

# Assessment of Servant Leadership, Adversity Quotient, Challenges Encountered, and Coping Mechanisms of United Methodist School Administrators for a Professional Development Plan

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## ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study assessed servant leadership behavior, adversity quotient, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms among school administrators in the South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church as the basis for a professional development plan. Total enumeration was used to include 82 administrators from 10 United Methodist schools. Data were gathered through survey instruments measuring five dimensions of servant leadership, four dimensions of adversity quotient, six areas of challenges encountered, and three coping mechanisms. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation were used for analysis. Results showed that servant leadership behavior was generally evident (overall weighted mean = 3.95), with organizational stewardship receiving the highest rating ( $M = 4.19$ ).

Administrators demonstrated moderate to favorable adversity responses, particularly in endurance ( $M = 4.07$ ), and frequently used problem-focused ( $M = 4.16$ ) and emotion-focused coping ( $M = 3.93$ ), while avoidant coping was used sometimes ( $M = 3.39$ ). Significant relationships were found between servant leadership and challenges encountered, servant leadership and coping mechanisms, adversity quotient and challenges encountered, adversity quotient and coping mechanisms, and challenges encountered and coping mechanisms. The findings indicate that servant-oriented leadership, resilience, and constructive coping operate together in supporting school administrators as they address organizational, instructional, technological, and community-related demands. A professional development plan focusing on servant leadership, adversity management, communication, technology integration, and healthier coping strategies is recommended.

**Keywords:** *servant leadership; adversity quotient; school administrators; coping mechanisms; educational leadership; professional development plan*

## INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership extends beyond administrative coordination. School administrators are expected to shape organizational culture, guide teaching and learning, respond to the needs of learners and personnel, mobilize resources, communicate with families and communities, and sustain institutional goals during periods of uncertainty. These responsibilities become more demanding when schools operate within faith-based settings, where leadership is expected to reflect service, moral stewardship, compassion, and accountability.

Servant leadership offers a relevant framework for this context because it prioritizes the needs, development, and well-being of followers while encouraging leaders to place service before self-interest. Unlike leadership approaches centered primarily on authority or organizational control, servant leadership emphasizes empowerment, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive communication, and stewardship (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et

al., 2019). In educational settings, this orientation can strengthen trust, collaboration, and commitment among school personnel and stakeholders (Shaw & Newton, 2014; Lee et al., 2021).

However, a service-oriented leadership disposition does not remove the pressures faced by school administrators. Leaders must contend with organizational climate concerns, personnel management, learner needs, performance development, technology provision, and communication with parents and communities. Previous studies have identified workload, inadequate coordination, limited resources, technology demands, and personnel issues as persistent challenges in educational administration (Al-Shamri, 2019; Adams & Muthiah, 2020).

Adversity quotient provides an additional lens for understanding how administrators respond to these pressures. It refers to the capacity to manage and overcome difficulties through perceived control, ownership, reach, and endurance (Stoltz, 2017). When paired with constructive coping strategies, adversity quotient can support resilient leadership and prevent challenges from undermining organizational effectiveness. Coping may be problem-focused, emotion-focused, or avoidant, with each approach carrying different implications for leadership well-being and performance (Carver, 1997).

Despite the relevance of these concepts, limited empirical attention has been given to their combined relationships within United Methodist educational institutions in the South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference. This study therefore assessed administrators' servant leadership behavior, adversity quotient, encountered challenges, and coping mechanisms; examined the relationships among these variables; and developed a professional development plan responsive to the findings.

## Literature Review

### *Servant Leadership in Educational Administration*

Servant leadership is grounded in the belief that leadership begins with a commitment to serve. Greenleaf (1977) described servant leadership as an approach in which the leader's primary motivation is to support the growth and well-being of others. In educational organizations, servant leadership is especially relevant because administrators influence not only operational decisions but also the professional growth, emotional safety, and moral climate of the school community.

Contemporary discussions describe servant leadership as an other-oriented approach that prioritizes follower needs and redirects individual concern toward the larger organization and community (Eva et al., 2019). The approach differs from leader-centered styles because it emphasizes empowerment, relational trust, ethical conduct, and development of followers (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014; Liden et al., 2015). In schools, these qualities may support teacher satisfaction, collaboration, and retention (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

The present study examined five dimensions of servant leadership: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. Altruistic calling reflects the desire to serve others; emotional healing concerns the ability to support people facing personal or professional difficulties; wisdom involves awareness and foresight; persuasive mapping refers to the ability to inspire and gain commitment through reasoned influence; and organizational stewardship reflects the leader's responsibility to prepare the institution to contribute positively to society.

### *Adversity Quotient and Leadership Resilience*

Adversity quotient concerns the manner in which individuals interpret and respond to difficulty. Stoltz (2017) organized the construct into control, ownership, reach, and endurance. Control refers to the perceived ability to influence an adverse situation. Ownership concerns accountability for improving the situation. Reach measures the extent to which adversity spills into other areas of life or work. Endurance concerns the perceived duration of adversity and the ability to persist.

For school administrators, adversity quotient is relevant because leadership work involves recurring disruptions, competing demands, limited resources, and interpersonal pressures. Administrators who sustain a sense of ownership and endurance may be better positioned to respond constructively, while leaders who perceive low control or allow adversity to spread across multiple domains may experience reduced effectiveness and greater stress. Building resilience therefore requires both individual capacities and organizational support.

### ***Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of School Administrators***

School administrators encounter challenges that span organizational, instructional, technological, relational, and community domains. Administrative pressures include workload, accountability expectations, staff coordination, access to facilities, professional development, and changing technologies (Al-Shamri, 2019; Adams & Muthiah, 2020). These challenges demand not only technical solutions but also communication, empathy, and adaptive problem-solving.

Coping strategies influence how leaders respond to these pressures. Problem-focused coping involves direct action, planning, help-seeking, and attempts to improve the situation. Emotion-focused coping includes acceptance, emotional support, prayer, reflection, or reframing. Avoidant coping includes denial, disengagement, distraction, or other efforts to distance oneself from the problem (Carver, 1997). While temporary disengagement may provide short-term relief, an overreliance on avoidance can prevent sustainable problem resolution. A professional development plan should therefore strengthen constructive coping while reducing unhealthy or unproductive avoidance.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the levels of servant leadership behavior, adversity quotient, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms of the administrators. The correlational component examined the relationships among the variables using Pearson product-moment correlation.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted among schools affiliated with the South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. These schools operate within faith-based educational environments where administrators are expected to combine institutional management with service-oriented leadership and community engagement.

### **Participants and Sampling Technique**

The participants were 82 school administrators from 10 United Methodist schools. Total enumeration was used so that all eligible administrators within the identified schools were included in the study.

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents*

School or Station	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Blessed Angels Christian School	5	6.10
Trinity Christian School	10	12.20
Trinity Learning Academy	10	12.20
Gethsemane Christian School	10	12.20
Blessed Hope Christian School	20	24.39
Nazareth Christian School	2	2.44
God's Family Christian School	12	14.63
Bethany Christian School	6	7.32
Gapan Ecumenical Center for Children	5	6.10
Good Shepherd Academy	2	2.44
Total	82	100.00

### **Research Instruments**

The questionnaire contained four major parts. The first measured servant leadership behavior through 23 items covering altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. The second assessed adversity quotient through control, ownership, reach, and endurance. The third measured challenges encountered in six areas: organizational climate, performance development, dealing with school

workers, dealing with learners, providing modern technologies, and communicating with parents and the community. The fourth measured problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping using indicators derived from the Brief COPE framework (Carver, 1997). The source manuscript reported that instrument reliability was established before administration.

### Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered from January to March 2024. After securing approval from the appropriate church supervising authority, the researcher administered the questionnaires through in-person and online channels. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, and retrieved responses were prepared for statistical analysis.

### Data Analysis

Frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to determine significant relationships among servant leadership behavior, adversity quotient, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms. The study tested the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

### Ethical Consideration

The conduct of the study followed institutional and organizational approval procedures. Participation was treated as voluntary, and responses were handled with confidentiality. Results were reported in aggregate form to protect the identities of individual administrators and participating schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Assessment of the Major Variables

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive findings. Overall, administrators agreed that servant leadership behaviors were evident in their practice (overall  $M = 3.95$ ). Organizational stewardship obtained the highest mean ( $M = 4.19$ ), followed by emotional healing ( $M = 3.94$ ), wisdom ( $M = 3.91$ ), altruistic calling ( $M = 3.86$ ), and persuasive mapping ( $M = 3.85$ ). These findings suggest that the administrators generally viewed leadership as a moral and community-oriented responsibility. The strong stewardship rating is consistent with the service orientation of United Methodist educational institutions and with the emphasis of servant leadership on follower growth and community contribution (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et al., 2019).

Table 2. *Summary of Descriptive Findings*

Variable	Dimension	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Servant leadership	Altruistic calling	3.86	Agree
Servant leadership	Emotional healing	3.94	Agree
Servant leadership	Wisdom	3.91	Agree
Servant leadership	Persuasive mapping	3.85	Agree
Servant leadership	Organizational stewardship	4.19	Agree
Servant leadership	Overall	3.95	Agree
Adversity quotient	Control	3.20	Sometimes
Adversity quotient	Ownership	3.65	Almost responsible
Adversity quotient	Reach	3.57	In other situations,
Adversity quotient	Endurance	4.07	Moderately pass
Challenges encountered	Organizational climate	3.95	Agree
Challenges encountered	Performance development	3.90	Agree
Challenges encountered	Dealing with school workers	3.89	Agree
Challenges encountered	Dealing with learners	3.98	Agree
Challenges encountered	Providing modern technologies	3.93	Agree
Challenges encountered	Communicating with parents and community	4.02	Agree
Challenges encountered	Overall	3.94	Agree
Coping mechanisms	Problem-focused coping	4.16	Often

Coping mechanisms	Emotion-focused coping	3.93	Often
Coping mechanisms	Avoidant coping	3.39	Sometimes
Coping mechanisms	Overall	3.83	Often

The adversity quotient findings show differentiated responses across the four dimensions. Control received a weighted mean of 3.20, interpreted as sometimes, indicating that administrators did not consistently perceive complete control over adverse situations. Ownership received a mean of 3.65, indicating that respondents were almost responsible for addressing difficulties. Reach received a mean of 3.57, suggesting that some adversities could affect other situations, while endurance received the highest AQ rating ( $M = 4.07$ ), indicating that administrators generally perceived difficulties as manageable and capable of passing over time. These patterns suggest a resilient but not uniformly strong response profile: administrators persisted through adversity, but some areas, especially perceived control, remained appropriate targets for professional development.

The challenge-related ratings ranged from 3.89 to 4.02, with communicating with parents and the community receiving the highest mean ( $M = 4.02$ ), followed by dealing with learners ( $M = 3.98$ ) and organizational climate ( $M = 3.95$ ). These findings indicate that administrators actively addressed challenges through communication, learner support, organizational management, and technology provision. At the same time, the ratings confirm that these areas continue to require sustained leadership attention.

Administrators often used problem-focused coping ( $M = 4.16$ ) and emotion-focused coping ( $M = 3.93$ ), while avoidant coping was used sometimes ( $M = 3.39$ ). The strongest problem-focused behavior involved concentrating effort on improving the situation, while spiritual comfort and prayer were prominent emotion-focused responses. Given the faith-based context, reliance on religion and spirituality is understandable and may reinforce meaning-making and endurance. However, the presence of avoidant coping indicates a need for professional development initiatives that encourage constructive coping and reduce denial, disengagement, and other forms of avoidance.

### Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Challenges Encountered

Table 3 shows that all five servant leadership dimensions were significantly related to the six areas of challenges encountered. Persuasive mapping produced the strongest correlations across the challenge domains, including communication with parents and the community ( $r = .789$ ), dealing with learners ( $r = .679$ ), dealing with school workers ( $r = .577$ ), organizational climate ( $r = .570$ ), performance development ( $r = .526$ ), and providing modern technologies ( $r = .515$ ). Emotional healing and wisdom also showed consistently significant relationships with challenge management. The results suggest that administrators who combine service orientation with empathy, foresight, persuasive communication, and stewardship are better positioned to respond to school demands. Persuasion is particularly important because it enables administrators to gain commitment without relying on coercion, a characteristic associated with servant leadership (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Table 3. *Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Challenges Encountered*

Servant Leadership	OC	PD	SW	L	MT	PC
Altruistic calling	.338*	.275*	.369**	.431**	.307*	.532**
Emotional healing	.450**	.454**	.510**	.612**	.516**	.734**
Wisdom	.503**	.427**	.494**	.564**	.404**	.670**
Persuasive mapping	.570**	.526**	.577**	.679**	.515**	.789**
Organizational stewardship	.436**	.350**	.442**	.492**	.389**	.567**

Note. OC = organizational climate; PD = performance development; SW = dealing with school workers; L = dealing with learners; MT = providing modern technologies; PC = communicating with parents and community. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Coping Mechanisms

As shown in Table 4, servant leadership dimensions were significantly associated with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Wisdom had the strongest relationship with problem-focused coping ( $r = .588$ ), followed by organizational stewardship ( $r = .576$ ), emotional healing ( $r = .568$ ), persuasive mapping ( $r = .548$ ), and altruistic calling ( $r = .414$ ). Emotional healing had the strongest relationship with emotion-focused coping ( $r = .534$ ). None of the servant leadership dimensions was significantly related to avoidant coping. These findings indicate that servant leadership is connected with constructive responses rather than disengagement. Administrators who view leadership as service appear more likely to address problems directly while also regulating emotional responses and seeking support.

Table 4. *Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Coping Mechanisms*

Servant Leadership	Problem-Focused	Emotion-Focused	Avoidant
Altruistic calling	.414**	.409**	.139
Emotional healing	.568**	.534**	.243
Wisdom	.588**	.477**	.232
Persuasive mapping	.548**	.451**	.208
Organizational stewardship	.576**	.388**	.001

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Relationship Between Adversity Quotient and Challenges Encountered

Table 5 indicates that selected dimensions of adversity quotient were significantly related to specific challenges. Ownership was related to dealing with school workers ( $r = .267$ ), dealing with learners ( $r = .406$ ), and communicating with parents and the community ( $r = .437$ ). Reach was significantly related to all six challenge domains, with the strongest association found in dealing with school workers ( $r = .612$ ) and providing modern technologies ( $r = .505$ ). Endurance was associated with organizational climate ( $r = .371$ ), dealing with school workers ( $r = .299$ ), dealing with learners ( $r = .297$ ), and communicating with parents and the community ( $r = .284$ ). Control did not show significant relationships. These results imply that accountability, containment of adversity, and persistence may be more influential in administrators' challenge management than perceived control alone.

Table 5. *Relationship Between Adversity Quotient and Challenges Encountered*

Adversity Quotient	OC	PD	SW	L	MT	PC
Control	.028	-.022	.191	.131	.083	.058
Ownership	.243	.171	.267*	.406**	.185	.437**
Reach	.358**	.410**	.612**	.361**	.505**	.307*
Endurance	.371**	.261	.299*	.297*	.183	.284*

Note. OC = organizational climate; PD = performance development; SW = dealing with school workers; L = dealing with learners; MT = providing modern technologies; PC = communicating with parents and community. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Relationship Between Adversity Quotient and Coping Mechanisms

Table 6 shows that ownership was significantly related to both problem-focused coping ( $r = .444$ ) and emotion-focused coping ( $r = .440$ ). Reach was related to emotion-focused coping ( $r = .295$ ), and endurance was related to problem-focused coping ( $r = .304$ ). No AQ dimension was significantly related to avoidant coping. The results emphasize that administrators who assume responsibility for improving difficult situations and who persist through adversity are more likely to rely on constructive coping responses.

Table 6. *Relationship Between Adversity Quotient and Coping Mechanisms*

Adversity Quotient	Problem-Focused	Emotion-Focused	Avoidant
Control	.047	.058	.224
Ownership	.444**	.440**	.225
Reach	.242	.295*	.211
Endurance	.304*	.154	-.040

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Relationship Between Challenges Encountered and Coping Mechanisms

Table 7 demonstrates that all challenge domains were significantly related to problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The strongest associations were found between dealing with learners and problem-focused coping ( $r = .736$ ), communicating with parents and community and problem-focused coping ( $r = .688$ ), and dealing with learners and emotion-focused coping ( $r = .627$ ). Avoidant coping was significantly related to dealing with learners ( $r = .303$ ), providing modern technologies ( $r = .360$ ), and communicating with parents and community ( $r = .277$ ). The findings confirm that administrators commonly respond to challenges through direct problem-solving and emotional regulation, but selected demands may also trigger avoidance. Professional development should strengthen healthy coping especially in learner-related, technological, and community communication challenges.

Table 7. *Relationship Between Challenges Encountered and Coping Mechanisms*

Challenges Encountered	Problem-Focused	Emotion-Focused	Avoidant
Organizational climate	.618**	.491**	.168
Performance development	.601**	.485**	.227
Dealing with school workers	.598**	.457**	.240
Dealing with learners	.736**	.627**	.303*
Providing modern technologies	.594**	.537**	.360**
Communicating with parents and community	.688**	.575**	.277*

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Proposed Professional Development Plan

The professional development plan was designed to respond directly to the descriptive and correlational findings. It emphasizes servant leadership development, adversity management, constructive coping, communication, and technology integration. The plan is intended for contextual refinement by school leaders and church education authorities before implementation.

Table 8. *Proposed Professional Development Plan*

Key Result Area	Objective	Core Activities	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Servant Leadership Enhancement	Strengthen stewardship, emotional healing, altruistic calling, wisdom, and persuasive mapping.	Leadership workshops; peer mentoring; case analysis; role-playing and servant leadership seminars.	Improved service-oriented leadership and stronger relationships with staff, learners, and community.	Year-round
Adversity Quotient Improvement	Improve control, ownership, reach, and endurance in managing adversity.	Resilience workshops; simulation exercises; mentoring; reflection and accountability sessions.	Greater resilience, ownership, and persistence in addressing challenges.	Quarterly for 1 year

Communication and Solutions	Improve responses to learner, parent, community, climate, and technology concerns.	Communication workshops; learner engagement seminars; organizational climate activities; technology integration training.	Enhanced communication, school climate, learner interaction, and technology use.	Bi-monthly for 1 year
Constructive Coping Utilization	Strengthen problem-focused and emotion-focused coping while reducing avoidant coping.	Coping-skills training; peer support groups; counseling access; wellness and stress-management sessions.	Healthier coping, reduced avoidance, and improved well-being.	Monthly for 1 year
Leadership and Coping Integration	Integrate servant leadership principles with practical coping strategies.	Integrated training; coaching; role-playing; feedback and assessment.	More effective challenge management and reflective leadership practice.	Bi-monthly for 1 year
Challenge-Specific Capacity Building	Address organizational, personnel, learner, technology, and community challenges.	Problem-solving workshops; emotional intelligence development; targeted mentoring; implementation monitoring.	Improved decision-making and sustained application of effective strategies.	Year-round

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that United Methodist school administrators generally demonstrate servant leadership behavior, with organizational stewardship as their strongest dimension. Their leadership practices reflect a service-oriented commitment to the school community and an emphasis on moral responsibility, emotional support, foresight, and persuasive communication.

The administrators also demonstrate resilience in managing adversity, especially through ownership and endurance. However, the lower rating in the control dimension indicates that some situations remain difficult to manage consistently. The frequent use of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping suggests that most administrators respond constructively by taking action, seeking support, reframing difficulties, and drawing strength from spiritual practices. Nevertheless, the occasional use of avoidant coping warrants attention because avoidance can delay sustainable solutions.

The correlational findings confirm that servant leadership, adversity quotient, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms are interrelated. Servant leadership dimensions were consistently associated with challenge management and constructive coping. Ownership, reach, and endurance were also related to selected challenges and coping strategies. These findings indicate that effective school leadership requires more than technical competence. It also requires service orientation, emotional maturity, resilience, accountability, and healthy coping practices.

The proposed professional development plan provides a practical framework for strengthening these areas. By integrating servant leadership formation, adversity management, communication, technology support, mentoring, and coping-skills development, United Methodist schools can further support administrators in leading responsive, resilient, and community-centered institutions.

## Recommendation

1. Church education leaders and school authorities should implement sustained servant leadership development programs that strengthen stewardship, emotional healing, wisdom, altruistic service, and persuasive communication.
2. Professional development activities should include resilience-building workshops focused on control, ownership, reach, and endurance, supported by simulations, coaching, and peer mentoring.

3. School administrators should receive targeted training in communication with parents and communities, learner engagement, personnel management, organizational climate improvement, and educational technology integration.
4. Schools should establish peer support networks and confidential access to counseling or wellness services to reinforce problem-focused and emotion-focused coping and reduce avoidant responses.
5. Leadership development activities should integrate faith-sensitive reflection and spiritual support while ensuring that administrators also have practical tools for problem-solving, stress management, and evidence-based decision-making.
6. Future researchers may replicate the study in other faith-based and non-sectarian school systems, examine differences by administrative role or school size, and evaluate the outcomes of the proposed professional development plan after implementation.

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