



**CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF TEACHERS-IN-CHARGE ON
THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE AND TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES:
BASES FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to determine the multifaceted challenges encountered by the Teachers-in-Charge and coping strategies in balancing administrative and instructional responsibilities in the District of Ajuy Cluster 1. This study used qualitative method using in-depth interview and phenomenological design. The participants for this study were the ten (10) purposely chosen Teachers-in-Charge (TIC). These Teachers-in-Charge were both handling teaching and administrative tasks. Findings revealed that their challenges for administrative responsibilities include meeting the deadline, making reports, lack of training, and limited resources or budget. Their challenges on teaching responsibilities include limited instructional materials, physical and mental fatigue, and management of time. The results revealed that Teachers-in-Charge cope with the challenges through task prioritization strategy and delegation of tasks.

Keywords: *Challenges, Coping Strategies, Teacher-in-Charge, Administrative and Teaching Responsibilities, Policy recommendations*

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INTRODUCTION

The role of Teacher-in-Charge (TIC) has become one of the most complex positions within modern educational systems, representing a complex role of both instructional practice and administrative leadership. Unlike full-time school principals or head teachers who typically focus exclusively on management and governance, TICs are tasked with responsibility of balancing two fundamentally distinct obligations.

Education is universally recognized as a cornerstone of national development, shaping not only the intellectual capacities of learners but also the socio-economic progress of societies. Effective school leadership plays a pivotal role in ensuring that educational institutions function efficiently and deliver quality instruction.

Administrative responsibilities encompass managerial, supervisory, and organizational duties that sustain the operations of schools and uphold accountability. In the absence of designated principals, these responsibilities often fall upon Teachers-in charge, who must balance administrative tasks with their teaching obligations (Hoy and Miskel, 2021).

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to grapple with leadership gaps, particularly in small schools where principals are not permanently assigned. Republic Act No. 11899 (2022), which created the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), explicitly mandates the review of systemic challenges and the recommendation of innovative reforms to strengthen school governance. Within this framework, teachers-in-charge serves as frontline leaders, ensuring continuity of operations despite limited resources and support. Leadership gaps in small schools have made TICs

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indispensable. They embody both instructional and managerial functions, making them critical actors in sustaining school effectiveness. However, the dual responsibilities of TICs present significant challenges. Administrative duties such as supervising teachers, managing records, and ensuring compliance with DepEd policies often compete with teaching responsibilities like lesson preparation, classroom management, and student assessment. This role conflict can lead to stress, burnout, and diminished instructional quality (Borillo and Baybay, 2023).

Despite these challenges, TICs employ coping strategies that enable them to fulfill their dual roles. These strategies include time management, delegation, peer collaboration and resilience-building practices.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy recommendations that address the needs of Teachers-in-charge. Policy Recommendations are evidence-based proposals intended to guide decision-makers in improving governance outcomes (Birkland, 2021). Policy recommendations can transform overload into structured professional growth by clarifying boundaries, reducing teaching loads, or providing administrative support. Moreover, national policy beliefs argue that deploying non-teaching personnel such as Administrative Officers has alleviated some burdens, but reforms remain necessary to ensure equitable workload distribution. Thus, policy interventions-such as workload caps, clerical support, and leadership training-are significantly not only for teacher well-being and retention but also for sustaining instructional quality and building a pipeline of future school leaders. In the Philippine context, where TICs often serve as de facto school heads, these

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recommendations are vital for ensuring fairness, efficiency, and long-term educational improvement (IDinsight, 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research design, study participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and methods of data analysis. The study focuses on identifying the challenges and coping strategies of teachers-in-charge in managing their administrative and teaching responsibilities, with the goal of providing policy recommendations for Ajuy Cluster 1 during the 2025–2026 school year.

Research Method

The research method used in this study was a qualitative research design employing in-depth interviews. During the interviews, the researcher was allowed to sit with the participants and ask a series of questions regarding the specific issues they encountered as teachers-in-charge. Demirci (2023) emphasizes the importance of conducting better qualitative interviews by focusing on participant comfort, interviewer flexibility, and methodological rigor, which aligns with the exploratory and open-ended nature of Fraenkel and Wallen’s approach.

The descriptive research method focuses on systematically describing a phenomenon as it exists in its natural setting, without manipulating variables. According to Elliott (2025), it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of current conditions, practices, or relationships within educational settings, enabling researchers to understand trends, patterns, and implications

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for practice. This approach is particularly useful in educational studies that seek to document and analyze real-world events, behaviors, or perceptions without altering the environment in which they occur (Elliott, 2025).

During the interviews, the interviewer and the interviewee were allowed to sit at a distance while reflecting on a series of questions about a specific issue. The purpose was to obtain the participants' key perspectives and insights on a particular issue within a social context through their responses to the questions.

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design, which is a philosophical approach to conducting qualitative research. The main objective of phenomenology is to understand how individuals perceive the world and how these perceptions may differ from widely accepted views, emphasizing a person's subjective interpretation of their experiences. This approach typically involves interviewing participants to gather their personal impressions and is commonly applied in fields such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology, as a qualitative research approach, emphasizes the exploration of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals, aiming to uncover the essence of phenomena as they are consciously perceived. Recent scholars highlight that phenomenology seeks to describe human experiences without imposing external theories or unexamined assumptions, instead focusing on the meanings participants attribute to their realities (Williams, 2021; McLeod, 2024; ResearchMethod.net, 2025).

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Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were ten (10) purposely selected teachers-in-charge in the District of Ajuy Cluster 1. These teachers must handle both teaching loads and administrative tasks having different age group and economic status. These teachers must be assigned in primary or complete elementary school located in the Schools District of Ajuy Cluster 1. They must have direct experience as a teacher-in-charge. They must have at least one year teaching experience in the present school. Only those teachers-in-charge who are willing to share their challenges and coping strategies as teachers-in-charge of schools will be included, and the participants will be informed about their consent prior to taking part in the study.

Sampling Design

The study utilized a purposive sampling design. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics needed for the study. In other words, participants are chosen "on purpose". Also referred to as judgmental sampling, this method relies on the researcher's judgment to identify and select individuals, cases, or events that can provide the most relevant information to achieve the study's objectives.

This design is appropriate for the study because it intentionally selects participants who possess the specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Purposive design was employed to include Teachers-in-Charge who simultaneously perform administrative and teaching responsibilities in the absence of a full-time school head. By focusing on this group,

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the researcher ensured that the data gathered directly reflects the lived experiences of those who encounter challenges such as role conflict and ambiguity, workload strain and time management, and financial responsibilities. This approach allowed the researcher to capture rich narratives and coping strategies that are central to understanding the dual-role realities of TICs. Consequently, the use of purposive design strengthens the validity of the study by ensuring that the policy recommendations formulated are grounded in authentic experiences and practical insights from those most affected.

Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule.

An interview schedule in qualitative research is a structured or semi-structured guide comprising a list of questions or topics that the interviewer intends to cover during the interview process. Its primary purpose is to ensure that all relevant areas are systematically explored across interviews, enhancing consistency, rigor, and comparability of data, while still allowing flexibility for in-depth probing and adaptation to emerging insights (Morris, 2025).

The interview schedule contained four questions that focused on the purpose of the study.

Voice and video recorders were used for data collection and documentation, depending on the participants' consent.

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Validity of the Research Instrument

Before determining the validity of the researcher-developed interview schedule, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of experts in research, testing and assessment, and English were asked to review and validate each question, providing suggestions for any necessary revisions.

Validity refers to the degree to which a study's findings, interpretations, and conclusions are accurate, meaningful, and appropriately represent the concept under investigation. It ensures that the research instrument effectively measures what it is intended to measure and that the results provide a credible reflection of reality. In establishing content validity, the questions and format of the instrument must align with the study's defined variables and objectives to guarantee that each item accurately reflects the construction under investigation. This process often involves expert review to determine whether the items are relevant, clear, and representative of the concepts being studied. By ensuring that the content and structure of the instrument are consistent with the study's framework, researchers enhance the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected in relation to the research objective (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The comments, corrections, and suggestions provided by the panel of validators on the interview schedule were taken into account using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (Appendix A).

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Data Gathering Procedures

Permits were obtained from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Office of the District Supervisors, the School Heads, and the individual participants to authorize the researcher to conduct the study.

The researcher personally visited the schools, communities, or other locations convenient for the participants to conduct the interviews. Before the interviews, the researcher encouraged the participants to sign a waiver or permission form related to the conduct of the study.

Using in-depth interviews, voice and video recorders were also used to fully capture the participants' responses. After completing the series of interviews, the researcher consolidated all the data collected.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the interview schedule were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or themes within narrative data. This approach enables the researcher to uncover meaningful insights into the challenges and coping strategies of teachers-in-charge on Administrative and Teaching Responsibilities in Ajuy Cluster 1.

Each written response was carefully examined to extract emerging themes related to behavior, communication, decision-making, motivation, and support of teachers-in-charge.

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), thematic analysis provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for analyzing qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify both explicit

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and implicit meanings across participants' narratives. Thematic analysis is especially appropriate for educational research that aims to explore complex social and organizational dynamics. Nowell et al. (2021) highlighted that this method improves the transparency and credibility of qualitative studies by promoting systematic coding and interpretation of the data.

Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis are essentially a step-by-step guide for making sense of qualitative data. First phase was Familiarization with Data-Reading and re-reading interview schedules; it was an essential step in the data analysis process. The repeated engagement with the responses of Teachers-in-Charge allowed the researcher to become fully familiar with their experiences, uncover subtle patterns such as role conflict and administrative overload and ensure that emerging themes were firmly grounded in the participants' actual words. This process strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Second, Generating initial codes; in this study, generating initial codes was an important step in organizing the qualitative data collected from Teachers-in-Charge.

After familiarization with the interview schedules, meaningful segments of the participants' responses were highlighted and labeled with concise codes that captured the essence of their experiences. These codes reflected recurring issues such as role conflict and ambiguity, Time management and workload constraints and financial responsibilities.

By systematically coding the data, the researcher was able to reduce complexity and prepare the foundation for identifying broader themes that represent the realities of Teachers-in-Charge in their dual roles. Third, Searching for themes; in this study, searching for themes involves clustering the initial codes from Teachers-in-Charge into broader patterns that

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captured the essence of their experiences. Codes such as “balancing class preparation with admin work”, managing paperwork with instructional tasks were grouped under role conflict and ambiguity, while codes like “managing school reports”, “handling multiple tasks”, and “distractions in classes due to urgent reports” were grouped under time management and “stretching tight school budget”, “limited resources”, “transportation expenses” and “budget constraints” were grouped under financial obligations. Fourth phase is Reviewing themes- checking if themes are truly present in the data and refining them.

Fifth phase is Defining and Naming Themes-writing clear definitions and giving concise names. And last is Producing the report, in this study it involves weaving the defined themes into a coherent narrative that directly addressed the research questions. This final phase transformed the coded data into meaningful insights, highlighting the systemic challenges and coping strategies of Teachers-in-Charge in fulfilling their dual-roles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study employed a qualitative research approach utilizing phenomenology to explore the challenges and coping strategies of Teachers-in-Charge in Ajuy Cluster 1 during the school year 2025-2026, with the aim of generating policy recommendations. Ten (10) purposively selected teachers-in-charge, each responsible for both teaching and administrative duties in primary and elementary schools, served as participants.

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Data were collected using a researcher-developed interview schedule, which was validated for content by a panel of experts. The process was further supported by voice and video recordings, conducted with the participants' consent.

Necessary permits were obtained from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the School Heads who participated in the study. The researcher personally visited schools and communities convenient for the participants to conduct in-depth interviews. Consolidated data were analyzed and interpreted using a thematic approach to capture the challenges and coping strategies of the participants.

Based on the results of the interview conducted to the teachers-in-charge, the experiences identified by them for administrative responsibilities were: Meeting the Deadline, Making reports, Lack of Training, and Limited Resources or Budget.

Based on the results of the interview conducted to the Teachers-in-Charge, the themes identified by them for Teaching Responsibilities were: Limited Instructional Materials, Physical and Mental Fatigue, and Management of Time

Based on the results of the interviews conducted with the teachers-in-charge, two themes emerged regarding the coping strategies they employed to address the challenges encountered in their administrative and teaching responsibilities: task prioritization and delegation of tasks.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, Teachers-in-Charge tend to view their role as both demanding and challenging. Participants recognized that serving simultaneously as classroom teachers and administrators places them in a position of constant negotiation-balancing instructional duties with managerial responsibilities.

The challenges faced by teachers-in-charge-meeting the deadlines, making reports, lack of training and limited resources-reveal a systemic gap between the expectations placed on them and the institutional support provided. These overlapping burdens not only create stress and role conflict but also compromise instructional quality, as teachers are forced to divert energy from pedagogy to administer compliance. The findings suggest that without targeted interventions such as structured training, streamlined reporting systems and resource allocation, the dual role model risks perpetuating inefficiency and burnout. Addressing these gaps is crucial to ensure that Teachers-in-Charge can fulfill both instructional and administrative responsibilities effectively, thereby strengthening school-leadership and overall educational outcomes.

The difficulties encountered by teachers-in-charge in handling their teaching responsibilities-limited instructional materials, physical and mental fatigue, and the struggle in managing time- illustrate how the dual role structure places unsustainable demands on educators. These challenges not only erode teaching quality but also compromise their well-being, as the constant tension between instructional and administrative duties leads to stress and diminished classroom performance. The findings point to a systemic imbalance: teachers

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INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

February 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



are expected to deliver high-quality instruction while simultaneously managing complex administrative tasks, yet they lack the resources and institutional support to do so effectively. This underscores for comprehensive interventions, such as adequate resource provision, workload management strategies, and wellness programs, to ensure that Teachers-in-Charge can thrive both as classroom instructors and school leaders.

The reliance on task prioritization and delegation as coping strategies demonstrates the adaptive capacity of Teachers-in-Charge in managing the dual pressures of teaching and administration. By prioritizing urgent and essential tasks, they safeguard the continuity of both instructional and managerial functions despite limited time and resources. Delegation, meanwhile, reflects a collaborative approach that not only distributes workload but also fosters shared responsibility among colleagues, support staff, and even students. These strategies highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of Teacher-in-Charge, yet they also reveal the necessity of instructional support-without systemic measures such as workload redistribution, streamlined reporting, and formal training, coping mechanisms alone may not be sufficient to sustain long-term effectiveness and well-being.

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INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

February 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



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