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## INTERPLAY OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE, COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP, AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT SKILLS OF SCHOOL HEADS: BASES FOR TRAINING DESIGN

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills of elementary school heads in the Schools Division of Iloilo, particularly in the First Congressional District, as bases for a proposed district-wide training program. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 111 school heads through a validated survey instrument. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, chi-square test, and Spearman rho were utilized for data analysis. Results showed a high level of work-life balance ( $M = 4.36$ ) and very high levels of collaborative leadership ( $M = 4.82$ ) and crisis management skills ( $M = 4.67$ ). No significant differences were found across demographic variables, indicating consistent competencies among school heads. However, "Enjoying Personal Life," "Encouraging Collaboration," and "Preparing and Planning" along with "Making Decisions and Staying Flexible" were the lowest-rated facets. Significant positive relationships were found among the variables, with collaborative leadership strongly associated with crisis management ( $\rho = 0.86$ ). Based on the findings, the "LEAD with BALANCE" training program was proposed to enhance leadership effectiveness through improved work-life balance and overall well-being. The study concludes that while school heads exhibit high to very high

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leadership competencies, strengthening specific facets of personal well-being—particularly in managing personal life and maintaining balance—can further improve leadership effectiveness and organizational resilience.

**Keywords:** *work-life balance, collaborative leadership, crisis management skills, school heads, training design*

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The role of school heads has evolved significantly, requiring leaders not only to manage administrative tasks but also to lead collaboratively, respond effectively to crises, and maintain personal well-being (Santos, 2019). Balancing operational demands with professional responsibilities while supporting teacher and learner development highlights the importance of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management. In the Philippines, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) under DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020 emphasizes these competencies, guiding school heads to provide strategic leadership, manage resources efficiently, foster quality teaching and learning, support staff development, and build meaningful stakeholder relationships (Department of Education, 2020).

Despite their importance, gaps remain in these areas, particularly in time management and work-life balance, shared decision-making and stakeholder engagement, and preparedness, responsiveness, and decision-making during emergencies and disruptions. Many school heads struggle with work-life balance due to long hours and administrative

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burdens, which can lead to burnout and reduced effectiveness (Reyes & Cruz, 2020).

Collaborative leadership, essential for teamwork, shared decision-making, and stakeholder engagement, is often underdeveloped because of limited formal training in mentoring, team-based problem-solving, and participatory leadership (Garcia, 2021). Similarly, crisis management skills are crucial for responding to emergencies such as natural disasters or school-based incidents, yet many school heads report insufficient scenario-based training, leaving them unprepared to maintain operations and safeguard learners and staff during high-pressure situations (Villanueva, 2020).

The Department of Education has introduced wellness and work-life balance initiatives, such as the DepEd Wellness Program – Oplan Kalusugan (DepEd Order No. 28, s. 2018), to support school leaders' well-being (DepEd, 2018). While beneficial, these programs often address each area separately rather than integrating wellness, leadership, and crisis management into a cohesive framework. Recognizing the interconnected nature of these competencies, this study explores how work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills interact among public school heads. By identifying gaps and areas for improvement, the research aims to provide a basis for designing a targeted training program that enhances resilience, leadership effectiveness, and overall school performance, ensuring that school heads are better prepared to meet the complex demands of modern educational leadership (Santos, 2019; Reyes & Cruz, 2020; Department of Education, 2020).

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, respondents of the study, sampling design, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis used in the study. The purpose of this study was to develop a training design based on the assessed levels of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills of school heads, as well as the relationships among these variables and their variations across selected profile characteristics. The findings of the study served as the basis for identifying priority areas and formulating a responsive and data-driven training program aimed at enhancing the leadership competencies and overall effectiveness of school heads.

### Research Method

The research method utilized in the study was descriptive-correlational research. The researcher administered a questionnaire both face-to-face and online to the elementary school heads in the First Congressional District of Iloilo. The aim was to assess their levels of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills, and to examine the relationships among these variables. The findings served as the basis for enhancing and developing an appropriate training design for school heads.

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research method to examine the relationship between work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills among public secondary school heads in the Schools Division of Iloilo. The findings will serve

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as the basis for developing a Training Design aimed at enhancing school heads' leadership effectiveness and overall school management.

According to Creswell (2023), a descriptive-correlational design is appropriate when the objective is to describe trends and examine relationships between variables without manipulating them. This study also aims to provide a framework for teaching leaders based on the connections identified among the three main characteristics. A systems theory perspective will guide the creation of this output, focusing on how inputs, processes, and outputs interact and evolve over time within an organizational setting.

### Respondents of the Study

There were 111 respondents to the study taken from the total of 154 school heads from public primary, elementary and integrated school heads in the First Congressional District of Iloilo.

### Sampling Design

Random Stratified Sampling design was used in the study. Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique in which the researcher divides a population into subgroups (strata) based on shared characteristics and then randomly selects participants from each stratum to ensure representation of all groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

### Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made questionnaires. The research instrument for this study consists of three researcher-made questionnaires designed to measure the Work-Life Balance, Collaborative Leadership Skills, and Crisis

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Management Skills of school heads. The instrument is divided into two parts. Part I gathers demographic and professional information, including sex, age, designation, highest educational attainment, and years of experience, providing contextual background for analyzing potential relationships between personal characteristics and leadership practices. Part II contains the three questionnaires, each with 25 items organized into five thematic subtopics to provide a comprehensive assessment of each construct. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale, and mean scores were interpreted using the NIRNDO scale, which converts numerical responses into descriptive performance levels.

### **Validity of the Research Instrument**

Prior to final testing, the three questionnaires were validated by three experts, namely Dr. Darwin Haro, Dr. Ramir Toreces, and Dr. Randy Ayuyon, ensuring high content validity. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study conducted on October 22, 2025, with 30 elementary school heads in the Schools District of Barotac Nuevo, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Collectively, these instruments provide a robust, reliable, and interpretable framework for assessing the work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills of school heads, supporting evidence-based recommendations for targeted professional development programs.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

For the administration of the instrument to the target respondents, an approved permit to conduct the study, duly signed by the Schools Division Superintendent of Iloilo, was

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presented to the Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDSs) in the First Congressional District, together with copies of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were disseminated by the PSDSs to the school heads.

Both printed copies and Google Forms of the questionnaire were utilized, allowing respondents to select the mode of response most convenient to them.

## Data Analyses

The study utilized appropriate analytical methods to ensure valid and relevant findings, with data processed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution and percentage (Triola & Triola, 2021), were used to summarize and present survey responses, while mean and standard deviation (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2020; Bhandari, 2023) measured central tendency and variability of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills. Ranking was applied to determine priority areas based on mean scores (Field, 2018; Song et al., 2024). For inferential analysis, nonparametric tests were employed: the Mann–Whitney U Test for comparing two independent groups, the Kruskal–Wallis H Test for three or more groups, and Spearman Rho Correlation to assess relationships among variables (Field, 2018; McKnight & Najab, 2023). These methods were appropriate due to the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the absence of normality assumptions. Ethical standards were strictly observed, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and secure data handling. No school funds were used, and respondents' information was solely for research purposes, safeguarding their rights and welfare throughout the study.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study examined the levels of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills of elementary school heads in the Schools Division of Iloilo, including their differences across demographic variables and relationships among key constructs.

### Level of Work-Life Balance

Findings revealed that the overall level of work-life balance among school heads was high ( $M = 4.36$ ), indicating that they are generally capable of managing professional responsibilities alongside personal well-being. Across demographic variables such as sex, age, designation, educational attainment, and years of experience, all groups consistently reported high levels of balance, with only minimal variations. Slightly higher means were observed among male respondents, those aged 50–59, Head Teachers, and those with master’s or doctoral degrees.

These results suggest that work-life balance is not significantly influenced by demographic characteristics but is instead shaped by adaptive coping strategies, role management, and institutional support. This aligns with previous findings that emphasize the importance of organizational conditions and resource management in sustaining balance. While school heads demonstrate effective balance overall, slightly lower scores among younger leaders and those pursuing advanced studies indicate the need for targeted support in managing competing demands.

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## Level of Collaborative Leadership Skills

The level of collaborative leadership skills was found to be very high ( $M = 4.82$ ), indicating that school heads effectively practice shared decision-making, teamwork, and participatory leadership. All demographic groups consistently exhibited very high levels, with minimal differences observed across sex, age, designation, educational attainment, and experience.

These findings highlight that collaborative leadership is a well-established practice among school heads and is likely embedded in the organizational culture of schools. The consistently high ratings suggest that school leaders actively engage teachers and stakeholders, fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment. Slight variations, such as higher scores among Teachers-in-Charge and those with master's degrees, further indicate that both experience and professional development contribute to strengthening collaborative practices.

## Level of Crisis Management Skills

Results showed that school heads possess a very high level of crisis management skills ( $M = 4.67$ ), demonstrating their ability to respond effectively to emergencies, make sound decisions, and maintain stability during challenging situations. Similar to other variables, all demographic groups reported very high levels, with only minor differences.

Higher scores were noted among male respondents, those aged 40–49, Head Teachers, and individuals with master's degrees. Additionally, school heads with 5–9 years of

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experience reported the highest levels, suggesting that mid-career leaders may have developed optimal competence through experience and exposure.

These findings indicate that crisis management skills are widely developed among school heads and are not significantly dependent on demographic factors. Instead, competencies such as preparedness, adaptability, and leadership experience play a more critical role.

### **Differences in Variables Across Demographic Characteristics**

The inferential analysis revealed no significant differences in the levels of work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills when respondents were grouped according to sex, age, designation, highest educational attainment, and years of experience ( $p > .05$ ).

This suggests that demographic characteristics do not significantly influence these leadership competencies. The uniformity of results across groups indicates that school heads, regardless of personal or professional background, are able to maintain similar levels of effectiveness. These findings further imply that organizational systems, leadership training, and professional expectations may have a stronger influence than individual characteristics.

### **Lowest-Rated Facets**

Although overall ratings were high to very high, certain facets obtained relatively lower scores. In work-life balance, "enjoying personal life" had the lowest rating, indicating limited time for leisure and personal well-being. In collaborative leadership, "encouraging collaboration" was the lowest, suggesting opportunities to further enhance team participation.

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In crisis management, “preparing and planning” and “decision-making and flexibility” received slightly lower ratings, highlighting areas for improvement in proactive and adaptive leadership.

These results suggest that while school heads are generally effective, targeted interventions are needed to strengthen specific competencies, particularly in personal well-being, team engagement, and proactive crisis preparedness.

### Relationship Among Variables

Significant positive relationships were found among all variables. Work-life balance was moderately correlated with collaborative leadership ( $\rho = 0.59$ ) and crisis management ( $\rho = 0.62$ ), while collaborative leadership and crisis management showed a strong correlation ( $\rho = 0.86$ ), all significant at  $p < .001$ .

These findings indicate that school heads who effectively manage their personal and professional lives are more likely to demonstrate strong leadership and crisis management skills. Moreover, collaborative leadership strongly enhances crisis response capabilities, emphasizing the importance of teamwork and shared decision-making during challenging situations.

The strong interrelationships among variables suggest that leadership effectiveness is multidimensional, where personal well-being, collaboration, and crisis competence reinforce one another.

### Implications for Training Design

Based on the findings, the study developed a training program titled “LEAD with BALANCE: A Development Program for School Heads on Sustainable Work–Life Balance and

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Leadership Well-Being.” The program is designed to address identified needs, particularly in enhancing personal well-being, strengthening collaborative practices, and improving crisis preparedness.

The training emphasizes workload management, stress reduction, boundary setting, reflective leadership, and adaptive decision-making. It also incorporates interactive strategies, including workshops, peer coaching, and reflective activities, to ensure practical application. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are included to assess learning outcomes and long-term impact.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that elementary school heads in the First Congressional District of Iloilo demonstrate strong leadership capacities, as reflected in their work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management skills. The results suggest that these competencies are generally well-developed and reflect effective leadership practices within the school setting.

The high level of work-life balance implies that school heads are generally able to manage professional responsibilities alongside personal and family demands, which is essential for sustaining long-term leadership effectiveness. Meanwhile, the very high levels of collaborative leadership and crisis management skills suggest a strong capacity to engage stakeholders, foster teamwork, and respond effectively to both routine and emergent challenges in school environments.

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Although overall results are favorable, certain dimensions—particularly enjoyment of personal life, encouraging collaboration, and aspects of proactive planning and adaptive decision-making—emerged as relatively lower. These findings imply that while leadership performance is strong, there remains a need to further enhance personal well-being and strengthen collaborative and strategic leadership practices to achieve more balanced effectiveness.

Furthermore, the significant relationships among work-life balance, collaborative leadership, and crisis management indicate that these variables are interrelated. This suggests that improvements in school heads' personal well-being may contribute to more effective leadership practices, particularly in fostering collaboration and enhancing crisis response capabilities.

In sum, the study concludes that effective leadership among school heads is multidimensional and influenced by the interplay between personal well-being and leadership practices. Strengthening these interconnected areas may further enhance leadership effectiveness, organizational resilience, and overall school performance.

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