

Silent Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Teacher-Coordinators' Contributions to Effective School Administration

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of coordinators at Manicahan National High School, focusing on silent leadership in relation to supervisory duties, teaching responsibilities, dispute management, leadership challenges, coping strategies, and policy implementation. Silent leadership was conceptualized through relational, reflective, empathetic, and context-responsive practices, informed by transformational, servant, distributed, and adaptive leadership perspectives. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Six coordinators were purposively selected, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews supported by field notes. Findings revealed that coordinators experienced silent leadership as transformative, relational, adaptive, and emotionally demanding. They balanced teaching and supervisory responsibilities through organization, prioritization, communication, flexibility, and role integration; managed disputes through empathy, fairness, active listening, and emotional regulation; and encountered mental fatigue, emotional pressure, role overload, and hidden emotional labor. Collaboration, mentoring, reflection, and collegial support strengthened their resilience. The study concludes that silent leadership is an essential yet often underrecognized form of educational leadership sustained through quiet influence, relational trust, service, resilience, and collaboration. It recommends clearer leadership roles, appropriate workload distribution, administrative assistance, leadership development, mentoring, and emotional well-being support. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Its sustainability impact centers on strengthening educational leadership, professional well-being, workforce conditions, and responsive institutional governance.

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Coordinatorship, Educational Leadership, Emotional Labor, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Lived Experiences, Resilience, Silent Leadership, Supervisory Duties

1. Introduction

Educational leadership is increasingly understood not only through formal authority and positional power but also through less visible practices involving reflection, relational influence, empathy, and context-sensitive decision-making. In schools, coordinators occupy a distinctive middle-level leadership position between administration and classroom instruction. They simultaneously perform supervisory, teaching, conflict-management, and policy-implementation responsibilities, often without

the formal authority associated with principals or school heads. Their work therefore provides an important setting for examining silent leadership, particularly how leadership is exercised through subtle influence, reflective practice, relationships, and adaptive responses to institutional demands. In Manicahan National High School, coordinators operate within Philippine educational policies that assign or imply responsibilities for instructional supervision, professional development, performance evaluation, teacher welfare, and shared school governance. Despite these expectations, limited research has examined how coordinators experience these overlapping responsibilities and make sense of leadership while balancing teaching, supervision, interpersonal tensions, workload pressures, and institutional requirements. This study therefore uses a phenomenological perspective, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, to explore the lived experiences of coordinators and understand how silent leadership is manifested within their everyday professional roles.

Traditionally, educational leadership has been associated with formal authority, visibility, and positional power. Emerging perspectives, however, recognize leadership practices based on reflective action, relational influence, empathy, and subtle strategic decision-making. Leadership scholarship has also emphasized the importance of modeling desired practices and influencing others through credible and consistent leadership behavior (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Coordinators exemplify this less visible form of leadership because they operate between administrative expectations and instructional responsibilities. In the Philippine setting, Republic Act No. 9155 decentralizes school governance and strengthens shared leadership structures, positioning school heads and designated personnel, including coordinators, as important actors in instructional supervision and school improvement. Republic Act No. 4670 further promotes teachers' welfare, reasonable workload, and due process in conflict situations. DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 emphasizes collaborative professional development, while DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 establishes expectations for teacher development and instructional monitoring. DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015 likewise requires systematic performance evaluation. Within these policy expectations, coordinators at Manicahan National High School perform hybrid roles as teachers, supervisors, mediators, and policy implementers. They must manage teaching loads, instructional quality, professional relationships, disputes, documentation, and institutional directives, frequently through interpersonal competence, discretion, and adaptive rather than authoritative leadership. Transformational and servant leadership have been associated with school performance, teacher motivation, and organizational climate (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). Although transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, and individualized consideration and servant leadership prioritizes service and collective well-being, both include empathy, reflection, and relationship building that are compatible with silent leadership. The present study extends this discussion by concentrating on coordinators whose leadership may be influential despite being less visible and formally authoritative.

Phenomenological research seeks to understand lived experiences and the meanings individuals assign to their roles and responsibilities (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is appropriate for examining coordinators because their leadership involves interconnected supervisory, instructional, emotional, and relational experiences. Previous research suggests that managing multiple leadership roles requires reflective practice, empathetic communication, and strategic decision-making (Harris, 2014; Spillane, 2021). Recent literature further views educational leadership as a contextual process of meaning-making shaped by institutional demands, personal values, and relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2021). Leadership roles may consequently remain complex and fluid as educational leaders continuously negotiate instructional and administrative responsibilities (Miller, 2021). Middle-level leaders such as coordinators can experience particularly ambiguous organizational positions because they face substantial expectations while possessing limited formal authority, resulting in emotional labour and reflective practice (Spillane et al., 2021). Phenomenological evidence supports this perspective. Embodo and Villanueva (2024) found that program heads experienced teacher supervision as both professionally fulfilling and emotionally demanding, requiring adaptability, reflective practice, communication, and emotional intelligence. Andal (2024) similarly found that master teachers experienced instructional supervision through time constraints, pedagogical concerns, interpersonal tensions, and leadership expectations. Phulpoto et al. (2024) further showed that

secondary school headmasters experienced administration as a multifaceted responsibility shaped by resource constraints, political pressures, social expectations, and institutional accountability. Instructional supervision remains central to educational leadership because leaders are expected to mentor teachers, monitor instructional practice, provide feedback, and support professional learning. Embodo and Villanueva (2024) emphasized that supervision extends beyond monitoring to mentoring, professional growth, relationship building, communication, and collaborative leadership. Andal (2024) likewise identified time management, pedagogical challenges, resistance to feedback, and limited awareness of innovative instructional techniques as supervisory concerns requiring emotional sensitivity and supportive communication. Supervision has also been examined in relation to teaching competence and quality. Studies addressing clinical supervision and teaching competence (Supriyanto et al., 2016) and educational supervision and quality teaching practices (Whetton, 2009) further demonstrate the relevance of supervisory processes to instructional practice. The importance of supervision to teachers' professional development has also been examined in secondary-school settings (Ngole & Mkulu, 2021), while interpersonal relationships have been considered within the context of educational supervision (Mensah et al., 2020). According to Ampofo et al. (2019), supervision is a cooperative endeavor aimed at improving school outcomes through professional support and guidance. The professional preparation and supervision skills of school heads have similarly received attention in educational leadership research (Sey et al., 2016), underscoring the relevance of supervisory competence to the implementation of instructional leadership responsibilities. Collaborative instructional leadership and continuous professional learning have also been associated with improvements in teaching and school outcomes (Agyemang & Ofei-Manu, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2021). Philippine policies such as DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 and DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 emphasize mentoring, coaching, and professional learning communities, but limited empirical evidence explains how coordinators actually enact these expectations. This creates an important distinction between prescribed supervisory responsibilities and coordinators' lived experiences of implementing them.

Balancing teaching and leadership responsibilities is a major concern for middle-level educational leaders. Individuals simultaneously performing instructional and administrative functions may experience role conflict, workload pressures, and limited time (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). The relationship between teachers' workload and educational or instructional outcomes has also received attention across different educational settings (Leyco, 2019; Ndioho & Chukwu, 2017; Pigozzi, 2008). Within the Philippine public-school context, pressures experienced by teachers have likewise raised concerns regarding working conditions and educational quality (David et al., 2019). Although RA 9155 supports distributed leadership within decentralized school governance, expanded responsibilities do not necessarily correspond with workload adjustments, potentially creating imbalance and strain. Evidence concerning educators with multiple responsibilities illustrates these pressures. Phenomenological research on teachers performing multiple ancillary functions has also documented the lived realities associated with responsibilities extending beyond regular classroom instruction (Into & Gempes, 2018). Tolibas and Morante (2022) found that elementary teachers performing ancillary functions experienced excessive workload, stress, fatigue, time-management difficulties, reduced productivity, and intrusion into personal time. Lauroza et al. (2025) similarly found that combined teaching, research, and administrative demands contributed to emotional stress, burnout, work-life imbalance, and reduced job satisfaction. Abao et al. (2025) identified comparable experiences involving teaching and administrative workload, role conflict, unexpected institutional responsibilities, time constraints, prioritization, and coping. Concerns regarding additional teacher responsibilities are not recent. Earlier literature also examined additional workloads in relation to educational performance (Nyawara, 2010), workload allocation and work efficiency in educational institutions (Perks, 2015), and the implications of workload for school management (Timperley & Robinson, 2010). Together, these works reinforce the relevance of workload organization when educators are expected to perform multiple professional functions. These findings are relevant to coordinators because their teaching responsibilities coexist with supervisory and administrative expectations. Conflict management adds another dimension to coordinators' work. Effective school conflict resolution depends on communication, emotional intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving (Tschannen-Moran &

Gareis, 2021). In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 4670 emphasizes due process and teachers' rights, requiring leaders to address disagreements with both procedural awareness and interpersonal sensitivity. Embodo and Villanueva (2024) emphasized open communication, objective feedback, flexibility, and emotional sensitivity in managing supervisory tensions. Andal found in 2024 that master teachers can experience difficulty providing constructive feedback when supervision is interpreted as fault-finding rather than professional support. Such interactions demonstrate that dispute management requires trust, empathy, reflective communication, fairness, and emotional stability. These qualities correspond with silent leadership because coordinators may need to resolve tensions through relational influence rather than positional authority. Middle-level leaders also face structural and professional difficulties. Role ambiguity, excessive workload, and insufficient institutional support are particularly important because such leaders occupy positions in which they implement policy without necessarily possessing full decision-making authority (Spillane et al., 2021). Challenges associated with educational supervision have long been recognized in the literature (Rashid, 2001), while more recent research has continued to examine challenges confronting school heads in instructional supervision (Sayee et al., 2021). Phulpoto et al. (2024) identified resource limitations, financial constraints, political interference, insufficient community involvement, and restricted administrative power among school leaders. Andal in 2024 reported instructional resources, communication, professional relationships, supervisory training, classroom concerns, and workload as additional challenges. Embodo and Villanueva (2024) similarly identified time constraints, teacher evaluation, feedback, and reporting requirements. Workload and accountability pressures may also affect educators' well-being (Li, 2024), while international evidence indicates that teachers and school leaders increasingly face expectations to innovate and adapt without corresponding support systems (OECD, 2023). Coordinators may therefore experience significant professional and emotional pressure because of the combination of their instructional and leadership roles.

The study conceptualizes silent leadership as leadership exercised through subtle, relational, reflective, empathetic, and context-responsive practices rather than primarily through visible authority. Transformational and servant leadership provide relevant foundations because they recognize individualized support, service, relationships, and collective development (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). Their emphasis on empathy, reflection, and relationship building further supports the conceptualization of silent leadership. The study is also informed by distributed and adaptive perspectives. Distributed leadership recognizes leadership as a shared organizational process rather than the exclusive responsibility of formally designated leaders. This is relevant to coordinators, who contribute to instructional supervision and policy implementation while remaining positioned between administrators and teachers. Adaptive leadership emphasizes flexibility, situational responsiveness, and the capacity to address complex challenges. The importance of adaptability is also evident in educational contexts requiring institutions and educators to maintain continuity amid changing and disruptive circumstances (Dayagbil et al., 2021). These characteristics correspond with coordinators' need to manage workload, relationships, supervision, and disputes through context-sensitive strategies. Coping practices further illuminate how silent leadership may operate under pressure. Collaboration, peer support, and reflection can reduce the negative effects of workload and role conflict (Agyemang & Ofei-Manu, 2022), while emotional regulation and resilience contribute to leadership in demanding environments (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). Teachers with multiple ancillary responsibilities have used planning, collaboration, positive relationships, and constructive attitudes to manage workload (Tolibas & Morante, 2022). Embodo and Villanueva (2024) likewise identified flexibility, open communication, and support networks as important coping mechanisms. Together, these perspectives position coordinators' leadership as a process involving relational influence, adaptation, reflection, collaboration, emotional regulation, and meaning-making. Phenomenology allows these dimensions to be examined through coordinators' own interpretations rather than solely through measurable leadership outcomes.

The literature establishes that educational leadership is multidimensional, relational, emotionally demanding, and shaped by organizational expectations, instructional responsibilities, and institutional conditions. Educational leaders frequently negotiate supervision, workload, interpersonal

relationships, conflict, accountability, and professional development. However, existing research has concentrated largely on principals, school heads, program heads, master teachers, and faculty members. Coordinators occupying intermediate positions between administrators and teachers have received substantially less attention. Although supervision and professional development are established policy expectations, limited evidence explains how coordinators experience their implementation while simultaneously fulfilling teaching and other institutional responsibilities. A further gap concerns the intersection of workload, conflict management, emotional labour, coping, and silent leadership. Existing evidence recognizes workload pressures, role conflict, and emotional demands, but little qualitative research examines how coordinators personally reconcile these responsibilities within their particular school contexts. There is also a lack of empirical research directly linking coping strategies to silent leadership practices in schools. The gap is particularly significant in Philippine public secondary schools, where coordinators operate within decentralized governance and policy frameworks while often possessing limited formal authority. The literature provides little understanding of how these middle-level leaders interpret and perform supervisory duties, balance teaching and coordinatorship, manage disputes, respond to professional challenges, and use adaptive strategies through silent leadership. Accordingly, the study explores the lived experiences of coordinators at Manicahan National High School during Academic Year 2025–2026 through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. It focuses on coordinators' personal narratives and meaning-making concerning supervision, teaching workload, dispute management, challenges, coping mechanisms, and leadership practice. The inquiry is qualitative and context-bound; it does not seek to establish causal relationships, quantify performance outcomes, compare institutions, or generalize findings across regional or national settings. Specifically, the study examines coordinators' lived experiences in performing supervisory duties; how they balance teaching and coordinatorship responsibilities; how they manage disputes; the challenges they encounter; the coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies they employ in response to work-related pressures; and the insights their experiences provide for leadership practice and policy implementation. The rationale is reinforced by calls for more responsive institutional support. Lauroza et al. (2025) and Abao et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of interventions addressing role overload, emotional exhaustion, workload balance, institutional support, and faculty well-being. Existing research therefore suggests that effective and sustainable educational leadership depends not only on individual competence and resilience but also on institutional structures responsive to leaders' professional and emotional needs.

The study most directly aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because coordinators contribute to instructional supervision, teacher mentoring, professional development, instructional quality, and school improvement. By examining how coordinators experience and manage these responsibilities, the study may provide insights into leadership practices and institutional conditions that support effective educational environments. The study also relates to SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, particularly its concern with sustainable and supportive working conditions. The literature identifies workload overload, emotional exhaustion, role conflict, time pressure, and work-life imbalance as recurring concerns among educators and educational leaders. Tolibas and Morante (2022), Lauroza et al. (2025), and Abao et al. (2025) demonstrate how overlapping professional responsibilities can affect stress, productivity, job satisfaction, and well-being. Examining coordinators' coping and adaptive practices can therefore contribute to understanding how leadership responsibilities may be organized more sustainably. A related connection exists with SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being because the reviewed literature associates workload and leadership demands with stress, emotional exhaustion, and well-being (Li, 2024). The study's examination of coping strategies, emotional regulation, workload pressures, and institutional support can provide context-specific insights into the professional well-being of coordinators. The research also has relevance to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions through its attention to conflict management, due process, policy implementation, shared leadership, and institutional relationships. Republic Act No. 4670 emphasizes teachers' rights and due process, while Republic Act No. 9155 supports decentralized and shared school governance. Understanding how coordinators mediate disputes and translate institutional policies into everyday practice can contribute to more responsive and collaborative school leadership structures. These alignments are primarily educational, socio-economic, institutional, and well-being oriented. The study

does not directly investigate environmental or ecological sustainability; therefore, its sustainability contribution is appropriately situated within the quality, resilience, and continuity of educational leadership and institutional practice.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by examining leadership practices that support instructional supervision, teacher development, professional relationships, and the continuity of effective school operations. Collaborative leadership and continuous professional learning have been associated with improvements in teaching quality and school outcomes (Agyemang & Ofei-Manu, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2021). Understanding coordinators' experiences may therefore help clarify the conditions needed to sustain instructional leadership at the middle level. Its contribution to socio-economic and workforce sustainability arises from its attention to workload, role overload, time pressures, and work-life balance. Evidence showing that educators with multiple responsibilities experience stress, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion (Tolibas & Morante, 2022) indicates that sustainable leadership requires attention to how professional responsibilities are distributed and supported. The study also addresses public health and well-being sustainability within educational workplaces by examining coping, emotional regulation, resilience, and professional pressures. Leadership resilience is supported not only by individual capacity but also by collaboration, collegial relationships, and institutional support. Emotional regulation and resilience are particularly important in demanding leadership contexts (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). From an institutional and governance sustainability perspective, the study examines the relationship between policy expectations and lived implementation. Coordinators translate school policies into supervisory, developmental, evaluative, and relational practices while working within limits of authority and resources. Research indicating that middle leaders occupy positions characterized by high expectations and limited authority (Spillane et al., 2021) highlights the need for leadership structures that recognize both formal policy responsibilities and actual workplace conditions. Finally, the study contributes to the sustainability of educational leadership by examining how relational trust, collaboration, adaptability, communication, emotional sensitivity, and institutional support enable coordinators to continue functioning under complex demands. The literature indicates that sustainable educational leadership depends not solely on personal resilience and competence but also on responsive organizational structures, appropriate workload distribution, leadership development, mentoring, emotional support, and work-life balance. By documenting coordinators' lived experiences in Manicahan National High School, the study can deepen understanding of silent leadership, emotional labour, adaptive strategies, and relational dynamics within coordinatorship while providing context-specific insights relevant to school leadership practice and policy implementation.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), to explore the lived experiences of coordinators in managing supervisory duties, teaching loads, and disputes at Manicahan National High School. Phenomenology was appropriate because it focuses on how individuals perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to their lived experiences rather than quantifying variables or testing hypotheses. IPA served as the methodological orientation because it examines how individuals make sense of significant experiences through reflection, emotion, and meaning-making. It involves a double hermeneutic in which participants interpret their experiences while the researcher interprets how participants make sense of those experiences. This approach was appropriate because coordinatorship involves complex emotional, relational, and organizational experiences associated with silent leadership, overlapping responsibilities, and interpersonal tensions. IPA is also suited to small, relatively homogeneous samples because it prioritizes detailed examination of individual experiences rather than statistical generalization. The six (6) participants enabled intensive engagement with individual narratives, emotions, reflections, and interpretations before patterns were examined across cases. Through repeated examination and interpretation of participants' accounts, the study sought to identify experiential patterns, emergent themes, and superordinate themes representing the hidden emotional

labour, relational dynamics, adaptive strategies, and leadership identities associated with silent leadership. The methodological framework was grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Phenomenology emphasized lived experience, hermeneutics guided interpretation, and idiography required detailed examination of individual cases before shared patterns were identified. These principles enabled the researcher to examine not only what coordinators experienced but also how they interpreted, negotiated, and constructed meaning from their experiences.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Manicahan National High School in Manicahan, Zamboanga City, Philippines. The school is approximately 23 kilometres east of Zamboanga City proper and was established in 1964 as an extension high school before being formally nationalised. It is a Department of Education public high school that provides secondary education to the surrounding community. Manicahan National High School is located at approximately 7.0224° N latitude and 122.1863° E longitude, with an address at High School Zone, Manicahan, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur 7000, Philippines. The locale was appropriate because it provided a real educational setting in which coordinators actively perform supervisory duties, manage teaching loads, resolve conflicts, and exercise leadership.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study involved six (6) coordinators from Manicahan National High School. The participants included Teacher III personnel serving as grade-level coordinators, a Grade 9 Curriculum Coordinator, and a Faculty Club President/TLE Master Teacher. To protect their identities, they were represented by the pseudonyms The Calm Coordinator, The Lady in Blue, The Reflective Mentor, The Soft-Spoken Leader, The Organized Coordinator, and The Smiling Facilitator. The participants varied in age, leadership style, responsibilities, and years of service, allowing the study to obtain nuanced accounts of the phenomenon. Their narratives provided detailed descriptions of how coordinators understood and experienced silent leadership in their daily professional lives.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in phenomenological research, was employed to identify individuals with rich and meaningful experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. Six (6) coordinators were selected based on their direct experience of the responsibilities examined in the study. Participants were selected on the basis of acting as coordinators or teacher leaders within the school, being directly engaged in supervisory roles, teaching roles, and dispute management, and having at least three years of leadership experience. The small sample was consistent with IPA because the methodology prioritizes depth and detailed interpretation rather than breadth or statistical generalization. This sampling approach enabled intensive examination of individual accounts while allowing the identification of shared experiential patterns across participants.

2.5 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. This method allowed participants to freely describe and reflect on their lived experiences while ensuring systematic exploration of topics relevant to the study. The flexible interview format enabled the researcher to ask probing questions, clarify responses, and examine emerging insights. The interview questions addressed participants' experiences in performing supervisory duties, balancing teaching and leadership responsibilities, managing disputes, coping with challenges, and practicing silent leadership within the school. Field notes supplemented the interviews by documenting contextual observations, emotional expressions, pauses, non-verbal behaviors, and other significant observations that could enrich the interpretation of participants' narratives. The interviews were conducted individually in a quiet and comfortable environment within the school premises and lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. With informed consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to support the accuracy and completeness of the collected data.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first obtained formal permission from the school administration to conduct the study. After approval, potential participants who satisfied the inclusion criteria were identified and voluntarily invited to participate. Before data collection, the researcher explained the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Written informed consent was obtained before the interviews. Individual interviews were then conducted in a quiet and private location within the school to maintain confidentiality and minimize distractions. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant's consent. Field notes were also prepared to capture contextual and non-verbal information relevant to participants' accounts. After data collection, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher subsequently conducted the interpretative phenomenological analysis through repeated transcript reading, identification of significant statements, initial noting, development and clustering of emergent themes, and cross-case examination to identify shared experiential patterns and superordinate themes. This systematic and reflective procedure supported interpretation of how participants understood their experiences as coordinators practicing silent leadership.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on how individuals make sense of lived experiences and the meanings attached to significant events within their personal and social worlds (Smith et al., 2022). IPA enabled detailed examination of the coordinators' interpretations, emotions, reflections, and meaning-making concerning silent leadership, supervisory duties, teaching loads, and dispute management. The analysis followed a systematic, iterative, and interpretative process adapted from the IPA procedures proposed by Jonathan Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). The approach is grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography and recognizes the researcher's interpretative role while maintaining detailed attention to participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Audio-recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim. The researcher repeatedly listened to the recordings while reviewing the transcripts to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the data. Repeated engagement with qualitative data facilitates greater sensitivity to participants' meanings, emotions, and contextual experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Each transcript was subsequently read and reread while maintaining an idiographic focus (Smith et al., 2022). During this process, the researcher practiced reflexivity by setting aside personal assumptions and biases and remaining attentive to participants' perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Initial noting involved examining the content of participants' accounts, their use of language, metaphors, repetitions, tone, pauses, emotional expressions, and deeper meanings associated with their statements (Smith et al., 2022). This process allowed the researcher to move beyond descriptive accounts toward interpretation of the psychological, emotional, and relational dimensions of participants' experiences. Emergent themes were then developed by condensing significant statements and interpretative notes into thematic expressions representing essential aspects of participants' experiences. Careful and systematic engagement with qualitative data is important in developing meaningful patterns and themes while maintaining interpretative coherence (Braun & Clarke, 2021). These themes incorporated participants' meanings and the researcher's interpretative engagement (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Related themes were subsequently clustered through conceptual and experiential connections to generate broader superordinate themes (Smith et al., 2022). Cross-case analysis compared themes among the six participants to identify shared patterns while preserving individual variations. This process generated Group Experiential Themes reflecting collective meanings within coordinators' lived experiences of silent leadership. Cross-case analysis enables IPA researchers to identify convergence and divergence while maintaining the uniqueness of individual experiences (Smith et al., 2022). Direct participant quotations were integrated into the interpretation to preserve participants' voices and ground thematic findings in their narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the analysis, the researcher repeatedly revisited transcripts, refined themes, examined relationships among themes, and maintained reflexivity so that interpretations remained grounded in participants' lived experiences. This interpretative interaction between participant meaning-making and researcher interpretation is fundamental to IPA (Smith et al.,

2022). The final analytical stage synthesized the superordinate themes into an integrated understanding of coordinators' experiences of silent leadership. Through this process, IPA provided a nuanced and reflective interpretation of both visible and less visible dimensions of coordinators' leadership experiences.

2.8 Validity and Verification

Credibility, trustworthiness, and rigor were supported through member checking, triangulation, reflexivity, rich description, and systematic IPA procedures. Member checking allowed participants to review their interview transcripts and clarify or confirm their statements and interpretations, helping ensure that the findings represented their intended meanings. Triangulation was undertaken by comparing interview transcripts with field notes to strengthen the consistency of the findings and provide contextual support for interpretation. The researcher also maintained reflexivity by acknowledging personal assumptions and biases while remaining attentive to participants' perspectives. Rich description was used to represent participants' experiences, contextual meanings, direct quotations, and thematic interpretations, enabling readers to understand the complexity of the phenomenon and consider the transferability of findings to similar contexts. The systematic application of IPA further strengthened rigor by examining both individual experiences and shared experiential patterns, supporting a nuanced understanding of silent leadership as experienced and interpreted by the coordinators.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants received an explanation of the study's purpose and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected through pseudonyms, while collected data were secured and used solely for academic purposes. The researcher also sought to prevent harm, deception, and coercion and treated participants with respect, dignity, and professionalism. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used solely for language enhancement, grammar checking, sentence refinement, and improving the clarity and coherence of written statements. Their use was limited to organizing and enhancing the researcher's original ideas, interpretations, and analyses. Data collection, coding, thematic analysis, interpretation of participants' lived experiences, and research conclusions remained the researcher's intellectual work and responsibility.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Lived Experiences of Coordinators in Performing Supervisory Duties

3.1.1 Coordinatorship as a Transformative Leadership Journey

The results revealed that coordinators experienced their supervisory roles as emotionally demanding but transformative. Participants described coordinatorship as a "roller-coaster ride," an "uphill battle," and a "journey of adjustment and growth," reflecting fluctuating emotions, pressures, uncertainties, and responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, their experiences gradually developed confidence, resilience, emotional maturity, and leadership competence. Leadership identity therefore emerged through continuous engagement with responsibilities, decisions, interpersonal relationships, and institutional demands rather than simply through formal appointment. These findings indicate that coordinatorship is experienced as a process of becoming a leader rather than merely occupying a leadership position. Challenges and uncertainties became opportunities for reflection, adjustment, and professional development. The participants' experiences demonstrate that leadership develops through lived encounters with responsibility, emotional strain, interpersonal negotiation, and continuous adaptation, making personal transformation an important dimension of silent leadership.

3.1.2 Silent Leadership Through Example and Influence

The results showed that participants understood silent leadership as influence exercised through actions, character, work ethic, emotional presence, and interpersonal trust rather than authority or control. Participants emphasized "acting what you preach," influencing colleagues through actions

rather than words, earning respect rather than demanding it, and maintaining calmness and presence. Their accounts consistently associated leadership with humility, consistency, professionalism, empathy, trustworthiness, and leading by example. These experiences demonstrate that silent leadership derives its influence from relational credibility and behavioral authenticity. Rather than relying on hierarchical authority, coordinators model the values and conduct they expect from others. Their leadership is therefore embedded in everyday professional interactions and relationships, where calmness, fairness, empathy, and consistent behavior foster voluntary respect and cooperation. This form of influence is particularly relevant to coordinators because they guide colleagues while maintaining collegial relationships.

3.2 Balancing Teaching Load and Coordinatorship Responsibilities

3.2.1 Navigating Multiple Roles Through Adaptability and Organization

The results revealed significant difficulty in simultaneously managing teaching and supervisory responsibilities. Participants experienced overlapping demands, limited time, extended working hours, and intrusion of work into personal time. They managed these pressures through intensive time management, prioritization, planning, delegation, communication, flexibility, and integration of teaching and leadership roles. Some participants eventually learned to view teaching and coordinatorship as interconnected rather than entirely separate responsibilities. These findings indicate that balancing dual roles requires more than scheduling and technical competence. Coordinators continuously shift between classroom instruction, supervision, administrative responsibilities, and interpersonal concerns, creating emotional and cognitive demands. Their use of organization, communication, role integration, and flexibility demonstrates adaptive leadership and professional agency. Coordinatorship is therefore experienced as continuous negotiation between competing responsibilities requiring resilience, structure, and relational coordination.

3.3 Management of Disputes Within the School Setting

3.3.1 Conflict Management as Emotional and Relational Work

The results showed that coordinators approached disputes as emotionally and relationally sensitive situations rather than merely disciplinary concerns. Participants emphasized listening to both sides, maintaining fairness and objectivity, understanding the emotions underlying disagreements, and creating safe spaces for conversation. They sought to facilitate understanding, preserve professional relationships, protect organizational harmony, and maintain focus on learners' welfare. Calmness, patience, neutrality, empathy, and emotional regulation were central to their approaches. The findings demonstrate that conflict management requires substantial relational and emotional work. Coordinators function as mediators who must understand different perspectives while controlling their own emotional responses and maintaining professional neutrality. Silent leadership becomes particularly evident during conflict because restraint, emotional presence, and careful communication allow coordinators to de-escalate tensions without relying heavily on formal authority. Conflict resolution therefore reflects leadership through empathy, fairness, reflective judgment, and preservation of relationships.

3.4 Challenges Encountered by Coordinators in Fulfilling Their Roles

3.4.1 Hidden Emotional Burden of Coordinatorship

The results revealed substantial emotional and psychological burdens associated with coordinatorship. Participants experienced mental fatigue, emotional pressure, exhaustion, role overload, and stress from continuously shifting between teaching and leadership functions. They also absorbed colleagues' professional and personal frustrations while remaining calm, supportive, dependable, and professional. These pressures represented a largely invisible dimension of their leadership responsibilities. The findings indicate that coordinatorship involves hidden emotional labour beyond observable instructional and administrative tasks. Coordinators must regulate their emotions while simultaneously addressing students' needs, teachers' concerns, administrative requirements, and institutional expectations. Their apparent calmness may therefore conceal significant internal pressure. Silent leadership consequently involves emotional endurance, self-regulation, patience, and the capacity to provide stability for others while managing personal strain.

3.5 Coping Mechanisms and Adaptive Strategies of Coordinators

3.5.1 Resilience Through Collaboration, Reflection, and Adaptability

The results showed that participants relied strongly on colleagues, teamwork, mentoring, communication, reflection, and shared responsibility to manage leadership pressures. Co-teachers were described as a “backbone,” while cooperative colleagues helped make coordinators’ responsibilities lighter. Mentoring from senior teachers and the school head also provided professional guidance, reassurance, confidence, and assistance in decision-making. These findings indicate that coordinator resilience is relational rather than exclusively individual. Participants sustained their responsibilities through networks of trust, cooperation, mentoring, and emotional support. Leadership was therefore experienced as an interdependent process in which colleagues and administrators contributed to coordinators’ ability to withstand institutional pressures. Silent leadership appears more sustainable when embedded within supportive professional relationships characterized by reciprocal assistance and shared responsibility.

3.6 Insights for Leadership Practice and Policy Implementation

3.6.1 Sustainable Leadership Support Systems for Coordinators

The results revealed a consistent need for stronger institutional support. Participants identified administrative assistance, clearer role guidelines, continuous leadership development, manageable workloads, mentoring, and emotional well-being support as important needs. Administrative tasks involving information dissemination, report collection, and follow-up contributed to workload pressure, while unclear expectations and insufficient preparation created additional difficulty. Participants perceived a mismatch between substantial leadership responsibilities and the organizational support available to fulfill them. The findings suggest that personal resilience alone is insufficient for sustainable coordinatorship. Although coordinators demonstrate adaptability and commitment, continuous reliance on personal sacrifice may contribute to exhaustion and reduced effectiveness. Their experiences indicate that sustainable silent leadership requires institutional recognition of workload and emotional labour alongside clearer responsibilities, professional development, practical assistance, and support for well-being. Leadership sustainability therefore depends on both individual capacity and responsive organizational structures.

3.6.2 Coordinators as Organizational Anchors

The results further revealed that participants perceived coordinators as stabilizing and connecting forces within the school. They described themselves as “the glue that holds everything together,” as individuals “standing in the middle” between teachers and administration and between concerns and solutions, and as leaders who work with rather than above colleagues. Their responsibilities included connecting people, facilitating communication, mediating tensions, supporting colleagues, and maintaining continuity and organizational harmony. These findings demonstrate the intermediary and service-oriented character of coordinatorship. Coordinators occupy a position between administration and teachers, requiring them to balance institutional expectations with human and relational concerns. Their influence derives less from formal authority than from their ability to maintain communication, relationships, cooperation, and stability. Silent leadership therefore serves an organizationally sustaining function, with coordinators acting as largely unseen but important connectors who help preserve institutional cohesion and collective purpose.

3.7 Integrated Essence of Silent Leadership Among School Coordinators

The overall results revealed silent leadership as a relational, transformative, adaptive, and emotionally intensive form of educational leadership. Coordinators developed their leadership identity through experience and personal growth, influenced others through example and trust, balanced teaching and supervisory responsibilities through adaptability and organization, mediated disputes through empathy and fairness, and managed substantial hidden emotional burdens. Collaboration, mentoring, and collegial support strengthened their resilience, while clearer roles, workload support, professional development, administrative assistance, and attention to emotional well-being emerged as important institutional needs. Taken together, the findings indicate that silent leadership is neither passive nor

dependent on positional visibility. Its influence is expressed through calm guidance, relational trust, emotional endurance, reflective action, collaboration, and service. Coordinators function as intermediaries and organizational anchors who quietly connect teachers and administrators, manage tensions, support colleagues, and maintain continuity within the school. From the participants' lived experiences, the essence of silent leadership lies in sustaining both the human and organizational dimensions of the school through empathy, adaptability, fairness, resilience, and relational commitment.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that coordinators at Manicahan National High School experience silent leadership as a complex, transformative, relational, and emotionally demanding process that extends beyond administrative responsibilities. In balancing teaching, supervision, and interpersonal responsibilities, they rely on time management, prioritization, collaboration, communication, role integration, adaptability, and reflective practice. They manage disputes through fairness, empathy, active listening, emotional regulation, and collaborative dialogue while simultaneously confronting mental fatigue, emotional pressure, role overload, and hidden emotional labor. Despite these challenges, collegial support, mentoring, resilience, and collective engagement help sustain their leadership roles. Overall, silent leadership emerges as an essential yet often underrecognized form of educational leadership characterized by quiet influence, relational trust, service, emotional endurance, consistency, and collaboration in maintaining organizational harmony and stability.

Based on the findings, school administrators and educational institutions should strengthen support for coordinators through appropriate workload distribution, clearer leadership roles, administrative assistance, leadership development, mentoring, emotional wellness support, and recognition of their hidden emotional labor. Teachers should promote open communication, teamwork, mutual respect, and shared responsibility to strengthen professional relationships with coordinators. Policy makers, particularly within the Department of Education, should consider the lived realities of coordinators when reviewing policies on coordinatorship, instructional supervision, workload management, leadership development, emotional well-being, and organizational support. Future researchers may further examine silent leadership and coordinatorship across broader participant groups and educational contexts, including emotional labor, teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and organizational resilience.

The study is limited to the lived experiences of coordinators at Manicahan National High School and therefore reflects the specific educational and organizational context in which their silent leadership is practiced. Its focus on coordinators' experiences means that the findings represent their perspectives on supervisory duties, teaching responsibilities, dispute management, leadership challenges, coping mechanisms, and organizational support. Further research involving broader participant groups, different educational settings, or comparative research designs may provide a wider understanding of silent leadership and mid-level educational leadership.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity through pseudonyms, and participants' right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Collected data were secured and used solely for academic purposes, while participants were treated with respect, dignity, and professionalism, with measures taken to prevent harm, deception, and coercion. Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration before data collection. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used solely for language enhancement, grammar checking, sentence refinement, and improving clarity and coherence, while data collection, coding, thematic analysis, interpretation, and research conclusions remained the researcher's intellectual work and responsibility.

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