
Crisis Leadership in International Education: Resilience and Coping Mechanisms of Filipino School Administrators in China

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Abstract — Filipino school administrators are increasingly employed in international schools in mainland China, and yet existing crisis management models remain predominantly Western-centric, overlooking the relational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that Filipino leaders naturally draw upon. This hermeneutic phenomenological study, following van Manen's approach, explored the lived experiences of seven Filipino school administrators navigating crises in international kindergartens and academies across major Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chongqing, and Hefei. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and van Manen's thematic reflection---moving iteratively within the hermeneutic circle and attending to the four lifeworld existentials---fourteen formulated meanings emerged. These meanings include leadership as responsibility (burden of accountability); leadership as earned authority through humility and patience; Filipino values as active, summonable resources; Filipino values as adaptive, operationalized resources; crisis composure as inherited family legacy; relational resilience as inherited family legacy; constraint as catalyst for self-directed innovation; strategic patience within structural constraints; work as moral endeavor (care-driven); work as identity expression (pride in being Filipino); faith as crisis infrastructure (prayer, ego reduction); faith as transformative power; collaborative decision-making and stakeholder inclusion; and emotional self-regulation through pausing and reflection. From these, seven emergent themes were synthesized, leading to the Pilipino-Chinese Crisis Leadership (PCCL) Model, which comprises

seven core competencies: *Pagkatao* (cultural identity integration), *Sistema* (structural navigation), *Damdamin* (relational emotional labor), *Diskarte* (adaptive innovation), *Tulay* (cultural bridge building), *Ugnayan* (stakeholder bridge building), and *Asa* (expectation management). The findings conclude that Filipino school administrators lead through integrated cultural identity, transforming structural constraints into opportunities for strategic resourcefulness and moral care. The PCCL Model offers a culturally responsive, dispositional framework for crisis leadership that honors Filipino heritage while addressing Chinese structural realities, designed to be teachable, assessable, and adaptable for international education contexts. The PCCL Model is also recommended for use in professional development programs, leadership training, and crisis preparedness in international schools.

Keywords: bayanihan, China, crisis leadership, Filipino school administrators, hermeneutic phenomenology, PCCL model

I. INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape today faces unprecedented globalization and interconnectivity, evidenced by the rapid proliferation of international schools worldwide. These institutions, once considered enclaves of Western educational practices, now employ a diverse workforce of educators and administrators from various cultural backgrounds. Among them, Filipino teachers and school administrators have become a prominent presence, recognized for their dedication, English proficiency, and adaptability (AISDL, 2020). For instance, a Filipino educator, Dr. Eleuterio "Ely" Timbol Jr., received the Governor's Empire State Excellence in Teaching Award in New York in 2022, and three Filipino public school teachers were awarded the Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange for Global Education Best Practices Award in 2023. These achievements underscore the growing recognition of Filipino educators on the global stage.

However, this trend also presents significant challenges. Filipino school administrators working in international schools, particularly in mainland China, must navigate unfamiliar cultural expectations, pedagogical approaches, and administrative procedures. The ability to bridge cultural divides, communicate proficiently, and employ context-specific methods has become increasingly

vital (Wei et al., 2021). This need for adaptability is especially crucial during times of crisis, where culturally sensitive leadership can significantly impact the well-being and academic success of students, teachers, and the wider school community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the importance of effective crisis leadership strategies for international educators. The global health crisis posed unprecedented challenges, forcing schools to rapidly transition to online learning, address complex health and safety concerns, and navigate significant operational disruptions (Adams et al., 2023). Schools in complex, dynamic environments like China had to innovate continuously, and the experiences of Filipino school administrators in that setting offer valuable insights into crisis leadership practices. Beyond pandemics, crises in educational settings can take various forms, such as natural disasters, health emergencies, financial instability, political unrest, and incidents of violence; each disrupting the learning environment and threatening the continuity of educational services.

The increasing number of Filipino educators seeking opportunities abroad can be attributed to higher salaries, access to better professional development, and a desire for personal growth. China, with its thriving economy and growing demand for English language education, has emerged as a particularly attractive destination. The influx of Filipino teachers and administrators has significantly contributed to the diversity and cultural richness of international schools across China. However, transitioning to these schools poses distinct challenges: Filipino educators must navigate not only educational and administrative differences but also the nuances of Chinese culture, language, and societal expectations. Compounding these difficulties is the constant threat of crises like natural disasters, health emergencies, political instability, and other unexpected events that can rapidly disrupt school routines (Adams et al., 2023).

Despite considerable literature on crisis leadership in education, a significant gap exists regarding the experiences and perspectives of Filipino school administrators in international schools in China. Existing studies frequently examine school contexts in the West or the broader international school system (Liu et al., 2022; Sun & Sun, 2022), yet they do not address how Filipino school leaders negotiate the complexity and dynamism of school contexts in China. This limited investigation provides little insight into how these professionals draw on their cultural values, such as *bayanihan* (communal cooperation), *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (shared identity),

and *tatag* (resilience), in order to lead their schools and communities through crises. The Filipino culture is highly relational, and gaining insights into how these cultural values shape crisis leadership approaches can help promote effective, culturally sensitive leadership in international school settings.

Given this gap, the present study adopted a **hermeneutic phenomenological approach** as its research paradigm, following the tradition established by van Manen (1990, 2014, 2023). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. Unlike purely descriptive phenomenology, which aims to bracket the researcher's assumptions, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that all understanding is interpretive. The researcher's pre-understandings, shaped by personal history, cultural background, and professional experience, are not obstacles to be eliminated but resources to be critically engaged. This approach is particularly suited for this inquiry as it aims to uncover how Filipino school administrators in mainland China navigate crises, revealing the cultural nuances, personal values, and professional challenges that shape their experiences (Suddick et al., 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019).

Central to van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology is the concept of the **hermeneutic circle**, which is a cyclical process of interpretation involving a constant movement between the whole of a participant's narrative and its parts (specific events, actions, feelings, and language). Understanding emerges through this iterative process, where the researcher's initial interpretations are continually refined and deepened as they return to the data. Van Manen also provides four **lifeworld existentials** as guides for phenomenological reflection: *lived space* (spatiality), *lived body* (corporeality), *lived time* (temporality), and *lived human relation* (relationality). These existentials offer a framework for exploring the multidimensional nature of human experience, allowing the researcher to attend to the spatial, bodily, temporal, and relational dimensions of crisis leadership.

The research paradigm of this study can be visualized as follows (adapted from van Manen, 1990, 2014, 2023), as shown in Figure 1: The researcher's pre-understandings (e.g., Filipino culture, leadership experience) interact with data gathered through in-depth interviews with administrators who have experienced crises. Through thematic reflection within the hermeneutic

circle or moving iteratively between parts and whole, and attending to the four lifeworld existentials, new understandings emerge about how cultural values shape crisis leadership. These insights, in turn, refine the researcher's initial understanding, guiding further data collection and analysis in an ongoing process of deepening comprehension. The outcome is a rich, textured description and interpretation of the phenomenon that resonates with readers and deepens their understanding of Filipino crisis leadership in the Chinese educational context. Thus, this study aimed to address the research gap by examining the lived experiences of Filipino school administrators in China as they navigate crises.

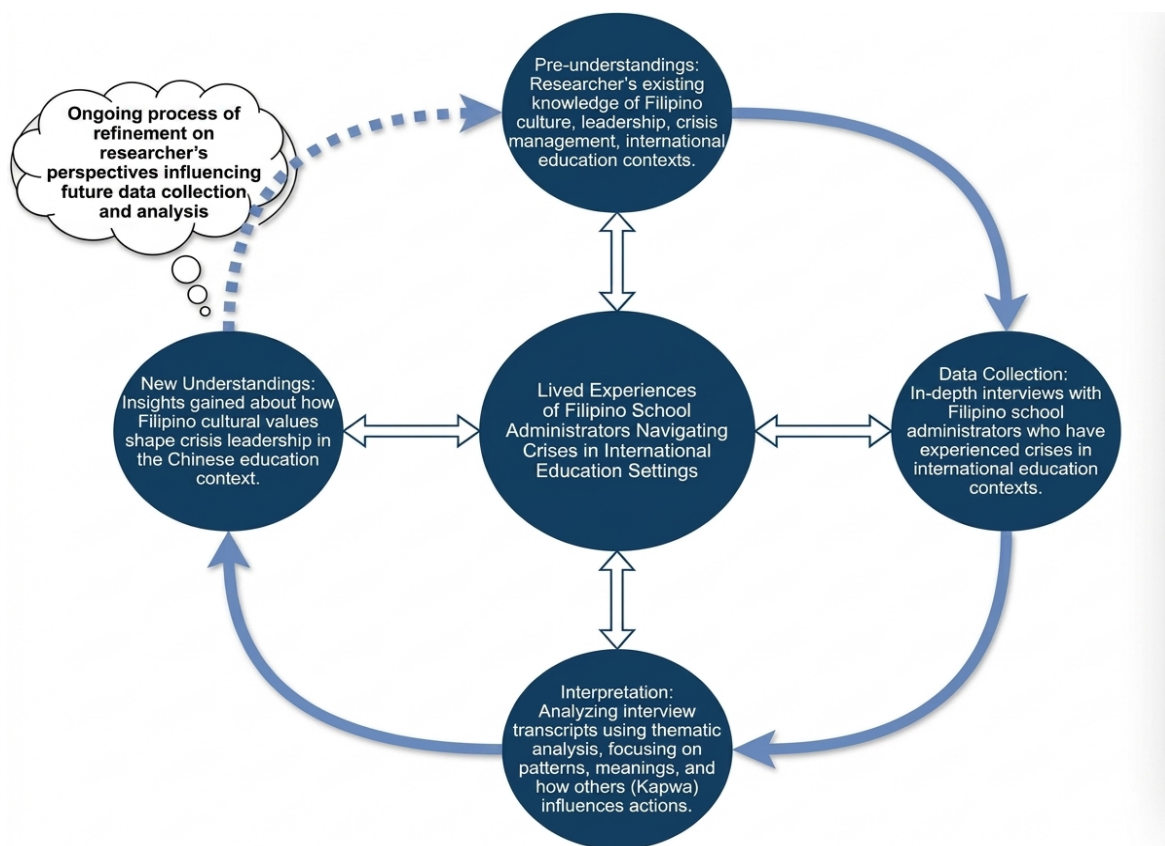


FIGURE 1. RESEARCH PARADIGM

(adapted from van Manen, 1990, 2014, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The global educational landscape has undergone a profound transformation, driven by economic globalization, increased cross-border mobility, and the growing demand for internationally minded graduates. This has led to a proliferation of international schools worldwide and a corresponding demand for qualified teachers and administrators from diverse backgrounds, including a growing number of Filipino educators (AISDL, 2020). Filipino teachers are highly regarded for their dedication, flexibility, and student-centered approach, and their influx into international schools has brought diverse cultural insights and professional experiences. However, this increasing diversity also presents unique challenges for international school administrators, who must navigate complex cultural interfaces, manage diverse staff and student bodies, and respond to stakeholder expectations from different cultural backgrounds (Adams et al., 2023). Understanding the specific experiences and perspectives of Filipino school leaders, particularly in crisis leadership, is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective leadership practices in international education.

Crises in educational settings are not monolithic; they range from natural disasters and health emergencies to financial instability, political unrest, and incidents of violence. While a crisis is generally understood as an unexpected event that disrupts normal operations, international schools face unique vulnerabilities that require a more nuanced definition. Operating within diverse cultural contexts, often far from their home countries, these institutions contend with a complex interplay of factors that can amplify the impact of crises (Pastor et al., 2024). The diverse cultural backgrounds of student populations, geopolitical influences, and the unique pressures of maintaining accreditation and managing reputational risks all contribute to crisis complexity. International schools frequently serve highly mobile, culturally diverse families, leading to differing perceptions of risk, communication styles, and expectations of school leadership during crises (DeMartino & Weiser, 2021). Furthermore, international schools are subject to complex geopolitical influences and regulations from both host and home countries, requiring leaders to balance competing interests with cultural sensitivity and diplomatic skill (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these vulnerabilities acutely, forcing schools to navigate

lockdowns, travel restrictions, and the rapid transition to remote learning while maintaining community trust and educational continuity.

Existing crisis management models, while useful, often remain Western-centric, emphasizing decisive action, hierarchical decision-making, and direct communication styles that may not align with collectivist cultures that value consensus-building and indirect communication (Spais & Paul, 2021). The Four Phases of Crisis Management (mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, recovery) and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework have been widely applied in educational settings (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023; Pastor et al., 2024). These models provide valuable structural guidance but tend to treat crisis leadership as a set of technical procedures rather than a culturally embedded, relational process. Cultural factors profoundly shape leadership approaches during crises: in collectivist societies, leaders may prioritize harmony and group cohesion, while individualistic cultures favor autonomy and assertiveness (Pastor et al., 2024). Research on crisis leadership in Chinese educational settings highlights the importance of cultural adaptation, emphasizing strong relational leadership, building trust, open communication, and collaborative decision-making (Wei et al., 2021). Confucian cultural values, such as ethical conduct, harmonious relationships, and collective well-being, also significantly influence Chinese school principals' leadership approaches (Huang & Qin, 2019; Zhang & Liu, 2022). This suggests that any crisis leadership framework intended for use in China must be responsive to these cultural orientations.

In the Philippines, school administrators have shown great resilience in facing educational challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which illustrated the need for innovative solutions that accommodate local and global contexts (Lansangan et al., 2021). Filipino school administrators successfully transitioned to online learning platforms, utilizing digital tools to enhance engagement, and collaborated with educators, parents, and communities to overcome isolation and build collective resilience (Moralista et al., 2022). Their strategies have garnered global attention, demonstrating the potential for cross-cultural exchange and contributing to a broader dialogue on pedagogical innovation. However, research on Filipino school leadership has largely focused on domestic contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Filipino administrators lead in international settings, particularly in culturally distinct environments like China.

Filipino leadership is deeply embedded in a collectivist cultural framework, drawing on values such as *bayanihan* (communal cooperation), *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (shared identity), *tatag* (resilience), *mala-sakit* (compassionate care), *diskarte* (strategic resourcefulness), and *pananagutan* (accountability). These values shape leadership behaviors, particularly during crises, fostering organizational resilience through collective action and mutual support (Rosario & Ancho, 2020; Pastor et al., 2024). *Bayanihan*, originally referring to a community carrying a house to a new location, has come to symbolize the Filipino spirit of helping one another without expecting anything in return. In organizational contexts, *bayanihan* manifests as teamwork, peer support, and shared problem-solving. *Pakikipagkapwa-tao* emphasizes treating others as fellow human beings, which underpins relational leadership and inclusive decision-making. *Diskarte* refers to the ability to make a way out of no way or improvisation and strategic resourcefulness in the face of scarcity or constraint (Daily Guardian, 2026). Filipino leadership is characterized by adaptability and fluidity, with leaders drawing on a repertoire of styles to suit specific situations and cultural contexts (AISDL, 2020). These values are not merely abstract ideals; they are actively deployed as resources in daily leadership practice, especially during crises.

Resilience in educational leadership extends beyond bouncing back; it is a dynamic process through which leaders adapt, learn, and even thrive amid challenges (Ledesma, 2021). Theoretical models such as the risk and protective factors model and the sense-making model offer frameworks for understanding resilience, emphasizing the interplay between vulnerabilities, strengths, and the ability to find meaning in chaos (Fullerton et al., 2021). The Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll) posits that individuals and organizations strive to acquire, preserve, and protect valued resources, and that stress occurs when these resources are threatened or lost. During crises, leaders who can mobilize social, psychological, and material resources are more likely to maintain effectiveness. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman) describes stress as a transaction between the individual and the environment, involving primary appraisal (what is at stake?) and secondary appraisal (what can I do?). Coping strategies are classified as problem-focused (addressing the source of stress) or emotion-focused (managing emotional distress). Both models have been applied to educational leadership, showing that

resilient leaders engage in proactive problem-solving while also attending to their own and others' emotional needs.

School administrators employ diverse coping mechanisms—problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused—to manage stress and sustain well-being (Fullerton et al., 2021). Social support networks and professional development opportunities are critical in fostering resilience. Filipino culture, with its strong family ties, collectivist orientation, and deep sense of faith, shapes how individuals cope with stress; the value of *bayanihan* extends to the workplace, fostering collaboration and mutual support (Ramirez, 2022). Faith (*pananalig*) plays a particularly significant role for many Filipino leaders, providing a source of hope, humility, and transformative communication. Studies have shown that spiritual well-being and religious coping are associated with lower burnout and higher leadership effectiveness among Filipino educators (Tan, 2022). However, the integration of faith into crisis leadership frameworks remains underexplored in mainstream literature.

Cross-cultural leadership in international schools requires not only technical competence but also intercultural sensitivity and the ability to mediate between different value systems. Research on Filipino managers working in China has identified differences in working values, particularly regarding hierarchy, communication, and relationship-building (Zheng et al., 2020). Filipino leaders tend to be more relational and indirect in communication, while Chinese organizational culture often emphasizes formal hierarchy and face-saving (*mianzi*). Successful Filipino administrators in China learn to navigate these differences by exercising strategic patience, building trust over time, and acting as cultural bridges between Western teaching staff and Chinese administration (Del Rosario & Ancho, 2025). This bicultural fluency, or the ability to move fluidly between Filipino, Chinese, and Western cultural frameworks, emerges as a critical competency in this study.

Despite the richness of existing literature, a significant gap remains: research specifically examining the lived experiences of Filipino school administrators navigating crises in international schools in China is very limited. While Filipino leadership has been studied in domestic contexts and crisis leadership has been explored in diverse cultural settings, the intersection of Filipino cultural values, Chinese structural realities, and international school crisis leadership has been

overlooked. This study addresses that gap by centering the voices of Filipino administrators and employing hermeneutic phenomenology to uncover the meanings they ascribe to their experiences. By doing so, it contributes a culturally responsive, dispositional framework—the PCCL Model—that is grounded in lived experience and designed for practical application in professional development and crisis preparedness.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to address the gap by examining the lived experiences of Filipino school administrators in China as they navigate crises within the Chinese educational context. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do the co-participants describe their most significant experiences regarding navigating crisis leadership in the Chinese educational context?
2. What meanings may be formulated based on the most significant experiences of the co-participants?
3. What themes emerged from the formulated meanings?
4. Based on the results of the study, what culturally responsive model of crisis leadership may be developed for international education contexts in China?

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed hermeneutic phenomenology as its methodological foundation, following the tradition established by van Manen (1990, 2014, 2023). Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. It is particularly suited for this inquiry as it aims to uncover how Filipino school administrators in mainland China navigate crises within international education

settings, revealing the cultural nuances, personal values, and professional challenges that shape their experiences (Suddick et al., 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019). Van Manen's approach emphasizes the interpretive dimensions of human experience, acknowledging that the researcher's pre-understandings are resources to be critically engaged rather than obstacles to be eliminated.

Participants. Seven Filipino school administrators participated in this study, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) currently holding an administrative or management position (e.g., principal, director of studies, head of foreign teachers, or academic coordinator) in an international school in mainland China; (b) at least two years of experience as a school administrator in China; and (c) directly managed at least one major crisis (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment drop, policy change, or cross-cultural conflict). To guarantee diverse life experiences, participants were recruited from different cities (Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chongqing, and Hefei) and from different types of international institutions (Montessori-based kindergartens, British-affiliated international schools, project-based learning academies).

Data Generation. Data were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted either face-to-face (when participants were in the same city) or via secure virtual meeting platforms (WeChat, DingTalk) for those in other locations. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, were audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The guiding themes for the interviews were derived from the research questions, but the researcher remained open to unanticipated lived experience material, adopting van Manen's approach. Following preliminary interpretation, the researcher returned to participants to invite further reflection, asking: "Having read my initial interpretation, does this open up new memories or experiences you wish to share?" and "What might I have missed that feels essential to your experience?" All seven participants responded; their additional reflections were incorporated into the final analysis.

Ethical Considerations. The researcher obtained approval from the ethics review committee of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA Graduate School. Each participant received an informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, the nature of their participation, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Participants were assured they could withdraw at any time. All collected data were kept confidential using pseudonyms and stored securely. Member checking

was conducted, sharing a summary of preliminary findings with participants before finalizing the report; all seven participants affirmed that their experiences were well represented.

Data Analysis. In accordance with van Manen’s hermeneutic phenomenological approach, data analysis involved reflective and interpretive engagement with participants’ lived experiences, following the hermeneutic circle—moving back and forth between the whole of each participant’s narrative and its parts (specific events, actions, feelings, and language). The analysis followed van Manen’s six interrelated research activities: turning to the phenomenon of interest, investigating experience as lived, reflecting on essential themes, describing the phenomenon through writing, maintaining a strong pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, and balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. The four lifeworld existentials (lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation) served as developmental guides for thematic reflection. A reflexive journal was maintained throughout the process to monitor changes in significance, personal responses, and realizations, enhancing the credibility of the analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Problem No. 1: Significant Experiences of Participants

The seven Filipino school administrators described crisis experiences as relationally situated, culturally mediated, and emotionally demanding. Participant 1 (41-year-old female, Shenzhen) described the constant pressure to prove herself as a non-native English speaker while managing colleagues from different nationalities. She shared, “*Siguro because I am not a native speaker and yung ugali or yung culture ng pinoy na we are very hard working, parang palaging may kailangang patunayan*” (Maybe because I am not a native speaker, and the Filipino habit or culture that we are very hard working, it always seems like there is a need to prove it). She also faced high parental expectations, which she addressed by instructing foreign teachers to record students speaking English as evidence of learning, and she invoked Filipino values: “*We Filipinos have our palabra de honor, the word of honor, I invoke those values.*”

Participant 2 (53-year-old female, Shenzhen) described dealing with demanding Chinese parents who did not respect her plans as an administrator, stating, *“Mayroon mga parents na hindi nila nirerespeto kung anong plan ka meron bilang administrator”* (Some parents do not respect the plan you have as an administrator). She drew on Filipino humility and patience, calling herself a “brave heart administrator.” Participant 3 (41-year-old male, Shanghai) focused on managing team morale during COVID-19, noting, *“The teaching part is okay, but managing the teachers’ and team’s morale is one of the goals we focused on during the COVID crisis. It was really emotional for everyone.”* He also observed that “nobody teaches you how to manage the team, so you have to figure it out for yourself.”

Participant 4 (42-year-old male, Chongqing) described a crisis related to student fatigue and declining enrollment, resolving it through collaboration and flexibility. As a non-native English speaker facing biases, he proudly shared that foreign teachers chose him as their head because he does his job great, stating, *“As a Filipino teacher, I need to show them that we are really capable of doing things and that we are really educated educators, not only in the Philippines, but we are international.”* Participant 5 (39-year-old female, Shenzhen) faced enrollment decline due to increasing competition and received no formal crisis training, so she pursued online trainings independently, emphasizing, *“Because I am not provided with the training, I find online trainings, workshops, conferences, and webinars on how to deal with school administrations and crisis management.”* She also declared, *“We as Filipinos also, we just do not work for money, we work because we care. We love our work, we do it with dignity, and we do it with pride.”*

Participant 6 (43-year-old male, Hefei) served as a bridge between foreign teachers and Chinese administration during COVID-19 lockdowns, explaining, *“In China, administrative decisions are often made at the top, and then communicated downward... There is less room to apply being independent.”* Participant 7 (43-year-old male, Hefei) described overlapping pressures of COVID-19, government policies restricting English instruction, and high parental expectations, deeply emphasizing Filipino family values: *“We feel, and we treat everyone as part of the family. So that is how we treat teachers, that is how we treat our staff, not only the teachers, but also the helpers or assistants, and even security guards.”* He also relied on faith: *“Before you reconcile everything, you have to pray first. Nothing is impossible. I am just nothing, but our faith also helps.”*

Problem No. 2: Formulated Meanings

From the significant statements provided by the seven participants, the researcher identified fourteen formulated meanings: (1) leadership as responsibility (burden of accountability); (2) leadership as earned authority through humility and patience; (3) Filipino values as active, summonable resources; (4) Filipino values as adaptive, operationalized resources; (5) crisis composure as inherited family legacy; (6) relational resilience as inherited family legacy; (7) constraint as catalyst for self-directed innovation; (8) strategic patience within structural constraints; (9) work as moral endeavor (care-driven); (10) work as identity expression (pride in being Filipino); (11) faith as crisis infrastructure (prayer, ego reduction); (12) faith as transformative power; (13) collaborative decision-making and stakeholder inclusion; and (14) emotional self-regulation through pausing and reflection.

Problem No. 3: Emergent Themes

These fourteen formulated meanings were synthesized into seven emergent themes. **Emergent Theme 1: Cultural Identity and Leadership Integration** combines leadership as responsibility with Filipino values as active resources, showing that Filipino administrators reframe leadership as accountability rooted in *pananagutan* and consciously summon values such as *palabra de honor* and *kaya natin yan* during crises. **Emergent Theme 2: Structural and Systemic Challenges in Crisis Leadership** combines constraint as catalyst with strategic patience, revealing that the absence of formal training sparks *diskarte*, while top-down governance requires waiting for official guidelines, while quietly advocating for staff needs. **Emergent Theme 3: Relational Leadership and Emotional Labor** combines crisis composure as an inherited legacy with emotional self-regulation, showing that calmness under pressure is an embodied disposition inherited from family and practiced as strategic leadership behavior. **Emergent Theme 4:**

Adaptive Crisis Response and Innovation combines Filipino values as adaptive resources with constraint-driven innovation, demonstrating how administrators operationalize *bayanihan* in practical ways (e.g., training sessions, creative compliance) and turn constraints into opportunities for self-directed learning. **Emergent Theme 5: Navigating Dual Cultural Expectations** combines earned authority with work as identity expression, illustrating that authority is earned through humility and patience while work becomes an expression of Filipino pride—neither assimilation nor subservience, but fluid cultural intelligence. **Emergent Theme 6: Bridge-Building Across Stakeholders** combines relational resilience as inherited legacy with collaborative decision-making, showing that family-learned relational orientation extends to inclusive meetings, collaborative decisions, and treating all staff as family. **Emergent Theme 7: Parental Expectations and Communication** combines work as a moral endeavor with faith as a crisis infrastructure and transformative power, revealing that Filipino administrators respond to unrealistic parental demands with evidence-based, caring communication and, for some, faith-infused communication that reduces ego and transforms difficult conversations.

Problem No. 4: The Pilipino-Chinese Crisis Leadership (PCCL) Model

From the lived experiences of the seven participants, a culturally grounded and practically oriented model of crisis leadership emerged. Named the Pilipino-Chinese Crisis Leadership (PCCL) Model, it comprises seven interrelated competencies derived directly from the seven emergent themes: *Pagkatao* (cultural identity integration), *Sistema* (structural navigation), *Damdamin* (relational emotional labor), *Diskarte* (adaptive innovation), *Tulay* (cultural bridge-building), *Ugnayan* (stakeholder bridge-building), and *Asa* (expectation management). *Pananalig* (faith as crisis infrastructure) emerged as a foundational competency for some participants. The Filipino values embedded in the PCCL Model map directly onto global leadership competencies: *Pananagutan* (accountability), *Malasakit* (emotional intelligence), *Diskarte* (adaptive leadership), *Bayanihan* (teamwork), *Pananalig* (values-based leadership), *Hinahon* (crisis composure), and *Pakikipagkapwa* (inclusive leadership). The model functions as a repeating cycle: a leader may enter at any competency depending on the most urgent crisis demand (e.g., parental pressure → *Asa*; bureaucratic constraints → *Sistema*; staff morale →

Damdamin and *Ugnayan*). The cycle repeats with each crisis, strengthening leadership competence over time.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were drawn. First, Filipino school administrators in China lead through an integrated cultural identity wherein they accept leadership as a sacrificial responsibility and actively deploy cultural values as flexible tools. This transforms authority from positional power into moral obligation, and crisis leadership becomes a fusion of Filipino values (*pananagutan*, *bayanihan*, *malasakit*) and adaptive strategies (*diskarte*, *pananalig*). Second, structural constraints in the Chinese educational system, such as top-down governance, policy restrictions, and lack of formal training, do not paralyze Filipino administrators; rather, they activate *diskarte* (strategic resourcefulness) and *malasakit* (compassionate care). Effectiveness is achieved through constraint, not despite it. Third, for Filipino administrators, crisis leadership is fundamentally relational, emotionally demanding, and spiritually grounded. They prioritize team morale over logistics, practice emotional self-regulation inherited from family, build bridges across stakeholders through inclusive meetings and collaborative decision-making, and for some, faith provides wisdom, reduces ego, sustains hope, and transforms communication. Emotional labor and spiritual resilience are central to holding the school community together when structures fail. Fourth, the PCCL Model provides a culturally responsive framework for crisis leadership within China's international education system, organizing seven interrelated competencies that serve as a guide for Filipino administrators, a tool for professional development, and a platform for further research. Effective crisis leadership in cross-cultural contexts requires neither assimilation nor defiance but a creative fusion of cultural legacy and structural responsiveness.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Filipino school administrators in China should intentionally cultivate awareness of Filipino values (*pananagutan*, *bayanihan*, *malasakit*, *diskarte*, *pananalig*) as active leadership resources. They may use the seven PCCL competencies as a self-assessment tool and a guide for professional development, practice emotional self-regulation through mindfulness, journaling, or peer mentoring, and build peer support networks that operationalize *bayanihan* as a professional resource. They should also advocate for written crisis leadership frameworks and mental preparedness training using their lived experience as evidence.
2. The Department of Education of the Philippines should incorporate cross-cultural crisis leadership skills, including the PCCL Model's competency framework, into both pre-service and in-service training programs. It should develop case studies based on Filipino educators' experiences abroad, highlighting how *diskarte*, *malasakit*, and *pananalig* function in international contexts, and integrate the PCCL Model's four-stage workflow (Foundation, Navigation, Response, Sustainability) into leadership preparation courses. Formal recognition and career pathways for Filipino educators with international administrative experience should also be created.
3. The Chinese Ministry of Education and international schools in China should develop orientation programs for foreign administrators that explain Chinese governance structures, communication styles, and parental expectations while also learning from the relational and adaptive strengths that Filipino leaders bring, as articulated in the PCCL Model. Schools should establish clear, written crisis management frameworks and leadership manuals that allow local flexibility, and may adopt the PCCL Model's seven competencies as a reference for mentoring and evaluation. Channels for foreign administrators to share policy insights that could bridge gaps between government mandates and school-level realities should also be created.
4. Future researchers should test the PCCL Model empirically in other international education contexts (e.g., Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the United States) to assess its transferability and

effectiveness. Longitudinal studies should examine how Filipino administrators' crisis leadership competencies develop across multiple crises, including the perspectives of Chinese colleagues, teachers, parents, and students. Filipino school administrators worldwide should position themselves as co-creators of culturally responsive crisis leadership through publications, workshops, and online platforms. International school associations, training programs, multi-national boards, and government education agencies may adopt the PCCL's four-stage workflow and its emphasis on *pananagutan*, *malasakit*, and *pananalig* for recruitment, evaluation, and the development of culturally responsive national guidelines. In doing so, Filipino administrators can transform from recipients of imported models into active contributors of global knowledge.

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