

Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators

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ABSTRACT: This study sheds light on the daily realities of middle administrators at a faith-based college in the Philippines. These leaders walk a tightrope—supporting faculty, meeting institutional goals, and staying grounded in their values, all while facing pressure from multiple directions. Using survey responses, the research explores how they manage these challenges through practical strategies like time management, open communication, and a mindset rooted in optimism. It turns out that what truly helps them succeed isn't just policy or planning—it's who they are. Qualities like integrity, transparency, and adaptability emerge as the strongest predictors of effective leadership. While workload and procedures play a role, it's the administrators' inner resilience and professional character that make the biggest difference. To help nurture these strengths, the study proposes **AdminCARE**—a targeted HR program offering mentoring, leadership training, and wellness support. The goal is to give these leaders not only tools, but the encouragement to lead with clarity, confidence, and purpose, all in alignment with the mission of their institution.

168 words

KEYWORDS: middle administrators, role demands, professional dispositions, adaptive strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

In many faith-based colleges in the Philippines, middle administrators quietly shoulder some of the most important responsibilities on campus—yet their work often goes unnoticed. They're the ones who hold things together, making sure academic goals stay in sync with the everyday needs of faculty while staying rooted in the institution's spiritual mission. Their role isn't just about managing schedules or performing tasks—it's about leading with heart, conviction, and a strong sense of right and wrong.

Their job is anything but simple. These leaders are expected to meet performance expectations, guide and support their colleagues, and keep daily operations running smoothly—all while working within a values-driven culture and limited resources. Despite their crucial contributions, most leadership discussions still center around presidents and top administrators. As Del Rosario and Santos (2021) point out, middle administrators are often the ones navigating silent tensions that don't always reach the attention of senior leadership—trying to balance academic quality, institutional goals, and spiritual direction, all at once.

This research takes a closer look at the day-to-day experiences of middle leaders at St. Michael's College of Iligan, Inc. It explores how they deal with the pressure, what helps them stay grounded, and what kind of support could truly help them thrive. Ultimately, the goal is to spark conversations about leadership training that actually reflects the challenges these leaders face—and to ensure their work gets the recognition and support it deserves.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In colleges and universities, middle administrators quietly carry a complex load. They stand between faculty and top administrators, trying to meet both expectations while also managing their own well-being. Their days are filled with unclear policies, shifting demands, and emotional pressures—yet they continue to lead with patience, integrity, and quiet strength.

This study looks beyond job titles to understand what this role truly feels like. It explores the emotional strain, the difficult choices, and the inner balancing act that comes with being in the middle. It asks deeper questions: What helps them keep going? What gives them strength when burnout is close?

Rather than just pointing out the pressures, this research highlights the values and leadership styles that help them stay grounded. Their stories reveal not just challenges, but also the quiet resilience that keeps institutions running. The goal is to help schools recognize this vital group—not just with appreciation, but with real, lasting support that acknowledges the weight they carry and the heart they bring to their work.

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

3. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

Middle administrators often find themselves pulled in many directions—trying to meet institutional goals, support their faculty, and stay true to their personal values. It's a role full of tension, and to better understand how they manage it, three theories help paint the picture.

Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) explains the stress that comes from handling conflicting demands. One moment they're expected to follow top-down directives; the next, they're advocating for their team—two forces that don't always align.

Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards et al., 1998) looks at what happens when an administrator's beliefs or abilities don't quite match what the job requires. That mismatch can lead to burnout. But when there's a good fit, it brings energy, confidence, and a stronger sense of purpose.

Resilience Theory (Richardson, 2002) focuses on how people bounce back from stress. Optimism, mentorship, and having a support system all help administrators recover and grow through challenges.

Recent studies back this up. Maddock (2023) found that clear expectations and shared decision-making reduce stress. Similarly, Olmo-Extremera et al. (2022) noted that administrators grounded in purpose and servant leadership tend to stay committed, even when things get tough.

Altogether, these perspectives show that resilience, fit, and clarity aren't just buzzwords—they're what help real leaders thrive in the middle.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study took a close, data-informed look at how middle administrators in a faith-based college experience their roles, handle leadership pressure, and find ways to stay resilient. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach, the researchers explored patterns and connections in the administrators' day-to-day work—without changing anything about their natural setting. The goal was simple: to better understand how these leaders manage the unique mix of institutional duties and spiritual responsibilities.

Twenty administrators were purposefully selected. These were not just leaders by title—they were hands-on decision-makers with a strong grasp of what it means to lead in a values-based academic setting.

Data were gathered through a structured survey that asked about four core areas: clarity of their responsibilities, how they resolve conflicts, the pressures they face, and the strategies they use to stay steady under stress. Responses were measured on a five-point scale, allowing participants to reflect honestly on their experiences.

To make sense of the data, the study used descriptive statistics to spot trends and Kendall's Tau-b to explore how different experiences were connected—especially useful given the small sample size.

Ethical care was a top priority. Participants were fully briefed, confidentiality was maintained, and every response was treated with respect. The emotional weight of the topic—leadership stress in a faith-based setting—was never taken lightly.

In the end, this was not just a numbers project. It was a deeper effort to understand the human side of academic leadership—one shaped by responsibility, belief, and the quiet strength it takes to lead from the middle.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Problem 1. How do middle administrators balance faculty expectations with institutional needs?

Table 1. Level of balancing faculty expectations and institutional needs

Dimension	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I effectively communicate faculty concerns to senior management.	4.35	0.587	Very High
2. I balance the expectations of both faculty and administration in decision-making.	4.30	0.571	Very High
3. I ensure that policies implemented align with the needs of both teachers and students.	4.50	0.513	Very High
4. I feel that my role as a middle administrator helps bridge gaps between faculty and leadership.	4.40	0.598	Very High
5. I am confident in my ability to mediate conflicts between faculty and higher administration.	4.30	0.657	Very High
6. I receive clear guidance from upper management when implementing policies.	4.30	0.571	Very High
7. My role allows me to advocate for faculty needs effectively.	4.35	0.587	Very High
8. I believe that faculty members trust me to represent their concerns fairly.	4.30	0.571	Very High

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

9. I am involved in discussions that shape institutional policies and procedures.	4.50	0.513	Very High
10. I find it challenging to maintain alignment between institutional goals and faculty expectations.	4.20	0.523	High
Overall Mean	4.35	0.467	Very High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 – Very High; 3.41 – 4.20 – High; 2.61 – 3.40 – Moderate; 1.81 – 2.60 – Low; 1.00 – 1.80 – Very Low

The data in Table 1 highlight how middle administrators view their role in balancing faculty interests with institutional demands. With a very high overall mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.467), respondents showed strong confidence in navigating this responsibility. They aren't just executing tasks—they're actively bridging academic and administrative spheres, embodying what Fairman and Mackenzie (2021) call "boundary spanners" who foster dialogue and coherence across institutional levels.

Administrators felt particularly empowered in aligning policies with both faculty and student needs and participating in decision-making (M = 4.50), reflecting a sense of agency and inclusion in governance. High ratings for bridging gaps (M = 4.40) and voicing faculty concerns (M = 4.35) further emphasize their role as communicators and advocates. This resonates with Spillane and Coldren (2020), who stress the importance of trust and shared leadership in middle-level roles.

Still, the slightly lower score of 4.20 for aligning institutional goals with faculty expectations suggests some strain—echoing Lumby's (2022) findings on the tensions of dual accountability. These leaders must constantly mediate between top-down directives and bottom-up realities.

Overall, the findings portray middle administrators as competent, relational, and vital to institutional balance. Yet, their effectiveness depends on clear communication, collaborative policy processes, and institutional support. As Harris and Jones (2021) argue, empowered middle leaders drive institutional success—especially when their voices are heard and their roles are clearly supported.

Problem 2: What is the level of emotional and mental demands associated with their roles?

Table 2: Level of Emotional and mental demands associated with their role

Dimension	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
1. My role as a middle administrator is emotionally demanding.	3.80	1.152	High
2. I often feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities assigned to me.	3.75	1.118	High
3. I experience high levels of stress due to work expectations.	3.45	1.099	High
4. Conflict resolution is a challenging part of my responsibilities.	3.50	0.889	High
5. I find it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.	3.15	1.137	Moderate
6. I feel mentally exhausted due to the demands of my role.	2.95	1.050	Moderate
7. The expectations from both faculty and administration are manageable.	3.85	0.745	High
8. I receive adequate emotional support from colleagues and senior leaders.	3.95	0.826	High
9. I believe my workload is reasonable given my role and responsibilities.	4.05	0.686	High
10. I feel that my contributions as a middle administrator are valued.	4.20	0.894	High
Overall Mean	3.67	0.659	High

Table 2 captures the emotional load borne by middle administrators. The overall mean of 3.67 (SD = 0.659) signals substantial—but not crippling—strain. Administrators reported feeling overwhelmed (M = 3.75), stressed by high expectations (M = 3.45), and burdened by conflict mediation (M = 3.50)—a pattern consistent with research showing that middle leaders shoulder disproportionate emotional labor (Nguyen & Slavitt, 2021).

Yet these leaders also display resilience. Scores for work-life balance (M = 3.15) and mental exhaustion (M = 2.95) fall in the moderate range, indicating an ability to stay afloat, as Leal and Illeris (2020) suggest is common when leaders draw on personal coping strategies. Crucially, respondents felt supported by colleagues and supervisors (M = 3.95) and deemed expectations manageable (M = 3.85); such relational support is known to buffer stress and sustain engagement (Bouchamma et al., 2022). They also judged their workload fair (M = 4.05) and believed their contributions were valued (M = 4.20)—factors Harris and Jones (2021) link to leadership endurance.

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

In short, middle administrators operate under significant emotional pressure, but peer support, clear acknowledgment, and a sense of purpose help them transform strain into steady, empathetic leadership.

Problem 3: What is the level of institutional and leadership-related challenges experienced by middle administrators?

Table 3: level of institutional and leadership-related challenges

Dimension	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I encounter difficulties due to unclear institutional policies.	2.90	0.912	Moderate
2. Sudden administrative changes negatively impact my work.	3.10	0.912	Moderate
3. Bureaucratic limitations slow down decision-making in my role.	3.15	1.089	Moderate
4. Faculty members are resistant to new policies or changes.	3.10	1.021	Moderate
5. The workload required of me often feels unmanageable.	2.60	0.754	Low
6. I believe my authority is limited when making impactful changes.	3.10	0.968	Moderate
7. My responsibilities as a middle administrator are clearly defined.	4.00	0.795	High
8. Budget constraints prevent me from implementing necessary programs.	2.95	0.887	Moderate
9. I find it difficult to align faculty expectations with institutional policies.	2.70	0.865	Moderate
10. Institutional challenges often prevent me from being effective in my role.	2.50	1.000	Low
Overall Mean	3.01	0.561	Moderate

Table 3 sheds light on the everyday tensions middle administrators manage. With an overall mean of 3.01 (SD = 0.561), challenges such as bureaucratic delays (M = 3.15), sudden administrative shifts (M = 3.10), faculty resistance (M = 3.10), and perceived limited authority (M = 3.10) were rated as moderate. These results point to institutional friction that complicates leadership without fully impeding it—echoing Bush and Glover’s (2021) finding that middle leaders often work within constraints that test their patience and adaptability.

Encouragingly, respondents strongly affirmed role clarity (M = 4.00), a crucial factor for navigating complexity with confidence. As Spillane et al. (2022) emphasize, clearly defined roles allow leaders to act decisively and align their efforts with institutional priorities.

The lowest ratings—unmanageable workload (M = 2.60) and institutional challenges impairing effectiveness (M = 2.50)—suggest that while the terrain is uneven, it is not disabling. This speaks to a quiet resilience: middle leaders stay grounded, not because the path is easy, but because their commitment and coping skills are strong (Day & Gu, 2020).

In sum, these administrators are not overwhelmed but are balancing constraints with clarity and resolve. To support them, institutions must streamline policy structures and reinforce leadership training that strengthens their role as key drivers of change.

Problem 4. What professional dispositions sustain middle administrators in fulfilling their roles?

Table 4: Professional dispositions that sustain middle administrators in fulfilling their roles

Dimension	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I uphold integrity in my decision-making as a middle administrator.	4.50	0.513	Very High
2. I take responsibility for my actions and decisions in my leadership role.	4.55	0.605	Very High
3. Empathy helps me connect with faculty and understand their concerns.	4.50	0.513	Very High
4. I maintain professionalism in all aspects of my work.	4.65	0.587	Very High
5. Adaptability allows me to adjust to new policies and expectations.	4.55	0.51	Very High
6. I prioritize transparency in my dealings with faculty and administration.	4.70	0.47	Very High
7. A strong sense of teamwork helps me foster collaboration within my institution.	4.65	0.489	Very High

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

8. I actively seek opportunities for leadership growth and improvement.	4.50	0.513	Very High
9. I believe optimism plays a key role in overcoming workplace setbacks.	4.45	0.605	Very High
10. Self-discipline helps me stay focused on my responsibilities.	4.60	0.503	Very High
Overall Mean	4.57	0.436	Very High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 – Very High; 3.41 – 4.20 – High; 2.61 – 3.40 – Moderate; 1.81 – 2.60 – Low; 1.00 – 1.80 – Very Low

Table 4 highlights the strong professional values that guide middle administrators in faith-based higher education. With a very high overall mean of 4.57, these leaders demonstrate a deep commitment to transparency, collaboration, responsibility, and emotional intelligence.

Transparency (M = 4.70) tops the list, reflecting their dedication to honesty and ethical communication—essential traits in institutions grounded in trust and shared mission (Dempster & Berry, 2021). Close behind are teamwork and professionalism (both M = 4.65), suggesting these leaders value relationships and uphold institutional integrity through collaboration (Naidoo & Petersen, 2020).

High scores in self-discipline, adaptability, and responsibility reveal that middle administrators are not just managing—they're actively rising to meet the everyday pressures of their work. These traits help them stay focused, flexible, and accountable even when institutional demands keep shifting (Wang & Huang, 2022). At the same time, the consistently strong ratings for empathy (M = 4.50) and optimism (M = 4.45) highlight their emotional intelligence. These qualities aren't just nice to have—they're vital. They help leaders navigate tough conversations, offer meaningful support to their peers, and create a sense of trust and connection within their teams (García-Garnica et al., 2021).

When seen together, these insights reveal something more than just leadership ability. They show middle administrators as real people—leading with heart, clarity, and strength. They carry out their duties with care, facing challenges with a mix of compassion and steady resolve.

Problem 5. What adaptive approaches do middle administrators utilize in responding to role-related challenges?

Table 5: Adaptive Approaches of Administrators in responding to role-related challenges

Dimension	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I use time management strategies to balance my administrative tasks.	4.30	0.657	Very High
2. I seek mentorship from experienced administrators when facing challenges.	4.30	0.801	Very High
3. I actively engage in professional development opportunities.	4.30	0.657	Very High
4. I maintain a support network of colleagues to discuss work-related issues.	4.30	0.657	Very High
5. I delegate responsibilities effectively to reduce workload pressure.	4.15	0.671	High
6. I stay updated with leadership training to enhance my skills.	4.00	0.858	High
7. I adopt a solution-oriented mindset when dealing with institutional challenges.	4.20	0.616	High
8. I focus on long-term goals rather than short-term obstacles.	4.30	0.571	Very High
9. I practice stress management techniques to maintain emotional resilience.	4.05	0.686	High
10. I believe that my leadership approach helps me handle work challenges effectively.	4.25	0.716	Very High
Overall Mean	4.21	0.571	Very High

Table 5 shows that middle administrators are actively using a variety of practical strategies to handle the challenges of their roles. With an overall mean score of 4.21 (SD = 0.571), rated as "Very High, it's clear they are not just reacting—they're thoughtfully adapting. Whether it's through time management, seeking mentorship, or leaning on professional development, these leaders are finding ways to stay focused and effective amid the daily demands of leadership. This reflects not just their competence, but their willingness to grow and respond with resilience." Respondents' strongly endorsed using time management, mentorship, professional development, collegial support, and future-focused planning—all rated at 4.30—showing that they actively invest in both personal and collective strategies to stay effective.

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

These approaches reflect what Nguyen et al. (2021) also observed: that having strong support systems and access to mentorship can make a real difference in helping academic leaders stay resilient, especially when the pressure is high. In the same way, Collie and Martin (2020) noted that ongoing learning—whether through formal training or self-initiated growth—helps school leaders adapt and lead through uncertainty, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The data backs this up. With fairly high scores in areas like delegation ($M = 4.15$), leadership development ($M = 4.00$), and stress management ($M = 4.05$), it's clear these administrators are not just managing tasks—they're also managing themselves. Zhao and Wu (2022) describe this kind of balance as part of emotionally intelligent leadership, where practical skills go hand in hand with self-awareness and emotional control.

Together, these findings reinforce the idea that adaptability is not incidental—it's essential. These administrators aren't just coping; they're intentionally cultivating habits and systems that keep them grounded, effective, and future-ready. **Problem 6. Are there significant relationships among balancing faculty expectations and institutional needs, emotional demands, institutional and leadership-related challenges, professional dispositions, and adaptive approaches?**

Table 6: Significant relationships among balancing faculty expectations and institutional needs, emotional demands, institutional and leadership-related challenges, professional dispositions, and adaptive approaches.

Components		Balancing Faculty & Institutional needs	Emotional Demands	Institutional & Leadership challenges	Professional Disposition
Balancing Faculty & Institutional needs	Kendall's Tau B	—			
	p-value	—			
Emotional Demands	Kendall's Tau B	0.309	—		
	p-value	0.066	—		
Institutional & Leadership challenges	Kendall's Tau B	-0.094	0.201	—	
	p-value	0.577	0.227	—	
Professional Disposition	Kendall's Tau B	0.377	0.110	-0.099	—
	p-value	0.027	0.512	0.555	—
Adaptive Approaches	Kendall's Tau B	0.480	0.215	-0.006	0.669
	p-value	0.006	0.208	0.974	< .001

Table 6 reveals how internal traits and strategies shape middle administrators' ability to balance faculty and institutional demands. A significant link was found between professional disposition and balancing capacity ($\tau = 0.377$, $p = 0.027$), suggesting that those with strong values—such as integrity, empathy, and purpose—are better at navigating complex institutional dynamics (Du Plessis & Maringe, 2020).

More notably, adaptive strategies like time management and collaboration showed an even stronger correlation with balancing needs ($\tau = 0.480$, $p = 0.006$). This affirms that practical, day-to-day tools matter—especially when leaders are under pressure (Nguyen & Slavitt, 2021). The most powerful connection was between professional disposition and adaptive approaches ($\tau = 0.669$, $p < 0.001$), showing that ethical and emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to act constructively and stay resilient (Harris & Jones, 2020).

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

Interestingly, emotional demands and institutional challenges showed weak or no significant ties to other variables. While stress is real, what truly drives effectiveness appears to be the internal capacity to lead with clarity and purpose (Leal & Illeris, 2020; Zhao & Wu, 2022).

Ultimately, the findings highlight that it's not just external conditions that shape leadership outcomes—it's who the leaders are and how they respond. Building inner strength and adaptive skills may matter more than structural fixes alone.

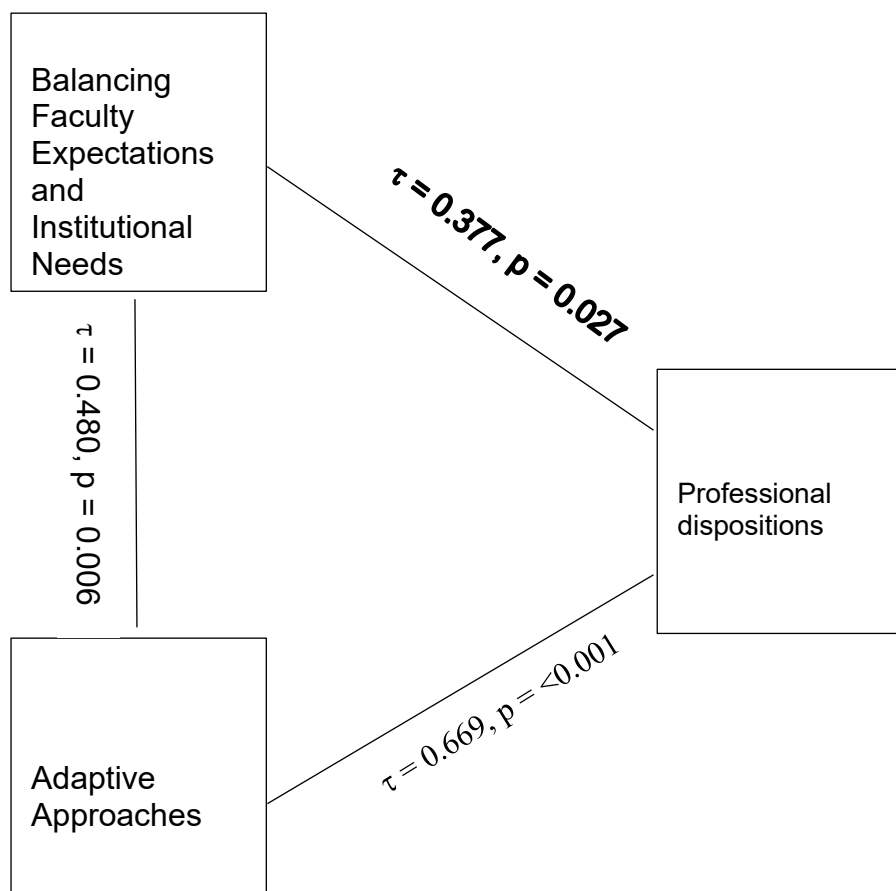


Figure 1. Illustrative Model

Problem 7. What HR Development Program could be crafted based from the results of the study?

AdminCARE: Capacity, Adaptability, Resilience, and Empowerment for Middle-Level Leaders HR Development Program Rationale

Middle administrators are the steady hands that keep the balance between faculty needs and institutional goals. They bring dedication, professionalism, and flexibility to their roles, yet many still wrestle with emotional exhaustion, inconsistent guidance, and bureaucratic obstacles. Even with some support in place, what they truly need is more consistent, structured help to keep doing their work well and sustainably.

Objectives

AdminCARE was created to meet that need. It aims to equip middle administrators with practical tools, strong mentorship, and clear, consistent feedback. It also puts well-being at the forefront—offering stress management sessions and making mental health support easy to access. The aim isn't just to help middle leaders do their jobs, but to help them feel energized and valued. It's about building a workplace culture where they know they're supported, understood, and equipped to grow for the long haul.

"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

Objectives	Activities	Person/s Involved	Time Frame	Expected Output
Enhance professional growth through continuous training	Conduct workshops on leadership, decision-making, and policy implementation	HR Office, Training Providers, External Experts	Every semester	Increased competence in leadership and governance
Foster mentoring and peer support	Establish mentor-mentee programs among senior and junior administrators	Academic Affairs, Senior Admins	Year long	Improved peer learning and support system
Strengthen mental wellness and emotional resilience	Offer stress management sessions, counseling, and wellness days	Guidance Office, Health Services	Monthly	Reduced emotional burnout and improved work-life balance
Improve feedback and recognition systems	Implement performance reviews, recognition programs, and 360-degree feedback	HR Office, Department Heads	Every semester	Higher motivation, performance clarity, and morale
Streamline policy and communication processes	Conduct dialogue forums and policy clarity sessions between middle and subordinates	Institutional Planning, Senior Management	Every semester	Increased role clarity, faster decision-making, and reduced conflict

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study *Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators* takes an honest look at how mid-level leaders in faith-based colleges handle the daily balancing act between faculty needs and institutional expectations. What makes their leadership stand out isn't just what they do—it's how they do it. They lead with sincerity, transparency, and heart, grounding their work in values they truly believe in.

But even the most dedicated leaders feel the strain. Many juggle tight schedules, heavy responsibilities, and the ongoing struggle to maintain a personal life. Thankfully, they aren't doing it all on their own. Strong relationships with colleagues and support from the institution provide much-needed stability.

Even when systems are unclear or slow, having a well-defined role gives them direction. Tools like time management, peer mentoring, and continuous growth aren't just strategies—they're essentials. What really drives their success isn't the structure around them, but the strength within them.

This is why the study proposes **AdminCARE**—a support program that focuses on people first. It's designed to nurture resilience, sharpen leadership skills, and build a stronger support network. If institutions hope to cultivate leaders who are capable, compassionate, and consistent, investing in their middle administrators isn't just helpful—it's vital.

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"Balancing Leadership: The Interplay of Demands and Resilient Strategies Among Middle Administrators"

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