

Challenges and Mental Fortitude amid Self-Doubt in Implementing Sustainable Community Extension in the Face of the New Normal

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted the implementation of community extension programs, challenging the sustainability of university–community engagement and placing unprecedented demands on extension leaders. This study examined the challenges, experiences of self-doubt, and mental fortitude of university community extension heads in sustaining community extension initiatives during the new normal. Using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design, in-depth unstructured interviews were conducted with seven extension heads from the campuses of North Eastern Mindanao State University in Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Data were analyzed following Moustakas’ phenomenological approach to identify the shared essence of participants’ lived experiences. Findings revealed that sustainability of extension work was constrained by three interrelated challenge domains: restrictive health protocols and mobility limitations, limited beneficiary participation, and prolonged procurement and bureaucratic processes. Beyond operational barriers, participants experienced significant psychological strain characterized by hesitation, fear of infection, role overload, and self-doubt arising from ethical responsibility to protect both communities and implementers. Despite these challenges, extension heads demonstrated substantial mental fortitude manifested through adaptive leadership strategies, particularly the shift to online and blended modalities, sustained commitment to service, and a strong sense of fulfillment derived from community impact. Mental fortitude was reinforced by purpose-driven leadership, intrinsic motivation, and values rooted in service and compassion. The study concludes that sustaining community extension during crisis conditions depends not only on institutional systems but also on the psychological resilience and adaptive capacity of extension leaders. These findings underscore the need for policy support, flexible administrative mechanisms, and psychosocial interventions that strengthen both program sustainability and leader well-being in higher education extension systems..

Keywords: Challenges, Mental Fortitude, Self-Doubt, Sustainable Community Extension, New Normal

Introduction

Sustainable community extension has become an increasingly critical mandate for higher education institutions as they seek to balance social responsibility with long-term community impact. Sustainability in extension goes beyond the continuity of programs; it emphasizes adaptability, inclusivity, and the capacity to respond meaningfully to changing social conditions. Saysi (2024) describe sustainable extension as a process that builds enduring relationships between universities and communities through responsive and ethical engagement. Siankwilimba et al. (2023) further argue that sustainability in extension requires institutional commitment, leadership stability, and community trust. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, disrupted these foundations by altering how extension initiatives could be implemented and sustained. Traditional models of face-to-face engagement were constrained by health risks and regulatory measures, challenging the very notion of sustainability in community service. Similar pandemic-related disruptions have been documented to intensify academic and health insecurities, compelling educators and institutions to develop adaptive strategies under constrained conditions (Chavez, 2020). Crises often force institutions to reassess how core functions can persist under extreme conditions. In this environment, community extension heads assumed a pivotal role in safeguarding the sustainability of extension programs amid unprecedented uncertainty.

The transition to the new normal exposed extension leaders to a range of operational challenges that directly threatened the sustainability of community initiatives. Health protocols, mobility restrictions, and limitations on gatherings reduced the scale and frequency of extension activities. Barbosa (2023) highlights that compliance with evolving safety regulations required additional resources, time, and coordination, often straining already limited capacities. Procurement delays and disrupted supply chains further undermined timely program delivery, particularly in geographically isolated areas. Such structural constraints can weaken program sustainability when institutions lack flexible systems. For extension heads, sustaining programs under these conditions required constant adjustment and negotiation with stakeholders. These challenges underscore how sustainability in extension during the new normal became contingent not only on resources but also on leadership resilience and decision-making (Bengal et al., 2023).

Beyond logistical constraints, the pursuit of sustainable extension during the pandemic carried significant psychological implications for extension leaders. The responsibility to continue community engagement amid health risks heightened feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. Dwiedienawati et al. (2021) assert that prolonged exposure to crisis conditions can intensify stress and self-doubt, particularly among leaders tasked with safeguarding others. Extension heads often faced hesitation when deciding whether to proceed with activities that involved travel or face-to-face interaction. Koçak et al. (2021) note that fear of transmitting infection to others emerged as a dominant source of psychological strain during the pandemic. This concern was especially pronounced for leaders responsible for mobilizing both faculty and community participants. Axelrod (2017) argue that unresolved self-doubt can compromise leaders' confidence and emotional well-being. Within sustainable extension efforts, these internal struggles became an invisible yet powerful challenge affecting implementation.

Self-doubt among extension heads was not merely a personal experience but a leadership dilemma with implications for program sustainability (Tushar, 2017). Decisions to postpone, modify, or limit activities often involved moral and professional tension. Leadership during crisis involves navigating ambiguity while maintaining a sense of purpose. Extension heads were required to reconcile institutional expectations with ethical considerations related to health and safety. Extension leaders must exercise judgment that prioritizes both community welfare and implementer well-being. In the context of sustainability, hesitation and doubt reflected leaders' awareness of long-term consequences rather than weakness (Brabandt, 2016). These experiences reveal how self-doubt functioned as part of the decision-making process in sustaining extension work during the new normal.

Despite persistent challenges and internal struggles, many extension heads demonstrated mental fortitude in sustaining community extension initiatives. Mental fortitude, in this context, refers to the capacity to endure pressure, adapt strategies, and remain committed to service despite uncertainty. Wittmers et al. (2023) highlight that psychological strength during crises is often rooted in purpose-driven work. Extension heads drew motivation from their commitment to community service and the belief that extension programs remained essential during difficult times. Scott and Bender (2025) notes that perseverance and adaptability are defining traits of effective extension leaders. This fortitude enabled leaders to redesign activities, recalibrate goals, and continue engagement within imposed limitations. Such persistence was central to maintaining the sustainability of extension programs when conventional methods were no longer viable.

Adaptive strategies emerged as critical mechanisms for sustaining extension programs during the new normal. Shifts to blended or online modalities, reduced participant sizes, and modified training approaches were employed to ensure continuity. Digital platforms can support sustainable extension by enabling flexible knowledge dissemination. However, disparities in access and digital literacy posed challenges to inclusive sustainability. Shafik (2025) argues that adaptive strategies must balance innovation with equity to prevent exclusion of vulnerable groups. Extension heads were tasked with ensuring that adaptations aligned with sustainability principles rather than short-term compliance. These efforts illustrate how mental fortitude translated into strategic action aimed at preserving long-term community engagement. Sustaining extension initiatives during the pandemic also required emotional reinforcement, often derived from a sense of fulfillment and purpose (Rajkumar et al., 2022). Positive responses from communities and observable benefits of extension activities reinforced leaders'

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commitment. Polkinghorne et al. (2025) note that meaningful community impact can mitigate psychological strain and burnout. For extension heads, these experiences validated the effort to sustain programs despite constraints. Fulfillment functioned as an internal resource that supported mental endurance and reaffirmed the value of sustainable extension work. This balance between strain and fulfillment highlights the complex emotional landscape of extension leadership in the new normal.

Understanding the challenges, self-doubt, and mental fortitude of community extension heads is essential for strengthening sustainable extension systems. Osmani and Ndoka (2025) argue that extension leadership is often undervalued within institutional structures, affecting long-term sustainability. Manchia et al. (2022) emphasize that insufficient support exacerbates stress and undermines program continuity. The pandemic magnified these issues, revealing the need for policies that support both program sustainability and leader well-being. Examining these experiences, institutions can develop strategies that reinforce sustainable extension practices beyond crisis conditions. Such insights are vital for ensuring that community extension remains responsive, ethical, and resilient in the face of future disruptions

LITERATURE

Sustainable Community Extension

Sustainable community extension is commonly understood as the capacity of extension programs to maintain relevance, continuity, and impact over time while responding to evolving community needs. Phung et al. (2025) emphasize that sustainability in extension depends on long-term partnerships rather than short-term project completion. James (2025) argue that extension initiatives become sustainable when communities are treated as co-creators rather than passive recipients of services. Extension sustainability requires institutional commitment beyond compliance with mandates. Sustainability also involves the efficient use of resources, particularly in contexts where funding, manpower, and logistical support are limited, as noted by Singh (2024). In higher education, sustainable extension is closely tied to leadership practices that ensure program continuity despite personnel changes or external disruptions. Đurić et al. (2025) highlights that sustainability becomes more fragile during crises, revealing weaknesses in planning and governance structures. Sustainable extension is not only about program survival but about maintaining trust, relevance, and responsiveness. These elements become especially critical during periods of uncertainty, such as the new normal brought about by the pandemic. Le Roux and Pretorius (2016) agree that sustainability must be embedded in decision-making processes rather than treated as an outcome. This framing positions extension leaders as central actors in sustaining community engagement.

The pandemic challenged traditional assumptions about what makes extension initiatives sustainable. Akinwalere et al. (2025) note that institutional sustainability during crises depends heavily on leadership adaptability and organizational flexibility. Health restrictions disrupted face-to-face engagement, which has long been central to extension practice. Pan et al. (2025) explains that sustainability during the new normal required recalibration of delivery modes rather than abandonment of services. Sustainable extension must balance innovation with accessibility to remain equitable. Extension heads were therefore compelled to redefine sustainability not as uninterrupted activity but as responsible continuity. The Iyad et al. (2024) suggests that sustainable extension during crises is measured by ethical responsiveness rather than volume of outputs. These insights underscore the importance of examining how extension leaders navigated sustainability amid uncertainty. Understanding these dynamics provides a foundation for assessing leadership experiences during the new normal.

2.2 Implementation Challenges

Challenges in implementing community extension programs have been widely documented even before the pandemic. Zickafoose et al. (2024) identify time constraints, competing academic responsibilities, and limited resources as persistent barriers to effective extension work. Creagh et al. (2025) add that administrative workload and coordination issues often limit educators' capacity to

engage with communities. Extension implementation is particularly vulnerable to institutional inefficiencies. These challenges become more pronounced when extension is treated as secondary to instruction and research. According to Sott and Bender (2025), extension leaders often function within rigid systems that offer little flexibility. Implementation challenges are therefore not solely operational but organizational in nature. These barriers affect not only program delivery but also leader morale and motivation. When challenges persist without adequate support, sustainability becomes difficult to achieve. The implementation challenges are multidimensional and interconnected (Ahmed et al., 2024). These findings provide a critical backdrop for understanding extension work during disruptive periods.

The new normal introduced additional layers of complexity to extension implementation. Parallel studies during the pandemic reveal that compounded uncertainty and disruption compelled educators to adopt adaptive strategies to sustain professional responsibilities despite heightened strain (Chavez et al., 2023). A mobility restrictions and health protocols significantly slowed extension activities across sectors. Compliance requirements increased preparation time and operational costs. Procurement delays emerged as a major concern, particularly in geographically isolated campuses, as noted by Petropoulos et al. (2026). Hung et al. (2026) explain that pandemic-related disruptions affected supply chains and administrative processes globally. These challenges forced extension leaders to continuously revise plans and timelines. Prolonged implementation challenges contribute to leadership fatigue. Extension heads were often required to justify delays to both institutional authorities and community partners. This dual accountability intensified pressure on leaders. Understanding these challenges is essential to contextualizing the experiences of extension heads during the new normal. The literature thus supports a focused examination of implementation constraints as a central issue in sustainable extension.

2.3 Self-Doubt Experiences

Self-doubt among leaders has been widely examined in crisis and uncertainty. Khumalo and Olaleye (2025) describe self-doubt as a common psychological response when leaders face conflicting demands and ambiguous outcomes, it reveal that role ambiguity significantly contributes to both emotional demands and employees' intentions to quit. In educational settings, leadership self-doubt often emerges when expectations exceed available support, as noted by Dor-Haim (2025). A prolonged stress and uncertainty can undermine confidence even among experienced professionals. Extension leaders, in particular, operate in high-stakes environments where decisions directly affect community welfare. Karnatovskaia et al. (2020) explain that fear of causing harm during a health crisis intensified emotional strain among service providers. Self-doubt is often internalized and underreported in academic leadership roles. This silence can exacerbate psychological burden over time. It frames self-doubt not as weakness but as a reflective response to ethical responsibility (Ntumi et al., 2025). Leaders who question their decisions often demonstrate heightened awareness of consequences. Self-doubt has been shown to impair confidence and engagement, a pattern similarly observed among extension implementers navigating unfamiliar community conditions (Berry et al., 2025). These insights suggest that self-doubt is an important dimension of leadership experience. Examining this phenomenon provides a more holistic understanding of extension leadership during crises.

During the pandemic, self-doubt among extension heads was shaped by health risks and moral responsibility (Dariotis et al., 2025). Extension implementers as experiencing tension between duty and personal safety. Leaders were forced to make decisions without precedent or clear guidance. This uncertainty amplified hesitation, particularly in activities involving face-to-face engagement. The link such hesitation to fear of transmitting infection to family members and communities. Mathewson et al. (2020) argues that repeated exposure to high-risk decisions can erode leaders' emotional resilience. The absence of institutional acknowledgment intensifies self-doubt. In sustainable extension, these experiences directly influence decision-making and program continuity. Leaders who doubt their capacity may delay or modify implementation strategies. Illke et al. (2018) indicates that self-doubt affects both personal well-being and organizational outcomes. Understanding these experiences is therefore essential to evaluating leadership sustainability. This body of work justifies focused attention on self-doubt among extension heads.

2.4 Mental Fortitude

Mental fortitude refers to the capacity to endure pressure, adapt to adversity, and sustain commitment under challenging conditions. B  r   and Balough (2025) describe mental fortitude as a critical psychological resource during prolonged crises. Olugboyega et al. (2024) link mental fortitude to purpose-driven leadership and service orientation. In extension contexts, fortitude enables leaders to persist despite limited resources and external constraints. Resilience in extension leadership is often reinforced through meaningful community engagement. Qureshi et al. (2024) add that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in sustaining effort. Mental fortitude is therefore not innate but shaped by experience and values. Scholars argue that leaders develop fortitude through reflective practice and adaptive learning. This capacity becomes particularly visible during crisis situations. These insights highlight its relevance to extension leadership during the new normal. The pandemic tested the mental fortitude of extension heads in unprecedented ways. Nazib et al. (2025) argue that sustained leadership during crises requires emotional regulation and perseverance. Adaptive leaders demonstrate fortitude by reframing challenges as manageable tasks. Reflective leadership supports psychological endurance. Extension heads relied on their commitment to community service to remain engaged. Purpose mitigates burnout and emotional fatigue. Mental fortitude enabled leaders to redesign programs rather than abandon them. This persistence directly supported the sustainability of extension initiatives. These findings support examining mental fortitude as a core element of extension leadership experiences.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the challenges, experiences of self-doubt, and mental fortitude of university community extension heads in sustaining community extension initiatives during the new normal. Qualitative research is appropriate when the inquiry seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning, and describe the essence of phenomena within real-life contexts. Lim (2024), emphasized that qualitative inquiry is most suitable when the researcher is interested in how people make sense of their experiences and articulate the meanings they assign to them. Given the study's focus on leadership experiences amid uncertainty, psychological strain, and sustainability concerns during the pandemic, a qualitative design allowed for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of these lived realities.

Specifically, the study adopted a phenomenological research design to capture the shared experiences of community extension heads as they navigated the new normal. Phenomenology seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals who have directly encountered it. Within phenomenological inquiry, two primary approaches are commonly used: hermeneutical and transcendental phenomenology. While the hermeneutical approach emphasizes the researcher's interpretation of experiences, the transcendental approach focuses on participants' descriptions to arrive at the core essence of the phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). In this study, a transcendental phenomenological approach was employed to foreground participants' voices and faithfully document how they experienced challenges, self-doubt, adaptive strategies, and mental fortitude in sustaining community extension programs during the new normal.

Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following research objectives, which directed the selection of participants, the development of the interview guide, and the data analysis process:

To identify the major challenges encountered by university community extension heads in implementing sustainable community extension programs during the new normal, particularly those related to health protocols, mobility restrictions, procurement processes, and limited participation.

To explore the experiences of self-doubt, hesitation, and psychological strain among community extension heads while carrying out extension responsibilities amid pandemic-related risks and uncertainties.

To examine the mental fortitude and commitment demonstrated by community extension heads in sustaining community extension implementation during the new normal, as reflected in their adaptive strategies, sense of fulfillment, and dedication to community service.

These objectives served as the primary framework for the formulation of the interview questions and guided the thematic analysis of participants' lived experiences. In phenomenological inquiry, clearly articulated objectives ensure that data collection and analysis remain focused on the essence of the phenomenon being investigated while allowing participants to narrate their experiences freely.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study were the heads of the Extension Services of the seven (7) campuses of North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) in Surigao del Sur, Philippines. These individuals were selected because they were directly responsible for the planning, coordination, and implementation of community extension programs before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to identify participants who possessed the specific characteristics necessary to provide rich and relevant data for the phenomenon under investigation. Maxwell (2013) explained that purposive sampling is appropriate when the objective is to select individuals with direct experience and specialized knowledge related to the research focus.

Participants were included based on the following criteria: they must hold a permanent academic position, must have been actively involved in extension services for at least three years, and must have served as extension head prior to and during the pandemic period. These criteria ensured that participants had sustained exposure to extension work under both normal and crisis conditions, allowing them to reflect meaningfully on issues related to sustainability, leadership challenges, psychological strain, and perseverance. Padilla-Díaz (2015) noted that such inclusion criteria help ensure that participants share common experiences relevant to the phenomenon being studied. The seven extension heads represented varied academic ranks, years of service in the university, and lengths of leadership experience, providing a comprehensive picture of extension leadership during the new normal. The detailed profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Academic Rank	# of Years in NEMSU	# of Years as Extension Head
Linda	Female	Professor II	38 years	11 years
Jenny	Female	Associate Professor IV	37 years	5 years
Ben	Male	Assistant Professor IV	6 years	5 years
Cristy	Female	Instructor I	4 years	2 years
Sofia	Female	Assistant Professor III	4 year	2 years
Macy	Female	Instructor 1	4 years	1 year
Rose	Female	Associate Professor II	7 years	2 years

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected through unstructured, in-depth interviews, which are widely used in phenomenological studies to elicit detailed and reflective narratives. The interview guide consisted of broad, open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their experiences in implementing community extension programs during the new normal. Questions focused on the challenges they encountered, moments of hesitation and self-doubt, emotional and psychological demands, adaptive strategies, and the ways they sustained commitment and purpose amid restrictions and uncertainty.

The unstructured format allowed participants to freely narrate their experiences in their own words while enabling the researcher to probe emerging ideas relevant to sustainability and mental fortitude. This flexibility ensured that participants could emphasize aspects of their experiences they deemed most meaningful, resulting in rich and authentic descriptions aligned with the objectives of the study.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering was conducted through virtual individual interviews due to health risks and mobility restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each participant was contacted personally to explain the purpose of the study and to arrange an interview schedule at their convenience. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. With participants' permission, interviews were audio- and video-recorded to ensure accurate capture of responses. Each interview lasted approximately 35 to 60 minutes, allowing sufficient time for in-depth discussion. During the interviews, the researcher maintained a neutral and reflective stance, encouraging openness while minimizing interruptions. Field notes were taken to document contextual observations and initial reflections related to challenges, emotional responses, and sustainability practices in extension implementation.

3.5 Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological in 1994 method, which follows a systematic process of meaning-making (Martirano, 2016). Analysis began with epoche, where the researcher consciously set aside personal assumptions to focus on participants' descriptions. This was followed by phenomenological reduction, involving the identification of significant statements related to challenges, self-doubt, mental fortitude, and sustainable extension practices. Creative variation was employed to explore the contextual and structural conditions that influenced participants' experiences. Finally, a synthesis of meanings and essences was developed by integrating textual and structural descriptions. This process resulted in themes that were firmly grounded in participants' narratives and consistent with the study's focus on sustaining community extension amid the demands of the new normal.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical rigor was maintained throughout the conduct of the study to protect the dignity, rights, and well-being of the participants. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the nature of their involvement, and the intended use of the data. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms, and all identifying information was removed from transcripts and reports. Digital recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Given that the interviews involved discussions of fear, stress, self-doubt, and psychological strain, the researcher conducted the interviews with sensitivity and respect. Care was taken to avoid questions that could cause undue distress, and participants were allowed to pause or redirect the discussion as needed. These ethical safeguards ensured that the study upheld integrity and accountability while documenting the lived experiences of community extension heads in sustaining service during the new normal.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Objective 1. To identify the major challenges encountered by university community extension heads in implementing sustainable community extension programs during the new normal, particularly those related to health protocols, mobility restrictions, procurement processes, and limited participation.

COVID-19 Pandemic Reshapes Extension Programs and Services

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally reshaped how community extension programs were planned, implemented, and sustained by university extension heads. Participants consistently described how the sudden imposition of health protocols, mobility restrictions, and safety regulations disrupted long-established modes of extension delivery. While extension programs were not entirely halted, their continuity required constant adjustment, negotiation, and compliance with evolving government policies. Extension heads emphasized that sustaining programs during the pandemic demanded additional time, effort, and coordination with local authorities and community stakeholders. The pandemic tested not only logistical capacity but also institutional flexibility in responding to rapidly changing conditions. Participants noted that extension work became more complex as safety considerations began to outweigh efficiency and reach. Limitations on face-to-face interaction altered the scope and scale of activities, particularly those requiring hands-on engagement. Despite these constraints, extension heads remained committed to fulfilling their mandate, although sustainability became increasingly fragile.

1.1 Health Protocols and Travel Restrictions

Participants unanimously expressed that health protocols and travel restrictions imposed by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) significantly constrained their ability to implement extension programs. Movement limitations restricted access to adopted communities, particularly those located in geographically isolated areas. Although participants recognized the necessity of health protocols, they emphasized that compliance reduced operational flexibility and delayed implementation schedules. Extension activities that previously relied on direct interaction were forced to adapt to safety requirements that were often difficult to operationalize in community settings. The narratives revealed that extension heads were caught between institutional obligations to serve communities and regulatory mandates designed to prevent virus transmission. These conditions reflect how sustainability during the pandemic became contingent on regulatory compliance rather than program readiness alone. Similar findings highlight that mobility restrictions during COVID-19 severely limited extension operations that depend on physical presence and community immersion (Fazio et al., 2022). The requirement to secure repeated approvals from barangay officials and local government units further complicated implementation processes. Health protocols introduced additional layers of coordination that strained both time and resources. These experiences underscore how health regulations directly reshaped extension delivery and challenged its sustainability under crisis conditions (Sharma et al., 2025).

The difficulty of complying with health protocols was further intensified by infrastructural and contextual constraints in adopted communities (Filip et al., 2022). Participants highlighted that limited internet connectivity rendered virtual alternatives ineffective, necessitating face-to-face implementation despite risks. This contradiction exposed the uneven capacity of communities to adapt to digital modes of extension service delivery. Extension heads described how venues were often unprepared for new normal arrangements, requiring additional preparation and resources. Compliance demanded the provision of personal protective equipment, sanitation materials, and spatial reconfiguration, all of which increased logistical burden. These added requirements illustrate how sustainability during the pandemic required not only program continuation but also expanded operational inputs (Deepthi et al., 2020). Research suggests that sustainability weakens when institutions lack adaptive infrastructure to support crisis-driven adjustments (Nadiia, 2025). Moreover, repeated negotiations with local leaders reflected the fragile balance between public health priorities and extension mandates. Extension heads' experiences reveal that health protocols, while necessary,

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redefined sustainability as cautious continuity rather than program expansion.

“Yes sir, naka affect gyud ang COVID-19 Pandemic especially pag mag extension, so dili na dali2 makakadtu kung mag conduct gane sir kay syempre may mga restrictions” Translation: (“Yes sir, COVID-19 pandemic really affects our extension activities since we cannot easily conduct them to the community due to restrictions”)

“There is really a big challenge on the part of the extension office. Because there are many programs in which we wanted to implement but the problem is we are being restricted by this virus or pandemic. So little by little we are affected by new government policies. There are restrictions that you cannot go out due to health protocols implemented in barangays. So we need to follow and it makes the projects more problematic that prolong in a way”

“Since we are a Technological Campus, so dapat ang among implementation is more on hands-on training skills... we are conducting man gud mga competency based nga skills training that leads to national certification noh sa TESDA. Naglisud kami kay dapat face to face gyud xa i.conduct.” Translation: (“Since we are a Technological Campus, we need to implement hands-on training skills that lead to national certificate from TESDA. That’s why we find it difficult to cope up with since we can only do the training face to face”)

“It is really very challenging on our part since some of our adopted communities do not have signals. So bisag gusto namu nag i.virtual nalang dili pud puyde because wala signal didtu bisag cellphone nalang. You really have to go there and implement the project face to face following the IATF guidelines.” Translation: (“It is really very challenging on our part since some of our adopted communities do not have signals. So even if we want to implement it virtually, we cannot do it because of inavailability of signals even for their cellular phone.”)

Macy:

“...include nalang namu daan ang facemask, face shield and hand sanitizer ky part sa new normal...” Translation: (“...we include facemask, face shield and hand sanitizer as part of the new normal...”)

“Pag-abot sa venue moingon ang kapitan nga dli nila irisk ang health ng mga tao so dapat mofollow ug sako nga protocol.” Translation: (“The barangay captain informed us in the venue that they will not risk the health of their constituents, thus we need to follow protocols.”)

“...need to follow the protocol by our university and LGU.”

“...Lisod jud sya sir kay syimpre magbalik-balik kami sa kapitan kung pwede na ba makaconduct then pagbalik namu dili nasad me tugutan...” Translation: (“It very challenging in our part because we needed to constantly ask the barangay captain to allow us conduct our activities but we are not allowed to...”)

1.2 Limited Number of Participants

A significant challenge identified by participants was the limited number of beneficiaries allowed to attend extension activities due to quarantine classifications. Extension heads noted that compliance with GCQ and MGCQ guidelines drastically reduced participation rates, often allowing only a fraction of the intended clientele. This restriction directly affected program reach and efficiency, as sustainability in extension is closely tied to inclusivity and scale. Participants explained that reduced attendance was not only a regulatory issue but also influenced by fear among community members of contracting the virus. The need to limit participants transformed extension programs into fragmented sessions rather than cohesive activities. Such fragmentation increased workload and extended implementation timelines. Literature suggests that limited participation undermines program sustainability by weakening community engagement and continuity (Mia et al., 2022). Extension heads emphasized that achieving targets required repetitive implementation, which strained resources and personnel. These constraints illustrate how participation limits redefined sustainability as prolonged effort rather than optimal impact. The findings highlight that health-driven participation caps became structural barriers to sustainable extension implementation also supported by Mahmoodi et al. (2023).

The duplication of activities emerged as a critical consequence of limited participation. Participants described how single-session programs were expanded into multiple training schedules to accommodate more beneficiaries. While this approach allowed extension heads to meet numeric

targets, it significantly increased fatigue and operational demands. Each repeated session required renewed preparation, coordination, and compliance with health protocols. This repetition amplified logistical challenges rather than resolving them (Farahmandnia et al., 2025). Repetitive implementation without additional support can lead to exhaustion and diminished program quality. Extension heads experienced sustainability not as continuity but as endurance under constrained conditions. The need to repeatedly justify activities to local officials further compounded delays. These experiences demonstrate how participation limits transformed extension work into a cycle of constant adjustment.

"The community or the barangay that was being under the MECQ or GCQ so there is a percentage of participants that can attend during the activity 30%. So by following the safety health protocols or the public safety health protocols that only 30% can attend during the conduct."

"...there are limited face-to-face interactions having less participants. So this is according to the restrictions given by the IATF by the LGU. So maximum is 15 participants."

"...limited face to face pa rin in which maka delay gane siya sa implementation. Instead of 1 day himuon nimu xa ug 3 days." Translation: ("...the limited face-to-face caused delay in the implementation. Instead of 1 day, we extended it to 3 days.")

"...we need to duplicate the training up to three times to meet our target participants"

1.3 Procurement Problems

Procurement delays were identified as another major challenge affecting the sustainability of extension programs during the pandemic as supported by Siankwilimba et al. (2023). Participants reported that lockdowns and travel restrictions disrupted the delivery of training materials and supplies, delaying scheduled activities. Extension programs that depended on timely availability of materials were particularly affected. The inability to procure resources locally further intensified these delays, especially for satellite campuses located far from commercial centers. Participants emphasized that sustainability was compromised when materials arrived after the scheduled implementation period. Supply chain disruptions during the pandemic have been widely documented as barriers to institutional operations (Raj et al., 2022). Extension heads described how procurement delays forced them to reschedule or postpone activities, weakening program momentum. These challenges highlight how sustainability depends on functional administrative systems. Without timely procurement, extension programs struggled to meet community needs despite strong leadership commitment (Mazharul & Alharthi, 2020).

The problem of procurement extended beyond delays to include administrative and regulatory constraints. Participants explained that suppliers were often located outside the province, requiring inter-regional transport permits that were difficult to secure. Even when funds were available, procurement timelines became unpredictable due to changing policies. These constraints demonstrate how sustainability during crises is shaped by systems beyond the control of extension heads. Participants noted that while projects were eventually completed, target beneficiaries were not fully reached. This gap between completion and impact highlights the fragility of sustainable extension under crisis conditions. The findings underscore the need for flexible procurement mechanisms during emergencies. Overall, procurement problems significantly constrained the timely and effective implementation of extension programs.

"It really affects since our extension we need necessities. Like when we conduct needs assessment, you need ballpens and supplies yet no delivery yet so we need to wait for the delivery of the materials."

"This pandemic affects the extension programs and services such as the delivery of supplies, Sir... the materials and supplies have not reached to us or have not yet delivered so there's a sort of delays in supplies. And then that will make the extension activity also be delayed."

"Lisod ibyaha ang mga supplies tungod sa lockdown ky ang nakadaog sa canvass taga-lain nga region." Translation: ("There is a difficulty in delivering the supplies because of the lockdown especially if the winner of the canvass is coming from another region.")

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Objective 2. To explore the experiences of self-doubt, hesitation, and psychological strain among community extension heads while carrying out extension responsibilities amid pandemic-related risks and uncertainties.

Psychological Strain and Self-Doubt in Extension Leadership During the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced profound psychological challenges that affected how extension heads perceived their roles, responsibilities, and personal safety. Participants described how uncertainty, fear of infection, and concern for family welfare influenced their willingness to continue extension implementation. Unlike logistical challenges, these experiences were internal and emotionally taxing, often accompanied by hesitation and self-questioning. Extension heads were required to make decisions that carried both professional and moral consequences. The obligation to serve communities conflicted with fears of becoming virus carriers, creating emotional tension. Participants emphasized that these struggles were not immediately visible but deeply affected leadership confidence. Self-doubt emerged as a recurring experience as extension heads weighed risks against institutional expectations. The pandemic intensified psychological strain by blurring boundaries between professional duty and personal safety.

2.1 Hesitation to Conduct Extension Activities

Participants openly acknowledged that hesitation was a dominant emotional response during the initial implementation of extension activities amid the pandemic. Fear of contracting COVID-19 or unintentionally transmitting the virus to family members and community clients significantly influenced decision-making. Extension heads described how face-to-face activities heightened anxiety because of prolonged exposure and physical interaction. This hesitation reflects self-doubt rooted not in lack of competence but in ethical concern and responsibility. Leaders questioned whether continuing extension work justified the potential health risks involved. Studies indicate that fear of infection during pandemics is a major source of psychological strain among service providers (Khazae-Pool et al., 2025). Participants' narratives suggest that hesitation functioned as a protective response rather than avoidance. Extension heads were forced to constantly evaluate personal vulnerability alongside professional duty. This internal conflict illustrates how self-doubt shaped leadership behavior during the new normal (Fleming & Millar, 2019).

The psychological impact of hesitation was further intensified when extension activities resulted in actual infection. One participant recounted how contracting COVID-19 during implementation led to blame and stigmatization within the institution. This experience amplified emotional distress and reinforced self-doubt, particularly when colleagues questioned their actions. Being perceived as a source of infection undermined morale and leadership confidence. As a result, some extension heads refrained from compelling faculty to participate in activities, prioritizing their safety over institutional output. Research recognizes extension workers as frontliners who face significant emotional and health risks during crises (Ahmad et al., 2025). The narratives reveal that hesitation was reinforced by real consequences rather than imagined fear. Psychological strain emerged from both external judgment and internal guilt. These experiences demonstrate how self-doubt was shaped by fear, responsibility, and institutional pressure.

"Since I have a little kid bag-o pa ako nanganak and after one month ng COVID na dayun sya. So isa gayud nako gikuan is kanang safety sa akong family." Translation: ("Since I just gave birth, and after a month COVID, I was concerned with the safety of my family.")

"...afraid sad kami basin mamemohan kami ni mayora... faculty have fear talaga nga they might be infected with the covid." Translation: ("...we are afraid because the mayor might give us a memo... faculty really fear that they might be infected with COVID.")

"During the implementation of Bent but not Broken Bamboo Project, we were tested positive... they are pointing fingers to the extension."

2.2 *Difficulty in Balancing Duties and Responsibilities*

Participants described significant difficulty in balancing multiple academic and administrative responsibilities during the pandemic, which intensified psychological strain. Extension heads were required to juggle instruction, research, extension, and administrative duties simultaneously. The shift to modular and online instruction increased workload and reduced available time for extension activities. Participants emphasized that extension work demanded extensive preparation, coordination, and documentation, which overlapped with teaching responsibilities. This role overload heightened stress and contributed to emotional exhaustion. Leek et al. (2026) suggests that extension responsibilities often compete with instructional demands, creating time conflicts that affect performance and well-being. The pandemic further amplified these conflicts by introducing additional reporting and compliance requirements. Participants described feeling overwhelmed by constant deadlines and overlapping expectations. Such conditions fostered self-doubt about their capacity to perform effectively across roles.

The strain of balancing responsibilities was compounded by reduced manpower and work-from-home arrangements. Participants noted that fewer personnel were available to assist in extension activities, increasing individual workload. Tasks that were previously distributed among team members became concentrated on extension heads. This reduction in support intensified fatigue and reduced motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been identified as a sustaining force enabling educators to remain engaged in development-oriented initiatives despite structural and psychological challenges (Nazareth et al., 2026). Gearhart et al. (2022) indicate that staff shortages and coordination challenges limit educators' ability to engage meaningfully in extension work. Participants expressed that diminished manpower weakened collaborative support systems that previously sustained extension initiatives. The lack of assistance reinforced feelings of isolation and pressure (Holt-Lunstad, 2024). Self-doubt emerged as leaders questioned whether they could meet expectations under constrained conditions. These experiences illustrate how psychological strain was shaped by systemic limitations rather than personal failure.

"...very stressful sa amoa nga part kay nga maghimu ka ug module, maghimu paka ug report, maghimu paka ug proposal, ug naa pay mga budget2 diha nga concern." Translation: ("...very stressful on our part since we have to make modules, reports, proposals, and there are also budget concerns.")

"mag handle pa ug klase, maghimu pa ug module, nag exam, mag check pa sa online output nga grabe ambot grabe ka stressful kadayaw." Translation: ("You still have to handle classes, make modules, conduct exams, and check online outputs, which are all very stressful.")

"...sa una daghan tana amo ma implement na mga projects kay daghan nasa kami. Damo na makatabang sa ako labi na sa mga contractual." Translation: ("Before, we implemented many projects because we had many people to help, especially contractual staff.")

"...because of work-from-home, only few can help to facilitate the conduct of the extension activity."

2.3 *Long and Rigorous Procedures and Processes*

Participants identified bureaucratic procedures and lengthy approval processes as major contributors to frustration and emotional fatigue. Extension heads described procurement and approval systems as slow, complex, and demotivating. These procedures often delayed implementation for months, weakening momentum and morale. The pandemic further exacerbated delays due to reduced staffing and disrupted operations. Participants expressed that prolonged waiting periods undermined motivation and confidence in the system. Literature notes that unclear policies and procedural rigidity weaken extension implementation and leader engagement (Martínez Díaz et al., 2021). The lack of consistent guidelines created confusion and uncertainty among extension heads. These conditions fostered self-doubt as leaders questioned whether their efforts were worthwhile. Emotional strain emerged from repeatedly navigating unclear and changing requirements. Workplace stress and its consequences have become ubiquitous in modern workplaces. Amidst ongoing

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uncertainty and constant change, complex workplace demands, and a persistent feed of information from our always-on devices, recent reports indicate that over 40% of employees experience a lot of daily worry or stress, a record high since 2021 (Gallup, 2022, 2023). Nearly 60% of employees find that workplace stress impacts their performance and motivation, highlighting emotional exhaustion, feeling disengaged, and a desire to keep to themselves (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The emotional impact of procedural delays was intensified by perceptions of unequal prioritization and inefficiency. Participants voiced frustration over what they perceived as inconsistent handling of proposals. Delayed procurement weakened trust in administrative systems and discouraged initiative. When extension is treated as secondary to instruction and research, leaders experience diminished motivation. Participants described losing enthusiasm when repeated efforts yielded no progress. This loss of motivation reflects emotional exhaustion rather than lack of commitment. Calls for systematic and chronological processing indicate a desire for fairness and transparency. Self-doubt was reinforced when leaders felt unsupported by institutional processes. These experiences illustrate how procedural challenges became psychological stressors.

"It takes time to canvass for the materials needed because of the pandemic..."

"Kanaman malate ang amoa extension, kay grabe kalisod mgPR ug canvass, daghan process agihan... dugay pa mapirmahan samot madugay pag canvass." Translation: ("We experience late conduct of extension because of the long approval process, PR, and canvass of materials.")

"NagPR kami dugay na labay na bulan, hangtod kuman wala gihapon nabalik kay way moquote..." Translation: ("We made our PR, but even after a month it was not returned because nobody would quote.")

"...wala me kasabot sa policy kay maglahi-lahi unya grabe ka dugay sa process..." Translation: ("We did not understand the policy because it kept changing and the process was too long.")

"Maybe this study will make them realize na sa BAC part dapat dili sila mag liya-liya or mag favor ng mga unahon. Dapat chronological an paghandle ng mga proposals na iindorse sa ila office." Translation: ("Maybe this study will make the BAC realize to expedite the process and prioritize proposals chronologically.")

Objective 3. To examine the mental fortitude and commitment demonstrated by community extension heads in sustaining community extension implementation during the new normal, as reflected in their adaptive strategies, sense of fulfillment, and dedication to community service.

Mental Fortitude and Commitment in Sustaining Extension Programs During the New Normal

Despite persistent uncertainty and risk, participants demonstrated notable mental fortitude in sustaining community extension programs during the pandemic. Mental fortitude emerged through their willingness to adapt, persevere, and remain committed to service even under constrained conditions. Extension heads described how challenges compelled them to rethink delivery strategies rather than abandon extension responsibilities. Their commitment was reflected not only in operational adjustments but also in emotional endurance and sustained motivation. Participants emphasized that continuing extension work provided purpose during a period marked by fear and instability. Adaptation became both a survival strategy and an expression of resilience. Fulfillment derived from community impact further strengthened leaders' resolve to persist. These experiences illustrate how mental fortitude was enacted through action rather than rhetoric.

3.1 Shift to Online Modality

Participants identified the shift to online modality as a critical adaptive strategy that enabled extension programs to continue amid health restrictions. While face-to-face interaction is traditionally central to extension work, the pandemic necessitated innovation in service delivery. Extension heads

demonstrated resilience by embracing digital platforms despite limited prior experience. The shift reflected mental fortitude in confronting unfamiliar tools and redesigning programs under pressure. Online modalities allowed continuity while reducing exposure risk for implementers and beneficiaries. Literature emphasizes that crises accelerate digital transformation in service-oriented sectors (Cardoso et al., 2025). Participants described virtual platforms as solutions that preserved engagement and program relevance. This transition required patience, learning, and sustained effort. The willingness to adapt highlights psychological strength rather than mere compliance.

The effectiveness of online extension was shaped by the nature of the programs and the profile of beneficiaries. Participants noted that professional development and information-based programs were more compatible with virtual delivery. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Facebook Live enabled wider reach and flexibility. However, participants also recognized limitations in digital access among some community members. Despite these challenges, extension heads persisted in exploring alternatives rather than suspending activities. This persistence illustrates mental fortitude rooted in problem-solving and adaptability. Nayak et al. (2025) argues that resilient extension systems are those that continue functioning during crises through strategic adaptation. The shift to online modality reflects leaders' commitment to sustaining service amid uncertainty.

"So planning in this time is done through zoom, google meeting and not with face-to-face interactions."

"...from face-to-face as I have said, especially kun an amoa extension activity is more on the computer so amo nalang sya gi online..." Translation: ("...from face-to-face, we shifted into online especially if activities are more into computer...")

"Aside from adjusting, we tried our best to go with the new trend such as virtual. As much as possible we tried to manage and seek solution on how to solve this problem. In forestry, since we are not allowed to have face to face so we have this training on air."

3.2 A Sense of Fulfillment

Participants consistently described fulfillment as a powerful source of motivation that sustained them despite challenges. Seeing positive responses from beneficiaries reinforced their commitment to extension work. Fulfillment functioned as emotional fuel that counterbalanced fear, fatigue, and uncertainty. Extension heads expressed that meaningful engagement with communities validated their efforts. Research indicates that intrinsic motivation strengthens resilience during prolonged stress (Sabaliauskas et al., 2025). Participants emphasized that appreciation from beneficiaries provided reassurance that their work mattered. This emotional reward strengthened their willingness to persist. Fulfillment also contributed to psychological well-being by affirming professional identity. These experiences illustrate how fulfillment supported mental fortitude during the pandemic. Fulfillment was derived not only from recognition but also from witnessing tangible community impact. Participants described joy in seeing beneficiaries benefit from training and assistance. Simple gestures such as gratitude and smiles reinforced purpose and commitment. Brudner et al. (2023) and McGuire (2025) note that positive feedback enhances social consciousness and emotional resilience. Extension heads emphasized that fulfillment was present even without formal acknowledgment. Acts of service during crisis strengthened relationships between the university and communities. Extension projects such as community pantries created lasting emotional impact. These moments eased fear and restored confidence. Mental fortitude was sustained by the belief that service brought hope during difficult times.

"...very fulfilling sya in a way from varied ages batan-on, tigulang, lalaki, babae, nay education, walay education, when you are going give your project, they are open hearted sa mga projects..." Translation: ("...very fulfilling because people of varied ages, gender, and educational background are open to the projects...")

"So fulfilling, after you accomplish something, they are smiling saying thank you ma'am and sir."

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"...nakahatag ta smile sa ilaha by simple na pagkaon na ila tagkuha dako na na impact sa ila na part. Makahatag ka sa ila ng memory na forever they will treasure and they will not forget you." Translation: ("...it brings smiles through simple food, creating memories they will treasure forever.")

3.3. Commendable Qualities of the Implementers

Participants emphasized that commitment and dedication were essential qualities that enabled them to sustain extension work during the pandemic. These traits supported perseverance despite fear, exhaustion, and uncertainty. Extension heads highlighted genuine care for beneficiaries as central to effective service. Dedication manifested through willingness to continue serving despite personal risk. Literature underscores resilience and concern for community as defining traits of effective extension leaders (Patel et al., 2017). Participants described extension as service driven by compassion rather than obligation. These qualities strengthened psychological endurance. Mental fortitude was reinforced by values rooted in service and solidarity.

Commitment was further expressed through selflessness and intrinsic motivation. Participants viewed extension as a platform to help without political or personal gain. Seeing beneficiaries succeed reduced fear and strengthened resolve. Pizana et al. (2021) emphasize that extension implementers require dedication, humility, and preparedness. Participants noted that fulfillment eased anxiety about the virus. Shared collaboration among extensionists fostered mutual support (Raniel et al., 2021). Biggs et al. (2023) highlight cooperation as vital to sustaining extension efforts. Mental fortitude was sustained by collective purpose rather than individual endurance. These experiences demonstrate that values-driven leadership sustained extension during crisis.

"Extension was a very nice venue to help without politics and without expecting anything in return."

"...Client commitment and affection, as well as love for one's countrymen... Commitment that, despite the circumstances, we will continue to extend or assist members of the community in any way we can..."

"Malipay sab ka mutan.aw nga nalipay sila ug nagamit nila sa panginabuhian ang imung nahatag nga training, fulfilling kadayaw mawala sab kahadluk sa Virus..." Translation: ("You feel happy seeing that the training becomes their livelihood; it eases my fear of the virus.")

CONCLUSION

This study examined the lived experiences of university community extension heads in sustaining community extension programs during the new normal, with particular attention to implementation challenges, experiences of self-doubt, and manifestations of mental fortitude. The findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally reshaped the conditions under which sustainable community extension was pursued. Sustainability during the new normal was not defined by uninterrupted program delivery but by cautious continuity, ethical judgment, and adaptive leadership amid uncertainty. Extension heads encountered persistent structural challenges, including restrictive health protocols, limited participant engagement, procurement delays, and bureaucratic constraints. These challenges disrupted traditional modes of extension delivery and weakened program efficiency, revealing systemic vulnerabilities in extension governance and administrative processes. Sustainability emerged as a fragile and negotiated process, heavily influenced by external regulations and institutional capacity rather than program readiness alone.

Beyond operational constraints, the study highlights the significant psychological dimension of extension leadership during crisis conditions. Participants experienced hesitation, fear of infection, role overload, and self-doubt as they balanced professional obligations with ethical responsibility for personal and community safety. Self-doubt did not reflect leadership inadequacy; rather, it functioned as a reflective response to moral accountability and risk-laden decision-making. These internal struggles shaped how extension activities were planned, delayed, modified, or implemented. Despite these pressures, extension heads demonstrated notable mental fortitude in sustaining community engagement. Mental fortitude was expressed through adaptive strategies such as shifting to online and blended modalities, recalibrating program scope, and maintaining commitment despite fear and

fatigue. A strong sense of fulfillment derived from community impact, coupled with values rooted in service, compassion, and purpose, reinforced leaders' resilience. These findings affirm that sustainable community extension during crisis conditions depends not only on institutional systems and resources but also on the psychological resilience, adaptive capacity, and value-driven commitment of extension leaders. The study underscores the need to recognize extension leadership as both an operational and emotional endeavor. Strengthening sustainable extension systems requires institutional policies that support administrative flexibility, equitable workload distribution, and the psychosocial well-being of extension leaders, particularly during periods of disruption.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological design with a small, purposively selected sample of seven community extension heads from a single state university. While this approach allowed for in-depth exploration of lived experiences, the findings are context-specific and not intended for statistical generalization to all higher education institutions. Second, data were collected through self-reported narratives, which may be influenced by participants' recall, emotional state, or willingness to disclose personal experiences related to fear, self-doubt, and psychological strain. Although trustworthiness strategies were applied, subjective interpretation remains inherent in phenomenological inquiry. Third, the study focused exclusively on extension heads and did not include perspectives from faculty implementers, community beneficiaries, or institutional administrators. As a result, the findings reflect leadership experiences but do not capture how sustainability challenges and adaptations were perceived across other stakeholder groups. Data collection was conducted during an ongoing crisis period, which may have influenced participants' perceptions and emotional responses. Experiences may evolve as institutions transition beyond emergency conditions, limiting the temporal scope of the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future studies may expand this line of inquiry by including a broader and more diverse sample of higher education institutions across different regions to examine how contextual factors shape sustainable extension leadership during and beyond crisis conditions. Comparative studies between public and private universities, or between urban and rural campuses, may provide deeper insights into structural and resource-based differences in extension sustainability. Further research may also incorporate the perspectives of faculty extension implementers, community partners, and beneficiaries to develop a more holistic understanding of how sustainability, leadership, and psychological resilience intersect across stakeholder groups. Mixed-methods approaches could strengthen empirical evidence by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative measures of stress, resilience, and leadership effectiveness. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how self-doubt, mental fortitude, and adaptive leadership evolve over time, particularly in post-pandemic contexts. Such research could assess whether adaptive strategies developed during the new normal become embedded practices or diminish once crisis conditions subside. Future research may explore institutional interventions, such as psychosocial support programs, leadership training, and policy reforms, that enhance extension leaders' resilience and well-being. Examining the effectiveness of these interventions would contribute to the development of more robust, ethical, and sustainable community extension systems in higher education.

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