EMPOWERING THROUGH AWARDS AND RECOGNITION: STRENGTHENING TEACHERS' MORALE

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ABSTRACT

The study unfolded the experiences of the school heads in award and recognition approach for teachers. This study employed a phenomenological research design which aims to determine the experiences and perceptions of the eight (8) participants. The generated themes on the positive experiences of teachers were improved work and creation of school-community Collaboration. On the other hand, the themes under negative experiences were the feeling of being left out, the sense of distrust and envy, and increased stress levels. Meanwhile, in the coping mechanisms of school heads in awards and recognition approach for the teachers, three subthemes were generated which were re-defining school cultures, providing appropriate motivation, and enacting different roles. Lastly, for the insights drawn from the experiences of the school heads three subthemes were also generated which were instituting a positive culture, creating trusting relationships, and provide adaptive leadership. These implied that school heads can provide effective support to teachers when utilizing a collaborative and coordinated strategy to facilitate improvement in teacher performance. Moreover, the results generated provided comprehensive data in conducting future research with similar scope. This study may be published in reputable research journal.

KEYWORDS: *Experiences, awards, recognition, approach, Tagum City*

INTRODUCTION

In the global world is that people influence important aspects of organizational performance in a multitude of ways. People conceive and implement the organizational strategy, while the mix of people and systems mostly determines an organization's capabilities. Competencies are required to execute the strategy, and these competencies are primarily a function of the skills and knowledge of an organization's human capital. Therefore, if an organization is to treat its employees as its most important asset, it has to be knowledgeable about what it is that motivates people to reach their full potential (Lawler, 2003).

Appropriate motivation plays a vital role in determining the quality of teacher work efforts. And the incentive system of the school largely determines how strongly teachers will be: motivated to perform their work responsibilities! These simple, intuitively obvious propositions have been largely ignored in most recent efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the public schools. Recognition is a very rewarding experience for an excellent classroom teacher and his or her students. Recognition for teachers builds off of some of the well-known extrinsic and intrinsic motivational theories. It offers hope for meaningful recognition to the other teachers working to improve student-learning outcomes. It also brings pride and support from the teacher's students, administration, governing board, and the general public (Andrews, 2000).

However, in USA and Australia, there is a lack of recognition existing for outstanding teachers in the US and Australia. Based on the survey of 23,569 teachers in the countries found that only 50 percent of the teachers reported a recognition program existed in their schools. It is hard to believe that many school administrators, teacher unions, and governing boards have neglected to realize the importance of recognition as a motivator for their teachers (Andrews, 2000).

Further, in Somalia, it appears to be mounting concerns that unacceptably high proportions of teachers working in private secondary schools in Somalia are poorly motivated due to a combination of low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives, and inadequate controls and other behavioral sanctions. Consequently, standards of professional conduct and performance are low and falling, and incentives for teachers to perform well are frequently weak. This has resulted in high labor turnover, teachers' part-timing as a means of topping up on the basic salary by teaching in two or more schools, late coming, lack of commitment to the job, and dodging classes which consequently results in poor performance of teachers and hence students.

In the public school system in the Philippines, where the organization is the largest, problems arise in terms of giving awards to teachers. The basis for giving awards and recognition depends on the availability of savings. There is an allotment of 5% of the human resource management, yet it is not even the priority or not enough for the department to use in recognizing the so many teachers in the entire country.

The award that employees most noticeably receive from their organization is pay, allowances, recognitions, and promotions, etc. These awards are used to encourage the employees to perform their tasks at full potential. Therefore, an organization has to be informed about what motivates people to perform in order to develop their employees' excellence (Lynch, 2000). Teachers are the most important part of the whole education system. Effective teaching and learning activity are impossible to take place if teachers themselves are not motivated. The theoretical foundation of this study was based on expectancy theory of motivation. It is stated that employees' performance is an outcome of their expectations (Vroom, 1964).

In the school setting, most teachers are not awarded and recognized for the countless hours they spend preparing for their students and the improvement they contribute to the learning outcomes. In an effort to determine what teachers are seeking, this study will collect data from the schools in Tagum Central Division, Tagum City. In doing so, this study investigated the experiences of school administrators on the awards and

recognition approach for teachers. Awards are essential in order to motivate teachers and to make their performance effective. Through this investigation, one will discover some of the types of recognition teachers are looking for and some of the ways in which these recognition mechanisms may impact the culture of the school.

Purpose of the Study
The goal of the study was to investigate the experiences of school administrators on the awards and recognition approach for teachers. In a profession where teacher burnout is a major issue, it is necessary to determine ways to motivate and encourage individuals to continue doing this difficult work. When a teacher is motivated, it is more likely for them to have a positive impact on students and the school. This may also make the work environment more pleasant. In order to best support teachers, it is vital to understand what forms of recognition teachers seek. In addition, when such recognition systems are introduced, it is important to understand how the system may alter the environment.

Research Questions
The primary research questions of this study are the following:
1.   What are the experiences of school heads on awards and recognition approaches for teachers?
2.   How do they cope with the challenges of awards and recognition approach for teachers?
3.   What educational insights are drawn from the study?

METHODOLOGY
Design and Procedure
This study adopted a phenomenological qualitative research design, exploring the lived experiences of school principals regarding awards and recognition for teachers. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of experiences within a specific group, aiming to derive a deep, meaningful understanding of a phenomenon through detailed descriptions. The primary data collection method involved long interviews with school principals who have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon. Additional data were gathered from documents and observations. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then analyzed to identify themes and patterns that provide insights into the principals' experiences.

Ethical Considerations
Ethical integrity was paramount in the research design. The study adhered to the principles of social value, informed consent, and the minimization of risk. Participants, all professional teachers, voluntarily joined the study after being thoroughly informed about its purpose and procedures. They signed consent forms ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any point. The study also complied with the Data Privacy Act to protect participant identities, using pseudonyms in all reports.

Research Participants
The research involved eight school heads from Tagum Central District, selected through purposive sampling based on their experience and performance ratings. This method ensured that the participants could provide relevant and significant insights into the research questions.

Role of the Researcher
The researcher acted as a facilitator, expert in qualitative methods, data collector, and analyst. This involved conducting unbiased interviews, ensuring competent data collection and analysis, and safeguarding the data and participants. The researcher maintained a neutral stance throughout the study to avoid introducing personal bias into the data interpretation.

Data Collection
Data collection followed strict procedural guidelines, including obtaining necessary permissions from educational authorities and ensuring participant consent. The in-depth interviews were conducted using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was validated by experts to ensure clarity and relevance. Responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis
The analysis utilized a thematic approach as described by Creswell (2012), beginning with data familiarization, followed by coding, and then theme development. The themes were reviewed to ensure they provided a comprehensive understanding of the data. This process involved a blend of inductive and deductive reasoning, ensuring a robust analysis that reflects the participants' true experiences and perspectives.

Analytical Framework
The analytical framework followed Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) five-step process: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation. This structured approach allowed for a systematic analysis of the data, ensuring that findings were reflective of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Trustworthiness of the Study
The study's trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Techniques such as prolonged engagement with participants, validation of findings through participant checks, and external audits were employed to enhance the study's reliability and validity. The researcher's adherence to a methodical process in data handling and analysis further reinforced the trustworthiness of the findings.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION
Experiences of School Heads on Awards and Recognition Approach for teachers
School principals encounter both positive and negative experiences with the awards and recognition approaches for teachers. The good and the bad experiences of school principals form an essential part of the context of their approach to the teachers. These experiences may influence subsequent behavior and may be especially important when they form the context for situations involving some level of risk or uncertainty.

Positive Experiences Paragraph
Awards and recognition systems in schools serve as potent motivators that significantly enhance teacher performance and engagement. Regular evaluations and adjustments, as highlighted by Susta (2019), ensure these systems remain relevant and effective, thus maximizing positive outcomes such as enhanced teacher performance and alignment with organizational goals. Beyond tangible rewards, these recognitions lead to intrinsic benefits including goal setting, professional development, and collaborative growth among teachers, as suggested by Kelly (1999). Additionally, such programs foster school-community collaboration, enhancing community involvement and support for the educational process. As noted by Andrews (2011), these recognition initiatives not only highlight individual accomplishments but also inspire other teachers and students, thereby setting high aspirational standards and strengthening community ties through visible recognition of teachers' hard work.

Negative Experiences Paragraph
However, the implementation of awards and recognition systems can also lead to several negative experiences among teachers. One significant issue is the feeling of exclusion for those who are not

recognized, which can diminish morale and engagement, as described by Heneman (1989) and Breccia (2013). This sense of being left out can lead to disengagement and reduced job satisfaction among non-awarded teachers. Furthermore, as explored by Lange (2015) and Wang & Sung (2016), such systems can inadvertently foster negative competition, envy, and distrust among colleagues, disrupting teamwork and the collaborative environment that is crucial for educational

effectiveness. Additionally, the pressure to achieve and maintain recognition can lead to increased stress and anxiety, negatively impacting teachers' mental health and leading to burnout, which was highlighted in studies by Kelley (1999) and Saunderson (2010). This stress can decrease overall job performance and satisfaction, underlining the need for careful implementation and management of recognition systems within schools.
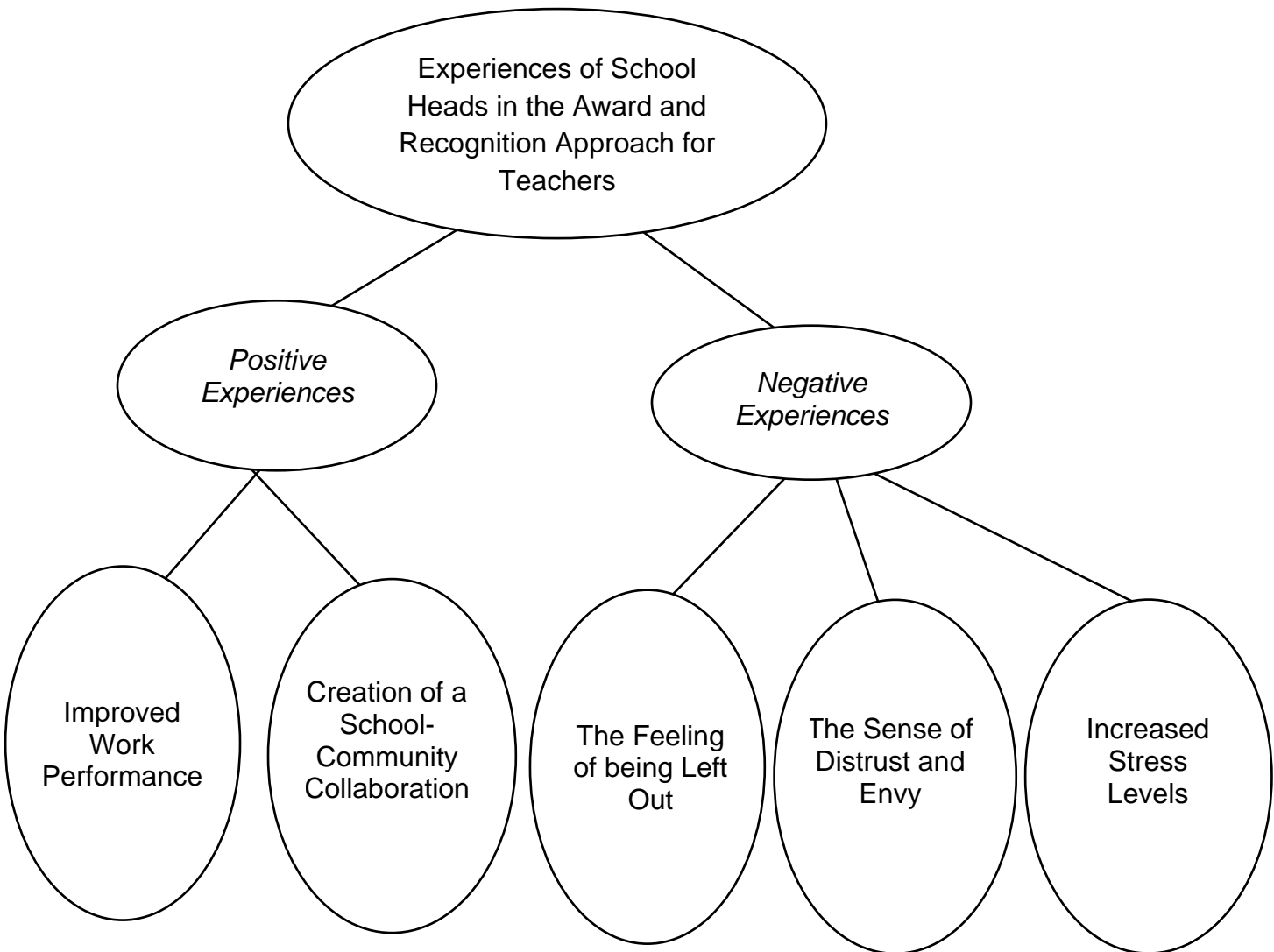

Figure 1: Emerging Themes on the Experiences of School Heads in Award and Recognition Approach for Teachers

Coping ways with the challenges of awards and recognition approach for teachers.
School heads employ several dynamic coping strategies to manage the complexities associated with awards and recognition systems for teachers. These strategies focus on re-defining school cultures, providing appropriate motivation, and enacting diverse roles, aimed at enhancing the efficacy and acceptance of these systems.

Re-defining School Cultures. School heads play a pivotal role in molding and adapting school cultures to support the effective implementation of awards and recognition programs. This involves a deep understanding and observation of existing cultural dynamics within the school, as suggested by Handrich (2014), who emphasizes the importance of school heads understanding teacher attitudes and the overall school atmosphere. Drew (2011) further asserts that school heads can enhance the positive aspects of school culture by integrating new values and attitudes that support recognition programs, thereby fostering a positive environment. Clear objectives and criteria,

which Becker (2011) notes as crucial for clarity and effective evaluation, are essential components that school heads work to define, ensuring that teachers fully understand what is expected of them and how they can meet these expectations.

Providing Appropriate Motivation. Motivation is critical in driving teacher participation and excellence within award systems. School heads focus on aligning motivation with the teachers' goals and the broader organizational objectives. The definitions by Obi Ndu, Ocho, and Okeke (1977) and Peretomode (1991) highlight motivation as a complex, socially learned behavior essential for achieving organizational goals. School heads involve teachers in decision-making processes regarding the award criteria and fund allocation, a practice supported by Andrews (2009) and Rosver (2010), who argue that such involvement is crucial for enhancing decision quality and promoting democratic values within the school setting.

Enacting Different Roles. The multifaceted roles school heads adopt are critical in navigating the award and recognition

landscape effectively. These roles, as identified by Casas (2014), range from interpretive to representational and authenticating, each playing a distinct part in shaping school and classroom cultures. By actively participating and supporting various facets of the award process, school heads ensure strategic implementation and visibility, which is essential for the success of recognition programs. These roles enable school heads to create and maximize opportunities for teachers, facilitating their professional development and aligning with the school's goals.
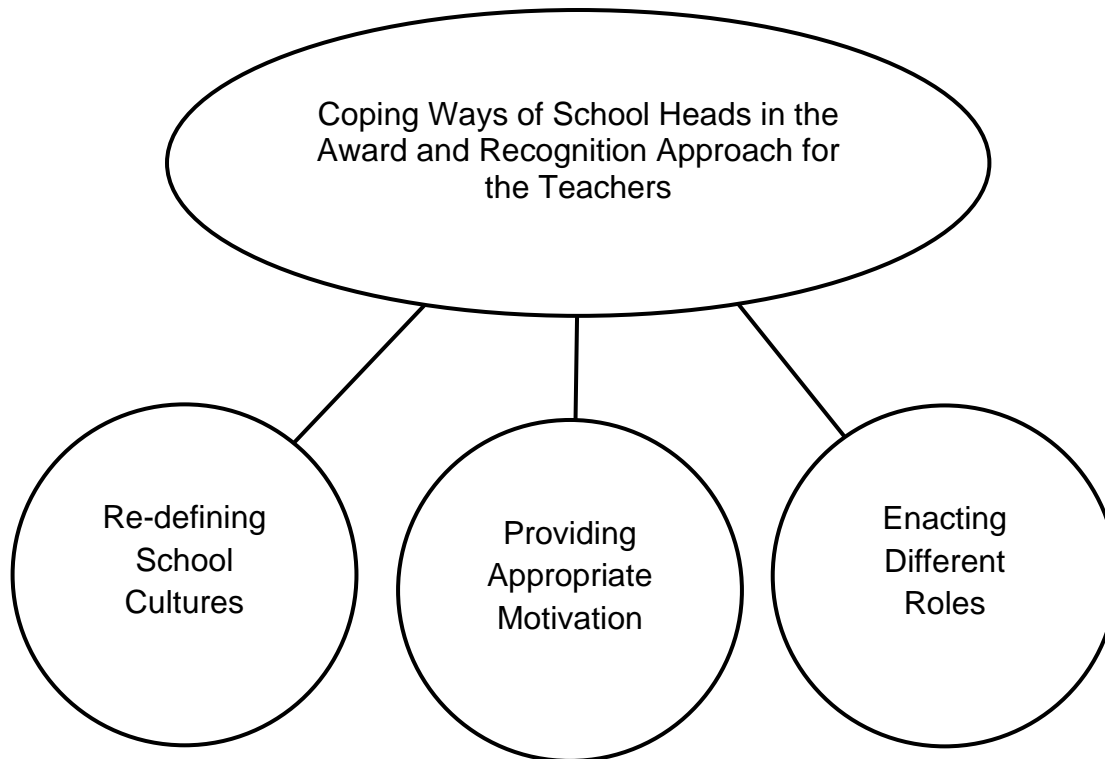

Figure 2. Emerging themes on the Coping Ways of School Heads in the Award and Recognition Approach for Teachers

Educational Management Insights Drawn from the Experiences of the School Heads

Instituting a Positive Culture. School heads recognize the critical role of cultivating a positive school culture to enhance the effectiveness of award and recognition programs for teachers. According to MacNeil, Prater, & Busch (2009), a positive school climate, which includes aspects like goal focus, cohesiveness, and adaptability, is foundational for fostering an environment where teachers feel motivated and valued. Participants in the study underscored the importance of creating a supportive atmosphere where teachers are encouraged and recognized, leading to reduced stress and increased job satisfaction. This aligns with Lindahl's (2001) assertion on the interdependence of school climate and teacher performance, suggesting that a supportive climate enhances both teacher satisfaction and effectiveness.

Creating Trusting Relationships. The ability to build trusting relationships is another vital aspect of educational management. Effective communication and empathy are essential, as they allow school heads to understand and address the concerns and aspirations of teachers. This collaborative approach not only involves teachers in the decision-making process but also strengthens their commitment to organizational goals, as noted by participants who emphasized the importance of empathy and understanding in leadership roles. The concept of emotional intelligence, as described by Mindtools (2019), plays a significant role here, enabling school heads to manage their emotions and better connect with their staff, thereby fostering a more cooperative and productive educational environment.

Providing Adaptive Leadership. Adaptive *leadership is crucial for managing the diverse needs and capabilities of teachers, especially in the context of recognition and awards. School heads must be flexible and responsive to the varying expectations and professional goals of their staff. This involves creating opportunities for all teachers to achieve and be recognized, regardless of their starting points. Participants highlighted the need for school heads to harness the collective knowledge and expertise of their staff to navigate the challenges posed by award systems effectively. This approach aligns with Heifetz's (2018) views on adaptive leadership, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative problem-solving and innovation in contemporary educational settings.*
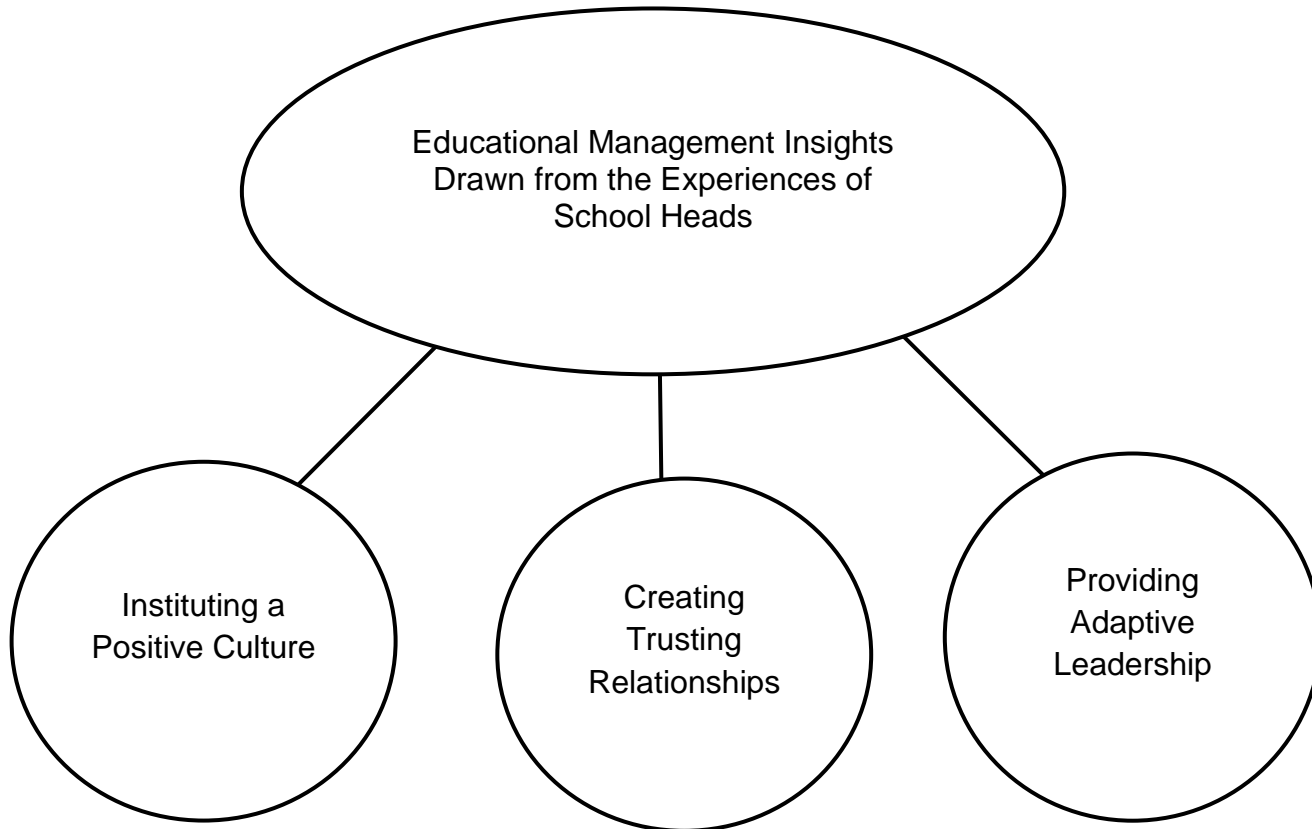
Figure 3. Emerging Themes on the Educational Management Insights Drawn from the Experiences of the School Heads

Implications and Future Directions
Implications
The goal of this study is to investigate the experiences of the school heads in awards and recognition approach for the teachers. The first theme, which is all about the experiences of the school heads, generated five subthemes. The themes under positive experiences were improved work and creation of school-community collaboration.

Improved work. Implementing an effective awards and recognition approach creates a positive work environment that stimulates teacher growth and professional development. It encourages teachers to strive for excellence and engage in continuous learning. The prospect of recognition motivates educators to explore innovative teaching methods, participate in professional development programs, and pursue higher levels of academic qualifications. Ultimately, this improves the overall quality of education provided to students.

Creation of school-community collaboration. A successful awards and recognition approach requires collaboration between schools and communities. By involving the community, we extend appreciation beyond the school walls and strengthen the bond between educators and the society they serve. Community members can provide valuable insights, nominate outstanding teachers, and participate in the recognition process. This collaboration helps foster a sense of shared responsibility for education, as well as a deeper understanding of the challenges and triumphs in the teaching profession.

On the other hand, the themes under negative experiences were the feeling of being left out, the sense of distrust and envy, and increased stress levels.

The feeling of being left out
One of the significant challenges faced by school heads in implementing awards and recognition approaches is the feeling of being left out. As the focus shifts towards recognizing teachers, school heads might perceive their own contributions as undervalued or overshadowed. This can lead to a sense of exclusion and demotivation among school leaders. It is vital to address this concern by actively involving school heads in the selection process and recognizing their leadership and administrative achievements. Their role in creating an enabling environment for teachers should be acknowledged and appreciated.

Sense of distrust and envy
The implementation of an awards and recognition approach can inadvertently create a sense of distrust and envy among teachers and school heads. When recognition is perceived as unfair, biased, or influenced by favoritism, it erodes trust and damages the overall morale within the school community. School heads must ensure transparency and objectivity in the selection process, clearly communicating the criteria for awards and recognition. Open dialogue, feedback mechanisms, and appeals processes can help address any concerns related to fairness, thereby fostering a sense of trust and unity among all stakeholders.

Increased stress levels
The teacher awardee then has a reputation to live up to his/her accomplishments. While some saw this as a positive outcome, others may feel they were required to live up to what the award presented, always requiring them to work harder.

These implied that the tremendous successes made by school heads on the subject of award and recognition approach for teachers are enhancing the work performance of the teachers and inviting additional opportunities for school and community partnership. However, they face a significant obstacle in the form

of the establishment of a healthy and safe working environment for the teachers within the organization.

Pertaining to the coping ways of school heads in the award and recognition approach for teachers, three subthemes were generated, which were re-defining school cultures, providing appropriate motivation, and enacting different roles.

Re-defining school cultures
Principals can promote a collaborative school culture by emphasizing teamwork and shared goals. Encourage teachers to collaborate on projects, share best practices, and support one another's professional growth. By nurturing a culture of collaboration, principals create an atmosphere where teachers view recognition and awards as celebrations of collective achievements rather than individual accomplishments.

Providing appropriate motivation
Appropriate motivation will help teachers achieve their career goals. If an individual is motivated, there is a high chance that they will be able to attain the performance standard and criteria. Job satisfaction would increase too.

Enacting different roles
Principals should play an active role in planning and executing recognition programs. Ensure that the selection process is fair, transparent, and inclusive. Involve teachers, students, parents, and community members in the decision-making process, thus reinforcing a sense of shared responsibility and ownership.

These implied that the school heads are working on the internal aspect of awards and recognition for the teachers. They restructure the school culture to make the approach accepting for the teachers. They also provide appropriate motivation to enhance teachers' commitment and engagement. And they enact different roles to enable teachers to acquire the varied support they need to achieve the performance standard.

Further, on the educational insights drawn from the experiences of school heads, the following subthemes emerged: instituting a positive culture, creating trusting relationships, and providing adaptive leadership.

Instituting a positive culture
Clearly define the core values and principles that guide the school community. These values should emphasize the importance of excellence in teaching, continuous learning, collaboration, and student success. Aligning the awards and recognition scheme with these values, principals can promote a positive culture that values and celebrates the achievements of teachers.

Creating trusting relationships
Foster open and transparent communication channels between principals and teachers. Regularly share information about the awards and recognition scheme, its purpose, criteria, and selection process. Ensure that the process is fair, objective, and accessible to all. Providing clear communication, principals build trust and confidence among teachers, reducing any apprehensions or misconceptions.

Provide adaptive leadership
Principals should articulate a clear vision for the awards and recognition scheme that aligns with the overall goals of the school. Inspire teachers by communicating the purpose, significance, and long-term benefits of recognition. A visionary leader creates a sense of purpose and direction, motivating teachers to strive for excellence and actively participate in the program.

These implied that school heads can provide effective support to teachers when utilizing a collaborative and coordinated strategy to facilitate improvement in teacher performance. The school leaders may strengthen the capability of both organizations and teachers, finally resulting in the achievement of great outcomes.

Future Directions
Data obtained had future directions for various stakeholders in education, including DepEd Officials, school administrators, teachers, students, other stakeholders, and future researchers.

DepEd Officials
The findings of the study prompt them to give webinars and training to school heads so that they could cope effectively with the challenges of the award and recognition approach for the teachers.

School Administrators
The findings of the study give insights on what strategies and best practices should be incorporated in giving awards and recognition to the teachers. The findings would also enlighten them on the importance of acknowledging the efforts and contributions of the teachers at school. The findings would also help school administrators to adjust and adapt to the varying needs of the teachers.

Teachers
The findings of the study give them information on the common challenges in awards and recognition; hence, they can benchmark collaborative efforts that would assist them in gaining awards and recognition.

Other Stakeholders
The findings of this study encourage stakeholders to be involved in planning school initiatives that help and assist teacher development. Such initiatives could be included in the crafting of a School Improvement Plan (SIP) in which stakeholders could participate.

Researchers
Several areas for future studies within this field remain need to be explored. Further development on the similar and different contexts can be done in this study. It is recommended to consider the experiences of the school heads in using varied ways of giving awards and recognition to the teachers (e.g., public recognition, private recognition, peer recognition, etc.). Surely, this will yield advantageous findings and implications tailored to the strengthening of awards and recognition approach in schools and other hierarchical organizations in the education sector.

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