

Keeping them in the Workplace:A Grounded Theory Study of Filipino Administrator's Motivation

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Abstract: Middle-level administrators (MLAs) face an uncomfortable position of responsibility and accountability, being sandwiched between the top management and operational personnel in schools. Due to the roles expected of them by people above and below them, studies presented that issues such as power struggle, unrecognized, and narrow opportunities continue to surface. The demand placed in the role of MLAs prompted the point of inquiry of this paper. This study presented the motivation behind their application or acceptance of their position as MLAs via a constructivist grounded theory. The developed themes regarding motivational factors were (1) the need to achieve, (2) a positive organizational climate, (3) professional advancement, and (4) recognition. The sources of their motivation were supportive colleagues, positive reinforcement, and the accomplishment of shared goals. These determined motivational factors significantly impact their productivity, competence, and their job satisfaction. Establishing a sound climate and merit system conducive to the MLAs' needs were further recommended.

Keywords: mid-level administrators, employee recognition, human resource management, school leadership and organization, employees

1. Introduction

The implementation of school policies and regulations relies heavily on middle-level administrators (MLAs). They are positioned in the middle of the organization's hierarchy, behind senior management but above the lowest level of operational workers. Consequently, they are accountable to the upper management for their department's functions and are supposed to motivate people beneath them to do effectively. They hold a semi-executive position, bridging the gap between the executive level and supervisory line management (Cao et al., 2016; Dance, 2011; Diefenback, 2011; Robbins & Coulter, 2012; van der Voet, 2016). In addition, they can help bridge or create knowledge gaps, which can have positive or negative effects on the implementation of innovation (Birken et al., 2012, van der Voet et al., 2016). Due to the fact that MLAs are located between crossing roadways of staff, it is essential to determine if they help eliminate or create blockages that impair the institution's operations.

The competency of managers has been the subject of numerous researches, although those concentrating on middle managers remain untapped (Qiao & Wang, 2009, cited in Sudirman et al., 2019). Furthermore, little effort has been made to comprehend the functions of MLAs and the factors influencing their motivation and job performance (Hernandez, 2010)."What is happening to middle management?" (Dopson and Stewart, 1990, p.3) has been a point of inquiry for an extended period (Harding et al., 2014). MLAs are identified to be the unhappiest among the workers for being "stuck in the middle of everything" (Zenger & Folkman, 2014), yet Hernandez (2010) argues that they belong to the biggest group of administrative positions on schools nowadays. This is true of the majority of schools in the Philippines, and with this in mind, the purpose of this study was to determine the driving force behind the retention of MLAs despite their onerous duties.

Middle managers are best positioned to steer policy-induced change (Preston & Price, 2012) and should remain highly effective in their roles to attain a successful organization (Mustafa, M.J. et al., 2021). With the absence of research found on MLAs (Gmelch & Miskin, 2011), the current paper aimed to elucidate factors that influence MLAs' motivation and, consequently, the sources they perceive to positively impact their motivation that significantly affect the improvement in institutions. Through a grounded theory approach, it is hoped that this study will lead administrators to new insights in understanding factors that influence motivation and, subsequently, employee performance. The insights from this study can be helpful in administrative functions such as job allocation, incentivizing performances, and professional advancements that will lead to the success of the entire school organization.

1.1 Middle-level administrators

Middle management is key to organizational success. It is the heart of all organizations, and such workers are frequently at the policy-practice interface; they implement policy and are often vital in ensuring others do (Mustafa, M.J. et al., 2021). They are the decision-makers, typically with the functional scope of authority, below the top executive level but above supervisory ranks (Glaser et al., 2016). Furthermore, they are boundary-spinning actors who operate at a critical intersection between the firm and its environment while also connecting executive and supervisory tiers within the organization (Randhawa et al., 2019; Reimer et al., 2016). Their ascending leadership and descending influence affect how organizational activities are aligned with the strategic context (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). They assist in facilitating the need for change in executive communications and in implementing change in interactions with lower levels (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011). They are central to the implementation of school policies and regulations.

Moreover, Kanter, et al. (1992), as cited in Malik (2012) pointed out that their central position is stuck between those below, who require their cooperation, and those above, who delegates practical authority to carry out stated policy. As a result, they have historically been viewed as information providers and consumers of decisions made by top-level managers or the organization's strategic apex. Jansen and Samuel (2014) considered them essential participants in attaining organizational goals by inspiring staff, removing roadblocks, clarifying paths to goals, and compensating staff appropriately. In support of MLAs' relevance in an organization, the current study asserts that the middle management perspective is a necessary point of reference to uncover motivation factors as their stronghold to their position.

Being in the middle of things produces struggles for MLAs. Hernandez (2010) found out that the issues and experiences of frustration among them include perceived lack of opportunity for career growth, stress, unclear job expectations, role conflict, lack of recognition, and pay level. It is necessary to consider the factors that affect the motivation of mid-level administrators – what contributes and what hinders attaining job satisfaction and morale impact their productivity at work. Being central and serving as a link between and across the organizational structure would undoubtedly create ripple effects up and down, impacting those they supervise and work with. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the components that motivate them to perform as expected or even above their role.

1.2 Motivation in MLAs

Tenacity, determination, and visibility at the forefront of the project are critical characteristics of lead leadership (Laureani & Antony, 2015). Motivation, according to research, directs an individual's effort and drive to perform. This means that individuals are motivated as a result of their performance and the anticipated outcomes of their actions (Vroom, 1964). As regards the plethora of studies about MLAs, the number of studies examining the impact of individual emotions and moods on employee commitment and job satisfaction has increased (Chen et al., 2012; Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017; Jung & Yoon, 2015). These studies suggest that firms should hire and promote individuals on the basis of their motivation and trait abilities in order to do so efficiently (Sanghi, 2016). On the same vein, this current study was designed to elucidate the factors that influence MLAs' motivation levels, as they perform their job functions and their intention to remain or leave the job. This study also tried to explore the sources of such motivations and the primordial reason of their demotivation.

Salary can be a source of motivation among mid-level administrators. Aguinis (2013) noted that monetary incentives might influence employee motivation and attainment, which can result in necessary performance improvements. Moreover, recognition improves morale and satisfaction when affirmed and appreciated for their work and contribution. They have to feel valued and enjoyed to be motivated to work harder and be more loyal toward the organization. Mahazril et al. (2012) also opined that people are motivated to work through rewards, recognition, and communication. Recognition increases productivity and performance on the work, regardless of whether the activity is performed for the first time or is repeated. Harvey (2013) feels that the majority of staff has an intense desire to feel valued, recognized, and acknowledged for their efforts. As a result, businesses must go beyond traditional economic motivations like employment opportunities and compensation. Businesses are unfamiliar with certain methods of valuing employees. Several low-cost methods of expressing gratitude to employees that go above and beyond include praising them frequently via notes addressed to their homes. Certain businesses run an employee-of-the-month program, which is the simplest and least time-consuming strategy to guarantee that workforce remains appreciative. Responsibility and autonomy are not universally appreciated in organizations (Re'em, 2011). According to the author, while some employees relish and desire it, others avoid it. He stated that training is critical for employee motivation because it prevents individuals from failing as a result of the lack of capabilities. Consequently, continuous staff training is necessary to increase the likelihood of ensuring a great and competent job.

1.3 The aim of the study

This study was designed to increase the literature on the motivation of mid-level administrators in general while focusing on mid-level academic administrators. Specifically, the focus of the present study is to identify the factors affecting mid-level academic administrators' motivation in handling their roles in the position. This will benefit employers in understanding factors that affect employee motivation, and subsequently performance, which could be useful in a multitude of realms ranging from the assignment of job responsibilities to the creation of employee acknowledgement, professional development, and reward programs. For mid-level administrators, this work may provide insight into their motivations to perform and those work variables that lead to increased motivation, which, in turn, may be helpful as they seek increased responsibility, job changes, or promotion.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This qualitative study addressed the research question through a grounded theory method as there is scarcity in studies about the motivation factors of MLAs in the context of developing countries. The seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined grounded theory as a means of discovering categories and frameworks that emerged from the data gathered (Charmaz 2006). The paper's discovery of the emergent theory was aided by the constructivist grounded theory approach of Charmaz (1995). This variant of grounded theory was employed in this study as the researchers took the role of architects in the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The interviews were treated as a mutual interaction of the researchers and the informants, and the experiences were investigated and proved (Charmaz, 2014; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2018; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Willig, 2013;).

2.2. Data source and collection

Factors that affect mid-level administrators' motivation levels were examined through interviews and FGDs based on initial sampling and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The initial selection was made through a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The subsequent stage was pursued through theoretical sampling. The participants were invited and selected to facilitate constant comparative analysis and revisit to provide supplementary data. The theoretical sampling also allowed the researchers to follow up on earlier leads and strengthen the research process.

The informants (Table 1) were invited for an intensive interview (Charmaz, 2014) to ensure a more focused set of questions, minimizing variations in responses, therefore, allowing easier comparisons and facility in the

analysis of data. The focus group discussion (two groups) employed a combination of conversational and structured approaches. The conversational approach allowed for the exploration of new information based on the answers given by the participants. On the other hand, using a more structured approach through an interview guide enabled the researcher to clarify data culled from the open-ended interview guide questionnaire. This also ensured a more shared understanding of concepts based on responses between the participants and the researcher. To ensure the confirmability of the data gathered, the researchers utilized a questionnaire with an open-ended questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussion on gathering adequate data to address the research question. The authors also invited external researchers to validate the refined data based on the raw data collected.

Table 1. Profile of Participants (N=9)

Participant	Degree	Years in Profession	Years as MLA	Subject Area
1	MA units	24	3	Reading
2	MA units	10	3	Music and PE
3	MA degree	16	2	AP or Social Studies
4	MA degree	12	4	English
5	MA units	19	4	Filipino
6	MA units	13	3	Mathematics
7	MA degree	11	3	Christian Living
8	MA degree	16	1	Science
9	MA units	16	3	Grade Coordinator

2.3 Data Analysis

Data in the form of texts generated from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed and reviewed to generate the theory (Cohen et al., 2007). The complex data obtained through the instruments were converted to smaller analyzable segments during initial coding (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016). The data was reduced to the tiniest amount of information that communicated a single concept. Following that, the researchers utilized focused coding (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016) to rebuild meaning from the structures that evolved from participant-researcher interactions and categorized them analytically.

Through the categorization, concepts and construct realities were identified. Further, axial coding (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016) was implemented to establish the relationship of the categories identified and designated. The process was the deliberation on the relationships of the concepts derived from the categories and what constitutes them.

The categories and sub-categories that emerged were processed through constant comparative and theoretical sorting (Charmaz, 2014; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2018). The researchers invited two informants to facilitate theoretical sampling. The informants provided data needed to fill the research gap invoked in this paper. The simultaneous data collection and analysis concluded until data saturation was achieved. Then, a framework for the factors that influence mid-level academic administrators' motivation was finalized.

3. Results

MLAs have been recognized as a vital unit of administrative functions. There is still a great deal of work to be done in the understanding of the place of MLAs in an institution, albeit, their significant roles in school administration are garnering increased attention. Due to this prevalence, this study was done to look at the motivational factors MLAs have in pursuing their work. Below presents the information on this and the specific sources of motivation and demotivation.



Figure 1. Custodio, Raguindin, and Bulusan's Arrow-up Model of Motivational Factors that Impact Mid-Level Academic Administrators' Performance

ALT TEXT: This figure shows a huge arrow pointing northeast. It is segmented into four parts diagonally. Each part is written with one theme that emerged from this study. The tail of the arrow inscribes the focus of the study—Motivations of Mid-level academic administrators.

3.1

Motivational Factors

Need to achieve. An inspection of five essential questions stemmed from the unfolding of four themes (Figure 1). Theme 1, Need to Achieve, underlines the importance of accomplishment and the purpose of contribution to the school's mission. Participants 8, 4, and 2 all mentioned that the improvement in their area (the content of the subject), the "feeling of accomplishing a task," and knowing that they contribute to the development of the school are motivating factors for staying in the position of mid-level administrator. Participant 1 specifically pointed out when asked about the reason for entering the position.

I believe that showing my learnings will bring differences and improvements in the area where I am assigned (P1).

Participant 6 mentioned the same reason when asked about the cause of performing better than others, saying:

Some of the goals that I have set have come to fruition (P6).

Employee motivation, as defined by Robbins (2005), is the readiness to put significant effort toward corporate goals, contingent on the activity's capacity to meet a personal need. And as reflected by the participants, their motivating factor for staying in the position is working to accomplish shared goals.

Positive organizational climate. The second theme, positive organizational climate, recognizes the importance of support from bosses and colleagues. Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 even mentioned that the appreciation and the support of people around them made them stay in the position even when they thought about leaving it. When asked about the aspect of the position they enjoy the most, Participant 5 responded camaraderie and support system as the most enjoyable things. Additionally, in the interview conducted, it was revealed that these subject area

coordinators have a "core group" where regular meetings outside the school period are held, in which sharing about personal and professional struggles happen. This is where they help one another by giving advice and tips to improve themselves. Participant 7 stated the same answer as she said:

I enjoy the personal and professional sharing we have. I also enjoy helping my colleagues with their tasks.

When asked about what motivates them to perform in their job, participants 4, 7, and 8 mentioned:

When surrounded by people, I can work/get along with / be happy with (P4).

A harmonious relationship with the people I work with motivates me to perform my work (P7).

[...] support from fellow coordinators and teachers (P8).

Being surrounded by a healthy environment is a motivating factor for MLA retention in their challenging work. Moreover, the consistent, robust, constructive, collegial relationship contributes to helping MLAs feel contented in their position.

Professional advancement. Many respondents indicated that the opportunity to engage in professional development activities that help them acquire new skills and competencies motivates them to continue serving as MLAs. This theme reflects the importance of opportunities for lifelong learning, career development, and advancement.

Participant 1, when asked about the reason for entering the academic, administrative position, said:

[...] this is for career advancement, learning opportunities, general enrichment, and potential long-term benefits (P1).

Participants 1, 3, 5, and 6 cited attending seminars and workshops as means of professional growth and career advancement are the most enjoyable aspects of their position. Specifically, participant 3 stated the same reason as she explained explicitly the opportunity for growth she might have in the post.

I want to experience growth in my career, master the content and skills of AP [Araling Panlipunan or Social Studies] across levels, learn how to handle teachers, manage the AP area, and impart my ideas for improvement of the AP area (P3).

Learning is essential for Participants 1, 4, and 8 as they claim to have accepted the position to learn more through having new experiences.

Recognition. Recognized employees' productivity and performance on the job gradually increases, regardless of whether it is a first-time performance or a repeated activity on the job, and ultimately reinforces employee behavior.

This theme underscores the importance of affirmation, evaluation, appreciation, and acknowledgments. When asked about the mid-level administrators' belief that they are rewarded at work, participant 7 mentioned that the appreciation she receives from her colleagues and others works as the reward system. These participants' answers are worth noting:

Because I noticed that our students enjoyed all the activities prepared by the area based on their evaluation/reflection report (P3).

I believe that I am rewarded in any form. Pwedeng pansarili dahil nakagawa nang mabuti at mahusay; [it could be an intrinsic reward when performing well] (P5).

The appreciation I received from my colleagues and others, as the little successes of the teachers in the area are rewards for me. When the administration and the teachers in the area appreciate your effort in what you did for them and the area as a whole, e.g., a simple note of thanks, kind gesture/remarks, "stars" when teachers respect and listen to you despite seniority, experience and the like (P7).

Participants 2 and 3 also stated that praises, acknowledgments, and positive words from others motivate them to do their work.

Rewards also reflect the reason for staying in the position, as participant 6 mentioned getting a star and being appreciated for something I did right as a factor for keeping the job. Participant 4 indicated that extra pay and some school privileges such as personal work computers and own office space are factors for maintaining the position.

3.2 Sources of motivation

Supportive colleagues and accomplishment of shared goals. It is the desirable work climate brought about by supportive colleagues and administration and the desire to achieve the school's goals that motivate them to exert more effort in their work. Participants (f=3) shared that:

It inspires me to do my task as a teacher & academic coordinator (P3).

I am inspired to do better in my work (P4).

[...] inspired to make good outputs (P6).

Positive reinforcement. The rewards that the participants believe that they received indeed influence the participants' motivation. The results manifested those rewards to subject area coordinators' motivation are reflected in their job satisfaction, competence, confidence, inspiration, and productivity. The most notable impact is on productivity and inspiration, as participants (f=4) mentioned:

I am motivated to perform better, search for new ways to learn, improve my skills and increase my performance level (P5).

I tend to work more than my usual quota and work beyond the official time (P6).

[...] these rewards have motivated me more to perform well in my job; these have even helped me with things that I like least (P7).

[...] continue doing my work, submit requirements, do my best, and do more (P8).

Collectively, the participants in this study generally felt rewarded for doing their tasks. Although only three responded positively, claiming that they were rewarded for their effort, while six mentioned that they had been rewarded sometimes, none shared that they were not rewarded. The feelings of being rewarded by the participants of this study are due to the excellent evaluation of the activities prepared by the area for the students, the appreciation and acknowledgments they received from colleagues and others, including the improvement of the teachers in the area.

From the participants' responses [when asked if they believe that their effort was being rewarded], it can be deduced that rewards indeed influence mid-level administrators' motivation in the form of recognition, such as good evaluation, appreciation, and acknowledgment. As participants shared:

The gratitude I received from my colleagues and others and the little successes of the teachers in the area are rewarded for me when acknowledgment is given. I like 'stars' (P7)

The teachers also boost me up, especially when they offer to assist me (P4).

[...] with acknowledgment – orally, written, or "stars," appreciation from my teachers in the area (P8).

The results mentioned above suggest that it is essential to make the mid-level administrators to be recognized. Because of the belief of being valued, acknowledged, and appreciated, mid-level administrators tend to be motivated and work harder to achieve desired objectives. The rewards the participants believed they received influenced their motivation as reflected in their productivity, inspiration, job satisfaction, competence, and confidence. The following participants' remarks support this claim:

(P5): "I am motivated to perform better, search for new ways to learn, improve my skills and increase my performance level."

P6: "I tend to work more than my usual quota beyond the official time..."

P7: "...these rewards have motivated me more to perform well in my job; these have even helped me to things which I like least..."

P8: "...continue doing my work, submit requirements, do my best, and do more..."

3.3 Source of Demotivation

Multiple designations and extra accountability. What they do not like about their work is the bulk of tasks and paperwork to accomplish. Additional teaching load, holding two major positions/areas, being held liable for everything that happens, looking after the teachers and students under them, and ensuring that things are done are reasons that render them prone to stress and burnout. Increased job responsibilities come with greater expectations in terms of output and accountability. Participant 4 adds that there is a feeling of having to "know more" than the people under her supervision.

Mid-level administrators' sense of responsibility keeps them continually focused on performing, even on those aspects of the job they don't necessarily like. They regard their tasks as vital to their function as a supervisor. They believe that they should be responsible for the work they accept. Being able to help the teachers they supervise, mentor, and effect improvements in their subject areas are the responsibilities they should work for.

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that mid-level academic administrators are motivated by their need for achievement, a positive organizational climate, professional advancement, and recognition. These are the outcomes that mid-level administrators perceive to impact their motivations to perform in their expected roles.

Participants in the study said that a desire for success motivates them to perform. Atkinson (1966) suggests that the drive to succeed, or need for achievement, is one of three elements that contribute to success, together with the individual's judgment of the chance of success in carrying out the specific activity and the reward for success. In addition, McClelland (1985) lists the want for accomplishment as one of three prerequisites in his Acquired Needs Theory, along with the desire for affiliation and the desire for power. The demand for achievement represents the participants' drive for success, task mastery, and goal achievement. Many participants regard fulfilling the institution's goals, influencing subject area improvements, aiding instructors in their duties, and coordinating successful school activities as evidence of their achievements. They feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when they complete the given duties in their respective academic areas. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), feelings of curiosity, accomplishment, and pleasure are aspects of intrinsic motivation. Participants are motivated to perform even better as a result of the internal benefits they receive for performing a good job, based on the proofs of achievement they have provided. It is safe to conclude that MLAs maintain a high level of intrinsic drive to remain employed.

This article concludes that employees' motivation is retained when they experience personal satisfaction. As reasons for executing their responsibilities as mid-level academic affairs administrators, nearly all participants cited positive organizational climate indicators such as appreciation, camaraderie, support, and encouragement from coworkers. Positive work environments and situations can increase employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment, according to Jung and Kim (2012). An environment that is engaging, inclusive, supportive, and affirming is one in which learning is pervasive. A school with an inclusive and cooperative structure harnesses the potential of all its members and generates opportunities for their stimulation and enrichment (Raguindin et al., 2021).

Additionally, MLAs must utilize social networks to find, create, and maintain interpersonal interactions (Chen & Gable, 2013). It is critical to cultivate employee support to avoid costly delays, diversions, or even failures of intended change (Mantere et al., 2012). Subsequently, MLAs will require organizational assistance to become more effective strategic change agents (Kelliher & Parry, 2015; Olsen & Stensaker, 2013).

The opportunity to enhance skills is identified as a valued outcome, and participants regard their assignment as a key to professional advancement. They enthusiastically accept orders from their superiors for the MLAs to attend training and seminars. Additionally, they believe that the tasks and assignments intentionally proffered to them by their bosses will help the MLAs develop their leadership and management skills. They think, too, that their job of constantly refining their subject area curricula will enable them to become more effective curriculum planners. These are some instances of mentoring the MLAs, and according to van Zyl and colleagues (2017), mentoring

activities such as these may increase MLAs' self-efficacy and sense of belongingness.

Many of this study participants view recognition as a critical consequence that drives them to complete their duties. The participants underscored the impact of various forms of recognition on their motivation levels, including words of encouragement from colleagues and superiors, being asked to lead a particular school activity, receiving praises from teachers within their subject areas, and garnering acknowledgments from the administration during meetings. Their morale is also boosted when they receive positive feedback from students and parents. Baskar and Rajkumar (2013) discover that the higher the amount of recognition, the larger the motivation and satisfaction, and presumably, the greater the level of performance and productivity. Furthermore, recognition and communication motivate people to work (Candi et al., 2013; Mahazril et al., 2012). On the other side, if the emotional impact of the work performed by MLAs is not recognized, they may feel isolated and abandoned, frustrated, and reluctant to change (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011).

Herzberg et al. (1959) hypothesize that some of the factors that contribute to job satisfaction in the workplace are internal motivators (i.e., achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth) and external or hygiene factors (i.e., company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with superiors, work condition, salary, relationship with peers, personal life, relationship with subordinates, status, security). Likewise, in this study, three sources were identified to help boost the MLA's motivation. These are supportive colleagues, an accomplishment of shared goals, and positive reinforcement. To minimize and overcome resistance, they need to uphold positive, supportive, and trusting relationships with employees (van der Voet, 2016). Mahazril and colleagues. (2012) report that rewards and recognition, and communication are factors of motivation to work.

Additionally, the MLAs in this study emphasize that acknowledgments incrementally improve employee productivity and performance on the job, regardless of whether it is a first-time performance or a routine activity on the job, and ultimately reinforces employee behavior. But yet, it has been underutilized by most managers in the organization. The conclusions of this paper are somewhat corroborated by Yamamoto's (2013) study, which claims that if an employee believes they will be rewarded for their efforts, they will work more. Their position is safe; their performance will naturally improve. Similarly, Mahazril et al. (2012) claim that recognizing and rewarding employees, as well as communicating with them, may motivate them to work.

On the other hand, Aguinis (2013) emphasizes that monetary incentives can significantly predict employee motivation and achievement, resulting in significant returns in firm-level performance. It's also worth noting that the current study asserts the opposite, that mid-level administrators in private primary schools appear to place a higher premium on other personal and interpersonal motivational factors, such as personal worth, recognition, friendship, social pressures from group members, and job satisfaction. Robbins (2005) argues that, in addition to economic demands, man has other social-psychological requirements that should be met to encourage work and therefore increase productivity. Therefore, from the initial findings, the researchers concluded that while money is a motivator, individual social-psychological needs cannot be downplayed as a prime motivational factor. Thus, the need for comprehensive incentive measures for the mid-level administrators must be instituted to ensure a more effective performance.

Work overload and responsibility are two elements that demotivate MLAs. Even being overworked is highlighted as one of the causes of job unhappiness (Zenger & Folkman, 2014). This supported Olsen and Stensaker's (2013) assertion that MLAs confront obstacles such as job-related uncertainty and ambiguity in their roles. Furthermore, issues such as greater responsibility, intensified labor, and prolonged working hours have been found to demotivate MLAs (Kelliher & Parry, 2015; Pick & Teo, 2017). They feel that they have enormous responsibilities and accountability. However, Preston and Price (2012) disagree. According to their research, MLAs have significant amounts of responsibility but lack authority. They are referred to as disempowered middle managers, since superiors delegate obligations without authority (Davis et al., 2014). According to the same study, MLAs have little or no influence in critical decision-making. These demonstrate that MLAs are overworked but have various degrees of influence, authority, and accountability depending on the organization in which they serve. From their comments, it may be inferred that mid-level administrators continue to perform despite work overload

concerns. There are aspects of the employment that they enjoy and are content with, which motivate them to remain in their position.

5. Conclusions and Limitations

This small-scale case study revealed that MLAs are valued members of the school where they function as middle administrators "leading from the middle." The institution's organizational climate that promotes cooperation and collegiality inspires the mid-level administrators in the study to play their roles. As opposed to the studies of Davis et al. (2014) and Preston and Price (2012), MLAs feel accountable for the advancement of the subject area they are assigned to. To be able to contribute to the attainment of institutional objectives is a valued outcome for them. They feel rewarded when they have accomplished tasks that raise the quality of the academic program, which is their responsibility. They see such contribution as their share in the maintenance of a supportive and collegial school climate.

The desire to succeed has emerged as a factor influencing motivation, consequently, affecting the performance of work roles among the mid-level administrators. Their intrinsic motivation to succeed in their subject areas, caused by the successful student activities and opportunity to witness the teachers' development, yields them with a sense of fulfillment and meaning in their work.

Opportunities for professional development were regarded as valued outcomes that increase MLA's motivation. Being continually immersed in the work of curriculum development, program implementation, and faculty training, they believe that the opportunity to be responsible for all those tasks is already a guarantee of professional development. They did express the value they attach to opportunities for further training. Although they recognized the need to improve their competencies given the demands of their role as far as leadership, supervision, and curriculum development are concerned, for them, being "hands-on" is both a responsibility and an opportunity

Recognition determined the mid-level administrators' motivation, and consequently, their performance of their work roles. It was discovered that all types of credit favorably to them can boost their performance. The term "recognition" in this study encompasses all forms of praises, acknowledgements, respect, and trust accorded to the MLAs by their fellow MLAs, teachers, and superiors.

Finally, the mid-level administrators in the study are dedicated educators and academic supervisors in their institution—support for their school's goals and mission surfaces as the prime determinant of their motivation level. Simply put, they perform well if they can intrinsically feel the essence of caring for the school by maintaining respect and value, leading to a positive working climate.

Although some interesting findings were forward, this study was limited to data collected from one institution; hence, caution should be observed when using the findings to generalize in other contexts. Also, the participants consisted of mid-level academic administrators who are relatively new in administration – an average of 3.4 years in the office they hold. They work in a private school and are only assigned to the grade school unit. Nevertheless, findings can still provide relevant consideration for future research. The time devoted to gathering data from the participants and their particular settings posed another limitation. More accurate attributions could have been made from observations of the participants' work environment for an extended time.

To strengthen the positive motivation of MLAs, it is beneficial to establish a sound working climate and merit system that is conducive to the needs of MLA. Thus, a religious review and implementation of a merit and reward system should be done in academic institutions. Furthermore, to address some issues that negatively impact MLA performance, identifying and then providing considerations on the aspects disliked by MLAs, such as too much paperwork, accountability, and teaching load, and policy formation and management decisions, should be addressed. This study's revelation may be used as a springboard for revising school policies and practices. Also, while accountability in the MLAs seems to be a demotivating factor to the participants, other studies state otherwise. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be done to articulate the difference in culture and power among MLAs.

A comparative study of other private primary schools that will focus on factors of top administrators and teachers in their area of effectiveness influencing the motivation of mid-level administrators may be an interesting offshoot of this study. Determining the extent of the effect of top management and the teachers in their area, along with the MLA's motivation, would provide additional insight into understanding MLA's work roles, which may result in the further creation of a holistic relationship and a more balanced environment between top management, teachers, and MLA.

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