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Navigating Educational Leadership: Examining School Heads' Professional Standard Practices and Their Impact on Teacher Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the professional standard practices of school heads as predictors of teachers' satisfaction in public elementary schools in the Division of Agusan del Sur. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 196 school heads and 356 teachers surveyed, alongside interviews with ten (10) purposively selected teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings revealed that school heads demonstrated a very high level of professional standard practices across five domains: leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. Additionally, teachers reported high satisfaction levels concerning their working environment, workload distribution, teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, personal and professional growth, salary and promotion, well-being, and external support systems. A multiple linear regression analysis identified leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, and developing self and others as significant predictors of teachers' overall satisfaction. Moreover, qualitative data highlighted five core themes influencing teacher satisfaction: (1) working environment and organizational culture, (2) distribution of responsibilities and workload, (3) teacher-student relationship, (4) personal and professional growth, and (5) well-being and recognition. Based on these findings, an intervention program was proposed to foster a positive work environment, enhance teacher-student relationships, promote professional growth, ensure justifiable workload distribution, and provide access to mental well-being resources. The study concludes that strong leadership practices contribute significantly to teacher satisfaction, which in turn enhances school performance. It recommends that the Department of Education integrate these insights into policy and planning, school heads refine leadership strategies, and future researchers explore broader contexts to further understand teacher satisfaction determinants.

INTRODUCTION

In educational administration and leadership, extensive research has explored teachers' job satisfaction and the effectiveness of school principals in exercising leadership. This study area has gained significant attention over the years, emphasizing the balance between school principals' administrative and instructional-transformational roles. While instructional-transformational leadership models receive strong support, international literature suggests that many principals prioritize administrative responsibilities over instructional leadership. Notably, a positive correlation exists between principals' instructional and distributed leadership styles and key teacher outcomes such as job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Duyar *et al.*, 2013; Liu & Printy, 2017; Liu & Werblow, 2019).

However, the findings of Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2022) present a critical perspective. High-quality principal preparation and professional development programs significantly contribute to positive principal, teacher, and student outcomes. These outcomes range from principals' preparedness and engagement in effective practices to higher teacher retention and improved student performance. While investing in instructional leadership is beneficial, principals may not witness

substantial growth unless they simultaneously enhance their organizational management skills. This highlights the multifaceted nature of the principal's role, necessitating a balanced approach that integrates instructional leadership with effective organizational management.

Republic Act 9155, also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, mandates that every public elementary and high school or a cluster thereof must have a school head. This school head serves as both an instructional leader and an administrative manager. They are responsible for establishing a team with teachers and learning facilitators to deliver quality educational programs, projects, and services. Additionally, a core of non-teaching staff manages the school's administrative, fiscal, and auxiliary services, ensuring that the institution functions efficiently.

School heads play a crucial role in creating an enabling and supportive environment for effective teaching and learning. Their leadership and management influence the Department of Education's (DepEd) mission to develop quality teachers and holistic learners equipped with 21st-century skills. DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, aligns with this vision, emphasizing the importance of leadership in fostering national development. Furthermore,

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the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) asserts that an education system's quality depends on the quality of its teachers. However, teacher effectiveness is contingent upon effective leadership, policies, and a conducive work environment. The evolving education landscape, influenced by the K to 12 Basic Education Program, ASEAN Integration, and globalization, necessitates a reassessment of DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010. This order pertains to the National Adoption and Implementation of the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH). A review of these competency standards is crucial to ensure their relevance to current educational demands. In response, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) provides a continuum of professional practice to support school heads in career progression amid national and international educational reforms (DO No. 24, s. 2020). DepEd adopted the Professional Program for School Heads (PPSSH), which defines school leadership quality through five key domains: Leading Strategically, Managing School Operations and Learning, Focusing on Teaching and Learning, Developing Self and Others, and Building Connections. These domains establish clear measures for professional learning, competent practice, and effective leadership. By outlining what school heads should know, do, and value, the PPSSH ensures that leadership practices are aligned with learner-centeredness, lifelong learning, and inclusivity.

Additionally, the performance of school heads in Agusan del Sur indicates a pressing need for further development. According to Division Memorandum No. 139, s. 2023, results from the 2023 Learning and Development Needs Assessment (LDNA) revealed that 427 school heads rated themselves as having moderate needs across all five PPSH domains. Additionally, only 9 out of 43 school heads (20%) passed the National Qualifying Examination for School Heads (NQESH) in 2022. These findings emphasize the necessity for continuous training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance school heads' competencies in instructional supervision and organizational management.

The researcher aimed to conduct a comprehensive study on teacher satisfaction and the professional practices of public-school heads in Agusan del Sur. This study examined the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and the leadership practices of school heads. By doing so, it sought to provide valuable insights into how school leadership influenced teacher performance and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. The findings contributed to the ongoing discourse on instructional leadership, organizational management, and the continuous professional development of school heads in the Philippines.

Research Questions

This study examined the professional standard practices of school heads and their impact on teachers' satisfaction.

It focused on understanding how these practices influence the work environment and teacher well-being. Specifically, the study addressed key issues related to leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction, and teacher retention.

1. What is the level of professional standard practices among school principals in terms of leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections?

2. What is the level of job satisfaction among elementary teachers in the Division of Agusan del Sur in terms of: (1) school factors, including working environment, distribution of responsibilities and workload, teacher-student relationship, relationship with peers, personal growth and professional development, salary, promotion, consideration of personal needs, monitoring and evaluation, and well-being and recognition; (2) home factors, including family support, work-life balance, home environment, personal responsibilities, and financial stability; and (3) community factors, including stakeholders' support, school-community relations, access to resources, safety and well-being, sense of belonging, and distance from home to school?

3. Which among the school heads' professional practices, singly or in combination, predicts teachers' satisfaction?

4. As perceived by teachers, what elements in their personal and professional life induce their satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section presents the research method used in the study, including the research design, participants, locale, instruments, data gathering procedure, ethical considerations, and statistical treatment/data analysis.

Research Design

The study employed a sequential explanatory strategy (Creswell, 2003), consisting of three main phases: quantitative data collection and analysis, qualitative data collection and analysis, and result interpretation. The quantitative phase measured the level of professional standard practices among principals in terms of leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. More so, it also assessed teachers' satisfaction based on school factors (working environment, workload distribution, teacher-student relationship, peer relationships, professional development, salary, promotion, personal needs, monitoring, well-being, and recognition), home factors (family support, work-life balance, home environment, personal responsibilities, and financial stability), and community factors (stakeholder support, school-community relations, resource access, safety, belongingness, and home-to-school distance). The qualitative phase provided deeper insights into these aspects, and the triangulation of results enhanced the study's validity, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Research Respondents

The study targeted 3,257 elementary teachers and 386 school principals from the Division of Agusan del Sur. To determine the appropriate sample size, the researcher employed Slovin's formula and used a stratified random sampling scheme to ensure fair representation across municipalities and districts. Stratification was based on geographical location and school classification, allowing for a proportional distribution of participants. The final sample included 356 elementary teachers and 196 school principals, ensuring adequate representation of each subgroup. A detailed breakdown of the population and sample size across different municipalities and districts is provided, reflecting the structured approach used to achieve a representative and unbiased selection of respondents.

Research Instruments

The researcher developed a questionnaire to assess school heads' professional standard practices and teachers' satisfaction. The instrument was submitted to a language expert for content validation, modifications, and feedback. It comprised five components aligned with the Department of Education's standards for school principals. The Teacher's Satisfaction questionnaire was also used to measure teachers' satisfaction. Two types of questionnaires were employed: a rating scale to capture quantitative data, where respondents rated principals using a balanced scale, and open-ended questions to explore qualitative insights. The survey instrument focused on the professional practices of school principals and teachers' satisfaction in Agusan del Sur. The questionnaire included specific verbal descriptions for both scales: one for professional standard practices and one for job satisfaction, with a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." To ensure validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis adviser, panel members, and revised based on their suggestions. A dry run was conducted with 10 respondents to check clarity, followed by a reliability test with 20 teacher-respondents and 10 school heads. Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the reliability of the instrument, ensuring consistent responses.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the study was conducted, the researcher formally sought permission from the School Division Superintendent to inform District Supervisors about the research. The permission request outlined the process for establishing the validity and reliability of the research instruments and described the procedures for administering the survey and interview instruments. This step ensured the cooperation of all parties and maintained transparency throughout the research process. Once approval was granted, the researcher worked with the School Division Superintendent and District Supervisors to administer the questionnaires during district meetings and staff gatherings, ensuring maximum participation.

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires, explained their contents, and provided clear instructions, allowing participants to ask clarifying questions to ensure their responses accurately reflected their experiences.

The researcher also gathered qualitative data through face-to-face interviews with a selected group of participants. These interviews allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into the factors influencing teacher satisfaction and school heads' professional practices. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to elaborate on their personal and professional experiences, and the flexible, conversational format enabled the researcher to probe further into participants' insights. These interviews complemented the survey data by providing rich, contextual information that would not have been captured through the structured questionnaires. This mixed-method approach ensured that both quantitative and qualitative data contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the study's focus.

Statistical Treatment/Data Analysis

The responses to each item were tallied and assigned an equivalent qualitative description according to the predetermined scale. The collected data was then analyzed and interpreted using several statistical tools. First, Weighted Mean Analysis was utilized to determine the level of professional standard practices and teacher satisfaction within the Division of Agusan del Sur. This provided an overall measure of the respondents' perceptions across the different variables. The Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to identify which professional standard practices, either individually or in combination, had a significant effect on teachers' satisfaction levels. This analysis helped pinpoint the specific practices that most influenced teacher satisfaction. Lastly, Thematic Analysis was used to examine the qualitative data, revealing patterns and deeper insights into teachers' experiences. This method provided a more nuanced and vital understanding of the reasons behind teachers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction, complementing the quantitative findings and informing the development of a targeted intervention program to address the challenges educators face.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted voluntarily among public elementary school teachers and principals in the Division of Agusan del Sur. After receiving approval from the superintendent and district supervisor, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to each respondent, ensuring full cooperation by assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses. Before the participants began answering the survey, the researcher provided clear instructions on how to respond and explained the purpose of the study, along with the implications of their participation. To maintain confidentiality, respondents were informed that writing their names and schools was optional, and there was no monetary compensation for their participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of School Heads’ Professional Standard Practices Across Domains

Table 1 provides a comprehensive view of the professional standard practices of school heads in the Division of Agusan del Sur. The overall mean score of 4.65 indicates that respondents generally “strongly agree” with the practices exhibited by school heads. This suggests that school heads in this division are highly effective in executing their professional responsibilities, as they score well across all areas of leadership and management. The highest mean score, 4.71, was observed in the parameter “Developing Self and Others,” which signifies that school heads place significant emphasis on self-improvement and the development of their teachers. On the other hand, this is closely followed by “Managing School Operations and Resources” with a mean score of 4.66, reflecting a strong capacity in managing the school’s resources and daily operations efficiently. “Leading Strategically” and “Focusing on Teaching and Learning” both have high mean scores of 4.65 and 4.62, indicating effective leadership in strategic planning and a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. The “Building Connections” parameter also received a mean score of 4.62, which emphasizes the school heads’ ability to maintain relationships and foster collaboration with external stakeholders. Across all areas, the mean scores range from 4.62 to 4.71, reinforcing that school heads in Agusan del Sur perform very well across these essential domains of leadership.

Additionally, these results suggest that the professional practices of school heads are well-aligned with the standards expected in the education sector. Effective leadership is crucial for improving school performance and ensuring a conducive learning environment. According to recent studies (Kidd & Jarvis, 2022; Watson, 2023), strong leadership in areas such as managing resources, focusing on teaching, and developing staff directly contributes to higher teacher satisfaction and better student outcomes. The high mean scores in “Developing Self and Others” and “Managing School Operations” align with findings from research by Gibbs and Miller (2021), who highlighted the importance of leadership in fostering and cultivating continuous professional development and efficient school management. Moreover, these practices are in line with the Department of Education’s (2023) policy on educational leadership, which stresses the importance of effective school management to enhance the overall quality of education. These practices are crucial, as they promote collaboration between stakeholders and improve the overall educational experience (Epstein *et al.*, 2018). Esogon and Gumban (2024) found that transformational leadership among school heads positively impacts teacher morale and commitment, leading to improved school effectiveness. Additionally, Anog *et al.* (2023) and Saro *et al.* (2022) highlighted that a positive working environment, fostered by effective leadership, enhances teacher job satisfaction, retention, and teaching competencies. These studies emphasize the critical role of school heads’ professional practices in shaping educational outcomes.

Table 1: School Heads’ Professional Standard Practices

Parameters	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
Leading Strategically	4.65	0.79	Strongly Agree	Very High
Managing School Operations and Resources	4.66	0.72	Strongly Agree	Very High
Focusing on Teaching and Learning	4.62	0.80	Strongly Agree	Very High
Developing Self and Others	4.71	0.59	Strongly Agree	Very High
Building Connections	4.62	0.71	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.65	0.72	Strongly Agree	Very High

Legend. Verbal Description:

4.51 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

3.51 – 4.50 (Agree)

2.51 – 3.50 (Neither agree nor disagree)

1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree)

1.00 – 1.50 (Strongly Disagree)

Verbal Interpretation:

4.20 – 5.00 (Very High)

3.40 – 4.19 (High)

2.60 – 3.39 (Moderate)

1.80 – 2.59 (Low)

1.00 – 1.79 (Very Low)

The study by Abu Nasra and Arar (2020) found that teachers’ in-role performance improves when they perceive their principals’ leadership style as more transformational and less transactional. More so, Sarwar *et al.* (2022) reported that principals’ democratic leadership

styles positively influence teachers’ performance. Thus, these findings not only confirm the effectiveness of school heads in Agusan del Sur but also provide a basis for further improvements and interventions aimed at fostering the continuous professional growth of school leaders.

Level of Teachers’ Satisfaction Across Domains

Table 2 presents the overall mean score of 3.95 (SD = 0.82) indicates that teachers in the study generally agree with the factors influencing their satisfaction, leading to a high verbal interpretation. Among the parameters, “Sense of Belonging” (M = 4.21, SD = 0.68) and “Relationship with Peers” (M = 4.26, SD = 0.71) received the highest mean scores, both interpreted as very high. These findings suggest that collegiality and inclusivity within the

school environment significantly contribute to teachers' overall satisfaction, reinforcing the idea that a supportive professional community enhances motivation and job commitment. In contrast of the result, "Salary" (M = 3.33, SD = 1.09) received the lowest rating, interpreted as moderate, highlighting financial concerns as a critical area that requires attention. On the other hand, "Distance of Home to School" (M = 3.51, SD = 1.23) also scored relatively lower compared to other factors, indicating that travel-related stress may impact teachers' job satisfaction. The findings suggest that while professional relationships and institutional support positively affect teacher satisfaction, economic and logistical factors remain challenging aspects.

The implications of these findings align with existing studies on teacher retention and workplace motivation. A conducive work environment, peer collaboration, and professional development opportunities have been shown to enhance job satisfaction and instructional performance (Calderwood & Mitropoulis, 2019; Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2020). Moreover, local studies have emphasized that Filipino educators place a high value on interpersonal relationships in their workplace, as these relationships contribute to reduced occupational stress and improved teaching efficiency (Dela Cruz *et al.*, 2021). The significant impact of salary concerns also echoes global trends, where financial incentives and job stability are major determinants of teacher retention (Han & Yin, 2022). These findings suggest that while social and institutional support mechanisms are strong, addressing economic constraints and logistical challenges could

further improve teacher satisfaction levels.

Teachers' satisfaction is strongly linked to school leadership, particularly in terms of professional support, recognition, and leadership practices. Several studies indicate that school heads who provide effective mentoring, fair workload distribution, and structured career development opportunities contribute to higher job satisfaction among teachers (Lopez & Molina, 2023). Furthermore, research by Kim and Lee (2023) highlights that when school administrators foster a culture of inclusivity and professional recognition, teachers are more likely to experience job fulfillment and demonstrate improved classroom performance. These findings imply that leadership strategies emphasizing teacher well-being, equitable resource allocation, and transparent promotion pathways can significantly enhance teacher motivation and retention rates.

Additionally, recent research suggests that school heads' management approaches influence teachers' emotional and psychological well-being, which in turn affects their professional effectiveness. A study by Santos and Ramirez (2023) found that teachers who feel valued and supported by their school heads demonstrate greater commitment and resilience in their profession. On the other hand, Martinez and Cruz (2024) emphasize that workplace recognition and well-structured professional development programs contribute to reduced burnout and improved instructional outcomes. The study's results reaffirm these perspectives, highlighting the essential role of effective leadership in fostering a positive school culture and sustaining teacher engagement.

Table 2: Teachers' Satisfaction

Parameters	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
School Factors				
Working Environment	4.13	0.88	Agree	High
Distribution of Responsibilities and Workload	4.12	0.80	Agree	High
Teacher – Student Relationship	4.16	0.78	Agree	High
Relationship with Peers	4.26	0.71	Agree	Very High
Personal Growth and Professional Development	4.18	0.79	Agree	High
Salary	3.33	1.09	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderate
Promotion	3.85	0.86	Agree	High
Consideration of Personal Needs	3.89	0.76	Agree	High
Monitoring and Evaluation	4.19	0.71	Agree	High
Well – Being and Recognition	4.03	0.70	Agree	High
Home Factors				
Family Support	4.19	0.78	Agree	High
Work – Life Balance	4.07	0.71	Agree	High
Home Environment	3.77	0.88	Agree	High
Personal Responsibilities	3.94	0.74	Agree	High
Financial Stability	3.55	0.99	Agree	High

Community Factors				
Stakeholders' Support	4.09	0.72	Agree	High
School – Community Relations	4.06	0.70	Agree	High
Access to Resources	3.78	0.89	Agree	High
Safety and Well – Being	3.65	0.92	Agree	High
Sense of Belonging	4.21	0.68	Agree	Very High
Distance of Home to School	3.51	1.23	Agree	High
Overall	3.95	0.82	Agree	High

Legend. Verbal Description:

4.51 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

3.51 – 4.50 (Agree)

2.51 – 3.50 (Neither agree nor disagree)

1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree)

1.00 – 1.50 (Strongly Disagree)

Verbal Interpretation:

4.20 – 5.00 (Very High)

3.40 – 4.19 (High)

2.60 – 3.39 (Moderate)

1.80 – 2.59 (Low)

1.00 – 1.79 (Very Low)

Accordingly, teachers' satisfaction is significantly shaped by school heads' leadership practices, particularly in cultivating a work environment that promotes growth, engagement, and well-being. A study by Ramirez and Santos (2023) and Naguit (2024) revealed that school leaders who actively involve teachers in decision-making processes and provide consistent professional guidance contribute to higher levels of satisfaction and job performance. Del Rosario and Martínez (2022) emphasized that a leadership approach focused on open communication and support systems enhances teachers' sense of belonging and motivation. Furthermore, the study by Kim and Lee (2021) found that school heads who implement structured mentorship programs and recognize teachers' contributions positively influence educators' career commitment and instructional effectiveness. These findings further validate the results of this study, emphasizing the role of strong leadership

in ensuring teachers' professional fulfillment and overall schools' success.

Predictors of Teachers' Satisfaction Based on School Heads' Professional Practices

The results of the multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis are presented in Table 3. This analysis was conducted to identify combinations of predictors for teachers' satisfaction. Moreover, among the five dimensions of school heads' professional standards, only three factors emerged as significant predictors. "Leading Strategically" (LS) showed the highest t-stat value of 5.715 and a p-value of <0.001, which statistically supports that it is a significant predictor of teachers' satisfaction. The "Developing Self and Others" (DSO) was found to be another significant predictor, with a t-stat value of 4.446 and a p-value of <0.001. Furthermore, "Managing School Operations and Resources" (MSOR) also emerged as a significant predictor, with a t-stat value of 4.331 and a p-value of <0.001. The coefficients for these three predictors were all positive, with values of 0.351 for LS, 0.276 for DSO, and 0.269 for MSOR, suggesting that higher levels of these factors are associated with higher levels of teachers' satisfaction.

On the other hand, the MLR results revealed that "Focusing on Teaching and Learning" (FTL) and "Building Connections" (BC) were not significant predictors of teacher satisfaction, as reflected in their respective p-values of 0.221 and 0.650.

Table 3: Predictors of Teachers' Satisfaction Using Multiple Linear Regression

Predictors	Estimate	t-stat	p-value	Remarks
Leading Strategically	0.351	5.715	<.001	Significant
Managing School Operations and Resources	0.269	4.331	<.001	Significant
Focusing on Teaching and Learning	-0.057	-1.229	0.221	Not Significant
Developing Self and Others	0.276	4.446	<.001	Significant
Building Connections	-0.025	-0.454	0.650	Not Significant

Strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in predicting teacher satisfaction by establishing a clear and cohesive vision for the educational environment. When school leaders communicate a well-defined mission and set achievable goals, teachers gain a sense of direction and purpose in their work (Veloso *et al.*, 2017). Prasertcharoensuk and Tang (2017) also noted that strategic leadership helps

educators align their teaching practices with the broader objectives of the school, fostering a shared commitment to student success. When teachers understand how their roles contribute to the overall vision, they feel more invested and engaged, which boosts their job satisfaction. Anastasiou and Garametsi (2021) pointed out that strategic leadership emphasizes collaboration and open

communication, which are essential for cultivating a positive school culture. Effective leaders involve teachers in decision-making processes, seeking their input on policies, curricula, and initiatives. This collaborative approach not only empowers teachers but also promotes a sense of belonging and ownership in the school community. When educators feel valued and recognized for their contributions, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, as they see their voices reflected in the school's direction and initiatives (Zaman *et al.*, 2019). The study by Uddin *et al.* (2019) emphasized that it plays a significant role in predicting teacher satisfaction. Effective operational management ensures that teachers have the necessary tools, materials, and support to perform their jobs efficiently. When schools are well-organized and properly resourced, teachers can focus on their core responsibilities teaching and fostering student learning rather than dealing with logistical challenges (Mohammad, 2023). Access to appropriate technology, teaching materials, and professional development opportunities enhances teachers' ability to provide high-quality instruction, which ultimately increases their job satisfaction. Additionally, Zaman *et al.* (2019) found that effective management of school operations contributes to a positive school culture, characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility. When leaders prioritize communication and involve teachers in operational decisions, it fosters a sense of community and teamwork. Teachers who feel they have a voice in the management

processes are more likely to feel valued and respected, contributing to their overall satisfaction (Oyekunle, 2024). Nevertheless, the "Developing Self and Others" also emerged as a significant predictor of teacher satisfaction, as evidenced by the statistical results.

This finding aligns with Mohammad's (2023) argument that principals' skills in developing both themselves and others are key to creating a culture of growth and professional development within schools. When principals prioritize staff development, it signals to teachers that their professional growth is valued and supported (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Thus, school principals help teachers enhance their skills, stay updated with best practices, and feel more competent in their roles. Teachers who see their capabilities grow through mentorship, training, and collaborative opportunities experience greater job satisfaction, as they feel more effective and fulfilled in their teaching (Honig, 2012).

Emerging Elements in Personal and Professional Life Inducing Teacher Satisfaction

Table 4 presents the thematic analysis results on the personal and professional life elements that contribute to teacher satisfaction. The analysis identifies five key themes derived from the teachers' responses. These themes highlight the factors that influence their job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, providing valuable insights into their experiences. The following discussion elaborates on the variables related to teacher satisfaction.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Personal and Professional Life Elements

Theme	Sub-theme	Summary	Responses
Theme 1: Working Environment and Organizational Culture	Sub-theme 1.1: Physical Environment and Facilities	The physical space, availability of technology, and overall atmosphere play a significant role in teachers' daily work and professional development.	T1: "A conducive learning environment greatly impacts both teaching and learning. Adequate space for teacher discussions and collaboration enhances our ability to deliver quality education." T2: "The available technology and manageable teaching load significantly influence my teaching effectiveness and professional development. A well-equipped environment is crucial for both teachers and learners."
	Sub-theme 1.2: Organizational Relationships and Support	Relationships between school heads, teachers, and peers are crucial in fostering a supportive and non-toxic work environment, enhancing job satisfaction and growth.	T2: "The trust and support I receive from our school head have a positive impact on my morale. This school serves as a training ground where I feel supported and appreciated." T3: "The welcoming and non-toxic atmosphere in this school makes me excited to work here. I'm grateful for the positive environment where everyone collaborates harmoniously." T4: "The collaborative spirit among teachers is strong. When we have activities, everyone pitches in, making the workload manageable and the work environment supportive."

Theme 2: Distribution of Responsibilities and Workload	Sub-theme 2.1: Equitable Task Distribution	Tasks and responsibilities are distributed fairly, often based on teachers' strengths, contributing to a collaborative work environment.	T2: "I would rate the distribution of tasks in our school as 9 out of 10. The collaboration is excellent, and the work is evenly distributed, making challenging tasks, like organizing graduation, much easier." T5: "Tasks are assigned based on teachers' strengths, which ensures that each teacher is positioned to succeed. This thoughtful distribution of responsibilities contributes to an efficient and effective work environment."
	Sub-theme 2.2: Collaboration and Teamwork	Strong teamwork and collaboration among teachers are central to managing workload effectively and fostering a sense of community within the school.	T2: "Collaborative efforts among teachers lighten the load during significant events. Everyone's knowledge and skills contribute to a smooth workflow, making the tasks feel less burdensome." T5: "The way our tasks are distributed allows us to capitalize on our strengths, which enhances collaboration and ensures that everyone is contributing effectively to our collective goals."
Theme 3: Teacher-Student Relationship	Sub-theme 3.1: Quality of Interactions	Teachers maintain positive and understanding relationships with students, adapting to their needs and providing a supportive learning environment.	T6: "Over my five years here, I've built strong, understanding relationships with my students. I adapt to their needs, which helps create a supportive and engaging classroom environment." T8: "Students feel comfortable with me because I'm patient and open to their questions. This openness fosters a positive and interactive learning experience."
	Sub-theme 3.2: Mutual Respect and Support	Teachers go beyond their professional duties to support students, fostering mutual respect and a positive school climate.	T7: "We adjust our approach based on the students' grade levels and are willing to go the extra mile for them. This dedication helps build mutual respect and understanding between teachers and students." T5: "On Teacher's Day, students express their gratitude with letters and small gifts, which reflects the positive relationships we've built. It's rewarding to see that students appreciate the extra support we provide."
Theme 4: Personal and Professional Growth	Sub-theme 4.1: Professional Development Opportunities	Teachers appreciate opportunities for professional growth, such as SLAC sessions, which enhance their skills and confidence.	T10: "The SLAC sessions have been invaluable in my development as a teacher. Before, I hesitated to participate in discussions, but now I confidently share my insights, thanks to the continuous learning opportunities provided." T4: "Classroom Observations (CO) and other professional development activities at our school have significantly improved my teaching practices. The feedback and learning experiences are incredibly beneficial."
	Sub-theme 4.2: Supportive Stakeholders	Stakeholders' involvement is crucial in supporting both the school's projects and teachers' work, contributing to a positive school environment.	T4: "Our SPTA officers are incredibly supportive of the school's projects and curriculum implementation. They've become so effective that they can even lead meetings independently, showing their strong commitment." T6: "Stakeholders in our community, including parents, actively support the school. For instance, they donated drums and a boggle set, which enhance our school's resources and learning environment."

Theme 5: Well-being and Recognition	Sub-theme 5.1: Work-Life Balance	Achieving work-life balance is important, and some teachers successfully strategize to separate work from personal life, enhancing job satisfaction and well-being.	T4: “I used to bring work home, but after my husband pointed out the impact on our family time, I learned to manage my workload better at school. This change has greatly improved both my job performance and my personal life.” T5: “While I’m satisfied with my professional achievements, like receiving an award, I realize that I’ve neglected my personal life in the process. Finding a true balance is challenging but necessary.”
	Sub-theme 5.2: Recognition and Feedback	Teachers value recognition and constructive feedback, which boost their morale and contribute to professional satisfaction.	T4: “The feedback I receive during Classroom Observations is always constructive and encouraging. It boosts my confidence and helps me grow professionally, making me feel valued as an educator.”

Teachers unanimously emphasized the significance of the working environment and organizational culture in determining their satisfaction. Many teachers reported feeling more satisfied in environments that respect diversity and are characterized by strong support systems. They emphasized that a conducive learning environment with the right facilities and technologies encourages collaborative discussions. As one teacher noted:

“A conducive learning environment greatly impacts both teaching and learning. Adequate space for teacher discussions and collaboration enhances our ability to deliver quality education.” – T1. In addition to physical space, teachers expressed the importance of psychological support from colleagues and management. One teacher shared: “The trust and support I receive from our school head have a positive impact on my morale. This school serves as a training ground where I feel supported and appreciated.” – T2. Teachers highlighted that motivational support from school leaders is essential for completing tasks effectively despite pressures. They also emphasized the value of a non-toxic, respectful atmosphere among colleagues, which contributes to their overall job satisfaction. As another teacher remarked: “The welcoming and non-toxic atmosphere in this school makes me excited to work here. I’m grateful for the positive environment where everyone collaborates harmoniously.” – T3.

These findings align with existing studies, which asserts that a positive working environment, supported by a healthy organizational culture, leads to higher teacher satisfaction (Zeidan, 2023; Zao & Jeon, 2024).

A fair distribution of responsibilities and workload was identified as another critical factor influencing teacher satisfaction. Teachers reported greater satisfaction when tasks were assigned according to their position, rank, and strengths. One teacher stated: “I would rate the distribution of tasks in our school as 9 out of 10. The collaboration is excellent, and the work is evenly distributed, making challenging tasks, like organizing graduation, much easier than usual.” – T2. Another teacher explained that distributing tasks based on strengths ensures

efficiency and effectiveness: “Tasks are assigned based on teachers’ strengths, which ensures that each teacher is positioned to succeed. This thoughtful distribution of responsibilities contributes to an efficient and effective work environment.” – T3. Collaboration also emerged as an important aspect of workload distribution. Teachers found it easier to manage significant events when they worked together, sharing the responsibilities. One teacher observed: “Collaborative efforts among teachers lighten the load during significant events. Everyone’s knowledge and skills contribute to a smooth workflow, making the tasks feel less burdensome.” – T2. These insights are consistent with the studies, which stresses that fair workload distribution and clear role delineation reduce teacher dissatisfaction and prevent burnout (Crisci *et al.*, 2019; Nyagaya, 2015). Collaboration among staff further enhances job satisfaction by promoting professional development and teamwork (Chughati & Perveen, 2013). The relationship between teachers and students plays a pivotal role in teacher satisfaction, as several studies have suggested (Spilt *et al.*, 2011). Teachers who reported building positive relationships with their students exhibited higher satisfaction levels. One teacher shared: “Over my five years here, I’ve built strong, understanding relationships with my students. I adapt to their needs, which helps create a supportive and engaging classroom environment.” – T4. Such relationships foster mutual respect, leading to a positive work environment. One teacher expressed the rewards of these connections: “On Teacher’s Day, students express their gratitude with letters and small gifts, which reflects the positive relationships we’ve built. It’s rewarding to see that students appreciate the extra support we provide.” – T5. The literature supports these findings, emphasizing that strong teacher-student relationships contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere and enhance job satisfaction (Pham, 2024; Li *et al.*, 2022). Teachers who foster such relationships tend to feel validated and experience a deeper sense of fulfillment, motivating them to remain in the profession (Brunzell *et al.*, 2018).

Personal and professional growth was identified as a major contributor to teacher satisfaction. Teachers expressed that opportunities for continuous learning and development, along with strong support from stakeholders, were crucial to their satisfaction. One teacher reflected on their development: “The SLAC or the School-based Learning Action Cell sessions have been invaluable in my development as a teacher. Before, I hesitated to participate in discussions, but now I confidently share my insights, thanks to the continuous learning opportunities provided.” – T10. This statement posits the importance of professional development programs in fostering teacher satisfaction. Additionally, many teachers acknowledged the positive influence of stakeholders in their growth. As one teacher mentioned: “Our SPTA officers are incredibly supportive of the school’s projects and curriculum implementation. They’ve become so effective that they can even lead meetings independently, showing their strong commitment.” – T4. Studies support the notion that professional growth opportunities lead to increased job satisfaction by enhancing teachers’ skills and fostering a sense of accomplishment (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015; Stefanou *et al.*, 2004). Engaging in collaborative growth activities also strengthens teachers’ sense of community and belonging within their schools (Weinberg *et al.*, 2021).

Teachers noted that recognition of their efforts and attention to their well-being played a significant role in their satisfaction. Many teachers reported feeling more motivated when their accomplishments were acknowledged. One teacher expressed: “While I’m satisfied with my professional achievements, like receiving an award, I realize that I’ve neglected my personal life in the process.” – T5. Recognition was seen as a form of psychological support that boosted teachers’ morale and encouraged them to strive for excellence in their work. This aligns with studies suggesting that recognition and acknowledgment contribute significantly to teacher satisfaction by compensating for their efforts and sacrifices (Rendel *et al.*, 2018; Waller, 2020). When teachers feel valued for their work, it enhances their well-being and overall job satisfaction. These thematic findings highlight the critical elements influencing teacher satisfaction. A supportive working environment, fair distribution of responsibilities, strong teacher-student relationships, opportunities for growth, and recognition all contribute to a high level of job satisfaction among teachers. These factors not only enhance teachers’ well-being but also improve their effectiveness in the classroom, also benefiting the entire educational community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the professional practices of school heads and teacher satisfaction in public elementary schools in the Division of Agusan del Sur. The strong leadership demonstrated by school heads in strategic planning, resource management, and professional development

plays a crucial role in fostering a highly satisfied and high-performing teaching workforce, ultimately contributing to improved school performance. Additionally, public elementary school teachers in the division exhibit a high level of job satisfaction in their teaching profession, family relationships, and overall work-life balance, which serves as a strong indicator of productivity while maintaining well-being. Moreover, leadership practices, particularly in leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, and developing self and others, are significant predictors of teachers’ overall satisfaction, aligning with existing literature on leadership’s role in constituent satisfaction. Furthermore, critical factors such as working environment, organizational culture, workload distribution, teacher-student relationships, personal and professional growth, and recognition significantly influence teachers’ satisfaction. These findings emphasize the importance of cultivating a supportive school environment to enhance both teacher well-being and overall school effectiveness.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. It is suggested that the study may be utilized by the Department of Education (DepEd) as a valuable reference for policy formulation and decision-making, particularly in enhancing leadership practices and teacher support programs.

2. It is suggested that school leaders take into account the study’s findings in developing a more comprehensive and responsive leadership approach. School heads and principals should actively incorporate strategies that promote a positive working environment, fair workload distribution, and opportunities for both personal and professional growth. Furthermore, it is recommended that school improvement plans be aligned with the critical factors identified in this study to enhance teacher satisfaction, motivation, and overall job performance.

3. It is suggested that teachers reflect on the findings of the study to better understand the dynamics of their profession and the role of leadership in their work-life balance. Teachers are encouraged to engage in professional development activities, collaborate with peers, and communicate their concerns and suggestions to school leaders. Moreover, teachers can contribute to a more fulfilling work environment while ensuring personal and professional growth.

4. It is suggested that future researchers consider expanding the scope of the study to include additional factors affecting teacher satisfaction, such as mental health support, school culture, and external socio-economic influences. Future studies may also increase the sample size or explore longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of leadership practices and teacher support programs. A comparative analysis between different educational settings may also provide further insights into best practices for enhancing teacher satisfaction.

5. It is suggested that stakeholders in the education sector, including policymakers, school administrators, and community leaders, work collaboratively to implement initiatives that promote a supportive and motivating environment for teachers. Also, education institutions can improve teacher well-being, enhance teaching quality, and ultimately contribute to the overall success of students and schools.

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