Original Research Article

**THE COMBINED INFLUENCE OF MOTIVATIONAL LEADERSHIP, REWARDS AND RECOGNITION TOWARD GENERATION Z TEACHER RETENTION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

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| This study examined the retention of Generation Z teachers in Davao City's public elementary schools, focusing on the influence of motivational leadership plus rewards and recognition. Employing a quantitative research design and correlation-regression analysis, the study surveyed 150 Gen Z teachers. The findings revealed that while motivational leadership, particularly transformational leadership, and collaborative decision-making, was perceived as high, it had only a moderately low correlation with teacher retention. Rewards and recognition, encompassing compensation, career advancement, and performance recognition, demonstrated a stronger, moderately high correlation with retention. Although the teachers expressed a strong intent to stay, particularly due to job tenure, the regression analysis indicated that rewards and recognition significantly influenced their decision to remain, accounting for 39.4% of the variance in teacher retention. Based on these results, the study suggests that policymakers should prioritize structured incentive programs, such as performance-based recognition and clear career pathways. School administrators are advised to implement reward systems acknowledging teachers' contributions through promotions and bonuses, while educators should pursue professional development and advocate for better recognition. Future research should explore factors like work-life balance and the long-term impacts of incentive programs to improve teacher retention strategies. Overall, the study emphasizes the critical role of tangible rewards and recognition in retaining Gen Z teachers. |

*Keywords*: Motivational Leadership, Rewards and Recognition, Retention, Generation Z Teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

The retention of Generation Z teachers is a critical issue within the educational sector, influenced by the interplay of motivational leadership, recognition, and rewards. Motivational leadership is pivotal in creating an environment that fosters a sense of purpose and commitment among teachers. It involves leaders who inspire, support and guide teachers, thereby enhancing their job satisfaction and professional growth. Recognition, both formal and informal, serves as a significant factor in boosting morale and reinforcing a sense of value and appreciation among teachers. This can include acknowledgments such as awards, public commendations, or even personal notes of thanks. Rewards, encompassing both monetary incentives and non-monetary benefits, act as tangible affirmations of teachers' efforts and contributions. These elements collectively influence the retention rates of Gen Z teachers, who prioritize meaningful work, career development, and a supportive work culture. This research aims to elucidate the combined impact of these factors on teacher retention, providing insights into effective strategies for maintaining a stable and dedicated teaching workforce.

Internationally, numerous studies around the world have studied the factors affecting teachers’ retention. In East Wollega Zone, Western Ethiopia, Wakwoya (2020) identified that poor motivational leadership leads to low job satisfaction and high turnover rates. Similarly, Wamala and Genza (2022) found that in Mukono District, Uganda, the absence of formal and informal recognition for teachers' efforts results in feelings of undervaluation and demotivation. Acheampong and Gyasi (2020) highlighted that in rural Ghana, the lack of adequate rewards, such as competitive salaries and professional development opportunities, discourages teachers from remaining in the profession. Additionally, a study published by Richter et al. (2022) in Germany emphasized that unsupportive work environments, characterized by poor leadership and insufficient resources, exacerbate the problem of teacher retention.

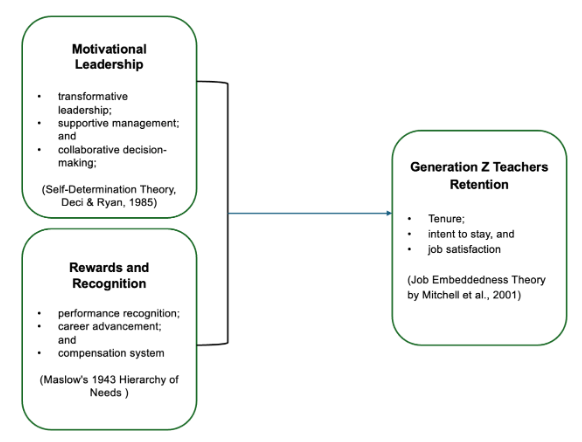
Gen Z individuals born between 1997 and 2012 are entering the workforce with distinct expectations and values that differ from previous generations. Vendica’s (2022) study in Indonesia found that this generation prioritizes both intrinsic and extrinsic work values, emphasizing personal skills development, professional growth, personal achievement, recognition, healthy working relationships, teamwork, collaboration, work-life balance, and job and financial security. In Turkey, Demirbilek and Keser (2022) stated that leaders who demonstrate sincerity, flexibility, warm communication, consistency, supportiveness, and problem-solving abilities resonate well with Gen Z teachers. Such leadership approaches enhance job satisfaction and contribute to a positive organizational culture that encourages teachers to remain in their positions.

In the Philippines, particularly in South Cotabato pointed out that ineffective human resource management practices, particularly in recruitment, performance management, training, compensation, and career planning, negatively impacted teachers' job satisfaction and retention (Solidarios et al., 2025). Addressing these issues through targeted strategies is essential for improving teacher retention rates across these regions. By focusing on enhancing professional growth, supportive leadership, and effective HRM practices, educational institutions can create a more stable and satisfying work environment for teachers.

The primary issue of teacher retention is the pursuit of better opportunities, improved work conditions, and higher compensation, leading to voluntary resignations. In Marikina City, another article suggested that the problem centered around the lack of supportive school leadership, professional development opportunities, and a positive school culture crucial for retaining teachers.

In Mati South District, Division of Mati City, a study conducted by researchers in the Mati City identified issues of concern, such as the need to enhance teachers' work values, self-efficacy, and resilience through effective professional development programs. The article emphasized that traditional professional development methods often fail to address the evolving needs of teachers, particularly in adapting to technological advancements and modern educational challenges. With these mentioned studies, it is then timely to study how motivational leadership, recognition, and rewards influence the retention of Generation Z teachers as they become the youngest educators in our educational systems.

To strengthen the connection and relevance of basic education, it is in this premise that the researcher will conduct the study to find out if the Retention of Generation Z Teachers in Public Elementary Schools in Mati South District, Division of Mati City is being affected by their Combined Influence of Motivational Leadership and, Rewards and Recognition. Furthermore, the study aims to identify which specific elements of Motivational Leadership and, Rewards and Recognition have the most substantial impact on Retention of Generation Z Teachers in Public Elementary Schools. Given these, no study has been conducted in the schools of Mati South District, Division of Mati City

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**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of Combined Influence of Motivational Leadership and Rewards and Recognition to Generation Z Teacher’s Retention

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to combine influence of motivational leadership and reward and recognition to teachers’ retention of Generation Z in Mati South District, Division of Mati City. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of Motivational Leadership of school heads inMati South District, Division of Mati City in terms of:

1.1 transformative leadership;

1.2 supportive management; and

1.3 collaborative decision-making?

2. What is the level of Recognition and Reward Practices of School Heads in Mati South District, Division of Mati City in terms of:

2.1 performance recognition;

2.2 career advancement; and

2.3 compensation system?

3. What is the level of Retention of Generation Z Teachers in public elementary schools of Mati South District, Division of Mati City in terms of:

3.1 tenure;

3.2 intent to stay; and

3.3 job satisfaction?

4. Is there a significant relationship between motivational leadership, reward and recognition, and retention of Generation Z teachers in public elementary schools in Mati South District?

5. Is there a significant combined influence of motivational leadership, and recognition and rewards on retention of Generation Z teachers in public elementary schools in Mati South District?

**1.2 Hypotheses**

Ho1: There is no significance of the relationship between motivational leadership, reward and recognition, and retention of Generation Z teachers.

Ho2: Motivational leadership, and recognition and rewards did not significantly influence retention of Generation Z teachers.

2. methodology

**2.1 Research Design**

This study utilized a quantitative research design, for it enables objective measurement and statistical analysis of variables, ensuring accuracy and reliability in the findings. Utilizing larger sample sizes enhances the validity of the results and allows for generalizability across different populations. Additionally, the structured nature of quantitative research facilitates replication, reinforcing the credibility of the study's conclusions, as Holmes (2020) noted. Through systematic data collection and analysis, this method provides empirical evidence to support the relationships among key variables.

Furthermore, this study employed correlation-regression analysis to examine the influence of motivational leadership and rewards and recognition on the retention of Generation Z teachers. This statistical technique helped determine the strength and direction of these relationships, identifying which factors played a significant role in teacher retention. By analyzing these predictors quantitatively, the study aimed to offer data-driven insights that could guide educational institutions in implementing effective leadership and reward strategies to improve retention rates among Generation Z educators.

**2.2 Research Respondents**

This study was conducted in Mati South District, Division of Mati City, and included the 18 schools within the district. A total of 178 teachers were involved as respondents out of a population of 320, determined using Slovin’s Formula with a 0.05 margin of error. These teachers rated the combined influence of motivational leadership, rewards, and recognition on Generation Z teachers' retention in public elementary schools. The study was carried out during the school year 2024–2025. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample based on relevant population characteristics and research objectives (Howell et al., 2020). This method allowed for a more accurate and proportional selection of participants, enhancing the reliability of the findings. By specifically identifying Generation Z teachers as key respondents, the study aimed to gather insights into factors influencing their retention. The researcher believed that applying these criteria effectively supported the achievement of the study’s objectives.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: first, the teacher had to be currently employed at a public elementary school within Mati South District, Division of Mati City during the 2024–2025 school year and born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. Second, the teacher had to have at least one year of teaching experience in any subject. Teachers who did not meet these criteria were excluded. Specifically, those not employed in a public elementary school within Mati South District, Division of Mati City during the 2024–2025 school year, those with less than a year of teaching experience, and teachers on temporary leave or undergoing administrative actions were excluded, as they might not have accurately represented regular teaching experiences. Additionally, school administrators and guidance counselors, who did not directly teach elementary subjects, were also excluded.

**2.3 Research Instrument**

The researcher utilized a modified survey questionnaire to gather data on motivational leadership, rewards and recognition, and the retention of Generation Z teachers. Before implementing the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted to verify its reliability. A sample group, similar to the actual study participants, was selected for this assessment. The results demonstrated that all indicators achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha value greater than 0.700, confirming strong internal consistency and reliability. This validation established the questionnaire’s effectiveness in measuring the relationships among motivational leadership, recognition and rewards, and the retention of Generation Z teachers. The reliability scores from the pilot test were recorded.

The first questionnaire on the motivational leadership component was adapted from Heikonen and Ahtiainen (2024), which explored the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of school leadership practices and collaborative school development. A five-point Likert scale was used for the Motivational Leadership of Teachers. Each item was assigned specific weights, with equivalent statements as follows. The scale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.870.

The second part of the questionnaire, which focused on Recognition and Reward Practices, was based on Subhashini and Vignesh Kumar (2022), who investigated the impact of reward and recognition systems on teachers’ performance in international schools. A five-point Likert scale was used for the Recognition and Reward Practices of Teachers. Each item was assigned specific weights, with equivalent statements as follows. The scale demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.950.

Lastly, the retention of Generation Z teachers was examined using concepts from Youcef, Ahmed, and Ahmed (2021), who analyzed job satisfaction and turnover intention through organizational commitment and intent to stay. A five-point Likert scale was used for measuring the retention of Generation Z teachers. Each item was assigned certain weights, with equivalent statements as follows. The scale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.876, confirming strong internal consistency in measuring teacher retention.

**2.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

# In order to collect data for this study, the researcher went through the following processes and procedures:

# The data collection procedure for this study was carried out in a systematic manner to ensure ethical adherence and obtain the necessary approvals. Initially, formal permission was requested from the Dean of the Graduate School. Once granted, the request was forwarded to the School's Division Superintendent for further evaluation. This step-by-step approval process ensured that all institutional and educational guidelines were followed.

# The next phase involved gathering data by creating and distributing survey questionnaires that were thoughtfully designed to meet the study's objectives. Coordination with school officials ensured the smooth distribution of the surveys to public school teachers, along with a clear explanation of the study's purpose. During the data collection phase, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were prioritized to encourage candid responses.

# After data collection, the retrieval process involved carefully organizing and analyzing the collected information. The completed questionnaires were counted, and responses were systematically recorded for statistical evaluation using tools such as mean, standard deviation, correlation and multiple linear regression analysis.

# 2.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing and interpreting the data gathered for this study, several statistical tools were utilized to determine the aim of the study.

Mean was used to assess the extent of motivational leadership, rewards and recognition, and retention of generation z teachers in public elementary schools.

Pearson r-moment correlation analysis was applied to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between motivational leadership, rewards and recognition, on retention of generation z teachers in public elementary schools.

Regression Analysis was employed to determine the significant influence of motivational leadership and rewards and recognition on the retention of generation z teachers in public elementary schools.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 Level of Motivational Leadership of School Heads as Perceived by Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools**

Table 1. *Level of Motivational Leadership of School Heads as Perceived by Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Standard Deviation** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Value** |
| Transformational Leadership | 0.70 | 4.52 | High |
| Supportive Management | 1.27 | 3.19 | High |
| Collaborative Decision Making | 0.76 | 4.36 | High |
| **Overall Mean** | **0.55** | **4.03** | **High** |

Presented in Table 1 is the summary of indicators in the level of motivational leadership of school heads as perceived by Generation Z teachers, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. Transformational leadership received the highest mean of 4.52, described as high, followed by collaborative decision-making with a mean of 4.36, also described as high. Supportive management had the lowest mean of 3.19, categorized as high. The overall mean of 4.03 is described as high, indicating that Generation Z teachers generally perceive motivational leadership by their school heads positively across these leadership dimensions. The overall standard deviation of 0.55, being less than 1, indicates that the ratings were consistent and closely clustered around the mean.

This suggests that school heads demonstrate strong transformational leadership and collaborative decision-making skills while providing moderate support in management. The consistently high mean scores reflect a generally favorable view of the leadership practices that motivate and engage Generation Z teachers.

The findings align with previous research emphasizing the critical role of motivational leadership in educational institutions. Wang et al. (2024) highlighted that transformational leadership significantly enhances school effectiveness by fostering a motivating and inclusive environment for teachers and students. Their study suggests that leaders who inspire and articulate a strong vision improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, Usmar and Santosa (2022) found that educational leaders who effectively communicate their vision and support teacher engagement contribute to a more innovative and committed workforce. These studies validate the findings of this research, reinforcing the notion that transformational leadership and collaborative decision-making significantly impact Generation Z teachers’ motivation and performance. Additionally, motivational leadership is crucial in adapting to changing educational needs, as it fosters continuous professional development and resilience in teaching staff. This ultimately supports institutional stability and enhances the overall teaching-learning experience.

**3.2 Level of Rewards and Recognition Received by Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools**

Table 2. *Level of Rewards and Recognition Received by Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Standard Deviation** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Value** |
| Performance Recognition | 0.76 | 4.02 | High |
| Career Advancement | 0.68 | 4.53 | Very High |
| Compensation System | 0.68 | 4.61 | Very high |
| **Overall Mean** | **0.60** | **4.39** | **Very high** |

Presented in Table 2 is the summary of indicators on the rewards and recognition received by Generation Z teachers, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. Among the indicators, the compensation system received the highest mean of 4.61, described as very high, followed closely by career advancement with a mean of 4.53, also described as very high. Performance recognition had the lowest mean of 4.02, categorized as high. The overall mean of 4.39 is described as very high, indicating that Generation Z teachers generally perceive the rewards and recognition they receive positively, especially in terms of compensation and career advancement.

This suggests that the teachers value the tangible rewards and career opportunities provided by their schools, while recognition of performance is also perceived favorably but to a slightly lesser extent. The very high overall mean reflects strong satisfaction with the rewards and recognition systems in place.

The overall standard deviation of 0.60, being less than 1, indicates that the ratings were consistent and closely clustered around the mean.

The findings align with studies emphasizing the importance of recognition in employee motivation and job satisfaction. Førland and Roxå (2023) highlight that tangible rewards, such as salary and promotions, significantly impact teacher motivation and retention. Subhashini and Vignesh Kumar (2019) further emphasize that non-monetary recognition, such as public acknowledgment and appreciation, fosters a culture of excellence and engagement. Researchers also underscore the need for a well-balanced reward system combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to maintain teacher effectiveness (Thampoe & Sivapathasundharam, 2024). These studies suggest that educational institutions should continuously enhance both monetary and non-monetary recognition strategies to ensure sustained motivation and job satisfaction among teachers.

**3.3 Level of Retention of Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools**

Table 3. *Level of Retention of Generation Z Teachers among Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Standard Deviation** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Value** |
| Job Tenure | 0.66 | 4.50 | Very high |
| Intent to Stay | 0.95 | 4.27 | Very High |
| Job Satisfaction | 0.69 | 4.17 | High |
| **Overall Mean** | 0.52 | 4.31 | Very High |

Presented in Table 3 is the summary of indicators on the retention of Generation Z teachers, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. Job tenure received the highest mean of 4.50, described as very high, followed by intent to stay with a mean of 4.27, also categorized as very high. Job satisfaction had the lowest mean of 4.17, which is described as high. The overall mean of 4.31 is described as very high, indicating that Generation Z teachers generally exhibit strong retention levels across these indicators. The overall standard deviation of 0.52, being less than 1, indicates that the ratings were consistent and closely clustered around the mean.

This suggests that teachers feel secure and committed to their positions, with positive intentions to remain in their schools and a generally high level of job satisfaction. The very high overall mean reflects a strong inclination toward continued service and professional stability.

These results support prior studies on teacher retention. Aggarwal and Mahouachi (2020) emphasize that early career support and professional development significantly influence teacher retention, particularly in the first five years. Shuls and Flores (2020) further highlight that schools focusing on teacher voice, mentorship programs, and collaboration tend to have higher retention rates. Similarly, Cells et al. (2022) found that providing autonomy and ongoing professional development leads to greater job satisfaction and commitment. These findings suggest that while Gen Z teachers express strong retention intentions, educational institutions should continue fostering a supportive work environment to sustain long-term engagement and minimize potential turnover.

**3.4 Relationship Between Motivation Leadership, Rewards and Recognition, and Generation Z Teacher’s Retention**

Table 4. *Relationship Between Motivation Leadership, Rewards and Recognition, and Generation Z Teacher’s Retention*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Generation Z Teachers’ Retention** | | |
|  | ***r*-value** | **p-value** | **Interpretation** |
| Motivational Leadership | 0.385 | 0.000 | Moderately low and has      significant correlation |
| Rewards and Recognition | 0.622 | 0.000 | Moderately high and has    significant correlation |

Presented in Table 4 is the correlation results examining factors influencing Generation Z teachers’ retention. The analysis indicates that Motivational Leadership (r = 0.385, p = 0.000) has a moderately low yet significant correlation with teacher retention, suggesting that leadership practices have an impact, albeit to a lesser extent. In contrast, Rewards and Recognition (r = 0.622, p = 0.000) exhibit a moderately high and significant correlation, emphasizing that recognition and reward systems play a stronger role in influencing teacher retention. Since all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that these factors significantly contribute to teacher retention.

The findings align with Tarantul and Berkovich (2025) emphasis on fulfilling these psychological needs can reduce emotional distress among teachers and sustain their motivation despite workplace challenges. Recognizing teachers’ efforts through performance-based rewards satisfies esteem needs, boosting their confidence,, and encouraging long-term commitment. Furthermore, offering career growth opportunities fulfills self-actualization needs, ensuring teachers find purpose and professional fulfillment in their roles (Venkatesh et al., 2024). Strong workplace connections with administrators, colleagues, and students create a sense of belonging, increasing teachers’ intent to stay. Schools that offer competitive salaries, professional development, and recognition programs enhance the benefits of staying, reducing turnover rates (Larkin & Carletta, 2021).

**3.5. Significant Influence of Motivational Leadership, Rewards and Recognition on Retention of Generation Z Teachers**

**Table 5.** *Significant Influence of Motivational Leadership, Rewards and Recognition on Retention of Generation Z Teachers*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Retention of Generation Z Teachers.** | | | | | |
| Model |  | **Unstandardized** | **Standard Error** | **Standardized** | **t** | **P** | **Interpretation** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| H₀ | (Intercept) | 4.312 | 0.043 |  | 100.726 | < .001 | Significant |
|  | **Motivational Leadership** | 0.093 | 0.071 | 0.097 | 1.303 | 0.195 | Not Significant |
|  | **Rewards and Recognition** | 0.502 | 0.065 | 0.573 | 7.717 | < .001 | Significant |
| R=0.628 R^2=0.394 F=47.743 p=0.000 | | | | | | |  |

Presented in Table 5 is the regression analysis results on the factors influencing Generation Z teachers' retention. The findings indicate that Motivational Leadership (β = 0.093, p = 0.195) does not significantly predict retention, suggesting that leadership alone may not directly influence teachers' decisions to stay. In contrast, Rewards and Recognition (β = 0.502, p < 0.001) has a strong and significant effect, indicating that recognition and rewards play a crucial role in retaining teachers. The overall model is significant (R = 0.628, R² = 0.394, F = 47.743, p = 0.000), meaning that the included variables account for approximately 39.4% of the variance in teacher retention.

These findings both align with and challenge aspects of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Legault (2020). While SDT emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key motivators, the results suggest that leadership, often associated with fostering autonomy and competence—does not significantly impact retention. This contradicts research by Tarantul and Berkovich (2024), who found that leadership styles supporting emotional well-being and autonomy were central to teachers' motivation.

The results imply that while leadership might contribute to workplace motivation, it may not be a decisive factor in teachers' long-term commitment. Instead, the strong significance of Rewards and Recognition supports Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, particularly the esteem and self-actualization levels. When teachers feel valued through acknowledgment and career advancement, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles.

Additionally, the findings are consistent with Job Embeddedness Theory (Shah et al., 2020), which highlights the importance of professional connections (links), alignment with institutional goals (fit), and perceived sacrifices of leaving (sacrifice) in influencing retention. The significant impact of rewards and recognition aligns with the sacrifice component, as competitive salaries, career growth, and acknowledgment increase the perceived cost of leaving. However, the non-significance of motivational leadership challenges the fit aspect, implying that alignment with leadership vision and decision-making may not be as critical to retention as previously suggested.

Overall, while leadership is often considered a key driver of motivation, these results suggest that tangible rewards and recognition exert a more direct influence on teacher retention. This highlights the need for educational institutions to prioritize structured reward systems, professional development, and job security to maintain a committed and stable teaching workforce.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the study's findings, the researcher draws the following conclusions based on the theories relevant to the study:

Firstly, the level of motivational leadership of school heads as perceived by Generation Z teachers is oftentimes manifested. This suggests that school heads frequently demonstrate leadership behaviors that inspire, support, and empower Generation Z teachers. Such leadership practices include transformational vision, supportive management, and collaborative decision-making, which contribute to creating a positive and motivating work environment. However, while these behaviors are regularly observed, they may not always reach the highest level of consistency or impact desired.

Secondly, the level of rewards and recognition received by Generation Z teachers is oftentimes manifested. This indicates that schools consistently provide acknowledgment, incentives, and career development opportunities to Generation Z teachers, which help foster professional satisfaction and motivation. Recognition ranges from performance-based appreciation to clear pathways for career advancement and competitive compensation, all of which serve to affirm teachers’ contributions and encourage continued professional growth.

Thirdly, the level of retention among Generation Z teachers is always manifested, indicating a strong and stable commitment to remain in their teaching roles. This reflects a generally positive perception of their working conditions, job security, and professional fulfillment. The consistent manifestation of retention underscores that many Generation Z teachers feel supported enough to envision a long-term career in the education sector.

Fourthly, the correlation analysis revealed that both motivational leadership and rewards and recognition have significant positive relationships with Generation Z teachers’ retention. This means that effective leadership and well-structured rewards systems are both important factors linked to teachers’ decisions to stay in their positions. Notably, rewards and recognition showed a stronger correlation, highlighting their critical role in sustaining teacher engagement and loyalty.

Lastly, the regression analysis indicated that only rewards and recognition significantly predict the retention of Generation Z teachers. This finding suggests that while motivational leadership is important, it may not directly influence retention as strongly as the tangible benefits and recognition teachers receive. Consequently, school administrators and policymakers may prioritize developing and maintaining comprehensive rewards and recognition programs to effectively retain Generation Z teachers and reduce turnover.

The significant influence of rewards and recognition on teacher retention, contrasted with the non-significant relationship between motivational leadership and retention, validates several key motivational theories. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943) explains that rewards and recognition fulfill essential needs for esteem, growth, and security, which strongly motivate teachers to remain in their positions. When teachers feel valued through performance recognition, career advancement, and fair compensation, they experience greater job satisfaction and commitment. While motivational leadership behaviors, such as transformational leadership, supportive management, and collaborative decision-making, address psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as described in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2024), this study shows that these leadership behaviors alone do not directly predict retention.

Additionally, the Job Embeddedness Theory by Shah et al., (2024), supports the finding that tangible rewards and recognition deepen teachers’ connections to their schools by increasing the perceived benefits of staying and the costs of leaving. This theory highlights that meaningful attachments and value alignment, combined with clear incentives, play a critical role in retaining teachers. Therefore, the results confirm that while effective leadership fosters motivation, it is the concrete rewards and recognition that have a stronger and more direct impact on retaining Generation Z teachers.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed for the intended beneficiaries:

Given the significant impact of rewards and recognition on teacher retention, policymakers may prioritize structured incentive programs. Performance-based recognition initiatives, clear career progression pathways, and competitive salary structures may be integrated into national education policies. Additionally, professional development opportunities may be emphasized to enhance teachers’ skills and long-term job satisfaction.

While leadership is important for fostering a positive work environment, it may be complemented by tangible incentives. Administrators may develop and implement reward systems that acknowledge teachers' contributions, including promotions, salary adjustments, and performance-based bonuses. Schools may also foster a culture of appreciation and recognition to enhance teachers’ sense of value and commitment.

Educators may take advantage of professional development programs and career advancement opportunities to maximize job satisfaction and long-term growth. Additionally, teachers may advocate for improved recognition programs within their institutions to ensure their contributions are acknowledged and rewarded.

Future studies may explore additional factors influencing Generation Z teachers' retention, including work-life balance, professional development satisfaction, and mental well-being. Further research may also investigate the long-term effects of various incentive programs on teacher retention across different educational institutions and regions.

Consent (where ever applicable)

This study was conducted in full adherence to established ethical principles to safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained all necessary approvals, including the endorsement of the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges and ethical clearance from the institution’s Ethics Review Committee. The research procedures were based on the ethical framework proposed by Pregoner et al. (2025), ensuring alignment with current standards for studies involving human participants in educational contexts. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were fully informed of the study’s goals, scope, and their right to refuse or withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent was secured to affirm participants' understanding and agreement to participate. To protect privacy, no personally identifiable information was gathered, and all responses were handled with strict confidentiality. The data collected were solely intended for academic use. These safeguards ensured the research was carried out with ethical integrity, transparency, and professional accountability.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

The author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies have been used during the writing and editing of this manuscript. The details of the AI usage are as follows:

1. Grammarly: Used for grammar and spellchecking, as well as suggestions for improving sentence structure and overall clarity.
2. Quillbot: Employed for paraphrasing and refining sentence flow to enhance readability and coherence.

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