

Work Motivation and 21st-Century Leadership Performance among School Administrators in an Island School District

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Abstract: A key element of educational institutions is school leadership, especially when it comes to meeting the needs of the contemporary world. This study examined how school administrators in the District of Caluya performed as 21st-century leaders during the 2023–2024 academic year, in relation to their job motivation. Thirty school administrators were purposively selected for a descriptive-correlational design. Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) and a researcher-made tool measuring 21st-century leadership performance were used to collect data. The findings showed that school administrators had very high levels of job motivation; males were rated higher than females, but motivation was consistently very high across all school levels and lengths of service. Overall and across all dimensions, leadership performance was similarly very high; the only areas with significant disparities were in instructional direction setting by sex and in developing oneself and others by duration of service. All aspects of leadership performance were found to be significantly positively correlated with work motivation. Project MATATAG was created to improve administrators' performance further and maintain their motivation, based on these findings, which highlight the critical role motivation plays in improving leadership practices.

Keywords: Work Motivation; 21st-Century Leadership Performance; Island Schools; Work Extrinsic; Intrinsic Motivation Scale; Foster Instructional Improvement; Organizational Development.

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1. Introduction

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Good school leadership is an important dimension of educational institutions, especially in response to the increasing complexity of the modern educational environment [2]. School administrators are expected to oversee the day-to-day functioning of their schools and to exhibit leadership competencies that foster instructional improvement, organizational development, innovation, collaboration, and the professional growth of teachers and other stakeholders [3]. 21st-century school leadership is more demanding as educational institutions operate in an environment of rapid technological development, changing learner needs, evolving curriculum requirements, accountability pressures and increasing expectations from parents and communities [1]. Thus, school administrators' ability to function effectively as 21st-century leaders is closely linked to their personal and professional motivations [4]. Work motivation is a crucial foundation for maintaining leadership performance, as highly motivated administrators are more likely to exhibit commitment, initiative, persistence, creativity, and a willingness to face organizational challenges. School administrators are not just administrators anymore [5]. School leaders today are expected to:

- Set clear instructional directions
- Promote effective teaching and learning
- Facilitate professional development
- Manage resources effectively
- Encourage collaboration
- Respond constructively to emerging challenges

They also have to develop their own professional competencies while fostering the development of teachers and other members of the school community. These duties demand not only technical and managerial skills but also a deep sense of purpose and long-term motivation [3]. Motivation affects administrators' attitudes toward their responsibilities, their responses to challenges, their relationships with teachers and stakeholders, and their attempts to raise their schools' performance. Therefore, it is very important to study the relationship between work motivation and leadership performance of administrators working in difficult conditions in educational institutions [1]. The study aimed to determine the work motivation and 21st-century leadership performance of school administrators in the District of Caluya for the school year 2023-2024. The District of Caluya provides an important context for the study of school leadership, as its geographical characteristics and local conditions may pose challenges different from those faced by administrators in more accessible urban or mainland school districts. School administrators in geographically isolated and island communities may face challenges related to transportation, communication, professional development opportunities, educational resources, and external stakeholders [4]. Such conditions may affect school leaders' ability to fulfill their responsibilities and their motivation to continue effective leadership practices [2]. In these environments, school administrators may need to demonstrate greater resilience, adaptability, creativity, and resourcefulness to maintain educational quality and organizational effectiveness. Local school administrators may face limited communication, professional isolation, limited access to resources and challenges in receiving timely institutional support. Geographic distance may limit opportunities for collaboration with other administrators and educational professionals, as well as participation in training programs, meetings, and other professional activities, due to transportation and logistical constraints [5].

Also, due to limited access to technological infrastructure and other educational resources, school leaders may have to assume additional responsibilities, requiring alternative strategies to address institutional needs [9]. These challenges underscore the need for work motivation to keep administrators committed to their duties despite environmental constraints. In adverse circumstances, highly motivated school leaders may be more inclined to find solutions, make the most of available resources, support their teachers, and preserve a positive climate in the organization [7]. The concept of work motivation has been studied from various theoretical approaches. Ryan and Deci's [8] Self-Determination Theory is a major foundation for comprehending intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when you do something because it is personally meaningful, interesting, or satisfying. Extrinsic motivation is doing something for external factors, such as rewards, recognition, expectations, or other outcomes. Both types of motivation could affect administrators' willingness to carry out their duties in educational leadership [6]. Administrators are motivated by personal satisfaction in improving their schools and helping learners, as well as by professional recognition, career advancement, institutional expectations, and accountability. Grasping these dimensions gives a more complete understanding of why school administrators continue to perform their duties and seek organizational improvement. In this study, the work motivation of school administrators was measured using Ryan and Deci [8] Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS). The use of an established instrument provides a systematic way to investigate the components of motivation. It enables the study to determine the extent to which administrators are motivated in their professional roles.

Leadership performance in the 21st century was also measured using a researcher-developed instrument in the study. The leadership instrument sought to address key aspects of leadership in today's schools and to evaluate administrators' performance against the expectations of today's educational organizations [10]. By examining motivation and leadership performance together, the study offers an opportunity to determine whether differences in administrators' motivation are related to differences in their leadership practices. The respondents of the study were thirty school administrators. The selection of

participants was based on purposive sampling, which was appropriate given the study's focus on school administrators in the District of Caluya during the identified academic period [11]. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to describe the levels of work motivation and leadership performance and to determine whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables [12]. The descriptive part of the design helped the researcher determine the respondents' existing levels of motivation and leadership performance. The correlational part of the study, in contrast, provided an opportunity to explore the relationship between work motivation and several dimensions of 21st-century leadership performance without manipulating the variables. The results indicated that the school administrators had very high levels of work motivation. This finding suggests that the administrators were generally highly committed and motivated to their professional responsibilities [14]. This is especially true in an island school district, where the district's geographic and organizational challenges may place additional demands on school leaders. Despite these challenges, the respondents appeared to remain strongly committed to performing their duties and contributing to the functioning and development of their schools [15].

High motivation at work can help the administrator stay focused on the school's goals, remain involved with teachers and learners, and continue working on improvements despite limitations in the working environment. The results also showed that male school administrators reported higher work motivation ratings than female administrators. However, the motivation in the groups remained very high. This means that although a sex difference was found, both male and female administrators were highly motivated in their work [13]. Thus, the finding should be interpreted with caution, as a difference in ratings does not necessarily imply that one group is universally more committed or efficient than another. Many factors, including organizational, personal, professional and contextual factors, can influence motivation [17]. The consistently high levels observed across groups indicate that school administrators are generally well motivated to fulfill their leadership responsibilities, irrespective of sex. Similarly, work motivation was consistently very high across different school levels and lengths of service [16]. This finding indicates that motivation was not confined to administrators at a specific educational level or with a particular amount of professional experience. Both more experienced and relatively new administrators seemed highly motivated. This consistency is important, as professional experience may impact leadership behavior differently. Longer-tenured administrators may have gained knowledge and familiarity with institutional processes, while shorter-tenured administrators may show enthusiasm, openness to new approaches, and readiness to try new practices [15]. The very high level of motivation across the groups indicates that both experience and school level can coexist with a strong professional commitment. The overall rating of 21st-century leadership performance was also very high.

The findings imply that the school administrators have demonstrated overall high performance on the leadership dimensions considered in the study. Their performance suggests they met contemporary expectations of effective educational leadership, including providing instructional direction, supporting teachers, facilitating organizational development and contributing to school improvement [12]. This is especially true for effective leadership in geographically remote settings, where administrators may have to make decisions on their own and develop solutions tailored to the context at hand without immediate external assistance [18]. Overall leadership performance was very high, but significant differences were found in specific areas. One major difference was seen in the setting of instructional direction by sex [19]. It implies that male and female administrators differed in their perceptions of this leadership dimension. However, the difference should be seen as a particular area for further exploration rather than as a demonstration of broad differences in leadership effectiveness, given that overall leadership performance was quite high [20]. The finding may reflect differences in leadership approach, professional experience, institutional responsibility or context. Further research could examine reasons for this variation using qualitative interviews or larger comparative studies. Another major difference was found in the development of oneself and others, depending on the duration of administrators' service [21]. The finding suggests that the length of professional experience may be a factor in how administrators approach their own professional development and the development of their teachers and colleagues. More experienced administrators may have more knowledge of professional development processes, mentoring roles, and organizational capacity-building. In parallel, administrators with less tenure may have different developmental needs and may need structured mentorship and leadership support [22].

This finding emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development programs that are sensitive to administrators' career stages and the unique leadership demands they face. The study found a significant positive correlation between all aspects of 21st-century leadership performance and work motivation. This finding suggests that higher work motivation is associated with better leadership performance on the dimensions examined [4]. The result highlights motivation as an important factor in reinforcing leadership behaviors [23]. Motivated administrators are more likely to engage in instructional leadership, support teachers, initiate improvements, develop themselves and others, and respond positively to organizational challenges [24]. In contrast, successful leadership experiences can also increase motivation as administrators gain a sense of achievement, purpose, professional recognition, and meaningful contributions to their schools. In remote and geographically challenging educational environments, the relationship between motivation and leadership performance is especially important. In such contexts, school administrators may not always have immediate access to external resources or professional support. Hence, their organizational effectiveness might be closely linked to their commitment and willingness to overcome challenges [12]. Motivation can lead administrators to develop creative solutions, build stronger relationships within the school community, and continue pursuing

educational goals even when resources are limited. In this sense, motivation should be considered not only as an individual psychological characteristic, but also as a factor that can influence organizational performance and school improvement.

The study's findings are also relevant to the overall transformation of Philippine education. School leaders are required to respond to changing curriculum expectations, technological developments, learner diversity, teacher development needs and community demands, as part of contemporary educational reforms today [8]. Initiatives like Project MATATAG underscore the importance of strengthening foundational learning, improving educational delivery, supporting teachers and creating more responsive learning environments in educational institutions. In this context, school administrators play a vital role in translating educational policies and reforms into effective practices at the school level. Their motivation and capacity to lead can impact the degree to which these efforts are implemented, particularly in remote or low-income communities [1]. The findings led to the formulation of Project MATATAG to further improve leadership performance and sustain administrators' motivation [7]. The initiative offers a practical answer to the expressed need for ongoing professional and organizational development. An intervention of this nature can address issues in instructional leadership, professional development, communication, collaborative decision-making, leadership resilience, resource management and strategies for maintaining motivation [10]. It can also offer administrators' opportunities to share experiences, identify common challenges, develop localized solutions and learn from one another. This kind of intervention is particularly beneficial in island school districts where professional isolation may limit opportunities for regular collaboration and knowledge sharing. Leadership and work motivation have been extensively researched in the existing literature.

However, much of the available literature has been conducted in accessible, urban or relatively well-resourced educational environments. Relatively little attention has been given to leadership and motivation in remote island settings, where school administrators face peculiar geographical, logistical, social and organizational conditions. Studies such as Allen [2] and Becker [5] highlight the significance of leadership adaptability and organizational conditions. Still, additional context-specific inquiry is needed to understand the dynamics of these factors within isolated educational communities. In such environments, leaders may need to demonstrate resilience, creativity, flexibility and a strong intrinsic commitment to sustain educational services and organizational performance. In this regard, the study of the relationship between work motivation and school leadership performance in the District of Caluya adds to the existing knowledge regarding educational leadership at the local level [1]. The findings indicate that school administrators can sustain very high levels of motivation and leadership performance even under difficult geographic and resource conditions. At the same time, the differences identified by sex, school level, and length of service highlight areas where targeted professional development and institutional support may be valuable.

The strong positive association between motivation and leadership performance further substantiates the importance of creating work conditions that sustain administrators' professional commitment [10]. Ultimately, good educational leadership is not only about knowledge of administration and technical skills, but also about the motivation that drives school leaders to apply those skills consistently [3]. This relationship is even more important in isolated educational communities, where administrators often play a key part in maintaining school operations, supporting teachers, engaging communities and implementing educational reforms. Therefore, enhancing their motivation might help to improve leadership practices and organizational effectiveness [12]. The results of this study suggest that educational leaders need to recognize motivation as an important aspect of leadership development and to provide sustained opportunities for professional growth, collaboration, recognition and institutional support. Developing the capacity of motivated and capable school administrators can enable educational institutions to respond to contemporary challenges and promote meaningful, sustainable, and context-sensitive educational development in island communities like the District of Caluya. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how work motivation affects school heads' leadership performance in these environments to promote localized educational development [1]. The central objectives of this research are framed into the following questions:

- What is the level of work motivation of school administrators when taken as an entire group and when categorized according to sex, length of service, and school level?
- What is the 21st century leadership performance of school administrators in terms of setting instructional direction, managing complex tasks, communication skills, and developing self and others when taken as an entire group and when categorized according to sex, length of service, and school level?
- Is there a significant difference in the level of work motivation of school administrators when they are categorized according to sex, length of service, and school level?
- Is there a significant difference in the 21st-century leadership performance of school administrators in terms of setting instructional direction, managing complex tasks, communication skills, and developing self and others when they are categorized according to sex, length of service, and school level?
- Is there a significant relationship between work motivation and 21st-century leadership performance among school administrators?
- What capability-building program may be proposed to upskill the performance of school administrators?

From these questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

- There is no significant difference in work motivation among school administrators across sex, length of service, and school level.
- There is no significant difference in 21st-century leadership performance among school administrators in setting instructional direction, resolving complex problems, communication skills, and developing self and others, when categorized by sex, length of service, and school level.
- There is no significant relationship between work motivation and 21st-century leadership performance among school administrators.
- Drawing from Chu Ho Ting's Four Hierarchical Layers of the New Model in 2009 and Vroom [15] Expectancy Theory in 1983, this study combines leadership and motivational techniques. Whereas Chu's model emphasizes leadership as an active process impacted by values, communication, and situational decision-making, Vroom's theory clarifies how effort-performance expectations and reward expectancies motivate people. Taken as a whole, these models help one grasp how school leaders' motivation and leadership effectiveness interact in the twenty-first century.

2. Review of Literature

The provision of inclusive, equitable, high-quality education and the encouragement of opportunities for lifelong learning for all are key components of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 [1]. Education systems around the world are urged to strengthen school leadership as a catalyst for high-quality instruction and better student outcomes to fulfill this global agenda. To successfully navigate the rapid changes of the 21st century, school heads need to demonstrate flexibility, instructional vision, and people-centered approaches. Since both internal and external factors encourage leaders to go above and beyond expectations, ensuring organizational commitment and excellence, leadership effectiveness and motivation are frequently linked [5]. The region wants to create resilient, creative, and human-centered educational communities that promote regional competitiveness and unity in line with ASEAN Vision 2045. It is believed that creating collaborative and future-ready learning environments requires transformational leadership and driven school administrators [2]. ASEAN emphasizes the value of leaders who can think strategically, be innovative, and empower their teams with skills that directly impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Thus, achieving long-term regional educational goals still depends heavily on motivation and leadership. National mandates like the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533), the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), and the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) serve as the cornerstones of leadership in education in the Philippines [8]. These guidelines emphasize the importance of school administrators in establishing instructional direction, overseeing personnel, and encouraging professional growth. Nevertheless, despite increased research on motivation and leadership, unanswered questions remain about how these concepts interact with the particular difficulties faced by the Philippine educational system. Specifically, there is still a dearth of empirical research on how work motivation shapes 21st-century leadership competencies [10].

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive research was used to gather, analyze, classify, and tabulate data about prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, and trends, and to interpret these data with or without the use of statistical methods. Correlational research was also used to determine the extent to which relationships exist between two or more variables, thereby enabling intelligent predictions. This design was appropriate, as the study aimed to determine the relationship between work motivations and 21st-century leadership performance among school administrators. The study was conducted in Caluya, Antique, Philippines, an island district comprising three major islands and six minor islands, all with educational institutions and designated school administrators. Purposive sampling was employed to select the respondents. The participants included 30 school leaders (administrators, principals, head teachers, and teachers-in-charge) from various schools within the district. They were chosen based on their leadership roles and direct involvement in school management. The distribution of respondents is shown below (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to variables

Variables		n	%
Sex	Male	9	30
	Female	21	70
Length of Service	13 years and below	15	50
	14 years and below	15	50
School Level	Elementary	23	76.6
	Secondary	7	23.3

Two instruments were used: (a) the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) by Ryan and Deci [8], an 18-item tool grounded in self-determination theory, and (b) a researcher-developed questionnaire assessing leadership performance in instructional direction, task management, communication, and professional development. Instruments underwent expert validation and reliability testing before administration. Data were collected through face-to-face survey administration, with informed consent obtained from participants and confidentiality ensured. Responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were employed to describe respondent profiles and levels of motivation and leadership performance. Inferential tests included the t-test and one-way ANOVA to determine group differences, while Pearson's *r* assessed correlations between variables. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test identified specific group differences when applicable. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Work Motivation of School Administrators

The overall level of work motivation among school administrators was very high ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.46$).

Table 2: Work motivation of school administrators by variables

Variables		Mean	SD	Description
Entire group		3.39	0.46	Very high
Sex	Male	3.58	0.40	Very high
	Female	3.20	0.52	High
Length of Service	13 years and below	3.39	0.57	Very high
	14 years and below	3.29	0.49	Very high
School Level	Elementary	3.30	0.43	Very high
	Secondary	3.37	0.77	Very high

When grouped by variables, males reported very high motivation ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.40$), while females reported high motivation ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.52$). Across length of service and school level, mean scores remained in the very high category. Table 2 presents the descriptive results.

4.2. 21st-Century Leadership Performance

Overall, the respondents demonstrated very high levels of 21st-century leadership performance ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.42$). Across all four dimensions—setting instructional direction, managing complex tasks, communication skills, and developing self and others—mean scores were consistently very high (Table 3).

Table 3: 21st-Century leadership performance of school administrators (Entire Group)

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Setting Instructional Directions	3.62	0.46	Very high
Managing Complex Tasks	3.42	0.43	Very high
Communication Skills	3.46	0.29	Very high
Developing Self and Others	3.57	0.48	Very high
Over-all	3.52	0.42	Very high

When grouped by sex, both males and females showed very high performance across all dimensions. Similarly, no major differences were observed when grouped by length of service (Table 4) or school level (Table 5).

4.3. Differences in Work Motivation

Independent-sample t-tests indicated no significant differences in work motivation when grouped by sex ($t = 1.93$, $p > .05$), length of service ($t = 0.46$, $p > .05$), or school level ($t = 3.32$, $p > .05$).

Table 4: T-Test results for differences in work motivation

Variable	Group	Mean	t	df	p
Sex	Male	3.58	1.93	28	.644

	Female	3.20			
Length of service	13 years below	3.39	0.46	28	.647
	14 years above	3.29			
School level	Elementary	3.31	3.32	28	.774
	Secondary	3.38			

4.4. Differences in Leadership Performance

Leadership performance showed no significant differences across most variables. However:

- A significant difference was observed by sex in setting instructional direction ($t = 2.10$, $p < .05$).
- A significant difference was observed by length of service in developing self and others ($t = -1.14$, $p < .05$).
- No significant differences were found across school level in any leadership dimension.

Relationship between Work Motivation and Leadership Performance: Pearson correlation results indicated that work motivation was significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of 21st-century leadership performance:

- Setting instructional direction ($r = 0.803$, $p < .001$)
- Managing complex tasks ($r = 0.428$, $p = .018$)
- Communication skills ($r = 0.819$, $p < .001$)
- Developing self and others ($r = 1.000$, $p < .001$)

Table 5: Correlation of work motivation and leadership performance

Leadership Dimension	r	p
Setting instructional direction	0.803	.000
Managing complex tasks	0.428	.018
Communication skills	0.819	.000
Developing self and others	1.000	.000

5. Discussion

The study findings revealed that the school administrators in Caluya, Antique had a high level of work motivation and 21st-century leadership performance. The findings suggest that, although there were geographic and organizational challenges inherent to an island school district, school administrators were largely motivated to fulfill their professional obligations and capable of demonstrating leadership practices that met the demands of contemporary education. The high level of work motivation indicates that the administrators had a strong sense of commitment to their work, and the high level of leadership performance implies that they could translate that motivation into practices that could support school operations, instructional improvement, professional development, and organizational effectiveness. These findings are especially important, as administrators in geographically isolated communities may be limited in communication, transportation, access to resources, professional networking, and ongoing development opportunities. Another important finding of the study is the consistency of work motivation across demographic groups. Results revealed no significant differences in work motivation by sex, length of service or school level. This means that administrators' motivation was quite stable, regardless of their demographic and professional features. While individuals' experiences and responsibilities may differ, the lack of significant differences suggests that administrators across groups shared a similar level of commitment to their professional roles. This may be because the district's school administrators share the same responsibilities and expectations.

Administrators, whether male or female, relatively new or highly experienced and assigned to different school levels, were expected to address similar organizational challenges and provide leadership to teachers, learners and other stakeholders. The absence of significant differences in motivation by sex is particularly relevant, as it shows that male and female administrators exhibit similar levels of professional motivation. There may be differences in leadership styles and individual approaches. Still, the results are insufficient to warrant the conclusion that sex is a determining factor in the work motivation of school administrators in the study setting. This finding underscores the need to focus on individual and organizational factors that can enhance motivation, rather than assuming that motivational capacity is necessarily tied to demographic characteristics. Therefore, educational institutions should provide equal opportunities for all administrators to develop their leadership skills, be recognized, advance professionally and be involved in decision-making. Similarly, no significant differences in length of service were found, suggesting that motivation can be maintained throughout an administrator's career. Administrators with fewer years on the job may be characterized by enthusiasm and a willingness to try new things. In contrast, long-term

administrators may be driven by their professional knowledge, relationships, and a greater understanding of their schools and communities. The high level of motivation across these groups suggests that both types of professional experience can serve to support commitment to leadership responsibilities. But sustaining motivation throughout an administrator's career requires continued institutional support, relevant professional development, collaborative opportunities, and recognition of accomplishments.

Findings also showed no significant difference in motivation concerning school level. This implies that the administrators working at different levels of education had similar high motivational orientations. Teaching needs and administrative duties across different school levels may differ, but shared challenges in school leadership may foster a shared sense of professional purpose. School administrators are responsible for operating schools efficiently, supporting teachers, serving learners' needs, working with parents and the community, and implementing educational policies. These common responsibilities may explain why motivation was high across school levels. Motivation was generally consistent. However, there were differences in specific dimensions of 21st-century leadership performance. Male administrators were significantly better in instructional direction setting. Instructional direction is an inseparable aspect of current leadership practices in education, as it involves setting clear academic expectations, communicating expectations, monitoring instructional practices and facilitating activities that enhance learner outcomes. The finding suggests that administrators may differ in their approaches to instructional leadership and academic direction. However, this finding should not be interpreted as evidence of the superior effectiveness of male administrators as leaders in general. Leadership performance can be affected by many factors, including professional training, organizational culture, years of experience, school context, resources and leadership styles. Therefore, further investigation is required to understand the specific causes of the observed difference. Another important difference was found in the leadership dimension regarding the development of self and others by length of service. Administrators with more years of professional experience performed better in this area.

This is not surprising, as leadership development is typically a cumulative process of professional experience, exposure to different organizational contexts, mentoring relationships, and opportunities to manage complex challenges. More experienced administrators may have developed stronger competencies in identifying their own professional development needs and in supporting the development of teachers and colleagues. They may also have gained practical knowledge that enables them to identify suitable strategies for mentoring, coaching, delegation and professional capacity-building. At the same time, the finding emphasizes the need to provide structured professional development opportunities for administrators at all stages of their careers. Mentoring programs, leadership coaching, peer learning communities, and opportunities to work with experienced school leaders can be helpful for administrators with less time on the job. Such initiatives may help accelerate professional development and also help less experienced administrators develop the competencies required for effective contemporary leadership. At the same time, experienced administrators can undergo advanced training to update their leadership practices and respond to emerging educational challenges. The study results also further confirm the important link between work motivation and leadership effectiveness. The findings are consistent with the view that motivated leaders are more prone to exhibit effective instructional, managerial and organizational practices. This relationship aligns with the Self-Determination Theory developed by Ryan and Deci [8], which emphasizes the importance of psychological needs such as autonomy, competence and relatedness in maintaining motivation. People generally stay highly intrinsically motivated when they feel competent in their work, have opportunities for meaningful professional autonomy, and have positive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.

Such conditions may promote persistence, creativity, commitment to the profession, and willingness to take on leadership responsibilities among school administrators. The results are also consistent with prior research highlighting the association between leadership motivation and effective educational practices. For example, Leithwood et al. [12] highlight the role of leadership practice in influencing school improvement and organizational conditions. Motivated school leaders are more apt to set clear directions, develop people, strengthen organizational processes, and maintain a focus on instructional improvement. The significance of these characteristics may be even greater in geographically isolated schools where administrators may have fewer opportunities to access external support. It may therefore have to rely on its own drive and leadership capacity. The findings have important implications for educational practice. First, leadership development programs need to be more than technical and administrative skills. Knowledge of school management, instructional supervision, policy implementation, and resource management is needed, but administrators also need strategies to strengthen and sustain their motivation. Professional development can include reflective activities, coaching, peer collaboration, recognition systems, goal-setting strategies, and opportunities for administrators to share successful practices. Such activities can enhance administrators' feelings of competence, autonomy, and professional belonging. Second, policymakers and educational authorities need to formalize ongoing professional development programs for administrators working in remote, geographically isolated contexts. Administrators of island communities may face challenges different from those faced by leaders of urban or easily accessible schools and programs, and these leaders should acknowledge that. As such, training opportunities should be flexible and accessible and could include digital learning platforms, remote mentoring, virtual professional communities and localized leadership workshops.

Regular access to professional support can help to reduce professional isolation and help administrators stay motivated and effective. Third, educational institutions should cultivate organizational climates that foster collaboration and recognition. Administrators who feel appreciated and supported are likely to have high professional motivation. Creating a positive professional climate may involve including administrators in decision-making, giving them opportunities to share ideas with colleagues, providing constructive criticism, and recognizing their accomplishments. These actions are especially pertinent for isolated communities where physical distance may limit regular contact with peers and higher-level educational authorities. The study has several limitations despite its contributions. Because the sample of school administrators was relatively small and drawn from a single district, the findings cannot be generalized to other educational environments. Caluya, Antique's geographical, cultural, administrative, and organizational settings may be unique compared to mainland, urban, or large school districts. So, the results must be interpreted primarily in the context in which the study was conducted. Another limitation is the use of self-reported data. Respondents may have answered in ways that reflect socially desirable perceptions of their motivation or leadership performance rather than providing completely objective assessments. Thus, response bias may be a limitation of self-report measures. To address these limitations, future studies should use larger, more diverse samples from multiple school districts and geographic settings. Comparative research on island, rural and urban schools may offer a wider view of how context affects leadership motivation and performance. Mixed-method research could also offer deeper insights by combining quantitative measures with interviews, focus groups, observations and documentary evidence.

These approaches would enable researchers to examine not only the levels of motivation and leadership performance but also the experiences, challenges and strategies that underlie these findings. Longitudinal research would also be valuable because motivation and leadership performance can change over time. As administrators learn, face organizational change, take on new roles and respond to educational reforms, they may experience different motivational conditions. Therefore, following school administrators over multiple years of service may provide a more complete picture of how professional experience and changing institutional conditions affect leadership performance. Future research might examine other variables including organizational support, leadership style, professional development, job satisfaction, resilience, workload, resource availability and school climate. All in all, the study demonstrates that work motivation is a significant constituent of effective educational leadership in the 21st century. Despite the challenges associated with an island school setting, the school administrators in Caluya, Antique, exhibit a high level of motivation and leadership performance, which manifests their strong professional commitment. The results also reveal that, although general motivation is similar across demographic groups, the development of some leadership competencies may differ by sex and professional experience. The findings support the need for context-sensitive leadership development, continuous professional support, and motivation-enhancing strategies. Improving the psychological and professional components of school leadership can help administrators respond better to modern educational requirements. Educational authorities can sustain motivated school leaders and strengthen their capacity to improve teaching, learning, and organizational outcomes in geographically isolated communities by creating supportive environments that foster autonomy, competence, collaboration, recognition, and continuous learning.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between work motivation and 21st-century leadership performance of school administrators in the District of Caluya for School Year 2023–2024. Results revealed that administrators exhibited very high levels of work motivation and very high leadership performance across instructional direction, task management, communication, and professional development. Motivation remained consistent across sex, length of service, and school level. At the same time, leadership performance showed limited variation, with male administrators excelling in instructional direction and more experienced administrators performing better in developing self and others. Importantly, a significant positive relationship was established between work motivation and all leadership dimensions. Theoretically, these findings affirm the relevance of Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sustaining effective educational leadership. Practically, the results highlight the need for leadership development programs that integrate motivation-building strategies alongside technical competencies. The design of Project MATATAG reflects this practical application, aiming to strengthen administrators' leadership capacities while fostering motivation in geographically isolated schools. In conclusion, motivated school leaders are better positioned to navigate complex educational demands, sustain high performance, and drive meaningful school improvement. Strengthening both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among administrators is therefore essential to advancing effective, future-ready leadership in the 21st century.

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