

SMU prof is first Asian to win prestigious psychology award



Professor David Chan was given the Raymond Katzell Award by the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

56-year-old recognised for his work and his societal contributions in managing pandemic

Tay Hong Yi

A Singapore Management University (SMU) professor is the first Asian and Singaporean to win a prestigious award from a leading professional association of psychologists.

Professor David Chan, director of the Behavioural Sciences Institute and professor of psychology at SMU, was bestowed the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology's Raymond Katzell Award.

Winners of this annual award are feted for showing the public the importance of work done in industrial and organisational psychology to address social issues.

Prof Chan, 56, who has spent three decades in psychology research work, was recognised for his lifetime scientific and practical contributions. The awards committee also highlighted his societal contributions in managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

In particular, it cited his 2020 book, *Combating A Crisis*, which explains the psychology of Singapore's response to Covid-19, as a clear example of using science to address social issues and solve practical problems for policymakers, organisations and the public.

Speaking to *The Straits Times*, Prof Chan said the greatest impact of his writings on Covid-19, which also include a series of five articles for *ST* under its *By Invitation* series in 2020, was to underscore the importance of public trust in pandemic control.

"With policies such as the use of *TraceTogether*, it became quite obvious public trust was critical... not just to know it and value it, but also to continue working on communicating policies to maintain that trust," he said.

The Society for Industrial and Or-

ganisational Psychology, which has more than 10,000 members, is the largest organisation of industrial and organisational psychologists worldwide, noted SMU in a statement on Monday.

It is devoted to the scientific study of working and the application of that science to workplace issues faced by individuals, teams and organisations, such as workforce planning, employee selection and job motivation.

Prof Chan said he was humbled and honoured to receive the award.

"It's always special when an

award goes to a Singaporean and Asian for the first time, because psychology has been globally dominated by researchers in the United States and Europe for decades.

"So the award is a good sign that the work of Singaporeans and Asians is being recognised," said Prof Chan, a regular contributor to *ST* on topics in psychology, such as how to make difficult decisions

and increase one's positivity.

He added that the award was all the more special as it was not a typical scientific award, but one that emphasises translating research for the public, organisations and policymakers.

"It's a reminder to me and fellow scientists that the reason we chose to be scientists is because we want to have the findings and knowl-

edge to make a practical difference to society."

Prof Chan will deliver the keynote address and receive his award, which comprises an achievement plaque and US\$3,000 (S\$4,000) in cash, at the society's annual conference to be held in the US in April.

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