The Relationship Between Instructional Leadership Style and School Performance Excellence Among Primary Schools in Johor

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Abstract

This study aims to look the relationship between instructional leadership style of headmasters with school performance excellence in Johor. In instructional leadership there are three dimensions are defining the school mission, managing the instructional programs and promote a positive school learning climate, where each dimension has its own role. To conduct this study, a total of 433 primary school teachers were involved as respondents. Teachers were selected as respondents because they were a mobilized resource to improve school performance. This study used quantitative methods and the data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Mode (PLS-SEM). The results show definine the school mission and managing the instructional program have a significant relationship with school performance. Therefore, it is necessary to extend this study to other states in Malaysia order to see the effectiveness of this relationship.

Keywords
headmaster; instructional leadership; school performance excellence

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) intends to make Malaysia a Centre of Excellence Education in the Asian region in this century (Yahaya et al, 2011). For that, MOE developed the Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 to be used as a guide to achieve the direction of education in Malaysia. PPPM 2013-2025 is an educational transformation that aims to ensure excellent school performance based on school quality and student achievement (MOE, 2019).

To ensure that school performance increase, in 2017, MOE has transformed primary school assessment from public examination to holistic assessment. This assessment covers the aspects of health, fitness, co-curriculum, classroom learning and mastery of students' tendencies (MOE, 2019). The transformation of assessment had a positive impact for the education system. As a result, at the 2018 World Economic Forum, Malaysia was ranked 19th out of 141 countries. So, this affect many foreign students interested to studying in Malaysia (Zahirwan, Huzaimah, Yusri, Munir, Paiz & Bakhtiar, 2020; Sualman, 2019).

In addition, school performance excellence is also influenced by the leadership qualities of school principals (Abdullah, Chen & Ling, 2019). At the same time, school leaders need cooperation from teachers to achieve outstanding performance (Nurlaili, 2018). According Nick (2018), through the collaboration of school leaders and teachers, leaders can improve the performance from less excellent schools to more excellent ones. In Malaysia, school performance measured by Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2). SKPMg2 consists

of five standards that is leadership, organizational management, curriculum management, learning and facilitation and student development (MOE, 2019).

However, there are obstacles to improving school performance in Malaysia today, data showing self-performance of the majority school leaders is below 90 percent (Dina, 2019). This should not happen because according Ibrahim (2017), school leaders are the role models for teachers in terms of administration, teaching and learning and producing students. Likewise, transferring headmasters every five years to new schools also prevents them from improving school performance (Halimah & Norizah, 2017). Moreover, previous researchers found the barrier school performance excellence because headmaster do not master of instructional leadership (Zakaria, 2016). To achieve school excellence, school leaders should focus on the learning process such as helping to improve student proficiency in English since these subjects often contribute to declining school performance in Malaysia (Foong & Khairuddin, 2018). Thus, the above facts clearly indicate that barriers to school performance improvement are related to the leadership style. Sensitive to this problem, started 2013, MOE has determined that school leaders in Malaysia need to practice instructional leadership (MOE, 2013). This is because previous researchers have proven that school leaders who practice instructional leadership can improve student achievement by up to 20 percent (PPPM 2013-2025, 2013).

According Hallinger and Murphy (1985), instructional leadership has three dimensions (define the mission, managing the instructional program and promote a positive school learning climate). Each dimension has its own purpose and are related each other. On the other hand, according Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in the first dimension, school leaders should be clearly set the direction of the school mission and make it known to all teachers. Second, in managing the instructional program, school leaders should have sufficient knowledge and be proficient in leadership related to teaching and learning by providing guidance with appropriate for teacher in enhancing learning. Third, in promote a positive school learning climates school leaders need to create environment happy and fun at school as a result of their wellbeing. When school leaders mastered all dimensions of instructional leadership, the process of achieving school performance excellence is easier and very clear.

Next, to achieve excellence in instructional leadership, school performance needs to involve resources who must be mobilized. School leaders are the resources need to be mobilized because they are the driving force in a success (Azlin & Roselan, 2015). In addition, teachers and students are also resources that need to be mobilized for school performance excellence; and thus, to achieve school excellence, these resources need to move together.

2. Literature Review

This study involved two variables. School performance excellence is a dependent variable and instructional leadership as an independent variable.

2.1 School Performance Excellence

Previously, school performance excellence was assessed based on public examinations, after 2019, the MOE has assessed primary school performance excellence holistically (KPM, 2019; Ibrahim, 2017). Thus in 2019, MOE has decided that school performance excellence is measured using SKPMg2 (KPM, 2019). As mentioned earlier, SKPMg2 measures five things namely (i) leadership; (ii) organizational management; (iii) curriculum, co-curriculum and student affairs; (iv) teaching and facilitation; and (v) discipleship.

From a leadership perspective, the item measured involves how leaders act as mentors, motivators and leaders in schools (Ibrahim, 2017). While in the organizational management perspective, leaders are evaluated based on human resource management, assets, finance, educational resource management, school climate, unity and strategic consensus. Furthermore, in terms of curriculum management, co-curriculum and student affairs, management evaluation are made based on accuracy of subjects and programs the of implementation all three aspects. From the perspective of learning, excellence and facilitation are assessed in terms of the role of teachers as planners; guards; mentor; motivators and evaluators in improving student mastery. Finally, in terms of discipleship the aspects assessed were in terms of student well -being in academics; student development in the co-curriculum and student personality development. So, the goal of these assessments a holistic to producing good students with mental, physical, intellectual and personality (MOE, 2019).

SKPMg2 is a manual provided by KPM specifically for school leaders to improve school performance. This manual is a guide for school leaders to achieve the targets set by the MOE. With that, school leaders can target outstanding achievement or minimal achievement. This strategy focused to making Malaysia an admired educational centre in Southeast Asia (KPM, 2019; Yahaya et al., 2011). This shows KPM is very serious in improving school performance.

Moreover, to achieve school performance excellence leaders need to set Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that need to be achieved in order to meet the aspirations of MOE (Rahman, 2015; Chan & Chan, 2004). The determination of school KPI must be in line accordance with the recommendations of MOE (Zabidah & Azlin, 2019). Thus, the process of improving school performance should be done continuously and should be improved from time to time to bridge the gap between high-performing and low-performing schools (Imelda, 2018).

Some of MOE efforts to improve school performance can be seen through the decrease in the National Average Grade (GPN) in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination results from 2015-2019 (KPM, 2019). During those five years, the average grade drop was 0.038 (MOE, 2019). This decline indicates that school performance excellence is improving and school leaders are committed to improving excellence. Even so, the decline cannot be boasted to face the current situation.

From another angle, every year government provides a large allocation for education field. In return, MOE always plan and implement various strategies to improve school performance and improve the national education system at global (Rahman, 2015). Through the explanation of school performance excellence above, strategies to improve educations system refer to school leaders. Previous researchers also have proved through the leadership style of headmasters can improve school performance (Nurlaili, 2018; Saiful, 2017; Siti, 2016). Based of previous finding, MOE found the strategies that can help in improving school performance is to focus on the leadership style (KPM, 2013). Finally, MOE takes the decision to choose instructional leadership in order practiced in all schools in Malaysia and this matter has been recorded in PPPM 2013-2025.

2.2 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is also known as learning leadership because it focuses on the teaching and learning process (Zabidah & Azlin, 2019). Previous researchers have found that instructional leadership is the best implemented in schools. After 2013, MOE has determined instructional leadership to be practiced in all school. The decision was made based on previous researches who found that instructional leadership can improve school performance to 20 percent (MOE, 2013). Because in instructional leadership, leaders should not focus on administration alone and ignore the teaching process. This type of leadership requires a line of school leaders who can contribute to the improvement of teaching.

However, previous researchers have also found that leaders have already practiced instructional leadership but school performance has not improved (Ng et al., 2015). The findings support the result from Francesco Sofo (2012) who considered that the weakness of instructional leadership is rooted in management. In addition, previous researchers also acknowledged that there is no uniformity in the implementation of instructional leadership in schools (Davis, 2019). Although there are weaknesses in the implementation of instructional leadership in schools but MOE stated this leadership should be runed in schools since it can improve school performance (Shafinaz, 2017; Baharin et al., 2017; KPM, 2013; Robert et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the MOE chose this instructional leadership because it contains three dimensions interrelated with each other dimensions namely; defining the mission, managing the instructional program and creating a positive learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Firstly, defining the mission is referring to how leaders need to understand and ensure the planned mission that can be achieved and pared the requirements of MOE (Ibrahim, 2017; Piaw, Shafinaz & Hussein, 2016; Abdullah & Kassim, 2012). Thus, headmaster should disseminate school goals for all school members understand the targets (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), and to make it easier for everyone to participate in their work.

Secondly, managing the instructional programs contains three sub-dimensions namely instructional supervision and evaluation, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring the development of students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

This of dimension requires a school leader with be able to manage, evaluate, monitor and know the activities available in the school (Ghazali, 2019; KPM, 2018; Sabri, 2017; Nashir, 2016; KPM, 2013; Azlin & Roslan, 2007). Also, this dimension supported by Robinson (2008) if school leaders are sensitive to school development, they can contribute to improve student performance.

The third dimension is promotion of a positive school learning climate. This dimension has six sub-dimensions, namely controlling teaching and learning time, cultivating professional/staff development, always seen, providing incentives to teachers and students and towards emphasizing academic excellence (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It suggests that school leaders need to create a conducive learning climate from all aspects involving well-being and the environment so that everyone is comfortable in school (Baharin et al., 2017).

In conclusion, based on the above description, instructional leadership is the best style of leadership because it emphasizes all the aspects from mission setting, the teaching process and creating a fun culture in the school. Table 1 shows the dimension of instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Table 1. Dimensions of Instructional Leadership

Define the mission	Managing the instructional program	Promotes a positives school learning climates
• Framing school goals • Communicating school goals	• Supervising and evaluating instructional • Coordinating curiculum • Monitoring students development	• Protecting instructional period • Promoting proffesional development • Always seen • Providing incentives for students • Providing incentivies for teachers • Enforcing academic standards

3. Methods

This study aims to investigate the relationship between instructional leadership and school performance excellence. In this study, a relationship study design was used to obtain sufficient information to answer the research question. In addition, this study was conducted in Johor and involved primary school teachers. A total of 433 respondents were involved and randomly selected by district. Google form was used as a substitute for questionnaire form in the data collection process. The changes of using the google form instrument is because the researcher was unable to have face-to-face meetings with the respondents due to the pandemic covid-19. The distribution of the google form to the respondents was done through the headmaster of the school involved and extended to the teachers using WhatsApp and Telegram applications. The use of the selected application is to take into account the ease of the respondent in accessing the questions that needs to be answered.

The structured of google form in this study consisting of Likert Scale type. Five-Point Likert Scale type responses were used in this study. This Likert Scale type reponses ranged from 1(Strongly Not Agree) to 5(Strongly Agree). The google form contained 98 questions. The questions were divided into three sections, Section A, Section B and Section C. Section A was a demographic related to gender, age, length of service and the highest level of education. While section B involves school performance excellence, and the questionnaire item was based on Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) which was developed by Shartle in 1945 (Foong & Khairuddin, 2018) and modified according to the suitability of the SKPMg2 (Ibrahim, 2017). Section B are divided into five parts leadership, organizational management, curriculum management, co-curriculum and student affairs, learning and facilitation and student development. Section C is an instructional leadership, a questionnaire items are guided by the Principals Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was introduced by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Items in section C are divided into three dimensions, defining the mission, managing the instructional programs and promotes a positive school learning climate. The data obtained from the respondents are analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Mode (PLS-SEM). The

demographic items were analyzed using SPSS. Whereas, to find the relationship between instructional leadership and school performance excellence, the data were processed using PLS-SEM.

4. Results and Discussion

This study investigated the extent of the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school performance excellence in Johor. This section presents demographic characteristics of respondents, findings and discussion of study.

4.1 Respondent Profile

The respondents constituted from primary school teachers in Johor. The results showed, 433 respondents participated in the study, 94(21.7%) were males while 339 (78.3%) were females. The respondents mostly females and confirms the primary schools in Johor are mostly female teachers. In terms of age of respondents, the participants aged above 50 years were 15.5%, those who are aged between 40-49 years were 39.0%; while 34.6% consisted of those aged between 30-39 years. The results of this study also showed that the age range of respondents between 20-29 years consist of 10.9%. The results show that, the most of respondents were aged of 30-49 years. In terms of respondents work experience, the results showed that 32.8% had 1-10 years working experience; while 37.9% had 11-21years work experience, and 29.3% had over 21 years work experience. This indicates that most of the respondents had more than 11 years of work experience. Meanwhile, in terms of highest educational attainment, the results showed 29 of the respondents were representing 6.7% had a diploma, 378 of the respondents representing 87.3% had a first degree, while 26 representing 6.0% had a postgraduate degree. These results confirm that the majority of the teachers in Johor had first degree.

4.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

The objective of this study is answered using PLS-SEM. In PLS-SEM, data were analyzed using two stages are measurement model and structural model. A measurement model is implemented to obtain the reliability and validity values of each indicator and construct studied in a model. This study uses a reflective measurement model. There were three main aspects assessed in the reflective measurement model, namely internal consistency reliability, convergent reliability and discriminant validity.

The Internal consistency reliability is a key feature studied in the measurement model. Generally, according Hair et al. (2017) instrument internal consistency was obtained when all items were positively correlated with each other in the construct. A commonly used criterion for internal consistency reliability is Cronbach Alpha, where it provides reliability estimates based on the relationships between the items construct. But with PLS-SEM, the internal consistency reliability is assessed based on a composite reliability where each indicator or item has different indicator loading values from each other. Just as the Cronbach Alpha reading range from 0 to 1, the composite reliability (CR) refers to a reading between 0 to 1. When the CR reading value is high, then the level of reliability is high as well (Hair et al., 2014).

According Norazwa et al. (2021), CR values between 0.6 to 0.7 are accepted in the exploratory studies while in other studies, values between 0.7 and 0.9 are satisfactory. However, if the CR value exceeds 0.90 (especially above 0.95) it is necessary to examine the items used to measure the constructs in which all items measure the same phenomenon (Hair et al., 2017). This study show a CR value above 0.95. Based on the Table 2, the CR value for school performance excellence (0.987), followed by defining the school mission (0.980), then managing instructional programs (0.973) and creating a positive learning climate (0.978). According Hair et al. (2017) if CR value exceeds 0.95, then the questionnaire items need to be reviewed. But according to Jan (2019), if the CR value of 0.95 should not get rid because it had a high and accurate reliability value. Therefore, the CR values for the four constructs in this study are acceptable and the level of construct reliability in this study is very good.

Next is to obtain the convergent validity value by focusing on the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE value refers to the extent to which an indicator on a construct has a relationship with other indicators or alternative indicators that measure the same construct. The AVE value setting must be at least equal to or greater than 0.5. The findings of this study show the AVE value for each construct is higher than 0.5. So, there is no need to get rid of indicators that have an outer loading value of 0.4 to 0.7 because the AVE value for each construct exceeds 0.5. In this study, the AVE value for school performance excellence is 0.629, defining school mission is 0.827, followed by managing instructional programs value of 0.721 and creating a positive learning climate value of 0.637.

Therefore, in this study the items for each construct showed high variance with each other. Table 2 shows the values of construct validity and reliability of the measurement model.

Table 2. Construct Validity and Reliability of The Measurement Model

Latent Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
School performance excellence	0.986	0.987	0.629
Define the mission	0.977	0.980	0.827
Managing the instructional program	0.970	0.973	0.721
Promotes a positives school learning climate	0.977	0.978	0.637

Once the process of internal consistency reliability and convergent reliability is run, the next step is to analyze discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which indicators in a construct differ from indicators of other constructs assessed through correlations in a model. This indicates that each construct is unique and measures phenomena not measured by other constructs. There are three approaches in discriminant validity are finding the value of cross loading, Fornell-Lacker and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). But according Henseler (2015), using Fornell-Lacker values is enough to find the value of discriminant validity. Fornell-Lacker value focuses on the comparison of the power source of the AVE values with the correlation of latent variables. In Fornell-Lacker the power source of AVE of each construct must be greater than the correlation value of the construct with other constructs.

Table 3 shows the Fornell-Lacker readings for this study. Based on Table 3, the AVE power source of each construct is greater than the correlation value of the construct with respect to the other constructs. In the school performance excellence column, the school performance excellence reading value is 0.779, which is higher than the other constructs. In defining the mission column, the Fornell-Lacker reading value of 0.910 is higher than the other constructs. Next, for the column to manage the instructional program, the highest reading value is to manage the instructional program which is 0.849 and for the column to create a positive learning climate, the highest reading value is to create a positive learning climate which is 0.798. In this study, the result shows that the correlation value of each construct is higher than the other constructs in its column. With that the validity of discrimination has been successfully achieved in this study.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion) of measurement model

Latent Variables	School performance excellence	Define the mission	Managing the instructional program	Promotes a positives school learning climates
School performance excellence	**0.793**			
Define the mission	0.786	**0.910**		
Managing the instructional program	0.755	0.801	**0.849**	
Promotes a positives school learning climate	0.707	0.757	0.833	**0.798**

4.3 Structural Model Result

This stage consists of the process of evaluating the interconnected constructs that in turn tend to form the model. This rating also looks at the relationships between the hypothesized constructs. A review of collinearity problem needs to be done before the structural model evaluation stage is done. This is to avoid the possibility of two constructs measuring the same thing. As such, to avoid the collinearity problem, the method used is the variance

inflation factor (VIF). If the VIF value obtained is less than the value of 0.2 or above 5.0, it indicates the existence of collinearity problem in the study model (Hair et al., 2017). The findings of this study show that the values of collinearity for the construct define the mission of 3.396, managing the instructional programs is 4.301 and creating a positive learning climate is 3.916. This cleary show that the results of this study for collinearity values are between 0.2 to 5.0. Thus, there is no problem of collinearity in this study because the collinearity values are between 0.2 to 5.0. thus, if all constructs are independent of the collinearity problem, then it is further calculated to find the value of path coefficient (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) and predictive Relevance (Q^2).

The value of path coefficient (β) is used to obtain information about the relationship between constructs in the model whether the relationship is significant or otherwise. To ensure that the construct relationship studied is significant the data obtained must be at the value of $t>1.96$ and the value of $p<0.05$ (Norazwa et al., 2021). Table 4 shows the finding of this study, in the path coefficient (β) column define mission is the most important predictor of school performance excellence (0.393) compared to managing the instructional programs (0.353).

Addition, Table 4 shows the relationship between the construct. Based on Table 4, there is a significant relationship between defining mission with school performance excellence (t value = 4.112 and p value = 0.00). Similarly, managing the instructional programs has a significant relationship with school performance excellence (t value = 2.280 and p value = 0.023). But there is no significant relationship between creating a positive learning climate with school performance excellence because the t-value is just 0.392 which is smaller than 1.96 and while p-value of 0.695 which is greater than 0.05. So, the finding in this study show that only two dimensions of instructional leadership are having a significant relationship with performance excellence.

Next, the R^2 reading for school performance excellence was at a moderate level of 0.683. This means, that 31.7 percent of the variance of performance excellence is explained by other factors that were not the focus of this study. Further, the f^2 values obtained indicated that define mission and managing the instructional program have a weak effect in producing R2 for school performance excellence with the values recorded of 0.144 and 0.041, respectively. While the value of f^2 to create a positive learning climate is 0.001 shows no effect on performance excellence (Cohen, 1988). But Bridge (2007) says that an f^2 value of 0.001 is still acceptable. However, through Q^2 testing, it shows that the model prediction is relevant because the value of Q^2 for school performance excellence is 0.425. This is because the obtained Q^2 values are greater than zero indicating that this model has sufficient predictive relevance for endogenous constructs (Norazwa et al., 2021).

Finally, after completing the measurement model assessment and structural model assessment, hypothesis testing was performed. The determination of the hypothesis is significant and insignificant determined based on the p-value and t-value that have been described previously. Based on Table 4, there are three hypotheses answered in this study. The result of $H1_a$ define missions with performance excellence was significant ($t = 4.112$, $p = 0.000$) and $H1_b$ managing programs with performance excellence was also significant ($t = 2.280$, $p = 0.023$). But, $H1_c$ relationship promotes a positives school learning climates with performance excellence was insignificant ($t = 0.392$, $p = 0.695$). Thus, the hypotheses of this study indicate defining school mission and managing instructional programs have a significant relationship with school performance excellence. Whereas, promoting positives school learning climate has no significant relationship with school performance excellence. Therefore, only two of the three dimensions of instructional leadership have a significant relationship with school performance excellence.

Table 4. Relationship of Instructional Leadership with School Performance Excellence

Hyphotesis	Path Coefficient (β)	P Value	T Value	Result
$H1_a$ Define the Mission -> Performance Excellence	0.393	0.000	4.112	Accepted
$H1_b$ Managing the Instructional Program -> Performance Excellence	0.236	0.023	2.280	Accepted
$H1_c$ Promotes a Positive School Learning Creating a Climate -> Performance Excellence	0.033	0.695	0.392	Not Accepted

The findings of this study contradict with previous studies that say all three dimensions of instructional leadership have a significant relationship with school performance excellence (Yen & Abdullah, 2017; Kiflee & Talip, 2015; Deidre & Viviane, 2015). While in this study, only define the mission and managing the instructional programs had a significant relationship with school performance excellence. Findings of this study are parallel with the findings from Philip, Allan and Dao (2017). Different findings from the expectations of the study because the respondents involved in this study are different from the previous researcher respondents. Apart from that, the headmaster assessed were also different. It shows that the differences of sources that are assessed (teachers) and assessed sources (headmaster) are influencing the findings of the study. Not only that, based on the findings of the study there are also differences of the study place and sources studied affect the findings of the study. Furthermore, the results of this study are in line with the outcomes from Aryadita (2019) that how an organization can improve its performance depends on the resources owned (Aryadita, 2019).

In summary, the results showed that primary school teachers in Johor just admit the dimensions of defining school mission and managing instructional programs that are important in the instructional leadership of principals in enhancing school performance excellence. This study also clearly shows that the findings of study depend on the resources available to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional leadership relationships practiced by teachers to improve school performance.

5. Conclusion

Overall, this study reveals the instructional leadership style of headmasters towards school performance excellence in the state of Johor based on teachers' perspective. The results show that headmasters practice instructional leadership in schools. Headmasters also understand and implement the three dimensions of instructional leadership (define the mission, managing the instructional programs and promotes) have a positive learning climate.

This study also indicates that headmasters are able to convey the mission of the school clearly and can be understood by teachers with appropriate communication. Through the explanations presented, teachers understand that through clarity in formulating and conveying the school's mission contributes to the improvement of school performance excellence. The expertise of the headmaster in conducting instructional supervision and guidance, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress facilitate the process of managing instructional programs in schools. Such actions are realized to be able to help improve school performance. But, the actions of principals by controlling teaching and learning time, cultivating professional development, maintaining visibility, providing initiative to teachers, providing initiative to students and emphasizing student excellence are less effective towards creating a positive school learning climate. Most importantly in instructional leadership, headmaster must be clear and know how to implement. While, teachers must understand the instructional leadership delivered by headmaster for facilitate school performance excellence to be achieved.

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