

# THE RELATIONSHIP OF PERCEIVED PRINCIPAL'S BEHAVIOUR AND HEALTH OF SUBURBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KOTA SAMARAHAN/KUCHING DISTRICT, KUCHING

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## Abstract

The study was to identify the perceived teachers' perceptions of the leadership behaviour of principals and the school climate and school effectiveness of suburban secondary schools in Kota Padawan/Samarahan District, Kuching. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to determine the relationship of principal behaviour and teacher behaviour and its consequences on school climate, effectiveness and demographic variables of teacher. The instrument used to evaluate school climate was the Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire - Rutgers Secondary (OCDQ-RS) to measure teachers' perceptions of the principal leadership behaviour (supportive and directive dimensions) and teacher behaviour (intimate, engaged and frustrated dimensions) to determine whether the school climate is open or closed. In relation, school health was studied to determine the effectiveness of school. Consequently, the instrument to measure school health was the Organisational Health Inventory (OHI). It measures three level of school level of school health - the technical, managerial and institutional integrity. The technical level of the school measures morale and academic emphasis dimensions of the teaching-learning process, the managerial level of the school measures initiating structure, considerations, principle influence and resource support dimensions that is related to the internal administrative function and controls where as the institutional level of the school measures institutional integrity dimension concerning the school and its environment. In order to investigate the relationship between school climate and school health, principal behaviour and the school climate, and principle behaviour and teacher behaviour, correlation analysis of Pearson's Correlation was used. Moreover, Independent t-test and One-way ANOVA were used to test the relationship of demographic variables of teacher vis-à-vis gender, academic qualification, years of service and workloads and school climate. The major findings revealed that there was significant relationship between school climate and school health. School openness was related to school health. Thus, significant relationship were found between school openness and integrity level of health, managerial level of health and technical level of health which involved the subscale dimensions of consideration, initiating structure, principal influence, resource support, morale and academic emphasis. Significant relationship was also found between principal openness and the engaged behaviour and intimate behaviour of teacher. In addition, strong significant relationship were also found between school openness and principal openness, school

openness and teacher openness, school openness and principal supportive and directive behaviour, and school openness related to teacher engaged and intimate behaviour. However, demographic variables of teachers involving gender, academic qualification and years of service except workloads were not significantly related to school climate. In conclusion, principal behaviour and teacher behaviour were significantly related to school climate and consequently associated with effectiveness of school as indicated by school health.

## **Background**

The Malaysian educational system had undergone various restructuring and reforms since independence. During the 1950s - 1970s, the dominant strategy of educational change was the diffusion of nation building and integration. Basically, the economy was agricultural-based with minimum emphasis on human resource development.

In the 1980s, the movement to restructure gained pace. Two major forces converged to give a dramatic change to the educational restructuring phase. First, the national agenda shifted from agriculture to industrialisation and second the introduction of a new curriculum. With the implementation of the new integrated curriculum for primary and secondary schools, the education system focuses on the balance and a holistic development on physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of individual.

Then the wave of educational reforms was intensified in 1990s and beyond. Education reform is vital to meet the challenges of globalisation and was based on the premise that the educational system should be geared towards achieving a developed nation as envisaged in Vision 2020. Therefore, an integrated approach in affecting education reform and the various related strategies in education and training was the excellence in education drive. Thus, the wave of reform gave national visibility to the ideology and ideas of educational excellence.

The evidences of education reform involve issues of governance and structure require significant changes in individual and organisational behaviour, organisational roles, school culture, school climate, leadership, established decision-making processes and jurisdiction; standard operating procedures and others. It therefore changes the equation of the school organisation.

## **Purposes of the Study**

The new generations of educational administrators are expected to be self-confident leaders with competence, a sense of belonging and self worth. Principals must be particularly proficient and effective in management and must be masterful of the disciplines in their profession and the needs of teachers to nurture a healthy organisation.

Findings from research indicated that the leadership of school, particularly that of the principal had influenced school climate and consequently on school effectiveness. Therefore, it is very important for the principal to exhibit behaviours that emphasis strong organisational culture in school. Principal behaviour should be open and supportive. Hence, the principal should be willing to accept ideas and practise collaboration, shared decision-making and co-operation through shared leadership which is the essence to school's improvement and effectiveness. In relation, staff should be given autonomy, positive reinforcement and recognition for their contribution. In addition, studies showed that principal behaviours that are open result in open school climate and subsequently healthy school.

## **Objective of The Study**

- i. To identify perceived principal's behaviour and teacher's behaviour.
- ii. To examine the relationship of principal behaviour and teacher behaviour.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between principal behaviour and school climate.
- iv. To examine the relationship between school climate and school effectiveness.

## **Significance of The Study**

The finding of the study is of significant important to principal leadership effectiveness. Principals should be responsive and sensitive to teachers and their needs to improve school effectiveness. They should be aware of behaviours that encourage development in open school climate and healthy school.

In addition, organisational climate and organisational health instruments provides an overall information about the nature of leadership behaviours: supportive (consideration), directive (initiating structure) and teacher behaviours (engaged, frustrated and intimate) that is invaluable to gauge the effectiveness of schools.

## **Review of Related Literatures**

Effective school environment exhibit strong administrative leadership and effective principal emphasis task accomplishment and human relationship. Not only it communicates high expectation for staff members but also promote good feelings and collegiality between teacher-teacher and principal-teacher relationship but also encourage teacher participation in the school's decision-making process. Thus, principal behaviour help to create open school climate and cultures that provides an environment that emphasis achievement and intellectualism, nurtures co-operative, collegial, supportive relationships among all school members and offers staff help and recognition (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992).

Empirical studies in school effectiveness indicate that the quality and characteristics of the organisational climate significantly influence school effectiveness. Research suggested that school principals that emphasis supportiveness, open communication, collaboration, intellectuality, and that reward achievement and success are better for the health of an organisation than principals that emphasis unhealthy competition, constraint and restriction, rules and standard operating procedures (Owens, 1991).

## **Principal Leadership**

As e result of the changes in educational theories and practices, leadership and management approach will determine the success or failure of developing effective schools. Hussein Ahmad (19910 believed there should be changes in management approach from absolute bureaucracy to humanistic bureaucracy which emphasis on the importance of the human factor. In addition, educational institution faces two major problems, which was related to structure and rigid organisational bureaucracy. This usually resulted in the failure of achieving organisational goals.

Leadership in education should be flexible to increase effectiveness of staff performance. Effective leadership involved the abilities to influence and convince internal and external human resources of the organisation to achieve organisational goals. Leader can be democratic or autocratic depending on the surrounding environments. It's most important that leadership behaviour will bring co-operation from the staff and between the staff (Lee Ong Kim, 1994).

Consequently, principal leadership is of utmost important to ensure improved, excellent and effective schools. Principals can make a difference and it is the leadership of school that make the difference between mediocrity and excellence, and effective schools are the result of the activities of effective principals (Edmond, 1987, Ubben & Hughes, 1987). In addition, the principal should develop and improve their personality, increase their knowledge and skills, enrich their experiences, refine their behaviour so that they can be more effective and respected leaders (Azmi Zakaria et al, 1995).

### **Research Findings on the Effectiveness of Principal Leadership**

Numerous research identified principle's leadership behaviour is required to promote school effectiveness and development of positive school climate (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997, Hussein Mahmud et al 1993, Sweeney, 1982, Edmond, 1977):

- i) Principals need to be sensitive to the talent and skill of their subordinates and be free from conventional bureaucracy. He or she is also responsible to provide an effective school climate, organisational maintenance, school policy, safety and school regulations.
- ii) Principal's leadership will influence school culture by shared school goals, collaborative decision-making, reducing teacher isolation, direct and frequent communication and plans to accomplish school goals.
- iii) Principal's leadership is required to enhance fundamental goals, help staff member to develop and maintain a collaborative professional school culture, foster teacher development and help teacher solve problems together more effectively.
- iv) The principal set a high professional standard; have a high level of personal involvement in the school; be readily available, especially for discussions; be interested in individual teacher development; give a lead in establishing aims for the goal setting and decision making.
- v) Effective principal appeared to contribute to school cultures viewed as associative; such cultures were described as cohesive. Interactions between principals and teachers and between teachers and others were viewed as co-operative, empathetic, supportive, respectful, equitable, and productive. In contrast, ineffective principals tended to create cultures viewed as dissociation. These cultures were seen as fragmented.

Bickel (1995) lists the following criteria of principal effectiveness:

- i) Encourages free and open flow of comments, suggestions and recommendation.
- ii) Creates a positive school environment.
- iii) Is a positive influence on staff behaviour.

- iv) Encourages staff involvement in decision making.
- v) Provide teacher with support they need.
- vi) Maintain good working relationships and rapport with staff.
- vii) Recognises the achievement of individual staff member.
- viii) Carries out agreements with staff.

### **Research Findings on School Climate and Leadership**

Findings indicated that principal had influenced on school climate, educational performance and the teachers, students and community satisfaction. However, leadership is also a two way process and it was apparently that the behaviours of the leaders were also in part a product of the school environment and interaction with others. Principals who practised "openness" give autonomy, positive reinforcement and recognition to staff. Generally, the staff had a strong sense of collegiality and cohesion which communicated positive images of the school to student and the community (Dinham, Craigies et al 1996).

Effective school has strong administrative leadership that provides an orderly and supportive school climate. Thus, the school principal practise collaborative planning and implementation, intense interaction and communication; both horizontal and vertical level within the schools. In addition, teachers are involved in curriculum planning, development curriculum guidelines and participation in decision-making on school policy and maintain maximum principal-teachers, teacher-teachers and teachers-students communication. In conclusion, effective schools are healthy schools in which the principal is open and supportive coupled with teacher openness that is intimate and cohesive (Mortomore et al 1988, Boger et al 1984, Baumhaver 1984, Schweitzer 1984, Purkey & Smith, 1983, Brookever et al 1979, Edmonds 1979).

### **Summary**

Literature review showed that principal supportive behaviour are related to school climate and consequently on school effectiveness which is reflected by school health. Principals who are open and practise supportive behaviour develop an open school climate that is indispensable for healthy school dynamics. Thus, climate is reflected by collaborative leadership, staff autonomy in decision-making, low restrictions, and high supportiveness and teachers are also open, intimate, cohesive and support each others. Thus, openness of the school is expressed through open principal-teacher and open teacher-teacher interaction and communication. In relation, open school climate also result in healthy school. The principal of healthy schools is supportive of teachers and yet provides high standards for performances, with high consideration and initiating structure. Moreover, the principal also provides morale to teachers and emphasis on teaching and learning.

### **Methodology**

#### **The Research Design**

The research used in the study was a survey research that was explanatory in nature. The explanatory design seeks to explain variables on the basis of data gathered at a point in time.

Hence, inferential statistics were used to examine the relationship between two variables of leadership behaviour and teachers behaviour, leadership and school climate, school climate and school effectiveness. In addition, the relationship between school climate and demographic characteristics were also been studied. On the other hand, it's to be noted that the research was ex post facto related. In addition, the research in question was conducted after variations in the independent variables had already been determined in the natural course of events. In the study, the variables involved were: (i) Principal behaviours and teachers behaviour as independent variables, and (ii) School climate and school effectiveness as dependent variables.

## **The Sample**

For the purpose of the study, the population referred to suburban secondary schools located in Kota Padawan/Samarahan District in Kuching that were based (i) on accessibility, (ii) population has similar attributes in form of students and teachers, (iii) population consisted of students from the same social economic status, and (iv) the population was of the same setting, contexts (all government schools) and came under the same supervision, management and administration of district education department.

The sampling of the target population was by probability sampling and the cluster sampling method was used to collect the data. A total of four secondary schools were drawn from the defined population of five secondary schools. In addition, the sample size was 286 that consisted of all the teachers of the selected schools.

## **The Research Instruments**

For the measurement of school climate, the instrument used was Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire - Rutgers Secondary (OCDQ-RS). The OCDQ-RS was a 24-item climate instrument with five subtests describing the behaviour of the secondary teachers and principals. For the dimension of principal behaviour on leadership, it measured two aspects of behaviours that were supportive principal behaviour and directive principal behaviour.

Subsequently, for the teacher's behaviour dimensions, OCDQ-TS measured three aspects of teacher behaviour vis-à-vis engaged teacher behaviour, frustrated teacher behaviour and intimate teacher behaviour.

However, for the measurement of effective school, the instrument used was the Organisational Health Inventory (OHI) which measure the health of the schools. The OHI was a 37-item questionnaire on which teachers were asked to describe their behaviour regarding three dimensions: (i) Institutional integrity, (ii) Managerial dimensions on consideration, initiating structure, principal influence and resource support, and (iii) Technical dimensions on moral and academic emphasis.

A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaires.

## Findings and Discussions

### Perceived Principal's Behaviour and Teacher's Behaviour

**Table 1: Subscales of Principal Behaviour and Teacher Behaviour Dimensions**

Rank Order		Mean	Openness Profile
	<b>Principal Behaviour</b>		
1	Supportive	450.8	High
2	Directive	226.7	Low
	<b>Principal openness</b>	338.7	Open
	<b>Teacher Behaviour</b>		
1	Intimate	622.1	High
2	Frustrated	260.0	Low
3	Engaged	110.2	Low
	<b>Teacher Openness</b>	330.7	Open
	<b>School Openness</b>	539.3	Open

The findings concluded that the principal was inclined towards supportive behaviour (mean = 450.8). On the other hand, intimate behaviour of teacher has the highest mean (622.1) followed by frustrated behaviour (260.0) and engaged behaviour (110.2). In addition, the openness indices of principal openness (mean = 338.7) and teacher openness (mean = 330.7) were significantly related. Subsequently there was relationship between openness of principal and engaged behaviour and intimate behaviour.

Hence, principal openness is reflected by genuine concern for teachers. Principals are supportive and exhibit behaviour such as helping teachers, complimenting teachers, giving constructive criticism and looking out for the welfare of staff. As a result, teachers behaviour are open as evidenced with behaviour that support open and professional interactions among teachers, enjoy working with their colleagues and enthusiastic, and is reinforced through a cohesive and strong network of social support among themselves.

In relation, they show high collegiality and intimacy between teacher-teacher relationships. On the other hand, teachers show low level of frustration in their working environment and are highly engaged as expressed through commitment of their works, behave positively, friendly and constructive (engaged behaviour).

The result was consistent with the findings of Hoy, Hoffmen, Sabo & Bliss (1996). Open principal behaviour is reflected in authentic relations with teachers. The principal creates an environment that are supportive, encourages teacher autonomy and free teachers from routine busy work so that they can concentrate on teaching. Moreover, the principal is open and approachable and genuinely concerned with both the social needs and task achievement of the school. Consequently, teacher openness is expressed by behaviour that is friendly, close, supportive and professional (highly intimate) that is open, helpful, and committed to students, and co-operate with each other (highly engaged).

## Relationship of Principal Behaviour and School Climate

Table 2: Correlation of School Climate, Principal Behaviour and Teacher Behaviour

Principal/Teacher Behaviour Subtest		School Openness
1.	Principal Openness	.566*
	• Supportive	.588*
	• Directive	.325*
2.	Teacher Openness	.838*
	• Intimate	.754*
	• Engaged	.842*
	• Frustrated	-.267*

\*  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed)

There was significant relationship between school climate, principal behaviour and teacher behaviour as revealed in the findings. School climate and principal openness was measured correlated positively and significantly. However, the principal openness domain of supportive behaviour was correlated strongly than directive behaviour in relation to school climate. Thus, it implied that supportive behaviour of principal have a strong influence on the openness of the school than directive behaviour of principal.

In relation, school climate was correlated significantly and highly positive with teacher behaviour. It was linked highly and positively with the engaged behaviour and intimate behaviour of teachers except frustrated behaviour of teachers. Therefore, school climate also appeared to have significant relationship with behaviour of teachers.

Teachers that exhibit intimate and engaged behaviour were necessary for an open school climate. Teachers in school work in team and socialise together and see themselves as having cohesive and strong linkages of support by creating an orderly and positive climate. In summary, strong significant relationship were found between school and principal openness, school climate and teacher openness, school climate and principal supportive behaviour, and school climate with engaged behaviour and intimate behaviour of teachers.

Therefore, the findings indicated that principal supportive behaviour, teacher engaged and intimate behaviour are characteristics of an open climate. The results were supported by findings done by Dinham, Cairney, Craige and Wilson (1995). They concluded that the principal had a strong influence in setting the "climate" of the school and had a marked "hand on", "open door", and positive attitudes and is responsible for happening within and concerning the school.

Moreover, the openness of the school is marked by principal's style of supportive behaviour. It was shown by high correlation between school openness and supportive behaviour. Staff was given autonomy, positive reinforcement and recognition on a continuing basis. Generally, the staff had a strong sense of collegiality and "cohesion" which communicated positive images of the school to the students and the community. Hence, both teachers and the principals are open in their behaviour.



Thus, the findings of the study showed that teacher perception of principal leadership does have an effect on the school climate. Teachers' behaviour with high correlation of engaged and intimate behaviours coupled with principal openness high in supportive behaviour produce an open climate of the school.

### Relationship of School Health and School Climate

**Table 3: Correlation of School Climate and School Health**

Subscale of school Health		School Openness
1.	Institutional integrity	.153*
2.	Managerial health	.505*
	* Consideration	.513*
	* Initiating structure	.329*
	* Principal influence	.245*
	* Resource support	.333*
3.	Technical health	.609*
	* Morale	.519*
	* Academic emphasis	.542*
4.	School health	.629*

\* p<0.01

The study revealed school climate was highly significantly linked with school health. The findings were consistent with empirical studies (Hoy et al, 1991). Healthy school was related to school openness. Healthier school generate greater trust in the principal, trust in colleagues and the organisation itself. Moreover, healthy school have supportive leaders who provide an atmosphere conducive to improvement through co-operative and shared leadership involving teacher participation in decision making, autonomy and emphasis relation-oriented dimension without compromising on task-oriented dimension linked to academic emphasis.

In addition, teachers in healthy school are committed to teaching and learning, maintain high standard of performance and the learning environments is orderly and serious. Thus, in healthy school, teachers like each other, are enthusiastic about their work, and identify positively with the school. Therefore, they exhibit collegiality and cohesiveness.

Hence, it can be concluded that school openness is related to school health and subsequently on school effectiveness. Empirical research supported that school health determinants are strong educational leadership who is supportive - that is a school head who is actively involved and should empower people to achieve their own and the school's purposes, a secure and orderly school climate - staff stability and staff organisation, high expectations of student's achievement and collegiality, developing cohesive and professional relations. The above findings were evidences provided by Brookover et al, Rutter et al, Schweitzer, and Mortimore (Scheerens, 1992).

## **Relationship Between Demographic Variables and School Climate**

The findings revealed no significant relationship between demographic variables of teachers involving gender, academic qualification and years of service and school climate. However, there was significant difference between school climate and workloads of teachers.

Therefore, teachers should not be overburden with unnecessary paper works and daily routine chores. Heavy workloads and responsibilities heaped on teachers will very likely result in disengaged and frustrated behaviour of teachers. In conjunction, in disengaged school climate, teachers not only resent their principal but neither like or respect each other as friends (low intimacy and high frustration) or as professionals (low collegial relations). Their behaviours are often negative and critical of their colleagues and the organisation. In conclusion, the staff is divisive, intolerant and uncommitted.

On the other hand, there was no significant difference between years of service of teachers and school climate. Thus, results of the study was consistent with similar studies in that there was no clear pattern of relationships between teacher demographic characteristics and school perceptions (Rengstorff, 1991).

## **Summary of Findings**

It was revealed that principal was inclined toward supportive behaviour than directive behaviour and they were significantly related to school openness. On the other hand, the perceived teacher's behaviour exhibited strong intimacy followed by frustration and engagement. Hence, to improve the health of the school, principles should give due attention to teacher frustration and determine the factors that contribute to the problems.

In addition, it was concluded that the principal openness was significantly and positively related to engaged and intimate behaviour of teacher except frustrated behaviour and hence principal openness and teacher openness. In relation, strong significant and positive relationships were found between school openness and principal openness, and school openness and teacher openness.

It was also found that the schools had a healthy climate. Moreover, there was significant relationship between school climate and school health. Thus, significant relations were found between school climate and institutional integrity level of health, managerial level of health and technical level of health. Subsequently, there was no significant relationship between openness of school and demographic variables of teachers vis-à-vis gender, academic qualification and years of service except workloads.

## **Conclusions**

It is apparent that the leadership behaviour of principal had influenced school climate and school effectiveness. However, leadership is also two-way process and it is equally apparent that the behaviour of the teacher is also part of a product of school environment and interactions with others.

Open principal behaviour creates an environment that is supportive, encourages teacher autonomy, free teachers from routine busy work so that they can concentrate on teaching.

Moreover, the principal is open and approachable to teachers and genuinely concerned with both their social needs as well as task achievement of the school.

On the other hand, open teacher behaviour is expressed through authentic interactions with colleagues and students. Teachers are open and professional in their interaction, their behaviour is sincere, positive, friendly and constructive. Hence, there is functional flexibility in both principal and teacher behaviour and are pivotal dimensions of school climate.

Not only open school climate is essential for positive school outcomes but is indispensable to healthy school dynamics. Schools should be places where teachers and students want to be rather than have to be. Therefore, schools with open climates are places where teachers and students feel better about themselves and their teachers and where trust among students, teachers and administrators are high.

In conclusion, organisational climate of school provides an overall information about the nature of principal behaviour (supportive and directive) and teacher behaviour (engaged, frustrated and intimate) that can be used to describe the quality of the school. The quality of the school is complemented by school health which can be administered to gauge school effectiveness in the dimensions of institutional integrity level, managerial level (consideration, initiating structure, principal influence and resource support) and technical level (morale and academic emphasis).

## **Implications**

One key to successful leadership is to influence organisational members. The principal leads by example - that is who does not ask teachers to do anything that he or she would not do and is supportive and helpful with teachers will likely find voluntary compliance and co-operation among teachers. In relation, the principal can criticise constructively. Rigid, domineering principal behaviour rarely produce commitment, to the contrary, in an atmosphere of close monitoring and suspicion, teachers will likely become alienated, uncooperative, and turn against each other and the principal.

Leadership that is supportive encourages teacher initiation, and free teacher from administrative trivia is instrumental in forging an open organisational climate. Moreover, open relations between teachers and principals are necessary if schools are to become truly professional organisations.

On the other hand, administrators can use OCDQ-RS and OHI as an organising framework, a diagnostic tool, and a guide to action for organisational improvement. The climate framework provides a perspective for the principals to reflect about how they are doing? How open are their relationships with teachers, and the health of the organisation from the dimensions of institutional integrity, managerial and technical level. In regards, the OCDQ-RS and OHI instruments not only identify those schools are closed or opened but it pinpoints those aspects of school climate and school health that are undesirable and in need of amelioration. Clearly, the instruments describe teacher-teacher, teacher-principal relations and school health and effectiveness in a more systematic way than personal impressions of the administrator.

Finally, OCDQ-RS and OHI can be used for professional development for both teachers and administrators. The profile of the school climate and school health is a snapshot of the school at a given point of time. It describes what exists. Therefore, teachers and administrators who find their school in need of change must begin to uncover the causes of existing climate. Once the causes have been diagnosed, then strategies for planned change can be implemented. The instruments lie in the usefulness of the measure in self-improvement and organisational development.

### Recommendations for Further Research

Research on school climate and school health should be investigated further as suggested below:

- i) The nature of the relationship between school climate and school health.
- ii) The extent of openness in principal and teacher behaviour affect student outcome such as self-concept, commitment to school, motivation, absenteeism, vandalism and student achievement.
- iii) What are antecedents to open principal behaviour and when and how they move to a more open style?
- iv) What condition does open principal behaviour creates open teacher interactions, healthy interpersonal relationships, trust, intimate and commitment to teaching?
- v) What structural changes affect school climate and related to open school climate?
- vi) Explore the interrelationship of principal behaviour, school climate quality and student achievement.
- vii) What are the relationships of school health and student achievement?

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