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Teachers' Morale and School Effectiveness in Secondary Schools of Sibu, Sarawak

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Abstract: This quantitative study aims to identify the influence of teachers' morale on school effectiveness in secondary schools. The study sample consists of 297 teachers from 17 secondary school of Sibu, Sarawak using stratified random sampling based on School Average Grade for SPM. A questionnaire consists of three parts have been used to obtain data from the respondents. Translated questionnaire of Bentley and Rempel (2008) and Kgaile and Morrison (2006) were used to measure teachers' morale and school effectiveness respectively. The study found that the two variables, namely teachers' morale and school effectiveness are at a moderate high level in the secondary schools of Sibu, Sarawak. Findings indicate there are six dimensions of teachers' morale which have a significant influence on the school effectiveness namely the relationship with the principal, relationship among teachers, curriculum issue, teachers' status in the community, facilities and school services, and community pressure. Besides, the result shows the relationship with the principal has been identified as the best significant predictor of influence towards school effectiveness. In conclusion, this study describes how the teachers' morale needs to be strengthen in order to improve the school effectiveness such as the relationship between the school leader and teachers.

Keywords: School Effectiveness, Teachers' Morale, Principal and Teachers' Relationship

1. Introduction

One of the main policy agenda around the world is to increase the school success [1], including Malaysia. The success of the school or the measurement of educational outcomes commonly associated with students' achievement in public examinations. This is clearly happens in Malaysia, where the government has allocated a large number of budget of school education each year. A total of RM56 billion, which covers about 21 percent of the overall budget in 2015 was allocated to the Ministry of Education for funding various programs of learning and teaching. This shows the commitment and seriousness of the government in improving school performance. However, the return on investment in education is often not as high as expected. For example, the result of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2011 showed 35 percent and 38 percent of Malaysia's students failed to meet the minimum proficiency level in Mathematics and Science. These things show further

efforts should be taken to improve this situation.

Although the teacher's quality is the main agenda in the school effectiveness, but the students' academic achievement is more important. This phenomenon has been unavoidable until now. As a result, teachers face the pressure to improve students' achievement test scores [2-4], rather than outcomes or actual student outcomes. The study in [5] describes this phenomenon as a wave of school transformation that affect teachers' morale and lead to teachers' burnout. Malaysia also shows initiative on the quality of teachers in order to transform the teaching profession to profession of choice through a variety of strategic planning that has been outlined especially in the fourth displacement of Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB). All these initiatives aim to improve the quality of education and directly to enhance the school effectiveness. The school effectiveness involves processes in schools [6] and teachers play a very important role in

influencing students' achievement [7]. With this, the previous studies on factors affecting the teachers' morale were carried out because the spirit of the teachers influenced their teaching, teacher effectiveness and leadership, attitude, behavior and discipline of students, including students' performance, both directly.

School effectiveness can be enhanced through the motivation of teachers, the teachers' feelings toward school and school atmosphere created. This feeling can be described as the spirit (morale) teachers, where it will affect the motivation of teachers and student achievement. This is because the teacher is a person who is responsible to teach in the classroom and deal with pupils throughout the school day. If the teacher is feeling positive to his responsibilities at school, hence the positive effect will be presented to students and schools, or vice versa. So, teachers have the satisfaction and high spirit will act actively to engage in the process of teaching and learning and personality development of students with better performance [8]. Media in South Africa often associates success with poor school achievement of students in examinations and teachers' morale is low [9]. Therefore, it is clear that teachers' morale is important and should be taken into account in initiatives to improve the performance of schools by school leaders.

2. Problem Statement

The issue of work stress among teachers should not be underestimated. This is because the teacher is an important input in the process of learning and teaching in schools and have an impact on students' achievement. In this case, teachers' morale has been identified closely with the desire and the effort of employees to achieve the targeted work. According to [10], employees who have high morale can increase productivity and reduce the intention to change job. In the context of school, teachers' effectiveness was found to have a significant relationship to students' achievement [11]. Therefore, it clearly shows the effectiveness of school depends on the education process and not merely to the output.

Typically, school effectiveness is measured through the achievement of students in an examination. Achievement of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) for the state of Sarawak in 2014 was found to be impaired in which State Average Grade (GPN) for SPM is 5.44 compared with GPN SPM in 2013 ie 5:31. In addition, the analysis also found that the results of School Average Grade (GPS) for SPM in Sibu during 2012 to 2014 was between 2.83 and 6.15. Based on the analysis of student achievement above, clearly shows the effectiveness of the schools should be given priority and serious consideration to the formation of quality human capital and guaranteed in the future. Accordingly, the objective of this study was to identify the level of teachers' morale and effectiveness of school based on the perception of respondents. In addition, this study also wants to examine the influence of teachers' morale on the effectiveness of school.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Teachers' Morale

Teachers' morale is difficult to define because it is always changing [8]. However, morale can be measured [12], and the most effective way to understand the concept of morale is based on the domain of life and the role of morale in which the concept is applied [13]. With a combination of factors related to it, then the level of morale in an organization can be determined. In the context of teachers' morale, morale can be understood by domain and the role of the school as a teacher.

Bentley and Rempel [14] have defined the morale as the desire and an interest of individuals towards the goals and ideals of a professional, whether as a group or individually. Teachers' behaviour is often influenced by morale. If a person or group has self-confidence, discipline, happy, and willing to work hard towards goals together, they will have a high level of morale and will act as it should be. Researchers [15] defined morale as a state of mind that is influenced by individual expectations on satisfaction of needs which has been obtained that will affect their overall situation. Hardy in [16] distinguishes the definition of morale by referring to the value of the affective like the feeling of belonging to their own work and support from colleagues, but it is not a high correlation, mean workers can achieve job satisfaction based on an aspect of the job even employee morale is low and vice versa.

Young [17] argues that the atmosphere of the school and teachers' morale interrelating in influencing the health of the school. With the efforts and initiatives in improving the health of school, teachers' morale should be expected to increase. Many other factors affecting teacher morale. This includes status, teacher income, the effect of government policy, accountability and autonomy of teachers [15, 18-19].

Tye and O'Brien [20] studied the reasons for teachers leaving the profession and found that the accountability factor, adding clerical work, student attitudes, lacking of parental support, unresponsive administration, low professional status, and low income affect teachers morale. Liu and Meyer [21] also argues that the student discipline is the main factor followed by factors of income affecting teachers' morale. The study also found that the administration and school leaders influenced the teachers. Teachers' morale can be improved and fostered by school leaders [22]. Whitaker, Whitaker, and Lumpa [23] also found that morale could be improved by acknowledging and strengthening the positive things that are done by teachers in their daily work at the school. With this, it is concluded morale can lead the organization's success or otherwise.

3.2. School Effectiveness

Schools effectiveness is difficult to define due to the involvement of a wide range of factors that influence it. Preliminary studies on the effectiveness of schools focused on the effort of schools improving the situation of schools

and the measurement of output, especially on student achievement. However, various studies were against this statement and believed that the effectiveness of schools have focused on factors such as behaviour in the classroom, student participation rates and the value of learning [24]. This can be seen through the definition of Hopkins and West [25] on the effectiveness of schools as a place for development of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social and aesthetic as possible and supported students optimal learning environment created. Accordingly, Scheerens [26] also describes the effectiveness of schools improvement as the situation in schools as teaching, learning, management, student motivation, and community involvement.

Many characteristics of school effectiveness have been studied. Bakirci, Turkdogan, and Guler [27] found the involvement of school leaders have an impact on teaching activities in classroom. They also described the involvement of teachers in decision-making will affect the effectiveness of the school. In addition, effective communication between the school environment, principals and teachers should be at the maximum level in ensuring the effectiveness of the school. Researchers have outlined the effectiveness of having a relationship with the school principals, teachers, students, curriculum and teaching process, school climate and culture, schools and parents as well as their physical, social, and relationship with the environment [27].

4. Research Methodologies

This study was conducted using a survey method. Sampling consisted of 297 secondary school teachers who are serving in the seventeen secondary schools which categorized in four different school categories based on the GPS in the year 2013 and 2014. The instrument used was a set of questionnaire which was adapted from teachers' morale [14] and school effectiveness [28]. The questionnaire is divided into three parts namely Part A to obtain demographic information of respondents, Part B (100 items) to measure the teachers morale and Part C (35 items) to diagnose the school effectiveness. Accordingly, the sampling method used in this study was stratified random sampling based on GPS for SPM.

5. Research Findings

Respondent Profile

The respondents consisted of 297 secondary school teachers who are servicing in 17 secondary schools of Sibu, Sarawak. Descriptive statistical analysis of frequencies and percentages were used to describe the profile of the respondents that include gender, the highest academic qualification, teaching experience, working experience in education and the position in school.

***Table 1.** Respondent Profile.*

Particular	Total According to the school category				Percentage			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Gender								
Male	37	19	21	12	39.8	33.3	19.8	27.9
Female	56	38	85	31	60.2	66.7	80.2	72.1
Academic Qualification								
Certificate / Diploma	6	4	1	1	6.5	7.0	0.9	2.3
Bachelor Degree	79	51	93	34	84.9	89.5	87.7	79.1
Master / Doctorate Degree	8	2	12	8	8.6	3.5	11.3	18.6
Teaching Experience								
1-5 years	18	3	6	3	5.3	5.7	5.7	7.0
6-10 years	29	22	34	13	38.6	32.1	32.1	30.2
11-15 years	25	13	25	11	22.8	23.6	23.6	25.6
16 years and above	21	19	41	16	33.3	38.7	38.7	37.2
Working Experience in School								
1-5 years	41	16	21	10	44.1	28.1	19.8	23.3
6-10 years	32	21	46	15	34.4	36.8	43.4	34.9
11-15 years	15	13	17	8	16.1	22.8	16.0	18.6
16 years and above	5	7	22	10	5.4	12.3	20.8	23.3
Position in School								
Administrator	15	12	24	9	16.1	21.1	22.6	20.9
Head of Panel / Smart Teacher / Media Teacher	13	14	27	7	14.0	24.6	25.5	16.3
Expert Teacher / Pre-U Teacher	17	5	16	11	18.3	8.8	15.1	25.6
Teacher	48	26	39	16	51.6	45.6	36.8	37.2

Note.

A – Schools that showed improvement in GPS consecutively.

B – Schools that showed a decrease in GPS in 2013 but showed an improvement of GPS in 2014.

C – Schools that showed improvement of GPS in 2013 but decreased GPS in 2014.

D – Schools that showed a decrease in GPS consecutively.

Table 2. Teachers' morale and school effectiveness level based on school category.

School Category	Mean		Standard Deviation		Level
	TM	SE	TM	SE	
A	3.44	3.75	.52	.63	Moderate high
B	3.62	3.94	.38	.39	Moderate high
C	3.47	3.77	.33	.49	Moderate high
D	3.28	3.50	.43	.61	Moderate high
Overall	3.46	3.76	.43	.55	Moderate high

Note.
TM-Teachers' morale, SE-School effectiveness

To determine the level of teachers' morale and school effectiveness, the findings of Table 2 shows at the level of moderate high respectively. The results of Table 3 shows the result of multiple regression analysis performed on teachers' morale and school effectiveness. The decision found that there are six variables namely the relationship with the principal (β=.46*), the relationship between teachers (β=.11*), curriculum issues (β=.12*), the status of the teacher in the community (β=.18*), facilities and school services (β=.25*), and community pressure (β=.12*) have emerged as significant predictor of school effectiveness. Overall, these variables accounted for 63 percent of the variance of school effectiveness. Next, in order to identify the best predictor of all dimensions of teachers' morale to school effectiveness, stepwise regression analysis method used. The results were shown in Table 4.

Table 3. The findings of the standard regression coefficient for the predictor variable on dimensions of teachers' morale to school effectiveness (Enter method).

Predictor variables	The standardised β
The relationship with the principal	.46*
Teaching satisfaction	.03
The relationship between teachers	.11*
Teachers salary	.05
Teachers workload	.08
Curriculum issues	.12*
Status of the teachers in the community	.18*
Community support to education	.06
Facilities and school services	.25*
Community pressure (Expectation)	.12*
R^2	.63
Adjusted R^2	.62
F Value	49.6
Durbin Watson	1.89

Note. *p<.05

Table 4. The findings of the best predictor of all dimensions of teachers' morale to school effectiveness.

Predictor variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
The relationship with principal	.69*	.54*	.48*	.46*	.46*	.46*
The relationship between teachers	-	.28*	.20*	.15*	.10*	.10*
Curriculum issues	-	-	.24*	.21*	.13*	.15*
Status of the teachers in the community	-	-	-	.13*	.13*	.15*
Facilities and school services	-	-	-	-	.20*	.21*
Community pressure (Expectation)	-	-	-	-	-	.09*
R^2	.48	.54	.58	.59	.62	.63
Adjusted R^2	.48	.53	.57	.58	.61	.62
F Value	275.8	170.9	134.7	105.3	95.1	81.0

The test results showed the six multiple regression model established by the criterion and predictor variables were significant. The six standard regression coefficients of variables, namely the relationship with the principal (β=.46*), relationship between teachers (β=.10*), curriculum issue (β=.15*), teacher status in the community (β=.15*), facilities and school services (β=.21*), and community pressure (β=.09*) are factors to increase school effectiveness. The combination of the six predictor variables significantly accounted for 63 percent of the variance in improving school effectiveness. The results of Table 4 also shows the relationship with the principal has emerged as the best predictor of school effectiveness compared with other dimensions. These results have been

indicated in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the school, the school should improve the relationship between principals and teachers because it will influencing the job satisfaction of teachers perform teaching and thus influencing student achievement.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Results of studies have found a relationship with the principals accounted for 46 percent of the percentage change in the variance in the school effectiveness contributed by secondary school teachers' perception in Sibu. These results show the respondents felt that a relationship with the principal is considered as a very important aspect to determine the effectiveness of the school. This is proven by studies of Bogler [29] in which teachers view the practice of transformational leadership by the principals would have the effect of directly or indirectly on job satisfaction. This is supported by Price [30] who said relations between by the principals and teachers is a significant predictor of satisfaction and commitment of teachers. The principal-teacher relationship was also shown to have an influence on student achievement by the supportive and cohesive behaviour of the leaders in schools, which influences teacher commitment [30]. Furthermore, improving learning in schools can be achieved through enhancing the principal-staff relationships that produce teachers who are more satisfied and committed, and thus contribute to the school effectiveness [30]. This phenomenon takes place because the teachers see school leaders as a supporter and facilitator in the team together to achieve the mission and vision of the school. This view will foster a tendency for teachers to feel responsible for student learning in school [31-32].

Given the importance of teachers' morale and school effectiveness, the government is expected to take the initiative in improving teachers' morale and the effectiveness of the school. Thus, the teachers' morale and school effectiveness should be given a priority in the planning of any policy. With it, teachers will perform responsibilities with initiatives to improve the quality of education delivered to clients, especially students.

Acknowledgments

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