

The Relationship Between School Climate And Teacher Commitment In Rural Schools

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Abstract

This study surveyed the level of school climate and teacher commitment in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) in rural Malaysia, as well as the relationship between the two. The sample of the current study consisted of 450 teachers chosen through proportionate random sampling were made to answer a set of questionnaires. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited accessibility to the study population who were in rural areas, data were collected by post. The findings suggested that the school climate level was high ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.51$) and the level of teacher commitment was also at a very high level ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.45$). The school climate correlated with teacher commitment ($r = 0.468$, $p < 0.05$). The findings of the current study can be used by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve school climate and teacher commitment in order to achieve the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013–2025. The findings will also contribute to the international literature on the relationship between school climate and teacher commitment, especially in rural schools.

KEYWORDS: School climate, Teacher commitment, Sustainable Development Goals, Rural Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has set a target that by 2030, all low-, middle-, and high-income countries will have educated and skilled students who will advance in sustainable development. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the global agenda states that education can help produce skilled and educated students. As a result, all students should have access to high-quality education to build a peaceful and prosperous society (United Nations, 2022). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had negative impacts on people, society, the economy, and education all over the world that were not anticipated three years before. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had global negative effects on people, society, the economy, and education that were not anticipated three years ago. As a result, many countries, including those in Asia and the Pacific, have taken rapid recovery measures to prevent the negative long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning progression, welfare, future income, and economic productivity (Molato et al., 2022).

To improve student achievement and facilitate student learning progression, besides enhancing the level of teaching and learning delivery at schools, improving the school climate is also significant. School climate is a pattern of the life experiences of its school community. It reflects the norms, goals, values, relationships, practices of learning, and facilities that support the members of the climate to be involved in achieving the vision and mission of a school (Sharique et al., 2019). In terms of students, a school is a place where they gain knowledge and hone their skills. Without a positive school climate, their motivation to continue learning will wane, leading to the issue of students dropping out. In addition, a perceived positive school climate is able to shape the commitment of teachers. This has been discovered in many studies including the study conducted by Lily James and Muhamad Suhaimi (2020)

Longobardi et al. (2022) acknowledge the current need for educators, politicians, and researchers to recognise school climate as one of the key thrusts that can enhance the educational system. When confronted with changes or challenges, the human factor can shape a school climate, whereby teachers are the driving force of change that leads the mission to achieve the vision of the school. To achieve this goal, high-commitment teachers are necessary since they are responsible for the excellence of an organisation. According to Latipah and Mohd Khairuddin (2021), teacher

commitment refers to a person's attitude when performing tasks in order to be better and to achieve a good result. However, to date, there are still questions regarding the studies of teachers' perceptions of the effects of school climate (Maxwell et al., 2017). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the education system, might have also affected school climate and teacher commitment. Therefore, understanding the current phenomena of school climate and teacher commitment after the pandemic could provide significant insights, particularly for schools in rural areas.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

School climate:

School climate is a reflection of the norm, objectives, and interpersonal connections that are valued as well as the methods of teaching and learning and organisational structures. It is based on what students, parents, and school personnel have experienced (Jusuf et al., 2022). The link between organisations and school environments influences the lives of the school community. Therefore, to prepare students for the future, changes in school climate are required (Thapa et al., 2012).

Fisher and Fraser (1990) developed the School Level Environmental Questionnaire (SLEQ), which has served as a reference for researchers. The SLEQ is based on eight dimensions, namely (i) student support, (ii) combination, (iii) professional interests, (iv) freedom of personnel, (v) decision-making participation, (vi) innovation, (vii) sufficiency of resources, and (viii) work stress. The dimensions act as a guide to support organisational changes in schools that will raise educational standards by enhancing the school climate. However, Johnson et al. (2007) in their study titled 'Teacher' Perception of School Climate: A Validity Study of Scores from The Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire,' examined the contributing variables stated in the SLEQ. As a result, a total of three original dimensions, which are professional interests, personnel freedom, and work pressure, are eliminated and five dimensions, namely (i) teaching innovation, (ii) cooperation, (iii) decision-making, (iv) school facilities, and (v) the relationship with students, are maintained. According to Johnson et al. (2007), the five components are sufficient to assess and examine issues relating to teachers' perceptions of school climate. However, the terms for the five dimensions are adjusted to better suit the topic of school climate. In general, the redesigned SLEQ provides a more accurate model to examine school climate, resulting in researchers from Malaysia (e.g., Nur Syaima and Nuruhuda, 2020; Mohamad Adnan et al., 2017) and abroad (Manca et al., 2020) to have utilised the redesigned questionnaire as their studies' reference.

In previous research, school facilities only include the amenities offered in school libraries. On the other hand, a study conducted by Ashrof and Fattin (2017) in Malaysia addresses that key school amenities are facilities offered by a school including classrooms, labs, libraries, health facilities, recreation facilities, and teaching and learning materials. In accordance with that, the current study adopted the definition of school facilities provided by Ashrof and Fattin (2017), with the integration of variables such as financial resources to carry out activities and the preparedness of school facilities to carry out teaching and learning processes.

Teacher Commitment:

Commitment is a reference to the individual's willingness to comply with the rules and powers of the organisation, where the demands and requirements of the organisation are seen as morally correct and its organisational capabilities. In schools, teacher commitment has proven to be the key to influencing attitudes and behaviours, including those related to performance, loyalty, and well-being, of an individual teacher towards their organisation (Cohen, 2013). As teacher commitment is multidimensional, it is easy to identify factors that affect the quality of the teacher's work and indirectly know the extent of the attitude and behaviour of the teacher in the school (Crosswell, 2006; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). A teacher's commitment is formed from interrelated matters and is not seen as a completely different entity. In general, teacher commitment can be attributed to personality and background factors.

According to Louis (1998), the quality of life of teachers contributes to their commitment to continue working more effectively. Louis (1998) has made it clear that there are four dimensions of teacher commitment: (i) the commitment to the school as a social unit, (ii) a commitment to the academic goals of the school, (iii) a commitment to the pupil as a unique individual rather than as an 'empty ship to fill', and (iv) a commitment to the body of knowledge. In the Malaysian context, Evonne et al. (2014) have adapted that dimension and concluded that the four dimensions that help identify the level of commitment of teachers in Malaysia. They are (i) the teacher's commitment to the school, (ii) the teacher's

commitment to teaching, (iii) the teacher's commitment to the pupils, and (iv) the teacher's commitment to the profession itself. In addition to the four dimensions, Evonne et al. (2014) identifies two implications in identifying a teacher's commitment to their profession. The first is their heightened tendency to participate in the work of their professional organisations. The second implication is that their commitment to their profession improves their professional skills, knowledge, and professional abilities. Overall, these four dimensions are of great importance in today's school climate especially adapted at the school level. These commitments are to ensure that the goals and objectives of schools are achieved, that the professionalism of teachers is enhanced, and that challenges and changes are effectively addressed.

In short, teacher commitment to the profession is based on the strength of motivation and involvement of teachers to work and improve their professional skills, knowledge, and ability to teach. It is believed that when a teacher's commitment in these areas is met, the school climate will improve, thereby creating a more harmonious and positive working environment.

Rural Schools:

Malaysia is a country with eleven states and three federal territories. Within the states, there are rapidly developing areas such as urban areas and there are also areas that are far away or close to the development of urban areas referred to as rural areas. Specifically, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2000) has defined urban areas as 'gazetted areas and built-up areas bordering them and a combination of these two areas with a population of 10,000 or during the 2000 Population and Housing Census', while areas with a population of fewer than 10,000 people are described as rural areas.

However, according to Siti Masayu and Narimah (2018), nearly 40 per cent of respondents in the community believe that the family's low income and lack of education are the primary factors contributing to the low educational attainment of children in rural areas. To be more specific, Zurina et al. (2018) in a study on educational and social-economic standards in a rural area in the state of Kelantan, the level of unemployment is high and educational success is moderate. Social-economic changes also occurred after the MCO was implemented in phases over the course of approximately one year between 2020 and 2021 in Malaysia. As a result, many parents have been compelled to stay at home and are unable to work, while others are compelled to completely stop working. This resulted in their social-economic decline. Therefore, education must be improved in order to effectively educate rural students. Among them is to improve the infrastructure and facilities of schools in rural areas.

The government has enacted the Rural Development Policy (DPLB) 2030 in preparation for the 21st century and to develop skilled human capital based on the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This policy aims to create a prosperous, inclusive, sustainable, and holistic rural area by 2030 in line with the country's aspiration in the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 to ensure that rural communities have the infrastructure and social facilities on par with urban areas. In this regard, rural communities can build human capital capacity, live healthier, and enjoy safer lives (Ministry of Rural Affairs, 2020). Along with this rural development effort, educational institutions such as rural schools are included to ensure the success of this agenda, translated in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013–2025, which pertains to the development of students with six aspirations, namely knowledge, critical thinking, leadership, bilingualism, ethics and spirituality, and national identity.

Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework used to implement this study is depicted in Figure 1. The five-dimensional school climate was adopted from Johnson et al. (2007), as the independent variable in addition, Evonne et al.'s (2014) four components of teacher commitment were employed. In general, the conceptual framework was developed with the Malaysian environment in mind.

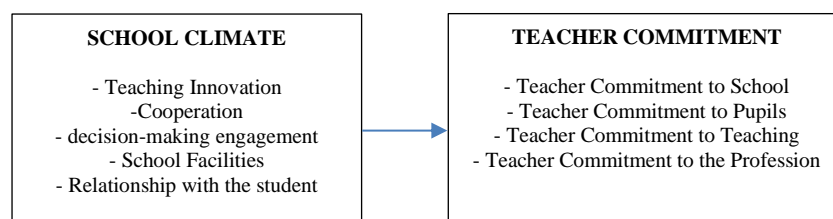


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The results of this survey provide a preliminary image of the level of school climate and teacher commitment in rural SMK in Malaysia and practical recommendations to the MOE, State Education Department (SED), District Education Office (DEO), and school leaders of SMK in rural areas in the effort to deliver higher-quality education. As a result, the following are the goals of this research:

- a. Identify the level of school climate in SMK in rural areas in Malaysia,
- b. Identify the level of commitment of teachers in SMK in rural areas in Malaysia, and
- c. Identify the relationship between school climate and teacher commitment in SMK in rural areas in Malaysia.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to determine the level of school climate, teacher commitment, and the link between school climate and teacher commitment in SMK in Malaysian rural areas following the COVID-19 pandemic, this study employed a descriptive-quantitative method. This research design was employed because, according to Sharique et al. (2019), the combination of descriptive and quantitative methods can produce precise measurements and allow generalisation in its population. This is the result of using mathematics, calculations, and statistics to determine the causal connection between two variables.

Participants:

According to Kingstrom and Mainstone (1985), respondents with more than a year of working experience can provide reliable information on the subject under study. Therefore, this sample was selected from this population. Teachers with more than a year of teaching experience from SMK in rural areas of Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sabah, and Sarawak were included in the study sample. Since there was no rural SMK in the federal territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Labuan, no teachers from the states participated in the study. The study population was divided into five regions (see Table 1) and proportional random sampling procedures were used. According to Sekaran and Bougie's (2016), Roscoe's (1975), Krejcie and Morgan's (1970), and Cohen's (1992) guidelines, the sample size should be between 390 and 500 respondents. Based on proportional random sampling and after the additional 20 per cent increase in the number of respondents to account for respondents who could withdraw and in the case that the questionnaire instrument is damaged (Frenkel and Wallen, 2009), a required sample size of 470 teachers were needed. Then, a random number generator was used to choose the 470 teachers to participate in this study.

Table 1: Research population and sample for SMK in rural areas

REGION	STATE MALAYSIA	IN	RATIO CALCULATION	TOTAL SCHOOL SAMPLE	TOTAL TEACHER SAMPLES
North	PERAK		$42^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	3	$3 \times 10^d = 30$
	PULAU PINANG		$1^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
	KEDAH		$14^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
	PERLIS		$8^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
South	NEGERI SEMBILAN		$27^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	2	$2 \times 10^d = 20$
	MELAKA		$7^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
	JOHOR		$67^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	5	$5 \times 10^d = 50$
Middle	SELANGOR		$8^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
East	PAHANG		$98^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	8	$8 \times 10^d = 80$
	KELANTAN		$17^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	1	$1 \times 10^d = 10$
	TERENGGANU		$40^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	3	$3 \times 10^d = 30$
Borneo	SABAH		$141^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	11	$11 \times 10^d = 110$
	SARAWAK		$115^a \times 47^b / 585^c$	9	$9 \times 10^d = 90$
Total				47	470

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- a. Number of school population in rural areas by the state in Malaysia
 - b. Number of schools samples in rural areas in Malaysia
 - c. Number of population of schools in rural areas in Malaysia
 - d. Number of samplese per school
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Data Collection Instrument:

Questionnaires were employed as the study’s instrument to obtain key information from respondents. The questionnaire consists of three sections: Part A related to demographics; Part B related to school climate practices, and Part C related to teacher commitment. Part A inquired about respondents’ information, namely, gender, age, length of service, length of service in the current school, top academic achievement, position grade, and position held at the current school. Part B, on the other hand, consisted of 5 dimensions represented by 78 items, all were adapted from the school climate model built by Johnson et al. (2007). As Leong and Norazah (2021) and Ashrof and Fattin (2017) believe that a school climate should consider the present situation, The current study made improvements in the dimension of school facilities by including the need for appropriate and adequate facilities in schools such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, recreational facilities, teaching and learning materials resources, and physical facilities including the supply of teaching equipment and materials. Lastly, Part C consisted of 25 items, representing the 4 dimensions of commitment based on the theory of teacher commitment by Evonne (2014). The section was also guided by literature surveys by Musliza et al. (2020), Mohd Aizat et al. (2018), and Nurulaim Asyikin and Suhaida (2013) who have studied a similar subject in Malaysia.

Data Validity and Reliability:

The process of validity and reliability in conducting quantitative studies is crucial to identify the degree of reliability of the instruments used in a study and whether the instruments will continue to accurately produce the same result when replicated (Babbie, 2016; Golafshani, 2015). According to Sekaran (2003), reliability refers to the accuracy of a measuring tool to evaluate a concept to be studied. On the other hand, Creswell (2009) explains that reliability refers to the stability and internal consistency of an instrument. To test the validity of the instruments built in the current study, the Item Specification Table (JSI). JSI was utilised to structure the content of the fields studied to be more systematic before being evaluated by three experts in the field of research. The views of the experts were considered when improving the items to suit the Malaysian context.

The validity of the items in the questionnaire that were evaluated by the experts in the current study was determined by calculating the mean score for each item evaluated by the expert using SPSS Version 26 software. Items with a mean score between 5.00 and 4.00 were maintained as they indicated a high consent level. Items with a mean score between 3.99 and 3.00 were modified as they indicated a moderate consent level. Meanwhile, items with a mean score between 2.99 to 1.00 were eliminated as they indicated a low consent level (Rahayu, 2017; Mohd Sahandri et al., 2015). In order to implement the validity of the current study, improvements were made as suggested by the experts. All items reviewed had a high mean score of between 4.00 and 5.00.

The current study measured the reliability of the constructed item using the coefficient correlation through Cronbach’s alpha. Based on Pallant (2010), Creswell (2009), and Mohd Majid (2005) the value of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient at <0.9 is very high, at 0.70 to 0.89 is high, at 0.31 to 0.69 is medium, and at <0.30 is low. In total, both variables, school climate and teacher commitment, had high Cronbach’s alpha coefficient values. Out of 103 items, 86 items obtained a very high Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of <0.9 and 17 items obtained a high Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of between 0.70 and 0.89 (refer to Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2: School climate dimensions coefficient

No.	School Climate Dimensions	Order of item numbers	Alpha Cronbach Value
1.	Innovation in Teaching	Isa1, Isa2, Isa3, Isa4, Isa5, Isa6.	.926
2.	Cooperation	Isb7, Isb8, Isb9, Isb10, Isb11, Isb12, Isb13, Isb14, Isb15, Isb16.	.962

3.	Decision- Making Involvement	Isc17, Isc18, Isc19, Isc20, Isc21.	.895
4.	School Facilities	ISd22, ISd23, ISd24, ISd25, ISd26, ISd27, ISd28, ISd29, ISd30, ISd31, ISd32, ISd33, ISd34, ISd35, ISd36, ISd37, ISd38, ISd39, ISd40, ISd41, ISd42, ISd43, ISd44, ISd45, ISd46, ISd47, ISd48, ISd49, ISd50, ISd51, ISd52, ISd53, ISd54, ISd55, ISd56, ISd57, ISd58, ISd59, ISd60, ISd61, ISd62, ISd63, ISd64, ISd65, ISd66, ISd67, ISd68, ISd69, ISd70.	.984
5.	Relationship With Pupils	Ise71, Ise72, Ise73, Ise74, Ise75, Ise76, Ise77, Ise78.	.932
Total Coefficient Reliability			.980

Table 3: Teacher commitment dimension coefficient

No.	Teacher Commitment Dimensions	Susunan Nombor Item	Nilai Alpha Cronbach
1.	Teacher's commitment to the school	KGa1, KGa2, KGa3, KGa4, KGa5.	.876
2.	Teacher's commitment to pupils	KGb6, KGb7, KGb8, KGb9, KGb10, KGb11, KGb12.	.955
3.	Teacher's commitment to teaching	KGc13, KGc14, KGc15, KGc16, KGc17, KGc18.	.909
4.	Teacher's commitment to the profession	KGd19, KGd20, KGd21, KGd22, KGd23, KGd24, KGd25.	.874
Total Coefficient Reliability			.944

Data collection procedures:

To ensure that the data collection procedures were complied with, permission to conduct research was obtained from the Planning and Research Division of the Education Policy of MOE, SED, DEO, and the schools that were involved in the current study. This survey questionnaire was distributed and collected to schools by post due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of influenza outbreaks. Also, the data collection method was chosen since the schools were in rural areas that might have limited internet access. The respondent's response to the questionnaire items was based on a 5-Likert scale consisting of, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = less agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Data processing and analysis:

To ensure that the data obtained were valid and reliable, a data screening process was done by removing the patently answered data sets and issuing data sets of extreme value based on outlier tests using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26 application. In this study, a total of 450 data sets were accepted and analysed. A total of three (3) data sets were removed for answering on a patent basis and seventeen (17) data sets were removed for having a high outlier value.

Descriptive analysis is performed to generate the frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation of responses. This serves to answer the first and second research questions. Therefore, the level of school climate and sustainable leadership practices among school leaders were determined by the interpretation of the mean score as proposed by Suzana (2015) and Mohd Azmi (2016) as set out in Table 4. To answer the third question, a correlation analysis using Pearson inference was used to conclude if there is a link between the school climate and teacher commitment. The conventional approach to interpreting correlation coefficients based on Taylor (1990) and Fauzi et al. (2014) was also employed (refer to Table 5).

Table 4: Mean score interpretation

Table 5: Correlation coefficient interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation	Magnitude Observed	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	1.0	Great Correlation
3.41 – 4.20	High	0.80 – 0.99	Very Strong Correlation
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	0.60 – 0.79	Strong Correlation
1.81 – 2.60	Low	0.40 – 0.59	Moderate Correlation
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	0.20 – 0.39	Weak Correlation
		0.01 – 0.19	Very Weak Correlation
		0.0	No Correlation

4. DISCUSSION

The demographic profiles of the teacher respondents in the current study were organised based on their gender, age, years of service, and educational background. The summary of the respondent's demographic profiles is shown in Table 6.

Demographic data:

Table 6 displays the demographic profile of 450 teacher respondents in rural SMK in the state of Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sabah, and Sarawak.

Table 6: Demographic profiles of 450 teachers in rural SMK in Malaysia

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	182
	Female	268
Age	51 > years old	14.7
	46-50 years old	18.2
	41-45 years old	22.7
	36-40 years old	17.3
	31-35 years old	17.1
	26-30 years old	6.9
	20-25 years old	3.1
Years of Service	>20	25.1
	16-19	19.6
	11-15	25.6
	6-10	16.4
	1-5	13.3
Highest Education Received	Certificate/Diploma	1.7
	Bachelor's Degree	78.9
	Master's Degree	18.7
	Doctor of Philosophy	.7

The Level of School Climate:

The first objective of the current study was to identify the level of school climate in rural SMK in Malaysia. The mean score, frequency, and percentage of dimensions of school climate in the survey are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The mean for the dimension of school climate in rural SMK in Malaysia

Bil	Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Interpretation
1.	Teaching Innovation	4.14	0.57	High
2.	Cooperation	4.36	0.43	Very High
3.	Decision-Making Involvement	4.24	0.48	Very High
4.	School Facilities	3.76	0.56	High

5.	Relationship With Pupils	4.19	0.51	High
	Total	4.14	0.51	High

According to Table 7, the overall school climate had a high mean value of 4.14 (SD = 0.51). The mean for cooperation among teachers was 4.36 (SD = 0.43) and decision-making engagement was 4.24 (SD = 0.48), indicating the very high level of the dimensions in the school climate. The mean for teaching innovation was 4.14 (SD = 0.57), school facilities was 3.76 (SD = 0.56), and relationship with pupils was 4.19 (SD = 0.51), indicating the high level of the dimensions in the school climate. The result of the current study showed discrepancies with the findings of the studies conducted by Yun and Norazah (2020) and Mohamed Adnan et al. (2017), both of which indicate that the overall school climate was extremely positive, a very high mean. This could be due to the close relationship between experience and observation, which enables the teacher to respond quickly and proactively to organisational changes.

To implement 21st century learning, changes in the curriculum and the equipment in schools are needed to attract students to learn and to ensure that they are exposed to the correct use of current technology-based learning materials and equipment. The findings of this study also showed that school facilities in rural areas in Malaysia scored a mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.51), indicating a high level. Therefore, the facilities and the supply of teaching resources provided by the schools in rural SMK are considered the facilities sufficient, in a good condition, accessible, and available (Johnson et al., 2007; Ashrof and Fattin, 2017). The high overall mean value for school climate also indicated that teachers in rural SMK in Malaysia were motivated to perform their tasks at school and that there had been the provision of appropriate and adequate resources in efforts of creating a more conducive school climate in rural SMK in Malaysia.

The Level of Teacher Commitment:

The second objective of this study was to identify the level of teacher commitment in rural SMK in Malaysia. The mean score, frequency, and percentage of the responses regarding the dimension of teacher commitment in the survey are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Overall means for the dimension of teacher commitment in rural SMK in Malaysia

Bil	Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Interpretation
1.	Teacher Commitment to School	4.26	.47	Very High
2.	Teacher Commitment to Pupils	4.43	.45	Very High
3.	Teacher Commitment to Teaching	4.37	.44	Very High
4.	Teacher Commitment to the Profession	4.27	.45	Very High
	Total	4.33	.45	Very High

According to Table 8, the overall mean value of teacher commitment in school was 4.33 (SD = 0.45). Based on the interpretation of the mean score by Suzana (2015) and Mohd Azmi (2016), the mean value indicated a very high teacher commitment level among teachers in rural SMK in Malaysia. The teacher commitment dimension to pupils had the highest mean value of 4.43 (SD = 0.45). While the mean value of the teacher's commitment to the school dimension was 4.26 (SD = 0.47), the teacher's commitment to teaching was 4.37 (SD = 0.44), and the teacher's commitment to the profession was 4.27 (SD = 0.45), indicating a very high level. The overall level of teacher commitment identified in this study was in line with the results of a study conducted by Musliza et al. (2020).

However, the findings of this study differed from the findings of the studies conducted by Mohd Aizat et al. (2018) and Nurulaim Asyikin and Suhaida (2013). They found that teacher commitment was still at a moderate level when the PPPM 2013–2025 was implemented. In particular, Nurulaim Asyikin and Suhaida (2013) found that teacher commitment needs to be enhanced in schools in order to improve school excellence and performance. The findings of the current study indicated that teacher commitment had improved as a result of the positive outcome of the PPPM 2013–2025 initiative by the MOE, although with the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the commitment of teachers in rural SMK in Malaysia was very high. The study also discovered that teacher commitment was formed when the school had a positive relationship with them and sees themselves in a school in which they chose to join and remained. As a result, teachers are committed to their responsibilities and have improved social relations in their organisation at school.

Relationship Between School Climate and Teacher Commitment:

The third objective of the current study was to find out the relationship between school climate and teacher commitment in rural SMK in Malaysia. The correlation between school climate and teacher commitment is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Pearson correlation between school climate and teacher commitment

Correlation Coefficient	
School Climate	Teacher Commitment
	.468*
*p < 0.05	

Findings as presented in Table 9 found that school climate and teacher commitment had a moderate positive correlation relationship. As interpreted by Taylor (1990) and Fauzi et al. (2014), the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.468$, $p < 0.05$) is at an observation of magnitude of 0.40 – 0.59, indicating a moderate correlation relationship between the two variables. The findings of this study were in line with the findings of the studies conducted by Billy and Muhamad Suhaimi (2020) and Suhaila and Khaliza (2016) that found a moderately positive significant relationship between the school climate and the commitment of teachers. This is due to the fact that education is constantly accepting challenges and changes due to current and future needs.

However, the results of the current study differed from the findings of the study conducted by Evonne and Crispina (2017), which found a weak but significant positive relationship between school climate and teacher commitment, especially on teacher motivation. The study by Roslee and Ranwan (2020) also found that the school climate was at an average level. In this regard, Cohen et al. (2009) explain that school climate refers to life in the school which involves relationships, operations, and environment. It is capable of making a good or opposite impression on its school's community, which affects the behaviour and commitment of the people in it. Therefore, the positive relationship that exists between the school climate and teacher commitment necessitates the implementation of a positive school climate at the administration level of school organisation (Billy and Muhammad Suhaimi, 2020). A positive school climate means a healthy school environment that is able to focus on academics. This is because schools are then able to influence teacher commitment and raise their belief that they have an impact on their responsibilities (Evonne and Crispina, 2018).

Even with school facilities at a high level, there are still many facilities in rural schools that need to be upgraded given that school facilities scored the lowest mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.56). As an example, the information communication technology (ICT) related requirements need to be improved in rural SMK to support the implementation of teaching and learning in schools. According to Billy and Muhammad Suhaimi (2020), a good school climate needs to be practised in the organisation of a school at a higher level as it has a significant positive relationship between the school climate and the commitment of the teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the level of school climate in rural SMK in Malaysia is high, the level of teacher commitment in rural SMK is very high, and there is a moderately positive relationship between school climate and teacher commitment in rural SMK in Malaysia. Although the findings discovered that the mean value of school facilities was the lowest under the school climate dimensions, the teacher commitment was still very high to create a better working culture. Therefore, high-commitment teachers ensure that the spirit and philosophy of education are strictly adhered to in order to further enhance the achievement and success of schools in rural areas.

With the findings in the current study, MOE can place special emphasis on upgrading facilities in rural schools to provide a conducive school climate. Also, SED and DEO need to implement continuous guidance and assessment to improve the level of school climate, influenced by provided school facilities and planned school activities, to further strengthen teacher commitment in rural schools. To further examine the relationships between school climate and teacher commitment,

future studies can look at school leadership practices and their relationship with school climate in shaping teacher commitment. This is due to teacher commitment is not only related to the school climate but a result of leadership practices among school administrators. This study was conducted based on the perception of teachers. Hence, future research can examine the perceptions of school leaders in relation to real situations at school. Furthermore, school leaders or principals should be enlisted as respondents or samples in future studies aimed at eliciting in-depth reasons for building a positive school climate, in an effort to increase teacher commitment in rural schools.

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