



## PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

<https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/pr>

How to cite this article:

Mohamad Zain, F., & Shaffiee, N. R. (2023). The relationship between school organizational climate and primary teacher's commitment in Malaysia. *Practitioner Research*, 5, July, 65-82. <https://doi.org/10.32890/pr2023.5.3>

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND PRIMARY TEACHER'S COMMITMENT IN MALAYSIA

<sup>1</sup>Farah Mohamad Zain & <sup>2</sup>Nazrul Ridzuan Shaffiee  
School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author: [mz.farah@uum.edu.my](mailto:mz.farah@uum.edu.my)

Received: 26/2/2023    Revised: 1/6/2023    Accepted: 14/6/2023    Published: 31/7/2023

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school organizational climate and teacher's commitment. This study focused on four dimensions of school organizational climate which are institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership and achievement press. A quantitative survey method was applied and randomly tested with a sample of 170 teachers from seven government primary schools in the district of Arau, Perlis, Malaysia. The instrument used in this study was adapted from Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and the Organizational Climate Index (OCI). Analyses of the data gathered were presented using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The findings indicated that the relationship of school organization climate and teachers' commitment is moderately strong.

**Keywords:** Organizational Climate, Teacher's Commitment, Primary Teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Among the factors linking the quality of teaching and learning in schools are positive school organizational climate and teacher's commitment (Khan, 2019; Othman & Kasuma, 2016; Fei & Han, 2020). Teachers' commitment is a very important element in the education system. In the field of teaching which is very broad and general, entails not only teaching but also educating and imparting knowledge to students (Razak et al., 2009). Hence, teacher's commitment comes as a very vital element in the education system and by increasing teacher's commitment in schools helps retain highly qualified teachers and improve their teaching skills and abilities.

Issues related to organizational climate and teacher's commitment have attracted much attention from various researchers in recent years. The organizational climate in schools is important because it bridges the practices of human resource management and teacher's productivity. It has been argued that climate change in schools will affect teacher's work commitment and behaviour (Robbin & Judge, 2012). In addition, studies have also shown that positive school climate is also linked with students' academic achievement (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004) whereby it improves teacher retention (DiStefano et al., 2007) and influences people's behaviour (Norhannan, 2016).

Likewise, in Malaysia, teachers' commitment is crucial to produce effective schools. A positive school climate interprets into an increased teachers' commitment. In other words, a healthy school organization climate not only increases the commitment of teachers but also improves the learning environment and increases the efficiency of the school. However, studies on the relationship between school organization climate and teachers' commitment are scarce particularly in the Malaysian context. Therefore, in an attempt to fill in the research gap, this study aims to identify the relationship between organizational climate such as institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership, achievement press and teachers' commitment among primary school teachers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **School Organizational Climate**

There is a continued scholarly debate about the definitions of school organization climate. The pioneers of school organization climate define organization climate as a school's personality (Halpin & Croft, 1963). They argue that organizational climate of each school is different depending on their actions and strategies that they place in achieving the vision and mission of the school. Meanwhile, school climate acts as a social relationship between teachers-students, students-students, principals-teachers, co-curricular work and other forms of human relationships (Norhannan, 2016). Meanwhile, school climate as a model of the characteristics and atmosphere encompasses the rules, beliefs, and expectations of an organization including its members (Petrie, 2014). Thus, each school has its own characters that affect its climate. This is due to the fact that schools have dissimilarities in terms of perception, philosophy, student behaviour, and academic achievement, as well as other aspects. Therefore, in the context of this study, the school climate means a concept that includes a various of components within the school environment such as institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership and achievement press. As such, it is very important to provide teachers with an insight of all views related to their work setting of an organization in the school context.

Many studies have shown positive relationship between organizational climate and teacher's commitment. A study has been conducted among 80 High School teachers in Kota Tebing Tinggi, Indonesia revealed that there is a positive influence between school organizational climate and emotional fitness and self-efficacy of teachers (Dewi, 2019). This study also suggests that a positive school organizational climate has a significant effect on self-efficacy, provided that the teachers have high self-confidence when conducting their duties and responsibilities. In a similar study, it shows that positive, secure and healthy school environments are correlated with better academic outcomes, psychological, community, and behavioural (VanLone et al., 2019). From the perspective of students, it shows that a good school organizational climate will produce excellent academic and positive behaviour of the students. A study also has been conducted using

30 samples to teachers in MSU Junior High schools (Valdez et al., 2019). The result shows, there was a significant correlation identified between organizational climate and teacher's demographics.

Despite the positive impact of organizational climate, schools also faced many challenges. Schools are often made up of teachers from various backgrounds (Abdullah & Abd Rahman Abd Aziz, 2008). And these diversified backgrounds often create unhealthy school organizational climate which makes it difficult for the school principals to handle. Some teachers are reluctant to accept views and ideas of others, and do not have a sense of love and belonging for the school. This indicates that there are shortcomings in the administration to the point of not being able to create a stable organizational climate. The progress or change in performance improvement is influenced by behaviours and practices as well as a positive and conducive climate of a school (Padhi & Palo, 2005). However, school leaders remain to be the main thrust in creating an efficient organizational climate and able to change the work environment of their subordinates. Given the negative attitude of some teachers, it is not surprising that some teachers only prioritize their essential tasks rather than helping colleagues who face difficulties in voluntary work as demanded in the creation of organizational climate (Widyastuti & Manara, 2014).

In another study, it shows that the relationship between principal leadership with work commitment of Christian teachers in Boven Digoel district, Papua is significant and positive (Werang, 2018). This relationship is able to increase teacher's work commitment through various methods for school principals and Christian elementary school climate change in Boven Digoel district, Papua, New Guinea.

### **Influential Factors in School Organizational Climate**

There are many influential factors which may impact the school organizational climate. Past studies suggest that school climate is linked to numerous job-related outcomes such as self-efficacy (Mansor et al., 2021), job satisfaction (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016; Fei & Han, 2020; Katsantonis, 2019), school performance (Manla, 2021), job performance (Fei & Han, 2020), academic achievement (Daily et al., 2019), teachers' stress (Hu et al., 2019; Saeki et al., 2018) and teachers' commitment (Othman & Kasuma, 2016; Yusof, 2012).

Four dimensions of school organizational climate are relationship, personal growth, system change and improvement, and physical environment have been constantly researched on (Khuluqo & Tenkahary, 2021). These four dimensions adopted through climate studies identified as institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership and achievement press (Hoy et al., 2002) are also used in constructing the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) (Hoy et al., 1998).

Professional teacher indicates on the accessibility of the teacher-to-teacher interaction, while academic press subtest emphasizes the relationship between the school and student achievement. Collegial leadership subtest, on the other hand, points out on how the principal treats teachers as professional colleagues and practices openness in dealing with any issues. In other words, this collegial leadership subtest also refers to the principal expectation and standards for the other teachers. Finally, the institutional vulnerability subtest indicates the relationship between the school and the nearby.

### **Teachers' Commitment**

Commitment is the level of responsibility to achieve the vision and mission in an organization (Yahaya, 2003). Previous study stresses that commitment is a sense of identification that includes trust, involvement and readiness of an individual to the needs and desires of an organization (Steers, 1981). On the other hand, commitment is a psychological construct that is also characteristic of an employee with his organization and influences a person's feelings in order to maintain in the position (Allen & Meyer, 1996). The results also showed that there are three dimensions of work commitment for an organization, namely normative commitment, affective commitment, and continuance commitment. Nevertheless, previous study has found that organizational commitment was influenced by teachers' work commitment (Antimah & Santosa, 2017). This means that if teachers have a high commitment to the school, they will work harder to increase the performance of the school. The results from this study are also in line with the study conducted by previous researchers who stated that there is a positive and significant presence of organizational commitment with teacher work commitment (Tolentino, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2010).

## **Relationship between Organizational Climate and Teacher's Commitment**

Many studies have been conducted to illustrate the relationship between school climate and teacher commitment (Khan, 2019; Manla, 2021; Selamat et al., 2013; Raman et. al., 2015). A study in secondary schools in Klang, Selangor found that teachers' work commitment affects teacher performance and school organizational climate (Selamat et al., 2013). Similarly, a study showed that the relationship between school climate and overall teachers' commitment of the five primary schools is at a moderate level. Based on the findings, the achievement press made a significant contribution to the teachers' commitment while school climate dimensions were positively correlated with the teachers' commitment.

Likewise, previous studies have investigated school climate in relation to teachers' commitment and school performance (Manla, 2021). The findings have significant implications for the implementation of change in schools, motivation, productivity, well-being, and learner achievement. School climate has positive correlation with teachers' commitment (Raman et al., 2015). Factors such as teachers' professional behaviour, work pressure and collaborative leadership have positive significant relationship with teachers' commitment whereas institutional transparency has no relationship with teachers' commitment. Teachers' professional behaviour was considered as the determining factor for teachers' commitment. The findings of these studies can contribute to all types of schools and school administrators. This is because by understanding factors which influence the school climate, school administrators and teachers will be able to work towards materializing education excellence of their respective institutions.

A correlation between school organizational climate and teacher's commitment findings exposed that the institutional vulnerability and collegial leadership are the strong predictors of teachers' commitment (Khan, 2019). The findings of their study can play a role to develop understandings for school administrators and principals to make necessary interventions to obtain a positive school climate. The level of school climate and overall teachers' commitment of the selected five primary schools is high (Yusof, 2012). As for the correlation

between school climate dimensions, the results show that there is a positive correlation with teachers' commitment. Analysis revealed that only professional teacher behaviour made a significant relationship to teachers' commitment.

### ***Research Objectives and Research Questions***

In conclusion, this study is guided by the following objectives:

1. to identify the level of organizational climate factor (institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership and achievement press) in primary school.
2. to identify the level of primary school teachers' commitment.
3. to determine the relationship between organizational climate and commitment among primary school teachers.

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of organizational climate factor (collegial leadership, academic achievement, teachers' professionalism and institutional vulnerability) in primary school?
2. What is the level of primary school teachers' commitment?
3. Is there a significant relationship between organization climate and commitment among primary school teachers?

Accordingly, the hypotheses constructed concerning the relationship between school organizational climate and teachers' commitment where,  $H_0$ : There is no relationship between organization climate and stress among primary school teachers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This descriptive study was used in a form of quantitative research method. The survey method was used to investigate the relationship between independent variables (institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial leadership and achievement press) and Dependent variable (teachers' commitment) among 170 primary school teachers in 7 public schools in Perlis. Questionnaires were distributed to

teachers working in public primary schools in the district of Arau to gauge their perceptions on school climate and their commitment.

### Population and Sampling

The sampling method in this study was based on the probability sampling technique which is a simple random approach. In simple random approach, each individual has an equal chance of being selected. The population for this study consists of public primary school teachers under the supervision of Arau District Education Office. There are seven public primary schools involved with a total of 304 teachers serving in those schools as of June 2019. Table 1 shows the detail information on the number of teachers and the sample size in each primary school. A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed to all the primary schools in the selected district.

**Table 1**

*Number of Teachers in Public Primary Schools Under the Supervision of Arau District Education Office*

School	Population	Sample size
A	39	22
B	39	22
C	83	46
D	67	37
E	29	16
F	19	11
G	28	16
Total	304	170

### Instrument

A survey was used to collect data needed in order to address the research questions. The questionnaire was prepared by researchers consisting of an instruction to complete each part of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three sections with a total of 50 items. Section I concerns the respondent's demographics such as gender, age, years of teaching experience and highest degree attained. Section II consists of 30-items that measure four dimensions of school climate (institutional vulnerability, professional teacher, collegial



leadership and achievement press). The items were adapted from the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) questionnaire (Hoy et al., 2002). The first dimension, which is professional teacher behaviour examines the relationship between teachers, while the second dimension, achievement press examines the press for achievement by parents, teachers, and principal. The third dimension, which is collegial leadership, on the other hand, looks at the relationship between the principal and teachers. Finally, institutional vulnerability examines the relationship between the school and the community. Section III deals with commitment and it is developed based on the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) which consists of 15-items (Steers et al., 1979). The OCI and OCQ questionnaires were translated from English to Malay to assist the teachers in understanding the questionnaire items. Back translation was conducted on all the items by a language editor from a public university. The method involves three main steps. The first step was to translate the original version (English) into the target language (Malay). Secondly, this translated version was translated into the original version (English) by another translator. Finally, the third step was to compare the original version and the back-translated version to detect any differences so that a readjustment could be made. Responses to the items on the questionnaire are based on a five-point Likert scale namely: “strongly disagree” = 1, “disagree” = 2, “neutral” = 3, “agree” = 4, “strongly agree” = 5.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Prior to distributing the questionnaire, the researchers obtained approval letters to conduct this study from Awang Had Salleh Graduate School, Universiti Utara Malaysia, the Education Planning and Research Department and Perlis State Education Department as the required procedure in conducting research in schools, as required by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The instrument was also pilot tested prior to data collection. The purpose of the pilot test was to evaluate the clarity of the items, the instruction and the completion time. A total of 30 teachers’ responses were used for the pilot study.

### **Data Analysis**

The focus of this study was to identify the primary teachers’ perceptions of the organizational climate and their commitment within

the public-school system. The unit of analysis involved for this study was the teachers. Analyses of the data collected were performed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Reliability and Validity

Reliability of the instruments was conducted using Cronbach Alpha. Ideally, the Cronbach Alpha value should be above 0.7 [39]. Alpha values approaching 1.0 are preferable. The overall reliability of all the school climate variables was found to be 0.86 (N = 30) and teachers' commitment 0.70 (N=30), which are considered acceptable. Table 2 shows the reliability of the measurement scales.

**Table 2**

*Cronbach's Alpha for Variables*

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Organization climate	0.86
Teachers' stress	0.70

### Demographic Data of the Respondents

The demographic data were retrieved via survey questionnaire (Section I) which includes information on gender, age, teaching experience, and the highest academic qualification attained by the teachers. As shown in Table 3, from the total of 170 respondents in the survey, the findings indicated that 69 (40.6 %) of the respondents were male, and 101 (59.4 %) of the respondents were female. Majority of the teachers were within 30–39 years old with 94 (55.3 %), while the minority of respondents belong to group of 50 years old and above with nine teachers (5.3 %). Moreover, 67 (39.4 %) of respondent fall within the 40–49 years.

Table 3 also displays 4 respondents (2.4 %) have taught between 6 and 10 years, 96 respondents (56.5 %) had between 11 and 15 years of experience, and 70 (41.2 %) have taught for more than 16 years. More than half of the respondents (97.7 %) have more than 10 years

of teaching experience. On the educational background, 170 (100 %) hold a bachelor's degree.

**Table 3**

*Demographic Information of the Respondents (n=170)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	69	40.6
Female	101	59.4
<i>Age</i>		
20 – 29	0	0
30 – 39	94	55.3
40 – 49	67	39.4
50 and above	9	5.3
<i>Teaching experience</i>		
1 – 5	0	0
6 – 10	4	2.4
11 – 15	96	56.5
16 and above	70	41.2
<i>Highest academic qualification</i>		
Bachelors	170	100

### **Level of School Organizational Climate**

Descriptive analysis was used to obtain the mean and standard deviation of the school organizational climate for each climate dimension. The score is interpreted based on the level and range as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Level and Range of School Organizational Climate*

<b>Level</b>	<b>Range</b>
4.01 – 5.00	High
3.01 – 4.00	Medium high
2.01 – 3.00	Medium low
Below 2.00	Low

(Source: Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)

Table 5 summarizes the total score for the overall organizational climate and each dimension in the school's organizational climate. As indicated in Table 5, the overall total school organizational climate score was ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) and it can be said that the primary schools in Arau, Perlis, have positive and high level of organizational climate. Collegial leadership had a mean score of 4.18 and SD of 0.50 and Institutional vulnerability had the highest mean of 4.28 and SD of 0.43. This means that the level for these two dimensions was high. Achievement press had the lowest mean of 3.58 and SD of 0.65. It was followed by Professional teacher with a mean of 3.65 and SD of 0.59. From these findings it can be summarized that institutional vulnerability is the highest determinant of organizational climate in the selected schools.

**Table 5**

*Total Mean and SD of School Organizational Climate Dimensions*

Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Level
Collegial leadership	170	4.18	0.50	High
Professional teacher	170	3.65	0.59	Medium high
Achievement press	170	3.58	0.65	Medium High
Institutional vulnerability	170	4.28	0.43	High
Overall school organizational climate	170	4.18	0.50	High

### Level of Teachers' Commitment

The level of teachers' commitment is as shown in Table 6. The overall mean of teachers' commitment gives a value of 4.28 indicating that the teachers' commitment is high because based on the category level (Table 4), it falls in the high category as it is above 4.00 ( $4.01 < 4.40 < 5.00$ ). Based on the overall commitment score ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ) it can be said that the primary school teachers in Arau, Perlis, are highly committed with their teaching job.

**Table 6**

*Overall Score of Teachers' Commitments*

	N	Min	SD	Level
Teachers' commitment	170	4.28	0.49	High

## Relationship between Organization Climate and Stress among Primary School Teachers

The relationship of organization climate dimensions and teachers' commitment was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. The correlation value has been recommended by previous study (Hinkle et al., 1988) as presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Correlation Value*

Correlation value (r)	Relationship strength
0	No relationship
$\pm 0.01 - 0.29$	Very weak
$\pm 0.30 - 0.49$	Weak
$\pm 0.50 - 0.69$	Averagely strong
$\pm 0.70 - 0.89$	Strong
$\pm 0.90 - 1.00$	Very strong

The relationship between overall school organization climate and the overall teachers' stress was explored using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. As indicated in Table 8, there was a moderately strong, positive correlation between the two variables [ $r=0.647$ ,  $n=170$ ,  $p<0.001$ ].

**Table 8**

*Correlation of Overall School Organizational Climate and Teachers' Stress*

		Total school organizational climate	Total teachers' commitment
Total school organizational climate	Pearson correlation	1	0.647**
	Sig. (two-tailed)		0.000
	N	170	170

(continued)

		<b>Total school organizational climate</b>	<b>Total teachers' commitment</b>
Total teachers' commitment	Pearson correlation	0.647**	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	
	N	170	170

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed)

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to identify the level of organizational climate factor, the level of primary school teachers' commitment and to determine the relationship between organizational climate and commitment among primary school teachers. The results indicated that institutional vulnerability and collegial leadership dimensions were at high level, whereas professional teacher and achievement press were at medium high level. An institutional vulnerability is the degree to which a school may be vulnerable to external pressure like parents and community members (Khan, 2019). It is important to ensure healthy and open school climate where everybody's behaviour in school is encouraging and collaborative, which results in increased teacher effectiveness and performance. The findings also proved that effective leadership behaviour can contribute towards developing positive organizational climate and stimulating teachers' commitment and involvement with school to effectively accomplish their goals (Avey et al., 2012).

The results also showed high level of teachers' commitment. Teachers with high commitment towards school will work persistently which will result in the increase of students' achievement (Raman et al., 2015). In addition, teachers' commitment is correlated with school success and is believed to be essential for the academic progress of students to attain desired school targets (Riehl & Sipple, 1996). The finding of this study is also in concordance with previous studies (Othman & Kasuma, 2016; Raman et al., 2015; Yusof, 2012). Lastly, the findings of this study revealed the significant relationship between school organizational climate and primary teachers' commitment in Arau, Perlis. This finding implies that if school climate is conducive and

positive, it will increase teachers' commitment and provide maximum achievement to the organization. This finding is in line with previous researchers who discovered that school organizational climate was positively correlated with the teachers' commitment (Khan, 2019; Othman & Kasuma, 2016; Yusof, 2012; Raman et al., 2015; Yusof, 2012). As practitioners, we recommend that school leaders ensure that effective leadership is practiced in their schools and work towards creating a more positive organizational climate which can stimulate teachers' commitment and involvement.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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