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The Influence of Feedback Environment Practices Established on School Climate in Kanowit Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This quantitative study aimed to determine the relationship of the feedback environment practices towards school climate. A total of 129 secondary schools' teachers randomly from Kanowit district in Malaysia participated in the study. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the level of the feedback environment practices based on the teachers' perception is below-average. In terms of school climate, both collaboration and student relation dimensions have gained the above-average level while the school resources dimension, decision-making dimension, and instructional innovation dimension have obtained the below-average level. Specifically, the study also found that the dimensions of feedback credibility, feedback quality, feedback delivery, and encourage feedback-seeking behaviour significantly influence on school climate. Therefore, organizational leaders must emphasize the existence of the feedback environment in the workplace as an injection into the school climate to ensure high performance among employees.

Keywords: Feedback environment, school climate, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Every school leader should play a role in shaping a conducive working environment. Najeemah (2012) explains how school leaders influence their teachers' beliefs and confidence in student learning. In this regard, Cammelia and Jati (2016) emphasize that organizational climate has an impact on employee behavior and significantly related to the commitment of employees. However, teachers in Malaysia in particular face increased work stress and are becoming increasingly anxious (Kyriacou, 2001; Sapidin, 2005). This is due to the ongoing education reform of the country in line with the increase of globalization effects. These rapid changes have added teachers' responsibilities apart from their teaching roles (Izzul & Huay, 2019). This is also stated by Frankie and Macdonald (2016) found that teachers' burnout also due to the high expectation or demands of the administrators. As a result, teachers are physically and emotionally exhausted and depersonalization. The negative relationship between working stress and job satisfaction (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003) means that the high level of stress causes a low level of job satisfaction which affects teachers' job commitment, performance capabilities, and productivity (Chan, Chong, Chong, & Tang, 2015). These low teachers' commitment may have associated with low school climate. The situation becomes worse when a finding of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2009 found that less than 10 percent of

Malaysian teachers received appraisal or feedback from the principals (OECD, 2009). Only a fifty percent perception of principals thought that coaching and supporting teachers and other staff is one of the important required skills (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013). In response to this problem, this study suggests investigating the significant relationship of the feedback environment towards school climate.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feedback Environment

Initially, the feedback environment referred to the extent to which subordinates perceived different types of feedback from supervisors (Herold & Parsons, 1985). Nevertheless, Steelman, Levy, and Snell (2004) doubted results from the scales used to test that type of feedback environment were invalid and inconsistent because it was evaluated only through a process between feedback supervisors and subordinates (Morrison & Bies, 1991). Thus, Steelman et al. (2004) defined the feedback environment as the contextual feedback process between supervisors and subordinates or between coworkers in the daily working environment rather than formal performance appraisal feedback sessions and developed seven facets to measure the feedback environment of an organization. In Malaysian context, Ling, Abdul Ghani, and Fairuz (2016) defined a feedback environment as the process of giving, receiving, and responding to the daily feedback between leaders and followers instead of formal feedback sessions about performance. This study would use the six dimensions from Ling et al. (2016) which adapted from Steelman et al. (2004) but excluded unfavourable feedback dimension in the Malaysian context. The six dimensions are feedback credibility, feedback quality, feedback delivery, constructive feedback, feedback availability, and encourage feedback-seeking behaviour.

Feedback credibility is concerned with the expertise and trustworthiness of the feedback recipients which decide the level of acceptable information (Steelman et al., 2004; Ling & Law, 2019). Expertise relates to the knowledge level of the sender about the subject of the message and trustworthiness refers to the degree of reliance on the ability, competency, and character (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Feedback quality is interpreted in terms of the degree of informative feedback which is more useful and effective (Govaerts, Wiel, & Vleuter, 2012). In turn, feedback delivery is regarded as the process and ways of delivering feedback and the degree to which the recipient can notice and perceive the source's intention when providing feedback (Ling & Abdul Ghani, 2015; Ling & Law, 2019). Thus, feedback senders ought to express tone, meaning, and intentional information with proper attitude whether synchronously or asynchronously. Yasir and Sajid (2010) defined constructive feedback as the consistent standard of behaviours either right or wrong among two parties. It is also referred to as a piece of useful information given by the provider (Ling, Fairuz, & Abdul Kanesan, 2015) which includes both praise and critic based on employees' performance (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2012) to achieve the fixed targets. Feedback availability is operationalized as the frequency of teachers and students' contact with each other, among teachers or and organizational leaders for feedback (Ling et al., 2015; Ling, Charles, & Pang, 2019). Feedback-seeking is the behaviour in which individuals acquire valuable job-related information from others actively for performance improvement or development purposes (Evraire, Ludmer, & Dozois, 2014; Dahling & Whitaker, 2016). The behaviour can also intend to manage impressions by seeking feedback from their superiors.

2.2 School Climate

Perry (1908) referred the school climate as the esprit de corps, school atmosphere, and thought for school honour. Freiberg (1999) defined school climate as the heart and soul of the school which comprises its atmosphere, milieu, tone, feelings, or setting. In the current research, school climate is viewed as quality and character of school life such as values, teaching and learning practice, goal setting and relationships experienced by students, teachers, and staff and influence their behaviours (School Climate Council, 2007; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Jacobs, 2018).

Since school climate emphasizes perceptions of teachers within a school, teachers need to recognize the variables related to the school climate. Fisher and Fraser (1990) suggested school climate is associated with eight variables, namely students support, affiliation, staff freedom, professional interest, participatory decision making, innovation, resource adequacy, and work pressure. Based on exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch (2007) modified them in the Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire (R-SLEQ) namely collaboration, decision making, instructional innovation, student relations, and school resources.

Collaboration is interpreted as an organized activity as a result of the effort to construct the reason for a shared problem (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). Mattatall (2014) described teacher collaboration as interaction directly between two or more co-equal groups of people who work together and have the same goals involved in shared decision making. Decision-making is a cognitive process of making choices for the organizational transform (Agnes & Laird, 2002; Fullan, 2002). It can also be viewed as a process of selecting the choice consciously among several probable alternatives to achieve a goal or solve a problem (Aydin, 2010; Yukl, 2013).

Bruce (1989) interpreted instructional innovation as learning exists in the interaction between the learning environment with the learner and adopts technology in teaching strategies properly to generate better teaching effectiveness. Meanwhile, Lee (2008) referred instructional innovation as the open-minded educator who uses vivid

teaching methods and rich content to foster learners' interest in learning, develop proactive learning, strengthen learning abilities and cultivate learners' creativity. Next, the term 'student relations' refers to teachers' perceptions of students' motivation and behaviours (Collie, 2010). According to NOUN (2006), school resources consist of humans in the school and communities, school buildings, models, stationery, teaching, and other basic materials to encourage learning and can be categorized into physical resources, financial resources, time resources, and human resources. However, OECD (2013) divided school resources into four types namely financial transfer, physical resources, human resources, and targeted programs.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This quantitative research intended to explain a phenomenon or issue (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2002) by using questionnaires associated with the research objectives to identify the levels of school climate and feedback environment practices. This is also correlational research to determine the relationship between two variables through correlation coefficients (Apuke, 2017) in which feedback environment practices are the independent variable while the school climate is the dependent variable.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of 193 teaching staff in all secondary schools in Kanowit district, Sarawak, Malaysia. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the desire sample size to be involved in the study was 129 teachers. A simple random sampling method was used in which every teacher in the population has an equal chance to be selected in the sample (Taherdoost, 2016). This method minimizes the possibility of sampling biases among respondents who teach in secondary schools in Kanowit.

3.3 Research Instrumentations

This study used a questionnaire that comprises of three parts. Part A related to teachers' demography. The respondents were asked to tick on their gender, teaching experience, and age group. Part B consists of 25 items to measure the feedback environment in the schools by using the Feedback Environment Scale (FES) (Steelman et al., 2004) adapted by Ling (2016). There are six facets in the scale namely feedback credibility, feedback quality, feedback delivery, constructive feedback, feedback availability, and encourage feedback-seeking behaviour. Part C contains 21 items of the Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire (Revised SLEQ) adapted from Johnson et al. (2007) to measure the level of school climate. Six-points Likert Scale was used in the study.

4. Research Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Feedback Environment

In interpreting feedback environment scale, the mean score of 1.00 to 4.03 is categorized as low level, the mean score between 4.04 to 4.57 is classified as below-average level, the mean score between 4.58 to 5.00 is categorized as above-average level and the mean score between 5.01 to 6.00 is categorized as high level. Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and level of feedback environment scale by dimensions according to the views of the teachers. Descriptive analysis of the study found that 12 items obtained the above-average level mean score and 13 items gained the below-average level mean score. Overall, feedback environment practice was the below-average level of mean score 4.50 (SD=.691).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of School Climate

In terms of school climate, the collaboration dimension and the student relation dimension have gained the above-average level mean score while the school resources dimension, decision making dimension, and instructional innovation dimension have received the below-average level mean score as shown in Table 2.

4.3 Influence of Feedback Environment Practices on School Climate

Results of the inferential analysis in Table 3 are about the influence of the feedback environment on school climate that was analysed using simple linear regression. Feedback-seeking behaviour has the most significant influence on school climate (ß=.558, $p<0.05$). The regression statistics r=.688 and R^2=.473 indicated that feedback environment dimensions have contributed 47.3 percent of the changes in school climate. Thus, the second null hypothesis 'There is no significant influence of feedback environment practices towards school climate among the secondary schools of Kanowit, Sarawak' is rejected.

Table 1 - *Mean, standard deviation and level of feedback environment scale (N=129)*

No.	Item	Mean	S.D.	Level
Feedback credibility				
B1	I am confident with the feedback given by my leader.	4.57	.788	Below-average
B2	My leader acts fairly when assessing my work.	4.64	.770	Above-average
B3	Generally, I respect my leader's opinion about my performance.	4.71	.720	Above-average
B4	My leader is very helpful when giving feedback on my work performance.	4.63	.730	Above-average
B5	My leader is familiar with my work performance.	4.56	.847	Below-average
Feedback quality				
B6	I appreciate the feedback received from my leader.	4.85	.708	Above-average
B7	The feedback on the performance of my work received from my leader, is a great help.	4.75	.718	Above-average
B8	My leader provides useful feedback on my performance.	4.65	.787	Above-average
B9	The feedback I have received from my leader helped me to carry out my duty.	4.74	.796	Above-average
B10	My leader is wise when providing feedback on my performance.	4.59	.826	Above-average
Feedback delivery				
B11	My leader always responds prudently.	4.62	.773	Above-average
B12	My leader treats me well when giving feedback.	4.70	.767	Above-average
B13	The information on my work performance received from my leader is meaningful to me.	4.80	.704	Above-average
B14	Based on the feedback on my work performance, I usually trust my leader.	4.64	.760	Above-average
B15	I always receive praises from my leader.	4.20	.995	Below-average
Feedback availability				
B16	When I ask for feedback on work performance, my leader will address to it directly.	4.34	.837	Below-average
B17	My leader is glad when I ask for feedback on my work performance.	4.51	.821	Below-average
B18	I am always in touch with my leader.	4.27	1.05	Below-average
B19	My leader has time to respond to me.	4.40	.964	Below-average
Constructive feedback				
B20	Normally, my leader will inform me if I have done a good job.	4.32	1.02	Below-average
B21	I often receive positive feedback from my leader.	4.40	.931	Below-average
B22	My leader praises me when I do my work well.	4.39	.955	Below-average
B23	In certain circumstances, when my performance dropped from its expectations, my leaders would inform me.	4.24	.942	Below-average
Encourage feedback-seeking behaviour				
B24	I feel comfortable when asking for feedback on my work performance from my leaders.	4.32	1.061	Below-average
B25	My leader encourages me to get a response if I am not sure with my work performance.	4.34	.964	Below-average
Total		4.50	.691	Below-average

Table 2 - *Mean, standard deviation and level of school climate*

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Level
Collaboration	4.42	.638	Above-average
Student relation	4.27	.617	Above-average
School resources	4.18	.633	Below-average
Decision making	4.10	.731	Below-average
Instructional innovation	4.10	.642	Below-average

Table 3 - *Influence of feedback environment practices on school climate*

Variable	Coefficients Beta (*β*)
Feedback credibility	.223*
Feedback quality	.053*
Feedback delivery	.113*
Feedback availability	-.017
Constructive feedback	-.145
Encourage feedback-seeking behaviour	.558*
R	.688
R²	.473
Adjusted R²	.534
F value	18.27*
Durbin Watson	1.80

Note:
Significant at the .05 level

The results of the study found that the feedback environment practices have a positive and significant relationship with school climate dimensions namely collaboration, student relations, school resources, decision making, and instructional innovation. These results support the perspective idea by Mehta, Gardia, and Rathore (2010) that the leaders trust the information provided by the teachers and involve them in making the decision which will then promote the relationship between school administrators and teachers. This is associated with Rabeeh's (2004) finding that collaboration among teachers establishes trust and develops communication in the teaching profession. This finding is also consistent with the study of Ling, et al. (2015) and Gong, Shan, and Yu (2019) where individual creativity has a significant and positive relationship with the feedback environment. Moreover, the result of this research is consistent with Yu's (2016) study that as the human resources in the organization, teachers can use the received feedback findings from students to improve their instructional strategies. Thus, the first hypothesis which says 'there is no significant relationship of feedback and positive environment towards school climate practices among the secondary schools of Kanowit, Sarawak' is rejected.

The findings of the simple linear regression analysis have shown that the feedback environment has significantly contributed to the changes in the school climate. Specifically, the results have shown four feedback environment dimensions namely feedback credibility, feedback quality, feedback delivery, and encourage feedback-seeking behaviour to have a significant influence on school climate dimensions. This finding demonstrates that teachers' trust in principals and colleagues impacts school climate (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Tschannen-Moran (2007) also explained that school leaders influence the degree of teachers' feedback credibility based on their administrative capabilities such as in managing the school resources, mediating the school conflict, and leading the subordinates. These professional competencies are important to show the leaders' ability because teachers value information more than those they respect as knowledgeable leaders in which they believe the feedback is beneficial and effective to improve their work performance in the organization (Unes, 2019). Similarly, Jessup, Bishara, and Busemeyer (2008) concluded that receiving feedbacks is crucial for individuals to evaluate choices in decision-making. Besides, these results support the research by Lurie and Swaminathan (2009) who urged that the senders should consider the ways to deliver feedback as nowadays advanced information technology play the role in conveying the information or input to the decision-makers in real-time. Thus, the second null hypothesis is rejected because this study has found that there is a significant influence of the feedback environment practices towards school climate.

Through this research, school leaders can identify the level of the feedback environment and school climate of the school. The school principals and the administrators are encouraged to cultivate a positive school climate by promoting feedback environment practices especially encouraging feedback-seeking behaviour from teachers or among teachers either formally or informally. These findings also bring awareness to the school leaders about the feedback process between supervisors and subordinate. The increase of the trustworthiness of teachers to supervisors enhances the trust of their coworkers as well.

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