

Multidimensional Leadership Practice of Technical Secondary School Principals in Malaysia

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Abstract

Multidimensional leadership is a leadership style that can be employed by leaders to plan, organize, manage and administer the school. Multidimensional leadership also influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment of teachers. This study aims to look at the level of multidimensional leadership practices of technical secondary school principals in Malaysia as a whole according to its dimensions, namely structural, human resources, political and symbolic leadership. The study sample consists of 217 technical school teachers with a survey research design. Study data were analyzed descriptively by employing mean values, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency using SPSS version 26. The study findings show that the level of multidimensional leadership practice of technical secondary school principals as a whole and its dimensions are at a high level.

Keywords: Multidimensional Leadership.

I INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian government through the Ministry of Education (MOE) designed a comprehensive policy framework to raise the national education as presented in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB, 2013-2025). This blueprint assessed the current performance of the national education system taking into account past achievements and comparing it to international benchmarks. The blueprint has outlined the vision of the education system and the aspiration of students to meet the needs of the country in the future. Eleven (11) strategic and operational shifts outlined by the blueprint must be implemented by MOE to achieve the desired vision. Eleven shifts in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB, 2013-2025) are measured based on five aspirations of the education system, namely access, quality equity, unity and efficiency. Meanwhile, the five aspirations are set out in three (3) Waves, which are Wave 1 (2013-2015) that focuses on the turnaround of the system, Wave 2 (2016-2020) is associated with the acceleration of system

improvement, and Wave 3 (2021-2025) is related to the movement towards excellence.

According to Bolman and Deal (2003), multidimensional leadership practices can influence leadership effectiveness of a leader when facing complex and challenging educational changes in recent times. Effective leadership of school leaders is able to influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the school staff to accomplish changes in schools, and subsequently achieve the goals and objectives of change that has been laid out (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013; Aisha Sarwar et al., 2015; Nurjanah et al., 2020). Thus, multidimensional leadership is seen a factor steering towards the production of quality education (Bolman & Deal, 1991; 1997; 2003).

Multidimensional leadership is a form of leadership that entails four leadership styles or framework, namely the structural, symbolic, human and political resources as highlighted by Bolman and Deal (1991). Structural leadership consists of analytical and organizational

management skills, while human resource leadership refers to the characteristics of supportive and participatory leadership. Meanwhile, political leadership is concerned with political power and sensitivity, while symbolic leadership refers to the inspiration and charisma of a leader (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Although there are different theories and models of leadership, several researches mention that changes in educational institutions are conveniently translated with the concept of multidimensional leadership (Bolman & Deal 1991, 1997; Davis, 2012; Aieman, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of multidimensional leadership practice of technical secondary school principals in Malaysia according to the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To analyze the multidimensional leadership level of principals.
2. To analyze the level of multidimensional leadership of principals according to the dimensions of structural leadership, human resources, political and symbolic leadership.

2 Literature Review

In the context of this study, the Four Framework Model of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1991; 2003) is the main reference point.

Multidimensional leadership is a form of leadership style that can be used and practiced by leaders to manage and administer schools. The foundation of multidimensional leadership is the Four Framework Model of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1991; 2003). There are four multidimensional leadership frameworks or styles (Bolman & Deal, 1991) namely structural, human resource, political and symbolic. Structural leadership focuses on organizational achievement, task orientation, explaining tasks, and creating work systems and procedures (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Human resource leadership, on the other hand, focuses on human relations in terms of meeting human needs, personal development, and job satisfaction. (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The main focus of political leadership is to address the problems of individuals and other parts of the organization by using available resources, establishing

influence and forming networks with individuals outside the organization. Whereas symbolic leadership refers to the legacy of leadership formed by a leader in an organization. Multidimensional leadership styles are also often associated with situational leadership styles and are applied especially when a leader needs to make decisions (Bolman & Deal, 1997) in the administration of an organization. The four leadership frameworks put forward by Bolman and Deal (1991) are based on two main assumptions, namely:

- i. Complex organizations at the current time must adapt more than two leadership behaviours to understand the organization in addition to adopting suitable leadership style based on the context.
- ii. The use of various leadership styles can increase the effectiveness of a leader's leadership compared to the practice of one or two leadership styles that are considered non-dynamic, less effective, and irrelevant. In addition, the use of diverse leadership styles demonstrates the ability of leaders to integrate thinking in making decisions and solving problems in the organization effectively.

3 Methodology

This study employed a survey research design. The use of survey research design is based on its potential to provide explanations that can be measured numerically for the study variable, which is multidimensional leadership (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Creswell, 2014). In addition, a survey research design saves time, is more economical, relevant in providing information related to the study population especially in social science research (Chua, 2012) and education research (McMillan, 2012). The study population is focused on technical secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Based on statistics obtained from the Data Unit, Technical and Vocational Training Education Division (2020), there are nine technical secondary schools in Malaysia, namely in Pahang, Terengganu, Johor, Melaka, Sarawak, Kedah, Penang, and Kuala Lumpur. There are a total of 496 teachers in nine technical secondary schools in Malaysia (BPLTV, 2020). For this study, a total of 217 technical secondary school teachers in Malaysia were selected as the study sample using systematic random sampling technique. This

study also used a questionnaire adapted from the original leadership orientation questionnaire constructed by Bolman and Deal in 1991. Data from the study sample were analyzed descriptively using mean values, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency by using SPSS version 26.

4 Results and Analysis

This section will explain the findings of the study based on the level of multidimensional leadership of technical secondary school principals in Malaysia as a whole and the level of multidimensional leadership of principals according to their dimensions namely structural, human resource, political and symbolic leadership.

Level of Multidimensional Leadership Practice of Technical Secondary School Principals in Malaysia

The findings of the study indicate that the overall mean score of multidimensional leadership of principals according to teachers' perception is 4.13. This specifies that the principals of technical secondary schools in Malaysia practice multidimensional leadership at a high level.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Principal's Multidimensional Leadership Level

Multidimensional Leadership	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Practice Level
Structural Leadership	4.27	0.55	High
Human Resource Leadership	4.19	0.62	High
Political Leadership	4.03	0.66	High

Table 2. Percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for structural leadership item (N=217)

Item/ Scale	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
B1. The principal thinks logically	0	1 (0.5)	13 (6.0)	104 (47.9)	99 (45.6)	4.39	0.62
B2. The principal strongly	0	3	18	99	97	4.34	0.69

Symbolic Leadership	4.10	0.64	High
Overall Mean	4.13	0.60	High

Mean level: 1.00-2.33 low, 2.34-3.66 moderate, 3.67-5.00 High (Nunnally, 1994)

Level of Multidimensional Leadership Practice of Principals of Technical Secondary Schools in Malaysia by Dimension

i. Structural Leadership

The items in the structural leadership style dimension are as shown in Table 2. There are five items of structural leadership in this study, namely (B1) the principal thinks logically, (B2) the principal strongly emphasizes careful planning, (B3) the principal sets specific goals to be achieved by each individual, (B4) the principal solves the problems based on facts, and (B5) the principal pays attention to task quality. Analysis using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) found that for the item (B1) the principal thinks logically, has a mean value of (M= 4.39, SD = 0.622), item (B5) the principal pays attention to task quality has a mean value (M = 4.37, SD = 0.65) and item (B2) the principal strongly emphasize on careful planning (M = 4.34, SD = 0.69) were among the items that recorded the highest mean value for structural leadership. Meanwhile, item (B3) the principal sets specific goals to be achieved by each individual (M = 4.14, SD = 0.75), and item (B4) the principal solves the problems based on facts (M = 4.12, SD = 0.75) were items that recorded the lowest mean values. Overall, the level of the structural leadership style was at a high level (M = 4.27, SD = 0.55).

emphasizes careful planning		(1.4)	(8.3)	(45.6)	(44.7)		
B3. The principal sets specific goals to be achieved by each individual	1 (0.5)	3 (1.4)	27 (12.4)	116 (53.5)	69 (31.8)	4.14	0.75
B4. The principal solves the problems based on facts	1 (0.5)	2 (0.9)	38 (17.5)	106 (48.8)	70 (32.3)	4.12	0.75
B5. The principal pays attention to task quality	0	1 (0.5)	17 (7.8)	100 (46.1)	99 (45.6)	4.37	0.65

Figure 1 shows a graph of teachers' perceptions of the structural leadership style of principals in schools. From the graph, the scale is classified into two groups, namely group one (never, rarely, and once) and group two (often and always). It was found that items in group two show a high percentage of agreement between 81%-94%. Percentage analysis for the structural leadership dimension of principals found that 93.5% of teachers stated that their principals thought logically, 91.7% of the principals paid attention to the quality of tasks and 90.3% strongly emphasized careful planning. However, 18.9% of teachers are of the view that principals do not address problems based on facts.

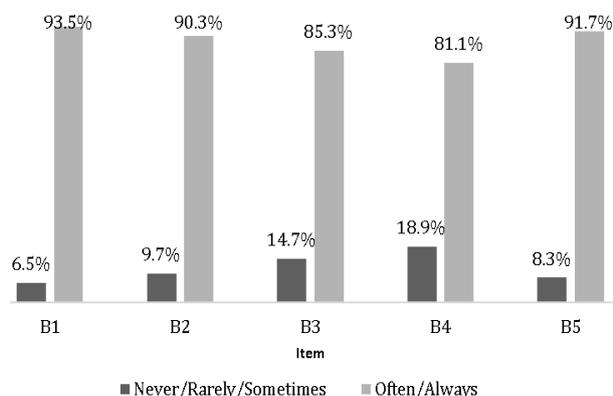


Figure 1. *Perceptions of teachers on structural leadership style of principal.*

ii. Human Resource Leadership

Table 3 shows the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for human resource leadership item. There are six items related to human resource leadership, which are (B6) the principal is responsive to problems faced by teachers, (B7) the principal builds trust through collaborative relationships, (B8) the principal accepts teachers' ideas, (B9) the principal gives recognition for good work, (B10) principal encourages participation of teachers in the decision-making process and (B11) the principal always works with all members of the school. Analysis of mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) found that item (B11) the principal always works with all members of the school ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.68$), item (B6) the principal is responsive to problems faced by teachers ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.711$), item (B7) the principal builds trust through collaborative relationships ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.75$), and item (B9) the principal gives recognition for good work are among the items with high mean. Whereas, item (B8) the principal accepts teachers' ideas ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.73$) and item (B10) principal encourages participation of teachers in the decision-making process ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.80$) are items with the lowest mean value. Overall, the level of the human resource leadership style dimension is high ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.62$).

Table 3. *Percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for human resource leadership item (N=217)*

Item/ Scale	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
B6. the principal is responsive to problems faced by	0 (0)	3 (1.4)	22 (10.1)	95 (43.8)	97 (44.7)	4.32	0.71

teachers							
B7. the principal builds trust through collaborative relationships	0 (0)	4 (1.8)	32 (14.7)	99 (45.6)	82 (37.9)	4.19	0.75
B8. the principal accepts teachers' ideas	0 (0)	6 (2.8)	35 (16.1)	119 (54.8)	57 (26.3)	4.05	0.73
B9. the principal gives recognition for good work	2 (0.9)	4 (1.8)	32 (14.7)	96 (44.2)	83 (38.4)	4.17	0.81
B10. principal encourages participation of teachers in the decision-making process	1 (0.5)	10 (4.6)	36 (16.6)	116 (53.4)	54 (24.9)	3.98	0.80
B11. the principal always works with all members of the school	0 (0)	3 (1.4)	14 (6.5)	92 (42.4)	108 (49.7)	4.41	0.68

Figure 2 shows a graph of perceptions of teachers on the human resource leadership style of the principal. Further analysis of the percentage on the human resource leadership style dimension of principals indicates that 92.1% of teachers stated that the principals always cooperate with all school staff, 88.5% of the teachers state that the principal is responsive towards problems faced by the teachers, and 83.5% of teachers indicate that the principal builds trust through collaborative relationships. However, 18.9% of teachers mention that the principals did not accept ideas proposed by teachers, and 21.7% of teachers state that the principals did not encourage participation of teachers in the decision-making process in school.

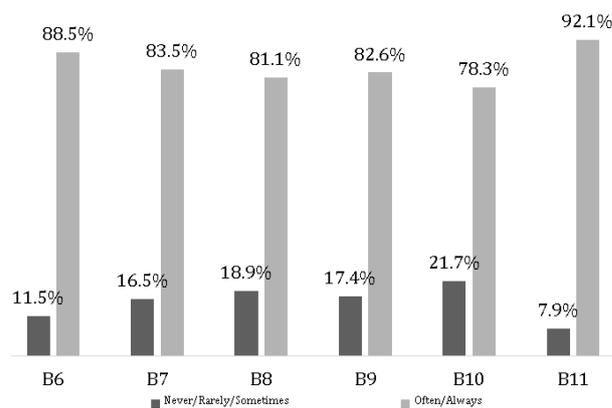


Figure 2. Perceptions of teachers on human resource leadership style of the principal

iii. Political Leadership

Table 4 shows the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for political leadership item. The items in political leadership consist of item (B12) the principal is able to mobilize staff and resources, (B13) the principal is a highly skilled consultant, (B14) the principal is very adept at influencing others, (B15) the principal is able to convince people to cooperate, (B16) the principal is wise in gaining support from teachers, (B17) the principal is wise in solving conflict, and (B18) the principal is wise in

dealing with problems that occur in the school. Item (B18) the principal is wise in dealing with problems that occur in the school ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.76$) is the item with the highest mean and standard deviation compared to other items in political leadership style. While item (B12) the principal is able to mobilize staff and resources ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.75$), item (B17) the principal is wise in solving conflict ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.72$), item (B16) the principal is wise in gaining

support from teachers ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.75$), item (B15) the principal is able to convince people to cooperate ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.77$), item (B14) the principal is very adept at influencing others ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.80$), and item (B13) the principal is highly skilled consultant are among the items with the lowest mean. Overall, the level for the dimension of political leadership style is high ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.66$).

Table 4. Percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for political leadership item

Item/ Scale	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
B12. the principal is able to mobilize staff and resources	1 (0.5)	5 (2.3)	36 (16.6)	117 (53.9)	58 (26.7)	4.04	0.75
B13. the principal is a highly skilled consultant	3 (1.4)	9 (4.1)	38 (17.6)	109 (50.2)	58 (26.7)	3.97	0.86
B14. the principal is very adept at influencing others	2 (0.9)	10 (4.6)	38 (17.5)	124 (57.1)	43 (19.9)	3.90	0.80
B15. the principal is able to convince people to cooperate	1 (0.9)	4 (1.8)	38 (17.5)	116 (53.5)	57 (26.3)	4.02	0.77
B16 the principal is wise in gaining support from teachers	1 (0.5)	3 (1.4)	44 (20.3)	113 (52.1)	56 (25.7)	4.01	0.75
B17. the principal is wise in solving conflict	1 (0.5)	4 (1.8)	33 (15.2)	123 (56.7)	56 (25.8)	4.06	0.72
B18. the principal is wise in dealing with problems that occur in the school.	0 (0)	6 (2.8)	29 (13.4)	102 (47.0)	80 (36.8)	4.18	0.76

Figure 3 shows the perceptions of teachers on the political leadership style of the principal. Further analysis of the percentage of political leadership style dimension found that 83.8% of teachers state that their principals are wise in dealing with problems that occur in school. However, 23.1% of teachers are of the view that the principals are not skilled consultants in influencing others, and 22.2% of teachers perceive that the principals did not receive support from teachers.

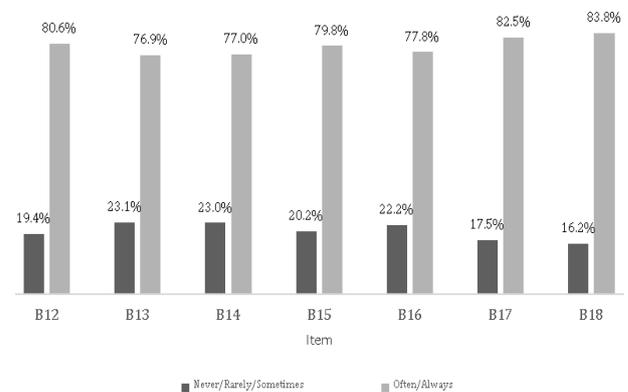


Figure 3. Perceptions of teachers on political leadership style of the principal

iv. Symbolic Leadership

Table 5 shows the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for symbolic leadership item. Symbolic leadership consists of item (B19) the principal inspires others to produce better work, item (B20) the principal is a highly charismatic individual, item (B21) a wise principal builds new opportunities, item (B22) the principal is a visionary and objective individual, (B23) the principal is a source of inspiration to teachers, item (B24) the principal successfully instils the value of obedience among teachers, item (B25) the principal is a

creative individual, and item (B26) the principal acts as a role model in the application of organizational moral values. Item (B22) the principal is a visionary and objective individual ($M= 4.36$, $SD= 0.71$), item (B19) the principal inspires others to produce better work ($M = 4.22$, $SD =0.75$), and item (B20) the principal is a highly charismatic individual ($M= 4.21$, $SD= 0.78$) are among the items that recorded the highest mean. Meanwhile, item (B23) the principal is a source of inspiration to teachers ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.86$), and item (B25) the principal is a creative individual ($M = 3.93$, $SD= 0.80$) are items that recorded the lowest mean. Nonetheless, in conclusion, the symbolic leadership style of the principal is at a high level ($M= 4.10$, $SD = 0.64$).

Table 5. Percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation for symbolic leadership item ($N=217$)

Item/ Scale	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
B19. the principal inspires others to produce better work	0 (0)	3 (1.4%)	34 (15.7%)	93 (42.9%)	87 (40%)	4.22	0.75
B20. the principal is a highly charismatic individual	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)	30 (13.8%)	98 (45.2%)	85 (39.2%)	4.21	0.78
B21. wise principal builds new opportunities	1 (0.5%)	5 (2.3%)	42 (19.4%)	105 (48.4%)	64 (29.4%)	4.04	0.79
B22. the principal is a visionary and objective individual	0 (0)	3 (1.4%)	20 (9.2%)	90 (41.5%)	104 (47.9%)	4.36	0.71
B23. principal is a source of inspiration to teachers	4 (1.8%)	5 (2.3%)	57 (26.3%)	102 (47.0%)	49 (22.6%)	3.86	0.86
B24. the principal successfully instils the value of obedience among teachers	1 (0.5%)	3 (1.4%)	33 (15.2%)	119 (54.8%)	61 (28.1%)	4.09	0.72
B25. the principal is a creative individual	0 (0)	9 (4.1%)	51 (23.5%)	104 (47.9%)	53 (24.5%)	3.93	0.80
B26. the principal acts as a role model in the application of organizational moral values	0 (0)	2 (2.8%)	32 (14.7%)	111 (51.2%)	68 (31.3%)	4.11	0.75

Figure 4 shows the perceptions of teachers on the symbolic leadership style of the principal.

Further analysis of the percentage of the symbolic leadership dimension of principals

found that 89.4% of teachers state that their school principal is a visionary and objective individual, 84.4% of teachers indicate that the principal is a highly charismatic individual.

However, 30.4% of teachers mention that the principals are not a source of inspiration to teachers, and 27.6% of teachers mention that the principals are not creative.

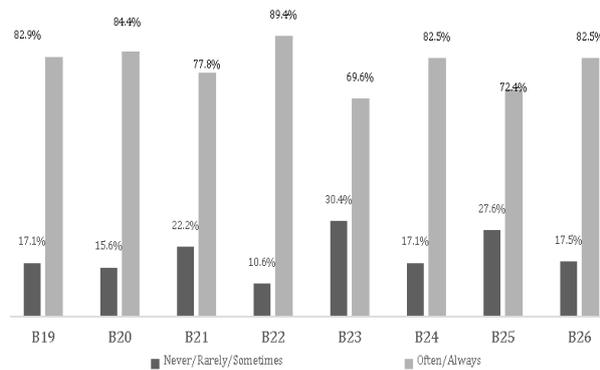


Figure 4. *Perceptions of teachers on symbolic leadership style of the principal*

5 Discussion

Overall, the study proves that technical secondary school principals have adopted the leadership style or framework of Bolman and Deal (1991) namely structural, human resource, political and symbolic leadership. The perceptions of teachers indicate that principals have adopted the style or framework of the leadership of Bolman and Deal (1991) at a high level. This also indirectly implies that school principals have adopted a variety of leadership styles when leading, managing and administering the school staff and community. The ability of principals to use diverse leadership styles is a major contributor that will influence the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of technical secondary school teachers in Malaysia. (Mareena Mohamad et al., 2012; Mohd Ghazali & Wan Norhayati, 2019; Nurul Ain 2017; Saravanan & Shahrizan, 2020).

In addition, the findings of this study are also in tandem with the study by Oumer and Kejala (2017), Azmira and Mohd Izham (2019), Khairy Bazli and Bity Salwana (2020), and Faridah Darus, Khairuddin dan Jerry (2021). Generally, structural leadership practiced by the principal aims to ensure that all teachers and school

support staff perform their duties based on the quality of work that has been set and teachers comply with the school rules and procedures. (Kline & Saunders, 1998; Tough, 2013) while at school. In addition, principals who practice structural leadership are found to be meticulous in devising school plans, for example as instructional leaders, principals are responsible for planning, organizing, leading, and ensuring that scheduled plans are on track to steer student performance in academics and effectiveness of the school management. In addition, principals that practice structural leadership are found to always think logically, set specific goals to be achieved by each individual, solve problems with facts, strongly emphasize careful planning and pay attention to the quality of assignments (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

6 Conclusion

The findings of this study are expected to be used as a reference and add value, especially in the world of educational leadership in Malaysia. In addition, it is hoped that training policymakers for leaders and future leaders in Malaysia can use the findings of this study to strengthen and sustain leadership training for prospective leaders as well as current leaders in the education system and community in Malaysia.

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