

The Impact of School Culture on Teachers' Organizational Commitment in primary cluster schools in Selangor

Kesan Budaya Sekolah terhadap Komitmen Organisasi Guru dalam Sekolah Kluster di Selangor

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at determining the relationship between school culture and organizational commitment in primary cluster schools in Selangor. The study also attempts to investigate the predictability of key dimensions of school culture towards teachers' commitment. Quantitative survey method was adopted to administer the questionnaires. A total of 331 teachers from primary cluster school in Selangor were randomly selected as respondents of this study. Data were analysed using inferential analysis in the SPSS software. The findings showed that school culture and organizational commitment are significantly correlated. In addition, the regression analysis showed that collaborative leadership and professional development are the two school culture dimensions that made a significant contribution to teachers' commitment. Finally, it is recommended that school leaders work towards creating a culture that will enhance the commitment of the teachers.

Keywords: *School culture, organizational commitment, cluster schools*

Introduction

Organizational culture gives a group its uniqueness and differentiates it from other groups. Every organization has its own culture and has become firmly anchored as an important aspect, an element in the organization (Bedarkar, Pandita, Agarwal & Saini, 2016).

The element which distinguishes the school is the culture in that school and this is what determines the effectiveness of the school (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Each school is a formal organization that has its distinctive culture, shaped by the interaction between citizens the school management, teachers, staff not teachers, parents, and students.

In defining organizational culture, Robbins & Judge (2013) described it as a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other

organizations, whilst Schein (2010) says it is *“a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration”* (p. 18).

Noting that positive school culture is an important factor in the teachers' organizational behaviour, DuPont (2009) stressed that school leaders—principals or headmasters understand the importance of school culture. When a good culture is present in a school, teachers will be more committed to contribute better for a healthy and sustainable achievement. A positive culture will exist when there is a good leadership to lead the school community.

Culture outlines the norms of organizational behaviours in any given organization (O. M. Monga, A. Monga, Mahajan, & A. Monga, 2015). In fact, according to Shoaib Ch, Zainab, Maqsood, and Sana (2013), organizational culture is closely associated with the concept of commitment. This is further supported by Masouleh & Allahyari, (2017) who found significant relationship between organizational culture and employees' commitment towards the organization. Furthermore, researcher Singh (2007) stated that the strength of the organization's culture indicates the extend the employees commitment towards their organization.

On the other hand, organizational commitment refers to the *“psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization”* (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 252). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), commitment is divided into three such as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative organizational commitment.

High organizational commitment is seen as a positive factor in the organizations, as employees who are highly committed often feel that he or she is safe, owned and has the satisfaction of a job and the prospects of the organization. This is proven in past studies, in which researchers concluded that there is a negative relationship between organizational commitment, absenteeism, replacement rates, and satisfaction in the workplace (Hackney, 2012; Kumar, Ramendran, & Yacob, 2012).

In schools, Hallinger and Heck (2010) stressed that the failure to maintain teachers' commitment might cause problems to the school management. The reason being, teachers' commitment towards the schools is considered to be the main thrust in determining the success of the education system as teachers are implementing every educational policy within the school organization (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Problem Statement

Described as a complex web of rituals and traditions (Deal & Peterson, 1999), school culture influences the members of the school (Karuppiah, Foo, Jamaliah, & Bahaman, 2014). In Malaysia, schools have similarity in the context of its curriculum, infrastructure and teacher qualifications. The schools differ in terms of its culture, which can be either healthy or toxic (Abdul-Jaleel, Opare & Yarquah, 2014).

According to Najeemah (2012) *“committed teachers may have strong psychological ties to their school, their students or their subject areas”* (p. 3). However, poor school culture can lead to lack of commitment among teachers. As noted by researchers Abdul-Jaleel et al. (2014) *“a weak school organizational culture negatively influences teacher’s satisfaction with their job in the school, as well as their commitment to the school and the teaching”* (p. 102).

In a study by Kiral and Kacar (2016) on 201 high school teachers in Aydin, Turkey, they found that organizational culture predicts all the three dimensions of organizational commitment. They suggested that training programmes be organized in line with the relationship between school culture and commitment. Similarly, researchers Raman et al. (2015) also found a positive and significant relationship between school culture and organizational commitment. Their findings are consistent with the studies done by Ghulam, Muhammad, and Abul (2016); Masouleh and Allahyari, (2017). In contrast, the path analysis conducted by researchers Karadag, Baloglu, and Çakir (2011) showed that there was no direct relationship between school culture and affective and normative commitment.

To sum up, although there are studies on school culture and teachers’ organizational commitment, there are not many similar studies conducted in developing nations (Abdul-Jaleel et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is important to note that the existing studies had reported contradicting results. Given this juncture, there is a need to examine the influence of school culture on teachers’ organizational commitment.

Research Objectives

This study will attempt to examine the predictability of key dimensions of school culture related to collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support and learning partnership towards teachers’

organizational commitment in the primary cluster schools in Selangor. The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the relationship between the variables of organizational culture and organizational commitment.
2. To determine which the dimensions of school culture would predict teachers' organizational commitment.

Literature Review

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is among the most researched constructs in organizational research (Hackney, 2012). It is defined as defined "*psychological linkage between employees and their organizations*" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 253) which is the "*relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization*" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, p. 226).

Although Meyer and Allen, (1991) stated that commitment can take different distinct forms, they added that it reflects "*three general themes: affective attachments to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and obligation to remain with the organization*" (p. 63-64).

According to researchers Albdour & Altarawneh, (2014) organizational commitment is often related to the attachment and identification to a workplace and in school, teacher's organizational commitment is described as the strength of teacher's attachment to the school (Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman, 1998). Furthermore, commitment towards the organization is important as highly committed employees could demonstrate positive work behaviors (Nurharani, Norshidah, and Afni Anida, 2013) and will have lower intentions to leave and would work with more effectiveness and loyalty (Pascal, Pierre-Sébastien, & Lamontagne, 2011).

Rabindarang, Khuan and Khoo (2014) in his study, concluded that educators in technical and vocational education are committed to their work even though they are facing transformation. However, in another study, Swarnalatha (2016) in researching the work commitment of secondary school teachers in Secunderabad and Hyderabad, found that majority of teachers had average level of commitment. In concluding, the researcher said it is important for teachers to be committed towards their work, as "*without this emotional*

connection teachers face the constant danger of burn-out in an increasingly intensified work environment” (p. 88).

A similar result was found by Cheasakul & Varma (2015), in their study on teachers in the Assumption University of Thailand; and Colak, Altinkurt & Yilmaz (2014), who studied on 280 teachers working in Mugla, Turkey. This clearly shows that “teachers are the primary source of competitive advantage in schooling,” (Garipagaoglu, 2013, p. 22). Thus, teachers’ commitment is important because committed teachers will be motivated to bring the best out of the students and this will subsequently move towards achieving school goals.

School Culture

In an educational context, Kaplan and Owings (2013) defines school culture as “*the shared orientations, values, norms and practices that holds an educational unit together*” (p. 2). Strong organizational culture serves as a compass to guide authorities and can compensate for the behaviour of members of the organization as mentioned by Zulfikri, Yahya, Yaakob, & Raman (2015).

High performing cultures have also been shown to produce excellent results, attract, motivate, and retain talented employees, and adapt readily to change, (Medina, 2012). It also can act as a bond that can strengthen ties among members of the organization. According to Peterson & Deal (2011, p. 11), “*school culture sharpens the focus of daily behaviour and increases attention to what is important and valued*” Furthermore, it builds commitment and identification with core values (Peterson & Deal, 2002, p. 20).

On the other hand, schools that are unproductive becomes toxic overtime and teachers are often disgruntled and sabotaged any attempts at collegial improvement (Peterson & Deal, 1998). This in turn can bring down the commitment level of the teachers and subsequently their productivity. Gopal Prasad Acharya (2015, p. 1) in his Master’s thesis stated: “*School culture is an important aspect of a school organization as it reflects the overall practices of a school*”.

The Relationship between School Culture and Organizational Commitment

Past studies found that commitment has some close ties with the organization's culture (Zulfikri et al., 2015) and is said to be a dominant aspect that can influence employees’ commitment towards the organization (Mitic, Vukonjanski, Terek, Gligorovic & Zoric, 2016).

This is evident by the findings by Raman, Lim, and Rozalina (2015) who focused their study on 23 Primary Chinese Schools (SJKC) in Kota Setar, Kedah, involving 200 teachers. Their findings indicated that *“school culture is a predictor of organizational commitment”* (p. 93). Their result is consistent with the findings of similar studies by Azadi, Farsani, Farsani and Aroufzad (2013); Zulkifri et al. (2015); and Mitic et al. (2016), all of whom found significant relationship between organizational culture and employees’ commitment towards the organization.

In another study, researchers Ayik and Atas (2014) found a positive and significant correlation between organizational commitment levels of high school teachers and their school culture in Turkey. Using the Organizational Commitment Scale and School Culture Scale on 265 teachers, the duo concluded that organizational commitment and school culture should be compromised in school setting.

Researchers Masoumeh and Muhammad Faizal (2015) also concluded that positive culture in school leads to teachers who are committed in teaching. In an earlier study by Ehtesham, Muhammad, and Muhammad (2011), it was found that organizational culture causes better organizational performance. They concluded that organizational culture is an important factor in an organization, as it *“affect employee’s behaviours, motivation and values”* (p. 88).

However, looking back at the literature, school culture plays an important factor in enhancing teachers’ commitment level. Therefore, it is important to study the relationship between organizational commitment and school culture.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the relationship between the independent variable (school culture) with dependent variable (organizational commitment) as perceived by primary cluster schools’ teachers. According Gruenert & Valentine (1998), there are six dimensions for school culture. These are: collaborative leadership (CL), teacher collaboration (TC), professional development (PD), unity of purpose (UoP), collegial support (CS), and learning partnership (LP). While Meyer and Allen (1991) organizational commitment has three dimensions, namely: (a) affective commitment (AC); (b) continuous commitment (CC); and (c) normative commitment (NC). The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1.

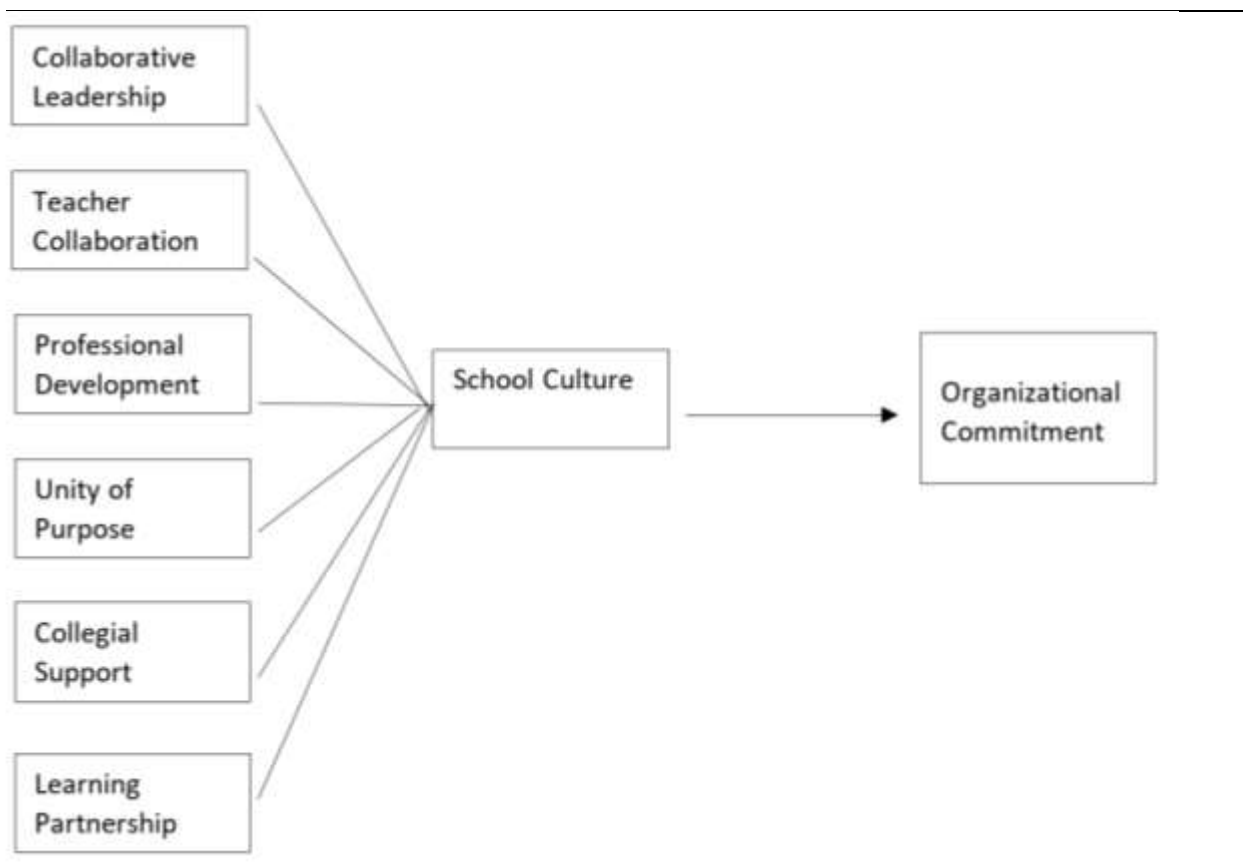


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

Population and sample

The population of the study was teachers teaching in primary cluster schools in Selangor. There is a total of 30 primary cluster schools in 10 district education department in the State with a population of 2348. A sample of 331 was determined in accordance to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) determination table. Simple random procedure was used to ensure that each subject in the population has an equal chance to be selected as respondents (Chua, 2011).

The descriptive analysis of the sample was performed for gender, age, ethnicity, education, and length of service with the current school is shown in Table 1. The results showed that gender distribution favoured to the female (77.3%). Majority of the respondents (54.4%) belonged to the age group 30-39 years, followed by 29.3 % in 40-49 years age group. Thirty-one teachers (9.4%) were below 30 years old while the age group

respondents aged 50 and above only constituted to 6.9%. In terms of ethnicity, more than three-quarter of them were Malay (81.3%), followed by Chinese (9.1%) and Indian (8.5%). Four teachers (1.2%) had categorised their race as others, representing the ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak.

The sample analysis also showed that slightly more than three-quarter of them (79.5%) has completed their Bachelor degree, whereas 7.3% holds a Master degree. A total of 21 (6.3%) teachers have completed their Diploma, followed by 1.8% having Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and 1.2% having Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM). Only one respondent holds a postgraduate degree. The length of service of the teachers in their current school revealed that majority of them has been with the current school for one to five years (39.3%), whereas 33.2 % had been working for six to 10 years. Sixty (18.1%) teachers have been attached with the same school for 11-15 years while 17 (5.1%) have been working for the longest duration – 20 years. Only 14 teachers, representing 4.2% of the respondents have been in the same school between 16 and 19 years.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was designed to elicit the required data from teachers in primary cluster schools in Selangor. For this study, the questionnaire was selected as the research instrument. According to Mangkau (2012), the questionnaire is suitable for use for the teachers as they would not face any pressure while answering the questions in the questionnaire, and that they are free to answer the questionnaire during their free time.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire' by Meyer & Allen (1997), contained 15-items, was used to measure teachers' commitment towards their schools. As for the school culture, the School Culture Survey instrument with 23-items by Gruenert & Valentine (1998) was used to assess the school culture. Both the instruments were measured using the 11-point numerical rating scale of 1 to 11, with anchored endpoints. In this, 1 represents 'strongly disagree' and 11 represents 'strongly agree'. Required permissions were obtained from the relevant parties to use the instruments. Besides questions on school culture and organizational commitment, respondents were also asked on their demographic background.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=331)

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	22.7
	Female	256	77.3
Age	Less than 30 years old	31	9.4
	30-39 years old	180	54.4
	40-49 years old	97	29.3
	50 and above	23	6.9
Education level	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)	6	1.8
	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM)	4	1.2
	Teaching Certificate	12	3.6
	Diploma	21	6.3
	Bachelor Degree	263	79.5
	Master Degree	24	7.3
	PhD	1	0.3
Race	Malay	269	81.3
	Chinese	30	9.1
	Indian	28	8.5
	Others	4	1.2
Years of experience as Teacher	1-5 years	130	39.3
	6-10 years	110	33.2
	11-15 years	60	18.1
	16-19 years	14	4.2
	20 years	17	5.1

Reliability and Validity

The pilot study showed high internal consistency reliability for almost all the variables. The study showed that the Cronbach Alpha for school culture dimensions were between .650 - .948, and teacher organizational commitment dimensions were in the range of .664 - .761. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010) the Cronbach alpha values that are below

.60 are poor, while values between .60 and .70 are acceptable, and alpha values that are over .80 are good.

For validity, the questionnaire was subjected to construct validity using the back-to-back translation technique, from English to Bahasa Malaysia. The help from teachers were sought to do the face validation to make sure that the questions were understandable. Next, the view from a panel of experts in the education field was sought to check the validity of the items in the questionnaire. Required adjustment was done in accordance to the suggestions and recommendations from this expert panel.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of data is carried out with the packet programme of SPSS. Pearson multiple moments correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis are used in order to determine the relationship between these dimensions and the level of prediction.

Findings

Relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment

Table 2 shows that there is a significantly positive relationship between the schools’ culture and teachers’ commitment ($r = .575, p < .01$). The correlation value indicates a strong correlation coefficient. This means a positive school culture would increase teachers’ commitment towards the school.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix between school culture and organizational commitment (N=331)

Variables	School culture
Organizational Commitment	.575**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Examining further, Table 3 below illustrates a positive correlation between dimensions of school culture and organizational commitment. Collaborative leadership dimension has significant but weak relationship with affective commitment ($r = .453, p < .01$); normative commitment ($r = .464, p < .01$) and continuance commitment ($r = .337, p < .01$). Teacher collaboration is also significantly correlated with affective commitment ($r = .345,$

$p < .01$) and normative commitment ($r = .447, p < .01$) but weak relationship. However, this dimension has a significant but very weak relationship with continuance commitment ($r = .276, p < .01$). Similar results showed for professional development which has significant and weak relationship with all three commitment dimensions - affective commitment ($r = .400, p < .01$), normative commitment ($r = .471, p < .01$) and continuance commitment ($r = .358, p < .01$).

In addition, unity of purpose has significant but weak relationship with affective commitment ($r = .396, p < .01$) and normative commitment ($r = .456, p < .01$). However, it has a significant and very weak relationship with continuance commitment ($r = .301, p < .01$). The analysis also shows that collegial support has significant but weak relationship with affective commitment ($r = .405, p < .01$) and normative commitment ($r = .433, p < .01$) and very weak relationship with continuance commitment ($r = .270, p < .01$). Finally, the sixth dimension, learning partnership has significant and very weak relationship affective commitment ($r = .303, p < .01$) and continuance commitment $r = .301, p < .01$) but shows a significant but weak relationship with normative commitment ($r = .388, p < .01$).

In summary, looking at the findings presented, the strength of the correlations shown suggests that school culture and its dimensions have a significant role in organizational commitment. However, this strength is either weak or very weak. Nevertheless, looking at the critical values table, the relationships are significant at the 95% significance level as the correlation values exceeds the critical threshold value of .1129 at the .05 level.

Table 3

Correlations between dimension of school culture and dimensions of organizational commitment

Dimensions	Collaborative leadership	Teacher collaboration	Professional development	Unity of purpose	Collegial support	Learning partnership
Affective commitment	.453**	.345**	.400**	.396**	.405**	.303**
Normative commitment	.464**	.447**	.471**	.456**	.433**	.388**
Continuance commitment	.337**	.276**	.358**	.301**	.270**	.301**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The extent to which the dimensions of organizational commitment predicted by the dimensions of organizational culture

The result of multiple regression analysis shown in Table 4 indicates that the prediction model contained two out of the six predictors. These predictors are collaborative leadership ($\beta = .339, p < .05$) and professional development ($\beta = .293, p < .05$). The collaborative leadership dimension was found to contribute 30.3% of the variance on teacher organizational commitment while the combination of collaborative leadership and professional development accounted for 34.4% of variance on teacher organizational commitment. These two models demonstrated large effect size on teacher organizational commitment.

Table 4
Regression Analysis for Effects of School Culture on Teachers Organizational Commitment

Model	Unstandardized	Standardized	t	p	R ²	Contribution
	Coefficients	Coefficients				
	B	β				%
Collaborative leadership	.293	.339	5.247	0.000	0.303	30.3
Professional development	.298	.293	4.541	0.000	0.344	4.1

Dependant variable: TOC

The dominant predictor for teacher organizational commitment is the collaborative leadership dimension ($\beta = .339, t = 5.247$ and $p = .000$). The t-test result was significant at the significance level of $p < .05$ with the $R^2 = .303$, indicating that the collaborative leadership dimension contributes 30.3% of variance on teacher organizational commitment. Based on the standardized beta value, when the collaborative leadership dimension increases by one unit of standard deviation, teacher organizational commitment increases by .339 unit of standard deviation.

The second predictor, the professional development dimension of school culture, ($\beta = .293, t = 4.541$ and $p = .000$) only contributed 4.1% of variance in teacher organizational commitment. Based on the standardized beta value, when the professional development dimension increases by one unit of standard deviation, teacher organizational commitment will increase by .293 unit of standard deviation.

Therefore, the multiple regression model for this study is:

Teachers' Organizational Commitment = .339 (collaborative leadership) + .293 (professional development)

Besides that, the results of the Anova test (F-test) in Table 5 indicated a statistically significant relationship between collaborative leadership and professional development with organizational commitment [$F(2,328) = 85,944, p = .000$] at the significance level of $p < .05$. The multiple regression analysis output indicates that the combination of the two predictor variables contributes 34.0% of the variance in the teachers' organizational commitment variable. This means that 66.0% of the variance is unable to be predicted by the school culture as it may be caused by other factors that are not examined in this study.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis (Stepwise): ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	200.221	2	100.110	85.944	.000
Residual	382.067	328	1.165		
Total	582.288	330			

- a) Dependent Variable: TOC
- b) Predictors: (Constant), Collaborative leadership
- c) Predictors: (Constant), Collaborative leadership, Professional development

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings of this study reveal a significant relationship between the school culture and teaches organizational commitment. The correlation value indicates a strong correlation coefficient. This finding is similar to studies carried out by Azadi et al. (2013); Raman et al. (2015); and Ayik & Atas, (2014); and Mitic et al. (2016).

In the studies by Raman et al. (2015) and Ayik & Atas (2014) on school teachers, the researchers found a positive relationship between teachers' perception of school culture and their commitment level. In another study by Mitic, et al. (2016) on 400 middle managers from 129 companies in Serbia, their findings revealed a significant correlation between dimensions of organizational culture and organizational commitment. They recommended that company managers work towards improving the company's organizational culture in order to increase the employees' level of commitment.

Researchers Azadi et al. (2013) studied the relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment among female physical education teachers in Isfahan, Iran. There was a significant and positive correlation between organizational culture and organizational commitment. In conclusion, they said both organizational culture and commitment are important factors to promote “*an innovative work environment and organization*” (p. 531).

The findings of the current study show that the school’s culture is firmly anchored as an important element within the organization, supporting Bedarkar et al., (2016) and shapes the organizational behaviors and the manner things are done in organizations (Balay & Ipek, 2010). Thus, it is important to establish the favourable school culture in order to increase the teachers’ level of commitment.

Another finding of the study showed that the collaborative leadership and professional development dimensions of the school culture are the two predictors of organizational commitment, with the former having a larger effect. In the study by *Supovitz, Sirinides, and May, (2010)*, the researchers found that when the school’s mission and goals are communicated clearly, it makes a great difference in the teachers’ teaching and learning practices. “*Such efforts foster a collaborative organizational culture, as well as contribute to productive teacher emotional states and organizational learning. These consequences, in turn, have positive impacts on student learning*” (Sun & Leithwood, 2015, p. 4).

Overall it can be concluded that school culture has an impact on the teachers’ organizational commitment. As Crum (2013, p. 24) stated, “*school culture is multifaceted in nature and has the ability to influence all aspects of the organization.*” Without a positive culture, it could lead to teachers experiencing burnout (Crum, 2013). Looking at the low correlation value between the dimensions of school culture and organizational commitment, Ministry of Education and school leaders specifically should work towards improvising the organizational culture of their schools.

Arising from the findings of this study, it is recommended that further studies are conducted with a bigger sample size with in-depth analysis. Considerations should also be given to analyse the effect of respondents’ demographic factors on their commitment.

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