




Exploring the effects of excellent principals' authentic leadership on schools' collaborative culture in Malaysia

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: 17 August 2022 Revised: 22 August 2022 Accepted: 28 August 2022 Published: 1 September 2022</p> <p>Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Self-Awareness, Internalized Moral Perspective, Balanced Processing, Relational Transparency, School Culture and Excellent principal</p> <p></p>	<p>The authentic leadership practice of educational leaders has lately gained attention in the leadership literature. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a quantitative cross-sectional study to determine its impact on Malaysian school culture. Consequently, this study will look at how each of the four elements—self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency—of authentic leadership practices by secondary school principals directly effects school culture. This research employing a survey approach that combines the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and the School Culture Survey (SCS) questionnaires. This survey involved 437 respondents from Malaysian secondary schools. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to examine the study's findings. In line with the study's findings, there is a positive direct effect between self-awareness and relational transparency on school culture. On the other hand, internalized moral perspective and balanced processing have no direct effect on school culture. Finally, the proposed model of this study of school's collaborative culture has 0.34 or 34% of total variance explained by the constructs of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency of excellent principals' practice. Overall, the outcomes of this study are aimed at providing information regarding authentic leadership styles at school level.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

A multitude of research on leadership theory has led us to understand it as the capacity of a person to lead an organisation as well as the ability of a person to influence followers towards the organization's goals (Northouse, 2016; Rost, 1991). Different forms of leadership are being explored or examined in the literatures (Kalkan, Altınay Aksal, Altınay Gazi, Atasoy, & Dağlı, 2020). According to several experts, authentic leadership is the root that underpins all other kinds of positive leadership such as transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, spiritual leadership, and others (Bruce J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Furthermore, some experts have suggested that the influence of the leader's internal traits on employees is directly tied to authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, dan May, 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). This is due to the fact that authentic leadership is seen as optimal leadership which capable of responding promptly to organisational outcomes, as well as encouraging a healthy working atmosphere and creating a balanced connection with employees (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004).

In light of that, it is important to highlight the impact authentic leadership has on the educational field (Duignan, 2014; Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020; Pavlovic, 2015). This is so because authentic leadership, as defined by Luthans dan Avolio (2003) is "genuine, reliable, trustworthy, and veritable." Additionally, authentic leaders are said to have the capability to boost followers' motivation, commitment, contentment, and job participation, resulting in greater work performance (Alazmi & Al-Mahdy, 2020; Du, Ma, Lin, & Wang, 2021; Hadian Nasab & Afshari, 2019; Kutluata, Karabulut, & Esen, 2017). Additionally, authentic leaders may alleviate the pressure on teachers to do their task while simultaneously boosting the teachers' confidence in them, which will raise teachers' participation in the classroom and their ability to accomplish their duties (Kulophas, Ruengtrakul, & Wongwanich, 2015; Siti Noor, Anis Salwa, & Abdul Ghani Kanesan, 2019). As a result, the focus of this research will be exclusively on the authentic leadership of school leaders in affecting collaborative culture.

When examined closely, schools are formal institutions with its own cultural traditions that materialised through interactions in between its populations and the school community (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Hofstede, 2010; Johnson et al., 1998). A positive culture will have a favourable influence on student achievement while a negative culture will have a detrimental influence on schools (Fuzainah & Yaakob, 2018; Steve Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Schein, 1990). In this regard, since school reform is critical in this volatile situation, it can only be accomplished if school populations practise a positive culture (Bernardes et al., 2020; Hidayat, Karlina, Nuranisa, Lembang, & Sofyandi, 2021). in which teachers are constantly unified and always establish collaboration efforts in enhancing their abilities. Hence, in order for teachers to collaborate with each other to fulfil the school's goals, school leaders must encourage the development of effective collaboration. This viewpoint is consistent with Karada dan Öztekin (2018), who argued that an organization's performance is highly tied to school leadership and school culture. This is because schools' mission and visions are impossible to be achieved in the absence of strong school leadership and positive cultural practices.

The leadership practises of school leaders, particularly authentic leadership, often affect the culture of an organisation (Alzghoul, Elrehail, Emeagwali, & AlShboul, 2018; Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013; Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Pavlovic, 2015). It is a mechanism for building and sustaining a positive culture. In essence, it reinforces organisational norms and behaviours based on cultural boundaries (Bass & Avolio, 1993). This is empirically supported by the study of Karadag dan Öztekin-Bayir (2018). which revealed a substantial positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviours of school leaders and school culture in Anatolia Region, Turkey. Other literatures have also underlined the need of authentic leadership in creating a positive school culture in order to raise awareness in the school community about their strengths and vulnerabilities. This is consistent with another findings (Azanza et al., 2013), which suggest that authentic leadership has a significant relation with collaborative culture in terms of enhancing employee job satisfaction. Furthermore, a lot of Eastern scholars have noted that the impact of real leadership on collaborative culture is still understudied. Researchers such as (Ling, Liu, & Wu, 2017), have concluded that many more studies should always be undertaken to determine the impact of authentic leadership on a variety of outcomes, including the cooperative nature of members of diverse and multicultural organisations. The suggestion is consistent with the assertion of certain researchers that authentic leadership influences school culture in improving teachers' organisational behaviour,

which necessitates additional research with different samples and populations (Feng-I, 2016; Karada & Öztekin, 2018; Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021).

In this regard, the Malaysian education system is experiencing significant changes as a result of the implementation of Malaysian education development plan 2013-2025, particularly the development and appointment of high-performing school leaders in each school with excellent leadership characteristics, as specified in the fifth shift (KPM, 2013). In Malaysia, being recognised as an excellent principal is the greatest honour in the field of school administration. It is determined by how well a principle leads, manages, and administrates their organisation (Lokman, M. Al Muzammil, & Mislina, 2013). However, only a small number of individuals were recognised as excellent principals in the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) 2006–2010 (Lokman et al., 2013). They are outstanding school leaders who can serve as mentors for upcoming leaders. They also serve as role models by demonstrating good behaviours such as the qualities of loyalty, trust, cooperation, engagement, and dedication that may be cultivated in their workplace culture (Hollis, 2018). As indicated in authentic leadership theory, their leadership is always consistent with communication and actions, that could significantly improve their self-image and personality (Cropper, 2017; Mason, 2019; Moye, Henkin, & Egley, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). According to Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (EPRD) statistics updated in May 2021, only 113 principals in Malaysia have obtained this distinction. Thus, to understand and enhance the leadership quality of Malaysian principals, it is essential to study the authentic leadership of exceptional principals. Since there is a lack of research on excellent principle leadership in many regions of Asia, including Malaysia (Lokman et al., 2013). This study focuses on good principal leadership by investigating the influence of their leadership on the school's collaborative culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Authentic Leadership

In response to society's need for trustworthy and powerful leaders, experts have been paying more attention to authentic leadership since 20 years ago (Alazmi & Al-Mahdy, 2020; G.Northouse, 2016; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Similarly, the idea of authentic leadership has attracted the attention of academics from a variety of fields since an authentic leader is an individual who is daring, visionary, and encourages his or her followers to grow (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Gardner et al., 2011; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). Additionally, authentic leaders exhibit their own traits as a person who is conscious of his or her own ideas, behaviours, and perspectives, which is seen as a perspective of awareness of one's own inner value (B. J. Avolio, Luthans, & Walumba, 2004; Bruce J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders wield significant power, which helps and benefits their organization (Bezzina & Bufalino, 2019). The financial and medical sectors have embraced the notion of real leadership initially (Alilyyani, Wong, & Cummings, 2018; Ribeiro, Duarte, Filipe, & Torres de, 2020). However, in recent years, intellectual experts have advocated that authentic leadership be practiced by leaders from all fields for the success of any organization (Srivastava, Mani, Yadav, & Joshi, 2020). The significance of a leader's personal authenticity, as articulated in the ancient Greek philosophical injunctions "To your own self be true" and "Know yourself" is the foundation for authentic leadership (Bruce J. Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004)(Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Today's definition of an authentic leader is one who has personal experience, ideas, feelings, wants, wishes, choices, or convictions. Even asserting that a person will act in line with their actual self means that they will express themselves in a way that is consistent with their inner thoughts and feelings (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020; Pensom, 2013).

Authentic leaders may gain the trust of their followers by convincing them to collaborate in the development of their organisation. However, till today, there have been numerous definitions and concepts presented by scholars concerning authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). However, the definition of authentic leadership that is most relevant and consistently addressed in the literature and is particularly useful in the context of organisational culture is:

“a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al., 2008) ms 94.

Based on this theory, the researcher developed an authentic leadership model that incorporates four dimensions: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The dimension of Self-Awareness is a self-reflection that leaders build internally to be aware of their own and their followers' shortcomings and strengths so that they may inspire followers to focus on the field they are engaged in and accept responsibility for the duties assigned to them (Chan, Hannah, & Gardner, 2005; Dag, 2014; Quraishi & Aziz, 2018). This approach can also enhance the leader's capacity to allow followers to flourish and become renowned in the field in which they work (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Hannah, Uhl-Bien, Avolio, & Cavarretta, 2009). Internalized Moral Perspective is an important component of authentic leadership because it affects how far the leader uphold high moral and ethical standards when managing the school (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). In reality, this value serves as a guide for leaders to behave consistently and to be able to endure all of the pressures applied by the organisation and the local community (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Balanced Processing, on the other hand, refers to a leader's capacity to assess data and information before making a choice (Hadian Nasab & Afshari, 2019). Furthermore, this dimension serves as a signal for the leader to solicit feedback and suggestions from his staff on difficulties and problems that develop in his business before making any judgments (Bruce J. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Meanwhile, the factor of relational transparency encompasses the leader's capacity to be open and honest with all people of the organisation in order to convey ideas and sentiments (Bruce J. Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005). Through these components, followers feel secure in their relationship with the leader and are inspired by their leader's interpersonal style of thinking and belief (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The finding of the authentic leadership model formed the basis for the development of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The instrument was evaluated in research which included five samples from different fields and nations, namely China, Kenya, and the United States (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Most authentic leadership study employed the ALQ instrument to assess the theoretical approach and model (Walumbwa et al., 2008), which is based on authentic leadership theory and model (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003)

School Culture

Culture refers to the quality of a school that forms the basic character, which is the mutually agreed upon standards, values, and beliefs among the members of the organisation (Ali, 2017; Tłuściak-Deliowska & Dernowska, 2016; Veeriah, 2017). It also refers to a higher level of fundamental assumptions and views held by teachers. The assumption is frequently followed without them being aware that they are acting in accordance with school culture and also impacted by culture (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Hence, school culture may be defined as the principles of beliefs, perceptions, connections, attitudes, and written and unwritten norms that shape and impact every element of how the school runs under the influence of the school leader's leadership.

Due to the good ideals that inspire the school community to form cooperative connections, school culture is also able to build trust, positive values, and collaborative attitude. (Carter & Dason, 2017; Gray, Kruse, & Tarter, 2016; Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Moye et al., 2005). The importance of teachers' trust in administrators and their peers, however, is rather difficult to create and yet is necessary for the success of school culture reform programmes. Any organisational reform, particularly one aimed at enhancing collaboration, must first acquire the trust of teachers (Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Zahed-Babelan, Koulaei, Moeinikia, & Sharif, 2019). In light of this, it may be claimed that before implementing any changes, leaders must first work to establish a positive school culture.

In this regard, it should be noted that collaborative practices in schools can only be fostered via the leadership impact of school leaders. However, the collaborative culture in Malaysian schools is said to be at an alarming level currently since teachers prefer to work alone rather than collaborate (Chong, Muhammad Faizal, & Zuraidah, 2016, 2019; Fuzainah & Yaakob, 2018). Nevertheless, this situation could be addressed by establishing a collaborative culture in each school, which can only be achieved through the school leader's leadership style.

As a result, the researcher employed the collaborative culture model in this study (S. Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). This paradigm is comprised of six components: professional development, collegial support, unity of

purpose, teacher collaboration, collaborative leadership, and learning partnership. professional development refers to the continual development of the teacher's own knowledge while also encouraging the improvement of the school's overall development (S. Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). Collegial support focuses on the practice of collaborative ideals among teachers through instilling trust and a willingness to collaborate. While unity of purpose refers to teachers' readiness to collaborate in achieving the school's objective. Meanwhile, the teacher cooperation component describes the type of collaboration among teachers that takes place through organised discourse sessions in order to fulfil the school's goal, whereas collaborative leadership refers to the level to which school leadership can build, maintain, and encourage collaborative relationships among employees. Finally, the learning partnership dimension denotes the amount to which teachers, parents, and students collaborate to increase student achievement through fostering positive connections and communication. These six elements will be used to characterize the practice of collaborative culture in schools, and (S. Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) also created a tool called the 'School Culture Survey (SCS)' to assess the extent of collaborative school culture in schools

The Relationship between Authentic Leadership and School Culture

Authentic leadership is interpersonal leadership founded on sound internal principles (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). These ideals may be felt via the leader's actions, and all these characteristics impact teachers, causing them to want to adjust their behaviours in a good manner. Simultaneously, the conduct will become a practice and, eventually, a culture (Azanza et al., 2013; Srivastava & Shree, 2019). The above remark is compatible with several study findings. Among these are the research of Karadag dan Öztekin-Bayir (2018), which demonstrate that authentic leadership behaviours of school leaders have a good impact on school culture in Turkey's metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the findings of Daryanto, Sumarto, Komariah, dan Kurniady (2017), present a fresh perspective in which there is a substantial association between authentic leadership, school culture, and information and communication technology (ICT) information and the efficacy of school administration. Meanwhile, the findings of Shulhan (2019), study, which was conducted at an Islamic higher education college in Indonesia, revealed that genuine leadership affects organisational culture, which is the managerial component and goals in the institution, in both good and negative ways, with most elements showing a favourable impact. All of the research cited above, however, look at cultural aspects in distinct circumstances. Nevertheless, the researcher's goal in this study is to examine the link between authentic leadership behaviours and school culture that emphasises on collaborative factors.

Majority of literature research on collaborative culture in schools are conducted with various educational leadership approaches. Bush (2015), believes that leadership style helps shape a healthy organisational culture in schools. Despite the fact that it is obvious that school leaders' leadership techniques play a crucial role in the formation of a strong school culture, research in the context of local education is still lacking. Besides, the impact of real leadership on collaborative culture has received less attention.

Therefore, the study's objectives are as follows:

1. Studying the direct effect of excellent principals' authentic leadership practises on school culture in Malaysia.
 - H₀₁ There is no significant effect of excellent principals' self-awareness on school culture.
 - H₀₂ There is no significant effect of excellent principals' Internalized Moral Perspective on school culture.
 - H₀₃ There is no significant effect of excellent principals' balanced processing on school culture .
 - H₀₄ There is no significant effect of excellent principals' relational transparency on school culture.
2. Identify the authentic leadership component that is the most important predictor for school culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach with 437 respondents from Malaysian secondary schools led by outstanding principals. The Multistage Random Sampling technique is used to choose research samples throughout Malaysia. In addition, prior to conducting this investigation, authorization from the EPRD was acquired.

Research Instrument

The authentic leadership style questionnaire employed in this study is an adaptation of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) developed by Avolio and friends in 2007. While the questionnaire for collaborative school culture was derived from Gruenert and Valentine's School Culture Survey (SCS) (1998). The questionnaire was been through a translation process (back-to-back translation) and it been validated by the penal of experts before it been distributed to teachers. In order to address the predetermined study objectives, the acquired data was statistically analyzed using Analysis of Moments Structures (AMOS).

Data Analysis

Research data was confirmed as a normal data before undertaking analyses such as missing data, multi-collinearity, and finding outliers and normality. The researcher first validates that the data is clean and meets the specifications for outlier data, skewness, and kurtosis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019). Then for each construct, researcher analysis with measurement model, before joining all the construct in structural model. The model fit for measurement model and structural model was determined based on the accuracy of the Chi-square value, Cooperative Fix Index (CFI), Tuckler Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Some items were eliminated since they did not add a value to the construct, which is low in Factor Loading (FL). At the same time modification index were done to achieved the fit index.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

For the school's collaborative culture construct, a measurement model was created separately to ensure fit index values. The finding show that the fit index value was achieved based on the measurement model. Factor loading (FL) for items in the measurement model is more than 0.5 but less than 1.0. This indicates that the measuring model for the school culture construct has reached unidimensional.

The ChiSq value is 838.074, while the Chisq/df value is 2.524 (5.0) with a significant value (.000), and the RAMSEA value is 0.065 (0.08). Furthermore, additional fit index values, such as TLI (0.920) and CFI (0.930), produce good matching accuracy that is greater than 0.9. Additionally, the correlation value of each aspect in the school's collaborative culture has reached a point where the correlation value between the researched constructs is less than 0.85. The structural equation model analysis was carried out after the researcher established that the measurement model had attained construct validity and reliability in order to carry out the structural model analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structural equation model analysis of the study

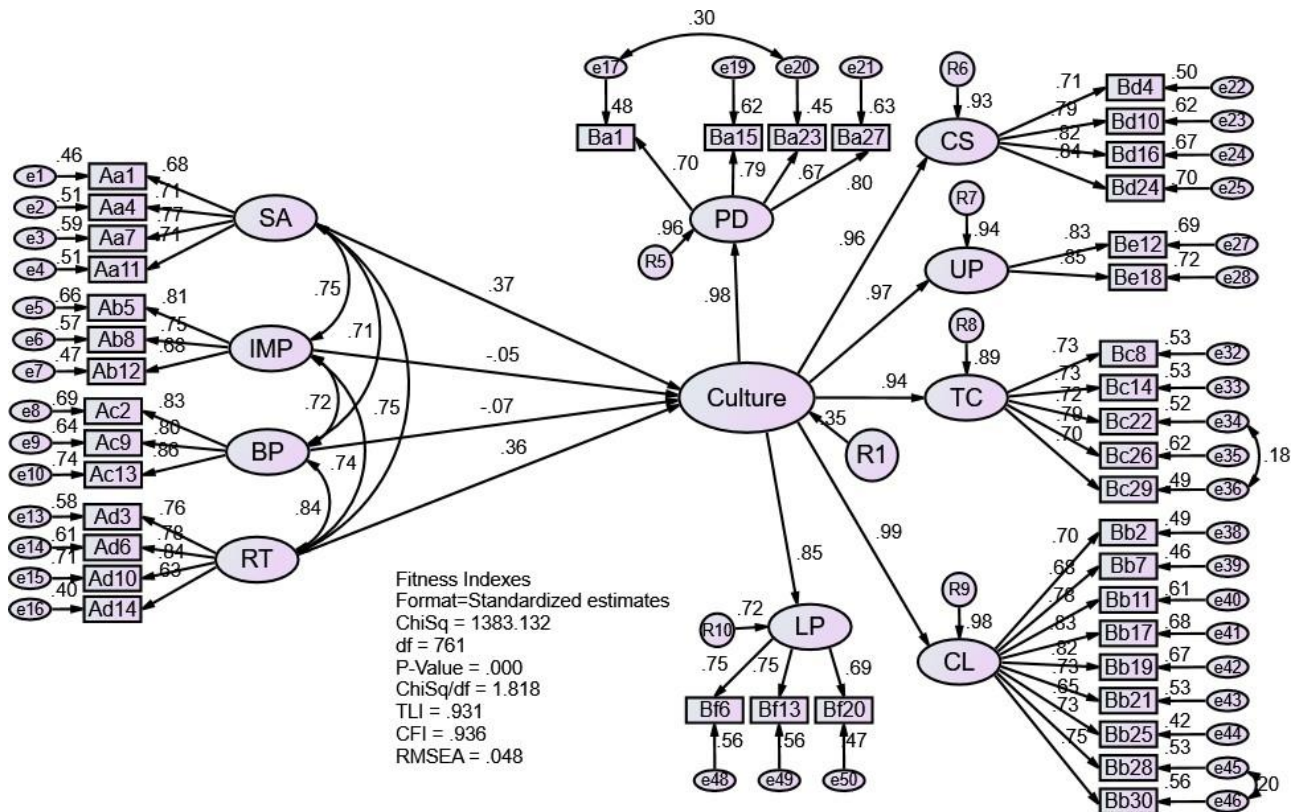


Figure 1 displays the suitability that has been established, including the fit index of the model, which is absolute fit led by Chi-Square, RMSEA; incremental fit based on CFI; and parsimonious fit based on Chi-square/df (Hair et al., 2019). The ChiSq value is 1498.827 while the Chisq/df value is 1.871 (5.0), with a significant value (.000), and the RAMSEA value is 0.049 (0.08). Furthermore, other fit index values such as TLI (0.926) and CFI (0.931) also obtained an excellent matching accuracy of greater than 0.9.

In addition, composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity (AVE) values were also achieved (Table 1), namely self-awareness (SA) AVE value 0.516 (>0.5) and CR value 0.81 (>0.6), internalized moral perspective (IMP) AVE value 0.56 (>0.5) and CR value 0.792 (>0.6), balanced processing (BP) AVE value 0.69 (>0.5) and CR value 0.869 (>0.6), relational transparency (RT) AVE value 0.572 (>0.5) and CR value 0.841 (>0.6) and school culture (Culture) AVE value 0.896 (>0.5) and CR value 0.981 (>0.6).

Table 1: Value of FL, C.R and AVE elements in the Authentic Leadership of Excellent Principals and the collaborative culture of schools in Malaysia

Construct	Dimension	Item	FL	CR >.7	AVE >.5
Authentic Leadership (Authentic)	Self-Awareness (SA)	Aa1	.68	0.81	0.52
		Aa4	.71		
		Aa7	.77		
		Aa11	.71		
	Internalized Moral Perspective (IMP)	Ab5	.81	0.792	0.56
		Ab8	.75		
		Ab12	.68		
	Balanced Processing (BP)	Ac2	.83	0.87	0.69
		Ac9	.80		

		Ac13	.86		
	Relational Transparency (RT)	Ad3	.76		
		Ad6	.78		
		Ad10	.84	0.84	0.57
		Ad14	.63		
	Professional Development (PD)		.98		
	Collegial Support (CS)		.96		
	Unity Of Purpose (UP)		.97		
School Culture (Culture)	Teacher Collaboration (TC)		.94	0.98	0.89
	Collaborative Leadership (CL)		.99		
	Learning Partnership (LP)		.83		

Path Regression Estimation Analysis

According to H₀₁, there is no direct effect of excellent principals' self-awareness on school culture. Nevertheless, the findings (Table 2) show that self-awareness has a significant direct effect on school culture ($\beta = 0.372$, $p < 0.05$). So H₀₁ is rejected, it shows that self-awareness has an impact on the school culture. However, h₀₂ in this research claimed that there is no direct effect of internalized moral perspective on school culture. The finding shows excellent principals' internalized moral perspective not significant effect on school culture ($\beta = -0.045$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H₀₂ not rejected, it shows that excellent principals' internalized moral perspective has no impact on school culture. According to H₀₃, there is no direct effect of excellent principals' balanced processing on school culture. Base on the findings of this study, there is no significant direct effect of balanced processing on school culture ($\beta = -0.068$, $p > 0.05$). It shows that H₀₃ was not rejected since balanced processing had no impact on the school culture. Meanwhile, for H₀₄, it is stated that there is no direct effect of excellent principal's relational transparency on school culture. The study's findings, however, demonstrate that there is a significant direct effect of excellent principal's relational transparency on school culture ($\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, H₀₄ is rejected, it shows that excellent principal's relational transparency has an impact on school culture.

Table 2: Direct Impact Analysis

H	Laluan	Estimate	S.E	C.R	Keputusan	
H01	Culture ← Self-Awareness	.350	.372	.103	3.383 ***	Signifikan
H02	Culture ← Internalized Moral Perspective	-.035	-.045	.082	-.427 .669	Not signifikan
H03	Culture ← Balanced Processing	-.043	-.068	.077	.559 .576	Not signifikan
H04	Culture ← Relational Transparency	.331	.355	.127	2.595 .009	Signifikan

The second objective of this study can be answered by referring to Table 2, which reviews four direct effect analyses to establish the key determinants of the school culture. According to the results of the study, the excellent principal's self-awareness practice was the key predictor in strengthening the school culture ($\beta = .372$, $p < .05$) compared to excellent principal's relational transparency ($\beta = .355$, $p < .05$). The coefficient of determination, or R² squared value, for school culture is 0.34, which is 34% prediction of the school culture was made using moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The R² squared value of the school culture is 0.34. In addition, internalized moral perspective ($\beta = -.045$, $p > .05$) and Balanced Processing ($\beta = -.068$, $p > .05$) are not a predictors of school collaborative culture in this study. Altogether, 34% of the school culture was predicted by self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The coefficient of determination, or R² squared value, for the collaborative culture at the school is 0.34. This is a high range, as suggested by Cohen (1988). Thus, the outcomes of this study analysis demonstrates that self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency contribute 34% ($R^2 = 0.34$) to a high degree of collaborative culture in secondary schools led by excellent principals in Malaysian.

DISCUSSIONS

This study adds to the empirical knowledge of excellent principals' authentic leadership behaviours, particularly self-awareness and relational transparency, in influencing the collaborative culture in schools during the pandemic. Other research have found that authentic leaders can affect school or organisational culture (Daryanto et al., 2017; Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Shulhan, 2019). This indicates that true leader behaviours inspire teachers to collaborate in learning and working together to achieve common goals. Since this study was conducted during the pandemic, all difficulties and changes in the school system were addressed collaboratively by teachers under the supervision of their leaders. Thus, this research provides a viewpoint to the world of education that the practice of self-awareness and the sincerity of school leaders' interactions are extremely crucial to exercise in order to establish a collaborative culture in schools.

Furthermore, this research suggests that excellent principals' self-awareness informs teachers on their distinct aims and orientations. This feature is stressed during the coaching and mentoring process (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). Leaders can raise the awareness of instructors during the mentoring process by sharing their own experiences. Moreover, the leader could uncover the teachers' self-awareness of their limitations and deficiencies throughout the coaching process, since dialogical conversations would stimulate an individual's inner conscious in making essential modifications to address problems. This clearly demonstrates that excellent principals always provide guidance and encouragement to teachers until they successfully establish awareness in teachers, allowing them to alter their behaviour accordingly.

Internalized moral perspective and balanced processing, on the other hand, have little effect on school culture. This could be due to the pandemic scenario, in which teachers were not participating in the decision-making process by leaders since the choice needed to be made swiftly by the leader, and there were limits to meet face-to-face or hold open conversations. These four factors, however, comprise up to 34% of the school's collaborative culture. These differences span a wide spectrum. As a result, it can be argued that excellent principals' authentic leadership behaviours always affect their organisational culture by instilling the importance of cooperation among teachers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study, in particular, have brought implications for the management of leaders and provide an understanding as to how excellent principals in Malaysian secondary schools develop their authentic leadership styles. The research also delves at the potential effects of leadership behaviour in businesses and provides vital insight into what authentic leadership means in the field of education. Finally, the researchers believe that further study on authentic leadership practices should be conducted in many sectors by evaluating the influence on variables such as organisational excellence, teacher job participation, and teacher professional development.

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