Empowering Teachers' Commitment: How Do Six Dimensions of Sustainable Leadership Play A Role?

Memperkasakan Komitmen Guru: Bagaimanakah Enam Dimensi dalam Kepimpinan Lestari Memainkan Peranan?

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between the six dimensions of sustainable leadership practices by principals with the level of commitment by secondary school teachers. The sample comprised 269 respondents who were school administrators including senior assistants, Heads of Departments, and secretaries from 8 secondary schools in the district of Lahad Datu. The researchers adapted a modified instrument based on the Sustainable Leadership Model while the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire was used to identify the level of teachers' commitment. A pilot study was conducted and the Cronbach's Alpha value indicated high consistency among the items in the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was then conducted to determine the frequency of sustainable leadership dimensions practised by the principals. Inferential analysis of Pearson Correlation was also conducted to test the hypotheses. The results showed that teachers perceive principals' sustainable leadership practices to be at a moderately high level. Furthermore, the six dimensions of sustainable leadership had a positive and significant relationship with the level of teachers' commitment. These findings contribute to the development of sustainable leadership theory and organisational commitment within the educational environment. This suggests that significant attention should be placed on the aspect of sustainable leadership to increase the level of teachers' commitment. The study also highlights the importance for principals to adopt a sustainable leadership style in administering and managing their schools so that the commitment of teachers can be enhanced and further achieve the vision and mission of the schools.

Keywords: sustainable leadership dimension, teachers' commitment, principals, secondary schools, Lahad Datu

Abstrak

Kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk meninjau hubungan antara amalan kepimpinan lestari pengetua yang terdiri daripada enam dimensi dengan tahap komitmen guru-guru sekolah menengah. Sampel kajian ini seramai 269 orang responden yang terdiri daripada pengurusan sekolah sama ada penolong kanan, ketua bidang serta setiausaha-setiausaha dari 8 buah sekolah menengah di daerah Lahad Datu. Pengkaji mengadaptasi instrumen diubahsuai berdasarkan Model Kepimpinan Lestari. Sementara soal selidik Organizational Commitment Questionnaires digunakan untuk mengenal pasti tahap komitmen guru. Kajian rintis telah dijalankan dan nilai Alpha Cronbach 0.898 yang diperoleh menunjukkan ketekalan item-item dalam soal selidik adalah tinggi. Analisis deskriptif dijalankan untuk meninjau kekerapan dimensi kepimpinan lestari yang telah diamalkan oleh pengetua. Analisis inferens juga dijalankan seperti Korelasi Pearson untuk menguji hipotesis kajian. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru mempersepsikan amalan kepimpinan lestari pengetua berada pada tahap sederhana tinggi. Tambahan lagi, keenam-enam dimensi kepimpinan lestari mempunyai hubungan yang positif dan signifikan p<.01 dengan tahap komitmen guru. Hasil kajian telah menyumbang kepada perkembangan teori

kepimpinan lestari dan komitmen organisasi dalam persekitaran pendidikan. Dapatan ini telah mencadangkan untuk guru meningkatkan komitmen, maka aspek kepimpinan lestari hendaklah diberi perhatian. Kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa pengetua perlu memainkan peranan penting untuk mengamalkan gaya kepimpinan lestari dalam mentadbir dan menguruskan sekolah agar komitmen guru dapat dipertingkatkan dan seterusnya mencapai visi dan misi sekolah.

Kata kunci: *dimensi kepimpinan lestari, komitmen guru, pengetua, sekolah menengah, Lahad Datu*

INTRODUCTION

Discussions about the quality and outcomes of education including organisational commitment have placed significant attention on the aspect of leadership. In this regard, the school principal is the individual entrusted to administer a school. The role of a principal is not only to ensure the continuity of existing structures and systems but also to mobilize teachers towards changes so that the school organisation is more sensitive and collaborative to address the current changes in the education system. Thus, the leadership of a school is a realistic parameter for it to achieve significant educational excellence and success (Silam et al., 2021).

According to Jeong et al. (2016), leadership refers to individuals who influence and bring about significant positive changes within firms, organisations, and communities by facilitating appropriate levels of trust, organisational structures, and processes that involve multiple stakeholders, resources, cultures, as well as geography. Awareness of leadership styles in the education system is gaining the attention of various parties as well as rapidly expanding the educational leadership paradigm in Malaysia (Karnan & Marimuthu, 2021). A more dynamic and 21st century-oriented leadership style is important to ensure that the quality of education in schools can achieve the key performance index (KPI) set by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025). Thus, quality school leaders serve as the main driver of a school's excellence.

Nevertheless, many researchers are intrigued about the characteristics of leadership that can bring about significant changes to the current educational needs and changes in schools. This is because the school excellence factor is closely related to the effectiveness of the principal's leadership. Saberi and Hamzah (2020) posit that sustainable leadership refers to leaders with several principles that give priority to human and material assets, disperse their leadership to the subordinates, and prioritise long-term goals. It also builds a diversified school environment that can contribute towards excellence, prioritise and lead the learning in schools, emphasise the benefits and progress for all parties in the school, as well as producing apprentice leaders in the organisation. In this context, sustainable leadership is seen as an appropriate leadership option to be practised by school administrators (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). This educational leadership theory is the result of an original invention by scholarly thinkers who ventured into the field of education and is not borrowed from any other existing leadership theories.

Commitment is an employee's serious attitude towards his work that is important so that better implementation and work results are achieved (Satangah@Salim & Abdullah, 2021). Hypothetically, the quality and educational outcomes of a school also depend on the teachers' commitment in conducting their duties (James & Taat, 2020). The ups and downs of a school depend on the commitment and determination invested by the school leaders and teachers in executing their duties (Amin & Hamzah, 2021). This is because all actions and activities that take place at the school are triggered by the school leaders and driven by the teachers. However, research on the latest new millennium leadership culture, namely sustainable leadership and organisational commitment within the education sector in the country is still lacking. Most researchers are more focused on general leadership such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership practised by school principals. Several research papers published at the undergraduate or doctoral levels in local universities show that past studies on principals are less than those conducted abroad. This study thus serves as a starting point that adds to the collection of studies on sustainable leadership within the academic field. The uniqueness of

sustainable leadership thus attests to its position as a medium to develop the schools and its citizens through the sharing of power and consistent learning process in the effort to sustain school excellence and achievement. The question is, to what extent do school principals appreciate this leadership quality to increase the level of commitment of their teachers?

Background of the Problem

Teaching is a challenging profession due to its burdensome tasks and heavy responsibilities. The time and globalisation factors have brought significant changes and challenges to the teaching profession including several modifications to the functions and roles of teachers that affect their level of commitment to the school. There are still school administrators who do not view changes and readiness for changes as serious agendas within educational organizations even though the agents responsible for the implementation of organisational changes are the school administrators themselves (Chong et al., 2018).

Heavy workload has given rise to the complexity, dissatisfaction, and emotional exhaustion of teachers. According to Butt and Lance (2005), 96% of teachers work in the evenings and 90% of teachers work on weekends. This is similar to the study conducted by Gunter et al. (2005) who found that 95% of teachers work in the evenings after school hours as well as on weekends. Among the complexities experienced by teachers includes heavy workload, limited equipment, lack of teaching preparation due to insufficient courses, large classroom size, and clerical works that interfere with their level of commitment to actual teaching tasks. Jose and Mohd Matore (2021) reported that the dominant trigger factor that contributes to burnout syndrome among teachers is the workplace environment, particularly interactions among colleagues. Therefore, teachers need to obtain guidance from their principals in aspects such as teaching methods, pedagogy, or how to motivate students. This element is necessary to ensure and maintain the teachers' performance at an encouraging and commendable level following the efforts invested.

Amin and Hamzah (2021) stated that school leaders have to deal with teachers' attitudes like their absence from school duties, late attendance to work, negligence towards teaching time, teaching and learning sessions that fail to achieve the learning objectives, teachers facing the issues of mistrust and limited values, and unconducive classroom environment that fails to meet the requirements of classroom management such as the 21st Century Learning (PAK21) classrooms, and constraints in school management. In addition, school leaders also face the pressure to achieve the targets set by relevant departments and ministries.

The recent decade has witnessed a growing number of research related to the concept of leadership, which reported mixed findings on the aspect of leadership practice that can be applied by leaders in the current situation and environment (Hashim & Mohd Nor, 2019). As a result, diversity in leadership styles brings varying effects to a school organisation. Whether it is by conscious or subconscious decision, it has become common for principals to practice traditional leadership that is 'top-down' in nature (Hallinger, 2003) as school organization is a form of community that operates bureaucratically. Traditional leadership style, or directive leadership, is a dominant leadership style practised by most organisations. The uniqueness of sustainable leadership lies in its potential to develop the school and its members through the sharing of power and consistent learning process as part of the effort to sustain the school's excellence and achievement (Mohd Tahir et al., 2009). Nevertheless, Jalet and Yunus (2021) posit that in reality, such measure of shared responsibility is still done with caution and school leaders are still confused about its implementation, to the point that leadership theory has been less effectively applied.

In recent years, new millennium leadership theory has emerged as a prominent choice among researchers in the effort of improving the ability to understand the effectiveness of leadership. The focus of this sustainable leadership theory approach is to identify and evaluate leadership behavioural styles that are believed to be capable of influencing the values, attitudes, perceptions, roles, and work performance of an employee. This is in line with the emergence of new leadership theories post-1990s

such as sustainable leadership which no longer involves the interaction between leaders and subordinates, but is rather more concerned with humanity, relationships, emotions, and values (Joesoef, 2009), subsequently demanding leaders to be competent in both the technical as well as humanitarian aspects. Teachers will not portray a high commitment to work if the humanitarian aspect is neglected by their leaders (Jaafar, 2004). Overall, the leadership excellence of a school can be described through the high level of job satisfaction and enjoyment in conducting responsibilities, thus upholding their commitment in realising the school's goals. Therefore, the significance of this study is to determine whether principals possess the characteristics of sustainable leadership by adopting the six dimensions presented by Hargreaves and Fink (2003) and Supian and Daud (2014).

Ideally, these views and studies are focused on examining and summarising whether principals are sustainable leaders. The focus of this study comprises principals who serve at secondary schools in Lahad Datu, Sabah. There are nine secondary schools within the Lahad Datu district and three of them are led by excellent principals while the other principals have served at least 3 years in their respective schools (Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Lahad Datu, 2016). This study aims to provide a clear picture of the level of leadership behaviours and practices applied by principals within the Lahad Datu district especially in cultivating their leadership at school as proposed by Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink since 2003. Sustainable Leadership is one of the leadership theories founded by educational leadership scholars. This means that the theory was not borrowed from other leadership theories of a universal nature. Therefore, the researchers decided to use the sustainable leadership model as an independent variable in this study. Finally, a discussion about the relationship between sustainable leadership with the level of teachers' commitment was explored in depth. The questions investigated in this study are as follows:

i.   What is the level of sustainable leadership portrayed by secondary school principals in the Lahad Datu district?
ii. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (encouraging continuous learning) with the level of teachers' commitment?
iii. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (creating apprentice leaders at school) with the level of teachers' commitment?
iv. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (cultivating a learning sharing culture among teachers) with the level of teachers' commitment?
v.   Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (encouraging partnership with peers or organizations outside the school) with the level of teachers' commitment?
vi. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (diversity) with the level of teachers' commitment?
vii. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership (preservation) with the level of teachers' commitment?
viii. Is there a relationship between principals' sustainable leadership with the level of teachers' commitment?

Conceptual Framework

In sustainable leadership, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) believe that sustainability does not refer to the retention of a concept over a short period of time. In fact, they view the concept of sustainability as a permanent and renewable element for the universal good of the future including the community and the school environment. Having examined the key definitions and concepts of sustainability in the field of education, the focus now is whether a leader or a principal is able to implement sustainable leadership strategies in educational organisations. The models of primary constructs and secondary constructs or sub-constructs of sustainable leadership are discussed in Figure 1 and Table 1.
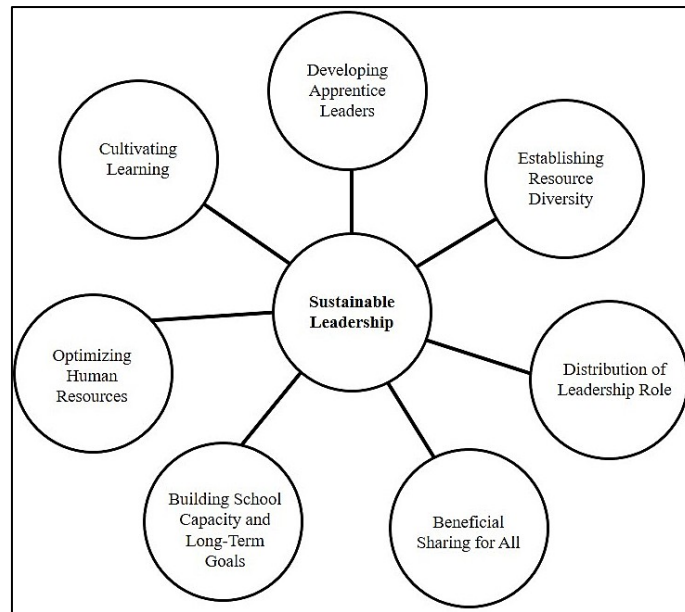
Figure 1. Hargreaves and Fink's (2003) Sustainable Leadership
Model adapted from Mohd Tahir et al. (2009)

Table 1. Sustainable Leadership Constructs (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006)

Main Constructs	Sub-constructs
Cultivating learning	Providing support for continuous learning
	Prioritise the mastery of knowledge and skills
	Freedom to choose expertise
	Sharing of expertise in the organisation
Developing apprentice leaders	Improving the leadership qualities of apprentice leaders
	Cultivating management knowledge sharing
	Organise leadership training
	Training teachers to be leaders
Optimising human resources	Prioritise continuous training
	Training staff to become field experts
Building school capacity and long-term goals	In-house training to enhance expertise
	Fostering the concept of teamwork
	Cultivating cooperation
	Prioritise on staff competencies
	Sharing the values and goals of the school
Beneficial sharing for all	Assist leaders from other organisations
	Share the secrets of organisational excellence
	Contribute expertise
	Exchange of information and knowledge
Establishing resource diversity	Prioritise the welfare of staff
	Be open to ideas and views
	Flexible to changes
	Staff development
Distribution of leadership	Giving staff the opportunities to lead
	Distribution responsibility as leaders
	Improving the quality of leadership
	Training staff who are interested to become leaders
	Implement empowerment

The framework of this study is constructed based on the Sustainable Leadership Model by Hargreaves and Fink (2003) and the Framework of Supian and Daud (2014). The framework explains the role of principals in sustainable leadership and its relationship with the commitment level of secondary school teachers in the Lahad Datu district. Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The dependent variable is the level of sustainable leadership of the principals while the independent variable is the level of teachers' commitment.
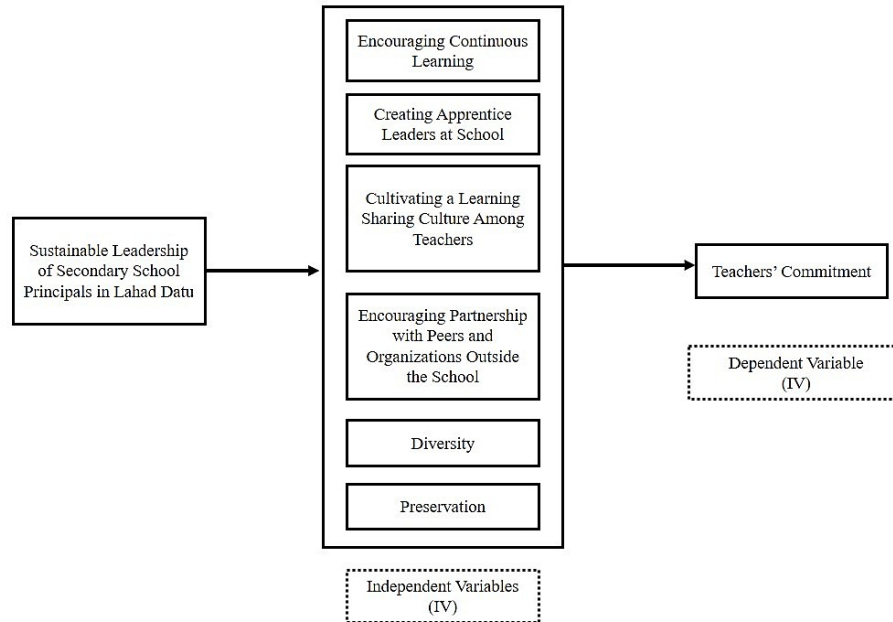

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Research

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design employed in this study was a survey. According to Cohen and Manion (1985), a survey is administered by collecting data within a specific time using a questionnaire. This study focuses on aspects of the relationship between the level of sustainable leadership and the level of teachers' commitment. A questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument as it allowed the researchers to gain feedback from a vast number of respondents. Moreover, it is also a more practical method for studies involving a large sample size.

Population and Research Sample

The population of this study comprised teachers who teach in secondary schools around the district of Lahad Datu, Malaysia. The study consisted of 269 respondents, which was approximately 30 percent of the total population of 904 teachers. The sample was randomly selected, which represented 30 percent of the sample from each school. For data validity, only secondary schools led by principals who had served for a minimum of 2 years were selected as the study sample. This is because a period of two years is sufficient for a person to conclude the characteristics of the school of which he is a member (Sala, 2003). A total of eight schools were involved in this study with a population of 904 teachers. The basis for determining the sample size was based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) in which a population of 904 teachers required sample size of 269 teachers, equivalent to approximately 30 percent of the study population. A 100% return rate method was implemented.

Prior to the sample selection process, the researchers had set the selection criteria for the purposive sampling technique. The sample comprised senior assistants, heads of departments, heads of committees, excellent teachers, curriculum secretaries, co-curriculum secretaries, senior discipline teachers, and academic teachers who had served as teachers for at least one year. The justification for selecting these respondents was because these individuals were closer to the principals in terms of administrative management practices within the school organisations. This is in line with the view of Kingstrom and Mainstone (1985) who stated that respondents who served for less than a year would typically give inaccurate responses to the constructs measured in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Selection of Respondents by School

No.	Name of School	Population of Teachers		Total Teachers	Sample
		Male	**Female**		
1	School A	47	116	163	50
2	School B (Pilot Study)	28	41	69	0
3	School C	28	36	64	21
4	School D	24	44	68	23
5	School E	35	94	129	40
6	School F	23	27	50	18
7	School G	32	75	107	35
8	School H	47	100	147	47
9	School I	42	65	107	35
Total		**306**	**598**	**904**	**269**

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire distributed to the selected respondents. Creswell (2002) stated that a questionnaire is a form used in a survey study in which the respondents will complete the form and return it to the researcher. Data obtained from the respondents is accurate as they feel safer to provide answers via the questionnaire because they do not have to write their names and all confidential matters will be kept secret (Abdul Ghafar, 1999). This study also used a five-point Likert Scale that required the respondents to mark their degree of agreement to each statement in the questionnaire.

As shown in Figure 3, the questionnaire was divided into three main sections. Section A contained 4 items that gathered demographic information related to the teachers' background including their gender, age, teaching experience, and school location. Meanwhile, Section B measured the level of sustainable leadership using six functional items adapted from Hargreaves and Fink's (2003) sustainable leadership model. Whereas, Section C measured the level of teachers' commitment using the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire adapted from Porter and Smith (1970). This commitment instrument contained three main dimensions, namely affective, normative, and continuous.

Table 3. Sections and Contents of the Questionnaire

Section	Functions	Distribution of Items	Total
A	**Demography of Respondents and Principals**		
	1. Respondents' Gender	2	1
	2. Respondents' Age	4	1
	3. Teaching Experience	3	1
	4. School Location	2	1
B	**Sustainable Leadership Practice by Principals**		

Encouraging Continuous Learning	S1-S6	6
Creating Apprentice Leaders at School	S7-S15	9
Cultivating A Learning Sharing Culture among Teachers	S16-S22	7
Encouraging Partnership with Peers or Organisations Outside the School	S23-S29	7
Diversity	S30-S36	7
Preservation	S37-S43	7
C **Teachers' Commitment Level**		
Teachers' Commitment	S44-S57	14

Pilot Study

Since the research instrument was adapted and modified from previous researches, language validation by experts was conducted on the clarity of instructions and appropriate language adjustment. In addition, a pilot study was conducted prior to the actual study to test the reliability and validity of all constructs in the questionnaire as well as to identify any unfit items that should be dropped or revised. The pilot study involved teachers from one of the secondary schools (i.e., School B) within the Lahad Datu district. A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and 30 questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

All data obtained were analysed using the SPSS version 17.0 software. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs ranged from 0.893 to 0.901 while the overall Cronbach's Alpha value for all components was 0.898. These reliability test results thus confirmed that the questionnaire used in this study appropriately described every component investigated in this study (Chua, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Sustainable Leadership among Principals

Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data pertaining to the first research question, which is to identify the level of sustainable leadership practised by secondary school principals within the Lahad Datu district. The principals' sustainable leadership style was based on the teachers' point of view. Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation for each dimension.

Table 4. Overall Mean Values for Sustainable Leadership

Dimention	Questionnaire Component	Mean Value
1	Encouraging Continuous Learning	4.19
2	Creating Apprentice Leaders at School	3.89
3	Cultivating A Learning Sharing Culture among Teachers	3.80
4	Encouraging Partnership with Peers or Organisations Outside the School	3.62
5	Diversity	4.10
6	Preservation	3.88
	Overall Mean	**3.91**

The descriptive statistics show that the overall level of leadership practice involving principals in the Lahad Datu district is only moderately high ($\mu = 3.91$). This is in line with the study conducted by Supian and Daud (2014) that reported a moderate level of sustainable leadership practice among

headmasters in the Segamat district (μ = 3.77). However, the finding contradicts Raja Harman Shah and Mohd Nor (2021) who found a high level of sustainable leadership practice among headmasters, with the mean value exceeding 4.0. These findings clearly illustrate that credible and quality sustainable leadership is essential to motivate an organisation in performing its tasks and achieving its goals. The sustainable leadership traits of principals are those who have vision and foresight as well as strive to bring progress to the organisation through long-term plans (Visser & Courtice, 2011).

Among the six sustainable leadership dimensions investigated in this study, the highest mean value was recorded by the 'encouraging continuous learning among teachers' dimension (μ = 4.19). This indicates that the majority of principals within the Lahad Datu district give priority to cultivating continuous learning among their teachers. The principals not only improve their knowledge by furthering their study to a higher level but also encourage teachers to do so through either full-time or distance learning by enrolling into a Master in Education program at the local public or private universities. This finding is in line with the statement by Hamzah and Sirat (2018) regarding the need for principals to provide continuous professional development support to teachers that promotes lifelong learning, subsequently maintaining teachers' job satisfaction through the improvement of existing knowledge.

According to Mansor and Hamzah (2015), effective leaders often involve their employees in decision making, delegate their rights to the employees, encourage employees' involvement in determining the organisational goals and way of work, as well as using the employees' feedback as a training opportunity. This statement supports one of the dimensions that obtained the highest mean value, namely 'diversity' (μ = 4.10). In this dimension, principals are seen as flexible where they encourage teachers to have diversity in all aspects of expertise. They are also open to all views, ideas, and creativity suggested by the teachers. Principals who are empowering and open-minded can develop staff to be more independent and creative. Such finding is in line with Amabile et al. (2004) who stated that leadership is a key factor in determining the methods or solutions used by organisations to trigger employees' creativity. Therefore, the leader of a learning organization (i.e., the principal) should portray an open attitude towards new and relevant ideas. Constructive ideas serve as positive feedback to reflect and make improvements in school leadership (Ishak & A. Ghani, 2012).

Furthermore, the dimension that encourages partnership with external peers and organisations had obtained a moderate overall mean value. The majority of respondents agreed that principals do share their secrets of success with other schools to achieve the same success. Every management area, including the principals, require support from the school staff and external parties to manage the school more effectively. The field of education has always practised healthy competition by viewing the sharing of success as a blessing that should be mutually celebrated.

The results of this study also suggest that principals are less likely to cultivate the learning sharing culture among teachers. This dimension clearly shows that principals are less inclined towards implementing learning sharing programs such as the mentor-mentee program as well as cooperation (dialogue sessions) between committees. This is partly due to limited participation from the teachers who are extremely occupied by school tasks and chores. Teachers nowadays carry an increasingly heavy workload and stressful teachers are often unable to focus on additional activities such as training and partnership programs that are implemented by the principals. This is in line with Ismail et al. (2018) who reported that the lack of knowledge sharing and discussion on skills improvement, along with individualism in working, often stop teachers from improving their skills, thus affecting students' learning performance. Therefore, the principals need to be fair in the division of tasks, understand the teachers' feelings and emotions, and distribute tasks evenly. In conclusion, a higher workload sustained by the teachers will lower their level of teaching motivation in the classroom. Therefore, the efficient use of human resources and machines can reduce teachers' workload.

Another sustainable leadership dimension that obtained a high mean value is 'creating apprentice leaders in schools' (μ = 3.89). This dimension suggests that principals will train teachers as future leaders who will assume the position of school administrators in years to come. As a leader, one

of the responsibilities played by a principal is to form a team that supports each other. Hashim and Mohd Nor (2019) reported a strong relationship between the coaching practice done by headmasters with teachers' readiness to implement the 21st Century Learning. The mentors' experience conveyed through the coaching and mentoring practice serves as an aspiration for teachers to become future school leaders. This suggests that the principals' actions and behaviours may affect teachers' teaching quality and enhance their teaching leadership.

Analysis of Relationship between Principals' Sustainable Leadership with Teachers' Commitment Level

Pearson correlation was used to test the 7 hypotheses investigated in this research as summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Findings

Hypothesis		Test	Significant	Interpretation/ Result
HO1	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (encouraging continuous learning) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.165 Sig.=.007 (p<.05) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected
HO2	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (creating apprentice leaders at school) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.203 Sig.=.001 (p<.01) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected
HO3	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (cultivating a learning sharing culture among teachers) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.238 Sig.=.000 (p<.01) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected
HO4	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (encouraging partnership with peers or organisations outside the school) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.181 Sig.=.003 (p<.01) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected
HO5	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (diversity) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.214 Sig.=.000 (p<.01) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected
HO6	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals (preservation) with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.307 Sig.=.000 (p<.01) Weak Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected

HO7	There is no significant relationship between the sustainable leadership of the principals with the level of teachers' commitment.	Pearson Correlation (coefficient value r)	r=.352 Sig.=.000 (p<.01) Moderate Relationship	Null hypothesis rejected

The study conducted at eight secondary schools in Lahad Datu found that there is a moderate positive relationship between the principals' sustainable leadership and teachers' commitment (r = .352, p = 0.000). This suggests that higher sustainable leadership demonstrated by the principals will increase the level of teachers' commitment. Such finding supports previous studies on the influence of leadership style on the employees' level of commitment to the organisation. For instance, Yusof and Wahab (2019) found that the level of trust shown by teachers at high-performing schools towards their school leaders carries a significant impact on their level of commitment in school. The result of this study is also in line with Jazmi (2015) where the leadership style portrayed by principals influences the organisational commitment of teachers more than their self-efficacy. However, the finding contradicts the study by Awang (2014) who found no significant direct influence between administrative leadership practices with teachers' commitment. Furthermore, Aslamiah (2014) also reported that leadership did not have a significant influence on teachers' commitment at high-performing and low-performing primary schools within the city of Banjarmasin, Indonesia.

Based on the situation of the past three decades, organisational commitment has been viewed as one of the most important variables in understanding organisational management and behaviour, especially in schools. Thus, the role of a leader (i.e., principal) is deemed important in schools not only to ensure the smooth running of its operation but also to increase teachers' motivation and commitment to work. This is supported by Awangku and Mohd (2021) who found a positive relationship between effective leadership and the level of teachers' commitment in primary schools within the Beaufort district. It posits that teachers' commitment to their schools will increase following the leaders' clear vision in creating a continuity of quality management within the organisation. Thus, a high element of trust among the leaders is believed to promote a more positive attitude among the followers, subsequently increasing their commitment and work performance to the maximum level.

The study also found that the most dominant dimension of sustainable leadership with teachers' commitment is 'preservation' (r = .307) followed by 'cultivating a learning sharing culture among teachers' (r = .238), 'diversity' (r = .214), 'creating apprentice leaders in schools' (r = .203), 'encouraging partnership with peers or organisations outside the school' (r = .181), and finally the dimension of 'encouraging continuous learning' (r = .165). All of these dimensions have recorded significant differences.

'Preservation' is the most dominant dimension that shows the leadership characteristics of the principals depend on their past administrative experience which serves as a guide to lead their schools more effectively. In this regard, a leader's behavioural differences are influenced by the differences in their administrative experience. It is evident by the employees' level of commitment as influenced by the employers' leadership style (Cochran, 2001). This dimension also shows that principals can make decisions based on information obtained in the past. These analytic principals possess excellent performance and skills that position them as a benchmark to other teachers.

Another sustainable leadership dimension that obtained a dominant correlation value with the level of teachers' commitment is 'cultivating a learning sharing culture'. It was found that the majority of principals do encourage teachers to learn and share information with one another despite being in different departments. This dimension emphasises the importance for principals to prioritise the concept of teamwork among teachers to promote better commitment. In this regard, managing a school organization necessitates the interactions between individuals. Hence, teamwork is deemed important for school members to achieve the common goals and for the organisation to be managed effectively and with quality. The findings of this

study also support Veloo and Kiew (2012) who emphasised that teamwork should be practised in schools through the formation of committees to assist the principals. Each member also plays an important role to improve the organisational quality of the school. Such team leadership not only ensures that every goal and objective is achieved with excellence but also increases the level of teachers' job satisfaction. This is evident by Karnan and Marimuthu (2021) who found a significant relationship between leadership practices centred on cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experience with teachers' job satisfaction.

This study also found that the dimension of 'encouraging partnerships with external peers or organizations' also influences the level of teachers' commitment. Principals are seen as individuals who are willing to share their expertise with other schools to improve performance, which applies not only to schools that require assistance but also to the entire district and state. As a result, the employees' commitment (i.e., teachers) will increase following their sense of respect to the principals' qualities who are believed to have the expertise of managing and leading the school organisation as well as serving as a point of reference for other principals in leading and administering their respective organisations. Excellent principals should share their leadership methods and styles with regular principals, thus creating a sharing of knowledge between excellent principals and their colleagues. As a result, schools within the proximity of excellent schools will receive the brunt of such success. This will contribute to the improvement of leadership distribution among schools so that knowledge sharing through the 'leadership distribution' dimension can be implemented efficiently between excellent schools with those that are yet to achieve such status.

Ideally, principals should play the role of leaders who deeply understand the teaching profession. Every principal begins their journey of becoming an administrator by holding the position of a regular teacher, senior assistant, before being promoted into the school administration line. The extensive experience possessed by principals in the education profession helps them to understand the intricacies of educational management. Thus, they will always aspire to teachers who wish to become school administrators while ensuring that their apprentices and successors are able to take on the duties as leaders after their retirement. In this study, the sustainable leadership of principals from the dimension of 'creating apprentice leaders' has a significant relationship with the teachers' commitment. Employees' commitment will increase as they view their leaders as mentors who exploit the strengths of their employees. They found that leadership that prioritises collaborative practices and trains the teachers is able to influence the teachers' commitment and trust towards the principals. Thus, the high level of trust shown by teachers to the principals will affect their commitment in providing the best service to the school.

Sustainable leadership from the dimension of 'encouraging continuous learning' also has a significant relationship with teachers' commitment. It refers to a principal-based leadership that prioritises the mastery of knowledge and necessitates learning in schools. This is because teaching and learning is the core business of teachers in schools along with the increasing demands for schools as learning institutions of the century. The result of this study advocates Nnaji and Uzoigwe (2021) who reported that sustainable leadership practices among school principals impacted the academic achievement performance of students in public schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. This suggests that leadership that cares about aspects of learning has a significant relationship with teachers' commitment. In fostering a conducive learning climate in schools, principals need to be aware of the course of learning activities by making observations that can motivate and control the quality of teachers' professionalism and commitment. Principals should also recognise the efforts made by teachers who excel in

teaching by rewarding them in the form of praises or public recognition. Most employees tend to demonstrate their commitment if they are given attention and recognition for their effort. Furthermore, leadership that emphasises learning in schools includes the principals' actions to encourage students' growth. In enhancing students' learning, both principals and teachers need to constantly discuss and brainstorm for new and appropriate teaching methods as well as continuously improving the teaching strategies.

The leadership style implemented by a leader needs to be appropriate and suit the employees. In this regard, most employees will feel more comfortable working when the superiors are wise, give clear instructions, explain the organisational goals, and constantly offer direct or indirect help and support. Furthermore, employees will feel that their commitment is worthy when their needs and wants are met by their leaders. As such, this paper believes that sustainable leadership can have a positive impact on employees' commitment in every organisation as advocated by Saberi and Hamzah (2020) and Teharaja and Hamid (2021). Moreover, leadership requires leaders and followers; to lead means to point the way or direction, to educate, to help, to control, and to direct. In this regard, the role of leaders in schools through sustainable leadership is significant they are the important instrument that influences the teachers' commitment, thereby ensuring a smooth running of the school organisation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of sustainable leadership among principals and its influence on the level of teachers' commitment in schools. The analysis shows that that the level of sustainable leadership among secondary school principals in Lahad Datu is moderately high ($\mu = 3.91$). The results also indicate significant relationships between the six dimensions of sustainable leadership with the level of teachers' working commitment. Such findings hence suggest that sustainable leadership plays an important role in influencing organisational commitment in schools. Sustainable leadership is a successful and effective leadership practice in the community where it encourages and cultivates employees to share and incorporate ideas for learning and development (Muzzafar & Jamalullail, 2020). The strong support from these sustainable leaders is an inspiration for teachers to build and further expand their commitment in school. Meanwhile, human value-oriented leadership displayed by principals who practice sustainable leadership not only influences teachers to be more committed to the organisation but also will foster a culture of autonomy among teachers and act on moral beliefs and courage to defend their confidence.

This study measured the level of sustainable leadership and teachers' commitment in schools by obtaining feedback from one source only, namely the teachers' perceptions towards the principals. For future studies, the measurement of sustainable leadership and level of commitment in schools can be improved by using multiple raters such as parents, schools, and students. This can give a broader and more in-depth picture of the variables. Furthermore, the researchers also proposed to produce a framework of best practices based on the sustainable leadership model to be used as a guide in the implementation of the TS25 School Transformation program. In summary, the six dimensions in sustainable leadership practice are found to influence teachers' readiness, level of commitment, and dedication to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, principals need to pay particular concern about their actions, thoughts, and words to be able to influence teachers to work voluntarily. When teachers have a high level of commitment, they will acquire a sense of job satisfaction and voluntarily improve their performance to achieve organisational goals.

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