

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACTORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT: This study was carried out to identify the relationship between the factors of school climate and academic achievement among primary school students. This study employed a survey method involving 369 of standard five primary school students from one of the states in Malaysia. The subjects were chosen through stratified random sampling method. Data related to school climate was collected using a set of a questionnaire on School Experience called Community and Youth Collaborative Institute (CAYCI), while the Candidate Average Grade (CAG) was used to represent the data for students' academic achievement. The obtained results indicated respect for equality in diversity shows a positive and significant relationship with students' academic achievement. This outcome implies that schools need to provide an atmosphere that promotes indiscriminate school experience to students regardless of their diverse backgrounds, as one of the efforts to improve academic achievement among primary school students.

Keywords:: school climate, academic achievement, primary school students

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic achievement of Malaysian students seems to be at a worrying state when compared to those accomplished by students in other countries. This situation is apparent when taking into account the results reported by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015, where they showed Malaysian students' academic achievement has declined below the international average score, [1-2]. Reported results highlight the fact that Malaysian students fail to achieve minimum skills compared to students from other countries.

A literature review on this worrying subject revealed that school environment factors significantly influence students' academic achievement [3-9]. Extensive research has been done on school climate since it was first introduced in the 1900s [10-12]. It was found through the research that schools that provide a good and harmonious climate can sustain students' cognitive development [13, 5]. For example, a learning environment that encourages support through group work not only helps achieve learning goals but also has a positive impact on holistic learning [14]. Besides, learning environments that fulfill students' basic needs can also become the driving factor for them to attain planned learning outcomes [15]. In other words, this study finds it imperative to identify the factors in a school climate that have a significant influence on students' academic achievement.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a survey method using a stratified random sampling technique involving 369 primary school students who have been chosen by the population of 2540 primary school students.

A set of a questionnaire developed by Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, and Ball [16] on School Experience (Community and Youth Collaborative Institute-CAYCI) was used to collect the data on school climate, while student academic achievement was represented by Candidate Average Grade (CAG) from the year-end examination results. The seven factors in a school climate that were studied in this research include academic motivation, learning support,

social skills, peer relationship, school connectedness, parental involvement and support, and respect of equality in diversity.

Before distributing the questionnaire, back to back translation was performed to ensure no errors occurred when instructional translations were performed by language lecturers and teachers. After completing the face validity, the researcher performed content validity to ensure the questionnaire items represent each factor. Three experts are appointed to evaluate the items in the questionnaire based on their respective expertise. Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship between the factors mentioned and students' academic achievement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between the factors of school climate and academic achievement is determined by considering the obtained value of correlation coefficient (r), and the level of significance (p) for each relationship. The obtained results indicated that academic motivation, learning support, social skills, peer relationship, school connectedness, and parental involvement and support had no significant relationship with academic achievement, while respect of equality in diversity had a positive, significant relationship with academic achievement. The results of the relationship between each school climate factor and academic achievement are shown in Table 1.

Table (1) Relationship between school climate factors and academic achievement

| Relationship | r | p |
|--|--------|-------|
| Academic motivation and Achievement | 0.028 | 0.590 |
| Learning support and Achievement | -0.054 | 0.298 |
| Social skills and Achievement | -0.056 | 0.282 |
| Peer relationship and Achievement | 0.071 | 0.173 |
| Respect of equality in diversity and Achievement | 0.195 | 0.000 |
| Parental involvement and support and Achievement | 0.054 | 0.300 |
| School connectedness and Achievement | 0.029 | 0.579 |

This research finding proves that respect for equality in diversity factors has a positive and significant relationship with primary school students' academic achievement. This result is justified when looking at how the students in Malaysia come from diverse cultural backgrounds. In this regard, student diversity is not only limited in the differences of their races but also includes the differences in religion, socioeconomic status (SES), gender and other factors that influence student learning experience in school. To illustrate this point, a student from low socioeconomic status (SES) will be more likely to experience difficulty in preparing learning materials because of the family's financial constraint [17]. Further, past research has shown that male students received better treatment from their teachers compared to female students [18].

The finding from this study reveals a significant implication on school practices. It surmises that all parties that interact directly with students at schools, especially the teachers, have to accept and support the diversity that exists among students. In other words, teachers are obligated to treat students justly, without any bias and preference. To this end, the teachers have to consider students' diversity as a challenge that can be changed into an opportunity to optimize their learning experience, which in return will translate into tangible improvements in their academic achievement.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study shows the relationship between the factors in school climate among primary school students' academic achievement. Respect for equality in diversity is the main factor that correlates with academic achievement. Students and teachers can implement effective teaching and learning processes by acknowledge the differences and optimizing the learning experience. As explained in the theory of ecological upon support; pupils with parents, friends, teachers, and schools can affect the cognitive development of students as well as to build a harmonious school climate directly and thus increase a student's academic achievement. This is because the school climate is capable of driving the nation's education system to help shape the formation of each school member towards a successful social institution. Therefore, the essence of the present invention is important to planners and policymakers who are intended as guidelines to improve existing systems to become more robust in the future.

5. REFERENCES

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