The Relationship Between Tamil Primary School Principals' Communication Styles And The School Climate

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Abstract*: The relationship between school principals' communication styles and the school climate has an impact on positive nurturing of the school climate. This research was designed to study the relationship between Tamil primary school principals' communication styles and the school climate. This quantitative study has employed the descriptive research design. The samples comprised 60 primary school teachers (30 males and 30 females) from three primary schools in Malacca. Two questionnaires were used to measure the principals' communication styles and the school climate. Prior to the actual study, a pilot study was conducted among 30 teachers to verify the reliability of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed through email to the teachers after the items were finalized and verified by two expert teachers. The data from the questionnaires was analysed using the SPSS program version 22.0 and Pearson Correlation was used in the data analysis. Results of the analysis indicated that principals' communication styles had a significant and strong positive correlation with the school climate. In addition, principals' styles of communication in terms of expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness and principals' styles of reflection have significant and strong positive correlations with the school climate. Better climates were expected in schools where effective communication styles between school principals and teachers existed. This study has crucial practical implications, whereby it is important for principals to practise good communication styles with teachers to build and enhance a positive school climate.*

Keywords*: Communication styles, Principals, Tamil Primary Schools, School climate, Teachers, Malaysia.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic need for humans. Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means, including speech, or oral communication; writing and graphical representations (such as infographics, maps, and charts); and signs, signals, and behavior (Nordquist, 2019). The transmission of facts, ideas, opinions, attitudes, and feelings enables humans to develop awareness of communication (Richmond, McCroskey, & Powell, 2012). In any organization, communication is vital for coordinating activities, especially in educational institutions. Given the widespread changes in education today, educational institutions need effective leaders who are good communicators. Lunenburg and Irby (2006) opined that effective leaders spend most of their time communicating with various stakeholders. A study by KHDA (2011) stressed that the quality of school leadership and management are reflected in the ability of school leaders to manage resources for the benefit of students, improve the school, create relationships with parents, and have an effective role in the community.

In schools, principal's communication happens daily, in all directions and in many ways. A communication style is the method by which one negotiates situations involving others. by which one usually behaves when exchanging information with others (Reece, Brandt, & Howie, 2010). Different leadership styles can be associated with different communication styles. Reversibly, different styles of communication indicate different leadership styles. For example, a human-oriented leadership style is strongly connected to an open communication style that respects people and their viewpoints. A charismatic leadership style is connected to a communication style that inspires followers and encourages them. On the other hand, a task-oriented leadership style depends less on open and receptive communication styles and is directive and controlling (deVries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oosteneld, 2009).

Principals' communication styles, has direct effects on school climate. A study by Ubben and Hughes (1992) found that certain principals' communication styles helped create a school climate that improved the productivity of both teachers and students. Other researchers such as Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), and Kruger, Witziers, and Sleegers (2007), also highlighted similar findings.

The enhancement of teaching and learning is strongly related to the school principal's roles and responsibilities as an instructional leader. Teachers deliver the instruction in the classroom. The principal is responsible for developing a school climate that enhances instructional practices. Through communication the principal can forge a positive partnership with teachers to improve teaching and learning (Ali & Sherin 2016).

The principal is required to be a professional leader who has the best communication style with teachers, takes appropriate action, is always in the school surroundings, enforces academic standards, and consistently focuses on teaching and learning processes with accredited feedback. The present study examines the communication practices of school principals and their relationships to the school climate.

Aligned to this, earlier studies have also stated that the principal plays an important role in determining the school climate. A positive and encouraging school climate helps the teachers and members of the organization show their commitment by playing a positive role in improving the school and students' academic achievement. A study by Ali and Sherin (2016) showed that principals in Al Ain schools are almost always expressive in their communication. They almost never act aggressively or use threat; neither are they moody. The findings also indicated that teachers attributed their high performance to the principal's supportiveness through his style of communication. The style of preciseness practised by the principal had the highest correlation coefficient with high school performance. Lastly, the study showed that styles of moodiness and threat correlated negatively with school performance.

Smith and Maika (2008) stressed that school climate is a good indicator of teachers' behaviour towards each other as well as the principals' leadership styles. A positive school climate helps to reduce the pressure on the principal; it increases the efficiency of the teachers and helps them to achieve the school goals and missions. To create a positive and conducive school climate within the organization, a principal should have an appropriate communication style befitting the atmosphere or circumstances. There are some communication styles which can be used or practiced by the principal in managing a school or creating a better school climate. However, there are a few styles that are not appropriate at all, especially the one-way communication style that ignores others' feelings.

Furthermore, a positive school climate and good principal communication styles are also stressed in the Malaysian education system. Based on the Government Transformation Program (GTP) through the National Key Result Area (NKRA, 2012), the two elements of school climate and principal communication have been highlighted under the subtopics of 'Identifying and Rewarding Principals and Head Teachers' and 'Introducing New Deals for Principals and Head Teachers.'

Communication styles practised by school principals constitute a significant factor in influencing the school climate. As different schools experience different principal communication styles, the role of the principal may vary from one school to another. This is because their personalities as well as characters can greatly influence the school climate. In addition, principals must be far sighted, be able to find ways to improve students' achievements in order to create conducive school environments and guide teachers to be more competent.

On the other hand, ineffective communication will confuse teachers and lead them to misinterpret information. In addition, teachers' willingness and commitment to perform will go down too. Effective and ineffective communication will significantly relate with the school climate. Subsequently, researches conducted in Malaysia have focused only on one variable, either the principal communication style or the school climate.

Thus, there are few empirical studies that have investigated both the variables especially in Malaysian schools (Razak, 2006; Najeemah, 2012; Sapian, Abdullah, Ghani, Abdullah, & Omar 2019). As we know, under the new National Education Blueprint that envisages the transformation of schools in Malaysia, there is a need to explore the communication styles of school principals that directly influence the school climate. In line with the need to create 21st century learning environments, there is a need to ensure that school leaders possess suitable communication styles to build positive school climates for the creation of effective teaching and learning environments.

Literature outlines the connection between principal communication styles and school climates. Deal & Petersen (1990) stated that characteristics common to effective schools include strong leadership, a climate of expectation, an orderly but not rigid atmosphere and effective communication. The primary measure of success in schools is students' achievement. Literature provides a link between principal communication styles and school climate. Salazar (2008) stated, "High impact schools maintain a climate that is conducive to serious work and learning" (p. 34).

The focus of this study is communication styles exhibited by primary school principals and their perceived effect on school climates as reported by teachers. Primary school principals are expected to carry out many responsibilities as school leaders. To be successful in the long run, primary school principals must do two things well. First, the leader must develop a shared vision of where the school is headed. This is especially important in a primary school where the needs of young children are diverse and vital for their future success.

Second, principal is the key player for organizational change and have a more indirect and less direct influence on students' academic achievement and teachers performance. Therefore, it makes sense today, more than ever, that principals must create and maintain a positive school climate for their employees and more importantly for their students. To create a positive school climate, school leaders must possess great interpersonal skills (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the educational knowledge of primary school climates and their relationships to styles of communication used by primary school principals. Past educational studies have studied the relationship between high school principals' communication styles and organizational health (Vickers, 2004; Williams, 1994; Yilmaz, 2011) but only few studies has examined the relationship between primary school principals' communication styles and their effects on school climates.

1.3 Hypotheses

Based on the aims of this study six null hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is no relationship between a primary school principal's communication style and the school climate.
2. There is no relationship between a principal's style of expressiveness and the school climate.
3. There is no relationship between a principal's style of preciseness and the school climate.
4. There is no relationship between a principal's style of niceness and the school climate.
5. There is no relationship between a principal's style of supportiveness and the school climate.
6. There is no relationship between a principal's style of reflectiveness and the school climate.

II.   Review Of Literature

Bandura (1986) developed the Social Learning Theory. What makes the Social Cognitive Theory unique compared to many other social theories is the way it looks at how individuals acquire a particular behaviour and their ability to maintain it, coupled with determining the social environment in which one exhibits the behaviour. In addition, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory relates to the school climate.

Hoy et al. (1991) suggested that principals' communication styles such as effective communication, teacher advocacy and participator decision-making lead to healthy school climates. Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) suggested that principals' communication styles and school climate are intertwined and a positive school climate can yield positive educational outcomes for students and school personnel. Anderson (1982) suggested that the role of the administrator is critical in improving and maintaining a positive school climate. The principal role of individual schools plays an important role in shaping the climate. Effective principal communication styles are most likely achieved when the principal seeks to promote a positive school climate that enhances the teaching and learning process.

2.1 Communication styles

Communication is a complex and multidisciplinary concept and there is no consensus on exactly how it should be defined across the disciplines (Krauss & Russel, 1996). The complexity of the term comes from the fact that any behaviour is considered a type of communication, so long as it occurs in a social situation

(Novinger, 2001). Further, as Novinger (2001) notes, communication across cultures is more difficult than communication among individuals from the same culture. Communication is a distinctive way and mode of action by which one usually behaves when exchanging information, ideas, and emotions with others (Reece, Brandt, & Howie, 2010). Different leadership styles can be associated with different communication styles.

Norton (1983) defines communication style as the way a person uses verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviours to indicate how literally others should interpret a message. de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, and Oostenveld (2009) define a communication style as a distinguishing way an individual transmits verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal indicators in social interactions to present the identity he or she has or wants to have, the way he or she relates with people and the way his or her messages should be understood. In this definition, de Vries et al. (2009) focus on interpersonal communication and exclude intrapersonal communication (which refers to how people use their internal feelings to guide their behaviours based on an event).

As with the definition of communication and communication styles, disagreement extends to the scales used to measure styles of communication. The inconsistency comes from the different perspectives each team of scholars has. Some understand communication as part of personality, others are more concerned with the context or culture and still a third group has a tendency to depend on the language itself (i.e., the lexical side). Consequently, there are three different perspectives for assessing communication styles. In styles targeting the personality, Norton (1983) identifies ten features of communication styles that can fit into two clusters: passive and active.

The passive cluster includes the attentive, friendly and relaxed styles while the active cluster consists of the dominant, dramatic, animated, contentious, open, impression-leaving and precise styles. The cultural view of communication styles assumes that people learn how to communicate and interact with others based on their cultures. Therefore, cultural values and norms condition communication styles (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Gudykunst et al., 1996).

Novinger (2001) also explains that cultural variation in communication styles happens because some cultures rely more on nonverbal communication behaviours. These are considered high-context cultures. The high-context message depends more on the context and the receiver. Cultures that rely more on speech and verbal communication are considered to have low-context communication style. The low-context message contains more words and less nonverbal communication. Because different cultures deal differently with factors like personal space, fast and slow messages and monochronic and polychronic time, in studying intercultural communication, understanding how people in different cultures deal with such factors is important to interpreting and responding to them correctly (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Verbal and non-verbal communication has been identified in research as being instrumental in the communication process. Mehrabian (1971) studied interpersonal communications and concluded seven percent of meaning is from the receiver's interpretation or perception of your words or what you say, 38 percent is conveyed by their perception of your voice or how you say what you say and approximately 55 percent comes from their interpretation of your nonverbal signals.

Literature refers to the interpersonal components of communication. Norton (1983) developed an interpersonal theory of communication that dealt not only with what was communicated but the way it was communicated. The term interpersonal communication refers to concepts central to the theories of Roloff (1981). In addition, Skrapits (1986) explained interpersonal communication has the following characteristics: a relational context, knowledge of one's relational partner, transmission of various symbols and a functional purpose. This concept means "A symbolic process between two or more people, bound by a certain relationship, whereby each provides for the exchange or negotiation of resources" (p. 17).

2.2 Organizational Climate

Walsh and Shay (1993) found climate actually refers to the human behaviours occurring within the organization. Hoy and Miskel (2012) described organizational climate as the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviours of each school's members.. Schein (2004) defined climate as the feeling conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which the members of the organization interact with each other, with customers or with outsiders.

According to Wertheimer (1971), climate is defined as "The aggregate of attitudes of members of the school institution toward each other, toward their joint efforts and objectives and toward the constraints and opportunities they meet there" (p. 527). In addition, Kottkamp (1984) suggested the organization consists of shared values, interpretations of social activities and commonly held definitions of purpose to make up the climate.

Organizations across the world are consistently analysed in order to determine factors influencing success. Researchers have determined organizational climate is linked with organizational success. Stringer (2002) stated, "Climate is both objective and subjective in that it's an objectively measurable expression of people's subjective perceptions of their work environment. The assumption underlying the concept of organizational climate is that the way people feel about where they work has a powerful impact on how they work and how hard they work. As such, "climate determines the performance of an organization" (p.1).

2.3 Principals' Communication Styles

Principals' communication styles have been identified as impacting the school climate. Study conducted by Pepper & Thomas (2002) showed that principals need to build a sense of trust with their teachers in order to sustain a positive climate in the institution. In addition, school climate has been identified as an important determinant of student achievement (Murtedjo & Suharningsih, 2017).

Style is commonly used to describe communication. The most important part of effective communication, is not what you say, but the way in which you say it and attitude you adopt when you communicate. As noted by Norton (1983), communicator style has a powerful impact on others. A study by Ali and Sherin (2016) indicate that all of the styles, except threat and moodiness, can contribute positively towards developing school performance. In addition, principals should rely more on the style of preciseness when they communicate with groups. On the other hand, in communication with individuals, they should be precise and supportive.

Norton (1975) found 9 of the 10 style variables formed two large clusters. Norton labelled one cluster, consisting of the attentive, friendly and relaxed subscales as passive. The other cluster included the dominant, dramatic, animated, contentious, open and impression-leaving variables. Norton labelled this cluster as active because the variables stressed doing, sending messages and being talkative. A person generally communicates using either the active or passive style.

Additionally, literature refers to the interpersonal components of communication. Norton (1978, 1983) developed an interpersonal theory of communication that dealt not only with what was communicated but the way it was communicated. Skrapits (1986) explained interpersonal communication has the following characteristics: a relational context, knowledge of one's relational partner, transmission of various symbols and a functional purpose. This concept means "A symbolic process between two or more people, bound by a certain relationship, whereby each provides for the exchange or negotiation of resources" (p. 17).

2.5 School Climate

According to Marshall (2004), there are two factors that both help and affect the broad concept of school climate, the characteristics of the schools such as the physical structure of the school buildings and the interactions between students and teachers. For many years, school climate has been researched, redefined and examined for its significant influences on educational outcomes. The elements that comprise the climate of the school are complex and extensive.

Researchers are continually trying to redefine and examine the nature of school climates. Several researchers have identified elements in schools that lead to positive school climates. The number and quality of interactions between adults and students lead to greater opportunities for collaboration (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 2001). As such, educators spend more time discussing, teaching and learning. Environmental factors such as the physical buildings, classrooms and materials used for instruction promote learning in a healthy environment. When the building is a place for learning, the students' and teachers' perceptions of the school environment and the personality and image of the school are greater (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996). Furthermore, the academic performance improves (Johnson, 1998). The school climate set in a safe and orderly environment is a major environmental factor (Freiberg, 1999). Finally, there is a feeling of trust and respect for students and teachers (Marshall, 2004, p. 1).

There are many definitions that researchers have used to define school climate. Freiberg (1999) describes school climate in terms of improving the quality of life for teachers and students in all areas of the school that need continued significant rethinking or support. Hoy and Miskel (2005) define school climate as "the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviours of each school's members" (p.185). Hoy et al., (2002) found that school climate is the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that affects students' behaviour and achievement..

The principal is responsible for establishing a positive school climate. He or she should always provide the leadership in maintaining and developing a climate that would be conducive to learning. Bredeson, (1995) contends that the role of the principal has changed from a traditional one to one of participatory leadership. The principal's role should include advising, modelling, counselling, relinquishing control and establishing supportive climates.

Several research studies have linked instructional organization with the climate of the school. Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee (1982) found that principals' leadership behaviours affected the instructional organization and the climate in the school. Both of these are linked to student achievement. Researchers have also found links between school climate and instructional leadership (Sergiovanni, 2000).

Ubben and Hughes (1992) found that principals could create a school climate that would improve productivity of students and staff. The principal's leadership style can also restrict or foster teacher effectiveness. Research studies have found that leadership of the school principal greatly impacts the climate of the school. "Studies on school effectiveness, school climate, and student achievement reveal one commonality, the fact that good happenings in schools depend to a great extent on the quality of school leadership" (Scott, 2008).

2.6 Principals' Communication Styles – School Climate

Several studies have indicated the correlation between principals' communication styles and school climate (Oo & Wai, 2020; Rafferty, 2003; Bulach, Pickett, & Boothe, 1998). McCallister Roberts (1998) found principals spend up to 90% of their time communicating. Accordingly, Smith and Andrews (1989) stated the principal, as a communicator, displayed behaviour that communicated the school purpose that then translated into programs and activities. A study by Sapian Abdullah, Ghani, Abdullah and Omar (2019) also indicate that there is a moderate and positive relationship ($r = 0.451$, $p=0.000$) between a principal's communication style and school climate. In terms of determining the contributions of significant predictors of school climate, their findings showed that a principal's communication style contributed 28.7 percent of the variance of school climate.

A study by Fullan (1991) stressed that successful principals used six strategies. These included: (a) strengthening the school culture, (b) using a variety of mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce change, (c) fostering staff development, (d) engaging in direct and frequent communication about norms, values and beliefs, (e) sharing power and responsibility and (f) using symbols to express cultural values.

Oswalt (2011) found that there is a positive correlation between principal communication and school climate. The findings indicate that communication plays a significant role in the leadership process through goal-setting, implementation, evaluation and feedback. Similarly Fox and Schwartz (1965) highlighted that good principals are good communicators.

Communication style depends upon whether the leader is task- oriented or people-oriented (Stech, 1984). People-oriented leadership is an important leadership behaviour style as it encourages leaders to form mutual respect, trust and confidence with followers, as well as to motivate and inspire them to accomplish the strategic vision and missions of their organization (Sinani, 2016; Robbins and Judge, 2013). Blake and Mouton (2006) also found people-oriented leaders tended to have more intense communication activities.

In addition, people-oriented leaders suppressed negative attitudes and conflicting material and use of third-party gossip to get criticism through. Positive upward communication and a sense of humour were characteristics of people-oriented leaders who were more likely to place personal items on bulletin boards and put stories about people in newsletters. In addition, Bradley and Baird (1977) found people-oriented leaders encouraged individual work, encouraged teamwork and were receptive to subordinates. Moreover, Charisma of a leader can be achieved if the leader has great self-confidence and good communication skills, especially in one-to-one discussions with employees (Khuong & Hoang, 2015)

McEwan (1998) stated instructional leadership comprised traditional management and a human component. Traditional management consists of planning, time management, leadership theory and organizational development, while the human component consists of communicating, motivating and facilitating roles of the principal. McCallister Roberts (1998) explained not only what a principal communicates but also the way a principal communicates affects almost every aspect of the organization. Sargent and Miller (1971) noted task-oriented leaders had more total communication, had more negative social-emotional emphasis, had more attempted task answers and had more talk answer emphasis. Stech (1984) also found two-way communication and more frequent communication are more common in people-oriented leaders than task-oriented leaders. People-oriented leaders are concerned with timing, keeping the channels open and soliciting messages from others.

Sergiovanni (2000) noted, "School climate and relationships are obviously affected by the organization and communication in the school; school climate lies at the centre" (p. 100-101). As explained by Schein (1993), "The learning culture must be built on the assumption that communication and information are central to organizational well-being and must therefore create a multichannel communication system that allows everyone to connect to everyone else" (p. 370). Hoy and Forsyth (1986) found the principal's communication style in interacting with teachers as one element of school climate. The three dimensions of principal-teacher interactions were supportive, directive, and restrictive principal behaviour. When a principal displayed supportive behaviour, genuine concern for teachers was revealed. With directive behaviour, the task-oriented principal showed little consideration for the personal needs of teachers. A principal who hindered rather than facilitated the work of the teacher by establishing impediments to work used restrictive behaviour. The type of interactions helped determine the climate of the organization.

Several studies indicated the negative effects of ineffective organizational communication. Donaldson (1991) researched his own high school principalship by surveying staff members regarding communication. He analysed both direct and indirect forms of communication, finding a discrepancy between how he saw himself and how his staff members saw him. In addition, he stated, "In general, staff communication with me, in nearly all forms, occurred less than daily and often less than weekly. For someone who projected himself as an active principal, this feedback was startling. "If I did not communicate, often verbally, through what medium was I leading the school?" (p.51)

Blase and Blase (2004), stressed that ineffective or ill-timed communication from the principal can cause anger, resentfulness and discomfort among teachers. Principal's insincerity and unfair behaviour increased teacher anger, frustration and a sense of futility; and teachers also lost trust in their principals. Wolcott (1973) did a yearlong ethnographic study in an elementary school, finding negative comments from teachers regarding the principals ineffective or inadequate communication causing confusion or stress.

Halawah (2005) studied the relationship between effective communication of high school principals and teachers. He used 555 students and 209 teachers in the Abu Dhabi District. Findings indicated school climate was positively associated with principal's communication effectiveness. In addition, significant differences were observed between males and females. Specifically, he found communication between principals and teachers in male schools was more effective than in female schools.

Study by Rafferty (2003) clearly demonstrate the positive relationship between school climate and upward communication patterns, and suggest school climate can be improved by increasing upward communication opportunities to influence and improves school life. Pomroy (2005) interviewed 22 teachers and three principals in small Maine elementary schools regarding their perception of principal communication and its impact on school climate. The results indicated that principals' patterns and styles of communication shape teachers' conceptions of the professional climate. In addition, findings by Pomroy (2005) showed that principals and teachers do not always have the same views of the principals' communication behaviours or the climate of the school.

Kirby and Bogotch (1996) conducted a study to determine the impacts of principals communicative styles on teachers. Both the researchers concluded that in collaborative environments, principals are information providers and promote staff development. They also also found greater information access, enhanced shared decision making by teachers.

McCallister Roberts (1998) sampled 350 K-12 teachers in West Virginia in order to analyse the relationships between communication styles, school climate, and student achievement,. The results indicated a significant correlation between the principal's communication style and school climate. In addition, there was a relationship between passive communication and school climate. When principals exhibit communication that is friendly, attentive, and relaxed, the teachers perceived their school climate as being positive.

The theoretical framework for the current study is focused on the Social Cognitive Theory based on Bandura's work (1986) and Rotter's Locus of Control Theory(1966). Both theories are related to the educational field in determining if a relationship exists between principals' communication styles and school climate. Several researchers have considered the link between principals' communication styles and school climate. Similarly, some researchers have studied the effects on principals', teachers', and students' perceptions of school climate, and they have also discovered how it influences school climate as well as a principal's communication style.

Studies in Malaysia on Tamil Primary schools principals' communicative styles and the school climate is very limited Thus, there is a gap to study and determine the relationship of Tamil primary school principals' communication styles and school climate, in order to determine its positive or negative effects and whether or not it is necessary to make changes for school improvement.

III.   Methodology

This is a quantitative study using a descriptive- correlation research design, This research design was chosen for this study because the intent is to ask focussed, objective questions generating quantifiable data that can be analysed using statistics. The data are collected using questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics and can be described using the correlations coefficient. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject rather than the "why" of the research subject. (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012).

3.1 Samples

Purposive sampling was employed to select 60 teachers from three Tamil Primary schools in Malacca. Samples are from various back ground in terms of, gender, age and experience in teaching. The samples consist of 30 males and 30 females from the ages of 30-60 years.. The questionnaires were distributed to the samples, to be answered during their free time. At the same time, questionnaires were emailed to some samples due to the Movement Controlled Order (because of the Covid 19 disease), to be answered during their stay home time.

3.2 Instruments

This study uses a research design in which quantitative data is collected and analysed. During the first phase, researchers developed a self-administered questionnaire for collecting the data. In addition to participant demographic information, the questionnaire included statements on two sections: a) principals' communication styles, and b) school climate. The section on principals' communication styles consists of fifteen structured items derived from de Vries et al.'s (2009) lexical study. The five styles that this study investigates include expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness and reflectiveness. The section on school climates consists of ten structured items.

The School Climate Inventory consists of ten items, or scales, logically and empirically linked with factors associated with effective school climates. Each scale contains one item, with one statement comprising the inventory. Responses are scored through the use of Likert scale as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly Agree. In addition, this instrument solicits demographic information that relates to respondent gender, age group and work experience in school. Demographic information was used to relate responses to this item. The questionnaire on school climate was adapted from the questionnaire used by Ibrahim and Alamassi (2017). The researcher had obtained permission from the previous researchers (Ibrahim & Alamassi, 2017) to use the questionnaire in this study. The questionnaire is chosen based on its similar pattern in the current study.

3.3 Pilot Study

Prior to the actual study, the researcher conducted a pilot study on 30 teachers from three different primary schools in same state. The purpose of the pilot test was to obtain the reliability of the questionnaire and to ensure the teachers did not encounter any problems in reading and comprehending the items in the questionnaire. The data from the pilot study was analysed using the SPSS program version 22.0. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire.

In this study, reliability analysis was conducted to examine the Cronbach Alpha (α) for internal consistency of instruments. The Cronbach's Alpha scores for scale instrument in the test range were from .966 to .969 for communicative style and .933 to .940 for school climate, which indicate consistent scores for all variables. The values obtained in this study fulfil the recommendations of a minimum level of 0.7 on Cronbach's Alpha values for reliability (Nunnally 1978, p. 245). The findings from the pilot test also indicate that the teachers did not encounter any problem in reading and responding to the questionnaire.

In order to obtain the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher asked two expert teachers from two different schools to verify the items in the questionnaire in terms of face validity, content validity and accurate use of language. Both the experts agreed that the questionnaire had face validity, content validity and accurate use of language. As such, the questionnaire was valid and could be used for purposes of the study.

3.4 Research Procedures

The questionnaires were distributed and emailed to 70 Tamil Primary school teachers after the items were finalized by the supervisor and verified by two expert teachers. Only 60 teachers answered and returned the questionnaires.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using SPSS Program for Windows version 22.0. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Peason correlation) were used in analysing the data

IV.   Findings And Discussion

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This study attempts to test the 6 null hypotheses using Peason correlation. The findings and discussions are reported according to the research hypotheses.

Ho1 There is no relationship between primary school principals' communication styles and the school climate

Table 4.1
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' communication styles and school climate

Correlations		Communication Styles	School Climate
Communication Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.826[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	.826[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

Level of significance p<0.05

In this study, the relationship between principals' communication styles and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation. Findings in table 4.1 indicate that the principals' communication styles have a significant, strong, positive correlation with the school climate (r=.83, p=0.000). According to Davis (2017) the r value of +0.30 to +0.49 would be considered positive with a moderate linear relationship and the r value of +0.8 is considered a positively high relationship. These findings reject Ho1.

These findings revealed that principals' communication styles have a significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate. Findings by Oswalt (2011) also stressed that there is positive relationships between principal communication and school climate The results support findings by Sapian, Abdullah, Ghani, Abdullah and Omar (2019) which indicated that there was positive relationship between principal's communication styles and school climate. According to Bulach, Boothe, and Pickett (2006), communication of building-level principals is linked to school climate. Findings from their study showed that teachers' views of principal interactions are related to school climate. As noted by Akpan, (2002) teachers would need proper motivation to enhance their effectiveness not only by extrinsic rewards but also by intrinsic rewards. Related to motivation is communication. Communication has been found to be a central factor for effective job performance. Investigations revealed that principals' ability to communicate increased teachers' morale, reduced

misunderstanding and interpersonal conflict among staff and consequently enhanced teacher effectiveness. The current findings are also parallel to findings by Sinani (2016) and Robbins and Judge (2013) which indicate that people orientated leaders can motivate and inspire employees to accomplish strategic business visions and missions of their organization.

Ho2 There is no relationship between principals' styles of expressiveness and the school climate.

Table 4.2
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' style of expressiveness *and school climate*

Correlations			
		School Climate	Expressiveness
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.807**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Expressiveness	Pearson Correlation	.807**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

In this study, the relationship between principal's style of expressiveness and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation method. Findings in table 4.2 show that principals' expressiveness has a significant, strong, positive correlation with the school climate (r=.81, p=0.000). These findings reject Ho2.

The findings of the current study have shown that principals' styles of expressiveness have a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. This study was significant because it filled a gap by broadening our understanding of school climate by tying school climate with the previously unstudied factor of primary school principals' communication styles. Halawah's (2005) findings supported the fact that effective communication between school principals and teachers enhances a positive school climate.

As a managerial tool in school, principals are frequently expected to share information with teachers, using expressive styles to coordinate activities, reduce unnecessary managerial burdens and rules and ultimately improve school performance. Findings by Richter (2018) and Khuong and Hoang (2015) also indicated that principals' good communication skills, especially in one-to-one discussion with the teachers, can improve the school climate.

Ho3 There is no relationship between principals' style of preciseness and the school climate.

Table 4.3
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' style of preciseness and school climate

Correlations			
		School Climate	Preciseness
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.772**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Preciseness	Pearson Correlation	.772**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

In this study, the relationship between principals' style of preciseness and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation. Findings in table 4.3 revealed that principals' style of

preciseness has a significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate (r=.77, p=0.000). These findings reject Ho3.

These findings indicate that principals' style of preciseness has a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. According to Bulach, Boothe, and Pickett (2006), communication of building-level principals is linked to school climate. Findings from their study revealed that teachers' views of principal interactions are related to school climate. The authors concluded that the strong relationship between the way principals interact with teachers and the overall climate of the school are early indicators of the principals' communication styles.

Teachers' perceptions of the school climate influence the teachers' involvement and commitment to the school. The effectiveness of communication is an indispensable requirement for positive success of any organization. Thus, quality communication, to be precise, influences teacher satisfaction, motivation and performance. Principals' communication styles normally determine and contribute to the failure or success of a school.

Ho4 There is no relationship between principals' style of niceness and the school climate.

Table 4.4
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' style of niceness and school climate

Correlations		School Climate	Niceness
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.774[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Niceness	Pearson Correlation	.774[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

In this study, the relationship between principals' style of niceness and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation. Findings in table 4.4 indicate that principals' style of niceness has a significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate (r=.77, p=0.000). These findings reject Ho4...

The findings of the study indicated that principals' style of niceness has a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. Hoy et al. (1991) suggested that principals' communication styles such as effective communication, teacher advocacy and participator decision-making lead to healthy school climates. Principals' effective communication styles like styles of niceness aremost likely achieved when the principal seeks to promote a positive school climate that enhances the teaching and learning process.

The relationship between principal's communication styles and school climate indicates that communication plays a vital role in the success of school through goal-setting, implementation, evaluation and feedback. Effective principals are good communicators, while ineffective communicators are not. Principals' have two large communication roles, which are helping teachers to strengthen their feelings of membership in the school and developing responsibility by understanding the school requirements. Findings by Pomroy (2005) also support the proposition that principals' styles of communication shape teachers' conception of the professional climate.

Ho5 There is no relationship between principals' style of supportiveness and the school climate

Table 4.5
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' style of **s**upportiveness *and school climate*

Correlations		School Climate	Supportiveness
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.759[**]

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Supportiveness	Pearson Correlation	.759[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

In this study, the relationship between principals' style of supportiveness and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation. Findings in table 4.5 indicate that principals' supportiveness has a significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate (r=.76, p=0.000). These findings reject Ho5

The findings of the study have proved that principal's style of supportiveness has a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. The findings indicated that school climate was positively associated with principal's communication effectiveness. Rafferty (2003) surveyed 503 teachers, counsellors and library-media specialists in thirteen counties in the western portion of Ohio. Rafferty's findings clearly demonstrate the positive relationship between school climate and principals' communication styles

Kirby and Bogotch (1996) stressed that school climate depends on the quality and skills of the principals' communication styles. If the school is joyful, has an excellent reputation, is innovative, has a student-centred learning environment and produces quality students, it is a result of leadership skills and highly creative communication skills when dealing with the teachers. Teachers feel happy if the principal, always or from time to time, informs them about their performance and achievement. Thus, principal's communication styles may be accepted as a predictor of teacher and staff commitment, perception and involvement with the school.

Ho6 There is no relationship between principals' style of reflectiveness and the school climate

Table 4.6
Correlation coefficients between primary school principals' style of reflectiveness and school climate

Correlations			
		School Climate	Reflectiveness
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.799[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Reflectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.799[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

In this study, the relationship between principals' style of reflectiveness and school climate in primary schools in Malacca were examined using the Pearson's correlation. Findings in table 4.5 indicate that principals' style of reflectiveness has a significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate (r=.80, p=0.000). These findings reject Ho6.

The findings of the study have shown that principal's style of reflectiveness has a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. This finding is supported by McCallister Roberts (1998). According to him the principal's communication style is positively correlated with climate, indicating the importance of the principal's overall communication to the teachers' perceptions of the school climate.

Principals must communicate clearly with teachers in what they believe, share difficulties in handling problems (so that teachers know what's going on in the school) and treat teachers as friends as being open and thoughtful in whatever action that is taken reduces conflicts and builds better working environment. Communication is a significant factor and predictor of school climate. Teachers have discovered that communication is an important factor that can help to provide conducive working environments. Akpan (2002) also stressed that conducive teaching and learning atmosphere should be provided for teachers to enhance effective teaching and learning process

V. Conclusion

Findings of this study clearly show that principals' communication styles have a significant, strong positive correlation with school climate. In addition, principals' style of expressiveness, principals' style of preciseness, principals' style of niceness, principals' style of supportiveness and principals' style of reflectiveness have significant, strong positive correlation with the school climate.

These findings have crucial theoretical implications, practical implications and pedagogical implications. In term of theoretical implications, the findings of this study support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory which relates principals' communication styles with the school climate. The basis for the theory is derived from the reciprocal interactions of people, their environment and their behaviour (Boston University of School and Public Health, 2013). Specifically, Bandura's constructs of behavioral capacity, observational learning and reinforcements are characteristics that can affect a school's climate. Wang and Degol (2015) stated, "Climate shapes the quality of the interaction of all students, teachers, parents, and school personnel and reflects the norms, values and goals that represent the broader educational and social missions of the school" (pg. 1). Thus, school climate focuses on the environment as a whole and how the communication styles of individuals affect the overall environment.

From the point of practical implications, a positive school climate and effective principal communication are also stressed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Based on the Government Transformation Program (GTP) through the National Key Result Area (NKRA), two elements of school climate and principal communication have been highlighted under the subtopics of 'Identifying and rewarding principals and head teachers' and 'Introducing New Deals for principals and head teachers'. The evaluation of the principal is done through the Standard and Quality of Malaysian Education (*Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia*) or SKPM. According to SKPM 2013, the above two elements or aspects have been placed as the criteria in the evaluation of the educational process and performance critical to identify strengths and weaknesses of the school so that the school can make improvements. In 2016, when the instrument of SKPM come to the second wave, known as SKPMg2.0, elements of principal communication and school climate were still stated as important elements. These have shown that principal communication and school climate are crucial factors in identifying the performance of a school.

Communication styles of school principals have become a significant factor influencing the school climate. In addition, principals must be far sighted, be able to find ways to improve student achievement, create conducive school environments and guide teachers to be more competent. On the other hand, ineffective communication will make teachers confused and prone to misinterpret information, as well as leading to teachers' willingness and commitment to deteriorate. Ultimately, effective and ineffective communication do significantly relate to school climate.

In term of pedagogical implications, positive relationships between principals' communication styles and school climate is vital for school performance and student success. Effective communication is one critical characteristic of an effective and successful school principal. Research on effective schools and instructional communication styles emphasizes the impact of principal leadership on motivating teachers and creating positive learning environments.

This study has some limitations: first the sample consists of only 60 Tamil primary school teachers in Malacca. As such, the results can only be generalized to similar Tamil primary schools in Malaysia. It is hoped that future researchers will carry out similar studies involving a larger sample from National schools, Chinese schools and Tamil primary schools in Malaysia

Second, this is a quantitative study and only questionnaires were used to obtain the data. Therefore, future researchers can use the mixed-method approach and triangulate the quantitative and qualitative data to get a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between school principals' communication styles and school climate through the documentation of interviews, statements and details from local practices.

Third, the current study was conducted in only primary schools. Hence, it is hoped that future researchers will do a comparative study of secondary school principals' communication styles and primary school principals' communication styles and strategies for promoting a positive school climate and high academic achievement.

Results of this study reinforced the importance of the ways in which principals communicate and the need to further explore and potentially train administrators on being conscious of the impact of their communication styles on the school climate. These findings can be used to help inform all educators, ranging from school district leaders to site-based administrators, on the importance of effective communication by principals

Due to the constantly evolving technological advancements impacting communication, there is a need for exploration and training in the area of communication for school principals. This study reminds us no matter what technological tools exist to make communication more convenient, educators are in the human business, and therefore, human contact can never be sacrificed without good communication skills.

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