

## **Exploring Trust, Perceived Leadership Integrity, and Work Engagement among Johor Bharu's Primary School Teachers: A Concept Paper**

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### **Abstract**

The leadership, integrity, ethics, and values of the headmaster at school come with numerous benefits not only to himself but also to teachers, students, stakeholders, and the school organization. School teachers who are engaged in their work are those who feel energetic, dedicated, and absorbed by their work. These engaged schoolteachers work hard (vigor), are involved (dedicated), and feel happily engrossed (absorbed) in their work. In addition to that, a headmaster who has built trust with teachers and other key stakeholders is also able to foster improvements and long-lasting positive changes in the school. This research aims to examine the mediating effects of trust in the relationship between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu. This quantitative study, which uses a questionnaire to gather data from current primary school teachers, aims to reveal a significant relationship between perceived leadership integrity, work engagement, and trust among Johor Bharu's primary school teachers. The findings of this study also hope to shed light on the effects of trust as a mediator between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement among Johor Bharu's primary school teachers.

**Keywords:** Perceived leadership integrity, work engagement, trust, primary school teacher, Johor Bharu.

### **1.0 Introduction**

Education plays an important role, serving as a prerequisite resource for a country's development. This is because education is regarded as a country's backbone in shaping people in knowledge development and imparting various skills, values, and awareness. If a country has a higher rate of educated people, it will lead to greater Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and a higher standard of living for its people.

Researches show that, aside from teachers, the headmaster is the most influential school-based factor in promoting school performance and student achievement. It is accurately believed that a good headmaster is the key to a successful school, given the many roles and responsibilities that a headmaster fills at school. A headmaster is also a public figure whose professional and personal behavior should always uphold stakeholders' confidence in his leadership (Hanover Research, 2019).

Similarly, people perceive teachers as responsible for enhancing student achievement and school success. Teachers play a decisive role in implementing curriculum transition in order to build human capital that is culturally literate, virtuous, has strong social values, and is optimistic and

futuristic to achieve success and face change in the future. To enhance student excellence and school effectiveness, teachers' engagement and enthusiasm must be improved (Khun-Inkeeree et al., 2022).

Teachers are noticeably the most important group of professionals, as teachers run within the social life of a school, and teaching is an inspiring occupation for all of the nation as they focus on the development of children. Nevertheless, there is a significant shortage of teachers throughout the world's largest economies nowadays because of the widespread departure of teachers from the teaching profession. These countries include the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand, and Canada (Xaba, 2003). A similar scenario also occurs in Malaysian school settings.

According to statistics from the Malaysian Department of Education, primary school teacher enrollment has decreased, indicating a downward trend from 230,631 teachers in 2017 to 225,762 teachers in 2021 (Li & Zhao, 2022). In their study using the Gray Prediction Model, Li and Zhao (2022) also stated that in the years 2022 to 2024, Malaysia's teacher population will continue to decline and the teacher-student ratio in schools will keep rising.

Correspondingly, the number of teachers in Malaysia has decreased since 2017 as a result of the tendency towards early retirement among teachers. According to media sources, Malaysian teachers have been notably retiring early since 2017, with an expectation that over 10,000 teachers have made this decision annually over the past few years (Alzahari et al., 2022).

Undeniably, the early retirement trend among schoolteachers has had some detrimental effects on Malaysian schooling. First and foremost, the early retirement trend has caused a significant shortage of experienced schoolteachers, which may result in larger class sizes, overworked remaining teachers, and decreased individual attention for students. Secondly, the early retirement of experienced teachers may lead to a loss of specialized knowledge in various subjects and teaching methods. This may limit the exposure of students to different perspectives, ideas, and teaching styles (Li & Zhao, 2022).

Thirdly, as more teachers retire early, the Malaysian government may need to invest more in recruiting and training new teachers to fill the vacancies in schools. This may lead to an additional financial burden that will potentially strain the education budget and affect the allocation of resources for other important aspects of education, such as infrastructure and learning materials in the Ministry of Education (Li & Zhao, 2022).

Likewise, the primary schools in Johor Bharu are also facing the issue of early retirement of teachers since 2018 (JPNJ, 2023). It is critical to emphasize the value of experienced teachers. Drawing on their extensive experience, they can serve as valuable mentors and resources for novice teachers. The loss of experienced teachers may harm the quality and credibility of education in particular (Mustapha et al., 2023).

From the standpoint of researchers, the higher the level of work engagement of a teacher, the lesser the possibility for the teacher to quit the profession. Several approaches to reduce the desire for early retirement of teachers have been taken before according to earlier studies. However, to what extent the integrity leadership of a headmaster can reduce the desire for early retirement among teachers still has not been investigated much. Researchers believe that integrity leadership can reduce the desire for early retirement among teachers by increasing their work engagement (Rusyandi, 2015)

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of perceived leadership integrity (IV) on work engagement (DV), with trust (MV) acting as a mediator among a selected number of primary school teachers in Johor Bharu. This study will examine the level of perceived leadership integrity

between teachers and their headmasters, the level of work engagement among teachers, and the level of trust between teachers and their headmasters in the primary school in Johor Bharu.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

In consequence, the objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the mediator effects of trust in the relationship between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.
2. To examine the direct effects of perceived leadership on trust among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.
3. To examine the direct effects of trust on work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The study hopes to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant mediator effects of trust in the relationship between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu?
2. Are there any significant direct effects of perceived leadership integrity on trust among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu?
3. Are there any significant direct effects of trust to work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu?

### **1.3 Research Hypotheses**

Accordingly, the related hypotheses of this study are:

1. RQ1: There are significant mediator effects of trust in the relationship between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.
2. RQ2: There are significant direct effects of perceived leadership integrity on trust among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.
3. RQ3: There are significant direct effects of trust to work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Behavioral Integrity Theory and Two-Factor Theory**

The behavioral integrity theory and the two-factor theory form the foundation of this study. To begin with, the behavioral integrity theory, drawn from the social cognition and trust literature, explains how employees form perceptions of their leader's word-deed alignment and how these perceptions have consequences for employees.

As a result, in its conceptual model, leader behavioral integrity enhances employees' trust in leadership, which then positively impacts their attitudes, behaviors, and performance. The theory that a leader's behavioral integrity positively influences employee performance through trust and clear communication received significant support from subsequent empirical work (Palanski & Yamamarino, 2007).

In the same way, employees in the organization are frequently involved in daily affairs with their leaders, and their emotions and behaviors are primarily dependent on leader interaction. As a result, they can intuitively understand their leaders' words and actions, which reflect their leadership

qualities. A leader's behavioral integrity can influence employees' belief in management, affective commitment, job satisfaction, emotional attachment to the organization, and intent to stay. Thus, a leader's behavioral integrity will impact significant leadership exertion in the workplace and have a wide range of consequences for employees, teams, and organizations (Li et al., 2021).

Also, as the organization's representative, the leader's leadership behavior can directly impact employees' emotional commitment to the organization. The leader's concern, assistance, and empathy reflect the esteem, support, and insight of the employees. When guided by the concept of reciprocity, it is easier to inspire employees' appreciation and return, improve their emotional return to leaders and organizations, and increase their initiative at work (Li et al., 2021).

Consequently, previous studies showed that a leader's behavioral integrity increases employees' in-role performance because it fosters employees' trust in their leader, which, in turn, energizes their in-role performance. Specifically, trust in leadership serves as a means to increase the predictability and reliability of leadership behaviors. According to a meta-analysis, employees' trust in leadership largely mediates the positive effects of a leader's behavioral integrity on in-role performance. Employees who perceive their leader as having high integrity also report clearer communication and a better understanding of their leaders' expectations (Choi et al., 2020).

Hence, conversely, if the employees perceive their leader as untrustworthy, they will avoid interaction with the leader, are not willing to share their ideas, and make themselves susceptible to those who have to contravene their trust. This is because the discrepancy between the words and actions of the leader disrupts the beliefs of the employees, and the employees begin to assume that the leader is not genuinely concerned about them. To this end, the discernment of mistrust is considered a threat to individual, group, and organizational functioning that can cause dissatisfaction, peer conflict, and bad management in organizations (Blau, 2017).

Researchers understand that behavioral integrity is the extent to which an employee believes their leader accurately represents both themselves and the core values in communication, typically through ongoing observation and monitoring. In simpler terms, Way et al. (2016) posited that behavioral integrity measures how much an employee perceives a leader "walks his talk" and, conversely, how much he thinks the leader "talks his walk."

Researchers also believed that behavioral integrity was the root cause of effective leadership in an organization. This is because employees will develop trust in this leader if the leader can demonstrate his integrity as a leader through his leadership in the organization. This will have beneficial effects on employees, such as increasing their satisfaction, productivity, and creativity by developing their strengths, and eventually bringing a positive outcome to the organization (Jacoub, 2014).

On that account, in the context of this study, researchers concluded that integrity in leadership is a pivotal key for a headmaster to ensure his leadership effectiveness and efficiency in the school and should be looked into seriously by the headmaster. The development of trust from the teacher to the headmaster is subjective and an ongoing process that will change time after time. Therefore, the headmaster needs to foster trust in the teachers by promoting integrity in leadership in the school and avoiding the formation of mistrust among the teachers (Simons et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the two-factor theory is one of the content theories of motivation. This theory describes the factors that motivate employees by identifying their individual needs and desires, as well as the goals pursued to satisfy these desires (Galanakis & Peramatzis, 2022). Maslow's hierarchy of

needs influenced the development of this theory by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman in 1959 (Jones, 2011).

In this theory, Herzberg perceived that motivators and hygiene factors were affecting separate aspects of job satisfaction. This belief differed from the traditional approach of viewing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as opposite ends of the same continuum. The factors that contribute to satisfaction (motivators) are: 1) a sense of personal achievement; 2) recognition; 3) challenging or stimulating work; 4) responsibility; 5) opportunity for advancement; 6) promotion; and 7) personal growth. In contrast, the factors that lead to dissatisfaction (hygiene) are: 1) organization policy, procedures, and administration; 2) quality of supervision; 3) relationships with supervisors and peers; 4) working conditions; 5) salary, wages, and other benefits; 6) job security; and 7) work-life balance (Ball, 2003).

Similarly, Robbins et al. (2013) opined that this theory promotes a two-stage process for motivating employees at work in practice. To apply this theory in the organization, the leader needs to eliminate the dissatisfaction (hygiene) factors that the employees are experiencing in the first place, as well as help employees find satisfaction (motivators). To create satisfaction at work, it is vital for leaders to address the motivating factors associated with work. A leader who acts with integrity in his leadership is able to develop satisfaction among his employees.

Hence, a leader should apply motivators and hygiene factors in his organization for better performance, productivity, and sustainability. Motivators can maximize satisfaction by minimizing physical pain (Seligman, 1995). Employees are more satisfied with opportunities, good working conditions, good organizational policies, and job security. For higher employee performance, motivation is an important aspect, that also retains them for a longer period of time and ultimately increases the reputation of the organization (Palaniammal, 2013).

Researchers believe that job satisfaction is a crucial factor in determining an employee's performance in their work. The leader in the organization must understand and practice the motivators and hygiene factors outlined in this two-factor theory, as they are essential for establishing an effective organizational role and high-performing employees. Motivators and hygiene factors both serve as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for the organization's employees.

Therefore, researchers presumed that in the context of this study, even though hygiene factors are support factors that do not directly affect the motivation of the teachers at school, excellent hygiene factors are able to cause teachers to be satisfied and have no complaints, as these factors eliminate dissatisfaction and improve the performance of teachers to some extent in their work.

Likewise, researchers also posited that teachers' trust in the headmaster can foster their job satisfaction and ultimately promote their work engagement. This is because teachers who are satisfied with their work are not only happier, healthier, and more fulfilled, but they are also more likely to deliver better performance, services, and innovation in the school (Liou & Daly, 2014).

## **2.2 Past Studies**

According to Suryadi et al. (2016), integrity that persists in a leader is an important factor for the individual in carrying out his duties and responsibilities. A leader with a high level of integrity tends to demonstrate ethical behavior such as honesty, trustworthiness, and discipline in his duties and responsibilities. A leader with low integrity tends to show unethical behavior, for instance, dishonesty, greediness, corruption, non-compliance with regulations, or unlawfulness in his duties and responsibilities.

Therefore, the integrity of a headmaster holds significant importance for both teachers and schools, as integrity attributions provide valuable insights into the headmaster's likely behavior, values, and ethical orientation. Teachers will choose the headmaster whom they will follow, the headmaster whom they will trust, the headmaster to whom they will be loyal and committed, and ultimately the headmaster to whom they will perform in school. Additionally, a headmaster's integrity is also important in its positive influences on the leadership process and the positive organizational outcomes that a headmaster can achieve (Moorman & Grover, 2009).

Bakker et al. (2011) view work engagement as a combination of willingness to work (dedication, involvement, commitment, and conscience) and capability to work (energy, strength, and stamina), both can impact job productivity. Giallonardo et al. (2010) argued that engaged employees outperform those who are merely motivated and/or satisfied with their work.

Teachers' trust in the headmaster is crucial and serves as the foundation of trust in the school, as their willingness to rely on the headmaster stems from their perception of the headmaster's reliability, kindness, honesty, and trustworthiness (Hoy & Tschannen, 2013). Honesty allows a headmaster to shape others' perceptions, and respectful interpersonal relationships validate this influence. Trust must be present to some degree for individuals and groups who are dependent on others within the school and the school system must have some level of trust (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015).

Bass and Riggion (2006) claimed too that trust in the headmaster is one of the most essential variables in the process of influencing the school community members. It is challenging for a headmaster who lacks the teachers' trust to attract highly committed teachers to the school. Also, in order to challenge the status quo and encourage teachers to look at new ways of doing things, the headmaster would need to win their trust (Zeinabadi & Rastegarpour, 2010).

On the other hand, a study by Manalo et al. (2020) highlighted that job satisfaction mediated the effect of work engagement on teachers. A strong sense of trust in the headmaster is very important for the teachers in order to create satisfaction in their job. This is because the sense of trust and positive feeling that they are part of the school contributed to teachers' strong commitment to the school. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs have a high level of work engagement and organizational commitment (Manalo et al., 2020).

Similarly, Shmailan (2016) cited that having satisfied teachers who perform better and are in the right jobs can help foster work engagement at school. Engaged teachers are present, and committed, seek good communication with their headmasters, and believe their work holds significance and can motivate them. Conversely, teachers who have a low level of job satisfaction (due to distrust of the headmaster) and are unengaged in their work will demonstrate poor professional service, a lack of commitment, and poor performance. Their participation lacks luster; they do not excel, and they do not care about the school's success.

### **2.3 Relationship between Variables**

Engelbrecht et al. (2017) noted that there is a joint relationship between a leader's integrity and work engagement. This is because trust is one of the most critical conditions for increasing employee engagement. A leader who embraces integrity in his leadership is able to gain the trust of the employee and influence the employee to engage in his work by creating an ethical and trusting work climate.

Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2021) asserted that a positive perception of leadership integrity in the workplace typically leads to an employee's trust in the leader's ability to influence his behaviors and attitudes. Leadership integrity fosters a work environment that values employees. An employee tends to achieve his goals and meet his psychological needs in a work environment where leadership integrity

flourishes. In a work environment that promotes leadership integrity, employees can actively contribute to themselves and the organization by exhibiting several positive behaviors.

Some indicators that show a headmaster has integrity honesty, consistency, responsibility, and high commitment (Manglingkas et al., 2019). According to Vikaraman et al. (2021), if teachers lose trust in their headmaster, they may face workplace burnout, are not passionate about work, and lack the dedication to teach. Teachers' trust in their headmasters is essential and is named as the marking point and basis of trust in schools, as this type of trust is built upon their willingness to depend on their headmasters since they are perceived as reliable, kind, honest, and trustworthy.

According to Sandi et al. (2022), there is a close relationship between integrity and trust. Competence, whether possessed by a leader or not, is not automatic or a guarantee of being able to gain the trust of employees. Only when the leader possesses integrity and competence can he/she gain and trust of his/her employees. When a leader possesses strong integrity, it leads to effective leadership, which in turn fosters employee trust in the leader. In addition, the level of satisfaction with the leader is higher among leaders who have integrity, if compared with leaders who have low integrity (Jones, 2011).

Thus, in today's highly competitive world of work, trust in the leader-employee relationship is a constant fundamental factor in ensuring long-term organizational success. Hence, a leader must be flexible in his leadership style to meet the individual needs of employees (Neises, 2020). The organization views the trust between the leader and employee as interpersonal trust. Similarly, an employee's level of trust influences his attitude towards his leader, and higher levels of trust lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction with that particular leader. This is because greater trust results in an overall improvement in the employee's perception of the quality of his interactions with the leader, and the employee is more inclined to follow, support, and show his loyalty to the leader (Ramdas & Patrick, 2019).

Additionally, an employee's trust in his supervisor has an impact on the employee's job satisfaction, and this trust accounts for an increase in job satisfaction that goes beyond the influence of job characteristics. This is because trust influences an employee's degree of motivation at work, as well as his readiness to work and acknowledgment of the supervisor's aims (Sunil & Sumitha, 2023).

## **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

To begin with, Christie and Fellow (2014) emphasized that a leader values five key elements of leadership integrity, which are: 1) integrity as wholeness; 2) integrity as consistency between words and actions; 3) integrity as consistency in the face of adversity; 4) integrity as staying true to oneself; and 5) integrity as morality or ethics. This will be the concept of leadership integrity that the researchers adopted in this study. Researchers apply these dimensions in determining the leadership integrity of the headmasters in this study.

Teachers generally respect, trust, and rely on a headmaster who upholds integrity in his leadership. The headmaster is also able to balance respect and responsibility and share his values with others through his leadership at school (Drugger, 2011). Consequently, school members will perceive the headmaster as a leader with high integrity and be satisfied if he demonstrates moral and ethical characteristics in his leadership at school.

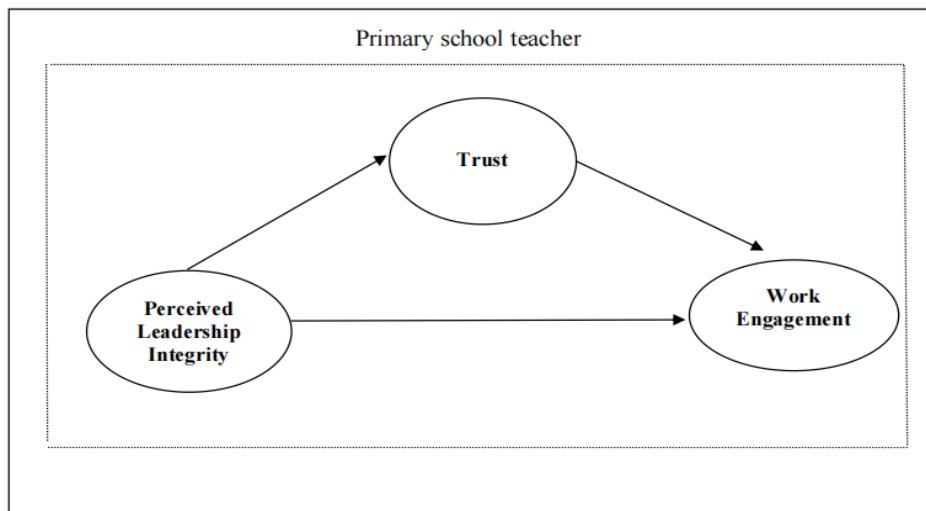
Meanwhile, the dimensions of work engagement encompass cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Work engagement refers to "a positive, fulfilling, work-

related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption by the employee” (Schaufeli et al., 2003). To apply into the context of this study, teachers' vigor can be defined as their investment in daily work tasks. Teachers' dedication can be defined as an attitude towards their professional tasks carried out with responsibility and a sense of belonging to their school. Also, absorption corresponds to a cognitive and emotional disposition, leading to high concentration and motivation that persist while performing job activities (Bakker et al., 2008). Thus, if a teacher is able to demonstrate the above-mentioned working behavior at school, he is considered engaged in his work.

At the same time, Mishra and Mishra (2013) advocated that a leader who has built trust with employees, teams, and other key stakeholders is able to foster improvement and lasting positive change in his organization. Anyone can become a trustworthy leader by developing trust through reliability, openness, competence, and compassion in the organization. If the teacher believes that the headmaster is reliable, open, competent, and compassionate in school, he can be considered trustworthy to the headmaster, in the context of this study.

Figure 1 below illustrates the conceptual framework of this study. Researchers expected that trust significantly affects perceived leadership integrity and work engagement as a mediator among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu. At the same time, as long as the headmaster consistently demonstrated leadership integrity at school, teachers would trust him. In this account, researchers assumed that perceived leadership integrity has significant direct effects on trust among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu. This particular section of the research framework can be elaborated by the behavioral integrity theory. When teachers perceive that the headmaster has integrity in his leadership, teachers will trust the headmaster.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



Concurrently, when the headmaster is trustworthy, job satisfaction among teachers will increase, which will foster work engagement among teachers at school. As a result, researchers assumed that trust has significant direct effects on work engagement among primary school teachers in Johor Bharu. This particular section of the research framework can be described by the two-factor theory. When teachers trust the headmaster, they will be satisfied with their jobs and improve their engagement in their work.



### 3.0 Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach. With the quantitative approach, this study follows a structured process, utilizing a large number of samples that accurately represent the population. In this study too, researchers will use the questionnaire as an instrument to collect data from the selected respondents in the research population to yield numeric statistical data.

#### 3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

This study targets primary school teachers in the Johor Bharu district area. In the current academic year, there are 3,256 primary school teachers under the management of the Johor Bharu District Education Office (PPDJB) from 128 primary schools. Thus, according to Krejcie and Morgan Sampel's Table Size Determination (1970), the sample size for this study is minimal 357 primary school teachers, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% error estimate.

Determining the sample size (357 primary school teachers) in this study with Krejcie and Morgan's table will allow researchers to make decisions about the population of primary school teachers at Johor Bharu (3,256 primary school teachers) with confidence, as it provides higher accuracy if compared to other research approaches in determining the sample size. Researchers can obtain the necessary data to describe the characteristics of the population of primary school teachers in Johor Bharu and make valid inferences.

This study will use the probability sampling method to select the samples (respondents) through the simple random sampling method. A simple random sample is a subset of a statistical population, where each member of the population has an equal chance of selection. The researchers of this study will assign a number to each of the primary school teachers in the population. They will later select the respondents using a random number generator to pick the subsets (representative respondents) of the populations.

#### 3.3 Instrument

The main data collection instrument in this research will be a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of items that will allow the researcher to examine the background profile of the selected teacher respondents, as well as their levels of perceived leadership integrity, work engagement, and trust in their headmasters.

Researchers will use Craig Dunn's (2012) Perceived Leader Integrity Measurement (PLIM) to adopt and modify the questionnaire's items. Additionally, Schaufeli et al. (2006)'s Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) will serve as a reference for the development of the work engagement items. Researchers will adopt and modify the items from Katie Delahaya Paine's 2003 Measuring Trust in Organization (MTO) to assess teacher respondents' trust in their school headmaster.

The researchers will use the domains that comprise the PLIM to measure the perceived leadership integrity of these primary school teachers to their headmasters. These domains included: 1) training and development; 2) resource/workload allocation; 3) truth-telling; 4) unlawful discrimination; 5) compliance with policies and procedures; 6) maliciousness; and 7) self-protection. The selected teacher respondents will answer the items for this construct (perceived leadership integrity) with the Likert scale of: 1) not at all; 2) somewhat; 3) very much; and 4) exactly.

Items related to the UWES domains of 1) vigor, 2) dedication, and 3) absorption will be used to measure the work engagement of these primary school teachers. They will respond to the items in this construct (work engagement) using a Likert scale: 1) never; 2) sometimes; 3) often; and 4) always.

Likewise, items related to the domains of 1) trust; 2) control mutuality; 3) commitment; 4) satisfaction; 5) communal relationships; and 6) exchange relationships contained in the MTO will be used to measure trust in headmasters among these teachers. They will answer the items for this construct (trust) on the Likert scale as follows: 1) not at all; 2) somewhat; 3) very much; and 4) exactly.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures**

The researchers will apply for written permission to conduct the study and collect the data in schools through the Education Planning and Policy Research Division (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education, Johor State Education Department (JPNJ), and Johor Bharu District Education Office (PPDJB) accordingly. Once they obtain the necessary written permissions, they will initiate the data collection procedure.

Researchers will also write a cover letter seeking the headmasters of the Johor Bharu district's elementary schools for permission to involve their teachers in the study, in an effort to accelerate the data collection procedure. Measures of the selected teacher respondent's work engagement, perceived leadership integrity, background profile, and trust will be collected and converted into a Google Form (GF). After processing, the data will be converted into Excel to facilitate analysis.

The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method in Smart PLS 4.0 will be utilized to examine the numerical data gathered for this study. To examine the descriptive demographic information about the selected teacher respondents to the study's variables, the mean, frequency, and percentage will be employed. To determine the study's findings, the mean, frequency, and percentage of the headmaster's perceived leadership integrity, the level of teacher work engagement, and the level of teacher trust will all be examined.

Moreover, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), also known as path analysis, will be used as a multivariate method to test hypotheses about the influences among interacting variables. Smart PLS 4.0, the data analysis tool, will examine the relationships between the variables in this study. Smart PLS will be able to simultaneously assess the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect of structural path coefficients for the variables of perceived leadership integrity, work engagement, and trust in this study.

To interpret the study results, the researchers will check the normality to ensure that the result they get from the selected type of SEM estimation is useful and informative. They will next examine both the fit indices and the parameter estimates. Fit indices measure the overall discrepancy between the observed data and the model-implied data, which can be absolute, incremental, or parsimonious. They will report and compare several fit indices to evaluate the model fit, such as chi-square, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). Parameter estimates are the coefficients that indicate the strength and direction of the relationships among the three variables involved in this study. In view of that, researchers will check the sign, magnitude, and significance of the parameter estimates, as well as their confidence intervals, to assess the effect sizes and the uncertainty of the estimates at the end.

The researchers will also use the SEM technique in conjunction with additional descriptive statistics, including the standard deviation, normality as determined by the z-statistic of Skewness and Kurtosis, multi-collinearity, reliability, correlation, and Harman's single factor test for common

method bias. This study will utilize the results of the inferential analysis to address the previously mentioned research questions (RQ1 to RQ3).

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures its intended parameters and operates as intended. Instrument validation is the process of collecting and analyzing data to assess the accuracy of an instrument (Polit & Beck, 2006). Five experts in the content validation dimension will validate the instrument (the questionnaire) later in this study.

The instrument will be considered valid and suitable for collecting research data from the teacher respondents in this study if the readings of the item-level Content Validity Index (I-CVI), scale-level Content Validation Index over Universal Agreement (S-CVI/UA), and scale-level Content Validation Index over Average (S-CVI/Ave) are close to 1.0.

Reliability demonstrates the consistency and accuracy of a measuring instrument in conducting measurements (Ghozali, 2014). People commonly view a pilot test as a test of a specific research instrument. All items in the research instrument are considered valid and perfect if the correlation coefficient in the pilot test is near +1.0. If the pilot test yields a result close to 0.90 for Cronbach's alpha, it suggests that repeating the measurement on the same subject can yield consistent results.

## 4.0 Implication and Limitation of the Study

This study is significant because it assessed the relationship between the perceived leadership integrity of the headmaster and the work engagement of teachers in the primary schools in Johor Bharu. Headmasters may use the literature as a reference in their efforts to build a competitive and successful educational organization. Understanding the relationships between perceived leadership integrity, work engagement, and trust will help headmasters to treat and motivate their teachers to engage in work, achieve the school's goals, and retain quality teachers in school. Headmasters can also improve their quality, effectiveness, and efficacy in their leadership by developing trust from teachers to headmasters themselves and obtaining job satisfaction from their teachers.

However, this study has certain limitations that may have implications for future studies. For instance, this study only focuses on the relationship between perceived leadership integrity and work engagement in a primary school in the area of Johor Bharu. Therefore, researchers may not be able to generalize the findings and results of this study to other primary schools outside Johor Bharu, as there may be dissimilarities in the context of background and local culture involved.

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