

# The Relationship between Headmaster's Sustainable Leadership and Teacher's Work Performance among Primary School Teachers in Klang District, Selangor, Malaysia

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## Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools in the Klang district. The study also examines the relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools. The sample for the current study is  $s=86$ , which are teachers from primary schools in the Klang district. The instrument of this study is divided into three main sections: respondents' demographics, sustainable leadership, and work performance. The level of sustainable leadership practices is at a medium level ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=.593$ ). Teachers' work performance level is at a medium level ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=.381$ ). A significant positive but weak relationship exists between sustainable leadership practices and teachers' work performance ( $r=.433$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis,  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools, is rejected. This study is critical in understanding the factors that influence teachers' performance in primary schools in Malaysia. This study is significant because it contributes to the field of study. Future research in this area can use the findings reported to understand the phenomenon further.

**Keywords:** Sustainable, Leadership, Performance, Teachers, Schools

## Introduction

The national education system's overall performance often reflects teachers' working performance. However, it is viewed in terms of students' achievements in various levels and factors of the education system. The working performance of teachers in Malaysia is measured using a multitude of methods, and it is often documented through a series of processes. Now, several key factors influence teachers' working performance. Most commonly, this would be associated with salary, job satisfaction, and their level of education or training. However, the leadership skills of headmasters in schools also play a very

significant role in determining the working performance of teachers. How teachers are led can contribute to their working performance, and teachers who undergo a particular leadership style can either demonstrate better or worse working performance levels. Either way, teachers working performance level is highly significant in the Malaysian education system, especially since it is directly correlated to students' performance in schools.

In education development in Malaysia, teachers' performance has been a significant focus since student educational achievement in schools has a deep relationship with teachers' work performance (Nian & Abd Rashid, 2022). In addition, work performance is a term widely discussed and addressed in the industrial and psychological fields of research (Johari et al., 2018). According to Jamian et al (2020), work performance is related to the workplace and refers to how individuals perform their jobs. Jamian et al (2020) define work performance as "actions, behaviors and scale outcomes involving employees in or bringing things associated with and contributing to organizational goals." Employee performance can be seen from different dimensions and, most importantly, is directed to their organizations' main goals and policies (Swanson et al., 2020).

These dimensions are defined in different documents and dimensions within the Malaysian education system. One such document is the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), a long-term plan for education development in Malaysia. The plan has many sections and sub-sections that outline how Malaysia views education as a platform for individual holistic development. Simultaneously, each target set in the plan is reflected by performances that need to be attained by the teachers. A critical document from the blueprint is the Malaysian Education Quality Standard or '*Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia*.' These quality standards are implemented and evaluated in different phases known as waves. It is developed in line with the aspirations of the national education blueprint, and each phase is an upgraded phase that evaluates teachers' performances. At this point, the entire education system has entered the third phase of the blueprint, which began in 2021 and is slated to end in 2025. There is more emphasis on advanced leadership skills that create in-depth transformation and cause exponential growth in teachers' performance levels. One crucial element in the third phase of standard quality assessment is the sustainability of teachers' performance via sustainable leadership skills. This will be the focus of the current article.

### **Problem Statement**

The most significant problem in the Malaysian education system is the teachers' task performance. The sustainability of the education system is highly dependent on the skills of teachers and how their skills contribute to the country's core technical aspects of education. Therefore, teachers' performance requires support through long-term education for teachers. Aspects of teacher work performance are one of the main focuses of school leaders (Muslimin, 2020). This is because teachers' work performance is vital to ensuring that schools achieve various goals (Arifin & Rasdi, 2017). Muslimin (2020) explains that the leading association between teachers' work performance and sustainable leadership can be seen in the opportunities and encouragement provided for continuous learning. Teachers' continuous education has been a major focus in developing educators who can address various global demands (Saberri & Hamzah, 2020). Through the development of professionalism, teachers in Malaysia are expected to increase their level of knowledge and skills in various aspects of education. For example, enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills in learning and teaching based on 21st-century elements. However, school leaders play a

more prominent role by always supporting every opportunity for teacher professionalism in schools (Rauf et al., 2018).

One of the most apparent ways of determining teachers' level of task performance is through their technology skills. There is ample evidence that reports teachers' lack of technological skills in Malaysia. For example, Ryn and Sandaran (2020) reported that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy rate among teachers in Malaysia is still low, considering the challenges they faced during the pandemic. Teachers in schools in Malaysia continue to struggle with technology because they lack basic knowledge of ICT use, and they are hampered by workload, which prevents self-learning (Baharuldin et al., 2019). The skills of teachers in Malaysia in advanced technology for education, such as virtual reality, are also very low because of the lack of exposure and emphasis (Rashid et al., 2021).

The main problem teachers face in schools is when leaders do not see the priorities of teachers' continuous learning (Rauf et al., 2018). Indirectly, this impacts teachers' performance regarding management, discipline skills, and teachers' arrangements (Kaur et al., 2017). For example, teachers are unprofessional in their pedagogical time management in the classroom as they are not exposed to the proper techniques. Furthermore, Kaur et al. (2017) argue that leaders cannot understand how continuous learning will lead to skill in school. This situation occurs when the headmaster does not support the teacher's desire to participate in outside activities. For example, workshops and sharing sessions organized by non-governmental parties that can help and guide teachers to achieve new skills are not the focus of schools. This is because leaders are also burdened by the various tasks given to the school.

### Research Objectives

This research aimed towards achieving the following objectives

- a. Analyzing the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district.
- b. Analyzing the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools in the Klang district.
- c. To examine the relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools.

### Research Questions

- a. What is the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district?
- b. What is the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools in the Klang district?
- c. Is there a significant relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools?

### Hypothesis

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools.

### Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework comprises the dependent and independent variables. In this study, the dependent variable is teachers' work performance, and the independent variable is the practice of sustainable leadership. Each variable is divided into several dimensions. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework. Sustainable leadership practices include the seven principles of sustainable leadership, which are also the constructs studied. The seven sustainable principles are promoting continuous learning, creating middle leaders in schools, implementing a culture of learning-sharing among teachers (emphasis on long-term goals), encouraging partnerships with friends or organizations outside the school (distributing leadership), exploring diversity, and preserving and appreciating assets. The dependent variable in this study is the level of teacher work performance. This is based on individual performance theory, including task performance, contextual performance, and unproductive work behavior.

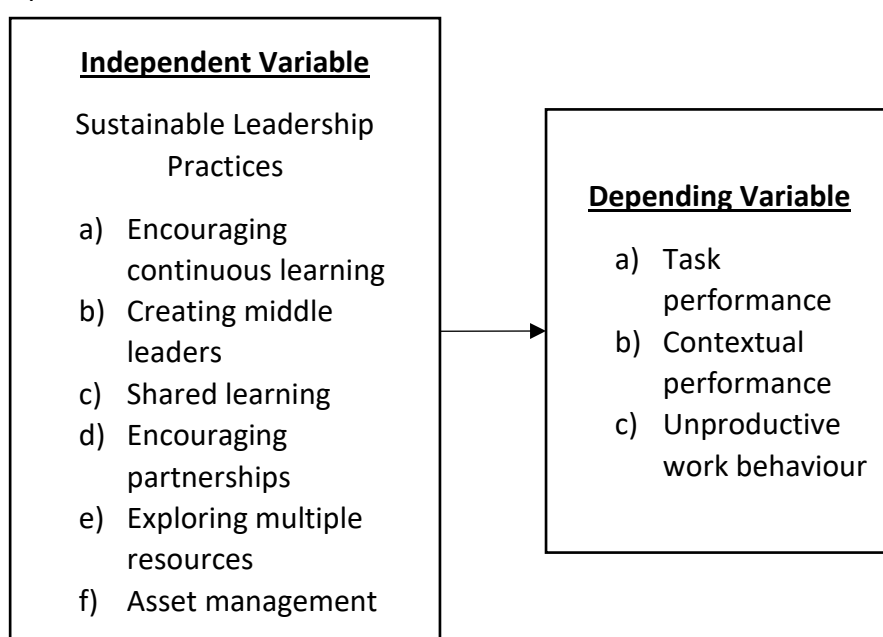


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

### Literature Review

#### Sustainable Leadership theory by Hargreaves and Fink (2004)

Sustainable leadership focuses on creating and maintaining long-term success while considering the impact of present actions on future generations (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). It involves considering the social, economic, and environmental impact of decision-making and ensuring that leaders' actions do not compromise future generations' ability to meet their needs. Sustainable leaders prioritize collaboration and stakeholder engagement to ensure that all perspectives are considered and that decisions are made with a holistic view of the organization and its impact. They are also committed to ethical and responsible behavior, transparency, and accountability. Sustainable leadership is characterized by a long-term orientation, a commitment to sustainability, and a focus on balancing short-term needs with long-term goals. It is an inclusive approach that recognizes the interdependence of people, organizations, and the natural environment and strives to create positive outcomes for all.

Overall, sustainable leaders prioritize people, the planet, and profits equally, recognizing that a healthy and thriving organization requires a holistic approach. Generally,

sustainable leadership refers to sustainable thinking that emphasizes "belonging" thinking. The primary purpose of sustainable thinking is to develop a direction that can develop into an organization's long-term performance mission and vision. Every organization needs leaders who can improve the quality of life of individuals by solving social and environmental issues through proper planning. Therefore, effective, sustainable leadership manages long-term and short-term planning. The seven main characteristics of sustainable leaders, according to Hargreaves and Fink (2004), are

- a) Sustainable learning can be developed and managed through sustainable leadership emphasizing continuous improvement.
- b) Sustainable leadership ensures future achievements.
- c) Sustainable leaders emphasize a sustainable leadership style.
- d) Sustainable leadership emphasizes the aspect of social justice.
- e) Sustainable leadership can increase the organization's financial resources.
- f) Sustainable leadership is a natural ability to do better.
- g) Sustainable leaders have a future-oriented direction that can develop organizational capacity and initiative.

A study by How and Ishak (2021) examined the relationship between the six dimensions of sustainable leadership practices by principals and the level of commitment of secondary school teachers. The sample consisted of 269 respondents who were school administrators, including senior assistants, department heads, and secretaries from 8 secondary schools in the Lahad Datu district. The researcher adapted a modified instrument based on the Sustainable Leadership Model, while the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was used to identify the level of teacher commitment. A pilot study was conducted, and Cronbach's Alpha values showed high consistency among the items in the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was then conducted to determine the frequency of dimensions of sustainable leadership practiced by principals. Pearson Correlation inferential analysis was also conducted to test the hypothesis. The results show that teachers consider the principal's sustainable leadership practices to be at a moderately high level.

Furthermore, the six dimensions of sustainable leadership have a positive and significant relationship with the level of teacher commitment. These findings contribute to developing theories of sustainable leadership and organizational commitment in the educational environment. This shows that significant attention should be given to the aspect of sustainable leadership to increase the level of teacher commitment. This study also emphasizes the importance of principals practicing sustainable leadership in administering and managing schools to enhance teachers' commitment and achieve the school's vision and mission.

According to a study by Saberi and Hamzah (2020), sustainable leadership practices can lead to effective schools in primary schools at that time, which is a crucial factor in creating school excellence. There is a difference in performance among schools in the education system.

This study aimed to identify the contribution of sustainable leadership by head teachers towards effective schools in a district in Selangor. The study provides guidance to principals on promoting sustainable leadership practices and achieving school targets for effective schools. The quantitative method used for this study is a formative study using a questionnaire instrument that tests its validity and reliability. The respondents of this study consist of 80 teachers in five schools in the Hulu Langat district teaching primary schools. Descriptive and inferential analysis was used to test the research questions. The results of the

descriptive analysis show that teachers have a high perception of the level of head teachers' sustainable leadership practices (mean=4.21, SP=0.564).

Meanwhile, the teacher's perception of school effectiveness in the national primary school in Zon Pudu, Kuala Lumpur, is also high (mean=4.31, SP=0.502). Pearson's correlation test analysis shows a significant and positive relationship between the headteacher's sustainable leadership practices with high teaching strength and value ( $r=0.881$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Multiple regression analysis shows that the four dimensions of the headteacher's sustainable leadership practices contribute to effective school development. This study is expected to inform novice head teachers about leadership practices in improving the school level towards effective schools, especially primary schools. In conclusion, effective leadership practices need to be practiced by every administrator in leading an educational organization to achieve the excellence of a school in leading an effective school.

### **Campbell's Individual performance theory**

The work performance model by Campbell et al (1993) includes several key aspects, namely technical performance, communication, effort, anti-performance behavior, management hierarchy, hierarchical management performance, and the performance of team leaders and teammates. A study by Hoque et al (2020) was conducted to determine the relationship between supervision and the performance and attitude of teachers in secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Overall, supervision practices do not correlate with teacher performance and attitudes. However, instructional supervision has a positive and significant relationship with teacher performance and attitude. The results of this study will benefit policymakers, school supervisors, and head teachers in choosing the right type of supervision practices that can contribute to better teaching performance.

### **Methodology**

This study focuses on practices of sustainable leadership among headmasters in primary schools and the work performance of teachers in primary schools in the Klang district. Radzi and Muzammil (2018) explain that the state of Selangor divides the education administration into 10 districts. District Education Offices or '*Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah*' (PPD) in Selangor are PPD Sepang, PPD Gombak, PPD Hulu Selangor, PPD Hulu Langat, PPD Sabak Bernam, PPD Klang, PPD Kuala Selangor, PPD Kuala Selangor, PPD Petaling Utama, PPD Kuala Langat and PPD Petaling Perdana. Primary schools in Selangor are divided into national schools, Tamil and Chinese national type schools. The total population of primary school teachers in Selangor is 34,321 people. Under the Klang district education office, there are 93 primary schools. There are 5701 teachers in the 93 schools in the Klang district. However, several selection criteria have been employed in the sampling procedure. First, the study narrows down the samples to national schools alone because including national-type Chinese or Tamil schools would affect the study because those schools have other external and internal factors that may influence the findings. A total of 6 schools with 113 teachers are chosen as the population for the study. The sample was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) guide for sampling. Based on that, the sample for the current study is  $s=86$ .

The instrument of this study is divided into three main sections: respondents' demographics, sustainable leadership, and work performance. First, the demographics of the respondents are divided into age, gender, education level, school location, and respondents' teaching experience. The Sustainable Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire was developed based on leadership research (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Mittal & Dorfman,



2012; Strange & Mumford, 2002). The sustainable leadership scale consists of 10 questions that evaluate sustainable leadership behavior. Sustainable leadership items were developed as composite constructs. The five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. The instrument is designed to study the participant's perception of the statements built in the questionnaire. The Likert scale has the advantage of simplicity and reliability (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Next, the third part of this questionnaire is work performance. Work performance instruments were adapted from Koopmans et al (2013), who developed and tested instruments containing three dimensions. The instrument has undergone various levels of testing and strengthening over time (Koopmans et al., 2013). The first dimension of the work performance instrument is the task performance scale containing 7 items. The second dimension is a contextual performance scale containing 12 items and a non-productive work scale dimension containing 8 items. Sustainable Leadership Division and individual work performance both use a five-point Likert scale. This scale was chosen because it is more appropriate to explore the respondents' perceptions and can give them a more accurate option (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The questionnaire was tested to ensure its content validity and construct validity. For these purposes, two professionals in the related field assessed and evaluated the questionnaire. In terms of reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test. The pilot test involved 30 respondents from the same district. The pilot test aimed to determine the instrument's reliability level. In addition, a Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted, and the level of reliability was determined based on the alpha scale shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Range of Alpha Interpretation*

Range	Interpretation
< 0.6	Weak
0.6 < 0.7	Normal
0.7 < 0.8	Good
0.8 < 0.9	Very good

Source: Hair, Money, Samouel & Page (2007)

Table 2 shows the results of the pilot test. Overall, the questionnaire scored a good ( $\alpha=.788$ ) level of reliability. In addition, the sustainable leadership section scored a good level of reliability ( $\alpha=.711$ ), and the work performance section scored a very good level of reliability ( $\alpha=.812$ ).

Table 2

*Cronbach Alpha Test*

Section	Score	Interpretation
Overall	.788	Good
Sustainable leadership	.711	Good
Work performance	.812	Very good

### Findings

The findings of the study are divided into four sections which are demographics, level of sustainability leadership practices, level of work performance of teachers, and the relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools.

### Demographic Analysis

Table 3 shows the demographic analysis of the respondents ( $n=86$ ) who participated in the study.

Table 3

#### *Demographic Analysis*

Features		Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	27	31.4
	Female	59	68.6
Age	25-30	16	18.6
	31-35	27	31.4
	36-40	35	40.7
	41-45	8	9.3
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	13	15.1
	5 -10 years	9	10.5
	10-15 years	39	45.3
	15-20 years	21	24.4
	More than 20 years	4	4.7
Academic Qualifications	Bachelor's Degree	62	72.1
	Master's Degree	21	24.4
	PhD Doctorate	3	3.5

### Level of Sustainability Leadership Practices

Table 4 shows the current study's overall analysis of sustainable leadership practices. Again, the level of sustainable leadership practices is at a medium level ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=.593$ ).

Table 4

#### *Descriptive Analysis of Sustainable Leadership Practices*

	Sustain	Valid N (listwise)
N	86	86
Minimum	2.20	
Maximum	5.00	
Mean	3.260	
Std. Deviation	.593	

Table 5 shows the current study's item-based analysis of sustainable leadership practices.



Table 5

*Item-based Analysis of Sustainable Leadership Practices*

Item	Scale	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
My headmaster is: Able to listen to opinions or ideas of other teachers in the organization.	Complete Disagree	13	15.1	3.314	1.340
	Disagree	10	11.6		
	Unsure	18	20.9		
	Agree	27	31.4		
	Completely Agree	18	20.9		
Aware of the cultural differences in people from different organizations.	Complete Disagree	10	11.6	3.547	1.262
	Disagree	8	9.3		
	Unsure	12	14.0		
	Agree	37	43.0		
	Completely Agree	19	22.1		
Open to opinions and can convey decisions suitable to everyone in the organization.	Complete Disagree	7	8.1	3.186	1.012
	Disagree	4	4.7		
	Unsure	53	61.6		
	Agree	10	11.6		
	Completely Agree	12	10.0		
Aware of issues that may affect the achievement of objectives.	Complete Disagree	30	34.9	2.419	1.401
	Disagree	21	24.4		
	Unsure	16	18.6		
	Agree	7	8.1		
	Completely Agree	12	14.0		
Prepared to cooperate with everyone.	Complete Disagree	27	31.4	2.570	1.451
	Disagree	18	20.9		
	Unsure	23	26.7		
	Agree	1	1.2		
	Completely Agree				

	Completely Agree	17	19.8		
Able to interpret knowledge and apply it.	Complete Disagree	17	19.8	3.209	1.519
	Disagree	12	14.0		
	Unsure	21	24.4		
	Agree	8	9.3		
	Completely Agree	28	32.6		
Trusted by members of the organization.	Complete Disagree	4	4.7	3.860	1.042
	Disagree	5	5.8		
	Unsure	14	16.3		
	Agree	39	45.3		
	Completely Agree	24	27.9		
Able to set long-term goals.	Complete Disagree	3	3.5	3.512	.904
	Disagree	1	1.2		
	Unsure	45	52.3		
	Agree	23	26.7		
	Completely Agree	14	16.3		
Able to have future visions.	Complete Disagree	10	11.6	3.233	1.224
	Disagree	9	10.5		
	Unsure	35	40.7		
	Agree	15	17.4		
	Completely Agree	17	19.8		
Able to work towards a united identity for the organization.	Complete Disagree	1	1.2	3.756	.766
	Disagree	3	3.5		
	Unsure	23	26.7		
	Agree	48	55.8		
	Completely Agree	11	12.8		

**Level of work performance of teachers**

Table 6 shows the current study's overall analysis of teachers' work performance. Again, the teachers' work performance level is at a medium level ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=.381$ ).

Table 6

*Descriptive Analysis of Work Performance of Teachers*

	Performance	Valid N (listwise)
N	86	86
Minimum	2.96	
Maximum	4.63	
Mean	3.590	
Std. Deviation	.381	

Table 7 shows the current study's item-based analysis of teachers' work performance.

Table 7

*Item-based Analysis of Work Performance of Teachers*

Item	Scale	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I can plan my work so I can complete my work on time.	Complete	4	4.7	3.314	.898
	Disagree				
	Disagree	2	2.3		
	Unsure	54	62.8		
	Agree	15	17.4		
	Completely Agree	11	12.8		
I make minimal work plans.	Complete	19	22.1	3.140	1.390
	Disagree				
	Disagree	8	9.3		
	Unsure	13	15.1		
	Agree	34	39.5		
	Completely Agree	12	14.0		
I always work towards the objectives.	Complete	9	10.5	3.012	1.035
	Disagree				
	Disagree	7	8.1		
	Unsure	55	64.0		
	Agree	4	4.7		
	Completely Agree	11	12.8		
	Complete	30	34.9	2.733	1.597
	Disagree				

I can segregate the main issues and other issues in my workplace.	Disagree	12	14.0		
	Unsure	16	18.6		
	Agree	7	8.1		
		21	24.4		
	Completely Agree				
I know how to prioritize my work.	Complete Disagree	7	8.1	3.186	1.068
	Disagree	8	9.3		
	Unsure	46	53.5		
	Agree	12	14.0		
	Completely Agree	13	15.1		
I know how to perform well in my work with minimum effort and time.	Complete Disagree	12	14.0	3.570	1.333
	Disagree	7	8.1		
	Unsure	9	10.5		
	Agree	36	41.9		
	Completely Agree	22	25.6		
I can work collaboratively to ensure better results.	Complete Disagree	3	3.5	4.023	1.137
	Disagree	3	3.5		
	Unsure	27	31.4		
	Agree	9	10.5		
	Completely Agree	44	51.2		
I accept more responsibilities.	Complete Disagree	4	4.7	3.826	1.190
	Disagree	9	10.5		
	Unsure	18	20.9		
	Agree	22	25.6		
	Completely Agree	33	38.4		

I begin new assignments when I complete old assignments.	Complete Disagree	3	3.5	3.767	1.145
	Disagree	4	4.7		
	Unsure	38	44.2		
	Agree	6	7.0		
	Completely Agree	35	40.7		
I accept challenging tasks when I can.	Complete Disagree	13	15.1	3.640	1.422
	Disagree	7	8.1		
	Unsure	8	9.3		
	Agree	28	32.6		
	Completely Agree	30	34.9		
I work hard to increase my working knowledge from time to time.	Unsure	58	67.4	3.535	.822
	Agree	10	11.6		
	Completely Agree	18	20.9		
I work hard to increase my working skill from time to time.	Complete Disagree	6	7.0	3.477	1.003
	Disagree	8	9.3		
	Unsure	17	19.8		
	Agree	49	57.0		
	Completely Agree	6	7.0		
I can come up with creative solutions for new problems.	Complete Disagree	3	3.5	3.105	.651
	Unsure	73	84.9		
	Agree	5	5.8		
	Completely Agree	5	5.8		
I always seek new challenges at work.	Complete Disagree	28	32.6	2.477	1.262
	Disagree	14	16.3		
	Unsure	23	26.7		

I always exceed expectations.	Agree	17	19.8	3.523	1.308
	Completely Agree	4	4.7		
	Complete Disagree	8	9.3		
	Disagree	7	8.1		
	Unsure	34	39.5		
	Agree	6	7.0		
I participate in work meetings actively.	Completely Agree	31	36.0	3.977	1.310
	Complete Disagree	10	11.6		
	Disagree	4	4.7		
	Unsure	2	2.3		
	Agree	32	37.2		
	Completely Agree	38	44.2		
I always find alternatives to increase my work performance.	Complete Disagree	1	1.2	4.267	1.056
	Disagree	4	4.7		
	Unsure	21	24.4		
	Agree	5	5.8		
	Completely Agree	55	64.0		
I always grasp available opportunities.	Disagree	2	2.3	4.174	.923
	Unsure	24	27.9		
	Agree	17	19.8		
	Completely Agree	43	50.0		
I can solve complicated problems.	Complete Disagree	6	7.0	3.430	1.133
	Disagree	8	9.3		
	Unsure	33	38.4		
	Agree	21	24.4		
	Completely Agree	18	20.9		



I complain about unimportant tasks at work.	Complete Disagree	8	9.3	3.372	1.006
	Unsure	39	45.3		
	Agree	30	34.9		
	Completely Agree	9	10.5		
I always blow problems out of proportion.	Complete Disagree	7	8.1	3.372	1.138
	Disagree	11	12.8		
	Unsure	24	27.9		
	Agree	31	36.0		
	Completely Agree	13	15.1		
I always focus on negative aspects in any situation at work.	Unsure	29	33.7	4.233	.929
	Agree	8	9.3		
	Completely Agree	49	57.0		
I always discuss the bad things about work with my colleagues.	Complete Disagree	3	3.5	3.919	1.043
	Disagree	5	5.8		
	Unsure	17	19.8		
	Agree	32	37.2		
	Completely Agree	29	33.7		
I always talk badly about my work to people outside of my organization.	Complete Disagree	1	1.2	4.360	.993
	Disagree	2	2.3		
	Unsure	20	23.3		
	Agree	5	5.8		
	Completely Agree	58	67.4		

I do not complete work based on expectations.	Unsure	14	16.3	4.674	.743
	Completely Agree	72	83.7		
I successfully avoid doing work.	Complete Disagree	8	9.3	3.198	1.166
	Disagree	12	14.0		
	Unsure	36	41.9		
	Agree	15	17.4		
	Completely Agree	15	17.4		
I sometimes do not do anything productive, even during working hours.	Unsure	51	59.3	3.628	.827
	Agree	16	18.6		
	Completely Agree	19	22.1		

### Relationship between Variables

Table 8 shows the Pearson correlation analysis. A significant positive but weak relationship exists between sustainable leadership practices and teachers' work performance ( $r=.433$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis,  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the level of sustainability leadership practices among headmasters of primary schools in the Klang district and the level of work performance of teachers in primary schools, is rejected.

Table 8  
*Correlation Analysis*

		Sustain	Performance
Sustain	Pearson Correlation	1	.433(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	86	86
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.433(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	86	86

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

### Discussion

#### Level of Sustainability Leadership Practices

The level of sustainability leadership practices in the current study is at an average level. One major reason for this situation is the challenges and obstacles the teachers and school heads face when implementing sustainable leadership principles. How and Ishak (2021) discussed this issue when they found that sustainable leadership practices were standard for secondary school leaders in a district in Sabah. They gave examples of how sustainable leaders who have

clear visions of where they want to take their organization often find it challenging when they need to work to inspire and motivate their team to achieve that vision. This is primarily because of the workload that exists in these schools. In addition, sustainable leaders need to be empathetic and understand the needs of their employees, customers, and other stakeholders. However, with issues like a shortage of teachers and resources, the idea of empathy is often non-existent in some schools (Sabeti & Hamzah, 2020).

The average level of sustainable leadership practices appropriately reflects certain aspects. For instance, ethics-wise, sustainable leaders prioritize ethical behavior and integrity, setting an example for others to follow. The survey in the current study shows that leaders are not just ethical but also accountable. For example, sustainable leaders are accountable for their actions and take responsibility for their mistakes. These ethics and values are often shown by the school leaders (How & Ishak, 2021). Other studies involving respondents from schools in Selangor (Sabeti & Hamzah, 2020; Shah & Nor, 2021) have also shown that ethics and accountability are principles of sustainable leadership among school leaders. However, as mentioned by Iqbal and Ahmad (2021), the issue with sustainable leadership happens in continuous learning, where collaboration and innovation are two significant elements. Sustainable leaders work collaboratively, recognizing that diverse perspectives lead to better decision-making. Plus, sustainable leaders are expected to be innovative and willing to take risks to create new solutions to complex problems. When teachers are not allowed continuous learning, collaboration, and innovation are harder to achieve at the school level (Johari et al., 2018).

Ultimately, this affects the other elements of sustainable leadership, such as being future-focused. Sustainable leaders are future-focused, considering the long-term impact of their decisions on their organization and society. They recognize the importance of protecting the environment and work to minimize their organization's impact and value inclusivity and diversity, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. The current study's findings reflect those reported by Abdullah and Arokiasamy (2016), where these principles barely existed.

### **Level of Work Performance of Teachers**

The level of work performance of the teachers who took part in this study is also at an average level. This study scores a high mean level for teachers who believe they do not work up to their leaders' expectations and standards. A teacher's work performance is often related to many factors influencing performance in various aspects (Afshar & Doosti, 2016). Therefore, studying work performance can be complicated because it is hard to determine how each teacher perceives it. For example, job satisfaction is one prominent factor affecting teachers' work performance, and within the dimension of job performance, there are many other factors apart from the leadership of principals or headmasters (Russell et al., 2017). Compared to the past study by Hoque et al (2020), teachers' work performance in the current study is better because they reported a lower work performance among teachers from secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur. One issue in the current study is the lack of past studies that focus on work performance among primary school teachers in Malaysia. This has prevented the researcher from getting a clearer picture of the work performance among teachers in Malaysia.

However, according to Chong et al (2017) who studied the aspects of the work performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia, leadership factors are just one of the many factors that contribute to work performance. This revealed a significant gap in research on teachers'

work performance in Malaysia. This research by Chong et al (2017) aims to investigate the influence of work pressure, emotional intelligence, and extrinsic motivation on work performance among teachers in government primary schools in Malaysia. In addition, this study provides information on which variables are most effective in achieving better teacher performance in government primary schools. The primary data collection method in this research is distributing questionnaires to respondents. Three hundred eighty-four questionnaires were collected from primary school teachers from various areas in Malaysia. They reported that work pressure, stress, emotional intelligence, job satisfaction elements, and extrinsic motivation of teachers all influenced the level of work performance among teachers.

### **Relationship between Variables**

There is a significant correlation between sustainable leadership practices and teachers' work performance, as reported in the current study. However, the positive relationship is considered weak and may not be sufficient to support the premise. On the contrary, Rehman et al (2019) show a strong, significant positive relationship between sustainable leadership practices and teachers' work performance. The difference in the finding can be attributed to the different contexts in which these studies are conducted. On the other hand, Iqbal et al (2020) found that sustainable leadership practices can significantly affect the psychological security and performance of the individual at work. Once again, this report is not comparable to the current study because Iqbal et al (2020) studied respondents who taught at higher learning institutions. As mentioned earlier, teachers' work performance depends on external and internal factors. Therefore, it is hard to pinpoint if sustainable leadership practices alone may have a significant relationship to the elements of work performance. The lack of studies on sustainable leadership practices in schools and teachers' work performance remains a significant issue in understanding the phenomenon better.

### **Motivation and Contribution**

From a research perspective, this study provides significant information on the primary schools in Malaysia. Primary schools are the cornerstone of public education and must receive equal attention, especially regarding research. This study contributes to the field of leadership research targeted toward primary schools in Malaysia. Hence, it will not only fill the gap in research for sustainable leadership in primary schools but also reinforce the importance of practicing sustainable leadership at the primary school level. Additionally, the findings of this study will drive other researchers to examine further the practices of sustainable leadership among primary school heads.

Education needs constant revitalization and must be revitalised by increasing teachers' performance. Consequently, education must frequently evolve through sustainability to remain relevant to the current generation's needs. Therefore, evaluating the factors that motivate teachers' performance, especially at the primary school level, is pivotal. This study will motivate primary school heads or headmasters to practice the different aspects of sustainable leadership that can accelerate their teachers' performance levels. Correspondingly, the data from the current analysis will support the notion that sustainable leadership practices can boost teachers' performance, increasing the quality of education in Malaysia. In the long run, Malaysian schools need sustainable leaders capable of leading their respective schools in a decentralised manner.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is critical in understanding the factors that influence teachers' performance in primary schools in Malaysia. Sustainable leadership practices are becoming increasingly important in various sectors, and they must be applied in schools in Malaysia. The lack of research in sustainable leadership for primary schools in Malaysia is a sign that more research is needed. This study is significant because it contributes to the field of study. Future research in this area can use the findings reported to understand the phenomenon further.

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