

THE INFLUENCE OF INTEGRITY PRACTICES ON TEACHING PROFESSIONALISM AMONG PRIMARY TEACHERS' INTERIOR PART OF SABAH: MEDIATED PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT STUDY

LATIFAH BINTI MOHD. ZAINMATJIN & SOON SINGH BIKAR SINGH*

Faculty of Education and Sports Science Study, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The research that has been carried out aims to identify the influence of integrity practices on the school teachers' professionalism and professional support among primary school teachers in the interior of the State of Sabah. A total of 409 teachers who participated in the field study were randomly selected to give feedback. This study chose a quantitative survey design with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. Feedback was obtained through a questionnaire containing three instruments with SPSS software with AMOS Version 24. The findings of the study show that the practice of integrity has a significant influence on the quality improvement of teacher professionalism ($\beta = 0.743$, $t = 10.838$, and $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). While the practice of integrity has a significant relationship with professional support ($\beta = 0.493$, $t = 5.123$, and $p\text{-value} = .001$). Similarly, the relationship between teachers' professionalism and professional support has a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.129$, $t = 4.814$, and $p\text{-value} = .001$). Based on the standardized estimated outcome and bootstrapping process on 5000 resampling, professional support shows that it has partially mediated the relationship between integrity practice and teaching professionalism. The results of the study are beneficial to the education sector, especially to the department and school management. Finally, this study contributes to the development of management and administration of organizations, especially schools.

Keywords: Integrity Practices, Teachers' Professionalism, Professional Support

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A profession that used to be a Nobel Prize is now one of the most stressful professions, as many scholars have found compared to other jobs (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2016). Many people, regardless of background and position, seem to put the blame and pointed finger at the teachers, especially if there is an unpleasant incident related to the behavior of students, such as cases of pregnant students, bullying, drugs, bullying, dropouts, and so on. Similarly to issues of job marketability and being soft skills incompetent, technological & digital illiterate and critical thinking among the graduates hinders the institution's staff (Okolie, Nwosu, and Mlanga, 2019; Poláková, Suleimanová, Madzík, Copuš, Molnárová, and Polednová, 2023). Therefore, teachers' professionalism ought to be prioritized and pay attention so educators are looked down on, degraded, and dishonored. This study aims to identify factors to regain its higher position and elevate the teachers' image in the communities.

The factors that threaten the professionalism of teachers have been much debated lately, not only among scholars but also among those who are not knowledgeable about it (Skåland, 2016).

Therefore, attitudes and approaches that are not transparent and assume that civil servants are immune can no longer be contained. Misconduct by civil servants is quickly exposed to the public. This has to do with the change in the environment of human life—not only advanced technology and digitalization, but an individualistic attitude—caring about one's own pocket in a greedy way is becoming more and more common. Every day there is news about civil servants being remanded and dragged to court for breach of trust, soliciting and accepting bribes, and so on (Graham, 2021). Negligence in carrying out duties and lack of focus on the field of duty is one of the public's worries about the quality of service offered by civil servants, including academic staff and teachers in schools. Based on the factor of the level of public employment service, which is less satisfactory, this study takes the factor of integrity practice and professional support, which is investigated to see whether it can affect teaching professionals.

The integrity practices among civil servants and the public are accumulated in the corruption index of each country. Several agencies monitor the development of the corruption index, whether internal or external agencies (Yunus and Burhan, 2023). In 2021, the country's ranking index fell from 53 points in 2019 to 47 points in 2022. According to the MACC report in 2023, a total of 125 people were recorded as being involved in the misconduct of accepting and giving bribes, as stated in the portal on November 11th, 2024. This shows that the level of integrity is damaged and affects the good name of the country in the lowest world ranking. Therefore, the study set the objective to identify whether there is a relationship between integrity practices and teachers' professionalism. Apart from that, the study also set a second objective to identify whether there is a relationship between integrity practices and professional support. While the third objective identifies whether there is a relationship between professional support and teachers' professionalism. Therefore, this research question is guided by the following statement and conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study, there are three variables to reveal the main question, namely integrity practice, teaching professionalism, and professional support. The study was conducted in various schools in four (4) districts. The literature review is to highlight and discuss in terms of the basic theory of the variables and their relationship to form the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study.

2.1 Integrity practice and Teacher's professionalism

The practice of integrity is often on the lips of the public for debates, especially among public servants. The word integrity comes from the Latin word "integer," which means 'working well, undivided, integrated, intact, and uncorrupted' (Green, R. (2016). According to Monga, M. (2016), integrity refers to a quality of a person's character; however, there are other uses of the term. For example, the integrity of a wilderness region or an ecosystem, a computerized database, a work of art, and so on. Similarly, integrity in science is also related to planning, proposing, performing, reviewing, and reporting must be executed accordingly. All of that action or job must be in accordance with values such as fairness, obedience, accountability, honesty, and stewardship. (Huberts, 2014) has reiterated that the underlying basics of integrity

are "approach" and its relationship with concepts/views with "ethics" or "corruption" or "good governance" in the center.

Nihan Demirkasımoğlu (2010) says teacher professionalism means meeting certain standards in education, and it is related to proficiency based on the debate regarding the position of the teaching profession as one of the semi- or full-time professional careers. However, according to Tatto, M. T. (2021), in order for teachers to be considered professionals, the education field needs to develop the capacity to ensure teachers' professional learning and that these efforts need to be informed by use-inspired research and an inquiry culture in university-based teacher education programs. In the Malaysian context, teacher professionalism has outlined a set of standards and behavior criteria that must be followed in order to be effective educators. It includes teachers' behavior, accountability, values preparation, reflection, growth, presence, and advocacy. All of these criteria are in Malaysia's teachers' standard document, which must be fulfilled.

Moore, and Clarke (2016) in their article critically explore how teachers' attachment to notions of professionalism can facilitate a process. The teachers find themselves obliged to enact central and local educational policies that they do not believe in but are required to implement. In their view, professionalism involves the interweaving of egalitarian and performative discourses and that the balance of the former facilitates the enactment of the latter. Taking Berlant's notion of ruthless optimism to help understand this process, where teachers' attachment to professionalism may assist them in undermining the values they believe to be embodied. Based on the research of the data, both researchers categorized four types of teacher stances in relation to professionalism. First, the teachers who broadly support central education policies (policies understood in this paper are basically neoliberal). Second, both teachers who significantly reject or oppose key aspects of central policy (for example, perceived overemphasis on basic literacy and numeracy, or output-based measures of successful teaching and learning, or the content set out in the national curriculum). Third, who actively seek space and opportunities in practice where alternative pedagogies can develop without compromising students. Finally, teachers who are dissatisfied with key aspects of central policy but feel they have no choice but to follow it often express a professional need to ensure their students succeed in a particular system, even if they personally feel the system is unfair, misguided, or potentially harmful. Therefore, integrity is crucial to controlling the teacher's behavior.

Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017), in their article, uncover and consider the value of adopting a professional code of ethics for teachers. They outlined how codes of ethics benefit the community of educators, namely by providing mechanisms to regulate autonomy and promote the sharing of professional ethics. They also examine in this article the main arguments against the code of ethics. There are three arguments discussed and analyzed based on teacher ethics codes elsewhere in Canada. They concluded that a code of ethics must meet three conditions for it to favor autonomous judgment rather than blind adherence to established norms: openness of meaning, room for dissent, and avoidance of moralistic language. Based on this article, it can be understood that there is a need to control the teacher's behavior in carrying out his duties as a teacher that does not conflict with the code of ethics and positive values.

Based on previous studies, it has been shown that there is a justification for research in relation to the practice of integrity to identify the relationship between the two, not only to increase the

professionalism of teachers but also to control behaviors that conflict with government rules and regulations and the ethical values of our country's society. Therefore, this literature highlight guides the current study to formulate hypothesis 1, which is Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the practice of integrity and teachers' professionalism.

2.2 Integrity Practices and Professional Support Relationship

The relationship between integrity and professional support seems unclear. Integrity Practice is aimed at the conduct in carrying the trust and responsibility of a job that is bound by the rules and code of ethics of employment. While professional support is an obligation of the superiors and middle management in the form of initiatives to help teach professionalism. In some past studies, there have been studies that unravel the relationship between the two.

Mintrop, H. (2012) has explores the tensions between external accountability obligations, educator's professional values, and student needs. Strategic, cognitive, and moral dimensions of this tension are captured with the central category of integrity. It is found that schools under similar circumstances differ on the degree of integrity. Schools with high integrity have a good balance between values and reality, are more cohesive and more open to dissent. It demonstrates the power of integrity as a key virtue of leadership under accountability pressures. It shows the different ways integrity can be forged in schools and the different ways it can be missed with consequences for school life. It stresses the point that it is quite conceivable that ideological zeal, Machiavellian strategizing, or eager system conformism may produce more forceful agency than integrity. But as everyday responses they are not as realistic, ethical or productive as the striving for integrity

Teaching, as a profession, has professional ethics arranged in the teacher's code of ethics (Kusumaningrum, Sumarsono, & Gunawan, 2019). The code of ethics is a reference for teachers in carrying out their teaching assignments in class. Teachers' teaching performance is the teachers' achievements in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. Their study uses a quantitative approach. The variables studied were professional ethics and teachers' teaching performance. The instrument used to measure the two variables was a questionnaire. The research respondents were 20 teachers of junior high school in An Nur Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. To test the research hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used. Hypothesis test results concluded that there is a positive relationship between professional ethics and teaching performance at junior high school in An Nur Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia, with a correlation coefficient of 0.498.

Based on the highlights of the literature, this study draws the second hypothesis as a direction, which is Ho2: There is no significant relationship between integrity practices and professional support.

2.3 Professional Support and Teachers' Professionalism Relationship

Usually the management of a highly reputable and stable organization does not ignore the welfare and empowerment initiatives of its human resources. The integrity and success of an organization lie not only in its leadership policies but also in emphasizing the elements of up skilling and sustaining learning and training programs. In other words, professional support is crucial and needs to be continued not only in learning, training, finance, and resources but also

morals and due consideration to psychological needs. Highlights of previous studies found that the relationship between the two is closely related to fostering and facilitating the development of teachers' professionalism.

Jokinen, and Välijärvi, (2017), in their study, have discussed that making mentoring a tool for supporting teachers' professional development emphasizes that school principals should create and organize professional learning activities based on the needs of students and teachers. The research aimed to evaluate the level of support provided for teachers' professional development in the school. It is a cross-sectional survey design of the quantitative method. The data was collected from the 4,729 teachers working in Sanliurfa province in Turkey. The results suggested that the school principals supported the professional development of the teachers occasionally, and the analysis outcome indicated only 25.5% of principals supported teachers' professional development sufficiently. The results also showed that the principals of high school teachers supported their professional development more than the principals in primary and secondary schools. The male principals supported the professional development of the teachers more than the female principals. Moreover, the teachers' level of education did not make any difference in their perceptions.

Cooper, Fitzgerald, Loughran, Phillips, and Smith (2020) have studied professional learning for teachers in school. Based on an in-depth study of a large number of teachers at one school, this paper begins to unpack the participants' views about and the expectations they hold for their professional learning. Data were collected over two school terms through several focus group interviews, reaching approximately two-thirds of the staff. Analysis of the data sets led to the identification of themes used to categorize teachers' perceived areas of developmental need (e.g., special needs, wellbeing, etc.) and what would be required to address these needs (e.g., time, collaboration, etc.). Findings indicate that what teachers receive to support their professional learning is not always what they want or value. Their aspirations regarding their professional learning needs tend to be more informed by their own beliefs about learning and teaching rather than more global, systematic, or operational requirements. Professional learning is a significant focus of discussion in most schools, but it is not all that common for these conversations to be informed by teachers' needs and expectations. Instead, they tend to be driven by external factors, such as accreditation, mandated professional development requirements, and policies. Tanang, H., & Abu, B. (2014) in their investigation on the teachers' professionalism and professional development practices, which still have lower quality based on the law and do not produce an improved performance. This investigation focuses on teachers' behavior-attitude, pedagogic skills, and diversity of learning activities through effective professional development as well as commitment to continuous improvement. The design of this study employs an exploratory mixed-method design with a triangulation approach. Simple random sampling is used in choosing 331 samples out of the 2367 population to answer the questionnaires. The study findings show that gender has a significant difference in behavior-attitude practice, while education professional qualification is significant on both behavior- attitude and teachers' learning activities. The qualitative findings show the need to display exemplary behavior, attitude, strength, teaching skill, knowledge, and beliefs through diversity learning activities in effective professional development. Teacher professional development needs support on policy, morals, infrastructure, and finances that can lead teachers to be professional. This study has provided a model of teacher professional

development as an input for improving the quality practice of teacher professionalism and professional development.

Many past studies have discussed the relationship between professional support and teachers' professionalism, which has a strongly significant relationship. Both constructs have different roles. The difference between integrity practices and professional support is very clear, as is its role in empowering the teacher's professionalism. Integrity practices are compliance with the rules and regulations and ethics' code of the service, while professional support is the skills and competence to perform tasks well and effectively. Previous studies led this study to the third hypothesis, Ho3: There is no significant relationship between professional support and teachers; professionalism.

2.4 Professional Support as a Mediator

As stated earlier, the professional support factor is a vital criterion in striving for teaching professionalism. The knowledge and skills to assume and carry out the role of education is not something that is easy and can be done by everyone. Therefore, since long ago, a teacher needs to get special training. In the past, teacher training institutions were known by various names, such as teacher training centers, teacher training institutes, and others. Now many teachers are born with various institutions, such as Campus College Institute, university, and so on. However, professional post-study support and teacher training are very necessary. It is not only facing the real and challenging atmosphere due to the change in the diverse and complex student environment. The teacher needs to master and adapt the situation from post-COVID-19 and in real-time. The presence of COVID-19 has taught the public how much a disaster or crisis affects the lives of working people. Not only do you need technology skills to deliver online lessons but also to find food and medicine supplies.

Cai, Wang, Bi, and Tang (2022) have investigated how teacher work engagement was affected by the crossover of job resources between the professional community (including shared norms, collective responsibility, collaboration, and reflective dialogue) and teachers. The sample included 1123 primary and secondary school teachers in China. Their finding indicated that the professional community offers valuable organizational and social resources that can be used by teachers to enhance their personal resources, such as self-efficacy, and thus become more engaged in their work. Shared norms and collective responsibility serve to shape a growth-oriented school culture that stimulates teachers' willingness to collaborate and improves their confidence in teaching and thus should be stressed by school leaders when introducing changes.

The Li, Liu, Chen, and Yao (2022) study's aim was to improve understanding of the relationship between teacher engagement and self-efficacy by investigating the potential mediating role of participation in continuing professional development (CPD) and the moderating role of years of teaching experience. The study was cross-designed with self-reported measurements from 615 Chinese teachers. The results indicated that teachers' work engagement positively predicted self-efficacy, and participation in CPD mediated this relation. The indirect effect of participation in CPD. was stronger for young teachers than for experienced teachers. The degree of participating in updating, reflective, and collaborative

activities was related to the increase of self-efficacy. Findings lend support to encouraging involvement in CPD activities in order to promote teacher self-efficacy.

There are many previous studies that show the need for professional support among teachers, especially regarding technology and digitalization beside PLC and CPD. Therefore, this study hypothesizes professional support as a mediator. Ho4: Professional support does not significantly mediate the relationship between practice integrity and teacher professionalism.

2.5 Conceptual Framework study

Through so many literature highlights, a conceptual framework is formed visually about the research that has been conducted. Based on the conceptual framework of Figure 1, integrity practices is an independent variable (IV). Meanwhile, teachers' professionalism is a dependent variable (DV). In the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is known as a direct effect relationship. While professional support is acting as a mediator. It becomes a dependent variable when integrity practices are related to it. However, it becomes an independent variable when it is related to teachers' professionalism. This kind of professional support relationship is known as an indirect effect relationship (Kline, 2023). In other words, designations 'a' and 'b' in the diagram are indirect effects. Designation 'c' is direct effect.

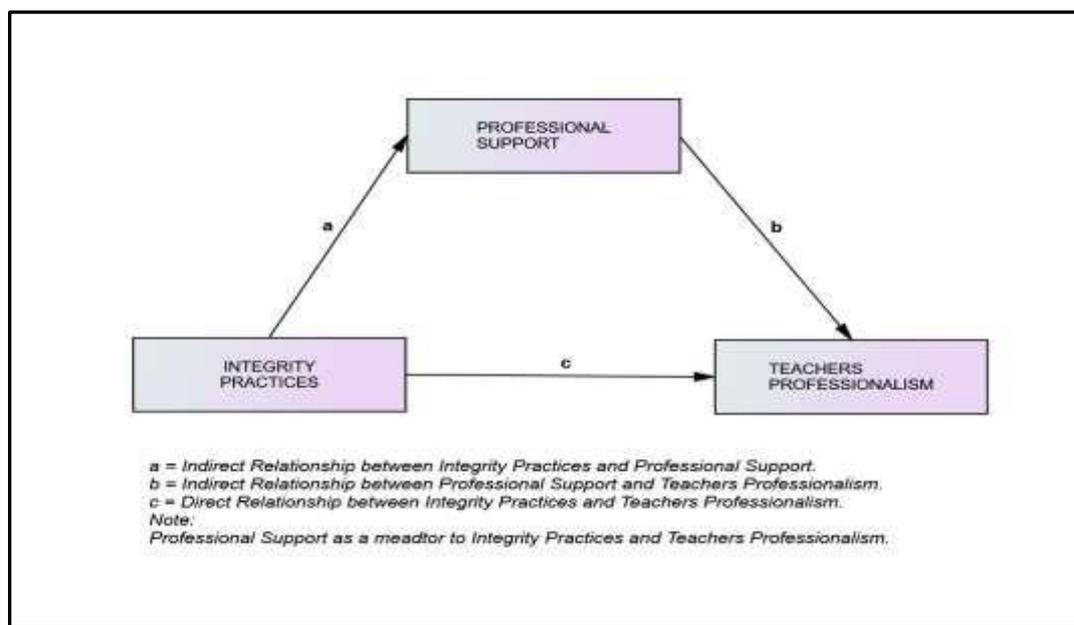


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Study

3.0 METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH APPROACH

This study chose a quantitative survey design study to unravel the issue of teachers' professionalism, which is a concern of the public, especially parents who demand education reform across the country. The selection of this approach is not only cost-effective but very persuasive to give confidence about the future of children's education, which is a concern. This study was carried out on primary school teachers who are currently serving in schools that

involve four districts in the upper part of the State of Sabah. This study received support and permission from the Malaysian Ministry of Education, State Education Department, District Education Office, and schools. The determination of the school was made by the lottery method, while the teachers were chosen randomly based on a list of 383 odd-ranked teachers based on Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 table.

This study uses four instruments to collect data in the field face-to-face. The content and language of each instrument question have been consulted and validated by local subject experts who serve and are practitioners in higher education institutions and the state's public service sector. Data were collected with the written permission of the school principal and school teacher. The selected teachers were given an explanation regarding the objective of the study, compliance with the confidentiality act applicable in the public service, and the right to be a respondent and provide a certificate of participation in the study (Arifin et al., 2018)

Research survey that contains four instruments. The first is the teacher's demographic profile, which contains 5 items such as gender, age, education level, job title, and work experience. The second is the integrity practices adopted from the National Integrity Agency, which contains 16 items. The third is Teacher Professionalism which is also taken from the Malaysian Ministry of Education, Department of Education (SKPMG) which contains 16 items (Malaysia, K. P., 2013). Bin Hassim and Mohammad, (2024). The fourth is professional support, which is also collected from the teacher assessment instrument.

The data obtained was checked manually before being entered into the SPSS with AMOS Ver. 24 application. Feedback received that is incomplete has been followed up back to the respondent to ensure that all surveys are fully completed. Out of the 450 forms sent, only 409 teachers returned them. However, this study is not faced with an insufficient sample. Studies that use the structural equation modeling approach have specific requirements to carry out analysis that is divided into two levels. First is the structural measurement stage. The data set should be free from missing values, have a sample size > 200 people, have linearity, have a Cronbach's alpha reliability value $>.6$, and reach the level of convergent and discriminant validity (Gagnon, Stone, and Garst, 2017). Based on the assumption check carried out on the data set, this study has met all the requirements to carry out the second-level analysis of the structural theory or model. In the structural theory or model, the fit model must meet three categories of indexes as a valid model, namely, absolute fit RMSEA (less than 0.08) and GFI $= > 0.90$, incremental fit CFI, TLI, and NFI (> 0.90), and parsimonious fit χ^2/df (less than 5.0) (Stone, 2021).

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDING

The data obtained in the field has been checked and confirmed that it is free in terms of missing values, straight line responses, and incomplete responses, of which as much as 30% did not get responses from the respondents. Hence, it is removed from the data set (Woolley, Handel, Bronsvort, Schoenebeck, and Clements, 2020). Central Tendency Dispersion Analysis shows that the collected data approaches a normal distribution where Skewness and Kurtosis are in the range of $-+ 2$ and 3, respectively.

4.1 Structural Measurement Assumption Checking

Since this study has a sample size of 409, it is assumed to be normal. Furthermore, this study takes the SEM approach, which only requires a sample size of 200 and above. Apart from that, some assumptions that need to be fulfilled in the SEM approach are to ensure that the constructs achieve a good level of linearity. Based on collinearity analysis, Tolerance is below one, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) does not exceed as shown in Table 1 (Jacob, J., & Varadharajan, R. 2024).

Table 1: Collinearity Statistic

Constructs	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.561	.264		5.910	.000		
Teachers Professionalism	-.106	.069	-.101	-1.533	.126	.559	1.789
Integrity Practices	.129	.069	.125	1.873	.062	.548	1.824
Professional Support	.000	.072	.000	.002	.999	.505	1.982

Next, an assumption check is carried out to identify construct correlation. Based on Table 2, it shows that the relationship between the three constructs is significantly related at 0.01 (2-tailed) at a moderate level. For example, the relationship between integrity practices and professional teachers is at 0.616. Meanwhile, integrity practice and professional support are at 0.643 correlation. Likewise, teacher professionalism and professional support correlated at 0.650. It is realized that there may be a relationship between items in other constructs. But it can be overcome in structural equation modeling analysis.

Table 2: Constructs Correlation

CONSTRUCTS	Teachers Professionalism	Professional Support	Integrity Practices
Teachers Professionalism			
Professional Support	.650**		
Integrity Practices	.616**	.643**	

Note: **correlations is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

Based on the construct reliability analysis, all three constructs are on a high-level scale, as shown in Table 3. Referring to the teachers table, professionalism reached a Cronbach's alpha level of 0.954, integrity practices at a level of 0.901, and professional support at a level of 0.938. The same is the case with convergence validity constructs. Teachers' professionalism attained average variance extracted value at 0.518, integrity indicated value at 0.614, and professional support at 5.80. Similarly, the constructs shown have met discriminant validity. The constructs' composite reliability of teachers' professionalism at 0.921, integrity practice at 0.946, and professional support at 0.939.

Table 3: Constructs Reliability and Discriminant Validity Using EFA and CFA

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR	Remarks
Teachers Professionalism	0.945	0.518	0.921	Established
Integrity Practices	0.901	0.614	0.946	Established
Professional Support	0.938	0.580	0.939	Established

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extracted and CR = Composite Reliability

The study has performed HeteroTrait-MonoTraits (HTMT) Ratio analysis to identify whether the constructs exhibited discriminant validity. Table 4 indicates that the correlation matrix of HTMT has indicated HTMT ratio less than 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Therefore, the constructs used in the study were fit for the structural equation modeling approach.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity using HeteroTrait-MonoTrait Ratio

Variable Items	Outcome	Variables	Outcome	HTMT Ratio
Correlation		Correlation		
Teachers Professionalism	0.552	Teachers P & Integrity P	0.169	0.168
Integrity Practices	0.302	Teachers P & P Support	0.142	0.21
Professional Support	0.661	Integrity P & P Support	0.171	0.461

Note: None of the correlation exceeding .85.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis of Demography as shown in Table 5. Based on the table below, it indicates that female respondents overcome the number of males, respectively, 33% to 67%. The age of the respondent ranges from 29 to 60 years. Age of 30 to 39 is the larger group at a rate of 43%, age 40 to 49 at a percentage of 32.3, age 50 to 60 years at a rate of 20%, and under 29 years of age is only 5.1%. The respondents' education varies: MCE at 2%, HSCE at 1%, Diploma at 2%, Bachelor degree at 81.7%, Master degree at 13%, and PHD at 0.5%. The majority of the

respondents are ordinary teachers, composed at 71.9%, Head Panel at 19.6%, Senior Assistant at 5.9%, and 2.7%. The respondents' experiences were also varied. The majority of the teachers have 16 years and above (44.7%), 6 to 10 years at 25.7%, 11 to 15 years at 20.0%, and less than 5 years at 9.5%.

Table 5: Demography Descriptive Analysis

GENDER	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	135	33.0	33.0	33.0
Female	274	67.0	67.0	100.0
AGE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under 29 yrs. old	21	5.1	5.1	5.1
30 To 39 yrs. old	176	43.0	43.0	48.2
40 To 49 yrs. old	128	31.3	31.3	79.5
50 To 60 yrs. old	83	20.3	20.3	100.0
EDUCATION	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
MCE	8	2.0	2.0	2.0
MHCE	4	1.0	1.0	2.9
Diploma	8	2.0	2.0	4.9
Bachelor Degree	334	81.7	81.7	86.6
Master Degree	53	13.0	13.0	99.5
Phd	2	.5	.5	100.0
JOB TITLE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ordinary Teacher	294	71.9	71.9	71.9
Head Panel	80	19.6	19.6	91.4
Senior Assistant	24	5.9	5.9	97.3
Principal	11	2.7	2.7	100.0
EXPERIENCE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0 To 5 Yrs.	39	9.5	9.5	9.5
6 To 10 Yrs.	105	25.7	25.7	35.2
11 To 15 Yrs.	82	20.0	20.0	55.3
16 Yrs. And Above	183	44.7	44.7	100.0

4.3 Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Structural measurement indicated that the model study has met model fit indexes. Figure 2 shows that CMIN = 168.317, degree of freedom is 51, p-value.000, CMIN/DF = 3.300, NFI is 0.942, TLI is 0.949, CFI is 0.959, and RMSEA = 0.075. The model is correct; the probability of getting a discrepancy as large as 168.317 is 0.000.

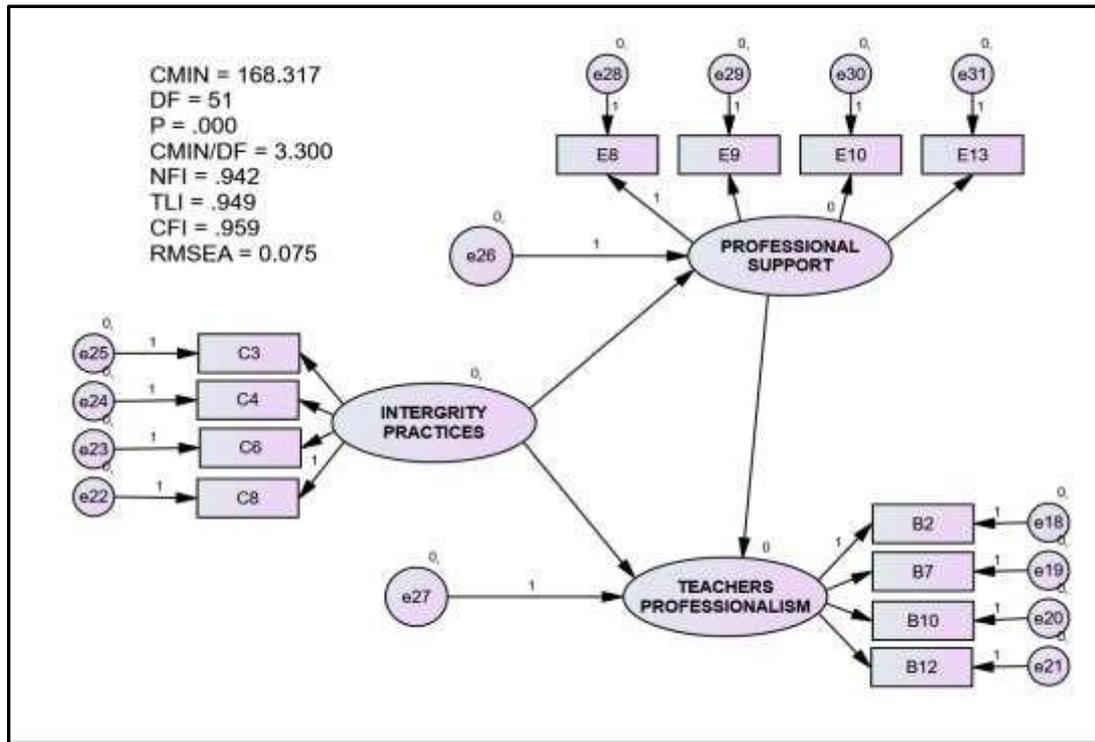


Figure 2: Model Fit

Table 6 indicates the outcome of the model study. Based on unstandardized path regression weight, the integrity practices relationship with teachers professionalism is significant ($\beta = 0.493$, $t = 5.123$, and $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). The teachers' professionalism relationship with professional support is also significant ($\beta = 0.129$, $t = 4.814$, and $p\text{-value} 0.001$). Meanwhile, the integrity practices in relation to teachers' professionalism are also significant ($\beta = 0.743$, $t = 10.838$, and $p\text{-value} = 0.001$).

Table 6: Unstandardized Path Regression Weights

Construct Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
Integrity Practices -->	0.493	0.096	5.123	0.001	Significant
Teachers Professionalism -->	0.129	0.027	4.814	0.001	Significant
Integrity Practices --> Teachers	0.743	0.069	10.838	0.001	Significant

Table 7 is the outcome standardized path regression weight. This outcome shows that the direct relationship and the indirect relationship are all significant (0.713). However, the direct relationship between integrity practices and teachers' professionalism is greater than the indirect relationship between integrity practices and professional support (0.289). Similarly, the indirect relationship between professional support and teachers' professionalism is smaller (0.21). This shows the effect of the presence of professional support as a mediator on the relationship between integrity practices and teachers' professionalism. This is confirmed by

bootstrapping at a rate of 5000 resampling as in Table 8. Professional support has only partially mediated the relationship between integrity practice and teachers' professionalism.

Table 7: Standardized Path Regression weights

CONSTRUCTS RELATIONSHIP	ESTIMATES	REMARKS
Integrity Practices --> Professional Support	0.289	Significant
Integrity Practices --> Teachers Professionalism	0.713	Significant
Professional Support --> Teachers Professionalism	0.21	Significant

Table 8: Bootstrapping Process

Constructs Relationship	Direct Effect	P-Value	Indirect Effect	P-Value	Confidence Level		Remarks
					Low B.	Upper B.	
Integrity Practices --> Professional Support --> Teachers Professionalism	0.713	0.000	0.106	0.000	0.030	0.101	Partial Mediation

5.0 DISCUSSION

Further in this section, we will discuss the results of the study in detail. Based on the findings of the analysis, it was found to have answered the objectives, event questions, and hypothesis as outlined at the beginning of the article.

The first goal and research question is to identify whether the relationship between integrity practices and teachers' professionalism data shows that it is significantly positive. This shows that the relationship between the two is very strong, cohesive, and dependent. In other words, the practice of integrity should be reinforced in the management and administration of a school so that teacher professionalism can control the attitude and behavior of teachers in carrying out their duties as educators to their students. A few teachers were found to spend more time strengthening and enriching mastery activities among weak students. This is because the overall achievement of the students in public examinations, especially the Malaysia Certificate of Education (MCE) ranking, is still not good. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Moore, and Clarke, 2016; Schwimmer and Maxwell, 2017). Therefore, school leaders need to increase the practice of integrity among teachers.

The second goal and research question revolve around aspects of integrity practice and professional support. Professional support has long been practiced in the country before the

education development plan was launched in 2012. Indeed, there are many efforts and various brands of strategic planning to increase and plan professional support for teachers. For example, subject trainers, trainers of training programs (TOT), mentors, outstanding teachers, Spectorate superintendence visits, and many more. The latest is school improvement partners (SIP) and school improvement and special coaches (SISC), who often travel to schools to provide input in the form of sharing best practices (Yan, Na, Alam, Masukujjaman, and Lu, 2022). However, all of these efforts lack coverage and documentation that is appropriate for analysis. So it's no wonder why the issue of teacher professionalism is still a delusion for the public. In fact, the Malaysian Ministry of Education spends a large amount of money on creating support professionals for teachers in schools. Previous studies show that the findings of this study are also in line with previous studies (Mintrop, H. (2012; Kusumaningrum, Sumarsono, and Gunawan, 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings of the study have answered the objectives, questions, and hypotheses of the study.

Further discussion of the study's findings related to the third objective, question, and hypothesis, which is to unravel the relationship between professional support and teachers' professionalism. The results of the analysis found that the relationship between the two was also significant. Although from a statistical point of view it seems small, this is an indication of teachers' perception as if they are not inclined to the efforts of the superiors who preserve continuous learning to make teaching professionalism competitive. For example, the organization of the professional learning community (PLC) (Cooper, Fitzgerald, Loughran, Phillips, & Smith, 2020), which is not comprehensive, is carried out in schools in the country. Past studies show that there is also a parallel with the current study (Jokinen, & Välijärvi, 2017). Rationally, if the professional aspect of support is strong, the question of professional teaching does not arise. Therefore, the professional support aspect is not only in the field or profession of teaching, but in any profession, professional support should be a vehicle for increasing professionalism.

The final objective of the study is to examine whether professional support is a mediator variable to the relationship between integrity practices and teachers' professionalism. As mentioned earlier in this article, the aspect of professionalism is very important and must be held in any field. This is very relevant to the rapidly changing world environment. Continuous learning through the efforts of innovation and creativity can help solve old and new problems that arise due to rapid changes in the environment of human life. In other words, it's not just teachers who need deep training, continuous training, sharing discoveries and new approaches, and so on to face the issue of incompetence in a field. Therefore, this study employs the aspect of professional support as a mediator variable. The results of the study found that it is present and functions as a mediator to the relationship between the practice of integrity and teachers' professionalism partially and parallel with previous studies (Cai, Wang, Bi, and Tang, 2022); Li, Liu, Chen, and Yao, 2022). This finding is very important to understand because professional support is one of the factors that can affect teachers' professionalism apart from the practice of integrity. Therefore, this finding is not only able to answer the objectives, questions, and hypothesis but also provides significant guidance and the need to be empowered in the management of teaching professionalism.

6.0 LIMITATION

This study is limited to primary school teachers in the upper part of Sabah. Statistically, the study outcomes indicate low covariance correlation and no more than 2 on each item; this research model can be said to be suitable to be carried out elsewhere with a larger scale (Stevens, 2013). This study is carried out in a simple manner based on the cost and time that are suitable for the period of study and the conditions of research permission issued by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) and State Education Department (SED). Long studies are feared to disrupt the smooth learning process and pursuit in schools.

7.0 IMPLICATION

Based on the method, theoretical, and practical implementation of the study, it has positive implications. This study provides an opportunity to explore new approaches in terms of methods or approaches to research questions. Apart from the ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis approach that was practiced in previous studies (Arpino, Pronzato, and Tavares, 2014), this study uses the structural equation model (SEM) in accordance with the development of statistical applications that can detect direct and indirect relationships. Likewise, this study can be reviewed for its implications in terms of theoretical research and instruments. With the SEM approach centered on the fit index model, the content of the instrument can be refined objectively. Finally, this study has significant implications in terms of its implementation with the use of user-friendly technology and applications. Research can be carried out cost effectively.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

The increase in the number of students that is not balanced with the size of the classroom has an impact and threatens the professionalism of teachers. The amount of workload that is non-teaching business or administrative duties is very burdensome for teachers in our country. Although there are many efforts to reduce it, it has not been carried out evenly and comprehensively so far, such as the establishment of teacher assistants and so on. The desire to internationalize the level of education is faced with limited financial and human resource allocations. Teachers in schools not only teach but also carry out tasks beyond their skills, such as game and cultural coaches, accompanying teachers to extracurricular activities that can involve legal risks in the event of accidents and deaths among students. Based on the very broad scope of the teacher's job description, this study gives some recommendations so that the Ministry of Education and the authorities need to give a specific definition of teaching professionalism. The second suggestion is to categorize academic teachers and extracurricular teachers so that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly and extracurricular activities are not carried out by the same teacher. Extracurricular teachers should be given special training and a license to teach activities such as soccer games, life-servers for swimming activities, and other high-risk activities. Third, teachers who face court cases related to school extracurricular activities are assisted in legal terms. For example, there are many cases involving accidents, injuries, and deaths during extracurricular activities where teachers face threats from parents and law enforcers who have little defense. This gives a little distraction and confidence to the teacher to actively engage and is labeled as an unprofessional teacher.

9.0 CONCLUSION

There are many factors that threaten professional teachers everywhere and in the country. The threat comes from various aspects, both directly and indirectly, such as slackness in the management and administration system at all levels, from superiors to school management. There are no less external influences that affect the behavior and practices of teachers who are careless and stuck with negative elements such as drugs, breaches of trust, lack of focus on the field of work, and so on. Therefore, the goal of the study is to identify factors that can help increase the professionalism of teachers. Integrity Practices that are very dominant in controlling human behavior in order to be accountable to one's professional field are among the factors that can be reinforced continuously without compromise. Likewise, the professional support that is implemented should be given emphasis on check and balance, such as for and profit in business. The government spends a lot of people's money on the education sector; there needs to be an awareness of the value of every cent spent. Overall, this study has achieved its objectives, and the research questions and hypotheses have been statistically answered. This study benefits the public, especially the education sector and teachers who are still serving. Finally, this study contributes to the development of the literature on leadership, management, and education administration.

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Truly, we declare that this article is original and has not been published by any publishing agency. The researchers confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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