The Reliability and Validity of Suburban School Leaders Communication Styles

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to validate the construct and behaviors of communication styles among the school leaders in suburban schools at Terengganu. In addition, the degree of the communication style of headmasters will be verified in this study. Before collecting actual data, the reliability test of 30 respondents was done. The finding indicated that the Alpha Cronbach values are achieved ranging from 0.86 to 0.97. This cross-sectional study involved 278 respondents who completed an online questionnaire through Google Forms adapted from The Principals Communication Styles Questionnaire for Principals (PCSQP). After normality tests were run, a total of 179 data was selected to be analyzed. Next, the data were analyzed using SEM AMOS successfully validated 22 of 28 behaviors of namely Aggressive, Assertive, Open, and Inclusive Communication Styles. This finding illustrates the diversity of communication styles practiced among school leaders in a suburban school. Furthermore, the validated behaviors in this study might help school leaders practice and assess their communication styles. However, it is recommended that further research be conducted in a wider location so that the findings of the study can be generalized.

Keywords: Teacher communication style; communication type; school leaders; suburban school; inclusive communication style

INTRODUCTION

Communication is part of our life. In an organization, communication is important to connecting the unit there. In the twenty-first century, communication come easier. We can communicate without boundaries. Communication occurs either formally or informally (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Thus, communication has shaped one's behavior and communication style. A communication style is a combination of language and action used in communicating. Communication action refers to the communication behavior used to elicit certain reactions or responses in various contexts (Oo et al., 2020). Generally, differences in communication style are influenced by factors such as culture, education, family environment, and experience causing different styles of communication between individuals (Aribisala, 2006; Marlina et al., 2020).

In school contexts, the communication style of the school leader is highly essential in attracting teachers to archive the school vision and mission. Principals' or headmasters' communication is critical in deciding the smooth management and administration of the school to fulfil the goals established together (Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020). While good communication has a major impact on motivation, subordinate performance, and organizational image, it is not the only one (Oo et al., 2020). Thus, communication skills must be mastered by every school leader, to ensure that every school management can be implemented properly and perfectly, or in other words can provide a climate of communication (Widyastuti et al., 2021).

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Communication may therefore be described as the process of sharing information, ideas, pictures, attitudes, sentiments, and facts between the source (the sender) who transmits intended meaning to the receiver and leads the receiver to respond in the desired manner (C & Ayotunde, 2019). Communication is a two-way process of reaching out to others, mutual understanding in which participants create and share meaning as well as exchange (encode and decode) information, news, ideas, and feelings (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2009; Aribisala, 2006). A communication style has been described as the way a person utilizes verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviour to suggest how literally others should understand a message (Norton, 1978). In other words, communication implies a concept, a meaning, and an order that is all understood simultaneously (Chirila et al., 2011).

Based on Norton's definition, De Vries et al. (2009) defined a communication style as a distinct way an individual transmits verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal indicators in social interactions to present the identity he or she has or wants to (or appears to have), the way he or she interacts with others, and the way his or her message should be understood (C & Ayotunde, 2019).While, style is a mix of words and action, whereas communication style is interpersonal conduct employed when communicating (Lestari, Arif & Miko, 2020). That is, a communication style is a collection of communication actions used to elicit certain responses or responses in specific contexts. The appropriateness of the communication style chosen is determined by the sender's intent and expectations of the receiver (Rohim, 2018). Communication style is a manner of thinking and behaving, not a skill, but rather a preferred way of employing one's communication talents.

There are several methods to describe communication and communication style in the literature. In this study, the communication style that will be used is characterized by previous scholars as open, inclusive, aggressive, and assertive (C & Ayotunde, 2019). The open communication style refers to leaders creating an atmosphere that allows all individuals in the organization to express views and opinions on everyday issues within the organization and will always provide the necessary information to help all employees to perform their tasks more optimally (Akinwale & Okotoni, 2018).

While**,** aggressive communication style is a communication style that is used to convey desires, opinions, and needs by violating the rights of others to the interests and needs either verbally or physically (Bennett, 2019). Next, assertiveness is a strong communication or conversation style that can defend the rights of oneself and the rights of others and can express thoughts, feelings, and beliefs directly in a calm and positive, and honest way (Sherman, 2015). Finally, the Inclusive communication style is a style used by leaders to ensure all employees feel free to engage in decision-making related to duties and responsibilities (Baskin & Bruno, 1977; C & Ayotunde, 2019).

As a result, the headmasters must have a unique communication style to influence the person that reports to them (Marlina et al., 2020). This is reinforced by the study's findings,

which revealed that the headmaster's communication style affected motivation, professional dedication, and work satisfaction of teachers who can enhance school performance (Boon & Ghazali, 2011; Mansor et al., 2021). In terms of communication style, the study found that aggressive communication style, assertive communication style, open communication style, and inclusive communication style had a positive association with teacher job satisfaction and teacher commitment. The findings revealed that assertive, open, and inclusive communication styles are related to teacher job commitments. The more forceful principals communicate the more likely instructors will be devoted to teaching and learning (C & Ayotunde, 2019).

Another study found that the "structure" communication style of the principal had a strong link with effective school leadership (Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020). In this case, the communication style expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supports, and the thinking of the principal have a positive relationship with the school climate (Oo & Wai, 2020). In another study, the characteristics of dynamic style, structure style, equalitarian style, and reshape style were shown to have an impact on the formation of a pleasant school atmosphere (Oo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, good communication styles can assist headmasters in efficiently managing schools. This assertion is supported by the results of research on a female principal's communication style, which showed that the structuring communication style recorded the highest mean by emphasizing the usage of "verbal" and "nonverbal" in providing instructions (Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020).This communication method is direct since it impacts teacher accomplishment development as well as the ability to increase students' achievements and performance (Walanda & Setyanto, 2020).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Communication is a platform connecting the organization's subordinates. Thus, organization leaders are responsible for establishing effective communication networks. Unfortunately, in the context of headmasters' communication, the presence of efficient communication has been hampered by official obligations outside the school (Billy & Taat, 2020; Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020; Tiop & Talip, 2020; Yusof, Dayang Rafidah Syariff, et al., 2020). The issue of busyness has a detrimental influence on communication between school administrators and teachers (Zhong, 2016). The weakness of this communication, creating barriers in the delivery and sharing of information, guidance, and instructions. This problem becomes worse when some of the headmasters who does not care about effective aspects of communication while performing administrative duties in schools (Boon & Ghazali, 2011).

Worryingly, this communication weakness develops as a result of a poor communication style, a lack of communication, a communication gap, and the use of one-way communication (Misdi et al., 2019; Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020). This issue is complicated when certain headmasters are unconcerned about the need for good communication when executing administrative responsibilities (Che Md Ghazali et al., 2020).

In reality, this communication weakness is also the cause of disharmony in the organization (Munian & Hasan, 2020). In other words, if headmasters do not communicate openly and share authority with teachers (Idi et al., 2021). Therefore teachers will feel burdened while carrying out teaching and learning in the school and impact the efficacy of teaching as well as the effectiveness and the well-being of students in the future (Schaap et al., 2019).

Despite the diversity of communication styles among headmasters, there are still gaps that impede communication effectiveness (Jamaluddin & Hamzah, 2020). As a result, headmasters fail to communicate effectively (Nurudin, 2020) which is the primary cause of teacher supervision and guidance failure, which eventually impacts teacher efficacy (Mohamed

Adnan Khan, 2020). This can be emphasized through the findings of past studies showing the elements of communication style i.e. expressiveness, accuracy, goodness, support, reflective, aggressive style, and emotions of headmasters are at a low level.

While the communication style of positive expression, feedback, job description, and negative expression of work is an element of communication that is not practiced by teachers (Md. Yusof & Abdul Wahab, 2019). As a result, headmasters fail to communicate effectively (Nurudin, 2020) which is the main cause of teachers' supervision and guidance failures that ultimately affect the efficacy of teachers (Mohamed Adnan Khan, 2020; Nazrul et al., 2019). In contrast to studies conducted abroad that found aggressive communication styles and emotions correlated negatively with school performance (Ibrahim & Mahmoud, 2017).

In another study, the communication style of feedback, work description communication, and negative expressive communication of headmasters was at a low level (Billy & Taat, 2020). This problem becomes more problematic when some headmasters practice discrimination in communicating. The findings showed male headmasters lacked communication with female teachers and female leaders limited communication with male teachers (Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020). Some headmasters are compassionate towards teachers based on age group, seniority in office as well as power and authority to communicate (Nazrul et al., 2019).

This limitation fails to achieve a common set goal (Nazrul et al., 2019) which in turn has an impact on the self-efficacy of teachers and the inclusiveness of pupils (Nizam & Rosli, 2020). In addition, the ineffective communication style will cause the employees to be less disciplined in carrying out their duties and responsibilities (Hoar et al., 2020). The findings of this survey were further emphasized when the findings showed that the weakness of the teacher's communication style had been the cause of disagreement in the organization which ultimately deteriorated teacher job satisfaction (Mansor et al., 2021).

As a result, based on the concerns, problems, and gaps in the study, the door is wide open for this study to be carried out. In general, the purpose of this research is to identify the gaps that must be addressed to solve issues with headmasters' communication styles. Hence, this study aims to validating the instrument of communication styles to produce consistent results each time a measurement is performed. Besides that, this study also verifying the dimension of communication styles among school leaders. Therefore, there are four dimensions, and 28 behaviors are suggested in this study namely Aggressive Communication Style, Assertive Communication Style, Open Communication Style, and Inclusive Communication Style recommended by (De Vries et al., 2009).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional quantitative study attempts to increase a model for assessing school leader communication styles among leadership in suburban school. The Principals Communication Styles Questionnaire for Principals (PCSQP) (Akinwale & Okotoni, 2018; de Vries et al., 2010; De Vries et al., 2009) was used to assess headmasters' communication styles in this study. With five-scale, ranging from the lowest scale, extremely disagreement to the highest scale extremely agreement was distributed through selected school WhatsApp group. A total of 278 respondents among teachers in a suburban area was completely answered the online questionnaire. Before analysing the data, normality tests were performed to find outliers. The Mahalanobis Distance value was utilized to look for outlier findings (Mustafa et al., 2019; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). The Chi-squares Distribution Table value on the degree of freedom, the number of build items at the significant

level of p0.001, and the Mahalanobis Distance value greater than 143.3.44 as parameters, whereas the data that is outliers and carried out from the study (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). Finally, a total of 179 data proceeded to be analysed.

RESEARCH FINDING

The Reliability

Reliability test is usually measured through a pilot study. Reliability refers to the ability of a study instrument to produce consistent results each time a measurement is performed (Cohen et al., 2011; Mohd Majid, 2000). In this study, we used alpha Cronbach reliability analysis as it is suitable for use against statements using the Likert scale (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, we considered the views of Hair et.al., (2010) which stipulated the value of Alpha Cronbach received was more than 0.6.

To determine the reliability of questionnaire items, the survey was distributed online to 30 respondents among teachers in Setiu District, Terengganu. The results reveal that the aggressive communication style has the highest Alpha Cronbach's alpha (0.97). While aggressive and open communication styles have the same Alpha Cronbach score (0.87). Following that, the assertive communication style has the lowest Alpha Cronbach (0.86) score. This result shows the internal reliability was archived and the item's level of reliability is high and acceptable as shown in Figure 1.
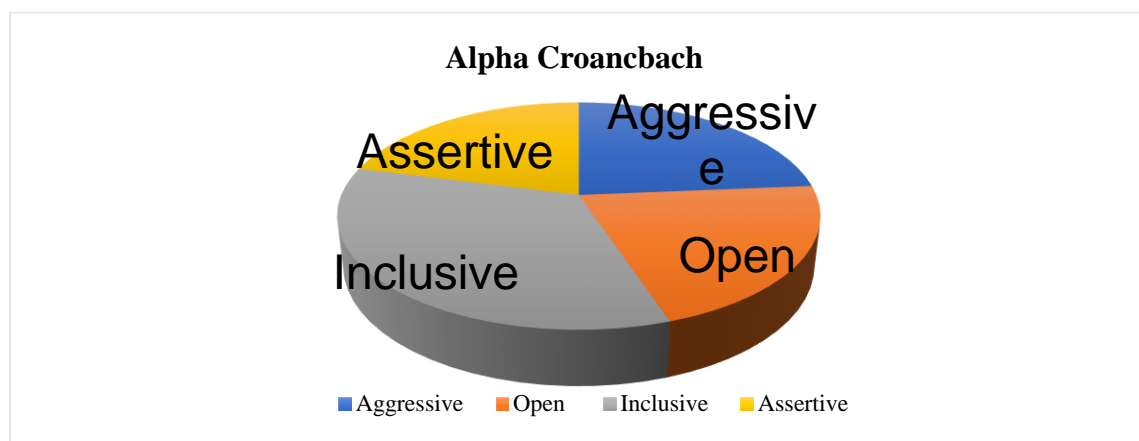

FIGURE 1. The Alpha Cronbach values

The Regression Weight

The value of the critical ratio (C.R) and the significance of Chi-Square use to confirm the factor. The C.R value must be greater than ± 1.96 for the proposed factor to be accepted (Chua, 2014; Hair et al., 2010). Table 3 shows that all the C.R value of the communication style construct exceeds ± 1.96. This finding indicates the aggressive communication style C.R. = -7.411; p=.000, inclusive communication style C.R. = 6.772; p=.000, assertive communication style C.R. = 11.25; p=.000, inclusive communication style and open communication style C.R.= 11.285; p=.000 each. Thus, all the constructs are contributing significantly to the proposed factors. As a result, it was shown that all four constructs strongly measured school leader's communication styles.

TABLE 1 Regression coefficient result

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R. ±1.96	P .000	Result
Aggressive	<---	Coomunication_Style	-.608	.082	-7.411	***	Significant
Inclusive	<---	Coomunication_Style	.786	.070	11.285	***	Significant
Assertive	<---	Coomunication_Style	.633	.093	6.772	***	Significant
Open	<---	Coomunication_Style	1.273	.113	11.285	***	Significant

The Discriminant Validity

Table 3 shows the result of the discriminant validity for all the constructs. Discriminant validity is achieved when the square root of the AVE's values is greater than the correlation value between the constructs (Zainuddin, 2015). Therefore, as shown in Table 3, the inclusive communication style had a square root of the AVE's of 0.770, higher than the assertive and aggressive communication styles. On the other hand, the inclusive communication style square root of the AVE's value lower than open communication style, Meanwhile, the aggressive communication style square root of the AVE's also greater than aggressive. assertive and open communication styles at 0.748 compared to 0.725. As a result, the suggested constructs in this model were deemed to fulfil the discriminant validity criteria.

TABLE 2. Discriminant validity: Inter-Construct Correlation (√AVE shows in diagonal)

	Inclusive	Open	Assertive	Aggressive
Inclusive	**0.770**			
Open	0.962	**0.717**		
Assertive	0.583	0.624	**0.740**	
Aggressive	-0.612	-0.655	-0.396	**0.773**

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To verify the construct and behaviours of communication styles among headmasters Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed. The model's items, constructs, and variables will be accepted if the regression weight for every factor loading (FL) is 0.708 or higher, the composite reliability (CR) is 0.708 or higher, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.5 or higher, and the square root AVE (AVE) for discriminant validity is greater than the value of correlation between an item and a construct (David F. L. et al., 1981; Hair et al., 2012; Meyers et al., 2013; Mustafa et al., 2019). Any item that does not fit the measurement model due to low factor loading should be removed from the model (Zainuddin, 2015). However, according to Hair et al. (2010), an external load value of 0.4 is acceptable if the AVE value exceeds the suggested value of >0.5. Figure 2 show the measurement model suburban school leader communication styles. Referring the model, CFA analysis was performed. Table 3 shows the values of FL, C.R, AVE and, √AVE obtained for Aggressive Communication Style, Assertive Communication Style, Open Communication Style, and Inclusive Communication Style. The values of FL, C.R, AVE and, √AVE obtained for Aggressive Communication Style are FL = 0.573 – 0.876, C.R = 0.911, AVE = 0.597, √AVE = 0.733. the Inclusive Communication style are FL = 0.603 – 0.881, C.R = 0.892, AVE = 0.545, √AVE = 0.798, the Assertive Communication Style FL = -0.482 – 0.706, C.R = 0.726, AVE = 0.392, √AVE = 0.626 and the Open Communication style values are FL = 0.515 – 0.802, C.R = 0.876,

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AVE = 0.476, √AVE =0.690. However, there are six behaviours are rejected represented by item B8, B10, B12, B13 and B14 (Assertive Communication Style) and B22 & B24 (Open Communication Style) due of low factor loading and AVE below 0.05.

TABLE 3. The FL, C.R, AVE, and √AVE values for communication style

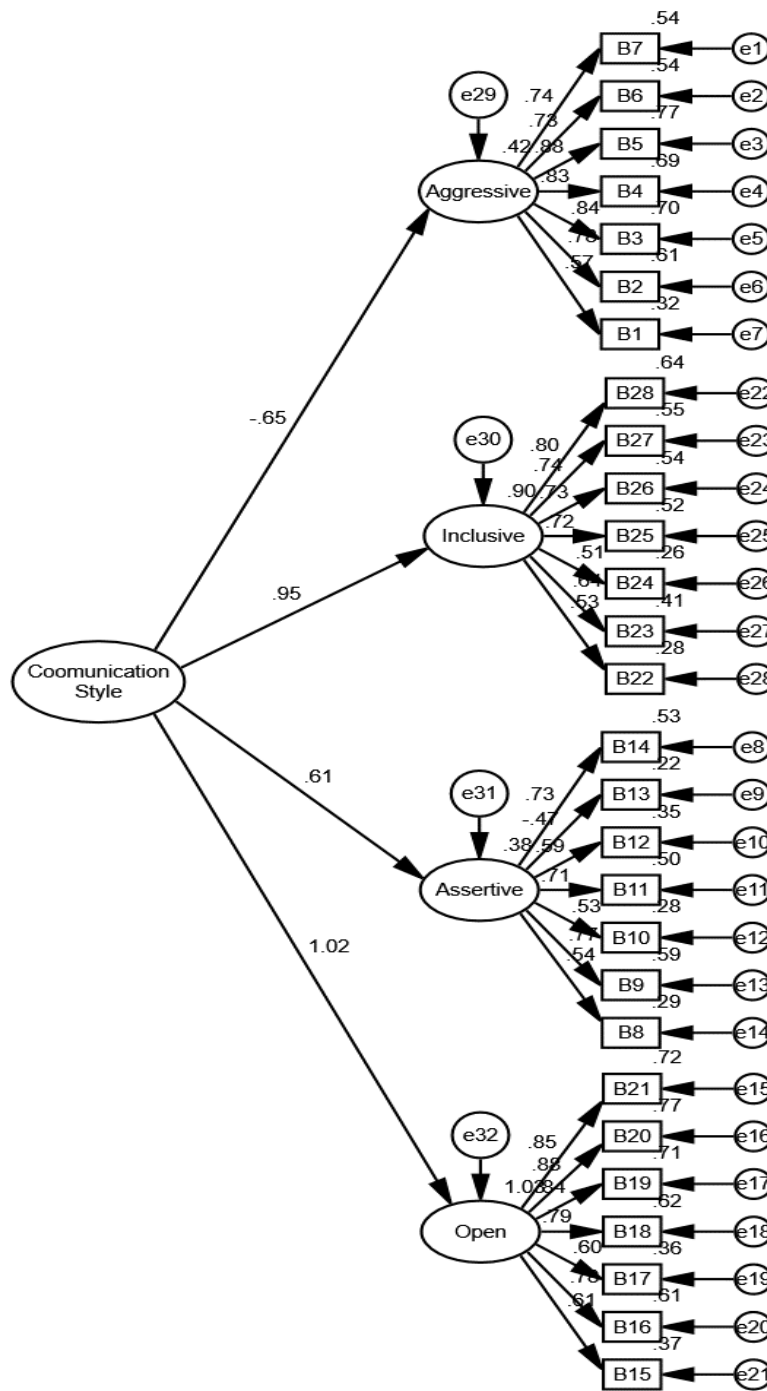| Constructs	FL	CR	AVE	√AVE	Remarks
Aggressive Communication Style	0.573 - 0.876	0.911	0.597	0.773	
Inclusive Communication Style	0.603 – 0.881	0.909	0.594	0.77	
Assertive Communication Style	-0.482 – 0.706,	0.726	0.392	0.626	B8, B10, B12, B13 and B14 are deleted due of low factor loading
Open Communication Style	0.515 – 0.802	0.876	0.476	0.69	B22 & B24 are deleted due of low factor loading

FIGURE 2. The measurement model of suburban leadership communication styles

Based on Table 3, items B8, B10, B12, B13, B14, B22 and b24 were deleted due of low factor loading. However, the values of FL, C.R, AVE, and √AVE are increasing after all low factor loading items were deleted as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. The C.R, AVE, and √AVE values for assertive and open communication style after deleted item

Constructs	Items	Description	CR	AVE	√AVE
Assertive Communication Style	B8	Fluency in the clarification of ideas	0.782	0.547	0.740
	B10	Taking the lead in a conversation in the school			
	B12	Determines the direction of conversation in a meeting			
	B13	Giving concise and unambiguous messages to teachers			
Open Communication Style	B22	Talk freely with all the teachers	0.84	0.513	0.717
	B24	Teachers feel free to discuss challenges facing them in teaching			

Finally, Table 5 shows that four constructs 22 constructs and behaviours represent by items indicator were accepted to measure the communication styles among suburban school leaders.

TABLE 5. The accepted indicators or behaviours of headmasters' communication styles

Constructs	Suggested Indicators	Accepted Indicators
Aggressive	7	7
Assertive	7	3
Open	7	7
Inclusive	7	5
Total	28	22

The Final Measurement Model of Suburban School Leader Communication Styles
Finally, this study successful developed the measurement model of headmasters' communication styles. This final measurement model of consists 22 behaviours and four constructs which is Aggressive Communication Style, Assertive Communication Style, Open Communication Style, and Inclusive Communication Style as shown in Figure 2.

To fit the model, thee several fit indices such as Chi-Square (CMIN), CFI, RMSEA, PNFI, and PCFI were tested. The model considered when the significant values of Chi-Square (CMIN) exceeding 0.05. The hypothesis model is also considered fit when the CFI is exceeding 0.90, but values between 0.80 and 0.89 are still within the acceptable margin. The RMSEA acceptable value is lower than 0.08, but it is still acceptable if less than 0.00 (Byrne, 2010; Yusof, Yaakob, et al., 2020). The PCFI and PNFI index values must exceed 0.5 for the fit of the model (Meyers et al., 2013). The final model considered fit if at least one of each categories of absolute relative and parsimony indexes were fit. Referring to Table 6, indicate that all indexes for each category were fit.
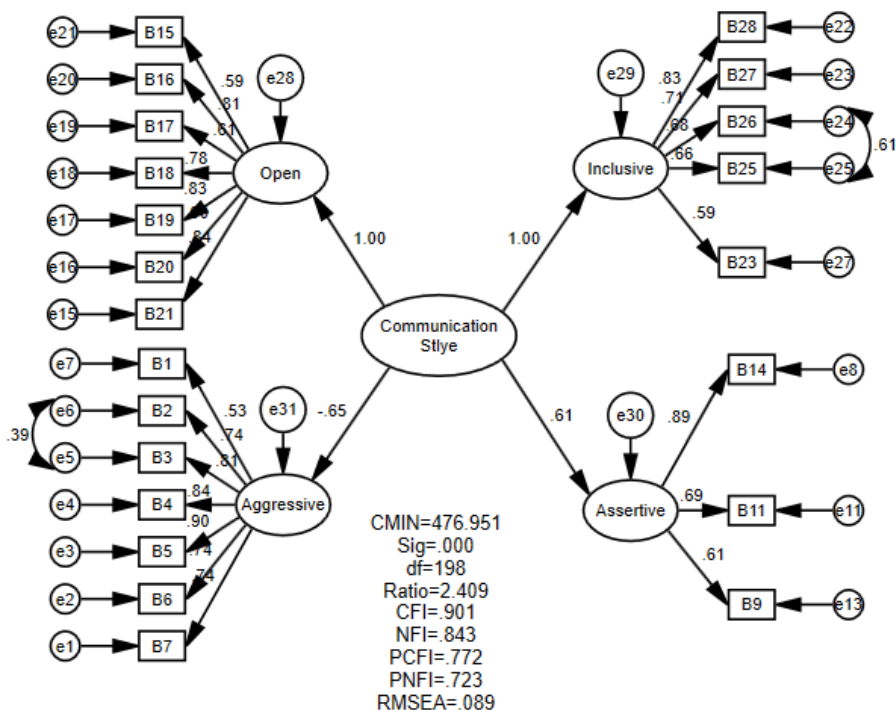
FIGURE 3. The final model of suburban school leader communication style

TABLE 6. The Fitness Indexes for the Suburban Teachers' Commitments Measurement Model

Categories	Indexes	Value	Result
Absolute	Ratio	2.409	The required level is achieved
	RMSEA	0.089	The required level is achieved
Relative	CFI	0.901	The required level is achieved
Parsimonious	PCFI	0.772	The required level is achieved
	PNFI	0.723	The required level is achieved

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In general, this preliminary study shows that there are four communication styles were practiced among the headmasters in Besut, Terengganu suburban area. The communication styles are Aggressive Communication Style, Assertive Communication Style, Open Communication Style, and Inclusive Communication Style. In terms of communication style, this result is consistent with past research that has discovered that headmasters use the same communication style (Abu Bakar & Alias, 2020; C & Ayotunde, 2019).

In addition, this study revealed that 22 of 28 behaviors were used by suburban school leaders in their communication strategies. In the context of the communication style of school leaders in Malaysia, the findings illustrate the diversity of communication styles practiced among headmasters. At the same time, Assertive Communication Style, Open Communication Style, and Inclusive Communication Style are also the choices of headmasters in performing their duties as administrators in schools. To influence others, such as teachers, students, and communities, headmasters must employ distinct communication techniques (Marlina et al.,

2020). Past studies found that communication style had a positive association with teacher job satisfaction, teacher commitment, and effective school leadership (C & Ayotunde, 2019; Tingkas & Ahmad, 2020).

Furthermore, in the context of practice, the findings of this study give a clear overview that overall, the communication style of headmasters is excellent. Headmasters practice Open, Assertive, and Inclusive communication styles at a high level. However, the findings of this study differ from that of which showed an Aggressive communication style to be the main choice of headmasters. This is because the findings of this study Aggressive communication style are at the lowest level.

However, school leaders must have effective communication styles in their regular communication routine. It can help headmasters to manage their school more effectively (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Thus, to strengthen the school education leadership, the Ministry of Education through leadership training institutions such as Aminuddin Baki Institute provides course opportunities to improve effective communication skills among headmasters. Besides that, the behaviors confirmed in this study can assist headmasters to practice and evaluate their communication styles. However, further study should be conducted by the new researchers to fill the gaps in this study. It is also proposed that researchers will expand the locality of the study so that the study findings can be independently available to all headmasters in Malaysia.

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