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## Impact of School Culture on School Effectiveness in Government Schools in Maldives

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School culture is considered to be a system of meanings that influence every aspect of the school including school effectiveness. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in Maldives. A quantitative approach using a survey design was adopted for the study. In order to achieve the research objective, a sample of 359 teachers was selected from government schools in the capital city, Malé through stratified random sampling. In the study, data were collected with scales related to two different variables, school culture and school effectiveness. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data using SPSS-25 and AMOS-25. The study revealed that the level of school culture and school effectiveness were high in Maldivian schools. According to the results, school culture had a significant influence on school effectiveness. The findings suggest that a positive and collaborative school culture enhances school effectiveness. In addition, it reflects the importance of creating a positive and collaborative school culture that empowers all school members to work towards common goals, which improves the effectiveness of the school. The findings confirm the current proposition that a positive school culture is instrumental in achieving school effectiveness, adding clarity to the understanding of school culture as a critical component of an effective school.

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## **Introduction**

Education is instrumental in shaping the lives of individuals in a society. Educational institutions need to provide quality education to prepare the students for the future generation. As such, schools offer an environment where students can learn the required skills and knowledge. Every organization has different characteristics based on its purpose and mission. Likewise, each school has a unique culture. The culture is observed as a key aspect of the school that enhances and gives meaning to various activities of the school (Dimmock et al., 2021). The culture of a school is the basic personality of the school which is formed by the shared norms, values, beliefs, and traditions of the members of the school (Karadag, Kilicoglu, & Yilmaz, 2014; Senol & Lesinger, 2018). The school culture can provide the best environment for the teaching and learning programs and connect the staff with the school (Dogan, 2017). The school culture is one of the factors which can impact school effectiveness (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014; Duan, Du, & Yu, 2018). In fact, it is considered to be one of the prerequisites of an effective school.

Literature on culture suggests that it is a phenomenon that lies below the surface (Abu-Jarad, Yusof, & Nikbin, 2010; Schein, 2004). It refers to powerful yet hidden concepts which have great impacts on all who are involved in an organization. These concepts are in the form of shared beliefs, norms, and values among the members of the organization which can be observed from the behaviours of the members (Ali, Sharma, & Zaman, 2016). Every school has its own beliefs and traditions which are impacted by the attitudes and relationships of its members. The culture of the school influences how people think, feel and act in the school (Peterson, 2002); and every aspect of a school including school effectiveness is impacted by a positive school culture (Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyriakides, 2010). However, school culture is still not widely considered as one of the determining factors of school effectiveness since educational issues are seen as concerns of educational psychology with a focus on the classroom environment as a didactic and methodical (Manaf & Omar, 2017; Widodo, 2019).

School effectiveness has been a topic of great interest involving serious debates for an increasing body of academic research since the 1960s. Earlier studies suggested that a child's achievement was influenced by family background and socioeconomic status, rather than school factors (Coleman et al., 1966) However, subsequent studies have revealed that school factors do in fact make a difference in students' learning irrespective of their socioeconomic status or family background. Studies on school effectiveness indicate that some schools are more successful than others, encouraging researchers to uncover the factors which contribute to an effective school. Researchers have offered multiple views of effective schools. An effective school has been defined as an organization in which all students are provided with equal opportunities and resources to learn, and as an environment that is conducive for development and accountable to all stakeholders (Gunal & Demirtash, 2016). A prevalent view of an effective school is that it is a place where students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake (Sammons, 2006, Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995). The main objective of schools is to improve their quality (Akay & Aypay, 2016) and an effective school is observed to add value to students' outcomes.

It is posited that organizations perform better when there is a high level of shared meaning, common mission, values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns (Dennison, 1984). By setting missions, visions and values, school leaders can shape the goals and actions, as well as motivate others (Craig, 2021). Accordingly, institutions work best when people are committed to common values and goals (Gaziel, 1997; Yasin et al., 2017). Since a positive school culture plays a significant role in directing the behaviour of school members towards achieving the



school goals (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2005), school leaders can contribute to the effectiveness of schools by building positive and collaborative school cultures.

The low quality of education at all school levels is a major challenge faced by the Maldivian education system (Ministry of Education, 2019). According to UNESCO (2017) 5-7 per cent of the country's GDP is spent on education; however, the outcomes have not been very satisfactory. The immense pressure to raise the performance of students, especially at the secondary exit examinations, has led to exam-oriented school cultures in the schools. The competitive nature of the Maldivian education system impedes school leaders from providing a holistic education (Ahmed, 2016). It is recognized that how society values school as a whole culture impacts how students engage with their own learning (D'Sa & Sheela, 2015), thus it is imperative to create positive school cultures to enhance school effectiveness. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to build a culture of collaboration to address the criticisms regarding the low standard of education in Maldivian schools (Ngang, 2011).

The culture of a school impacts every initiative taken in a school. For successful implementation of educational reforms, it is important to incorporate the reforms into the existing school culture, otherwise it could lead to superficial administration at the school level (Dimmock et al., 2021). Since the success or failure of any reform effort depends on how compatible it is with the school culture (Recepoglu, 2013), it is crucial to examine the impact of school culture on school effectiveness.

### ***School Culture***

In order to understand school culture, it is fundamental to know the concept of culture. However, individuals and organizations have their own interpretations of culture, thus it is a very broad and complicated concept to understand. For one thing, it is an abstract concept hence making sense of it is difficult (Schein, 2004). According to Sabanci et al. (2017) culture is a culturally rooted concept, communicated through our thoughts, beliefs and actions, which influences our perception and behaviour. Culture is seen in one's personality and character since it is a reflection of the accumulation of cultural experiences.

Schein (2004) conceptualized culture as having three levels, namely artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. These levels vary from very explicit indicators to deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions. Artefacts are the visible structures and processes including the norms, standards, and customs as well as the physical attributes of an organization (Sabanci et al., 2017). Espoused values are the ideals, values, goals, and aspirations (Schein, 2010). These include the ideal strategies, goals and principles which are considered as guidelines for organizational behaviour (Sabanci et al., 2017). Finally, the basic underlying assumptions are the taken-for-granted beliefs and values. The basic assumptions of culture explain the meanings and importance of things, guide the emotions and reactions, and tell how to handle oneself in various situations (Schein, 2010).

School culture is defined as the common values and beliefs, the signs and symbols, and the understanding shared among the members of a school (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Grunert, (2005) describes school culture as the guiding beliefs, assumptions and expectations that are apparent from how a school functions. The shared norms, values, beliefs, and traditions form the personality of a school that influences the behaviours of school leaders, teachers, and students (Karadag, Kilicoglu & Yilmaz, 2014). It reflects the deep patterns of values, beliefs and traditions accumulated over time. Moreover, culture is ongoing and evolving, therefore the goal is to create a culture that is positive and conducive to students and

staff and ensure that learning is at the core (Prokopchuk, 2016). Although schools have similar structures, every school is unique, having its own symbols, artefacts, traditions, and customs that shape the values, norms, and beliefs of those who belong to that school (Horton, 2018). Accordingly, every school has its own distinctive culture. In order to understand an organization, it is necessary to focus on the unique culture of each organization (Kalman & Balkar, 2018).

The concept of culture has often been confused with the term climate. The concepts have been used interchangeably and educational researchers have difficulty in understanding the concepts and the relationship between the two terms. This could be due to the fact that the terms are abstract, and they are better understood within the context of each of the professional fields (Parker, 2015). Although school culture and school climate are perceived to be the same by some practitioners, there is a marked difference between the concepts (Glisson, 2015; Nadelson et al., 2020). According to Hoy (1990), the concept of climate is used to describe variations in working environments while culture is perceived as a system of shared orientations that holds a unit together giving it a distinctive identity. Climate is formed by the environmental factors, the morale, atmosphere, and the well-being of the organization; in contrast, school culture refers to the norms, values and beliefs within a school (Parker, 2015). Thus, climate measures how organizational members view the perception of their colleagues whereas culture measures the individual member's beliefs and assumptions in an organization (Houtte, 2005). Both school climate and school culture are important components of school effectiveness and achievement (Hoy, 1990); but of late, culture has gained more importance in describing the character of a school (Houtte, 2005).

A positive school culture has an exceptionally positive influence on the members of a school and is considered to be a driving force in achieving the school goals (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2005). Thus, it is essential for schools to have the social conditions necessary for student and teacher success. Every aspect of a school including students' motivation, teachers' commitment, job satisfaction, collaboration and community building are impacted by a positive school culture (Kythreotis, Pashiardis & Kyriakides, 2010). According to Gruenert and Valentine (1998), an effective school culture can be identified through six factors, namely collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership. These factors are essential in understanding the collaborative culture of a school. Collaborative school cultures are known as the best setting for learning for students and teachers (Gruenert, 2005). In fact, a collaborative culture is considered to be an essential element for continuous improvement in the school (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019).

### ***School Effectiveness***

School effectiveness is a multifaceted concept (Akay & Aypay, 2016; Hoy & Ferguson, 1985); literature shows that the term 'school effectiveness' has been characterised in numerous ways by researchers. Mortimore (1991) defines an effective school as a school in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. Hence, in an effective school there is improvement in students' results in comparison with similar intakes in other schools while in an ineffective school there is not much change in students' outcomes when compared with their initial status (Sammons et al., 1995). School effectiveness has been considered as the ability to achieve the aims and objectives planned by the school (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). Moreover, school effectiveness is measured in terms of the level of goal attainment (Akay & Aypay, 2016). According to Day and Sammons



(2013), measurable academic outcomes are essential indicators of school effectiveness; nevertheless, social outcomes are significantly important. Laila (2015) argues that there isn't a universally acceptable definition of school effectiveness; however, an appropriate definition should consider students' learning and teachers' work. Thus, school effectiveness can be considered in terms of the internal factors, external factors, inputs, processes, and outputs of a school (Ali et al., 2016).

As with the definition of school effectiveness, researchers have suggested multiple variables and school outcomes as measures of school effectiveness. The Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) uncovered that socioeconomic status, race, and other family background factors had a more prominent effect on student achievement compared to the impacts of school factors. To contradict this opinion, there was a spate of studies attempting to show that schools did in fact make a difference in students' learning despite background and general social context (Edmonds, 1979; Mortimore, 1993). These studies have attempted to relate internal factors to school effectiveness. Based on this view, school culture should be considered as an internal factor in school effective studies (Ali et al, 2016).

Although there are no universally accepted measures of school effectiveness, there are several common characteristics used to describe an effective school. Ronald Edmonds (1979), one of the founding researchers of school effectiveness, suggested the characteristics of effective schools as strong administrative leadership, focus on basic skills, high expectations for student success, frequent monitoring of student performance and safe and orderly schools. These characteristics were known as the "Effective Schools Model". Building on the characteristics of this model, Lezotte (1991) formally proposed the "Correlates of effective schools". Lezotte (1991) stated that the attributes of an effective school are: a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress and home-school relations. The correlates of effective schools are a set of components that depend on each other, working together to achieve school effectiveness (Talebloo et al., 2018). The unique correlates of effective schools are considered as a means for achieving student success (Magulod, 2017); and these indicators have been acknowledged by numerous researchers for determining school effectiveness (Baldwin et al., 1993; Herman, 2017).

When comparing literature on school effectiveness, it can be seen that there are a lot of similarities among the identified factors. For instance, Dos and Savas (2015) describe the prominent characteristics of an effective school as: strong leadership, effective classroom management, well-organized curriculum, high expectations from students and teachers, believing that each and every student can learn, evaluation and feedback, orderly school climate, and family participation. Likewise, Ghani (2014) claims that effective schools can be achieved through the following indicators: creating a conducive environment, focus on the teaching and learning process, having high expectations from students, continuous assessment and evaluation of students, and good collaboration between the school and home. These studies implicate the importance of effective implementation of these responsibilities by school leaders and teachers. Implementation of the effective school indicators will have positive impacts on the students, teachers, and society in general (Kirk & Jones, 2004).

## ***School Culture and School effectiveness***

Educational research investigating the concept of culture suggests that school culture is highly significant for school effectiveness (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hargreaves, 1995; Leithwood & Sun, 2018). School culture is considered to have positive impacts on the students, staff, and the system of the school (Jamaludin, Akbar, & Sumantri, 2019). Positive school culture affects student achievement which in turn impacts school effectiveness (Parker, 2015). In fact, the outcomes of school such as students' attitudes and achievements and teachers' performance as well as the entire school system are impacted by the school culture (Pervez, Dahar, & Maryam, 2017).

Studies examining the relationship between school culture and school effectiveness show that there is a positive association between school culture and school effectiveness (Ali et al., 2016; Duan et al., 2018). High performing schools are linked with school cultures that focus on concrete indicators such as rituals, ceremonies and traditions, and discrete indicators like beliefs, values, norms, vision, and goals (Karadag et al., 2014). Positive school cultures are connected with improved student achievement, enhanced teacher collaboration, and higher teacher self-determination (Yasin et al., 2017). Moreover, the dimensions of school culture; specifically, professional development and learning partnership have a significant relationship with student achievement (Hammond, 2018). Professional development programs within the school allow teachers to learn with their colleagues and this collaborative learning influences their beliefs, attitudes, and practices, shaping the school culture (Dimmock et al., 2021). Ultimately, when there is a strong positive culture, the students are benefitted since staff enjoy working collaboratively to improve the quality of education. It has been shown that effective schools are led by school leaders who create positive school cultures that promote an effective teaching and learning climate (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014). When people in an organization work together, share common values and traditions, it impacts how they work together, in other words, the quality of school culture directly effects how teachers and administrators work in providing students with learning opportunities (Pearson, 2015).

From the literature review it is evident that school culture is an important factor that contributes to the effective functioning of a school. School improvement studies suggest a collaborative culture is critical for the success of schools (Liu, Bellibas & Gumus, 2020). Thus, to obtain insights into how school culture impacts the success of schooling, a quantitative study using a survey questionnaire was conducted. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in Malé, the capital city of Maldives. This knowledge could provide vital information regarding the elements of school culture for determining school effectiveness. For this purpose, the study focused on answering the following research question: Is there a significant relationship between school culture and school effectiveness in the schools?

## **Method**

In this section, the research design, participants, data collection tools, data collection and data analysis are discussed and explained.

## ***Research Design***

This study employed a quantitative approach to empirically examine the relationship between school culture (SC) and school effectiveness (SE). The research instrument was a survey questionnaire that was designed based on the literature review and included all the variables in the study. The survey method is a significant tool used in descriptive research



(Azam et al., 2021). This type of design is appropriate when independent variables are not manipulated and instead are studied as they exist (Creswell, 2018). This research method is used to describe the current status of the target population with respect to one or more variables. In this study, the aim is to determine the relationship between school culture and school effectiveness.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study comprised of teachers working in government schools of Maldives in the 2019-2020 academic year. Since 38% of the country's population resides in the capital city, the study was conducted in Malé. Moreover, government schools represent 97% of the total schools in Maldives. The population of this study consisted of 1509 teachers. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to represent both primary and secondary teachers. The sample size for this study was determined using a sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to this table, the minimum sample size required was 306. However, the sample size was increased to ensure accuracy in case of incomplete or unreturned forms and to avoid any issues with data analysis (Creswell, 2018). Out of 379 questionnaires received, 359 participants had completed the questionnaires and were included in the study.

This study considers five demographic factors relating to the participants including their school level (primary/secondary), gender, age, years of experience as a teacher and their length of service in their current school. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the participants of this study.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of the Participants

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
School Level	Primary	182	50.7
	Secondary	177	49.3
Gender	Male	72	20.1
	Female	287	79.9
Age	20-30 years	139	38.7
	31-40 years	138	38.4
	41-50 years	64	17.8
	51 and above	18	5.0
Years of experience as a teacher	1 year	49	13.6
	2-4 years	82	22.8
	5-9 years	97	27.0
	10-15 years	68	18.9
	More than 15 years	63	17.5
Years of experience at current school	1 year	88	24.5
	2-4 years	98	27.3
	5-9 years	102	28.4
	10-15 years	46	12.8
	More than 15 years	25	7.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 182 (50.7%) of the teachers participating in the study are from the primary level and 177 (49.3%) teachers are from the secondary level. While 287 (79.9%) teachers are female, 72 (20.1%) are male. The majority of participants, which is 139 (38.7%) are between 20 to 30 years old. Most teachers, which is 97 (27.0%) have working experience between 5 to 9 years. Finally, 173 (48.2%) teachers have been working in their current school for more than 5 years.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study, a survey questionnaire was used to collect data on two different variables, school culture and school effectiveness. The instrument consisted of three sections: Section A- demographic information, Section B- School Culture and Section C- School Effectiveness. To measure school culture, the study made use of the School Culture Survey by Gruenert and Valentine (1998) which has 35 items. School effectiveness was measured using the correlates of effective schools (Herman, 2017; Lezotte & Snyder, 2011) consisting of 21 items. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through a pilot study in one of the government schools. Result of the reliability test in Table 2 shows that the Cronbach’s Alpha values are above the accepted value of 0.70, thus considered acceptable (Taber, 2018).

**Table 2.** Reliability of Measuring Instrument

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha Values</b>
SC	Collaborative Leadership (CL)	11	.916
	Teacher Collaboration (TC)	6	.793
	Professional Development (PD)	5	.814
	Unity of Purpose (UP)	5	.866
	Collegial Support (CS)	4	.836
	Learning Partnership (LP)	4	.805
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>.960</b>
SE	Focused Mission and Clear Goals (FMCG)	9	.922
	Maximize Learning Opportunities (MLO)	5	.891
	Strong Instructional Leadership (SIL)	7	.923
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>.956</b>

### **Data collection**

Prior to the collection of data, the necessary approvals were obtained from the institutions. The data was collected personally through visits to the schools. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed of the objectives and scope of the research and given the assurance of their anonymity and confidentiality. The overall response rate among the participants was 74% which was an adequate representation of the target population. A survey response rate of 50% and above is considered generalizable to the population from which the sample is developed (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Data collection was within a time frame of 30 days.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis process involves the analysis and interpretation of the data. The data collected in this study were analysed using SPSS and AMOS Version 25.0. Based on the objectives of this study, descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted. The demographic characteristics of the participants and the level of school culture and school effectiveness were measured through descriptive statistics. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesis of this study which was to determine the impact of school culture on school effectiveness. SEM is a comprehensive multivariate modeling technique that relies on factor analysis and multiple regression or path analysis to evaluate hypotheses about relationships among observed and latent variables (Fan et al., 2016). In this study, maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) was used in the estimation process. MLE is the most widely used estimation technique and is effective when multivariate normality is met (Hair et al., 2014).

Screening for normality is a critical step of multivariate analysis. Since the study was using





maximum likelihood estimation for SEM, multivariate normality was assessed. Multivariate normality can be detected by examining the skewness and kurtosis. The skewness and kurtosis statistics can test normality of continuous data when the sample size ( $n$ ) is at least or greater than 50 (Mishra et al., 2019). Result of the assessment of normality of data is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Normality of Data

Variable	skewness	kurtosis
Collaborative Leadership (CL)	-0.719	0.913
Teacher Collaboration (TC)	-0.584	0.644
Professional Development (PD)	-0.471	0.536
Unity of Purpose (UP)	-0.438	-0.070
Collegial Support (CS)	-0.777	1.224
Learning Partnership (LP)	-0.633	0.442
Focused Mission and Clear Goals (FMCG)	-0.761	1.025
Maximize Learning Opportunities (MLO)	-0.727	0.474
Strong Instructional Leadership (SIL)	-0.699	0.680
<b>Multivariate</b>		<b>53.198</b>

When dealing with statistical procedures, it is important to test the normality of data. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data were examined to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The values were between  $\pm 1.96$ , indicating that the skewness and kurtosis were in line with the multivariate normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014). In addition, the data were screened for any omissions or inconsistencies and dealt with appropriately (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The survey data was collected from only teachers which might have caused common method bias, leading to subjectivity and inaccurate estimates of impacts and relationships between the variables (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Therefore, procedural remedies were taken to remove potential impacts of common method variance (CMV). In addition, the variance test for single factor using Harman's single factor showed that variance was less than 50%, thus there were no errors due to CMV in this study (Tehseen et al., 2017).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Prior to modelling the structural model and carrying out Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), it is important to validate the unidimensionality, validity and reliability of latent constructs (Awang, 2015). To assess the validity of the constructs, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed (Mohamad et al., 2019). Table 4 shows the results of validity and reliability.

**Table 4.** Composite Reliability and AVE Analysis

Variable	CR	AVE
School Culture	0.928	0.683
School Effectiveness	0.882	0.714

The internal consistency was checked by the Composite Reliability (CR) and the convergent validity was found by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The reliability of the measurement model was assessed using the following criteria: Composite Reliability (CR)  $\geq$

0.6 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)  $\geq 0.5$ . As shown in Table 4, the values of CR and AVE have met the criteria required to achieve reliability and validity. In addition, the square roots of AVE were higher than the correlation value between the constructs, fulfilling the discriminant validity.

Before testing the structural model, the measurement model was validated to ensure the model fit was achieved. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the accuracy of the structure. Three stages of model fitness namely, absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit, can be applied for estimating model fitness (Hair et al., 2014). The goodness-of-fit values gained in CFA are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Fitness Indices of Measurement Model

<b>Fitness Indices</b>	<b>Acceptable Value</b>	<b>Test Value</b>
RAMSEA	$\leq .08$	0.077
CFI	$\geq .90$	0.977
GFI	$\geq .90$	0.955
AGFI	$\geq .90$	0.922
Ratio of Chi-square/df	$\leq 5$	3.146

The CFA results of the fit indices in Table 5 show that RMSEA = .077, CFI = .977, GFI = .955, AGFI = .922 and ChiSq/df = 3.146, indicating that measurement model fulfils the requirement of goodness-of-fit (Awang, 2015, Hair et al., 2014).

## **Findings**

The aim of this study is to determine the impact of school culture on school effectiveness. A total of 379 questionnaires were received, out of which 20 responses were eliminated after screening for missing data and outliers. Hence, data was analysed based on 359 questionnaires completed by respondents.

### ***Level of SC and SE***

The mean and standard deviations were found to assess the levels of school culture and school effectiveness in Maldivian schools. A mean score determination scale of three levels was used to describe the levels of the variables (Amlus et al., 2015). The levels are expressed as:

- (1) 1.00-2.33 (low)
- (2) 2.34-3.67 (medium)
- (3) 3.68-5.00 (high)

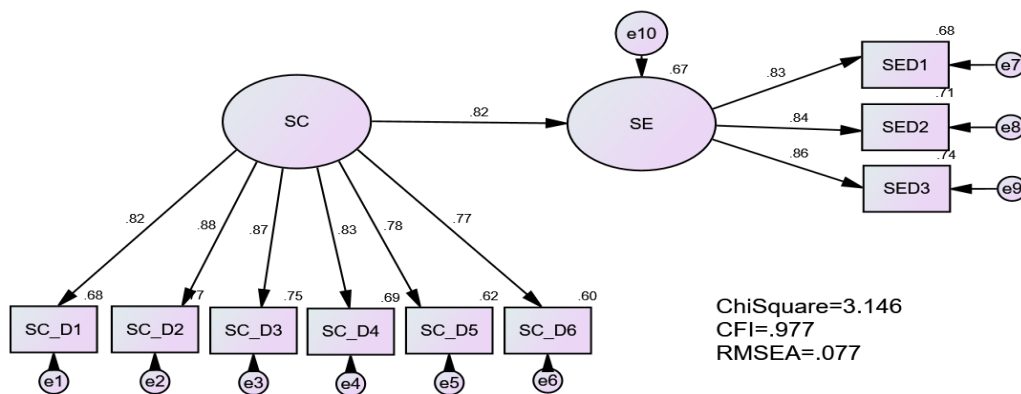
**Table 6.** Descriptive Statistics: Mean, Std. deviation and Level of SC and SE

Dimension	Mean	Std. D	Level
Collaborative Leadership (CL)	3.81	0.66	High
Teacher Collaboration (TC)	3.88	0.62	High
Professional Development (PD)	3.95	0.62	High
Unity of Purpose (UP)	4.14	0.60	High
Collegial Support (CS)	4.02	0.68	High
Learning Partnership (LP)	3.85	0.70	High
<b>School Culture (SC)</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>High</b>
Focused Mission and Clear Goals (FMCG)	4.06	0.62	High
Maximize Learning Opportunities (MLO)	3.93	0.72	High
Strong Instructional Leadership (SIL)	3.90	0.71	High
<b>School Effectiveness (SE)</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 6 shows the levels of school culture (SC) and school effectiveness (SE). The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the indicators of both variables were at high level. The overall SC variable has a mean of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.65. Likewise, the overall SE variable has a mean of 3.97 with a standard deviation of 0.68. Thus it can be assumed that the levels of school culture and school effectiveness are high in Maldivian government schools.

**Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was employed to test the hypothesis of this study. SEM is very useful for examining the inter-dependent relationships among latent variables (Hair et al., 2014). SEM using maximum likelihood was conducted to test the properties of the structural model and analyse the proposed relationship. The results from the SEM procedure are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Structural Model and Parameter Estimates

Since the hypothesized model has met the requirements of goodness-of-fit (Figure 1), the research model was considered fitting for hypothesis testing.

**Table 7.** The Regression Path Coefficient and its Significance

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P-value</b>
School Effectiveness	<---	School Culture	0.773	0.053	14.702	0.001

The result of Table 7 above shows that school culture has a significant influence on school effectiveness. The standardized estimate of Beta was 0.820, indicating that school culture has a positive effect on school effectiveness. The outcome in Figure 1 reveals that 67% of school effectiveness can be estimated by school culture. This result supports the hypothesis that school culture has a positive and significant impact on school effectiveness.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, the impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in Maldives was examined. The analysis was based on the data collected from 359 teachers. The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that the level of school culture was at a high level. Subsequently, all the dimensions of school culture were also high. Similarly, the results for school effectiveness showed that school effectiveness was high in Maldivian school and all the dimensions of school effectiveness were also at high level. These findings are in line with the work of Manaf and Omar (2017) which reported that the higher the culture of the school, the higher is the effectiveness of the school. Likewise, in their study examining the school culture and school effectiveness, Ali et al. (2016) put forth that a high level of school culture was a requirement to achieve a high level of school effectiveness. In this respect, it can be assumed that increasing the level of school culture will result in an increase in school effectiveness.

According to the results of the study analysis, there was a positive and significant relationship between school culture and school effectiveness. The findings indicate that a positive school culture increases school effectiveness. Based on the findings, the elements of school culture including collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support and learning partnership contribute to school effectiveness. The findings suggest that in a school with a strong positive culture, staff take pride and joy in working together which benefits the students in the form of a better quality of education. According to the findings, schools with strong cultures have leaders who establish and maintain a collaborative relationship among staff, there is cooperation among teachers, professional development is supported, teachers work towards a common mission, there is a collegial relationship among teachers, and teachers and parents share common expectations of students' achievement. Therefore, when the functions of school culture are applied, the level of school effectiveness gets enhanced. This implies that school leaders and educational authorities should focus on school culture to improve school effectiveness.

The findings of the current study are consistent with the results of previous studies (Ali et al., 2016; Duan et al., 2018). In line with the findings of the current study, Dogan (2017) claims that schools with a positive school culture display higher school effectiveness compared to schools having a less positive school culture. Likewise, Yasin et al. (2017) determined in their study that for the efficient functioning of a school, a positive school culture is essential. Accordingly, higher student achievement, better collaboration among teachers as well as enhanced teacher self-determination are linked with positive school cultures. Research by Ali et al. (2016) also found that there is a strong relationship between school culture and school



effectiveness, and for building a positive school culture, effective school leadership is a necessity. In the study by Clark (2019), it was found that there was a strong relationship between school culture and its outcomes, revealing that schools having positive cultures have positive outcomes among their students and staff than those that do not. Eger and Prasilova (2020) examined what factors of school culture affect the expected results of teaching and learning processes and discovered that the leadership and management's role was one of the most crucial factors for shaping the school culture. Duan et al. (2018) put forth that schools with stronger cultures have satisfied teachers, along with higher school effectiveness. Their study recommends school leaders to recognize the crucial role school culture plays in the improvement of school performance.

School culture is a set of values which connect the people in an organization, affecting the interaction and coordination among them. The results of this study reveal that a positive and collaborative school culture benefits the teaching and learning process of the school. Findings of the study reflect the implication of having a positive school culture which empowers all members to work towards a common goal, which is to improve the effectiveness of the school. The culture of a school enables the staff to work more effectively and agreeably with the school leader, shapes the behaviours and expectations of student and teachers, and contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of the school. (Senol & Lesinger, 2018). When people in schools interact and exchange frequently, it enhances the school culture (Demerath, 2018). Thus, collaboration among school members helps to solve the everyday problems faced in the school. Collaborative culture provides a comfortable environment among teachers and administrators leading to enhanced student performance (Dogan, 2017). In fact, the changes in the teaching and learning processes brought about by changes in the educational scenario necessitates collaboration among the stakeholders of the schools (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). As suggested by Dimmock et al. (2021), for effective implementation of educational reforms, a collaborative culture that is built on common goals, trust and academic focus is a necessity. When school leaders and teachers together build a culture of shared beliefs, it contributes to student success. Correspondingly, the findings of the current study provide evidence for school leaders on the importance of creating positive and collaborative school cultures.

The school culture has a significant impact on the educational activities and the productivity of structural changes for the improvement of the school (Karadag et al., 2014). The findings of the current study indicate the importance of having management strategies which can enhance the school culture. Since habits and culture guide people of an institution, the social and institutional culture can impact the leader's efforts in implementing leadership ideas and relevant changes (Yildirim & Yenipinar, 2021). Therefore, it is important that school leaders use effective management strategies which will direct the staff to work towards common goals and encourage coordination among all members of the school. In order to improve school culture, it is essential for school leaders to pay attention to the communication within the school which impacts the teaching and learning processes of the school (Eger & Prasilova, 2020). Accordingly, the voice of the teachers needs to be heard when making pedagogical and educational decisions (Vieira & Brabosa, 2020). Undoubtedly, the school leader's role and skills are critical in establishing an effective school culture. For this reason, it is crucial for school leaders to gain the necessary competencies required to establish positive and collaborative school cultures for achieving school effectiveness.

## **Recommendations**

The study revealed that school culture has a significant impact on school effectiveness. Hence, in the implementation of educational reforms, system leaders should emphasize the significant role of school culture in school effectiveness. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are provided for policy makers and educational practitioners:

- School improvement efforts need to focus on the dimensions of school culture and school effectiveness. Hence special consideration and allocations from the Ministry of Education are needed to create positive school cultures which can improve school effectiveness. In this regard, effective planning and strategies are required to develop the working conditions whereby teachers can collaborate and work together effectively.
- School leaders should focus on creating positive school cultures based on collaboration, mutual support, and trust. Thus, it is crucial that school leaders involve all stakeholders in the formulation and development of school management strategies.
- Elements of culture need to be incorporated into the curriculum with a focus on students' historical and cultural background. When educators and administrators create strong school cultures, students will get the opportunity to become just citizens and lifelong learners (Dogan, 2017).
- Professional development should be provided for the teachers of the school. This is vital for shaping the school culture. The training programmes need to consider the new educational panorama and address the technological needs and pedagogical adaptations. Accordingly, professional development programmes should provide technological knowledge and guidance for teachers to equip themselves with the required skills for online education. Likewise, meaningful in-service programs for school leaders need to be initiated.
- The findings of this study support the proposition that school culture contributes to school effectiveness. Future research could be designed to include other factors such as effects of leadership and teacher's job satisfaction, that can explain the associations between these variables.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study comes with a few limitations. Due to the spatial disparity between the islands of Maldives, the data was collected from schools in the capital city, Malé, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should consider extending the research outside the capital city. In this study, the choice of school type can be considered as a delimitation. Approximately 97% of the total schools in Maldives are government schools, hence the research was restricted to only government schools. Thus, the findings are presented with due consideration to these limitations.

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