

## Instructional Leadership, Teacher Commitment, and Motivation as Predictors of Holistic Child Development in TABIKA KEMAS

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### Abstract

This study examines the influence of instructional leadership, teacher commitment, and teacher motivation on the holistic development of TABIKA KEMAS children in Northern Malaysia. A quantitative survey design was employed involving 313 TABIKA KEMAS teachers from Kedah, Perak, and Penang. Data were analysed using SPSS through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that instructional leadership ( $M = 4.04$ ), teacher commitment ( $M = 4.10$ ), teacher motivation ( $M = 3.84$ ), and holistic child development ( $M = 3.81$ ) were all at high levels. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that teacher motivation had a strong and significant positive relationship with holistic child development ( $r = 0.694$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas instructional leadership showed no significant relationship. Multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that teacher motivation was the strongest predictor of holistic child development ( $\beta = 0.835$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 81.7% of the total variance ( $R^2 = 0.817$ ). The findings highlight the importance of strengthening teacher motivation in improving preschool educational quality and enhancing children's holistic developmental outcomes within TABIKA KEMAS institutions.

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Teacher Commitment, Teacher Motivation, Holistic Child Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's overall development and future learning experiences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2021; Epstein, 2022). During this stage, children experience rapid growth in cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical domains. Therefore, quality preschool education is essential to support balanced and holistic development in line with the National Philosophy of Education. Early childhood education not only prepares children academically but also contributes to personality formation, emotional resilience, communication skills, creativity, and moral development (UNESCO, 2022). Positive preschool learning experiences are also associated with long-term academic achievement, behavioural adjustment, and social well-being (Heckman, 2021; OECD, 2023).

In Malaysia, early childhood education has gained increasing attention through improvements in preschool policies and curriculum frameworks. The Preschool Curriculum Document 2026 emphasises holistic child development involving cognitive, socio-emotional, spiritual, physical, moral, and 21st-century competencies. Similarly, the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2025–2035 highlights character building, ethics, values, and humanity as key educational priorities. These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to producing balanced individuals who are intellectually competent,

emotionally stable, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible. Furthermore, the government continues to expand preschool access and improve educational quality to ensure equal learning opportunities for all children regardless of socio-economic background (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2025). TABIKA KEMAS is one of the major preschool education providers in Malaysia, especially within rural and low-income communities. Established under the Community Development Department (KEMAS), these institutions play an important role in reducing educational disparities by widening access to preschool education. However, TABIKA KEMAS institutions continue to face several challenges, including limited educational resources, teachers' workload, and inconsistencies in instructional implementation. Such challenges may affect teaching effectiveness and children's holistic development. Previous studies also reported that preschool educators often face difficulties related to instructional adaptation, classroom diversity management, and developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

Instructional leadership has been widely recognised as a key factor influencing teaching quality and school effectiveness. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) defined instructional leadership as leadership practices focusing on school goals, instructional management, and positive learning climates. Effective instructional leadership helps improve teachers' pedagogical competencies, curriculum implementation, and collaborative learning environments (Hallinger, 2022; Matt et al., 2022). Studies have shown that effective instructional leadership positively influences teachers' instructional performance, professional satisfaction, and classroom effectiveness (Al-Harhi & Al-Mahdy, 2021; Shaked, 2023). In preschool settings, such leadership is particularly important because young children require developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

In addition, teacher commitment and motivation are essential factors influencing educational effectiveness. Motivated teachers are more engaged, creative, and responsive during instruction (Ryan & Deci, 2020), while committed teachers demonstrate stronger professional dedication toward children's learning and development (Meyer & Allen, 2002). Teacher motivation is also associated with job satisfaction, instructional enthusiasm, and persistence in overcoming educational challenges (Collie, 2021). In preschool education, motivated and committed teachers are more likely to implement child-centred approaches and provide nurturing learning experiences that support holistic child development.

Although previous studies have explored leadership, commitment, and motivation in educational settings, limited empirical evidence focuses specifically on TABIKA KEMAS preschools. Most studies emphasised primary and secondary schools, while community-based preschool institutions received less attention. Therefore, this study investigates the relationships and predictive influence of instructional leadership, teacher commitment, and teacher motivation on holistic child development among TABIKA KEMAS children. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, administrators, preschool supervisors, and educators in strengthening instructional leadership, enhancing teacher professionalism, and improving preschool education quality in Malaysia.

## **METHODS**

In addition, the cross-sectional survey design enabled the researcher to obtain data from a relatively large number of respondents within a specific period of time, thereby providing a broader understanding of the existing educational conditions within TABIKA KEMAS institutions. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019), survey research is particularly appropriate when the objective is to identify trends, perceptions, attitudes, and relationships among variables within a population. In the context of this study, the design allowed the researcher to examine the interrelationships between instructional leadership, teacher commitment, teacher motivation, and holistic child development simultaneously.

The selection of TABIKA KEMAS teachers from Kedah, Perak, and Penang was considered suitable because these states represent different socio-economic and geographical characteristics within the Northern Zone of Malaysia. Such diversity provided a more comprehensive representation of TABIKA KEMAS preschool environments. Furthermore, teachers within these institutions are directly responsible for implementing preschool curriculum activities and managing children's developmental learning

experiences on a daily basis. Therefore, their perceptions and experiences were highly relevant to the objectives of this study.

Before the actual data collection process, ethical considerations were carefully observed to ensure that respondents' rights and confidentiality were protected throughout the study. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research prior to completing the questionnaire. Respondents were also assured that all information provided would remain confidential and used solely for academic and research purposes. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), ethical compliance is essential in educational research to ensure transparency, trustworthiness, and respect for participants' autonomy.

The research instrument utilised in this study was adapted from several established and validated instruments from previous studies. The instructional leadership items were adapted from Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership framework, which has been widely used in educational leadership research across various educational contexts. Teacher commitment items were adapted from Meyer and Allen's (1991) organizational commitment model, while teacher motivation items were developed based on Self-Determination Theory introduced by Ryan and Deci (2020). The adaptation of established instruments enhanced the content validity and construct validity of the questionnaire. According to Taherdoost (2021), the use of validated instruments from previous studies contributes significantly toward improving the quality and credibility of quantitative research findings.

Expert validation was conducted involving specialists in educational leadership, early childhood education, and research methodology. The experts reviewed the instrument in terms of language clarity, item relevance, conceptual appropriateness, and suitability for the TABIKA KEMAS preschool context. Feedback obtained from the experts was utilised to improve and refine the questionnaire before pilot testing was conducted. Subsequently, a pilot study involving a smaller group of respondents was implemented to examine the reliability and practicality of the instrument. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients obtained for all constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold value of 0.70 as recommended by Pallant (2020), indicating that the instrument possessed satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

In terms of data analysis, descriptive statistical analysis was important in providing an overall description of respondents' demographic background and perceptions toward the study variables. Mean score interpretation was categorised into low, moderate, and high levels to facilitate interpretation of findings. Inferential statistical analyses were also conducted to test the proposed research hypotheses. Pearson correlation analysis was employed because the variables involved were continuous and normally distributed. According to Field (2018), Pearson correlation analysis is appropriate for examining the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables in quantitative research.

Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was utilised to determine the predictive influence of instructional leadership, teacher commitment, and teacher motivation on holistic child development. This analysis enabled the researcher to identify the most dominant predictor contributing toward children's holistic development within TABIKA KEMAS institutions. Regression analysis is considered suitable when the objective of a study is to examine the contribution of several independent variables toward a dependent variable simultaneously (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019).

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The descriptive analysis demonstrated that all research variables recorded high mean scores, indicating that respondents generally perceived instructional leadership, teacher commitment, teacher motivation, and holistic child development within TABIKA KEMAS institutions positively. As presented in Table 1, teacher commitment recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.677$ ), followed by instructional leadership ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.624$ ), teacher motivation ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.548$ ), and holistic child development ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.530$ ). Based on the interpretation guidelines suggested by Pallant (2020), all variables were categorised at a high level, reflecting favourable educational conditions within TABIKA KEMAS preschool institutions.

The finding that teacher commitment achieved the highest mean score suggests that TABIKA KEMAS teachers possess strong emotional attachment, responsibility, and dedication toward their professional roles

and organisational goals. This situation reflects the willingness of preschool teachers to continuously contribute toward children's educational development despite facing various institutional and instructional challenges. From a critical perspective, this finding may indicate that preschool teachers within TABIKA KEMAS demonstrate a high level of intrinsic professional responsibility, particularly because early childhood education requires patience, emotional stability, and continuous interpersonal engagement with children. Meyer and Allen (1991) explained that highly committed teachers are more likely to remain loyal to organisational objectives and demonstrate greater persistence in fulfilling educational responsibilities. In the context of this study, the high level of teacher commitment may also reflect teachers' awareness regarding the importance of preschool education in shaping children's future developmental outcomes.

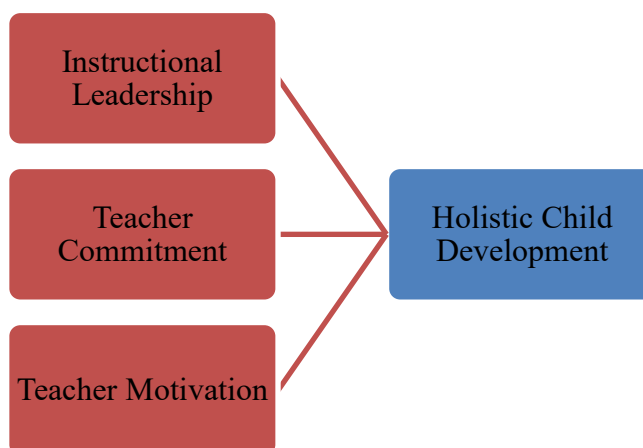
Furthermore, instructional leadership also recorded a high mean score, suggesting that preschool supervisors generally practised effective instructional leadership within TABIKA KEMAS institutions. This finding indicates that supervisors were actively involved in guiding teachers, monitoring instructional implementation, supporting curriculum management, and fostering positive preschool learning environments. Critically, effective instructional leadership within preschool contexts is highly significant because preschool education requires continuous pedagogical guidance and instructional support to ensure developmentally appropriate teaching practices are implemented effectively. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) emphasised that instructional leadership plays an essential role in enhancing instructional quality and educational effectiveness through goal-setting, instructional supervision, and positive learning climate development. Therefore, the high instructional leadership score in this study suggests that preschool supervisors may have successfully contributed toward improving teachers' professional practices and educational performance within TABIKA KEMAS institutions.

In addition, teacher motivation also recorded a high mean score, indicating that TABIKA KEMAS teachers generally possessed strong enthusiasm and willingness to perform their teaching responsibilities effectively. This finding supports the argument proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020), who stated that motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate greater instructional engagement, creativity, and responsiveness during teaching and learning activities. From a critical standpoint, the relatively high level of teacher motivation observed in this study may be influenced by teachers' intrinsic satisfaction in nurturing young children and contributing toward community educational development. However, despite recording a high mean score, teacher motivation demonstrated a slightly lower value compared to teacher commitment and instructional leadership. This may suggest that certain external challenges such as workload demands, limited teaching resources, administrative responsibilities, or professional stress could still influence teachers' motivational levels within preschool settings. Therefore, continuous professional support and motivational reinforcement remain essential to sustain teachers' long-term instructional enthusiasm and well-being.

The findings also revealed that holistic child development recorded a high mean score, indicating that respondents perceived children's cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, spiritual, moral, and 21st-century learning development positively within TABIKA KEMAS institutions. This finding reflects that the preschool educational environment generally supports balanced and comprehensive child development in accordance with the aspirations outlined in the Preschool Curriculum Document 2026 and the National Philosophy of Education. Critically, the achievement of holistic child development within preschool institutions may not solely depend on curriculum implementation, but also on the quality of instructional leadership, teacher commitment, and teacher motivation demonstrated throughout the educational process. Children in early childhood settings require emotionally supportive, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate learning environments to maximise their developmental potential. Consequently, the positive findings obtained in this study suggest that TABIKA KEMAS institutions have demonstrated encouraging progress in supporting holistic child development despite existing institutional and operational challenges.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Instructional Leadership	4.04	0.624	High
Teacher Commitment	4.10	0.677	High
Teacher Motivation	3.84	0.548	High
Holistic Child Development	3.81	0.530	High

**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of the Study

### Relationship between Instructional Leadership and Holistic Child Development

The findings of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that instructional leadership did not demonstrate a significant relationship with holistic child development among TABIKA KEMAS children ( $r = 0.026$ ,  $p = 0.646$ ). Although the correlation coefficient indicated a very weak positive relationship, the relationship was statistically insignificant. This finding suggests that instructional leadership may not directly influence children's holistic development within the TABIKA KEMAS preschool context. Instead, the influence of instructional leadership may operate indirectly through mediating factors such as teacher motivation, teacher efficacy, classroom instructional practices, and the overall learning environment. Hallinger (2011) explained that instructional leadership frequently affects student outcomes indirectly through teacher-related variables rather than through direct mechanisms.

In the context of early childhood education, children's developmental outcomes are often more strongly influenced by teachers' daily instructional interactions, emotional support, classroom engagement, and pedagogical responsiveness than by formal supervisory leadership structures. Preschool teachers serve as the primary agents of interaction within children's learning environments, making their instructional quality and emotional engagement highly influential toward children's cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, and moral development. Pianta et al. (2021) similarly argued that positive teacher-child interactions significantly contribute to children's learning experiences and developmental progress during early childhood education.

The non-significant relationship between instructional leadership and holistic child development may also reflect the unique organisational structure of TABIKA KEMAS institutions. Unlike conventional school systems where school leaders maintain continuous presence within educational settings, preschool supervisors in TABIKA KEMAS may conduct monitoring and supervision periodically rather than consistently. Consequently, preschool teachers often rely more heavily on their own professional autonomy, experience, and classroom management practices in conducting teaching and learning activities. Therefore, leadership practices may not be sufficiently direct to produce immediate observable effects on children's developmental outcomes.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that teacher commitment had a statistically significant but very weak negative relationship with holistic child development ( $r = -0.117$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ). Although statistically significant, the strength of the relationship was minimal, indicating that teacher commitment alone may not

function as a major determinant influencing children's developmental outcomes within the preschool context. This finding suggests that organizational commitment may not necessarily translate into effective pedagogical practices or highly engaging instructional approaches. Teachers may remain committed to their institutions because of professional obligations, job stability, or organizational expectations, but such commitment does not automatically guarantee high-quality instructional delivery.

Meyer and Allen (1991) explained that organizational commitment consists of affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions. In this context, teachers may demonstrate high organizational loyalty while simultaneously experiencing work-related stress, emotional exhaustion, and administrative burden. Such conditions may reduce teachers' instructional creativity and effectiveness despite strong commitment toward their organizations. Collie (2021) also argued that teacher commitment does not consistently predict instructional effectiveness unless accompanied by intrinsic motivation, emotional well-being, and supportive workplace environments.

In contrast, teacher motivation demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with holistic child development ( $r = 0.694$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding indicates that higher levels of teacher motivation are associated with better developmental outcomes among TABIKA KEMAS children. The result strongly supports the assumptions of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020), which emphasises that motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate meaningful instructional engagement, creativity, persistence, and child-centered pedagogical practices.

Within the TABIKA KEMAS context, motivated teachers may be more proactive in designing engaging classroom activities, encouraging collaborative participation, and providing emotionally supportive learning environments. Teachers with high motivational levels are generally more enthusiastic, patient, and responsive toward children's developmental needs. They are also more willing to adapt teaching approaches according to children's individual learning abilities and developmental differences. OECD (2023) similarly highlighted that highly motivated preschool teachers tend to establish stronger emotional relationships with children and create more positive classroom climates that support holistic development.

Additionally, motivated teachers often demonstrate greater self-efficacy and confidence in managing classroom behaviour, implementing instructional activities, and supporting children's socio-emotional development. Such qualities are essential in preschool education because young children require continuous emotional guidance, encouragement, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Therefore, the strong relationship between teacher motivation and holistic child development identified in this study highlights the importance of strengthening teacher motivation as a critical strategy for improving preschool educational quality and children's developmental outcomes within TABIKA KEMAS institutions.

**Table 2.** Pearson Correlation Analysis between Research Variables and Holistic Child Development

Variables	r	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
Instructional Leadership ↔ Holistic Child Development	0.026	0.646	Not Significant
Teacher Commitment ↔ Holistic Child Development	-0.117	0.039	Significant but Very Weak
Teacher Motivation ↔ Holistic Child Development	0.694	0.000	Significant and Strong

### Relationship between Teachers' Commitment and Holistic Child Development

The findings revealed a statistically significant but very weak negative relationship between teacher commitment and holistic child development ( $r = -0.117$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ). Although the relationship was statistically significant, the strength of the correlation was minimal, indicating that teacher commitment was not a major factor directly influencing children's developmental outcomes in this study. This finding suggests that organizational commitment alone may be insufficient to improve children's holistic development unless accompanied by strong motivational, emotional, and pedagogical qualities. Teachers may remain committed to their institutions because of professional responsibilities, organizational

expectations, or job stability; however, such commitment may not necessarily result in innovative, engaging, or highly effective instructional practices.

This finding reflects the complexity of teacher commitment within early childhood education settings. In many situations, teachers may demonstrate high commitment toward institutional responsibilities, administrative tasks, and organizational expectations while simultaneously experiencing professional stress, emotional fatigue, and workload pressures. As a result, their commitment to the organization may not directly translate into effective classroom practices that enhance children's developmental outcomes. Collie (2021) similarly argued that teacher commitment does not consistently predict instructional effectiveness unless supported by intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and supportive workplace conditions.

From a critical perspective, the weak negative relationship identified in this study may indicate that teachers who are highly committed to organizational demands could potentially experience increased emotional exhaustion and occupational stress. Preschool teachers frequently perform multiple responsibilities beyond classroom teaching, including administrative documentation, curriculum reporting, classroom management, parental communication, and co-curricular involvement. These cumulative responsibilities may reduce teachers' emotional energy and instructional focus despite their strong organizational commitment. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2023) explained that prolonged work-related stress and excessive professional demands may negatively influence teachers' motivation, enthusiasm, and instructional engagement.

Within the TABIKA KEMAS context, preschool educators often work in environments that require significant emotional and interpersonal involvement. Early childhood education demands continuous emotional responsiveness, patience, creativity, and individualized attention toward children's developmental needs. Consequently, teachers who experience high workload pressure may struggle to maintain high-quality instructional interactions even if they remain loyal and committed to their institutions. This situation may explain why teacher commitment in this study demonstrated only a weak relationship with holistic child development.

Furthermore, the findings may also suggest that commitment alone is insufficient without the presence of effective pedagogical competencies and motivational support. Teachers who are committed organizationally may comply with institutional requirements and professional expectations, yet may not necessarily implement child-centered, creative, or developmentally appropriate instructional approaches consistently. According to OECD (2023), the quality of preschool education depends not only on teacher professionalism and commitment, but also on teachers' emotional engagement, instructional competence, and ability to establish positive relationships with children.

Another possible explanation for the weak relationship is that preschool children's development is influenced by multiple interconnected factors beyond teacher commitment alone. Children's holistic development involves cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, spiritual, and moral dimensions that are shaped through continuous interactions within family, school, and community environments. Therefore, teacher commitment may contribute indirectly toward developmental outcomes but may not function as an immediate predictor when compared to more direct classroom-related variables such as teacher motivation and instructional engagement.

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of teacher well-being and workplace satisfaction in influencing educational effectiveness. Wang, Pollock, and Hauseman (2021) reported that teachers who experience supportive working environments and emotional well-being are more likely to sustain effective instructional practices and positive classroom relationships. Similarly, Kim and Asbury (2020) found that emotional resilience and professional support significantly influence teachers' capacity to maintain effective teaching performance under challenging educational conditions.

Additionally, the negative direction of the relationship, although weak, may imply that excessive organizational commitment without balanced professional support could potentially contribute to professional burnout. Teachers who overextend themselves to fulfill institutional expectations may gradually experience reduced emotional capacity, instructional creativity, and pedagogical enthusiasm.

This phenomenon is particularly relevant within preschool education because effective early childhood teaching requires emotionally nurturing interactions and high levels of sustained engagement with children. Overall, the findings suggest that while teacher commitment remains an important organizational factor, it should not be viewed as the sole determinant of educational effectiveness or children's holistic development. Greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening teachers' intrinsic motivation, emotional well-being, pedagogical support, and professional satisfaction to ensure that organizational commitment translates into meaningful classroom practices and positive developmental outcomes for preschool children.

### **Relationship between Teachers' Motivation and Holistic Child Development**

The analysis demonstrated that teacher motivation had a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with holistic child development ( $r = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding indicates that higher levels of teacher motivation are associated with better developmental outcomes among TABIKA KEMAS children. The result supports the assumptions of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020), which emphasises that intrinsically and extrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate meaningful instructional engagement, creativity, and student-centered teaching practices. Motivated teachers tend to create emotionally supportive classroom environments and display greater enthusiasm in supporting children's developmental needs.

Within the TABIKA KEMAS context, motivated teachers may be more proactive in designing engaging learning activities, encouraging collaborative participation, and supporting children's cognitive and socio-emotional growth. Therefore, teacher motivation appears to be a critical factor influencing holistic child development in early childhood education settings.

From a critical perspective, this finding highlights that teacher motivation functions as one of the most influential human factors in determining preschool educational quality. Early childhood education requires continuous emotional involvement, patience, creativity, and interpersonal interaction between teachers and children. Teachers who possess high motivational levels are more likely to demonstrate positive teaching behaviours, instructional persistence, and emotional responsiveness during classroom activities. Consequently, motivated teachers can establish learning environments that encourage active participation, exploration, curiosity, and positive social interaction among preschool children.

The strong relationship identified in this study also suggests that motivated teachers contribute significantly toward children's socio-emotional security and classroom engagement. Preschool children are highly dependent on emotionally supportive environments because their developmental processes occur rapidly during early childhood. Teachers who are enthusiastic and emotionally engaged are more likely to provide encouragement, positive reinforcement, and nurturing interactions that strengthen children's confidence, communication skills, and emotional stability. According to Fathi and Derakhshan (2021), teachers' emotional engagement and motivational qualities significantly influence students' classroom participation and learning experiences, particularly in child-centered educational settings.

Additionally, motivated teachers are generally more willing to implement innovative and developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches. In preschool education, children learn most effectively through active exploration, play-based learning, collaborative interaction, and experiential activities. Teachers with high motivational levels are often more creative in adapting teaching strategies to suit children's developmental needs and learning abilities. Such practices contribute positively toward children's cognitive development, language acquisition, creativity, problem-solving skills, and social competence.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that teacher motivation may influence holistic child development more directly compared to organizational factors such as leadership or institutional commitment. This situation occurs because children interact directly with teachers throughout daily learning activities. Therefore, teachers' attitudes, emotions, instructional enthusiasm, and classroom engagement become highly influential toward children's developmental experiences. Burić and Kim (2021) explained that motivated teachers demonstrate higher levels of instructional enthusiasm, emotional resilience, and professional efficacy, which subsequently improve educational quality and student learning outcomes.

Another important implication of this finding relates to teacher self-efficacy and professional satisfaction. Teachers who are motivated tend to possess stronger confidence in managing classroom behaviour,

implementing effective teaching strategies, and addressing children's diverse developmental needs. Such confidence enables teachers to establish more structured, supportive, and stimulating learning environments. In early childhood education, emotionally positive and well-managed classroom environments are essential because young children require consistent guidance, encouragement, and emotional reassurance throughout the learning process.

Moreover, motivated teachers are more likely to engage in continuous professional development and reflective teaching practices. They actively seek opportunities to improve their pedagogical knowledge, instructional competence, and classroom management skills. This willingness to improve professionally may indirectly strengthen the quality of preschool education and enhance children's developmental outcomes over time. According to Collie (2021), teachers who experience higher motivational satisfaction tend to demonstrate stronger professional engagement, classroom effectiveness, and emotional well-being, all of which contribute positively toward student development.

The strong positive relationship between teacher motivation and holistic child development identified in this study also supports the growing recognition that educational success in preschool settings is highly dependent on the quality of teacher-child interactions. Motivated teachers are more likely to build trusting relationships with children, respond sensitively to emotional needs, and encourage positive behavioural development. Such interactions are fundamental in supporting children's holistic growth across cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral domains.

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple linear regression analysis further revealed that teacher motivation emerged as the most significant predictor of holistic child development. The regression model explained 81.7% of the variance in holistic child development ( $R^2 = 0.817$ ), indicating strong predictive strength. However, instructional leadership and teacher commitment did not significantly contribute to the regression model when analysed simultaneously. These findings suggest that teacher motivation plays a more direct and influential role in determining children's developmental outcomes compared to organizational leadership and commitment factors. Although instructional leadership and teacher commitment remain important elements within educational institutions, motivated teachers appear to contribute more substantially to classroom effectiveness and children's developmental progress.

From a critical perspective, the high  $R^2$  value obtained in this study demonstrates that the regression model possesses strong explanatory power in predicting holistic child development among TABIKA KEMAS children. The finding indicates that the variables included in the model, particularly teacher motivation, contributed significantly toward explaining variations in children's developmental outcomes. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), an  $R^2$  value exceeding 0.75 reflects a substantial level of predictive accuracy in social science research. Therefore, the regression findings suggest that teacher-related psychological and instructional factors play a major role in shaping preschool children's developmental progress.

The regression analysis also showed that teacher motivation recorded the highest standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.835$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), confirming that teacher motivation was the strongest predictor influencing holistic child development. This finding indicates that motivated teachers are more likely to contribute directly toward children's cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, moral, and communication development through effective classroom engagement and meaningful learning experiences. In preschool education settings, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as emotional supporters, behavioural role models, and facilitators of children's developmental growth.

The dominance of teacher motivation in the regression model strongly supports Self-Determination Theory proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020), which emphasises that intrinsically motivated individuals demonstrate greater persistence, engagement, creativity, and commitment toward meaningful activities. Teachers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to display passion and enthusiasm during teaching activities, establish emotionally supportive classroom environments, and respond effectively to children's developmental needs. Such behaviours are highly important in preschool education because children's

learning experiences are strongly influenced by emotional interaction, encouragement, and responsive communication from teachers.

Additionally, motivated teachers are generally more proactive in implementing child-centered pedagogical practices that support holistic child development. They are more willing to create interactive learning environments, utilise play-based instructional strategies, and encourage collaborative participation among children. According to OECD (2023), motivated preschool teachers tend to demonstrate higher instructional quality, stronger emotional engagement, and greater responsiveness toward children's individual learning needs. Consequently, children who are exposed to supportive and stimulating learning environments are more likely to demonstrate positive developmental outcomes across multiple domains.

The non-significant contribution of instructional leadership dimensions in the regression model may suggest that leadership practices alone are insufficient to directly influence children's developmental outcomes without effective classroom implementation by teachers. Although instructional leadership is essential for establishing educational goals, curriculum management, and professional guidance, its impact may operate indirectly through teacher performance and instructional quality rather than directly affecting children's development. Hallinger (2011) similarly argued that instructional leadership primarily influences educational outcomes through mediating variables such as teacher motivation, teacher commitment, and school climate.

Likewise, teacher commitment did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression model despite its importance within organizational settings. This finding may indicate that organizational commitment alone does not necessarily guarantee high instructional effectiveness or meaningful child development outcomes. Teachers may demonstrate loyalty and commitment toward institutional responsibilities while still facing professional stress, emotional fatigue, and workload pressures that reduce their classroom effectiveness. Therefore, commitment without sufficient motivation and emotional well-being may not produce substantial impacts on children's developmental progress (Nengsih et al., 2022; Handrianto & Solfema, 2025).

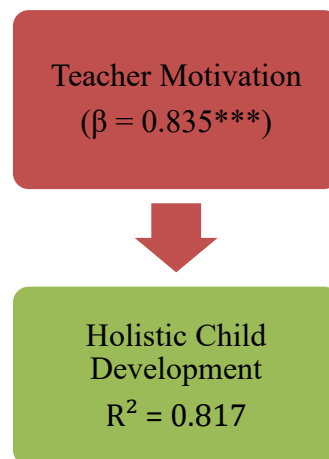
Another important implication of the regression findings relates to the central role of teacher-child interaction within early childhood education. Preschool children spend substantial time interacting directly with teachers during learning activities, emotional communication, and social development processes. Consequently, teachers' enthusiasm, emotional responsiveness, instructional creativity, and classroom engagement become critical determinants influencing children's developmental experiences. Pianta et al. (2021) highlighted that positive teacher-child relationships significantly enhance children's socio-emotional adjustment, learning participation, and cognitive development during preschool years.

Furthermore, the findings imply that efforts to improve preschool educational quality should focus not only on organizational management and institutional leadership, but also on strengthening teachers' motivational and psychological well-being. Motivated teachers are more likely to remain emotionally engaged, professionally resilient, and committed toward providing meaningful learning experiences despite workplace challenges. Educational policymakers and preschool administrators should therefore prioritise teacher support systems, professional recognition, emotional well-being programs, and continuous professional development opportunities to sustain high motivational levels among preschool educators (Zainil et al., 2023; Handrianto, 2025). Overall, the regression analysis provides strong empirical evidence that teacher motivation is the most influential factor affecting holistic child development within TABIKA KEMAS institutions. The findings reinforce the importance of prioritising teacher motivation as a strategic component in strengthening preschool educational effectiveness and improving children's developmental outcomes in Malaysia.

**Table 3.** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Predictor Variables	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Sig. (p)	Decision
Instructional Leadership Dimension 1	-0.019	0.676	Not Significant
Instructional Leadership Dimension 2	0.058	0.253	Not Significant
Instructional Leadership Dimension 3	0.054	0.273	Not Significant
Teacher Commitment	-0.008	0.834	Not Significant
Teacher Motivation	0.835	0.000	Significant

$R = 0.904$   
 $R^2 = 0.817$   
Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.817$



**Figure 2.** Regression Model

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing holistic child development within TABIKA KEMAS preschool institutions in Malaysia. The findings demonstrate that teacher motivation is the strongest predictor influencing children's holistic development compared to instructional leadership and teacher commitment. The study suggests that the effectiveness of preschool education is highly dependent on teachers' motivational levels, emotional engagement, and instructional responsiveness. Motivated teachers are more capable of creating positive learning environments that support children's cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, spiritual, and moral development. From a practical perspective, educational administrators and policymakers should prioritise strategies that strengthen teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through continuous professional development, emotional support systems, recognition initiatives, and positive workplace environments. Such efforts are essential to sustain teachers' enthusiasm and instructional effectiveness within early childhood education settings. Although this study provides meaningful insights into preschool educational leadership and child development, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focused only on TABIKA KEMAS institutions in the Northern Zone of Malaysia and employed a quantitative cross-sectional design. Future studies are therefore encouraged to incorporate broader geographical coverage, mixed-method approaches, and additional mediating variables such as teacher self-efficacy, classroom climate, and pedagogical practices. Overall, the findings indicate that strengthening teacher motivation is essential for improving the quality and effectiveness of preschool education. Without motivated educators, improvements in organizational structures and leadership practices alone may not be sufficient to achieve sustainable developmental outcomes among preschool children.

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