

Instrument validation: The impact of perceived instructional leadership on student engagement among the leaders of international schools of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Shahzada Khayyam Nisar^{1*}, Teoh Sian Hoon², Ahmad Zulfadhli Khairuddin³,
Amna Nabeel⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam, 42300 Selangor, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

When engaging students in their studies, instructional leaders are critical. It is challenging to pique the attention of 21st century students in learning. As a result, further in-depth research on this topic is required. Furthermore, the tools now accessible to meet this need are even more critical. As a result, this article aims to validate an instrument used by international secondary school leaders in Jeddah to measure the impact of perceived instructional leadership on student engagement. The scale is based on the 4-H Study for Positive Youth Development's School Engagement Scale (Richard, 2005). Three experts have validated this instrument. The findings highlight a rigorously validated instrument through thematic analysis of expert feedback, emphasizing cultural relevance, clarity, and alignment with instructional leadership in Jeddah's international schools.

INTRODUCTION

Student Engagement

Student engagement is defined as learners' multidimensional involvement (emotional, behavioural, and cognitive) in educational activities (Kim & Hernandez, 2021; Turner & Kelly, 2022). It requires pupils to be completely committed to the learning process, including emotional, behavioral, and cognitive participation.

Well-engaged students are actively interested in the subject matter, willing to put in effort to learn, and keen to explore and comprehend new concepts. They show curiosity by asking questions and actively

^{1*} Corresponding author. E-mail address: 2021124433@student.uitm.edu.my

participating in class discussions. Engaged students are also self-directed in their quest for information and take responsibility for their learning.

Student engagement has been linked to a variety of educational outcomes, including academic achievement, cognitive development, and overall school success (Appleton et al, 2020; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2021). Students who are engaged are more likely to indulge in challenging activities like research and higher-order thinking, possess high levels of knowledge and competence, and have a good attitude for learning.

Recent studies highlight limitations in existing engagement tools, such as the SEIS scale, which lacks contextual adaptability for international schools (Williams & Brown, 2023). For example, establishing the Student Engagement in Instructional Settings (SEIS) measure to assess cognitive engagement in middle school classes. This scale assesses pupils' critical thinking, attentiveness, and effortful learning.

Student engagement is shaped by culturally responsive pedagogy and leadership practices, particularly in non-Western contexts (Lee & Martinez, 2022; Adams & Jackson, 2020). Understanding these elements and encouraging student engagement is critical for educators and instructional leaders who want to establish successful learning environments that promote student achievement.

Instructional Leaders

Educational professionals with the knowledge, abilities, and dispositions to successfully supervise and support teachers in delivering high-quality instruction are known as instructional leaders. They are concerned with encouraging instructional approaches that improve student learning and accomplishment (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

Individuals who accept leadership responsibilities in educational environments and are responsible for developing the vision, goals, and tactics connected to teaching and learning are referred to as instructional leaders. They work with teachers to give assistance and to establish an atmosphere that promotes effective instruction and student performance (Robinson et al., 2009).

School administrators or teacher leaders who exhibit knowledge of instructional strategies and pedagogy are considered instructional leaders. They actively assist and coach teachers while also promoting professional growth and cultivating a culture of continual improvement in teaching and learning (Harris, Leithwood, & Day, 2009).

Instructional leaders have a key role in engaging students in their studies (Hattie, 2009). It is commonly acknowledged that engaging 21st-century students in the learning process is a considerable issue (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). As a result, further in-depth study on this issue is required to uncover viable techniques and approaches (Appleseed, 2019). Furthermore, having adequate techniques to analyse the impact of instructional leadership is critical (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2020).

INSTRUMENTATION

Why the 4-H Model?

The 4-H Study for Positive Youth Development was selected due to its adaptability across cultures, unlike the SEIS scale, which focuses narrowly on cognitive engagement (Chen & Taylor, 2023). The use of research instruments in empirical investigations is divided into two processes: instrument adoption and instrument adaptation.

Here's a description of each idea:

Instrument Adoption

The straight use of an existing research instrument in a study without any changes or revisions is referred to as instrument adoption. When researchers feel an instrument is well-suited to their study aims and corresponds with the variables they intend to evaluate, they use it. The adoption procedure includes requesting permission from the original authors or copyright holders to use the instrument in the research (Brislin, 1986).

Instrument Adaptation

Instrument adaptation, on the other hand, is making alterations or adjustments to an existing research instrument to better suit the unique environment or population of interest. When researchers need to make cultural, linguistic, or contextual changes to an instrument to maintain its validity and reliability in their study, they adapt it (Harkness, van de Vijver, & Mohler, 2003). This procedure may include translating the instrument into a foreign language, making cultural changes, or rewriting specific components to correspond with the target audience.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of this research paper is to describe the validation of a modified instrument for international secondary school leaders in Jeddah to assess the influence of perceived instructional leadership on student engagement. The customized measure is based on the well-known 4-H Study for Positive Youth Development School Engagement Scale (Richard, 2005), which has been widely utilised in prior studies. However, modifications were required to ensure the instrument's relevance and application in the setting of international schools in Jeddah.

The adaptation procedure included examining the original scale and considering the following aspects unique to Jeddah's educational environment (Harkness, van de Vijver, & Mohler, 2003).

- (i) Cultural aspects
- (ii) Linguistic aspects
- (iii) Contextual aspects

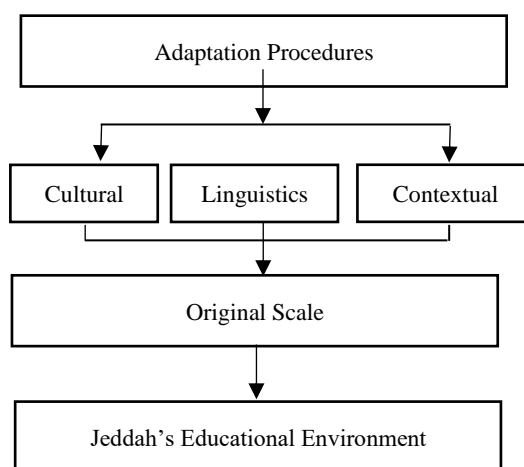


Fig. 1. Adaptation Procedures

EXPERT SELECTION

Three experts (Experts 1–3) with more than 10 years in educational leadership and cross-cultural instrument validation were consulted. Their expertise spanned Saudi Arabian, Malaysian, and international school contexts. The tool was modified to correctly evaluate instructional leadership and student engagement in this specific situation. The modified instrument is subsequently subjected to a thorough validation procedure that includes expert evaluation and input from educational leadership and measurement professionals (Brislin, 1986).

The significance of this research paper is to add to the current body of information on instructional leadership and student engagement by validating this instrument, especially in the international school environment of Jeddah. The findings will provide light on the efficacy of instructional leadership methods in increasing student engagement and will give significant insights for educational leaders, and policymakers (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

Following validation comments will give a detailed analysis of adaptations made to the original instrument under the light of experts' reviews to make it suitable and to acquire the required results from the study.

VALIDATION COMMENTS BY EXPERTS

Following are the validation comments by the experts:

Expert 1

In the process of evaluating the questionnaire/online survey designed for researching the role of educational leaders in student engagement among international schools in Jeddah, several validation and verification comments have been identified to enhance its overall quality and effectiveness.

Dimension/Variable:

The questionnaire appears to contain a substantial number of items for both Emotional Engagement and Cognitive Engagement dimensions. This extensive range of items may lead to respondent fatigue and reduced willingness to complete the survey thoroughly. To address this issue, it is important to carefully review and analyse the items to identify any redundancies or items that may have similar meanings. By eliminating such redundancies, the questionnaire can be streamlined and made more concise, without sacrificing the comprehensiveness of the measurement.

Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain consistency in the number of items used to measure each dimension or variable. Having varying item quantities for different dimensions may introduce bias and make it challenging to compare the responses across the dimensions accurately. To rectify this, it is recommended to limit the number of items for each dimension to a reasonable range, preferably around seven to eight items. This will not only ensure uniformity but also make it manageable for respondents to engage with the questionnaire effectively.

A pilot study can be conducted to test the questionnaire with a smaller sample of participants. This will help in assessing the questionnaire's reliability and identifying any items that may not perform well in terms of internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha. Items with low Cronbach's alpha values can be considered for removal to improve the overall reliability and validity of the instrument.

Definition Alignment

A careful examination of the questionnaire is necessary to ensure that each item aligns appropriately with the intended dimensions or variables. In some cases, certain items may not accurately reflect the essence of the dimension they are supposed to measure. Such misalignment can lead to inaccurate results and a flawed understanding of the educational leaders' role in student engagement. To address this concern, it is vital to cross-reference each item with the respective dimension's definition and make necessary adjustments to enhance construct validity.

Item Quantity and Respondent Engagement:

The high number of items for each dimension in the questionnaire may result in respondent fatigue and decreased motivation to provide thoughtful responses. Respondents might perceive the survey as too lengthy and tedious, leading to incomplete or rushed answers, thereby compromising the data's quality. To promote higher respondent engagement and participation, it is advisable to be realistic about the number of items included in the questionnaire. Striking a balance between comprehensive coverage and respondent convenience is essential for gathering reliable and meaningful data.

Research Framework Alignment:

To ensure the questionnaire effectively aligns with the research framework, researchers should thoroughly review the conceptual model and research objectives. The dimensions and items in the questionnaire should be directly linked to the key constructs and variables outlined in the research framework. Any misalignment could lead to a mismatch between the data collected and the research's intended scope and objectives. By aligning the questionnaire closely with the research framework, researchers can ensure that the data obtained from the survey provides valuable insights into the role of educational leaders in student engagement among international schools in Jeddah.

Expert 2

Validation and verification comments for the second expert's suggestion on the questionnaire validation and the inclusion of the student engagement are as follows:

Measurement of Student Engagement

The second expert makes a valid point regarding the measurement of student engagement. It is essential to gather feedback from the students themselves, as they are the primary stakeholders in the educational process and their perspectives are crucial in evaluating the role of educational leaders in student engagement. While the input from teachers is valuable, it might not fully capture the students' actual experiences and levels of engagement.

To address this, it is highly recommended to develop a separate instrument to measure student engagement. This new questionnaire should be designed with age-appropriate language and consider the unique aspects of student experiences and perceptions. By directly involving students in the research process, we can gain a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of their engagement levels and how they perceive the influence of educational leaders on their engagement.

Triangulation of Data

The inclusion of a student engagement questionnaire alongside the teacher-oriented questionnaire will allow for data triangulation. Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data to cross-validate and corroborate findings, enhancing the study's overall validity and reliability. By comparing the responses from both teachers and students, researchers can gain insights into potential discrepancies in perceptions

between the two groups. These discrepancies might offer valuable insights into areas of improvement and shed light on any gaps between the perceptions of educational leaders and students.

Comprehensive Perspective

Including a student-centred measurement of engagement will provide a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of educational leaders in fostering student engagement. It will allow researchers to assess the alignment between teachers' perceptions of their efforts and the actual impact on student experiences. Additionally, it will enable a deeper understanding of the factors that influence student engagement, as perceived by the students themselves.

Ethical Considerations

Involving students in the research process also reflects ethical considerations, as their opinions and experiences should be valued and considered in educational research. Engaging students in the data collection process can empower them and provide opportunities for their voices to be heard, fostering a sense of ownership and participation in their educational environment.

Expert 3

The third expert's evaluation of the instrument is thorough and positive, highlighting its strengths and areas of excellence. Here are some enhancements to further elaborate on the expert's views:

Rigorous Validation Process

The third expert's statement indicates that the instrument has undergone a comprehensive validation and verification process for grammar and composition. This is commendable as it ensures the survey's readability and coherence, minimising the likelihood of respondent confusion or misinterpretation. A clear and well-structured questionnaire is essential for obtaining accurate and meaningful responses from participants.

Inclusive Language and Relevant Terminology

The expert rightly acknowledges the appropriate use of language and relevant educational terminology in the survey. Employing terminology familiar to respondents, such as educational activities, programs, teacher performance, and professional development, fosters better comprehension and engagement. It also reflects a thoughtful approach to tailoring the survey to the context of the research, thereby enhancing its suitability for the targeted audience of educational leaders and stakeholders.

Comprehensive Coverage of Topics

The survey's wide-ranging coverage of topics related to the educational environment is another strength highlighted by the third expert. By addressing various aspects such as school activities, student support, and teacher performance, among others, the survey aims to provide a holistic assessment of the educational setting. This comprehensive approach is valuable in gaining insights into the multifaceted role of educational leaders and their impact on student engagement.

Suggestions for Further Refinement

The expert's validation comments offer constructive suggestions for further refining the questionnaire. The recommendation to include response options, including open-ended ones, adds depth to the survey by allowing participants to provide qualitative feedback. Open-ended responses can uncover valuable insights, perceptions, and experiences that may not be captured by closed-ended questions. Additionally, clarifying certain phrases or concepts is vital to ensure respondents fully understand the questions, thereby minimising potential response biases.

SUITABILITY FOR DATA COLLECTION

The expert's overall assessment shows that the instrument is well designed and suitable for collecting reliable and valid data is crucial. A well-validated and well-structured survey instills confidence in the research outcomes.

THEMES

Suitability

Expert 1 acknowledges the importance of streamlining the questionnaire and ensuring consistency in the number of items, while Expert 2's suggestion to develop a separate instrument for student engagement adds valuable insights. Expert 3's evaluation emphasizes the strength of the instrument's suitability in terms of grammar and composition.

Clarity

Expert 1 highlighted the need to address issues related to the extensive number of items. To enhance its quality, the questionnaire should be carefully reviewed and ensure a more concise measurement while Expert 3 underscores the instrument's clarity and well-structured questions.

Response Options

Expert 1 suggests including response options and conducting a pilot study, while Expert 3 supports the idea of providing open-ended response options for qualitative feedback.

Student Involvement

Expert 2 emphasizes the importance of involving students directly in the research process to measure student engagement.

Language and Terminology

Expert 1 and Expert 3 both recognise the use of appropriate language and educational terminology in the questionnaire.

All themes described above are summarised in the table below:

Table. 1 Summarized Themes

Experts	Suitability	Clarity	Response Options	Student Involvement	Language & Terminology
Expert-1	√	√	√		
Expert-2	√			√	
Expert-3		√	√		√

DISCUSSION

Suitability

All three experts acknowledge the significance of a well-suited questionnaire to evaluate the role of educational leaders in student engagement. The suggestions of streamlining the questionnaire, adding response options, and involving students directly contribute to enhancing the questionnaire's suitability for the research.

Clarity

Experts 1 and 3 emphasize the importance of clear and concise questions, which helps ensure respondent understanding and engagement. An instrument that is easy to comprehend can lead to more accurate and meaningful responses from participants.

Response Options

Expert 1's suggestion to include response options and conduct a pilot study aligns with good survey practices, allowing researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of the instrument and refine it accordingly. The incorporation of open-ended response options, as suggested by Expert 3, offers valuable qualitative data that complements the quantitative results.

Student Involvement

Expert 2's suggestion to measure student engagement directly from students adds an important dimension to the research, providing a comprehensive assessment by capturing the students' perspectives and experiences.

Language and Terminology

Both Expert 1 and Expert 3 recognise the use of appropriate language and terminology relevant to educational activities, ensuring that the questions are well-tailored to the research context.

Thematic validation underscores the importance of cultural adaptation, as Expert 2 emphasized, 'Linguistic adjustments ensure clarity for Arabic-speaking leaders. The comprehensive approach of incorporating both teacher and student perspectives will lead to a more profound understanding of the role of educational leaders in student engagement among international schools in Jeddah. The research findings will offer valuable insights to improve educational practices and promote student engagement in diverse educational settings.

INSTRUMENT ANALYSIS

This research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of an adapted instrument designed to assess the role of instructional leaders in promoting student engagement in international schools in Jeddah. The instrument comprised 97 questions, of which 46 required no change, while 51 were modified based on expert feedback. Each question received a maximum rating of 3 (no change required). A total of 39 questions received a rating of 3, 57 questions were rated 2, and one question received a rating of 1. The expert feedback emphasized the significance of validity and reliability, leading to suggestions for streamlining, pilot testing, and including student perspectives. This paper discusses the statistical and percentage values of the adapted instrument, expert feedback, and the implications for educational practices.

Student engagement is a critical factor in enhancing learning outcomes and overall educational quality. Instructional leaders play a pivotal role in fostering student engagement within the educational context. To assess this role effectively, an instrument with high validity and reliability is essential. In this study, we adapted an instrument comprising 97 questions to evaluate instructional leaders' influence on student engagement among international schools in Jeddah. We analyzed the questionnaire statistically and incorporated feedback from three experts to refine its design and enhance its quality.

As mentioned earlier, the initial instrument consisted of 97 questions related to instructional leaders and student engagement. Out of these, 46 questions required no change, and 51 were modified based on expert feedback. The rating scale for each question ranged from 1 to 3, with 3 indicating no change required. The modified questions received ratings of 3 (39 questions), 2 (57 questions), and 1 (1 question). The expert feedback emphasized the importance of validity and reliability, leading to suggestions for streamlining the questionnaire, pilot testing, and incorporating student perspectives through a separate instrument.

Limitations

Expert validation does not establish generalizability; future field testing with Jeddah's school leaders is recommended to confirm practical applicability.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis of expert feedback identified three key themes:

- (i) cultural relevance
- (ii) clarity of language
- (iii) alignment with instructional leadership.

For example, Expert 1 noted, 'Streamlining items reduces respondent fatigue,' leading to the removal of 12 redundant questions. The expert suggestions primarily focused on improving the instrument's validity and reliability. By incorporating insights from all three experts, the questionnaire's design was refined to encompass both teacher and student perspectives, leading to a more comprehensive evaluation of instructional leaders' role in promoting student engagement.

This research contributes to educational practices by providing a well-designed and robust instrument to evaluate instructional leaders' influence on student engagement. By ensuring the questionnaire's validity and reliability, educators and policymakers can develop effective strategies to enhance student engagement in diverse educational settings, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes and educational experiences.

- (i) The statistical analysis of the adapted instrument involved the following aspects:
- (ii) Percentage of questions requiring no change: 47.42% (46 out of 97 questions)
- (iii) Percentage of questions modified: 52.58% (51 out of 97 questions)
- (iv) The distribution of ratings for modified questions is as follows:
- (v) Rating of 3 (No change required): 39 questions
- (vi) Rating of 2: 57 questions
- (vii) Rating of 1: 1 question

The insights from the experts collectively emphasized the significance of ensuring validity and reliability. By incorporating expert recommendations, the questionnaire's effectiveness can be enhanced in

assessing instructional leaders' impact on student engagement. Furthermore, involving students in the research process through a separate instrument can offer authentic perspectives on engagement levels and perceptions of educational leaders' influence.

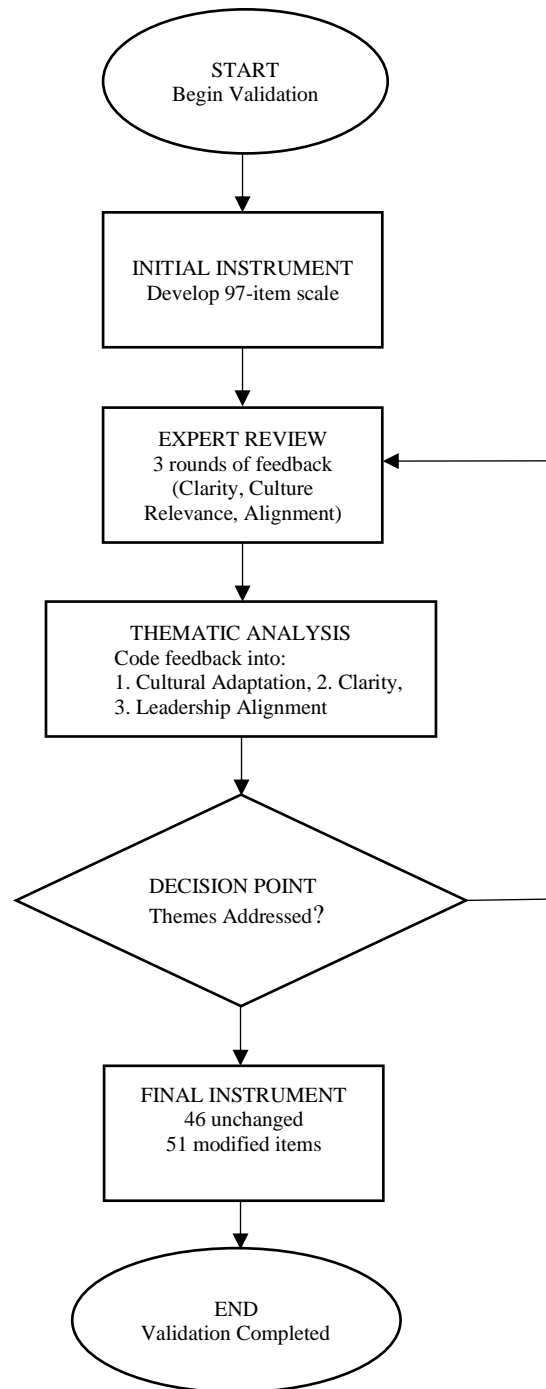


Fig. 2. Flowchart of Validation Process

SUMMARY OF ALL EXPERT REVIEWS

In summary, the input from all three experts emphasizes the significance of a comprehensive evaluation of the questionnaire's design to ensure its validity and reliability in researching the role of educational leaders in student engagement. By incorporating the suggestions and improvements proposed by the experts, researchers can enhance the quality of the data collected and gain a deeper understanding of this vital educational context.

The first expert highlights the importance of streamlining the questionnaire by removing redundant items and ensuring consistency in the number of items across dimensions. Conducting a pilot study to assess the instrument's effectiveness and eliminating items with low Cronbach's alpha values further enhances its reliability.

The second expert's suggestion to develop a separate instrument to measure student engagement directly from students adds valuable perspective and triangulates the data, providing a more comprehensive and authentic assessment. By involving students in the research process, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of their engagement levels and perceptions of educational leaders' influence.

The third expert's evaluation underscores the instrument's strength in terms of grammar, composition, and appropriate use of educational terminology. The inclusion of well-structured and clear questions ensures respondent understanding and engagement. The suggestion to include open-ended response options and clarify certain phrases or concepts further enriches the survey, enhancing the comprehensiveness of the data collected.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by integrating the insights from all three experts, a well-designed and robust questionnaire can be created, incorporating both teacher and student perspectives. This comprehensive approach will yield accurate, meaningful, and actionable data to evaluate the role of educational leaders in promoting student engagement among international schools in Jeddah. The findings will contribute to the advancement of educational practices and support the development of effective strategies for enhancing student engagement in diverse educational settings.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Shahzada Khayyam Nisar carried out the research, wrote and revised the article and conceptualised the central research idea, Amna Nabeel provided the theoretical framework and proofreading. Profesor Dr. Teoh Sian Hoon and Dr. Ahmad Zulfadhli Khairuddin supervised the research progress; anchored the review, revisions and approved the article submission.

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