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TEACHER QUALITY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL LITERACY FROM THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This study investigates school students' perceptions of teacher quality in Malaysian public secondary schools, focusing on two main constructs, including classroom management skills and pedagogical literacy, which are then further broken into 5 subconstructs. A mixed-methods approach was employed, with the quantitative phase involving 483 student respondents using a 50-item Likert-scale questionnaire in three languages. Reliability analysis confirmed strong internal consistency across all five subconstructs. Descriptive and inferential analyses revealed that most students rated their teachers positively in classroom behaviour, communication, and pedagogical aspects. However, perceptions of teachers' ability to motivate students were comparatively lower. Pearson correlation and regression analyses further showed significant positive relationships between subconstructs, with communication skills emerging as the strongest predictor of student motivation. Group comparisons indicated minimal significant differences across gender, race, age, and school type. Additionally, students' qualitative responses offered deeper insights into their experiences with teachers, their preferred instructional strategies, and suggestions for improving teacher quality. The study concludes that while the perceived quality of teachers is generally high, continuous attention is needed in nurturing student motivation. The findings provide empirical evidence to support educational reform and reinforce the importance of student voice in evaluating teaching effectiveness in Malaysian classrooms.

Kata kunci: teacher quality, secondary schools, pedagogical literacy

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher quality is widely recognised as the single most important in-school factor influencing student learning and achievement. According to Barber and Mourshed (2007), "the quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers", underscoring the pivotal role of teachers in shaping educational outcomes. An effective teacher encompasses a range of skills, competencies and motivation to execute high-quality teaching that leads to students' success

(Norman, 2010; Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011; Chia & Abdul Rahim, 2012; Sharma & Gupta, 2014; Bozkus & Tastan, 2016; Barnett, 2019). Characteristics such as professional qualifications and years of experience may sound relevant as requirements for a teaching career, but such requirements alone cannot define a good teacher nor predict improved learner performance (Maurer, 2012; Rivkin et al., 2005). Among the most influential frameworks for defining teacher quality are those developed by Robert J. Stronge and Linda Darling-Hammond. While both scholars emphasise the multifaceted nature of effective teaching, their models differ in structure and emphasis.

Stronge (2018) organises effective teaching into six broad domains, including professional knowledge, planning, instructional delivery, and classroom management. His framework emphasises preparation, structured environments, and professional dispositions. In contrast, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) focus on seven core teaching practices rooted in how people learn, stressing adaptive instruction, formative assessment, and social context. Despite structural differences, both frameworks converge on the need for strong content knowledge, responsive instruction, positive learning environments, and teacher reflection. These characteristics align with international standards of teacher effectiveness and are supported by empirical research on student outcomes. Evertson and Weinstein (2013) note that well-managed classrooms where teachers establish clear rules, routines and positive teacher-student relationships create comfortable conditions for learning. Meanwhile, poor classroom management can lead to teacher stress and reduced commitment, as well as disengaged students and discipline issues. A meta-analysis by Chong and Kong (2012) found that teachers who employ proactive behaviour management techniques tend to have higher student achievement. Recent research also highlights the connection between teachers' psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) and their classroom management efficacy, suggesting that teachers' attitudes and well-being influence their management style.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education's (MOE) policies, including the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (MEB), explicitly stress the development of a skilled professional teacher workforce and emphasise enhancing teachers' pedagogical quality. Pedagogical literacy refers to the teacher's ability to effectively deliver content using appropriate instructional methods. It is central to both chosen scholars' frameworks. Stronge's domains of "Professional Knowledge", "Instructional Delivery", and "Instructional Planning" collectively reflect pedagogical literacy. These emphasise deep content knowledge, differentiation, lesson structure, and formative assessment use. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) highlight pedagogical literacy through key practices such as scaffolding, connecting new content to students' prior knowledge, and using varied instructional strategies. Their framework prioritises teaching as an adaptive, evidence-based process grounded in how students learn best. Both perspectives affirm that pedagogical literacy is not merely about knowing what to teach but understanding how, when, and why to teach particular content in particular ways, especially in diverse classrooms with varied student needs.

On top of that, in line with the rapid developments in science and technology, UNESCO and MOE encourage each teacher to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching to enhance learning outcomes. A recent study by Lim and

Chong (2022) examined ESL teachers in Malaysia and found that those with high pedagogical literacy were significantly better at integrating technology, assessing learning, and fostering student-centred environments. Teachers' ability to use technology tools is proven to enhance student participation and assessment practices. In the international context, Koehler & Mishra (2009) introduced the TPACK model (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge), which integrates technology into pedagogy. They argue that competent teachers must know not only how to teach but also how to teach with technology. Despite this emphasis, concerns remain about teacher effectiveness in practice. Increasing complexity of the classroom with diverse student needs, technology integration, and demands for higher-order thinking raises the bar for teacher competence. The public discourse, particularly on social media, has contributed to widespread criticisms of government schoolteachers, often portraying them as less competent or committed compared to teachers in private or national-type schools. While these perceptions are largely anecdotal and lack empirical support, they risk undermining public trust in teachers and influencing student and parent attitudes.

Against this backdrop, the study seeks to provide data-driven insights into teacher quality by focusing on observable dimensions of teaching as perceived by students, the primary stakeholders of classroom learning. Teacher quality in this study is operationalised through two key constructs: classroom management skills (comprising behaviour management, communication skills, and student motivation) and pedagogical literacy (comprising technological competency and teaching strategy). These constructs reflect skills and practices that students can readily observe and evaluate, making them a suitable focus for perception-based research. The study aims not only to describe levels of teacher quality but also to examine how these dimensions interact and contribute to overall teacher effectiveness from the learner's viewpoint.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed the theoretical and empirical foundations underpinning this study on teacher quality in Malaysian public secondary schools. Drawing from both global and local perspectives, teacher quality was established as a central driver of student learning, with international models (e.g., OECD, Stronge, Darling-Hammond) highlighting the need for holistic teacher competencies beyond content mastery alone. Two primary constructs were identified as the focus of this study. Classroom management skills encompass behaviour management, communication skills, and student motivation, which collectively foster a conducive learning environment. Pedagogical literacy focuses on technological competency and teaching strategies, reflecting the expectations of 21st-century education and Malaysia's Education 4.0 agenda. Literature consistently supports the interconnectedness of these dimensions, showing that strong instructional practices are most effective when paired with sound classroom management.

Classroom Management Skills

Classroom management is widely recognised as the foundation of teaching excellence, supporting other professional competencies such as content mastery and innovative instructional strategies. Marzano (2003) argued that even the most knowledgeable and dedicated teachers will struggle to achieve academic success if they lack effective classroom control. Stronge, Tucker, and Hindman (2004) likened management to "the salt in a recipe", unnoticed when present but glaringly obvious when absent. Erdem (2012) compared teachers to conductors orchestrating complex dynamics, emphasising that harmony in the classroom is essential for achieving educational goals. Without such harmony, realising learning objectives becomes nearly impossible. Furthermore, literature underscores that behaviour management, communication skills, and students' motivation are essential for maintaining order, building engagement, and ensuring instructional clarity (Moh et al., 2018). Together, they provide a comprehensive view of how teachers create conducive environments for learning. While the importance of classroom management is well established, research findings on teachers' proficiency remain mixed. Some studies report moderate levels of behaviour management among Malaysian teachers (Nur Hanani Hussin & Halim Tamuri, 2017), while others indicate variation across school types and contexts. These inconsistencies highlight the need for further investigation, particularly into how students perceive their teachers' classroom management skills within Malaysia's public secondary schools. This study addresses this gap by examining behaviour management, communication, and motivation as student-observed indicators of teacher quality.

Pedagogical Literacy

Pedagogical literacy represents a teacher's ability to design, deliver, and evaluate effective instruction through mastery of instructional strategies and the integration of educational technology. It encompasses both theoretical understanding and practical competence, enabling teachers to adapt content, engage diverse learners, and utilise tools that support deeper student understanding (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Shulman, 1986). In contemporary education systems, pedagogical literacy is viewed as a core element of teacher quality, as it reflects a teacher's capacity to respond to evolving instructional demands and foster meaningful learning experiences. In this study, pedagogical literacy is operationalised through two subconstructs: technological competency and teaching strategy. These dimensions reflect both the demands of Education 4.0 and the expectations set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) for 21st-century educators. While both UNESCO and the MOE advocate for strong ICT integration in schools, studies show that many Malaysian teachers continue to face barriers in implementing digital tools, ranging from limited training to low confidence in using online platforms, multimedia resources, and digital assessments (Ain et al., 2021). Similarly, while innovative teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and problem-based learning are encouraged, traditional lecture-based approaches remain dominant, particularly in exam-focused classrooms (Azman et al., 2018).

Integration of Classroom Management and Pedagogical Literacy

Although classroom management and pedagogical literacy are frequently examined as distinct domains in the literature, scholars increasingly emphasise their interdependence in shaping teaching effectiveness. Effective teaching requires not only the ability to manage behaviour and maintain an orderly, engaging classroom but also the capacity to design and deliver instruction that meets diverse student needs. These two constructs reinforce one another: a teacher cannot fully engage students or implement innovative instructional methods without a structured and supportive learning environment, and classroom order alone cannot lead to meaningful learning without purposeful, adaptive pedagogy. Jaya and Hidayat (2020) highlight that "enhancing teacher pedagogical quality should be a top priority and is closely linked to classroom management elements," noting that both constructs contribute jointly to the overall quality of the learning experience. Similarly, Mustapha et al. (2020) found that student learning outcomes are influenced by the combined effects of the learning environment and pedagogical practices, underscoring that instructional innovation cannot flourish in a poorly managed or disruptive classroom.

In this study, classroom management skills (comprising behaviour management, communication skills, and student motivation) and pedagogical literacy (encompassing technological competency and teaching strategy) are conceptualised as interconnected dimensions of teacher quality. By evaluating these five subconstructs through student perceptions, the study aims to capture a holistic view of what constitutes high-quality teaching in Malaysian public secondary schools. This integrated perspective reflects international standards, such as those proposed by Stronge (2018) and Darling-Hammond (2006), while also responding to the specific cultural and educational context of Malaysia.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in three prominent theoretical perspectives on teaching effectiveness: Stronge's (2018) Teacher Effectiveness Framework, Darling-Hammond's (1998, 2005) principles of pedagogical content knowledge and equity-driven teaching, and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Together, these frameworks provide a multi-dimensional foundation for evaluating teacher quality as conceptualised in this research, specifically through the constructs of classroom management skills and pedagogical literacy.

Figure 1: *Framework for Effective Teaching (Stronge, 2018)*

Based on Figure 1, Stronge's (2018) framework emphasises that effective teaching is a composite of several core traits, including instructional delivery, assessment for learning, learning environment, content knowledge, and professional behaviour. Within this model, classroom management is regarded as a foundational skill that underpins all other aspects of teaching. Stronge identifies proactive behaviour management, the establishment of routines, positive teacher–student relationships, and the ability to motivate learners as hallmarks of effective teachers, directly aligning with the subconstructs measured in this study: behaviour management, communication skills, and student motivation. Complementing Stronge's model, Darling-Hammond (1998, 2005) underscores the importance of pedagogical content knowledge, reflective practice, and culturally responsive instruction. She argues that effective teachers possess not only deep content expertise but also the ability to translate this knowledge into meaningful, differentiated learning experiences for diverse students. Her framework is shown in Figure 2.

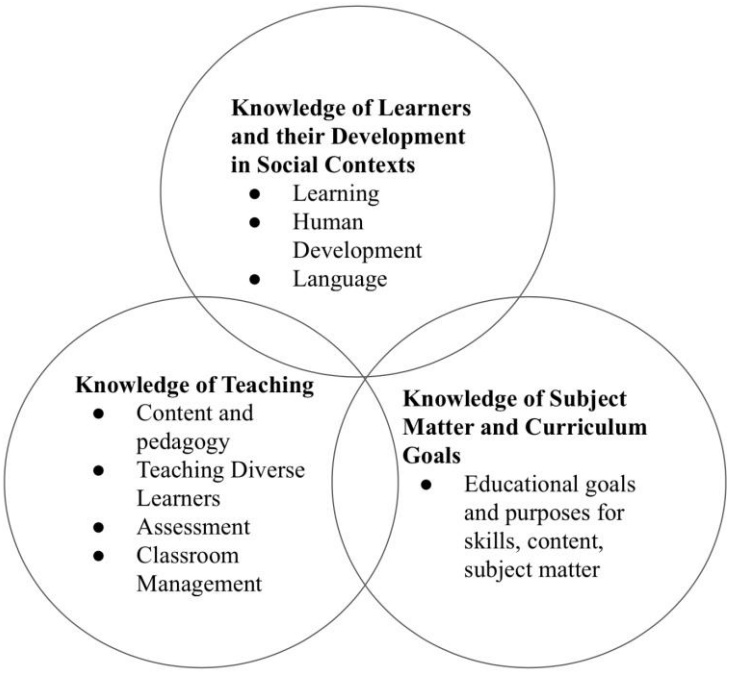

Figure 2: Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning

(Darling-Hammond and Brandsford, 2005, p. 11)

In Figure 2, Darling-Hammond and Brandsford highlight the centrality of instructional strategies and adaptation, which are the core elements of pedagogical literacy as conceptualised in this study. These principles justify the inclusion of teaching strategy as a measurable subconstruct. To address the growing role of digital learning, this study also draws on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). The model is illustrated in the figure below.

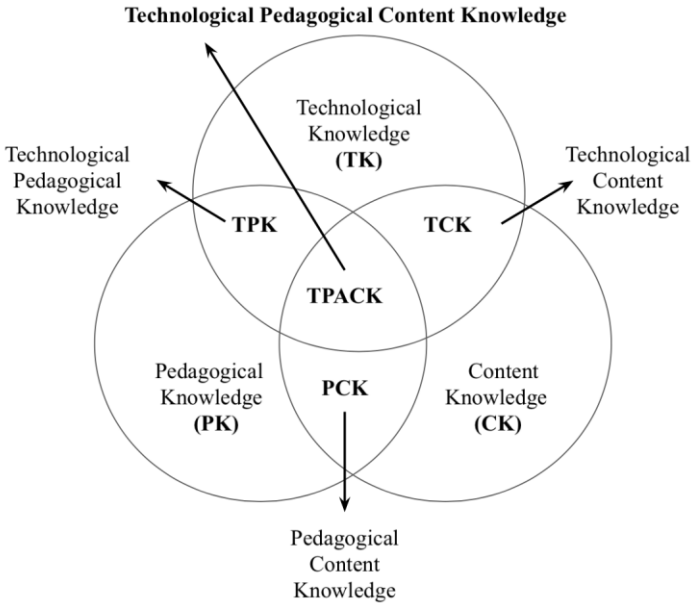

Figure 3: TPACK Model (Koehler & Mishra, 2009)

The TPACK Model in Figure 3 builds upon Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge by incorporating technology as a critical third dimension, emphasising the need for teachers to integrate digital tools seamlessly with pedagogy and content. This framework supports the inclusion of technological competency as a subconstruct of pedagogical literacy. By integrating these three perspectives, this study adopts a holistic, theory-driven approach to evaluating teacher quality. The frameworks collectively validate the five subconstructs (behaviour management, student motivation, communication skills, technological competency, and teaching strategy) as essential, observable dimensions of teacher quality from the perspective of students in Malaysian public secondary schools. These foundations also guide the development of the study's conceptual framework, which maps the relationships between the subconstructs and overall teacher quality.

Conceptual Framework

While the theoretical framework outlines broad principles of teacher effectiveness, this conceptual framework narrows the focus to two core constructs that are both observable and measurable from the students' perspective: classroom management skills and pedagogical literacy. Figure 4 below illustrates the conceptual framework, showing the relationships between the two main constructs, their five subcomponents, and their collective influence on overall perceived teacher quality.

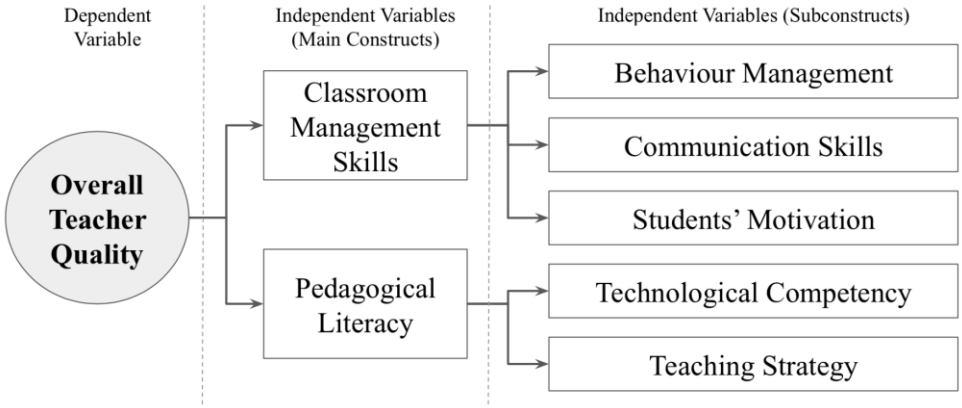

Figure 4: *Conceptual Framework of The Study*

Based on Figure 4, the framework positions overall teacher quality as the dependent variable, reflecting the holistic evaluation of teachers as perceived by students. Two main constructs serve as the independent variables influencing overall teacher quality (classroom management skills and pedagogical literacy). Each of these main constructs is further broken down into specific subconstructs that capture essential dimensions of teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Under Classroom Management Skills, three subconstructs were examined:

i. Behaviour Management (teachers' ability to address and regulate student behaviour effectively);

ii. Communication Skills (clarity, responsiveness, and relational communication between teacher and students);
iii. Students' Motivation (the extent to which teachers foster and sustain student interest and engagement).

Under pedagogical literacy, two sub-constructs were determined:

i. Technological Competency (teachers' capacity to integrate digital tools effectively into the learning process);
ii. Teaching Strategy (the variety, relevance, and adaptability of instructional methods used in the classroom).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, integrating a quantitative, cross-sectional survey with qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The quantitative component forms the core of the study, using a structured questionnaire to measure students' evaluations of their teachers across the five subconstructs. The research instrument, a 50-item trilingual questionnaire adapted from validated studies, demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80 across all sub-constructs. Items were contextualised for Malaysian classrooms through careful rewording and pilot testing. The target population for this study consists of students of age 14 to 17 enrolled in Malaysian government-funded public secondary schools (NSS and NTSS). To enhance statistical robustness, a larger target sample of 400 students was set. The final sample achieved was 483 students, exceeding the recommended minimum and comparable to other Malaysian educational studies using student perception instruments (e.g., Amin & Othman, 2019; Wu et al., 2022). Although the sample is not proportionally representative of school types, its size and diversity across gender, age, and ethnicity provide a strong basis for analysis.

The qualitative component complements the survey by exploring students' in-depth perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices. Before data collection commenced, ethical approval was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee and the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). Official permission was also sought from the principals of each participating school. Data collection was conducted in two phases to accommodate the mixed-methods design. All participation was voluntary, with strict confidentiality maintained throughout both phases. Data from both sources were securely stored and later analysed to produce an integrated understanding of teacher quality.

Data Analysis Plan

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods approach, with quantitative and qualitative data analysed separately and integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher quality from the students' perspective.

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and variance) were used to summarise students' perceptions for each subconstruct and the overall teacher quality (OTQ). Internal reliability for each subconstruct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All subconstructs exceeded the threshold value of 0.7, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency. Normality checks were performed using histograms and descriptive indicators to determine the distribution of data. Inferential analyses included:

a. Welch's t-tests to compare teacher quality perceptions between gender and school type groups;
b. One-way ANOVA to compare teacher quality perceptions across age and race groups;
c. Pearson's correlation coefficients to examine relationships among the five subconstructs;
d. Multiple regression analysis to identify which subconstructs significantly predicted students' motivation.

All inferential tests were conducted at a 0.05 significance level. Where applicable, effect sizes were calculated to complement p-values and provide practical interpretation.

To supplement the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected through follow-up interviews from students on various open-ended questions relating to teacher quality. These responses covered seven broad themes: perceptions of quality teachers, overall teacher quality in school, effective teaching methods, ways to make learning more enjoyable, hindering teacher behaviours, suggestions for the Ministry of Education (MOE), and personal experiences with teachers. Rather than adopting a complex thematic coding framework, this study applied a deductive content analysis approach. The analysis followed these steps:

i. Responses were grouped under predefined themes based on the research questions and subconstructs.
ii. For each theme, selected student responses were presented in a table format, including the respondent code, the original feedback (in Bahasa Melayu or English), the English translation (if needed), and interpretive notes.
iii. The patterns and insights within each theme were narratively synthesised to highlight recurring ideas, sentiments, or concerns that supported or contrasted with the quantitative findings.

This approach was deemed appropriate given the structured nature of the open-ended questions, the limited length of responses, and the study's objective to triangulate findings between quantitative scores and student narratives. Quantitative and qualitative data were integrated during interpretation to offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of teacher quality. The qualitative feedback helped explain patterns observed in the quantitative results (e.g., subconstructs with lower scores or group differences) and gave voice to students' real-world classroom experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A total of 483 students participated in the study. Table 1 below summarises the distribution of respondents by gender, age, race, and school type. The sample includes students mostly from NSS and NTSS. Most respondents were aged 16 to 17, reflecting the target groups of Form 4 and Form 5 students.

Table 1: *Demographic Distribution of Respondents*

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	71	14.7
	Female	412	85.3
Age	14 years old	7	1.4
	15 years old	22	4.6
	16 years old	110	22.8
	17 years old	344	71.2
Race	Malay	419	86.7
	Chinese	23	4.8
	Indian	8	1.7
	Others	33	6.8
School Type	SMK	473	97.9
	SMJK	10	2.1

Before proceeding with descriptive and inferential analyses, the internal consistency of the instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha for each of the five subconstructs.

Table 2: *Cronbach's Alpha Values for All Sub-constructs* (N=483)

Subconstruct	No. of Items	α	Reliability Interpretation
Behaviour Management	10	0.88	Good
Student Motivation	10	0.94	Excellent
Communication Skills	10	0.93	Excellent
Technological Competency	10	0.93	Excellent
Teaching Strategy	10	0.93	Excellent

According to the guideline by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher indicates acceptable internal consistency, while values above 0.80 reflect strong reliability. As shown in Table 2, all five subconstructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with alpha values ranging from 0.88 to 0.94. This suggests that the questionnaire items within each subconstruct reliably measure the intended construct and can be used for further statistical analysis with confidence.

Descriptive and Inferential Analysis

The descriptive statistics for the overall teacher quality (OTQ) score are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of All Sub-Constructs*

N	Mean	Median	Mode	σ	Variance
483	3.90	4.00	4.30	0.70	0.49

The results indicate that the mean score for overall teacher quality is 3.90, suggesting a generally positive perception among students. The median value of 4.00 reinforces this, indicating that at least half of the respondents rated their teachers' quality at or above this level. The mode of 4.30 shows that the most frequent rating was above the mean, reflecting a concentration of higher ratings. The standard deviation of 0.70 suggests a moderate spread in students' responses, while the variance of 0.49 supports the consistency of these responses. Overall, these findings reflect a favourable student perception of teacher quality, with relatively consistent agreement among respondents. The mean scores of all five subconstructs are shown in the table below.

Table 4: *Mean Scores for All Sub-Constructs of Teacher Quality*

Subconstructs	BM	CS	SM	TC	TS	OTQ
Mean	3.67	4.17	3.82	4.01	3.81	3.90

As shown in Table 4, all dimensions scored above the midpoint (3.00). These variations suggest that students found their teachers stronger in some areas than others. The overall teacher quality mean score was 3.90, indicating a generally positive perception of teacher effectiveness across all measured dimensions.

Table 5: *Frequency Distribution of Overall Teacher Quality*

OTQ Score Range	Level of Agreement	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
1.50 – 1.99	Disagree	0	0.0%
2.00 – 2.49	Somewhat Disagree	4	0.8%
2.50 – 2.99	Neutral	10	2.1%
3.00 – 3.49	Somewhat Agree	42	8.7%
3.50 – 3.99	Agree	109	22.6%
4.00 – 4.49	Strongly Agree	191	39.5%
4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	127	26.3%
Total	—	483	100%

Note: The Overall Teacher Quality (OTQ) score is the average of all five subconstructs per respondent.

As presented in Table 5, most students perceived their teachers very positively. A total of 65.8% of the respondents gave ratings between 4.00 and 5.00, indicating strong agreement with the indicators of teacher quality. Only 2.9% rated their teachers below a score of 3.00, suggesting very low dissatisfaction. These findings complement the earlier descriptive statistics and support the conclusion that overall teacher quality in the surveyed schools was rated highly by most students. Table 6 presents qualitative responses, categorised thematically.

Table 6: Students' *Feedback on Teacher Quality in Their Respective School*

Theme	Sample Feedback (Translated)	Interpretation
Mixed quality	"The quality of teachers in my school is average; some are good, some are not so good." (R1)	Students acknowledge that teaching quality can vary widely even within the same school.
Mostly competent and committed	"The overall quality of teachers in my school is evenly okay. There are some teachers who can still improve, but most are very good at doing their job." (R2)	While there is room for improvement, many students see their teachers as dedicated professionals.
Too serious or rigid	"At my school, there are a few good teachers, but most are too serious." (R3)	Some students feel that overly strict or serious teaching styles hinder engagement and connection.
Highly supportive and committed	"In my opinion, the teacher quality in this school is excellent. They try their best to help with all kinds of problems, academic or personal." (R4)	Certain students view their teachers as highly devoted, going beyond classroom instruction to offer holistic support.
Presence of negative behaviour	"My teachers are okay, but some of them are a bit toxic. They tend to downgrade students." (R5)	Negative teacher attitudes or behaviours—such as judgemental comments—can significantly impact students' learning experience.
Energetic and hard-working	"In my opinion, the teacher quality in this school is really good. Many teachers are hard-working and dedicated, and they try to ensure we understand the lesson." (R6)	Teachers' diligence and willingness to support student understanding are well appreciated.

Relationship Analysis

To examine the relationships among key variables in this study, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted between the two main constructs (classroom management and pedagogical literacy), as well as between each construct and overall teacher quality (OTQ). Table 7 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the two independent variables.

Table 7: *Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Main Constructs*

Constructs	**CM**	**PL**	**OTQ**
Classroom Management (CM)	1	0.791	0.962
Pedagogical Literacy (PL)	0.791	1	0.929
Overall Teacher Quality (OTQ)	0.962	0.929	1

As shown in Table 7, Classroom Management (CM) and Pedagogical Literacy (PL) were strongly and positively correlated ($r = 0.791$, $p < .001$), suggesting that students who rated their teachers highly on classroom management also tended to view them as pedagogically literate. Both constructs also demonstrated very strong positive correlations with Overall Teacher Quality (OTQ), where

i. CM and OTQ: $r = 0.962$
ii. PL and OTQ: $r = 0.929$

These findings indicate that effective classroom management and strong pedagogical skills are both closely associated with students' perceptions of high teacher quality. Notably, the correlation between CM and OTQ was slightly higher, suggesting that students may place slightly more weight on classroom management behaviours when forming overall judgements about their teachers.

Multiple Regression Analysis

This section presents a regression analysis conducted to examine the extent to which four teacher-related subconstructs (behaviour management, communication skills, technological competency, and teaching strategy) predict students' motivation levels. Although the overall goal of the study is to investigate factors contributing to teacher quality, students' motivation is positioned here as a dependent variable (DV) rather than an independent variable (IV). This analytical choice was made based on the understanding that students' motivation is a direct, internal outcome of observable teacher behaviours and practices. The regression model yielded the following statistics:

Table 8: *Summary of Regression Output*

Model Summary	Value
R (Multiple Correlation)	0.833
R Square (R^2)	0.694
Adjusted R^2	0.692
Standard Error	0.458
Number of Observations (N)	483

The R^2 value of 0.694 indicates that approximately 69.4% of the variance in students' motivation can be explained by the four independent variables, demonstrating a strong model fit.

Table 9: ANOVA Results of Regression Model

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. F
Regression	4	228.06	57.02	271.59	< 0.001
Residual	478	100.34	0.209		
Total	482	328.40			

The ANOVA results in Table 9 confirm that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 271.59$, $p < .001$), indicating that the predictors collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in students' motivation.

Table 10: ANOVA Results for All Subconstructs vs Students' Motivation

Predictor Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-value	p-value	Significance
(Constant)	0.095	0.772	0.441	Not Sig.
Behaviour Management	0.166	4.72	< .001	Significant
Communication Skills	0.405	9.18	< .001	Significant
Technological Competency	0.003	0.08	0.934	Not Sig.
Teaching Strategy	0.371	9.04	< .001	Significant

From the results in Table 10, three subconstructs [Communication Skills (B = 0.405), Teaching Strategy (B = 0.371), and Behaviour Management (B = 0.166)] were found to be significant predictors of students' motivation, all with p-values < .001. Technological competency, on the other hand, did not significantly contribute to the model (p = .934). These findings emphasise that the way teachers manage behaviour, communicate and apply teaching strategies has a statistically significant and positive impact on students' motivation, reinforcing their importance in any framework of teacher quality.

Students' Suggestions on Improving Teacher Quality

To further understand how teachers can enhance the classroom experience, a few related questions were asked during the interview session. Responses revealed that students value humour, creativity, inclusivity, and the use of rewards or exciting activities. The following table summarises their ideas on methods that make learning more enjoyable.

Table 11: *Student Suggestions on Making Learning More Enjoyable*

Theme	Sample Feedback (Translated)	Interpretation
Use of rewards and incentives	"I think teachers can use quizzes and give rewards to grab students' attention." (R1)	Positive reinforcement through fun activities and incentives can boost motivation and engagement.
Cheerful and open teacher personality	"I think teachers should be more cheerful in class and listen more to students' ideas. Also, they should engage with introverted or antisocial students, so they become more confident." (R2)	Warm and responsive teacher behaviour fosters inclusivity and boosts students' emotional comfort.
Humour and balance in teaching	"To make learning more fun, teachers should joke around while teaching but also know how to manage the class so it doesn't get too noisy." (R3)	A balance between humour and discipline helps maintain an enjoyable yet productive learning environment.
Personalised and up-to-date approaches	"Teachers should understand students' needs and preferences and be up to date with teaching trends." (R4)	Tailoring lessons to students' interests and integrating current methods can keep learning relevant and engaging.
Avoid favouritism	"Don't practise favouritism. Sometimes there are students who really want to succeed, but teachers only pay attention to the top scorers." (R5)	Inclusive attention and support to all students, regardless of ability, is essential for equitable classroom enjoyment.
Creative, exciting activities	"Teachers can use things like video games and exciting activities so learning becomes more fun. If the activity is fun, students will be more focused." (R6)	Fun and dynamic teaching activities can transform learning into a memorable and motivating experience.

Besides, regarding teacher behaviours that make learning more difficult, students agree that poor communication, lack of explanation, judgemental attitudes, and irrelevant instructional methods can create serious obstacles to effective learning. Feedback can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12: Students' *Feedback on Teachers' Behaviours That Hinders Learning*

Theme	Sample Feedback (Translated)	Interpretation
Giving unclear or unexplained tasks	"Teachers give exercises that I don't understand." (R1)	Students are discouraged when assignments are not preceded by adequate instruction or guidance.
Lack of interaction or communication	"I'm weak in some subjects and find it hard to understand without explanation, so if teachers don't let me ask questions, it makes learning harder." (R2)	Learning becomes difficult when students are denied opportunities to ask questions or seek clarification.
Poor clarity in delivery	"Some teachers talk as if they're talking to themselves; it's hard to understand what they're saying." (R3)	Unclear speech or disorganised delivery prevents students from following the lesson.
No actual teaching or reliance on tuition	"They just give work without teaching. Some think the first class should be independent or that students don't need help because they go for tuition." (R4)	If all students have external academic support can create gaps for those who rely on classroom instruction.
Judgemental or condescending behaviour	"Like I said, they're toxic toward underperforming students, like looking down on them." (R5)	Students feel demoralised when teachers display negative attitudes or bias toward weaker learners.
Teaching too fast and lack of relatable examples	"Teachers teach too fast, don't give chances to ask questions, and don't use examples that relate to our lives, so it's hard to understand." (R6)	Pacing that is too rapid and examples that lack relevance make comprehension more difficult for students.

In addition, students also share thoughtful perspectives on professional development, policy decisions, and the evolving needs of 21st-century learners.

Table 13: Student Suggestions on Improving Teacher Quality

Theme	Sample Feedback (Translated)	Interpretation
Introduce teachers to diverse and engaging methods	"Expose teachers to various teaching techniques that are not boring." (R1)	Students want teachers to be trained in innovative and enjoyable teaching strategies to keep lessons engaging.
Prepare teachers for student diversity and	"During the hiring process, teachers should be informed about the types of students they'll encounter and be ready	Students highlight the importance of equipping teachers with empathy and

emotional needs	with knowledge to handle them. Some students aren't bad; they may have psychological problems." (R2)	classroom management skills to handle emotional or behavioural challenges.
Stricter enforcement of discipline	"Disciplinary actions in public schools should be tightened. Many students skip school or engage in inappropriate relationships." (R3)	There is concern about student discipline and a suggestion that teachers should be supported with firmer school policies.
Assign teachers based on subject expertise	"Teachers shouldn't be made to teach subjects they're not trained in. It's confusing, especially when teachers not fluent in English are assigned to teach DLP subjects." (R4)	Misalignment between a teacher's skills and their assigned subject, especially in bilingual programmes, leads to student confusion and dissatisfaction.
Select teachers suited to current generation	"Choose teachers who are suitable for today's generation." (R5)	Students feel the Ministry should recruit teachers who understand modern learners and can connect with them.
Provide more practical and technological training	"Teachers should be given more practical training and be updated with modern teaching styles. My teachers are great, but still, more training would help." (R6)	Students advocate for continuous professional development, especially in digital tools, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

In essence, these students are not merely critiquing but providing constructive, forward-thinking advice. Their voices reflect a desire for a more empathetic, competent, and innovative teaching force, one that understands their generation and is equipped with the tools to teach, guide, and inspire.

CONCLUSION

The findings reflect how students evaluate their teachers' classroom performance and pedagogical literacy in Malaysian public secondary schools, offering valuable feedback aligned with the aspirations of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) and the Malaysian Teacher Standards (MTS). Based on the average of the five sub-constructs, most students perceive their teachers as demonstrating moderately high quality in classroom practice and pedagogical application. Among the five subconstructs, communication skills and technological competency received the highest mean ratings, suggesting that students value clear communication and digital integration in their learning experiences. On the other hand, Student Motivation received the lowest mean score, indicating that some students feel less emotionally engaged or inspired by their teachers, which may reflect the growing need for social-emotional learning and empathetic classroom practices.

From the qualitative responses, many students described quality teachers as those who are caring, respectful, approachable, and creative in teaching delivery. They emphasised the

importance of interactive teaching methods, individualised attention, and strong teacher-student rapport. Conversely, students also highlighted issues such as teachers being disengaged, showing favouritism, or failing to communicate clearly, which hinder their learning. These reflections point to a strong alignment between what students perceive as "quality teaching" and the competencies outlined in the Malaysian Teacher Standards (MTS), namely, professional values, knowledge and understanding, and teaching and learning practices. The qualitative data also reveal students' expectations for emotionally intelligent teachers who are responsive not just to academic needs but also to personal and developmental concerns.

Altogether, the findings show that Malaysian public secondary school teachers are generally meeting students' expectations, especially in areas tied to professionalism and pedagogical competence. However, the mixed feedback on student motivation and classroom management suggests that continuous professional development (CPD) is essential, particularly in equipping teachers with skills in student engagement, differentiated instruction, and classroom climate management. In line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint, which aspires to produce high-performing, reflective, and student-centred educators, the integration of student perception surveys like this can be instrumental in monitoring teacher quality, identifying gaps, and tailoring support systems for teachers. In many high-performing education systems, student feedback is not only welcomed but systematically used to inform school improvement and teacher appraisal systems.

Students, as primary recipients of instruction, are well-positioned to provide authentic feedback on how teacher practices affect their learning experience. While not the sole measure of teacher effectiveness, their perspectives serve as a vital complement to administrative evaluations, peer reviews, and self-reflections. Incorporating student voice into professional development conversations can promote a more holistic and democratic view of teacher quality. It also ensures that the principle of learner-centred education, a core value of 21st-century education frameworks, is honoured and applied. As seen in this study, students can articulate clear, relevant, and constructive feedback that, when taken seriously, can drive meaningful change in the education system.

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