



## School Identification and School Burnout Among High School Students in Faith-Based Schools in Malaysia.

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### ABSTRACT

School identification is defined as the sense of belongingness in a school, which means valuing school and school-related outcomes. Failure to identify with school relates to school withdrawal. Therefore, studies suggest that school makes the effort in increasing student identification. On the other hand, school burnout refers to student's fatigue due to excessive academic demands. School burnout relates to absenteeism, low motivation, low achievement, and school dropouts. Schools should, therefore, address school burnout for the benefit of the students. This descriptive quantitative study aimed at analyzing and describing the school identification and school burnout among students of two faith-based high schools in one eastern states of Malaysia—Sabah. Correlation between school identification and school burnout was also investigated along with their effect size. The subjects were 170 students of Form Four and Five, who were studying in the academic year of 2019. This study employed two research instruments. School identification was measured using Identification with School Questionnaire (ISQ) which was developed by K. Voelkl. School burnout was measured using School Burnout Inventory (SBI) developed by K. Salmero-Aro, N. Kiuru, E. Leskinen, and J. Nurmi. The instruments consisted of 7 demographics and 25 Likert scale items. Questionnaires were translated into Bahasa Melayu. For the correlation, data analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's  $r$ ). Both statistical analysis, descriptive and inferential, were processed using SPSS. The result also supports previous findings on gender differences in school burnout and school identification. Pearson  $r$  test on the data for student burnout and student identification suggests a negative correlation. Findings suggested a couple of pointers at the disposal of school administration to increase student's school identification.

**Keywords:** School Burnout; School Identification; Faith-Based, High School

### INTRODUCTION

The Online Etymology Dictionary states that the Latin word *schola* for school denotes rest from work and learning as leisure. The Greek *skhole* equates school as spare time, leisure, rest, and ease. Today, school is an essential institution to provide children a harmonious development of their physical, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social aptitudes (White, 1903). There have been rapid changes in the classroom environment and requirements. Unfortunately, with the ever increase on pressure to acquire and master new knowledge and

skills, school has become a possible place for experiencing stress both for teachers and students. (Smylie, 1999).

The lingering background of this study is school dropouts. School dropout has been a subject of research for the past eight decades in different parts of the world (Samler, 1938; Farooq, 1948; Livingstone 1958; Combs & Cooley, 1968; Annis & Watson, 1975; Rumberger, 1987; Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989; Mahoney & Cairns (1997; Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000; Dupere, Dion, Leventhal, Archaumbult, Crosnoe & Janosz, 2018). The interest and concern for school drop out will continue because school dropouts is considered a serious educational, economic and social problem. It will be so because most dropouts experience serious educational deficiencies in their later life as adult (Rumberger, 1987). The issue of school dropout, especially that of the upper secondary school, is a social and economic problem in Malaysia (Mokhsein, Kung, & Ibrahim, 2016). Patel (2014) cited that according IDEAS survey on education the main reason for dropping out was a lack of interest for school. There is a need to explore more ways to help students stay at school by addressing preventative actions to reduce the drop out rates.

This study views here that school burnout and school identification are related to school dropout. Identification and burnout are known to be negatively related (Avanzi, Fraccaroli, Castelli, Marcionetti, Crescentini, Balducci, & van Dick, 2018). Therefore, this study focuses on exploring two variables that appear to be on the opposite ends—school burnout and school identification. These two variables affect one's intention to pursue one's study in a different direction. A high level of school burnout may become a catalyst to one's intention to leave (Kobanoglu & Uygungil, 2000; Minamizono, Nomura, Inoue, Hiraie, Tsuchiya, Okinaga, & Illing, 2019). From this perspective, it is therefore important to detect burnout among students in school. On the other hand, a high level of school identification energizes a higher motivation to stay at school. Likewise, the detection of the level of school identification among students may offer a hint for a school to re-evaluate its study environment.

The curiosities behind this study are:

1. What is the level of school burnout and school identification of students
2. Do students differ in school burnout and school identification in terms of gender, residential mode, years of study at this school, or having their parents as alumni of the school?

3. What are the relationship between the two seemingly opposing variables, if at all there is a relationship? Do school burnout and identification with school go hand in hand the opposite direction?

## **LITERATUR REVIEW**

### **School Burnout**

There is still no consistent definition of burnout (Korczak, Huber, & Kister, 2010, p. 1). This scenario is rather strange considering the number of research interests on school burnout in the past few decades. A plethora of research has been on the different theoretical models and in different countries (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). To date, there is no one generally accepted definition of burnout. However, the most common definition was offered by Maslach (Galán, Sanmartín, Polo, & Giner, 2011, p. 453).

Historically, the term burnout was used to explain exhaustion observed among mental health professionals (Yaguz & Dogan, 2014). According to Maslach & Leiter (2016), burnout is considered as a psychological syndrome due to prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The prolonged response has three key dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feeling of cynicism, and a sense of inadequacy to accomplish certain tasks.

Several factors directly associated with burnout are number of workloads (Arlinkasari, Akmal, & Rauf, 2017). Other research show burnout to have the following negative consequences: has strong effect on the academic achievement of high school students, associated with high number absenteeism and poor motivation (Fiorilli, Stasio, Di Chiacchio, Pepe & Salmerla-Aro, 2017), a significant contributor to intention of leaving (Weisberg, 1994).

### **School Identification**

According to Voelkl (1996), school identification refers to student's sense of belongingness and valuing of school and school-related outcomes. A recent study on the effect of student's school identification resulted in the conclusion that over time, student identification predicts better mental health among high school students. This proposition was concluded from the major findings of a study on 406 high school students in three Scottish public schools (Miller, Wakefield, & Sani, 2018). School identification is considered to have impact on students to push for higher academic achievement (Maxwell, Reynolds, & Lee, 2017). According to Butler (2012), increasing student's level of school identification marks an increase in student engagement in school activity.

## **METHODS**

This study is nonfunded. It employed a non-experimental quantitative method using Likert-scale questionnaires as the means of gathering data from the respondents. The underpinning paradigm of the quantitative research method is positivism. From the positivist school of thought, it is posited that behaviors are observable as data. The data can be later numerically and objectively measured and statistically analyzed. This research method using numerical measurement and analysis is referred to as a quantitative approach (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Harvey & Land, 2017). The following discussions focus on the participants, instruments, and data analysis employed to extract information from the collected raw data.

### **Participants**

The study group consisted of 152 conveniently selected respondents. These were students of two faith-based high schools in the eastern state of Malaysia—Sabah. These respondents were students of Form Four and Form Five. In Malaysia, the high school is referred to as the upper secondary education level. The upper secondary level is the last two years of the eleven-year of basic and free education.

They were not in any way subjected to any treatment, intervention, or harm throughout data collection (Harvey & Land, 2017). However, only 120 participants returned their questionnaire as a symbol of consent to participate voluntarily in the study. Out of 120 returned questionnaires, only 112 were used for data analysis due to some incomplete responses on a few items. The participants were 58 (51.8%) females and 54 (48.2 %) males. Out of the 112 students who participated in the study, 60 (53.6 %) were in Form 4, and 52 (46.4%) were in Form 5. The participants consisted of 39 (34.8 %) boarders and 73 (65.2 %) day students. Most of the respondents were Seventh-day Adventist—86 (76.8 %) altogether. Meanwhile, other Christian denominations were 21 (18.8 %), Muslim 2 (1.8 %), and Buddhist 2 (1.8%). The average duration of stay at the school is 3.57 years. There were 27 (14.1%) students who have been in the school for 5 years; 47 (42.0%) with 4 years; 12 (10.7%) with 3 years; 15 (13.4%) with 2 years; and 11 (9.8%) with 1 years. Among the respondents were 59 (52.7%) whose parents were non-alumni of the school; 16 (14.37%) had their mother as an alumnus of the school, and 24 (21.4%) had their father as an alumnus of the school. Thirteen students (11.6%) had both parents as alumni of the school.

### **Instruments**

The questionnaire consisted of two instruments. These two instruments are Student Burnout Inventory (SBI) and Identification with School Questionnaire (ISQ). Both tools are well-

documented. These two instruments were, however, translated into Bahasa Melayu to suit the local language need of the respondents. The translation was counter checked by two speakers of Bahasa Melayu who were experts in the language. The instrument also included nine demographic items such as gender, race, residential mode, religion, years of stay at the school, and parental status of whether or not either or both were alumni of the school. In total the questionnaire had 34 items.

School Burnout Inventory was developed by Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, and Nurmi (2009) as a self-report Likert-type scale to measure school burnout among children. SBI explains three factors associated with school-related stress among upper middle school and high school students. The three factors are exhaustion at school, cynicism toward the meaning of school, and a sense of inadequacy at school. Exhaustion is related to feelings of strain and chronic fatigue resulting from overtaxing schoolwork; cynicism is related to having a detached attitude toward school and school-work; sense of inadequacy is related to diminished feelings of competence, success, achievement, and efficacy associated with school and schoolwork. This questionnaire was adapted from the Bergen Burnout Indicator-15 (BBI-15), which was developed to assess burnout in the work environment (Salmela-Aro, Rantanen, Hyvönen, Tilleman, & Feldt, 2011).

The (ISQ) was developed by Kristin E. Voelkl in 1996. Identification with School Questionnaire assesses a student's emotional engagement with school using two subscales—belongingness and valuing. The “Belongingness” subscale determines the level to which a student feels that he or she has significant belongingness to the school community. The “Valuing” subscale assesses how important or useful a student regards learning, to what degree a student agree that school is an important institution in society, and how much school is part of the student's self-definition.

### **Data Analysis**

All statistical analysis was performed using SPSS package software. Data analysis used in this research is frequency (f), percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation. Person Correlation Oefficient we used for relationship between variables. While correlation is generally used in measuring validity and reliability of an instrument (Randolph & Myers, 2013), correlation analysis is also used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Pearson  $r$  is designed for interval (continuous variables. It can also be used on one continuous variable and one dichotomous variable. The calculation of correlation in this

study is just a simple bivariate correlation which also known as zero-order correlation (Pallant, 2011). In simple words, it calculates correlation between two variables.

## RESULTS

As a preliminary step, the data were tested to determine whether or not it meets the assumption of normality. The term normal distribution describes a symmetrical, bell-shaped curve which has the highest number of frequency of scores in the middle but both extremes have lower frequencies counts (Pallant, 2011.) Ennos and Johnson (2018) explain that normality test is done to determine whether the distribution of a sample is significantly different from normal distribution. This testing method is also known as goodness-of-fit tests (Looney & Hagan, 2015). In this study, the following three methods are employed to determine normality assumption: Q-Q probability plots, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and measures of skewness and kurtosis (Looney & Hagan, 2015). Test of normality was conducted for both variables, school burnout, and school identification.

### Test of Normality for School Burnout Inventory (SBI)

Tests of normal distribution were conducted on School Burnout Inventory (SBI). The following outputs from SPSS are used to determine the normal distribution. According to Pallant (2011), Sig value of more (higher) than .05 indicates normality. In this study, a total of 111 cases were considered valid as seen in Table 1. Skewness and kurtosis as shown in Table 2 records -.054 and .192 respectively. The Sig value as seen in Table 3 is .200 which is higher than .05. Therefore, the value suggests meeting the assumption of normality. Further, the histogram scores in Figure 1 appears to be reasonably normally distributed, albeit displays a slight negative skew. Finally, an inspection of the Normal Q-Q Plot of Total SBI in Figure 2 also supports a case of a normal distribution. The distribution of scores reasonably creates a straight line suggesting a normal distribution. Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that the data for School Burnout Inventory is normally distributed.

Table 1. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
TOTAL SBI	111	99.1%	1	0.9%	112	100.0%

**Table 2. Descriptives**

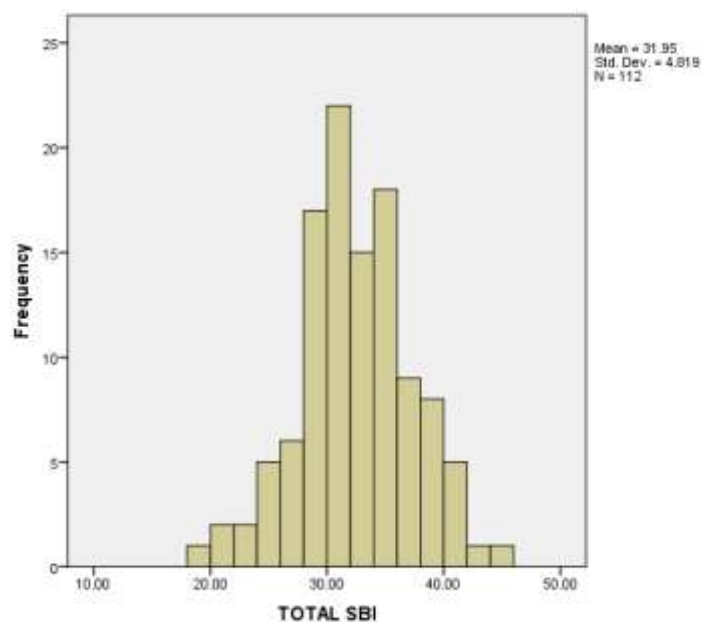
			Statistic	Std. Error
TOTAL SBI	Mean		31.9640	.45913
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	31.0541	
		Upper Bound	32.8738	
	5% Trimmed Mean		32.0000	
	Median		32.0000	
	Variance		23.399	
	Std. Deviation		4.83722	
	Minimum		19.00	
	Maximum		45.00	
	Range		26.00	
	Interquartile Range		6.00	
	Skewness		-.054	.229
	Kurtosis		.192	.455

**Table 3. Tests of Normality**

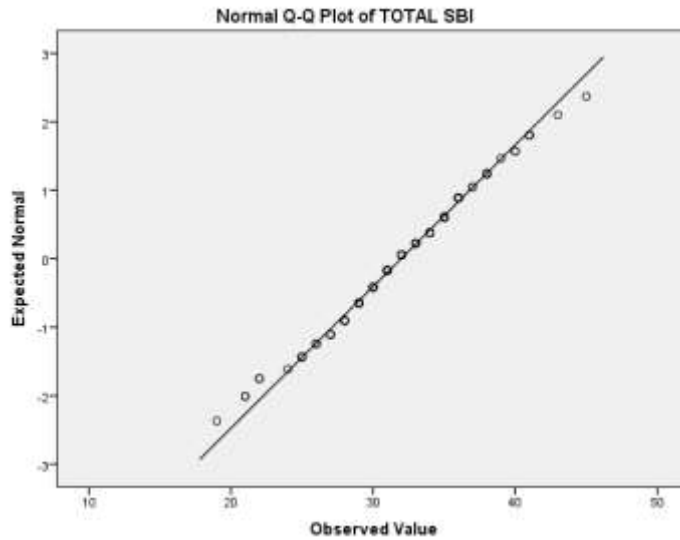
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TOTAL SBI	.065	111	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.991	111	.691

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction



**Figure 1. Total SBI**  
1634



**Figure 2.** Normal Q-Q Plot of Total SBI

**Test of Normality for Identification with School (ISQ)**

Three tests of normal distribution were conducted on Identification with School (ISQ). The following outputs from SPSS are discussed in the determination of the normal distribution. According to Paliant (2011), Sig value of more (higher) than .05 indicates normality. In this study, a total of 112 cases were considered valid as seen in Table 4. Skewness and kurtosis as shown in Table 5 records -.137 and -.378 respectively. Table 6 displays the Sig value is .200 which is higher than .05. Therefore, the Sig value for ISQ suggests meeting the assumption of normality. Further, the histogram for the ISQ scores in Figure 3 appears to be reasonably normally distributed. However, it does display a slight negative skew. An inspection of the Normal Q-Q Plot of Total School Identification in Figure 4 also supports a case of a normal distribution. The distribution of scores reasonably creates a straight line suggesting a normal distribution. Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that the data for School Burnout Inventory is normally distributed.

**Table 3. Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
TOTAL_School Identification	112	100.0%	0	0.0%	112	100.0%



Table 4. Descriptives

Descriptives			Statistic	Std. Error
TOTAL_School Identification	Mean		48.8036	.48495
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	47.8426	
		Upper Bound	49.7645	
	5% Trimmed Mean		48.8472	
	Median		49.0000	
	Variance		26.339	
	Std. Deviation		5.13220	
	Minimum		35.00	
	Maximum		59.00	
	Range		24.00	
	Interquartile Range		7.75	
	Skewness		-.137	.228
	Kurtosis		-.378	.453

Table 5. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TOTAL_School Identification	.063	112	.200*	.989	112	.474

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

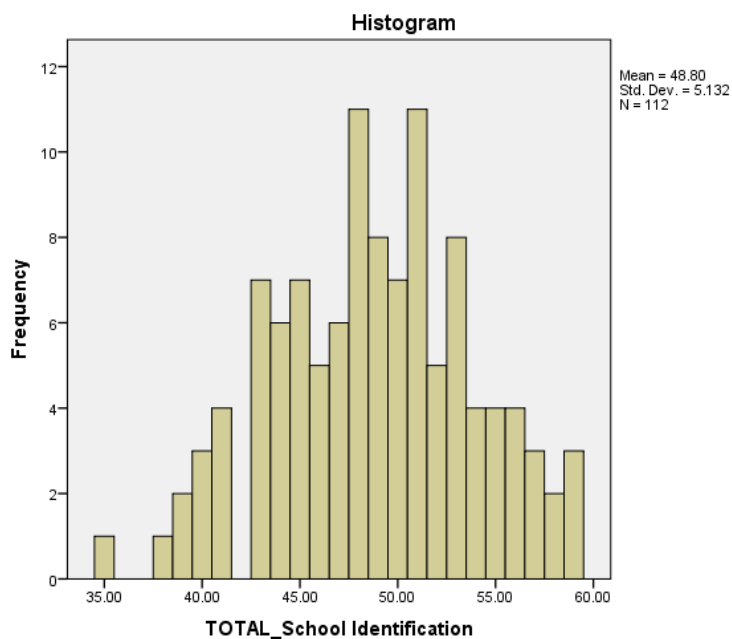
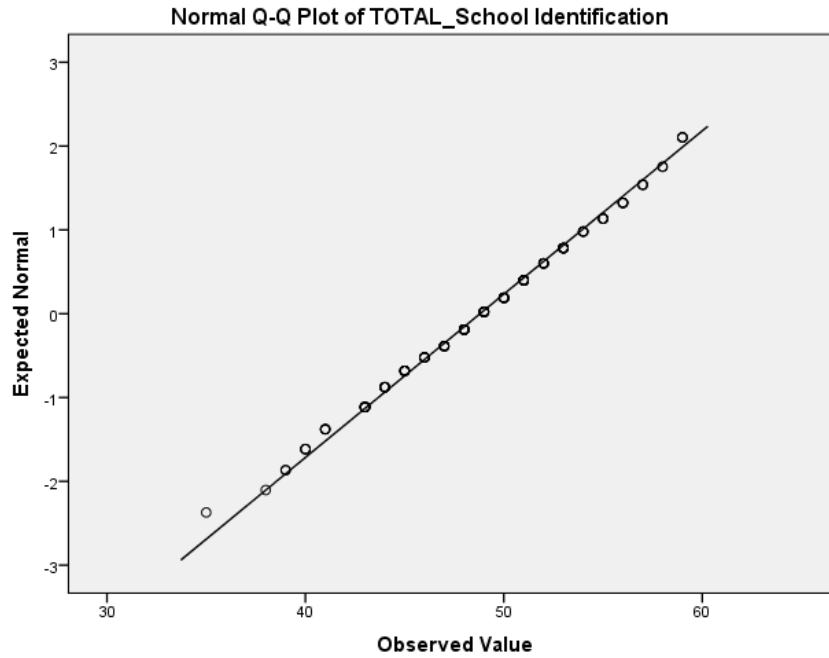


Figure 3. Histogram for Total ISQ



**Figure 4.** Normal Q-Q Plot for ISQ

**Level of School Burnout**

Question 1. What is the level of school burnout of the students?

Table 7 shows the mean of 31.96. Considering the highest possible level would be 54. It is reasonably correct to consider that the burnout level of the students is low. It should be noted that the scores are slightly negatively skewed (-.054).

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive Statistics										
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
TOTAL SBI	111	26.00	19.00	45.00	31.9640	4.83722	-.054	.229	.192	.455
Valid N (listwise)	111									

**Level of ISQ**

Question 1 What is the level of identification with school of the students?

Table 7 shows the mean of 48.80. Considering the highest possible level would be 64. It is reasonably correct to consider that the level of student identification is reasonably high. It should be noted that the scores are slightly negatively skewed (-.137).

**Table 7. Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
TOTAL_School Identification	112	35.00	59.00	48.8036	5.13220	-.137	.228
Valid N (listwise)	112						

**Differences in school burnout**

Question 1 Do students differ in school burnout and school identification?

**Relationship between school burnout and identification with school**

Question 3 What is the relationship between school burnout and school identification?

**Table 8. Correlations**

		TOTAL_School Identification	TOTAL SBI
TOTAL_School Identification	Pearson Correlation	1	-.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	112	111
TOTAL SBI	Pearson Correlation	-.356**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	111	111

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient of student burnout and school identification. The relationship between school burnout and school identification was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a medium negative correlation (-.356) between the two variables—school identification and school burnout. Pallant (2011) stated that authors have different interpretations of the significant strength of the values. However, Cohen (1988) outlines the following guidelines:

Small  $r = .10$  to  $.29$

Medium  $r = .30$  to  $.49$

Large  $r = .50$  to  $1.00$

Therefore, based on the guidelines above the correlation coefficient value of .356 suggests a medium relationship strength. The coefficient of determination is therefore 12.67 percent.

## **DISCUSSION**

Stress is associated with burnout. A certain amount of stress is good although too much stress may cause distress and burnout. Burnout will affect overall attitude, performance, and sustainability of performance over time (Smith, Brashen, Minor, & Anthony, 2015). It should also be noted that there are individual differences in burnout (Foley, & Murphy, 2015; Pines, 2017; Maslach, C. (2017). Meanwhile, school identification is an important factor in assuring student success, well-being, and completion of study, which eventually reduces school dropout. School administration and teaching staff have the power to influence school environment that will create favorable climate for higher student identification (Mitchell, Kensler, Tschanen-Moran, 2017). School dropouts do require concern. School dropouts are more likely to be nicotine dependance and attempted suicide (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2015). School burnout and school identification do provide insights to reduce school dropout.

In conclusion, this investigation shows that school burnout is negatively related to school identification. This does not mean that low burnout causes high identification with school. However, the findings of this study increase our understanding of the relationship between school burnout and school identification. The study also shows a relatively low amount of school burnout experienced by the students. This indicates that the school has a student-friendly environment and that the students are not in poor studying environment (Marôco, Marôco, Leite, Bastos, Vazão, & Campos, (2016). However, it could mean that students may not be challenged enough. Challenging tasks do motivate students to increase their performance (Hung, Sun, & Yu, 2015).

This study highlights the following limitations. First, the present study was conducted among students in faith-based schools, and thus, one has to be cautious in generalizing the results to other students even of the same level. Second, the present study was carried out in the state of Sabah in Malaysia. Therefore, one has to be cautious in generalizing the results to school contexts in other countries or even states within Malaysia. Third, both tools used in this study were translated into Bahasa Melayu.

Recommendations for further study is to identify factors that associated school burnout and school identification. It is important for a school to be able to identify what causes what in the school. Not knowing why we succeed is as dangerous as not knowing why we fail. Knowing that the level of school identification high is only half of the battle. The other half may prove

pivotal especially when one knows not what causes it to be at such level. The next curiosity questions is: how did we get here?

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