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AN INSIGHT INTO LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY AMONG THE PRINCIPALS OF RELIGIOUS SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

SATU TINJAUAN TENTANG EFIKASI KENDIRI KEPIMPINAN DALAM KALANGAN PENGETUA SEKOLAH MENENGAH AGAMA DI MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the level of leadership self-efficacy (LSE) among religious secondary school principals in Malaysia. In the context of norms in Malaysia, studies on the self-efficacy of leadership among school administrators are still lacking and limited. Thus, this study is conducted to measure the level of LSE of religious school principals involved from the aspects of (i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing awareness and self-confidence and (iv) creating change. A mixed-method questionnaire was distributed among all 56 respondents consisting of employees of religious secondary school principals through a convenience sampling method. The self-efficacy of leadership is measured through four dimensions namely i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing self-awareness and confidence and (iv) creating change. The results showed that the level of leadership self-efficacy for the dimension of motivating group members and creating synergy was high. However, the level of leadership self-efficacy for the dimensions of self-awareness and self-confidence as well as creating change is only at a moderately high level. Thus, to ensure that school principals have the opportunity to be selected as decision makers at the highest level of the organization, the four aspects of leadership self-efficacy must be at a high level. The findings showed that the school principals have a high level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) among themselves. They also provided additional comments and suggestions to improve the external factors that can affect their level of Leadership Self-Efficacy. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide input to the stakeholders of education in religious secondary schools on the need to hold mentoring programs or modules to help improve leadership self-efficacy (LSE) among the principals involved to achieve the transformation of 20th century education planned by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

Keywords: Leadership self-efficacy, school principals, educational policy, school education, educational leadership

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini membincangkan tahap efikasi sendiri kepimpinan (LSE) dalam kalangan pengetua sekolah agama menengah (SAM) di Malaysia. Dalam konteks di Malaysia, kajian tentang efikasi sendiri kepimpinan dalam kalangan pentadbir sekolah masih kurang dan terhad. Justeru,

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kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengukur tahap LSE pengetua sekolah agama yang terlibat dari aspek (i) memotivasikan ahli kumpulan, (ii) mewujudkan sinergi, (iii) menunjukkan kesedaran dan keyakinan diri dan (iv) mencipta perubahan. Soal selidik kaedah bercampur telah diedarkan kepada kesemua 56 responden yang terdiri daripada para pengetua sekolah agama menengah melalui kaedah persampelan mudah. Efikasi sendiri kepimpinan diukur melalui empat dimensi iaitu i) memotivasikan ahli kumpulan, (ii) mewujudkan sinergi, (iii) menunjukkan kesedaran dan keyakinan diri dan (iv) mencipta perubahan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan tahap efikasi sendiri kepimpinan bagi dimensi memotivasikan ahli kumpulan dan mewujudkan sinergi adalah tinggi. Namun begitu, tahap efikasi sendiri kepimpinan bagi dimensi kesedaran dan keyakinan diri serta mencipta perubahan hanyalah pada tahap sederhana tinggi. Justeru, bagi memastikan para pengetua sekolah berpeluang dipilih sebagai pembuat keputusan di peringkat tertinggi organisasi, empat aspek efikasi sendiri kepimpinan mestilah berada pada tahap yang tinggi. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pengetua sekolah mempunyai tahap efikasi sendiri kepimpinan (LSE) yang tinggi dalam kalangan mereka. Mereka juga memberikan komen dan cadangan tambahan untuk menambah baik faktor luaran yang boleh menjejaskan tahap efikasi sendiri kepimpinan mereka. Hasil kajian ini diharap dapat memberi input kepada pihak berkepentingan pendidikan di sekolah menengah agama tentang keperluan mengadakan program atau modul pementoran bagi membantu meningkatkan efikasi sendiri kepimpinan (LSE) dalam kalangan pengetua yang terlibat bagi mencapai transformasi pendidikan abad ke-20 yang dirancang oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Efikasi sendiri kepimpinan, pengetua sekolah, dasar pendidikan, pendidikan sekolah, kepimpinan pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

The leadership style of a leader can shape a comprehensive management in the administration under him. In the aspect of school leadership, the principals are the leaders who are responsible for managing and leading the school by realizing the policies of the ministry (Mohd. Muzakir, 2015). According to Mariani et. al, (2017) this professional leadership practice indeed provides a concept of attention and encouragement among teachers and students. In general, good leadership should influence the followers under the organization in performing a task to achieve the goals of the organization (Johansson, Miller and Hamrin, 2014). Thus, scholars acknowledge that leadership style does indeed influence the character under its followers or employees in terms of attitudes, behaviors, emotions as well as levels of thinking (Cetin et al., 2012).

In the era of 21st century education, the field of education is also undergoing rapid changes in the teaching and learning system. However, concerns remain in terms of the qualifications and competencies of school principals as skilled and competent school managers and leaders to enhance the development of this education in the 21st century era (Dina and Mohamed, 2019). These changes need to be coordinated also from the leadership of the principal so that each action gets a better influence on more consistent ethical behavior (Megat, 2017). In the context of the leadership of principals in schools, the level of self-efficacy influences their ability to make any desired changes in their respective schools. In this study, it refers to the data obtained from the researcher on the self -efficacy in the leadership of the principal in performing any organizational transformation. The influence of school leaders was found to influence the formation of school cultural atmosphere that plays an important role in school activities (Mohd. Faizullah, 2014). This effect can also be seen in the behavior and actions of principals are indeed influential in teaching leadership (Mohd Yusri, 2012). The transformational leadership performed by the principals also found to be supportive for a

positive effect on the teachers, contributing positive school culture and strengthening of organisational change process of the educational institutions (Atasoy, 2020).

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICIENCY (LSE)

In general, self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in his or her ability to perform an action to achieve a desired goal (Bandura, 1997). In fact, according to Bandura & Locke (2003), self-efficacy is able to influence individuals in terms of way of thinking (whether thinking from a positive or negative angle), self-motivation, self-resilience and quality of emotional well-being. Based on the concept of self-efficacy put forward by Bandura (1997), then the definition of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) specifically carries the meaning of an individual's belief in his ability to carry out responsibilities as a leader (Dugan et al., 2013). Even LSE-related studies show there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and leadership (Ramchunder & Martins, 2014; Niyogi & John, 2017; Abou 2017). An instrument construction study conducted by Bobbio & Manganeli Rattazzi (2009) stated that leadership self-efficacy is measured through six dimensions namely (i) initiating and leading change (ii) selecting effective followers and assigning responsibilities (iii) building and managing interpersonal relationships within groups (iv) demonstrate awareness and self-confidence (v) motivate members of the organization, and (vi) obtain consensus from group members. The results of the analysis show that studies on self-efficacy and leadership are mostly conducted at the school level or in the field of education such as the study conducted by Omar et al. (2019) who examined the relationship of principal leadership and teacher self-efficacy in general.

A study by Md. Noor, Andi Audryanah (2007) found that the perception of male teachers on the teaching leadership of principals is higher than female teachers. However, teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy shown by their principals were more or less the same. The t-test results also showed that there were significant differences in teaching leadership and self-efficacy between male and female principals where teaching leadership and the self-efficacy of female principals was higher. In addition, Kausal's study (2013) found that there is a very strong correlation between teaching leadership and self-efficacy conducted among school principals in Sabah. Hence, this study is conducted to investigate the level of LSE among religious school principals in Malaysia. They were selected from all SABK schools that implement the Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini (Religious Integrated Curriculum) as instructed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia since 2014.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to ensure the 20th century education transformation target is achieved especially in the post COVID-19 pandemic challenge at SABK-KPM schools, this study was conducted to measure the level of LSE of religious school principals involved from the aspects of (i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing awareness and self-confidence and (iv) creating change.

METHODOLOGY

This pilot study is conducted by using the survey to investigate of the level of leadership self-efficacy (LSE) among the principals of religious schools. The study respondents were selected from 56 religious school principals working in schools that implement the Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini (Religious Integrated Curriculum) in Government Aided Religious Schools (SABK) throughout Malaysia through purposive sampling method. A questionnaire adapted

by Nuha and Nurasmah (2021), with a reliability value (0.94) was used as a research instrument to collect the data descriptively. The total number of SABK for the secondary school category throughout Malaysia is 186 schools which are not equal in numbers in every state in Malaysia. However, this study is able to gather the data from all over Malaysia as shown in the findings later. The sampling size of this pilot study is adapting the recommended sample size for a pilot study as mentioned by (Neuman, 1997).

A mixed-method questionnaire study was conducted in this pilot study by using a questionnaire and administered to 56 respondents consisting of employees of religious secondary school principals through a convenience sampling method. The level of leadership self-efficacy is measured through four dimensions namely: i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing self-awareness and confidence and (iv) creating change. Study data obtained online with the help of the ‘Google Form’ application were analyzed descriptively through frequency, percentage and average, in addition to an open -ended questions to further explore an in-depth response quantitatively. The collected data was analyzed to understand the leadership of self-efficacy among SABK religious school principals from the aspect of self-efficacy and its relationship with their ability to implement educational transformation in their respective schools.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings of this study can be divided as follows:

a) DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Gender

No.	Male	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	42	76.4
2	Female	13	26.3
3	Missing	1	1.8
	TOTAL	56	100

Of the 56 respondents involved in the study, it was found that 42 (76.4%) respondents were male followed by 13 (26.3%) female respondents.

Table 2: Category of Age

No.	Ages	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 30	0	0
2	Between 31 and 40	4	7.1
3	Between 41 and 50	9	16.1
4	Above 50	43	76.8
	TOTAL	56	100

For the age category item, it was found that the majority of respondents with a total of 43 people (76.8%) belonged to the age category of 50 years and above, while the rest were aged in the range of 31 to 50 years (23.2%).

Table 3: Highest Academic Qualification

No.	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bachelor	43	78.2
2	Master	12	21.8
3	PhD	0	0
4	Missing	1	1.8
	TOTAL	56	100

For the item of the highest academic qualification category, it was found that the majority of respondents with a total of 43 people (78.2%) had a bachelor's degree, while the rest were Master's degree with 12 people (21.8%).

Table 4: Educational Service Grade

No.	Service Grade	Frequency	Percentage
1	DG 44	10	19.2
2	DG 48	1	1.9
3	DG 52	23	44.2
4	DG 54	18	34.6
5	JUSA	0	0
6	Others/Missing	4	7.1
	TOTAL	56	100

Meanwhile, the analysis by service grade showed that the majority of respondents consisted of principals with grade DG 52 as many as 23 people (44.2%), followed by grade DG 54 as many as 18 people (34.6%) and DG 44 as many as 10 people (19.2%). The remaining unspecified data are likely to belong to grade DG 41.

Table 5: Period of Teaching Experience in School

No.	Category of Ages	Frequency	Percentage
1	Between 1 until 10 years	1	1.8
2	Between 11 until 20 years	8	14.3
3	Between 21 until 30 years	7	12.5
4	More than 30 years	40	71.4
	TOTAL	56	100

For the analysis by period of teaching experience in school, the majority of principals have teaching experience in school more than 30 years with a total of 40 people (71.4%), while the rest have less than 30 years teaching experience with 16 people (28.6%).

Table 6: Location of schools based on states in Malaysia

No.	States in Malaysia	Frequency	Percentage
1	Perlis	1	1.8
2	Kedah	8	14.3
3	Penang	3	5.4
4	Kelantan	3	5.4
5	Terengganu	10	17.9
6	Pahang	4	7.1
7	Perak	1	1.8
8	Selangor	7	12.5

9	Negeri Sembilan	7	12.5
10	Melaka	2	3.6
11	Johor	8	14.3
12	Sabah	1	1.8
13	Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory	1	1.8
TOTAL		56	100

Based on the number of respondents who have participated in this pilot study, it was found that almost all states have answered this questionnaire except Sarawak. The largest number of respondents are principals from Terengganu as many as 10 people (17.9%) and one respondent for the least (1.8%).

b) QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Levels of Self -Efficacy of Leadership

Table 7 displays the findings of the level of Leadership Self -Efficacy (LFS) for SABK principals as mentioned previously. Details for each item of the LFS questionnaire are displayed as follows.

Table 7: Results of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE)

No.	Statement of Leadership Self-Efficacy (SLE)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Be enthusiastic about any eventuality.	0	0	3 (5.5%)	34 (61.8%)	18 (32.7%)
2	Assist in completing complex work.	0	0	0	30 (54.5%)	25 (45.5%)
3	Motivate group members by Providing opportunities to practice skills.	0	0	0	30 (54.5%)	25 (45.5%)
4	Motivate group members before starting a task.	0	0	0	28 (50.9%)	27 (49.1%)
5	Give encouragement to group members	0	0	0	23 (41.8%)	32 (58.2%)
6	Encourage the sharing of views.	0	0	0	22 (40%)	33 (60%)
7	Help group members achieve targets.	0	0	0	21 (38.2%)	34 (61.8%)
8	Think rationally.	0	0	0	24 (43.6%)	31 (56.4%)
9	Rise from failure.	0	0	1 (1.8%)	26 (43.7%)	28 (50.9%)
10	Able to stay positive.	0	0	1 (1.8%)	30 (54.5%)	24 (43.6%)
11	Have the initiative to stay positive.	0	0	0	33 (60%)	22 (40%)
12	Complete a task with confidence.	0	0	0	34 (61.8%)	21 (38.2%)
13	Confident that others will accept my idea.	0	1 (1.8%)	7 (12.7%)	39 (70.9%)	8 (14.5%)

14	Able to make changes to overcome all obstacles.	0	0	0	40 (72.7%)	15 (27.3%)
15	Able to set new directions for groups.	0	0	0	39 (70.9%)	16 (29.1%)
16	Able to change the attitude of group members.	0	0	3 (5.5%)	42 (76.4%)	10 (18.2%)
17	Able to change something in a group	0	0	3 (3.6%)	42 (76.4%)	10 (20%)

Based on the above findings, in general it can be concluded that all respondents have a high level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LFS) in the four constructs of the questionnaire, namely i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing self-awareness and confidence and (iv) creating change. However, there was an uncertain response for each of the four constructs involved, namely item number 1 (motivation construct), item number 9 and 10 (synergy construct), item number 13 (confidence and self-awareness construct) and items number 16 and 17 (construct initiate change). These differences are logically likely to occur due to differences in the age and experience of the respondents.

Based on Table 7, the statement ‘help group members achieve the target’ was the item with the highest percentage of agreement value (61.8%) for strongly agree answers, followed by the statement ‘encourage to share views’ with 60 percent %. While the statement ‘confident that others will accept my idea’ showed the lowest finding compared to other items with findings of ‘disagree’ 1 (1.8%), ‘not sure’ 7 (12.7%), ‘agree’ 39 (70.9 %) and ‘strongly agree’ 8 (14.5%). The remainder of the items showed a consistent finding between ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ which gave an indication that the respondents had a high level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LFS) in all four constructs in general.

c) OPEN-ENDED FINDINGS

Further comments and suggestions on organizational transformation that can be implemented in each school can be shown as follows.

Table 8: Open-Ended Response

No	Main Theme	Sub Theme
1	Teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Create teacher teamwork. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a relaxed teamwork and indirect team building program. <input type="checkbox"/> Unity of Thought and Action.
2	Proactive action	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires sacrifice from all aspects with high fighting spirit because the theory is not the same as practical and field <input type="checkbox"/> Willing to make any changes in managing the school as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Changing the attitude of the comfort zone. <input type="checkbox"/> Want to keep moving forward. <input type="checkbox"/> Need to take some time to understand the wants of all individuals in the organization and their respective capabilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Improving the academic achievement of the co-curriculum and personality. <input type="checkbox"/> Review all the plans that have been made for these three years. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals need to be constantly creative, innovative and sensitive to change in an effort to transform the organization.

		<input type="checkbox"/> Nurturing teachers to excel is part of the effort to transform the organization.
3	Appreciation and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> The principal of SABK Johor is still lagging behind in terms of the actual staffing of DG 52 as promised. <input type="checkbox"/> School leaders do not appreciate the fact that some of them resigned because they felt the pressure and risk they had to bear.
4	Religious souls and values	<input type="checkbox"/> Must be confident in the provisions of qada and qadar allah and must always try to find a solution to every problem. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a God Where to complain and ask for help. <input type="checkbox"/> Apologize and forgive... pray and hope for God's pleasure and mercy.
5	Positive thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> Life must be moving forward not wait and see. <input type="checkbox"/> Requires high commitment and enthusiasm and is always ready to change. <input type="checkbox"/> A work culture that is positively efficient, fast and careful and able to absorb stress positively. <input type="checkbox"/> Always move together towards achieving excellence. <input type="checkbox"/> Confident to continue with the school community to build excellence. <input type="checkbox"/> Positive thinking with an open heart. <input type="checkbox"/> The teacher paradigm needs to change in line with the current situation.
6	School infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Upgrading the physical and infrastructure of SABK schools should be given priority to ensure a conducive and meaningful environment and quality schools.

The qualitative findings of the open-ended questions can be divided into 6 main themes namely enhancing teamwork, exploring proactive action, enhancing appreciation and promotion system, instil religious souls and values, keeping up positive thinking and upgrading school infrastructures and supports. These 6 main themes of open-ended responses are explaining further more in-depth on means and ways to enhance Leadership Self-Efficacy (LFS) in the four constructs of the questionnaire, namely i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing self-awareness and confidence and (iv) creating change among SABK religious school principals in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

In general, the quantitative findings among SABK principals show that they have a high level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) in the four constructs of the questionnaire, namely i) motivating group members, (ii) creating synergy, (iii) showing self-awareness and confidence and (iv) creating change except in a few modest items related to confidence that subordinates will accept their ideas as school administrators. In addition to the quantitative findings, the principals also provided additional comments and suggestions to improve the external factors that can affect their level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE).

Thus, the results of this study can give implications to the formation of policies and strategies of each government sector in order to provide a 'proactive ecosystem' that is able to increase the level of Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) of SABK principals. The gap that occurs due to age differences and teaching experience between them can be improved by providing appropriate programs. The level of support in education services also needs to be reviewed to improve, especially in terms of workload, staff appreciation, promotion and upgrading of school infrastructure to further launch the work of SABK principals.

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