

The significance of Empowering Leadership towards High-Performance School Leaders in Malaysian High-Performance Schools

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Abstract

This study supports the aspirations of MEB 2013-2015 by identifying the best practices of leadership to achieve outstanding student performance as well as to maintain the high performance of schools. Therefore, this study examines the influence of empowering leadership towards high performance school leaders in primary schools of East Coast Malaysia. The instrument used is a questionnaire adopted from several questionnaires developed by previous researches on empowerment and high-performance school leaders. A total of 486 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of 14 high performing primary schools in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang using the random sampling technique. With a 58 percent return rate, the data were analyzed using SmartPLS version 3.28 for descriptive analysis, measurement model and structural model. The findings show that variables of empowering leadership exerted a significant influence on high performance school leaders. In addition, the results of this study support the contributions of the study that have been proposed. The findings of this study will contribute to future research, particularly to researchers aiming to examine this leadership style in depth on school performance in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Empowering leadership, high-performanceschool leaders, Malaysian High-Performance Schools*

Introduction

Academicians and researchers have covered a lot of issues highlighted in literature and studies about the importance of performance in the organization. They have identified performance from global perspective issues which are highlighted by three main factors; leadership, process and result (Kasim & Zakaria, 2019). However, Gürlek and Çemberci (2020) mentioned that performance is distinguished by excellent leadership and dynamic leaders who are committed to the success of organizational variables. An effective leader is a leader who plays a role as

a visionary leader who is clear about his organization, employees and result.

Performance in school organizations is also distinguished by excellent and good dynamic leaders in controlling their process and student's achievement towards school effectiveness (Waheed et al., 2020). Researchers conclude that leadership factors contribute to school performance. The literature has highlighted the factors that contribute to school performance in Malaysia such as policymakers, leadership, environment, community and student achievement (Gbollie & Gong, 2018; Tarimo,

2020; Zuckerman, 2020; Suhaini et al., 2020; Fuad et al., 2020). For this reason, the leadership factor needs to be investigated concerning high performance school leaders in contributing to school performance based on arguments of past studies (İşik, 2020).

Literature Review

Although empowerment has been identified as an important predictor of performance at both the individual and organization effectiveness, research has yet to examine empowerment simultaneously at the individual and organization of analysis, instead studying empowerment either at the individual or organization (Jha, 2019). As such, it remains to be seen whether the same leadership practices shown to empower individuals also empower employees or whether leaders need to use different practices to most effectively empower their members personally and collectively. Moreover, individual leaders' studies of empowerment have identified similar aspects of leadership as predictors of individual and organization performance (Tripathi et al., 2020). Empirical research has shown that employees who develop better relationships with their leader feel more empowered and in turn are more motivated to perform effectively and contributed to organization performance (Saleem et al., 2019).

LMX is defined as the quality performance of the social exchange between leaders and followers, characterized by mutual trust, respect, empower and obligation (Kirkman et al., 2020). Given that leaders can develop relationships of different quality with different employee, LMX has been considered an individual level construct capturing individuals' perceptions regarding the quality performance of their relationship with their leaders (Siddique et al., 2020). Accordingly, LMX is characterized as a discretionary stimulus that exerts a direct influence on individual motivation in organization. The leaders influence of LMX on individual performance is posited to occur at least in part through individual empowerment. Although there is also evidence that leaders develop better relationships in empowered with employee who have performed better previously, there is support to expectation that

empowerment influence individual performance (Thrasher et al., 2020).

In particular, in a longitudinal study, Alotaibi et al. (2020) found that developed better relationships with their leaders and employee subsequently performed better, as mediated by empowerment. Besides, studies are supporting the causal influence of self-efficacy captured by the competence dimension of empowerment of psychological and climate toward performance. At the organization level, García-Juan et al. (2019) proposed a model that generalizes empowerment from individuals to organization. The model proposes that psychological and climate empowerment is highly similar to individual performance in terms of its underlying dimensions, predictors, and outcomes. As such, empowerment has been conceptualized as a multilevel construct, or a construct that shares similar meaning and functions similarly across levels (Turnipseed & Waa, 2020). Empirical study also provided initial support for the generalizability of empowerment across levels and has demonstrated the positive influence of leaders performance or organization effectiveness (Bartram et al., 2020).

Empowering leadership behaviors focus on actions the leader takes to increase the motivation psychological and climate of the team as a whole rather than the quality of the relationship between a manager and a subordinate (Mutonyi et al., 2020). The set of empowering leadership behaviors identified is highly similar to the notion of empowerment psychological and climate. According to Byun et al. (2020), empowerment psychological and climate represents as a shared perception regarding the extent to which an organization makes use of structures, policies, and practices supporting employee empowerment.

Joo et al. (2020) has shown that leaders help develop shared empowerment of psychological and climate in teams through recurring practices that translate formal policies and procedures. Thus, Imam et al. (2020) used the term leadership climate to refer to leadership psychological behaviors which are directed to the subordinate as a whole and have the potential of developing shared, subordinate level empowerment. Ilyas et al. (2020) showed that empowerment has a significance relationship to the leadership and individual performance. Thus, both the

individual and organization portions of model suggest that leadership helps to explain the relationship between empowerment and performance.

Specifically, the hypotheses are posited as:

H1 Empowerment influences high performance school leaders.

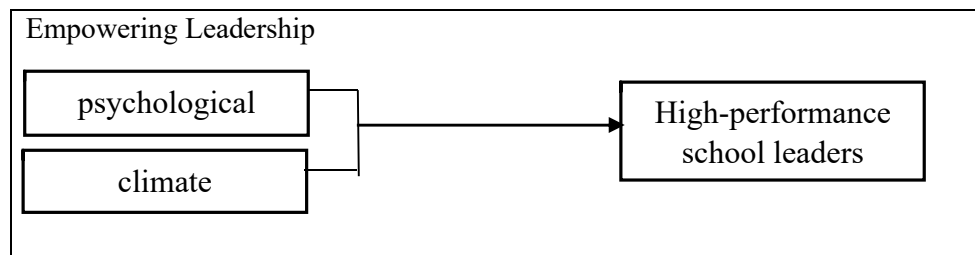


Figure 1.1

Methodology

This study focused entirely on school leaders who represent the organization of primary High-Performing Schools and schools were selected based on studies by Adams et al. (2020). The primary school context was selected based on an empirical study (Hui and Singh, 2020). The selection of school organisations was done in the East Coast states of Malaysia with High-Performing Schools that have been awarded the Excellent School title from the Ministry of Education based on the cohort received (Harun et al., 2020). This study also adopted a quantitative approach in which questionnaires were used as the research instrument. As for the respondents, all teachers in each school were chose to answer the instruments provided. The teachers in each school were chosen as the unit of analysis (individual) in assessing their perceptions of their headmaster who is responsible for executing managerial responsibilities in the school's organization. A total of 486 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of 15 high-performing primary schools in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang using the random sampling technique. The distribution of the survey forms was done by the researcher after dealing with the headmasters of the schools. The measurement of high-performing school leaders (22 items) was adapted from Malaysia Education Standard Quality (2010) and supported by Sammons, Hilman, and Mortimore (1995). The empowerment measurement (10 items) was adapted from Blanchard, Carlosh, and Randolph (1999); Seirbert, Silver, and Randolph (2004); as well as Spreitzer (1995).

Findings

Measurement of Reliability

The data in this study were analysed using a Smart PLS version 3.28 for the analysis approach. In the assessment of the measurement model, the first criterion was to assess the internal consistency of the measuring observed variables or items with each other. For the reliability measure in PLS-SEM, two sets of reliability measurement model were used, namely Cronbach's α for items or indicators reliability and composite reliability for internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Item or indicator reliability indicates which part of item's variance can be explained by the underlying latent variable (Gotz et al., 2010). Eight items from latent variable high-performing school leaders were removed because the factor loading value did not fulfil the condition (less 0.6). The high-performing school leaders showed AVE 0.607 and CR 0.955, and empowerment showed AVE 0.789 and CR 0.974.

Path Estimation (β) and Hypotheses Testing

The path estimation or hypothetical relations test was performed to examine the significance of the path relations in the inner model. Each path relationship was examined through the regression coefficient (β). The significance of regression coefficient β was based on the t-value, which was obtained using the Smart PLS bootstrap process. The procedure number of the bootstrap sample used by this study was 5000 and the critical value for the one-tailed test was considered as a significant value. The procedure of the run

bootstrapping for the lumped model was as suggested by Hair et al. (2014).

Table 1.1 First Order Result of hypothesis Empowerment toward High Performance School Leaders

Hypothesis	Path Relationship Between Variables	Path Estimation (β)	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value	Results
H1	EL->HPSL	0.189**	2.219	0.013	Supported

Note : Significant level = *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$; not significant.

HPSL = HighPerformance School Leaders EL= Empowering Leadership

The result of hypothesis testing for empowering leadership and high-performance school leaders was demonstrated in Table 1. The result shows that there is a significant and positive influence between empowerment and high-performance school leaders.

Conclusion

Empirical studies prove that empowering leadership has been identified as an important predictor of performance at both individual and organization effectiveness. In addition, literature has yet to examine empowering leadership simultaneously at the individual and organization of analysis, instead of studying of empowerment either at the individual or organizational level (Jha, 2019). Related to this study, the findings showed that empowering leadership has a significant relationship towards high performance school leaders. Besides, it remains that the leadership empowerment practices are shown to empower individuals and school teachers or whether school leaders need to use different practices to most effectively, empower their school teachers personally and collectively (Tripathi et al., 2020).

Moreover, empirical studies of empowering leadership have identified similar aspects of leadership as predictors of individual and organizational performance. Empirical research in school leadership also has shown that school teachers who develop better relationships with their school leaders feel more empowered and in turn are more motivated to perform effectively and contribute to school organizational performance (Saleem et al., 2019).

In addition, Alotaibi et al. (2020) found that better relationships with school leaders and school teachers, and subordinate

subsequently performed better, as influence by empowerment. Hence, studies are supporting the causal influence of self-efficacy captured by the competence dimension of empowerment toward performance. At the school organizational context, García-Juan et al. (2019) proposed a model that generalizes empowerment from school leaders to school organizations. The model proposes that empowering leadership is highly similar to individual performance in terms of its underlying dimensions, predictors, and outcomes. As such, empowering leadership has been conceptualized as a multilevel construct, or a construct that shares similar meaning and functions similarly across levels (Turnipseed & Waa, 2020). An empirical study in school leadership also provided initial support for the generalizability of empowering leadership across levels and has demonstrated the positive influence of school leaders' performance toward school organization effectiveness (Bartram et al., 2020).

Empowering leadership behaviors in the school leadership context focuses on actions the school leader takes to increase the motivation empowerment of the school team as a whole rather than the quality of the relationship between school leaders and school teachers (Mutonyi et al., 2020). Therefore, the set of empowering leadership behaviors identified is highly similar to the notion of empowerment psychological and climate. Therefore, the empowerment of psychological and climate represents a shared perception regarding the extent to which an organization makes use of structures, policies, and practices supporting employee empowerment (Byun et al., 2020).

The hypothesis result is also supported by Joo et al. (2020) who stated that leaders help

develop shared empowerment of psychological and climate in teams through recurring practices that translate formal policies and procedures. Thus, the school leaders in this study practice the term of leadership climate to refer to leadership psychological behaviors that are directed to the school teacher team as a whole and have the potential of developing shared toward school team level (Imam et al., 2020). Thus, both the individual school leader and school organization portions of the model suggest that leadership helps to explain the relationship between empowerment toward an individual or school organization performance (Ilyas et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this study showed that empowerment has a significant relationship with high performance school leaders in Malaysia East Coast High Performance Primary Public Schools. Based on the argument in empirical studies and the finding of this study, the practical perspective proves that school leaders need to empower themselves to increase individual performance in contributing to the school's organizational performance. The theoretical perspective also proves this study has achieved the goal as a new contribution between empowerment and high-performance school leaders.

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