

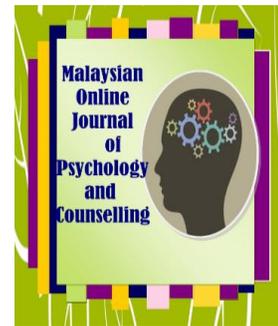
THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS' GENDER, ETHNICITY AND EXPERIENCE AND THEIR PERSONAL LEADERSHIP ATTITUDE

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the relationships between teachers' gender, ethnicity and experience and their personal leadership attitudes in Malaysia. The survey using Personal Leadership Attitude Questionnaire consisting seven dimensions (Vision, Altruistic Values, Hope, Meaning, Membership, Organizational Commitment and Productivity), administered to 100 teachers based on purpose sampling method. Findings reveal that the more experience the teachers have, the more understood and appreciated they feel. In contrast, as for the domain of productivity, the surprising finding is that less experienced teachers are found more productive. On the whole, all dimensions are positively and significantly correlated to each other.

Keywords: *Teachers' Leadership Attitude; Productivity; Gender; Experience; Ethnicity*



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INTRODUCTION

In the literature many predictor variables have been examined to determine employee attitudes and behaviors in the domain of change management. Shah and Shah (2010) have studied employees' readiness for change. The term "leaders" refers to persons holding formal positions of leadership in complex organizations such as industries, government departments, educational institutions, political offices; arts, sciences, and other professional establishments. Historically, gender precluded most females from becoming leaders in such organizations; as a result, the assumption that males were better suited than females for leadership roles was, until recently, rarely questioned.

Studies have investigated sex differences in relation to leadership; however, few have studied the relationship between gender roles and leadership. Poddar & Krishnan (2004) found that regardless of sex, managers who scored high on the femininity factor were viewed as more transformational by their subordinates. In a study in Greece, school responsibilities that are not apparent at first sight and family responsibilities for the household are found influential factors preventing women to be leaders (Brinia, 2012). It is also revealed that women find it difficult in managing both work and home tasks simultaneously. But traditional attitude and the present situation has shaped new culture. Findings of Diekmann et al. (2013) show that self-relevant cognitions and behaviors would accommodate to societal change and this accommodation took the shape of greater acceptance of nontraditional roles alongside continued acceptance of traditional roles.

When it comes to ethnicity, a rational argument against ethnicity is that no matter what race and ethnicity they belong to, the teachers lead inevitably to the conclusion that there are committed to their work and are thoroughly interested in increasing the achievement of the students. Research by Larson & Silverman (2000) and Noddings (1984) has emphasized the importance of developing a caring and respectful relationship between teachers and students and it is not related to ethnicity. They support students' needs for both communication and care in order to establish a personal relationship with their teachers. On the other hand, some empirical studies (Muyingi, 2013; Salisbury 2012) showed that ethnicity does matter to shape one's leadership traits.

Teachers with longer years of service maintain a comparatively high and stable level of commitment because they are more mature, experienced, and accustomed to the behaviors of many administrators. However, empirical investigations are also limited in the area of organizational commitment with regards to teachers' age, gender, marital status, and tenure (Reyes, 1992; Tsui & Chen, 1999). Recent research consistently finds that teacher productivity is the most important component of a school's effect on student learning and that there is considerable heterogeneity in teacher's productivity within and across schools as time passes (Wilson, 2013; Strong et al., 2013; Aaronson, Barrow & Sander, 2007). Thus, different studies found impact of gender, experience and ethnicity on shaping and reshaping of personal attitudes. Personal attitudes influence one's leadership capacity. But some studies (Goldburg, 2001; Fedai, 2012) showed that the quality of a leader does not lie in genetic character but need to be trained and could take years to be perfect.

All subject teachers are the leaders in the classroom. Their leading capacity increases the chance of intensity of students' learning. Therefore, teachers should be good leaders. Then what makes a leader great? Malaysia is a country of diversity for which teachers are from different ethnicities, races and religions. From literature it is evidence that there are influences of gender, ethnicity and experiences on building leadership attitudes while other studies do not find any relationships between these personality traits and shaping leadership attitudes.

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In this study, teachers' gender, ethnicity and experience have been taken as independent variables to find the relationships with seven dimensions of personal leadership attitudes as dependent variable. These seven dimensions, such as 'vision', 'altruistic values', 'membership', 'hope/faith', 'meaning or calling', 'organizational commitment', and productivity are adapted from Freeman (2011). Literature supports these variables as construct of personal leadership attitude (Kerr et al., 2004; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). Thus, this study aims to find whether there are any relationships between teachers' demographics and shaping leadership attitude among Malaysian school teachers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are formulated to reach the aim of measuring the overall leadership attitude among Malaysian school teachers.

- a) What are the differences in leadership attitude between male and female school teachers in Malaysia?
- b) What are the differences in leadership attitude among the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia?
- c) How do the teachers' years of experience influence their leadership attitude?
- d) What is the relationship among all the dimensions of personal leadership attitude?

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used in this study. The information gathered was analysed using Pearson correlation test, t-test and ANOVA on SPSS (version 21). The data were then analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine relationships between the gender, ethnic groups and years of experience of the teachers with their personal leadership attitude. For the purpose of this preliminary study, a survey was conducted using a set of structured questionnaire to obtain data from 100 teachers in Malaysia who were randomly selected. A 5-point Likert scale Personal Leadership Questionnaire comprising 27 questions was used and the questions are categorised into seven dimensions. They are: a. Vision, b. Altruistic Values, c. Hope/Faith, d. Meaning/Calling, e. Membership, f. Organizational Commitment and g. Productivity.

Designed to measure the key areas of personal leadership, scores that are below 3 in any area indicate the need for improvement, scores between 3 and 4 indicate areas that could need some attention and scores above 4 indicate areas that are satisfactory.

FINDINGS

Respondent Demographics

Table 1
Summary of Respondent Demographics

SUBJECT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTILE
1.GENDER		
Female	67	67
Male	33	33

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2.ETHNICITY		
Malay	59	59
Chinese	10	10
Indian	31	31
3.YEARS OF EXPERIENCE		
1-5 years	48	48
6-10 years	17	17
11-15 years	12	12
More than 15 years	23	23

Table 1 shows that more than half (67%) of the teachers are females with only 33% being male. In regards to the ethnicity, 59% of the teachers are Malay, 10% come from the Chinese ethnic group and 31% of the teachers are Indians. The teachers' experience is categorised into four groups: 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years and more than 15 years. In general, the teachers are from all four categories. The teachers who participated in the study mostly come from the 1 to 5 years category, amounting to 48%; teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience make up 17% of the demographic; teachers with 11 to 15 years make up 12% of the respondents and finally 23% of the teachers came from the most experienced teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience.

Gender and Teachers' Personal Leadership Attitude

Table 2

Gender and Teachers' Personal Leadership Attitude (Group Statistics)

Leadership Attitude Domains	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vision	Female	67	4.2886	.53464	.06532
	Male	33	4.3737	.53850	.09374
Altruistic	Female	67	4.4975	.46465	.05677
	Male	33	4.5859	.45856	.07983
Hope	Female	67	4.4527	.49476	.06044
	Male	33	4.5657	.49641	.08641
Meaning	Female	67	4.4478	.45524	.05562
	Male	33	4.4343	.46011	.08009
Membership	Female	67	4.0299	.57492	.07024
	Male	33	4.0909	.60537	.10538
Commitment	Female	67	4.0933	.49969	.06105
	Male	33	4.0985	.76531	.13322
Productivity	Female	67	4.5448	.44790	.05472
	Male	33	4.6212	.51962	.09045

The data were analysed using Independent-Samples T-Test between seven leadership attitude domains and gender. Table 2 indicates that mean score for every domain is above 4. That indicates both female and male teachers in Malaysia have satisfactory personal leadership attitude. The male teachers scored higher in all domains except for Meaning.

Ethnicity and Teachers' Leadership Attitude

Table 3
One-Way ANOVA Results on Three Ethnic Groups and Personal Leadership Attitude

Leadership Attitude Domains	Ethnicity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	F	Sig.
Vision	Malay	59	4.3446	.56381	.07340	.236	.790
	Chinese	10	4.2333	.60959	.19277		
	Indian	31	4.2903	.46141	.08287		
Altruistic	Malay	59	4.5678	.43231	.05628	.777	.463
	Chinese	10	4.5500	.55025	.17401		
	Indian	31	4.4409	.49169	.08831		
Hope	Malay	59	4.5028	.50428	.06565	.183	.833
	Chinese	10	4.4000	.69921	.22111		
	Indian	31	4.4946	.41160	.07393		
Meaning	Malay	59	4.5028	.46060	.05997	1.258	.289
	Chinese	10	4.3333	.54433	.17213		
	Indian	31	4.3656	.40693	.07309		
Membership	Malay	59	4.0424	.58382	.07601	.090	.914
	Chinese	10	4.1250	.59219	.18727		
	Indian	31	4.0403	.59546	.10695		
Commitment	Malay	59	4.1059	.60209	.07838	.561	.573
	Chinese	10	4.2500	.64550	.20412		
	Indian	31	4.0242	.57863	.10392		
Productivity	Malay	59	4.5975	.48693	.06339	.505	.605
	Chinese	10	4.6250	.41248	.13044		
	Indian	31	4.5000	.46547	.08360		

The data for differences in leadership attitude among the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia analysed using One-Way ANOVA. Table 3 reveals that leadership attitude does not differ much in terms of ethnicity. Based on the mean score, there is no significant difference among all the three ethnic groups in all the leadership attitude domains. It also indicates that mean score for every domain is above 4. This reveals that teachers in all ethnic groups in Malaysia have satisfactory personal leadership attitude.

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Experience and Teachers' Leadership Attitude

Table 4

One-Way ANOVA Results on Years of Experience and Personal Leadership Attitude

Leadership Attitude Domains	Years of experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Vision	1-5 years	48	4.2153	.53479	1.283	.285
	6-10 years	17	4.3922	.51687		
	11-15 years	12	4.3333	.44947		
	More than 15 years	23	4.4638	.57506		
Altruistic	1-5 years	48	4.5938	.47129	.874	.458
	6-10 years	17	4.4020	.55920		
	11-15 years	12	4.4444	.35056		
	More than 15 years	23	4.5217	.41531		
Hope	1-5 years	48	4.5208	.37603	1.182	.321
	6-10 years	17	4.3922	.76590		
	11-15 years	12	4.3056	.55883		
	More than 15 years	23	4.5942	.42589		
Meaning	1-5 years	48	4.4722	.47057	.405	.750
	6-10 years	17	4.3333	.52705		
	11-15 years	12	4.4444	.47849		
	More than 15 years	23	4.4638	.35872		
Membership	1-5 years	48	3.8750	.49196	4.521	.005
	6-10 years	17	4.0000	.76035		
	11-15 years	12	4.2083	.45017		
	More than 15 years	23	4.3696	.54808		
Commitment	1-5 years	48	4.0156	.59565	2.078	.108
	6-10 years	17	4.0588	.70450		
	11-15 years	12	3.9583	.43736		
	More than 15 years	23	4.3587	.53739		
Productivity	1-5 years	48	4.7083	.38707	3.407	.021
	6-10 years	17	4.4265	.61087		
	11-15 years	12	4.3125	.53433		
	More than 15 years	23	4.5217	.41226		

The data were analysed using One-Way ANOVA. Table 4 indicates that from the perspective of the teachers' years of experience, leadership attitudes such as Vision, Altruistic Values, Hope/Faith, Meaning/Calling and Organizational Commitment do not vary significantly. However, two other domains which are Membership and Productivity show significant differences according to the teachers' experience. For Membership, the more experience the teachers have, the more understood

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and appreciated they feel. In other words, this can be interpreted as the longer the teachers are in service, the higher sense of appreciation and sense of belonging they feel. This is reflected in the mean score of 4.3696 for the group of teachers with more than 15 years' experience. In contrast, as for the domain of Productivity, the less experienced teachers (1-5 years) and most experienced teachers (more than 15 years) have showed the higher productivity. This can be derived from the mean score of 4.7083 for the group of teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience which is the highest score among the four groups.

Relationship Among All The Dimensions Of Personal Leadership Attitude

Table 5
Correlations Result Among All Seven Personal Leadership Domains

		Vision	Altruistic	Hope	Meaning	M'ship	C'ment	P'vity
Vision	Pearson Correlation	1	.351**	.577**	.340**	.402**	.541**	.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.001
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Altruistic	Pearson Correlation	.351**	1	.702**	.691**	.509**	.592**	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Hope	Pearson Correlation	.577**	.702**	1	.511**	.541**	.607**	.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Meaning	Pearson Correlation	.340**	.691**	.511**	1	.541**	.644**	.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Membership	Pearson Correlation	.402**	.509**	.541**	.541**	1	.676**	.408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.541**	.592**	.607**	.644**	.676**	1	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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Productivity	Pearson	.315**	.702**	.713**	.572**	.408**	.533**	1
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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

The data collected were examined using Pearson Correlation Test (Sig 2-Tailed) to determine the relationship among all the personal leadership domains. Table 5 depicts that all the domains are important and are significantly positively correlated to each other. In other words, the changes in one domain are strongly correlated to the changes in the other domains. That means, increases or decreases in one variable significantly relate to increases or decreases in other variables. For example, the changes in Altruistic values correlate with the changes in Hope/Meaning.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that in general, teachers in Malaysia, regardless of gender, ethnicity and years of experience have satisfactory personal leadership attitude. Further analysis of the specific seven dimensions of Vision, Altruistic Values, Hope/Faith, Meaning/Calling, Membership, Organizational Commitment, and Productivity, provides more details on the strength and weakness of teachers' personal leadership for each leadership dimension. However, it is important to note that teachers are leaders in many aspects of responsibilities in the workplace. On top of teaching as the main responsibility, teachers can assume other leadership roles to advance their profession and to improve teacher and student learning. For example, teachers can be mentors to new teachers, they can assist colleagues with competency issues, and they can also be peer evaluators. With the concept of empowerment in educational organizations becoming more and more relevant nowadays, teachers' leadership attitudes become increasingly important to ensure that the responsibilities are carried out with appropriate accountability.

Empowerment, also referred to as shared decision-making, is essential to school reform and to the changing demands in a global world. In schools where teachers are empowered to be leaders, the focus of control for the substance of organizational change shifts from the principal to teachers. It is an evolutionary process that is totally dependent upon principals trusting teachers and teachers trusting their principals (Terry, 2000).

This need is even more pressing in schools of the 21st century whereby leadership should transcend from an autocratic model to something more collaborative and distributive. This empowers staff at different levels to exercise what is best for the students who are ultimately the protagonist in the institution. In playing their roles whether at deputy principal level, department heads, subject heads, committee heads, class teachers etc, empowerment granted provides the individuals hands-on training for the multidisciplinary skills in the operations of a school as an educational institution. At the heart of all the issues, we must never forget that the students remain as the focus of education and that priorities should be central to teaching and learning. This is because education is not a business producing products with expiry dates. It is a process of imparting knowledge, enriching the minds and sharpening the skills of individuals who will then in the future transmit the legacy of education in their own rights and capacity to the next generation.

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