

THE LEVEL OF PRINCIPALS' AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

Norazah Abdul Aziz
Universiti Utara Malaysia
abdulaziznorazah75@gmail.com

Abstract

The main focus of this study is to identify the level of principals' authentic leadership and the self-efficacy levels of teachers in the Pendang district, Kedah. This quantitative survey research utilized a questionnaire as its main instrument. The study's respondents consisted of 254 randomly selected teachers from 10 secondary schools in Pendang, Kedah. The measurement of authentic leadership employed the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ - Version 1), an instrument originally developed by Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007). Meanwhile, the teachers' self-efficacy questionnaire was adapted from Hoy and Woolfolk's short form of the Teacher Efficacy Scale, developed by Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998). The findings reveal a significant relationship between the dimensions of authentic leadership and the self-efficacy of teachers in Pendang, Kedah. These findings are expected to contribute valuable insights to the education sector in fostering authentic leadership among principals and enhancing teachers' self-efficacy, ultimately creating a holistic and exemplary human capital.

Keywords: *Authentic leadership, teachers' self-efficacy, leadership style relationships.*

Introduction

Leadership in education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning, driving organizations toward excellence, and inspiring positive outcomes. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) emphasizes the importance of leadership in schools to ensure high-performing leadership and accountability, aligning with the nation's vision to achieve developed nation status. Among the many leadership styles, **authentic leadership** has gained attention for its ability to foster trust, integrity, and long-term organizational success (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Authentic leadership is characterized by self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced information processing, and an internalized moral perspective, making it a vital approach in educational contexts (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007).

Research suggests that authentic leadership significantly impacts teacher performance and organizational outcomes. For example, Qureshi and Hasan (2019) highlight that authentic leadership in organizations fosters a positive ethical climate, reduces deviant workplace behavior, and enhances overall employee satisfaction. Similarly, studies by Liden, Wayne, and Meuser (2014) suggest that authentic leaders serve as role models, shaping followers' behaviors through trust and transparency.

In the context of education, authentic leadership has been linked to improvements in teachers' self-efficacy, a critical factor influencing teachers' confidence, motivation, and effectiveness in delivering quality education. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as individuals' belief in their ability to succeed in specific tasks, which directly affects their performance and persistence. In schools, teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater resilience, adaptability, and student engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

The relationship between authentic leadership and self-efficacy is well-documented. For instance, Bahzar (2019) explored the role of authentic leadership in Islamic schools in Indonesia, showing that authentic leadership dimensions such as self-awareness and relational transparency enhanced teachers' confidence and performance. Likewise, Djourova et al. (2019) found that leadership styles promoting ethical and transparent practices significantly improved employees' resilience and well-being, reinforcing the importance of leadership in fostering a positive work environment.

Despite these findings, gaps remain in understanding how authentic leadership influences teachers' self-efficacy within the Malaysian education system. Therefore, this study investigates the level of authentic leadership among secondary school principals in the Pendang district, Kedah, and its relationship with teachers' self-efficacy. By examining this relationship, the study aims to provide insights that can enhance leadership practices and empower teachers to deliver quality education effectively.

Method

a) Research Design

This study is a survey-based research utilizing data collected through questionnaires. According to Chua (2006), survey research is considered one of the most favored research methods due to its comprehensive usage, ease of implementation, and efficiency in collecting data from large sample sizes. Consequently, information can be directly obtained from respondents, and the findings of such studies can be generalized to the population with accuracy and effectiveness. The data collected are then analyzed based on the research questions and hypotheses outlined in Chapter One.

b) Population and Sampling

The research population is limited to secondary school teachers from public daily schools in the Pendang district of Kedah. Based on data obtained from the Pendang District Education Office, the total number of teachers in the ten secondary schools is 746, comprising 229 male teachers and 517 female teachers in 2019. Random sampling was employed to select schools, as there are only ten daily secondary schools in the district. However, a sample size of 254 teachers was selected using the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

c) Research Instruments

The research instrument plays a vital role in collecting information for this study. A set of questionnaires was developed based on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ - Version 1), originally designed by Avolio et al. (2007). Similarly, for the questionnaire on teachers' self-efficacy, the researcher used Hoy and Woolfolk's short form of the Teacher Efficacy Scale, developed by Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998). This set of questionnaires was divided into four sections: Section A includes questions on authentic leadership, Section B focuses on teachers' self-efficacy, Section C comprises teachers' background information, and Section D addresses the demographic characteristics of the schools studied.

Results

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The analysis of the descriptive statistics reveals that the overall level of authentic leadership among school principals is high, with a mean score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 0.45. Among the dimensions, Relational Transparency, Moral Values Internalization, and Self-Awareness recorded the highest mean scores of 3.96, indicating that principals are perceived as open, honest, and ethically grounded leaders who are self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The consistency in responses for these dimensions, reflected in relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.47 to 0.52), demonstrates that the majority of respondents share similar positive perceptions about these traits.

On the other hand, Balanced Information Processing scored slightly lower, with a mean of 3.90 and the highest standard deviation of 0.57. While this score still reflects a high level of effectiveness, it suggests that principals are perceived as somewhat less consistent in objectively analyzing information before making decisions. The greater variability in responses for this dimension indicates differing perceptions among respondents, suggesting a potential area for improvement. Overall, the findings emphasize strong leadership qualities among principals, with room to further enhance decision-making processes to achieve a more balanced approach across all dimensions of authentic leadership.

Dimension	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Authentic Leadership	254	3.95	0.45
Relational Transparency	254	3.96	0.47
Moral Values Internalization	254	3.96	0.52
Balanced Information Processing	254	3.9	0.57
Self-Awareness	254	3.96	0.52

The descriptive statistics for Teachers' Self-Efficacy show a mean score of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 0.33, based on a sample size of 254 respondents. The high mean score indicates that teachers in the study perceive their

self-efficacy as being at a high level, suggesting strong confidence in their teaching abilities and professional competence. The low standard deviation demonstrates consistency among respondents, indicating a shared perception of high self-efficacy across the group. This finding highlights that the majority of teachers feel capable and effective in their roles, reflecting positively on their confidence and motivation in their teaching practices.

	N	Mean	(SD)
Teachers Self Efficacy	254	3.99	0.33

The findings suggest that both authentic leadership and teachers' self-efficacy are at a high level, with mean scores (M) of 3.95 for leadership and 3.99 for self-efficacy, respectively.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the influence of authentic leadership can be regarded as a powerful driver of organizational culture, significantly enhancing employee self-efficacy and trust in leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leadership provides mutual benefits, including fostering positive emotions (Jensen & Luthans, 2006), creating more meaningful task engagement (Gardner et al., 2005), increasing organizational motivation (Ilies, Morgensen, & Nahrgang, 2005), and improving satisfaction and performance for both leaders and employees (Jensen et al., 2006). It also cultivates high self-efficacy among employees within the organization (Eigel & Kuhnert, 2005).

Based on these findings, the study offers several recommendations for relevant stakeholders, including the Pendang District Education Office, Kedah State Education Department, Ministry of Education Malaysia, and Ministry of Higher Education, to further enhance authentic leadership practices among school principals and improve teachers' self-efficacy. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Comprehensive Training for Principals
Provide in-depth training for principals through online courses and regular in-service training programs on

authentic leadership in educational organizations. These courses can enable principals to implement authentic leadership practices effectively in school management and administration.

2. **Motivational Programs for Leadership Implementation**
Conduct regular motivational programs aimed at promoting authentic leadership styles among principals and senior school management to ensure these practices become a consistent part of school leadership.
3. **Continuous Professional Development for Teachers**
Equip teachers with knowledge and skills through ongoing in-service training on positive self-efficacy and motivation. This can strengthen teachers' confidence in delivering effective communication and ultimately boost both curricular and extracurricular student performance.
4. **Identify and Address Leadership Gaps**
Identify the dimensions of authentic leadership that principals may not have fully adopted. Encourage these dimensions to be practiced more consistently in schools to further enhance teachers' self-efficacy and their relationship with the principals.
5. **Foster Trust and Balanced Decision-Making**
Emphasize the importance of building trust through balanced information processing among teachers. This can help further elevate their self-efficacy when performing assigned tasks.
6. **Gender and Experience-Based Support for Teachers**
Recognize differences in teachers' self-efficacy levels based on gender and experience and provide continuous moral support and motivation. This tailored approach can enhance student performance and excellence.

Conclusion

The study concludes that among the dimensions of authentic leadership, self-awareness has the most significant influence on teachers' self-efficacy in the Pendang district, Kedah. This dimension should remain a primary focus for principals to ensure effective school leadership. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, educational departments, and ministries in fostering authentic leadership practices and promoting high self-efficacy levels among teachers. These efforts aim to cultivate a well-rounded workforce and extend the implementation of authentic leadership practices across educational organizations, supporting the transformational goals outlined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025.

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