

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN
MALACCA

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ABSTRACT

This research is about the teachers' perceptions of the leadership behaviour of the secondary school principals in the state of Malacca. The objective of this study was to identify the leadership behaviour of the principals and to determine whether there is a relation between the leadership behaviour exhibited by the principals and demographic factors like the gender, race, age and administrative experience of the principals.

The Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire -Form 12 was used to identify and describe the leadership behaviour of the principals. The questionnaire measures 12 dimensions of leadership behaviour, that is, representation, persuasion, initiating structure, role assumption, production emphasis, superior orientation, consideration, reconciliation, tolerance of freedom, tolerance of uncertainty, integration and predictive accuracy. The 12 subscales can be collapsed to determine whether the leaders portray system oriented leadership or person oriented leadership. The sample comprised of ten principals and a total of 100 teachers responded to the questionnaires distributed. The data collected was used to identify the leadership behaviour exhibited by the principals. Most of the data was summarized descriptively.

The major findings of the study showed that all the principals exhibited desirable leadership behaviour in both dimensions of leadership behaviour, that is system orientation and person orientation. When compared to demographic factors, it was found there were differences in relation to gender, race, age and administrative experience.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership at the school level is necessary for achieving excellence in education. The success of a school depends not only on the teachers, supporting staff and students but also the principal. The principals are the leaders in schools. Without effective principals, schools are unable to function effectively. Studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between the performance of schools and the leadership exercised by their principals.

Leadership has been defined differently by different scholars. In general, leadership can be defined as the process of directing and influencing the task-related activities of group members. A leader is able to motivate and influence his or her subordinates more than any other member of the organization. He or she is able to communicate to other members of the group organizational goals as well as methods designed to achieve them. This process of guiding the efforts of the subordinates towards the organization's objectives is called leadership behaviour.

Leadership behaviour can be measured in different ways. One well-known measure of leadership behaviour was formulated in 1957 by the Ohio Leadership Studies Group of the Ohio State University using the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). This questionnaire measured two dimensions of leadership behaviour:-

- (i) initiating structure; and
- (ii) consideration.

In 1967, the LBDQ was modified and a new instrument, the LBDQ-Form 12 was developed. This instrument measures 12 dimensions of leadership behaviour along with initiating structure and consideration. The 12 subscales were further collapsed to show the relationship among them. Leadership behaviour was classified into two types:-

- (i) system orientation (initiating structure);and
- (ii) person orientation (consideration).

An effective leader is one who scores high in both consideration or person orientated leadership and initiating structure or system orientated leadership. Many studies on leadership in schools have been carried out using the LBDQ, giving empirical support to the questionnaire as a reliable and valid instrument for measuring leadership in schools.

It is clear that the leadership behaviour of the principals is vital for the success of their schools. However, few studies have been carried out in Malaysia on this topic. This study examines the leadership behaviour of selected secondary school principals as perceived by their teachers, and determines whether that behaviour is influenced by variables like the gender, race, age and length of service of the principals.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be useful to principals so that they can improve their effectiveness as educational leaders. The findings can be used by teachers and potential teachers in administering their duties as heads of departments, senior assistants or principals. The findings can also be used by the Ministry of Education to upgrade the performance of principals by identifying the areas that need improvement. The improvements can be done through training and professional development programmes. This study can also serve as the basis for further research on the leadership behaviour of school principals in the country.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviour of selected principals in selected secondary schools as perceived by their teachers. Specifically, it seeks:

- (i) to identify the kind of leadership behaviour exhibited by those principals; and
- (ii) to determine whether there is a relationship between the leadership behaviour exhibited and factors like their gender, race, age and administrative experience.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The study uses primary and secondary data. Secondary data on leadership and leadership behaviour were collected from books, journals, theses and conference papers on education and leadership. Primary data on the leadership behaviour of the selected principals were gathered through questionnaires that were distributed to the respondents (that is, the teachers) in the selected secondary schools in Malacca. The Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was used to identify, discuss and classify the leadership behaviour of the selected principals in the selected schools. The principals were also interviewed to obtain additional information on their qualifications and experience. Most of the data are summarised descriptively by frequency counts, means and percentages and presented in tabular form.

1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study suffers from one major limitation. As it is confined in its scope to selected principals in selected public secondary schools in