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Exploring the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Headmaster Leadership across Primary Schools in Malaysia Based on Gender

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Abstract

The purpose of this article was to explore the importance of emotional intelligence and the differences between genders amongst primary school headmasters across Malaysia. This paper was based on a thorough review of literature from local and global contexts. The recent development in emotional intelligence has highlighted the need for emotional intelligence in leadership. However, the existing literature has offered contradictory findings in differences between genders. Therefore, the aim of this paper was to explore the importance of emotional intelligence and leadership based on genders.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Gender.

Introduction

Changes in the system of leader selection are seen as necessary steps to spark new thinking and spirit in educating educators in bringing national education to the forefront (Rahmah, 2002). One of the key points of change in the education system in Malaysia is the quality of management and leadership of the school teachers (Nazri, 2012). Schools that are classified as successful are led by highly qualified leaders and vice versa. To enhance the excellence of the educational institution, Malaysia Education Ministry has focused on strengthening the leadership and headmaster's leadership programme by implementing various development plans.

Emotional Intelligence and Individual Differences

Emotional intelligence is defined as an intelligence that involves the ability to control one's emotions and the emotions of others, and the ability to discriminate emotions and use such information as a guide in thinking and acting (Romanelli, Cain & Smith, 2006). Anari (2012) also agrees with defining emotional intelligence as the ability of individuals to monitor and distinguish their own and others' emotions and to use such information to guide their thinking and behaviour.

Each individual has different capabilities in accepting and regulating one's emotions and the emotions of others and adapting the information gained in the appropriate behaviour (Johnson & Blanchard, 2014). There is a consensus that emotional intelligence plays an important role in individual success and achievement over intellectual property (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005).

Gondal and Husain's (2013) comparative study of the effects of emotional intelligence and intellectual competence on employee performance has shown that intellectual intelligence alone is not sufficient for success in the workplace. The findings have found that emotional intelligence aspects emerge as critical factors. Intelligence quotient is also said to be no longer a factor or determinant of success for individuals (Akers & Porter, 2011).

Emotional Intelligence and Gender Differences

A claim has posited that men and women have differences in emotional intelligence. Gardner (2002) as cited by Sergio and Marcano (2013) claims that women are more sensitive to personal emotions than men. While the previous study from Anari (2012) supports that there is significant difference between women and men in emotional intelligence because women are seen to have higher emotional intelligence scores than men.

However, the study by Dev, Nair, and Dwivedi (2016) has found that there are no significant differences in emotional intelligence between men and women and the results of the study did not rule out the notion that male respondents yielded higher emotional intelligence scores than female respondents or vice versa. Findings of Genderen (2012), also found that there are no significant differences in emotional intelligence either in men or women.

Emotional Intelligence Differences from the Aspects of Gender in Education

According to Anari (2012) women are seen to have higher emotional intelligence scores than men, but a study by Singh and Kumar (2016) has examined a sample of 300 teachers and found that in an ANOVA analysis of 150 men and 150 women, there is no correlation between male and female genders in relation to emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, Jiang's (2014) study has shown that there may be exists differences between the two sexes in emotional intelligence. This is because women are said to be better at self-control and emotion, and empathy than men.

Rai and Jain's (2014) study found that there is a significant difference between the two sexes in terms of emotional intelligence. In the study of Perera (2015) men are found to have a higher ability to control emotions and have better social skills than women. On the other hand, for women, it is found that they have higher scores on emotional aspects than men.

In the field of education, the influence of emotional intelligence is also seen as an aspect that is beginning to have a positive effect on promoting student achievement. For example, through the study of Curci, Lanciano and Soleti (2016), from the perspective of teachers 'emotional intelligence affects pupils' achievement in learning that is seen through aspects of teacher competence in controlling their own emotions and teachers of emotional intelligence also has a positive impact on self-efficacy in teaching (Wahyuddin, 2016). In his findings of quantitative and descriptive analysis, a link is found between teacher's emotional intelligence and teacher's

performance; he has suggested that teachers' emotional intelligence and competence can be improved to achieve teacher performance and productivity.

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

From the viewpoint of school leadership, Williams (2008) has argued that a factor that distinguishes between excellent and ordinary school leaders is the combination of emotional intelligence and social intelligence that can indirectly influence student achievement (Muijs, 2011). Moore (2009) in his article has stated that leaders' emotional intelligence drives the distinction between high performing schools and low performing schools. Studies from leadership aspects in education such as Williams (2008b) who has investigated the characteristics of differences between ordinary headmasters and excellent headmasters have found significant differences between them in terms of emotional intelligence.

In McKeown and Bates' (2013) study on leadership characteristics, it has revealed five prominent features in emotional intelligence, namely: communication, teamwork and collaboration, customisation, integrity and trustworthiness, and organisational awareness and outstanding headmasters have been shown in 12 out of 20 competencies studied in terms of emotional intelligence and social intelligence.

Wendorf-Heldt (2009) has concluded that leaders with high emotional intelligence are found to be successful in leading organisations. There are also studies in which the results show no significant differences between women and men's leadership but there are other study show differences between genders in leadership exist because female leaders are said to have better skills in interacting with people than male leaders (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008).

Recent studies (Jasielska & Wytykowska, 2015) have found that women have higher interpersonal skills than men, thus concluding that women are better at managing emotions. Meanwhile, Stokely (2008) has also found that most failures in leadership aspects are attributed to deterioration in emotional competence.

Conclusion

Various theories and analysis of studies have been conducted to prove that there is a link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, especially from the perspective of gender differences. Several studies have thus shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership (Higgs & Aitken, 2000; Wendorf-Heldt, 2009; Batool, 2013). Therefore, article aimed to examine the importance and role of emotional intelligence in individuals, and in particular, in terms of headmaster leadership from gender's perspective. Looking at the individual aspects, a theory suggestive of individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence also having high personal well-being and vice versa can be proposed.

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