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## **The Effect of Self-Leadership Strategies on Innovative Work Behaviors among School Teachers**

*(Kesan Strategi Kepemimpinan Kendiri terhadap Tingkah Laku Kerja Inovatif dalam Kalangan Guru Sekolah)*

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### **Abstract**

Innovative work behavior has gained considerable attention in the organisational behavior literature. Research on an integrated framework that cover personal predictors of innovative work behavior is still limited specifically among Malaysia government school teachers. This research incorporated the components of an individual's behavioral (behavior-focused), cognitive (constructive thought pattern and natural reward) and physiological (physical vitality) approach as self-leadership strategies that serve as predictors of innovative work behavior. This research used Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaires (RSLQ) to measure teacher's self-leadership strategies and Innovative Behavior Scale by Robert and Christopher (2001) was used to measure individual's innovative behavior. This research utilized quantitative approach where questionnaires were distributed to 250 government school teachers as a sample of the research. Overall, 234 completed questionnaires were usable for data analysis. The data was analyzed by using IBM Statistical Package for Social Science 22 statistical. The findings indicated that behavior-

focused strategies, constructive thought pattern strategies, natural reward strategies and physiological strategies significantly affected innovative work behavior of government school teachers. The findings of the study may help organizations to increase teachers' innovative work behavior by improving teachers' self-leadership strategies at the workplace.

**Keywords:** *Self-leadership, innovative work behavior, teacher.*

### **Abstrak**

*Tingkah laku kerja inovatif telah mendapat perhatian dalam literatur tingkah laku organisasi. Kajian berkaitan model lengkap yang memberikan penekanan kepada elemen tingkah laku kerja inovatif masih terhad khususnya dalam kalangan guru sekolah kerajaan Malaysia. Kajian ini menggabungkan komponen pendekatan tingkah laku (tingkah laku berfokus), kognitif (corak pemikiran konstruktif dan ganjaran semula jadi) dan fisiologikal (kecergasan fizikal) sebagai strategi kepemimpinan diri yang berfungsi sebagai peramal kepada tingkah laku kerja inovatif. Kajian ini juga menggunakan Revision Self-Leadership Questionnaires (RSLQ) untuk mengukur strategi kepemimpinan diri dan Innovative Behavior Scale oleh Robert dan Christopher (2001) digunakan untuk mengukur tingkah laku inovatif individu. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif di mana borang soal selidik diedarkan kepada 250 guru sekolah kerajaan sebagai sampel kajian. Secara keseluruhan, 234 soal selidik yang lengkap diterima dan digunakan untuk analisis data. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) versi 22. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa strategi tingkah laku berfokus, strategi corak pemikiran konstruktif, strategi ganjaran semula jadi dan strategi fisiologikal mempengaruhi tingkah laku kerja inovatif guru sekolah kerajaan. Penemuan kajian ini dapat membantu organisasi untuk meningkatkan tingkah laku kerja inovatif dalam kalangan guru dengan meningkatkan strategi kepemimpinan diri di tempat kerja.*

**Kata kunci:** *Kepimpinan diri, tingkah laku kerja inovatif, guru.*

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, innovation becomes a big part in contributing a good performance and achievement to an organization in either public or private sector due to world globalization phase. Organizations and employees in highly competitive markets need to focus on innovative manner for the sake of survival of these organizations. Many sectors such as manufacturing, economic and health

facing with a fast growth that leads a situation where they need to be creative and innovative in doing their work. Education also become an important sector in Malaysia that needs to be a crucial sector and innovative. This situation involves all level of management begin with the teachers itself until the top management in education sector for implementing the innovative work behavior at workplace.

In addition, teacher innovative behavior is highly important for the further development of educational professions as well as school organizations in terms of development of knowledge society. Innovative behavior among teachers related to the teacher creativity in fetching any changes and produced new ideas to solve their problem in teaching and learning process (Ghani & Jusoff, 2009). Thus, teacher innovative behavior and professional development also became main aspects of high-quality education (Nabi, Linan, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley, 2017). Furthermore, innovative behavior among teacher influences their teaching practices and at the same time contributes on teaching and learning process by given some impact on produce student achievement.

In order to enhance innovative behavior in education sector, the only way for the school to become more innovative is to capitalize on teacher ability as their employees to lead their self become more innovative. This is because innovative environment in education sector need teacher as self-leaders to generate their ideas, skill and abilities to lead the encouragement of innovative behavior in school. Self leadership becomes a new leadership in workplace that replaces a leader act of leadership which are allow individual to focus on his/her ability to lead their self and be responsible for their own behavior (Park, Moon & Hyun, 2014). This research focuses on the several self-leadership strategies as important factors to enhance innovative work behavior among teachers in school. Overall, the objective of this research is to investigative the effects of four components of self-leadership strategies which are (behavior-focused), cognitive (constructive thought pattern and natural reward) and physiological (physical vitality) on innovative work behavior.

## **Literature Review**

### *Self-Leadership Strategies*

Previous research on leadership emphasize on the important of self-leadership among employees in order to enhance individual level of commitment, independent, enhance skill and be creative in doing their job (Eliason, 2013). The concept of self-leadership related to the belief of self-management that persuaded individual to use systematic strategies which give effects on their

performance and effectiveness (Manz & Neck, 2004). In addition, self-leadership strategies also involve the process on how individual control their own behavior, guide and lead themselves through applying specific strategies. Reviews on previous literature provide a comprehensive historical overview of the concept of self-leadership strategies.

According to Houghton and Neck (2002), there are three main elements of self-leadership strategies which are behavioural-focused strategies, constructive thought pattern strategies and natural reward strategies. Firstly, behavior-focused strategies related to individual self-directed strategies that increasing self-awareness which are encourage individual being independent, creative in problem solving and having high sense of achievement in performing their work. This strategy also included self-observation, self-goal setting, rehearsal, self observation and evaluation, self-reinforcement, and self correction (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Park, Moon & Hyung, 2014). Secondly, constructive thought pattern strategies related to the individual aims and generation of positive thinking by reduction any negative self-talk, any assumptions and dysfunctional beliefs. Lastly, natural reward strategies in self-leadership related to individual strategies that aim to increase the feeling of proficiency and self-determination by focusing on task redesign and redesign of environmental conditions. These strategies help individual feeling joyful doing job and increasing their level of job satisfaction.

In addition, previous research also suggested another one element that is related to self-leadership strategies which is physical vitality strategies. Physical vitality strategies involve individual aims to maintain their well-being and fitness in everyday life. This strategy encouraged individual to target and have intention to involve in programs that improve their physical health and fitness such as self-leadership activity regarding the plan monitor diet, regular exercises and another activities that improve their well-being and potential to perform (Georgianna, 2015). Overall, this research focusing on these four elements which are behavior-focused strategies, constructive thought pattern strategies, natural reward strategies and physical vitality strategies as self-leadership strategies in work place.

### *Innovative Work Behavior*

In organization, innovative culture becomes an important factor to enhance the productivity and copes with current development. Innovative work behavior among individual in organization related to any physical or cognitive work activities that persuade the generating and promoting new idea and creativity that relevant to their task (Messmann, Mulder *et al.* 2010). In addition, innovative work behavior also always encouraged individual to use their

creativity, implement new idea in facing the challenge in doing their job and solve their problem at workplace. According to Park, Moon and Hyun (2014), there are several factors such as individual characteristics, need of achievement, types of problem solving, organisational environment, and organisational culture that affected the implementation of innovative work behavior. In this research, researcher only focus on investigating the elements of individual self-leadership strategies that affected innovative work behavior among employees.

### *Self-Leadership Strategies and Innovative Work Behavior*

In organisation, self-leadership strategies play an important role in enhancing individual performance and increase organisational productivity. In terms of individual performance, self-leadership strategies help individual to become more creative, generate new idea, maintain physical and mental health which are affected their innovative work behavior. Review from previous research also revealed the significant effect of self-leadership strategies on innovative work behavior among employees in various sector. Based on the model that integrated the element of self-leadership strategies, innovative and creativity among student, the research by Diliello and Houghton (2006) reported the positive relationship between individual with strong self-leadership skill and their innovative and creativity in doing job. Research by Gomes, Cural and Caetano (2015) on health sector employees that is involved a sample of 337 nurses and doctors found that self-leadership strategies have a positive relationship with innovative work behavior.

In terms of education sector, a few research was conducted among researcher to measure the relationship between self-leadership strategies and innovative work behavior among teacher or academician. Recently, research by Sesen, Tabak and Arli (2017) was conducted among 440 primary school teachers to measure the relationship between teacher self-leadership strategies and innovative work behavior. Their research finding concluded that self-leadership strategies among teachers have a significant relationship with innovative work behavior. In addition, another research by Park, Moon and Hyun (2014) among sport educators also revealed the significant relationship between self-leadership strategies and innovative work behavior.

In brief, based on the previous research in this topic, researcher argues a positive relationship between all elements of self-leadership strategies and innovative work behavior among teacher in workplace. This research predicted that teacher with high self-leadership skills will display more innovative behavior in workplace. Thus, based on all previous research and explanation above, current research suggested several hypotheses as below:

- H<sub>1</sub> : *Behavior-focused strategies of self-leadership significantly and positively have effect on innovative behavior.*
- H<sub>2</sub> : *Constructive thought pattern strategies of self-leadership significantly and positively have effect on innovative behavior.*
- H<sub>3</sub> : *Natural reward strategies of self-leadership significantly and positively have effect on innovative behavior.*
- H<sub>4</sub> : *Physical vitality strategies of self-leadership positively significantly and positively have effect on innovative behavior.*

### **Methodology**

In this research, the researcher utilizes descriptive study design with cross-sectional approach. The survey of this study was conducted among government school teachers in Malacca, Malaysia. In the survey, the participating schools fulfilling the criteria that registered with the Ministry of Education. About 40 schools were contacted to inform about the research via phone and email. However, only 25 schools are confirmed to give cooperation within this study and 15 schools were declined based on confidential issues. Questionnaires are given to the school clerk as a person in charge to distribute the questionnaires among teachers as a sample of this research. About 300 set of questionnaires were given to the participated schools (40 schools) but only 234 set of questionnaires were given back to the researcher. Data obtained were analysed through the IBM Statistical Package for Social Science 22 statistical program and proposed relations were tested through regression analysis.

#### *Research Instrument*

Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaires (RSLQ) was used to measure teacher's self-leadership strategies. The scale had an acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ) (Jeffery & Christopher, 2002). It consists of 35 items in nine distinct sub-scales representing the three primary self-leadership dimensions, which are behavior-focused, constructible thought pattern and natural reward strategies. The behavior-focused dimension is represented by five sub-scales labeled self-goal setting (5 items), self-reward (3 items), self-punishment (4 items), self-observation (4 items) and self-cueing (2 items). All the items were measured by using 5-point response scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The constructive thought pattern dimension is represented by three sub-scales labeled visualizing successful performance (5 items), evaluating beliefs and assumptions (4 items) and self-talk (3 items). Other than that, natural reward dimension represented a single sub-scale consisting of five which is

focusing on the thoughts related to intrinsic motivation. In additions, innovative behavior in this study also consist on another one dimension which is physical vitality that were measured by eight items from Müller, Georgianna and Roux (2010). All of the items represented the strategies that address physiological states and processes which included the dimension of health program, physical activities and healthy nutrition. The scale had an acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .70$ ). Responses were given in 4 points scales ranging from 'describe me very imprecisely' to 'describes me very precisely' at the highest scale.

For individual's innovative behavior, this research uses ten items from Robert and Christopher (2001) questionnaire. This questionnaire related to the opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea championing and implementation/application as dimension of innovative behavior. Response were given in 5-point scale ranging from 'never' at one end to 'always' at the highest scale All the questionnaire items are positive question. The scale had an acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .67$ ).

## **Research Findings**

### *Demographic Data of Respondents*

Table 1 represents the School Teacher Demographic Characteristic as respondents of this research. Out of 234 respondents, 75 respondents (32%) are male and another 159 respondents (63%) are female. In the aspect of Ethnicity, 201 respondents (86%) are Malays, 20 respondents (8%) are Chinese, while 11 respondents (5%) are Indian and 1 (1%) respondent from other ethnic. In terms of their Education background, the majority of the respondents are Degree holder 186 (79%), Master holder are 43 respondents (19%) and only 5 respondents are PhD holder. Focusing on the services duration, there are 56 respondents (24%) have less experience which is below 2 years, another 73 respondents (31%) are categorized under 2 to 5 years, 72 (31%) are under 5- 10 years of service and the rest of 33 respondents (14%) have more than 10 years experiences. Table 1 also describes that 113 teachers (48%) worked at primary school meanwhile 121 of respondents (52%) are from teachers who work at secondary school. Based on the status of the respondents, table 1 indicated that 57 respondents (24%) are single, and majority of the respondents (66%) are married, and the rest of the respondents is a widow.

Table 1

## Government School Teacher Demographic Characteristic

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	75	32%
Female	159	63%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	201	86%
Chinese	20	8%
Indian	11	5%
Other	2	1%
<b>Education</b>		
Degree	186	79%
Master	43	19%
PhD	5	2%
<b>Service</b>		
< 2 Years	56	24%
>2-5 Years	73	32%
>5-<10 Years	72	31%
>10 years	33	14%
<b>Types of School</b>		
Primary School	113	48%
Secondary School	121	52%
<b>Status</b>		
Single	57	24%
Married	154	66%
Widow/doubt	23	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

*The Effect of Leadership Strategies on Innovative Behavior*

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate the effects of leadership strategies on innovative behavior. There are four dimension of innovative behavior which are behavior-focused strategies, constructive thought pattern strategies, natural reward strategies, and psychical vitality strategies was tested as a predictor. Based on the result at table 2, strategies that focus on behavior-focused, natural reward and physical vitality have significant and positive effects towards innovative behavior except from dimension of constructive thought pattern. The standard regression weight of behavior-focused strategies for innovative behavior is 0.342 ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) which means the increase in behavior-focused strategies will increase in innovative behavior. This

finding has supported the first research hypothesis (behavior-focused has a significant effect on innovative behavior).

In addition, finding shown that teacher innovative behavior also affected by natural reward strategies. This result is 0.278 ( $\beta = .0.278$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicated that the highest of natural reward will significantly enhancing innovative behavior among teachers. This finding was supported the third research hypothesis (natural reward has a significant effect on innovative behavior). Furthermore, this research finding also supported the fourth research hypothesis which is physical vitality has a significant effect on innovative behavior. It is approved when the standard regression weight of physical vitality strategies for innovative behavior is 0.356 ( $\beta = 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, research finding did not support the second research hypothesis (constructive thought pattern has a significant effect on innovative behavior). It is because the standardized path coefficient of constructive thought pattern for innovative behavior is 0.039 ( $\beta = 0.039$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) which is a small and insignificant positive effect between both variables.

Table 2

Model Summary for Predictor of Innovative Behaviour using Tables and Diagrams

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	beta		
<b>1 (Constant)</b>					
Behavior-Focused	.575	.125	.342	4.596	.000*
Constructive Thought	.058	.087	.039	.668	.636
Natural Reward	.515	.083	.278	5.635	.000*
Physical vitality	.580	.068	.365	8.558	.000*

a. Dependent Variable: Innovative Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Constructive Thought, Natural Reward, Physical vitality

### Conclusion

Based on the result, this study proves the important role of self-leadership behavior as predictor to enhance innovative behavior among teachers. This is because innovation become one of the required elements that need to be implement in today education environment. Industry Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) is give a clear view on the important to transform our skill, technology and other element that fit with current development. As mentioned by Nabi *et. al*,

(2017), education nowadays needs a strong, quality and new system to face with globalisation approach. Students and all school syllabuses already upgraded with the elements of technological. A school member especially a teacher with high ability to generate new and useful ideas and applied it, is more likely to create their own innovation, which in turn contributes to school innovation.

In addition, several strategies such as behavior-focused strategy, natural reward and physical vitality strategy need to be focus among teacher to promote innovative behavior in workplace. This study revealed the significant effect of behavior-focused strategy on innovative behavior that was supported by research by Sesen, Tabak and Arli (2017). Teacher need to focus on their self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation and self-cueing to helps them promoting their innovative behavior. It can help teacher in term of generating creative ideas and make an innovation to transform teaching and learning onto the next level that fits with current development. Other than that, natural reward strategy that emphasis more on the teacher thoughts related to intrinsic motivation also need focus to enhance innovative behavior. This is because motivation play an important role in organisation to help employee feel happy at work and increasing job satisfaction. Motivation can help teacher to be happy in teaching, feel responsible and satisfied with their current job. This feeling can stimulate innovative behavior among teachers. Other than that, teacher also encourage to involved in health program, physical activities such as exercises, and also practice healthy nutrition to enhance innovative behavior.

Overall, the present study proposed and tested the links between four forms of self-leadership strategies with teachers' innovative behavior. After conducting regression analysis, strategies on behavior-focused, natural reward and physical vitality were found can give strong and positive effect on teachers' innovative behavior. A strong positive and significant direct effect of behavior-focused strategies suggested that teachers with high level focus on self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation and self-cueing are more likely to be innovative. Similarly, teachers with high level discipline on intrinsic motivation mind and physical health awareness are more inspired to be innovative in their daily life especially be innovative during teaching learning in the classroom.

As a conclusion, teachers with high level of self-leadership strategies exhibit high level of innovative behavior at their school. Within this scope, schools need to create a kind of atmosphere or offer some training to increase teachers' application of self-leadership strategies and innovative behavior so that teachers feel comfortable and have the chance to apply the strategies and produce new ideas and present them accordingly. Besides, changing

to an intrinsic mind and healthy lifestyle perspective on physical vitality concern ultimately begins with the teacher himself. However, employer and colleagues can play a supporting and motivating role in this situation. As a part for contribution, this research has highlighted the importance of teachers' self-leadership strategies and innovative behavior. This research also became a guideline for education institution to enhance innovative behavior among teachers by focuses on teacher self-leadership strategies. In all, the study helped to improve the understanding of how self-leadership can give effect to innovative behavior.

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