



# THE EFFECT OF CHARACTER, COMPETENCY AND COMMITMENTS TOWARDS LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

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**Abstract:** This study examines the role of character, competency and commitment on the leadership behavior. A survey method was adapted to undertake the objectives of this particular study. A regression analysis was considered to justify the sample of 300 respondents to determine the relationships between these variables using Statistical Package for The Social Sciences software. The results indicated that the element of character, competency and commitment have positive impact on leadership behavior of senior managers in the Public Institutions of Higher Learning in the Northern Malaysia. Findings of this study have provided the evidence that the three variables function as an indicator on behavior in leadership. Therefore, the interpretation of this finding is to prove that the element of character, competency and commitment do emerged as a filtering mechanism and resulting as determinant to the leadership behavior in public institutions.

**Keywords:** Leadership, character, competency, commitment.

## Introduction

Leadership is one of the skills being identified formally in a variability of programs whether undergraduate and graduate levels, with the skill it let an individual to manage efficiently with change in organization or society (Bryan, 2012). Encouraged in the form of minors, in the undergraduate and graduate program also the course, skill of leadership is been recognized to be included in the programs for better and future entrepreneur and businessman (Carl & Craig, 1978). Research of leadership and skill has been started over the past and it continues to expand (Chetan, Sankar, Howard & Raju, 2010; Morgen, 2005; Abdrbo, 2012) due to the importance of skills in leadership in steering the organization towards the targeted goals. This study incorporates the perspectives of 3C's framework to define leadership in terms of who leaders are and what leaders do, both in terms of organizational and academic leadership. The 3C's framework is the combination of commitment, character and competency in which this study is focusing on as influencing factors on leadership behavior.

Leadership behavior can be defined as the action of a leader in a group or organization. There are many characteristics of leadership in approaching the leader's behavior. The determinants of leadership

behavior among student lead to higher improvement to be successful student (Morgen, 2005). As a leader, they will be a role model to the group members and follower. A study of this kind could possibly uncover valuable information to aid instructional leaders in improving the behavior of student as well as to enhance the university's climate and student achievement.

The first thing that followers are inspired by a leader is the trust. The trust consists of two dimensions namely; character and competency. Character includes integrity, motive, and intent of individuals, while competency includes capabilities, skills, results, and track record which are important for a good leader (Covey, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behavior among the top management/senior managers of Public Institutions of Higher Learning as perceived by the employees. A good leader needs to have set of virtues, values and traits. These attitudes shall generate good character, strong competency and high commitment that make a leader effective and respected. The elements of competencies, character and commitment toward leadership role are eminent in to become successful (Ling & Ibrahim, 2013). There are enormous responsibilities and challenges encountered by a leader especially in judging his or her character, competency and commitment.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1 Leadership Behavior*

Term "leadership" has been defined in many ways depending on the interest of researchers as well as its principles have been adopted by various universities in different areas (Shams, 2012) and Norshidah (2012). There are various definitions of leadership as stated by (Stogdill, 1974 in Yun, Cox & Sims Jr., 2006) and several concepts of leadership definitions have been formulated as follows:

- a) Leadership is the behavior of an individual directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal (Starr, 2004);
- b) Leadership is the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization (Carl & Craig, 1978);
- c) Leadership is a process of giving purpose to collective effort and causing willing effect to be expended to achieve a purpose (Doris, 2013).

Leadership behaviors are associated with commitment, integrity, set strategies and priorities, create a work culture, develop a high performing teams, motivate and inspire others, empowerment, effective communication, risk taker, resolve conflicts within the organization, and encourage innovative thinking (Ronit & Anit, 2004).

### **2.2 Character**

Strong character enables individuals to succeed and retain the leadership position which includes being proactive; sustaining relationships and networks; effective communication, strong interpersonal, analytical, and leadership skills; past experience and curiosity Elham (2010). Most literatures on leadership character concurred that a leader needs vision and drive in achieving the organizational goals. Additionally, Meng (2009) stated that leaders must have the ability to create a compelling vision, that takes people to a new place and the ability to translate vision into reality.

Further, there are few studies based on characters influencing the leadership behavior. The results were significant on the personality traits. A study by Lim, Khor & Radzliyana (2013) has identified the personality types according to the theory, and their relationship to the values characters of individuals. A

case study by Jones (2002) investigated the relationship between leadership which concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership and character.

### **2.3 Competency**

Competency is defined as personal attributes, skills, values as well as knowledge. Fundamentally, past studies have concluded that leadership competencies consist of cognitive ability, visionary, interpersonal and managerial effectiveness of individuals (Doris, 2013). On the other hand, Bryan (2012) pointed out that over the last ten years of leadership effectiveness research has moved towards recognizing leadership competencies such as knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors of individuals. However, Norshidah (2012) has determined specific competencies enable strategic human resource management practices in areas such as recruitment and succession efficiency.

For effectiveness in leadership, competency represents an attempt to capture the experience, lessons learned, and knowledge of experienced leaders to provide a guiding framework for the benefit of others and organizations (Doris, 2013). Studies by Mozghan, Parivash, Nadergholi & Bahram (2010) found that leadership competencies are significant to the leadership behavior. Thus, leaders need to improve on competencies in organizations to survive and continue to nurture. These competencies include such skills in leadership styles, effective communication, convincing other and professionalism.

### **2.4 Commitment**

Commitment is an aspirations and sacrifices toward tasks and responsibilities of individuals in the organization (Lim, Kho & Radzliana, 2013). Leadership roles and duties acquire the preparedness and ability to handle stress and work pressure relentlessly (Meng, 2009). The concept of commitment began from a study on the organization's employees. Previous research found that organizational commitment continues to be a powerful response in employee attitudes (Andrbo, 2012). Ling & Ibrahim (2013) stated that commitment has the potential to predict the outcomes of an organization. Commitment is the source to determine the organizational performance. Employees with high commitment are the most important assets to the organization (Bryan, 2012; McCormack, 2007; Elham, 2010; Shams, 2012).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### *3.1 Research instrument*

There are three variables which have been tested namely; character, competency and commitment. Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) by Ohio State University researchers (Fullan, 2007) was used as the main instrument of this study. The LBDQ is a testing instrument to evaluate leadership behavior of an individual leader. It is used to describe or perceive the quality of leader toward their follower and group member.

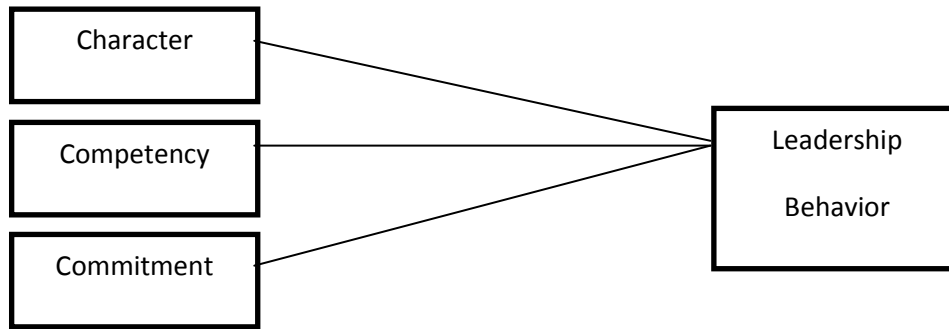
The questionnaires were distributed to the employees based on their experience working with leaders and their participation was treated as anonymous. The factor measure by LBDQ refers to the leader behavior in character, competency and commitment of them to the group member. The questions consist of 10-items and anchored by 5 point Likert-scales namely: 1 "Strongly disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Not sure", 4 "Agree" and 5 "Strongly agree". The data were computed by Social Sciences Statistical Package (SPSS) 22.0.

### *3.2 Sampling*

The population for this study were 300 employees of various positions with a minimum of a diploma holder in three Public Institutions of Higher Learning. The research was conducted using random sampling technique. Random sampling method is the element in the population that has an equal chance of being selected as a subject (Jones, 2012). This method is handy to conduct due to survey questionnaires were distributed in small targeted population. All 300 questionnaires were collected and computed.

### *3.3 Conceptual framework*

The objective of this study is represented in the framework as follows:



#### 4. FINDINGS

##### 4.1 Reliability test

Reliability refers to the part of true score to the observation score (Springhall, 2003). By using reliability analysis, can be resolve either the questionnaires have been measured in a useful way and determined the extent to which the items in questionnaire are related to each other, to get the generally index of the repeatability of the scale as a whole, and the problem items that should be excluded from the scale can me identify in case of the invalidity. Overall the LBDQ with validity value of .686 Cronbach's Alpha also exceed the validity percentage as shown in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1: Reliability statistic average

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.686	10

##### 4.2 Descriptive test

Based on **Table 4.2**, all three hundred respondents that have answered the questionnaire represented by three variables namely; character, competency and commitment are approximately 3.16 while mean for dependent variable of leadership behavior is 1.8067.

Table 4.2: Descriptive test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
behavior	300	1.40	2.00	1.8067	.20160
character	300	1.86	4.57	3.1476	.59848
competency	300	1.75	4.25	3.1000	.59669
commitment	300	2.00	4.50	3.2583	.65483
Valid N (list wise)	300				

##### 4.3 Correlation analysis

**Table 4.3** has indicated that there is a positive relationship between character (independent variable) and leadership behavior (dependent variable) since the Pearson Correlation is 0.400, where the correlation is significant at the 0.029 level. Then, these two variables between competency (independent) and leadership behavior (dependent) are perfectly related as the level of correlation significant is at 0.015 and the Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.439 showed the significant association. According to correlation of commitment, there is also a direct relationship between commitment (independent variable) and leadership behavior (dependent variable), where the level of correlation is significant at the 0.020, while

the correlation coefficient is 0.424 indicated the significant association. Given that the correlation ranged from 0.400 to 0.439 shows that all independent variables have positive relationship with the leadership behavior.

Table 4.4: Correlational analysis

		behavior	character	competency	commitment
behavior	Pearson Correlation	1	.400*	.439*	.424*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.029	.015	.020
	N	300	300	300	300
character	Pearson Correlation	.400*	1	.781**	.782**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
competency	Pearson Correlation	.439*	.781**	1	.776**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300	300
commitment	Pearson Correlation	.424*	.782**	.776**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

#### 4.4 Regression analysis

The regression analysis indicates that the aspect of character has significant effect ( $t = 0.029$ ) toward the leadership behavior of senior managers among three of Public Institution of Higher Learning in Northern Malaysia. The regression analysis in **Table 4.4** ( $\beta = 0.064$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) was found significant and positively related to the leadership behavior. Bryan (2012) stated in his case study, has shown that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership and character. In this support, Berger, Reber and Heyman (2007) stated that character enables professionals to succeed and enhance their leadership skills in communication, interpersonal, analytical, experience and curiosity. Thus, the results confirmed that there is a significant relationship between character and leadership behavior since the  $P < 0.05$ .

Table 4.4

Variables	Beta	t-Ratio	Sig. t
Behavior		6.513	.000
Character	.064	0.206	.029
Competency	.247	0.803	.015
Commitment	.182	0.590	.020
R Square = 0.211			
Durbin-Watson = 1.435			

Further, the competency aspect has been significant (Sig.  $t = 0.015$ ) toward the leadership behavior of the senior managers as indicated in **Table 4.4**. The idealized influence ( $\beta = 0.247$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) was found significant and absolutely related to the leadership behavior. As Mozhgan et al., (2010) mentioned that leadership competencies are significantly related to behavior in leadership. There are four categories of leadership competencies recognized by the faculty members: personality, administrative skills and social responsibility and knowledge (Doris, 2013).

In addition, the aspect of commitment also indicate a significant effect (Sig t = 0.020) toward the leadership behavior of senior managers in **Table 4.4**. The commitment ( $\beta = 0.182$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) was significant and positively related to the leadership behavior. The results are consistent with the past studies by Ling and Ibrahim (2013); Rohit and Ahit (2004). Therefore, Elham (2010) and McCormack (2007) mentioned that leaders must be willing to continue to be highly committed if they wish to accomplish goals as set upon them by the organization.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, all the variables (character, competency and commitment) have demonstrated positive feedback on leadership behavior among senior managers in three Public Institutions of Higher Learning in Northern Malaysia. The regression analysis indicated the existence of relationships between characters, competency and commitment of student in the class with leadership behavior of them. The analysis demonstrates 21.1% of  $R^2$  in behavior as a leader. The  $R^2$  determined that only 21.1% of overall character, competency and commitment have effect through the leadership behavior. Although the percentage is  $< 50\%$  for  $R^2$  value, the results exhibit a significant relationship between independent and dependent variables. This study focused on leadership behavior of senior managers in three of Public Institutions of Higher Learning in Northern Malaysia. It is essential that leaders and managers to advocate on the importance of exercising strong character, competence skills and high commitment in the organization's operational activities and to discover the types of behavior that are favorable to an organization's development as well as to focus on strengthening positive work conduct among the employees.

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