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The Relationship Between Leadership Style and Teacher's Spirituality: The Context of Early Childhood Education

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Abstract
Leadership in the context of early childhood education refers to the capacity to persuade, inspire, and transform teachers' attitudes and behaviors so that they consent to implement initiatives and make adjustments to support organizational objectives. It is common knowledge that the administrator of a school, particularly a preschool, oversees all activities and determines the organization's direction and the value of education for young children. This study aimed is to identify the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool leaders and identify the relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool. There are 200 teachers involved in this study. The quantitative study method was used to obtain the data that related teachers' spirituality and the leadership style used in their preschool. However, the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool leaders is moderately high. In addition, there is a significant relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool (r=0.758, p<.000). Therefore, this study is essential in identifying the dimensions that have a relationship with teachers. In conclusion, this study provides comprehensive data on leadership and spirituality in early childhood education.
Keywords: Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Spirituality, Preschool and Early Childhood Education

Introduction
Leadership is a responsibility that needs to be managed to form a positive and productive organization. The importance of a leader is to create a quality organization that will determine the organization's success. Leadership is important in determining the dimension and being a guide in an organization. This leadership is referred to authentic leadership that includes dimensions of self-awareness, balance processing of information, appreciation of moral values and transparency of relationships integrated with the leadership style that can influence the behavior of his employees. Leadership style is essential in creating an organizational environment that supports achieving goals and vision. According to Chanchal (2009) the role of the leader is to extend the goodness of spirituality to individuals in the organization. Effective leadership must be visionary, flexible, inspirational, innovative,

enthusiastic, and able to change. Banerjee (2015) states that leadership is the nature, ability, skills and behavior in relationships. Leadership is considered a static component that encompasses the knowledge-creation process, which is controlled by superiors in the organization (Mira & Odeh, 2019).

In this study, authentic leadership will be studied, which refers to the leadership style practiced by leaders in preschool towards their teachers and how it relates to spirituality. Leadership is a process that influences certain beliefs, and behavior and supports individuals or groups to achieve organizational goals (Nurfitri & Saad, 2015). Leadership in schools is related to improvement and focusing on the process involving the field of education in schools. The concept of authentic leadership further led to changes in effective schools in the 1980s. In line with the current educational development, the core constructs for authentic leadership began to be identified.

There are four dimensions of Authentic Leadership that consist of self -awareness, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing of information. These four dimensions have become variables in the study to see their relationship to spirituality in the preschool context. The first dimension self-awareness refers to the ability of a leader to make a self-assessment, understand himself and always try to improve his weaknesses to achieve the organization's goals (Besen et al., 2017). Second dimension is relational transparency. The second is the nature of the openness, which is the nature of the leader's vulnerabilities in creating mutual trust and involving honest relationships, active and sincere interactions in the relationship. The third dimension refers to an internalized moral perspective that found in leaders as well as underlying them in every action without focusing on pressure from certain parties. Next is balanced processing of information is the leader's ability to take into account the opinions of his staff and involve certain parties in making a decision. This component is discussed in Razi's study (2013) stating that authentic leaders act as guides, references and emphasize the involvement of parents when making decisions, taking into account information from various sources to solve problems.

In addition, the concept of spirituality in the workplace and the relationship with the leadership style of leaders in an organization will be identified in this study. Spirituality in the workplace involves efforts to find a primary purpose in life, develop strong relationships with colleagues and other work-related people, and consistently the organization's beliefs and values (Muok, 2018). Spirituality in the workplace involves a deep sense of well-being, the belief that one is engaged in meaningful work and has a higher purpose, an awareness of one's values and beliefs towards work and a relationship with something greater than oneself. It is characterized by a state or vitality that positivity, a sense of perfection and the experience of joy and happiness.

Objectives

Therefore, this study will focus on the Relationship Between Leadership Style and Teacher's Spirituality: The Context of Early Childhood Education. This study's objectives are:
- to identify the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool leaders
- to identify the relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives, the hypotheses of this study is:

H₁1: There is a significant relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool.

Authentic Model

Bill George's (2003) authentic leadership model was underlying in this study. Based on Penn State (2017) suggests that there are five dimensions discussed by George (2003) in his model. The first dimension in George's Model emphasizes a sense of purpose, where leaders should accomplish their goals. Second, leaders have values and know what they are doing, not compromising on those values. This quality will influence the leader's behavior and act on their values. Third, authentic leaders have relationships with other individuals and have mutual relationships with their followers. Next, the fourth dimension is self-discipline which focuses on the leader's ability to focus on goals, and act towards the set goals. Finally, the dimension of an authentic leader who has a heart and shows an attitude of compassion. This leader is sensitive to the needs of others and is willing to help his followers. This leader is very concerned about the well-being of his followers and tries to lighten the load as much as possible.
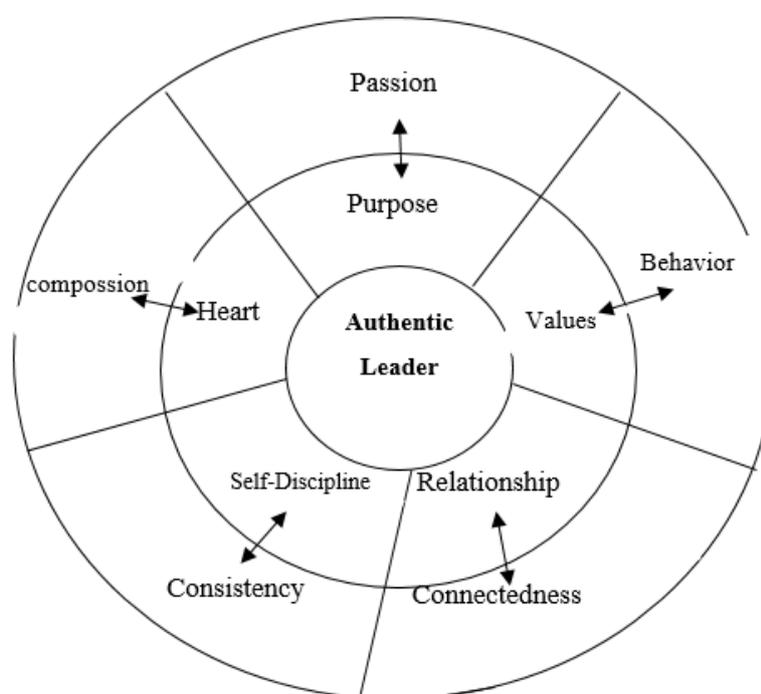

Figure 1. Authentic Model (George, 2003)

Among those dimensions are purpose and patience, values and behavior, relationships and interconnectedness, self-discipline and consistency, and heart and compassion. Indirectly, each dimension is interconnected and gives meaning to leaders in an organization. The value found in this leader is that the leader will not let his followers act contrary to policy. If the leader exhibits the qualities or characteristics, they will be authentic leaders, their followers will give positive feedback and the organization will benefit.

Teacher's Spirituality

Spirituality is an experience that involves interconnectedness, shared by all workers involved in implementing the work process, and each worker has an inner power, which creates and maintains honesty, kindness and courage (Mousa & Alas, 2016). Spirituality relates to the

human spirit including positive psychological concepts such as love, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, personal responsibility and a sense of harmony with one's environment (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). Spirituality in the workplace can provide peace and create an atmosphere of cooperation and trust instead of competition and disagreement (Khalil & Hameed, 2019). Based on Muok (2018) also stated that workplace spirituality is the concept of experiencing a sense of belonging, a relationship with each other in the community at their workplace. Spirituality can be categorized as personal experience, those that focus on values and ethics and those that focus on behavior. Spirituality in the workplace refers to an environment where an employee feels more energized because he believes and feels he has a real purpose (Beck II, 2017). Nevertheless, the behavior of spirituality also depends on the attitude shown by the leaders in an organization. This statement was also presented by Yishuang Meng (2016)who said that spirituality behaviors include respecting, treating others fairly, expressing attention, listening to positive responses, appreciating the contributions of others and involving spiritual practices and values such as integrity, ethical influence, communication honest and human nature that contributes to the expression of spirituality.

Problem Statement

Leaders in an organization need to have vision leadership characteristics and goals can be achieved. A leader's authentic leadership style will influence the spirituality of teachers working in preschool. Employees increasingly emphasize the issue of leadership because the leadership style practiced can influence the way the teacher works. Srivastava and Dhar (2016) that researchers need to conduct a study to identify the influence of authentic leadership on schools as well as being related with individuals who will affect the preschool's performance as a whole. Among these problems are teachers who show negative behavior such as truancy, teachers who are lazy to check assignments given and teachers who lack commitment. According to him, all these behaviors raise the question of whether leadership practices affect teachers' commitment to their work.Therefore, this study will look in more detail at leaders' leadership styles in influencing teachers' spirituality in their organizations. However, there still needs to be more research on authentic leadership styles toward spirituality in early childhood education.

In his study, Gibson (2011) suggests that further research can be done to explore the meaning of teacher spirituality in the education sector in New Zealand. In addition, according to Gardner et. al. (2005) leaders are related to cognitive disequilibrium or behavioral disharmony that results in the leader making unethical and unethical decisions about workers' welfare. In addition, this leader also does not give passion and motivation if they don't care about individual differences like the personal values he holds that create employee behaviour (Ashbihani, 2013). This statement is supported by Nurfitri and Saad (2015), who state that creating a positive atmosphere is the task of a leader who can influence human resources in the organization to make improvements in themselves and contribute to the organization. Indirectly, there are various issues arise since leadership style is important in influencing an organization. However, in the context of early childhood education, teachers need leaders who have strength and ability in the physical aspect but also in the psychological and emotional aspects of the leader himself.

Literature Review

Leadership styles are important in influencing the teacher's characteristic in an organization. However, in this study, the authentic leaders are those who are aware of how to think and

behave, aware of their own and other people's values or morals and are aware of their character (Rukh, Shahrukh, Iqbal, 2018). Next, the moral values held by authentic leaders will reflect their behavior in decision-making process because they will know the effect of moral perspective on other individuals (Abidin, 2017). Based on Datta (2015) defining of authentic leadership is having personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences or beliefs, a process to know oneself and behave according to oneself. According to him, such behaviour can promote trust through open engagement through sharing information and expressing feelings and thoughts while they are trying to minimize inappropriate emotions. Authentic leadership is related to the self-concept of a leader in an organization. Based on the Gardner et al (2011) stated that authentic leadership refers to self-awareness by acting according to oneself and expressing what one really thinks and believes. However, based on Kernis and Goldman (2006), mentioned that the authentic function is self-understanding, openness objectively in identifying reality such as evaluating desirable and undesirable aspects, actions and orientation towards interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, spirituality gives a different meaning and is not related with religiosity. Based on Mousa & Alas (2016), stating that spirituality is flexible and appropriate while religion is fixed and based on culture. Spirituality can be discussed in the workplace, on the other hand, the concept of religion is one of the topics that is not suitable for discussion in the workplace. Rego and Pina (2008) defined that employee creativity, organizational commitment and motivation are the goals of spirituality where it involves self-potential (Hassan & Sabil, 2020). Based on Afsar and Rehman (2015), indicate that leadership and organizational practices that are socially responsible and value-based, and recognize the contributions made by employees and support the development of spirituality and personal well-being. Next, Johnson (2017) states that the early characteristics of the formation of individual spirituality in the workplace are said to be the recognition of employees that they have an inner life that nourishes and is nurtured by meaningful work in a community context. According to the same author, meaningful work is related to individual needs in contributing something meaningful that also a dimension of spirituality (Forlenza & Vallada, 2018). Therefore, this study emphasizes on the relationship of the leadership style towards the teacher's spirituality in the context of early childhood education.

Methodology
The design of this study involves a quantitative study. Research design is a specific procedure involved in the research process such as data collection, data analysis and written reports (Creswell, 2012). This study uses a quantitative survey method because it involves a large number of samples. This is because the selection of a survey method is the most suitable for collecting quantitative data (Wagner, 1984; Burn & Groves, 1993). The population of this study involves teachers who work in preschools. The research sample required is as many as 200 teachers in Penang. This study has used a non-random sampling method which is purposive sampling. According to Idris (2013), purposive sampling is a non-random sampling that involves selecting samples based on the researcher's knowledge and purpose. In addition, researchers will use their knowledge to determine whether the sample can represent the population or not. This study uses a questionnaire instrument for the purpose of data collection.

According to Creswell (2014), survey questions are a procedure in quantitative research where administering a study or questionnaire to a small group of respondents. There are three main parts in this research questionnaire, consist of demographic information (Section

1), the level of authentic leadership of the preschool leaders (Section 2) and the level of teacher's spirituality in preschool (Section 3). Distribution and collection of questionnaires conducted on preschool teachers who serve in selected kindergartens. The questionnaires that have been returned will be checked first to ensure that the respondents follow the instructions and provide all the information required by the researcher is correct. If there is a questionnaire that is incomplete or does not follow the instructions as desired by the researcher, the questionnaire will be considered defective. All returned questionnaires are complete and suitable for processing and analysis.

The data obtained will be recorded and analysed with statistical methods using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The two statistical methods used to analyse the data are descriptive and inferential methods. The interpretation of the mean value found in the table will be used to answer the first research question what is the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool leaders?

The second research questions will be using the inferential analysis that is answer the question of relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool. Descriptive methods are used to determine the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the data received. In order to interpret the mean received from descriptive statistics, Norasmah and Salmah (2011) suggest the interpretation of the mean score as in Table 1.

Table 1
Interpretation of mean score

Mean score	Interpretation of mean score
1.00-2.00	Low
2.01-3.00	Moderately Low
3.01-4.00	Moderately High
4.01-5.00	High

Findings and Discussion
i) To identify the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool leaders
Based on the findings the level of authentic leadership practices among preschool teachers shows that the mean score obtained for the authentic leadership variable is 3.26 with a standard deviation of 0.46. Findings show that the level of the leaders in preschool at a Moderately High level as shown in Table 2. There are five dimensions of authentic leadership which self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing of information of relationships are in the range of medium mean score values which are between 3.01 to 3.26. The dimension that recorded a high mean value and standard deviation was the dimension of self-awareness (Mean=3.21, SD=0.52) followed by the balance of processing information (Mean=3.06, SD=0.50) while the dimension of internalized moral perspective (Mean=3.08, SD=0.53) followed by relational transparency (Mean=3.01, SD=0.56).The levels for each dimensions shows a Moderately High.

Table 2
The level of Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Self-awareness	3.21	.52	Moderately High
Balance processing information	3.06	.50	Moderately High
Internalized moral perspective	3.08	.53	Moderately High
Relational transparency	3.01	.56	Moderately High
Overall Mean	3.26	.46	Moderately High

ii) To identify the relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool
The findings show a correlation analysis of leadership style and teacher's spirituality in early childhood context. Based on Table 3, the result of Pearson Correlation analysis shows that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool (r=0.758, p<.000), using two-tailed.
It shows that each of the authentic dimensions (self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing of information) have a relationship towards the teacher's spirituality. Therefore, the hypotheses are supported, there is a significant relationship between authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool.

Table 3
Correlation analysis of authentic leadership and spirituality in preschool

		Authentic Leadership	Spirituality
Authentic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.758**
	Sig. (2 –tailed)		
	N	200	.000
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	.758**	1
	Sig. (2 –tailed)	.000	200
	N	200	
**correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (2-tailes)			

Recommendation
This finding explains the level of practice that is prioritized for leaders and spirituality by teachers. The findings of this study allow the private preschool leaders to create a more conducive work environment for its employees. The recommendation for the future research is more sample should be used because the results of the study still cannot provide a true picture of the relationship between leadership styles and the spirituality of preschool teachers. This is because the study sample is not very comprehensive and only involves 200 teachers in Penang. In order to gather more broad and detailed information to support the data obtained, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies might be used. Interviews and observations can be utilised as qualitative methodologies to support the study's findings. Further research must concentrate on the leaders' input because this study focuses more on early childhood teachers. Future research is therefore recommended to focus on these areas in order to paint a truer perspective of how the spirituality practised inside the organisation is impacted by the leader's authentic leadership.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this research have crucial significance for preschool leaders because they help them identify the aspects of authentic leadership that must be prioritised in order to satisfy the spiritual needs of teachers and advance the preschool's objectives. The results of this study enable leaders to understand how crucial a leadership approach is in influencing a teacher. This study also has indirect effects on leaders. Leaders will be able to restrain themselves to adhere to the guidelines and real needs of a company. In order to exercise the aspect of self-awareness that is the cause of hurdles in the construction of a healthy workplace, leaders should also review their own abilities and limitations. The way that teachers fulfil their purpose or practise their spirituality at work has a significant influence on how the education system develops. However, the spirituality entails the ideas of compassion, empathy, a feeling of connection, seeking to conform to organisational norms, and integrating with personal beliefs to develop relationships with others throughout the workplace. Thus, to increase the level of spirituality of teachers, the leader must prioritise the workplace environment, where strong interactions among all staff members are crucial. Indirectly, this discovery enables managers to offer family-oriented events to their personnel in order to foster a positive workplace environment.

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