Mindful Leadership Practices of Headmasters and the Relationship with Teachers' Digital Competence in Primary Schools in Hulu Langat District

Anon Sham Binti Che Din[1]; Jamalul Lail Abdul Wahab[2]
University Kebangsaan Malaysia

Abstract:- This study aims to identify the practices of mindful leadership by headmasters and its relationship with teachers' digital competence in national schools in the Hulu Langat District. mindful leadership is a relatively new concept that has emerged in recent years. It refers to a leadership style that emphasizes empathy, moral support, and the well-being of teachers in performing their duties, particularly in facing the challenges of technology and digital learning. This study uses a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires to teachers from national schools in the district. The findings show a significant and positive relationship between the mindful leadership practices of headmasters and the level of teachers' digital competence. Teachers who receive support and guidance from mindful headmasters are more likely to show improvement in their use of digital technology in teaching. Moral and professional support from the leadership is found to be a crucial factor in fostering teachers' confidence in integrating digital technology. Therefore, effective mindful leadership practices can accelerate the development of digital skills among teachers, thereby improving the quality of teaching in schools. The study suggests that school administrators place greater emphasis on mindful leadership to strengthen teachers' digital competence, in order to meet the demands of 21st-century education.

Keywords:- Mindful Leadership, Digital Competence, Headmaster, Teacher, National School, Hulu Langat.

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of school leaders is to ensure that teachers can effectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Consequently, teachers engaged in teaching and learning (T&L) must possess high levels of competence. This includes pedagogical competence, personal skills, social skills, professional expertise, and particularly digital competence.

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, introducing various challenges and obstacles to T&L implementation, teachers had to strengthen their digital competencies to achieve T&L objectives, as students began to engage in home-based learning (PdPr). Teachers had no choice but to conduct lessons online. Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes an individual possesses, reflecting how they think and act (Mulyasa, 2004).

If teachers do not possess adequate competence, the T&L process may inadvertently fail to meet the required standards (Wawan, 2016). Since teachers play a crucial role in devising strategies for T&L, the success of the process heavily depends on their performance and competence. Consequently, teachers must refine their skills to align with changing modes of student learning in today's world.

The increasing integration of technology into daily life underscores the importance of teachers incorporating technology into their T&L practices (Tondeur et al., 2017). Students are also acquiring information rapidly through digital tools available at home. These changes compel teachers to understand and implement child development concepts in alignment with early education standards (Pebriana, 2017), enhancing their digital competence with knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers are expected to integrate digital technology to improve the quality of their T&L activities (Guillén-Gámez et al., 2020) and serve as role models for students in using digital technology (Siddiq et al., 2016). However, many newly qualified teachers, despite being familiar with digital environments, are not necessarily highly proficient in digital competencies (Cebi & Reisoglu, 2020).

Schools require high-quality leadership because the leadership of principals and headmasters significantly impacts student and school performance (Widhyanti & Shahril@Charil, 2016). As school leaders, headmasters must focus on academic and teaching aspects alongside teachers to ensure continuous improvement in student achievement (Pierre, 2013). Furthermore, they are tasked with fostering and disseminating best leadership practices to meet professional standards outlined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM). Effective leadership strategies adopted by headmasters can drive school-level changes and innovations (Ahmad Fauzi, 2014).

One measurable success is when, through their leadership, headmasters enhance the academic outcomes of students, aligning with the goals of the National Education

Philosophy (PADU Report, 2017). Therefore, headmasters must adopt the most effective leadership strategies.

Mindful leadership is a relatively new concept that has gained traction in recent years. Marturano (2014) defines mindful leadership as the ability to cultivate focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion in interactions. Developing mindful leadership skills requires leaders to pay attention to their surroundings, make deliberate and careful decisions, demonstrate creativity and compassion, and maintain awareness and clarity in their leadership (Teney, 2016).

Mindful leadership involves work performance linked to positive employee conditions, showcasing a leader's ability to manage themselves and their staff effectively (Chaturvedi et al., 2018). Beverage et al. (2014) found that mindful leadership connects the mind and leadership traits. In today's unpredictable and complex world, leaders must remain mindful, adaptable, and innovative in their thinking (Kennedy et al., 2013).

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the list of studies on mindful leadership worldwide, none have been conducted in Malaysia, nor has any research linked the mindful leadership of headmasters to teachers' digital competence, whether in secondary or primary schools. Therefore, this study focuses on the level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters based on the perceptions of teachers in national primary schools and the digital competence level of those teachers in the Hulu Langat district. Additionally, the study aims to identify whether there is a relationship between the mindful leadership practices of headmasters and teachers' digital competence levels.

In Malaysia, research related to mindfulness has predominantly focused on clinical studies to explore the effects of mindfulness-based interventions. These clinical studies often emphasize research contexts rooted in internal meditation practices derived from Buddhist concepts (Keng, Phang & Oie, 2015). The concept of mindfulness and mindful leadership is a relatively new mechanism in the education system. This concept has proven to help improve teacher quality and the effectiveness of leadership among school principals and headmasters (Nur Syarima et al., 2020).

Understanding the relationship between mindful leadership practices of headmasters and teachers' digital competence is challenging due to the lack of existing research. Most studies on mindful leadership focus solely on the level of leadership practices. For instance, Wells (2015) explored how mindfulness supports school leadership. Wongkom et al. (2019) examined data related to mindful leadership practices in primary schools in Thailand. Other studies looked at mindful leadership in higher education institutions and leaders' ability to practice mindful leadership (Burmansah et al., 2019). Ega (2017) investigated the influence of mindful leadership on teacher stress levels in Yogyakarta.

Past studies show the effects of mindfulness practices in helping teachers avoid burnout (Schussler et al., 2016). However, the impact of mindfulness practices on school leadership remains underexplored, especially in Malaysia (Mahfouz, 2017). Leadership theories typically emphasize the behavior or traits of a leader (Northouse, 2013), focusing on their activities or actions. Mindful leadership differs by prioritizing a leader's mindfulness, emphasizing care, patience, and empathy (Wells, 2015). A healthy and positive school culture is created by leaders with emotional stability.

Digital competence is critical in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, requiring teachers to advance T&L toward digitalization. According to Ismail et al. (2020), digital competence demands educators' awareness to consciously transform the learning system into something more relevant to the needs of students and society. However, teachers are still unprepared to face the challenges of T&L today (Anggraini et al., 2021). Some believe that digitalization makes their role less significant, as students can learn and master topics that even the teachers themselves may not yet grasp (Afif, 2019).

To achieve the goals outlined in the PPPM, schools must always be ready to provide quality education for all students. School quality depends on factors such as up-to-date T&L techniques and school management that aligns with current trends (Sobri, 2016). Being a teacher in this era requires considerable patience and mastery of knowledge. The rapid digital transformation necessitates that teachers possess strong digital competencies, as technological knowledge is essential for effective T&L.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, discussions about mindful leadership and mindfulness have gained popularity in Western countries due to their strong associations with emotional intelligence and self-awareness, which have been extensively studied. These discussions are often linked to Western scholars who explore Buddhism's significant role in mindfulness practices (Braibant, 2013). Petrie (2011) emphasized that, to be effective leaders in today's complex world, leaders require cognitive flexibility to think differently, along with specific competencies like self-awareness and self-regulation (Kennedy et al., 2013).

According to Bunting (2016), when proven leadership theories are combined with mindful traits, the resulting leadership is termed mindful leadership. Bunting's concept identifies seven essential practices of mindful leaders: being attuned to the present, taking full responsibility, leading with integrity, inspiring vision, fostering curiosity, empowering others, and valuing people. He asserts that a mindful person possesses an open and observant mind, highly attuned to current situations.

Marturano's (2014) theory of mindful leadership focuses on mindfulness practices, which involve using various strategies to respond thoughtfully and intentionally. Marturano believes that mindful leadership has a profound

personal impact, enabling leaders to respond more positively, handle stress and conflict calmly, and make careful decisions at work. Marturano (2015) describes leadership as a challenging task requiring a diverse set of skills, solid education, and resilience.

In today's fast-evolving world, excellence in leadership is often overlooked due to an overwhelming focus on organizational objectives. However, mindful leadership fosters leadership excellence and strengthens leadership quality by emphasizing essential qualities such as focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion in decision-making and management.

Digital competence is a contemporary concept encompassing technology-related skills. It includes proficiency in using digital technology, ICT skills, technological expertise, 21st-century skills, information literacy, digital literacy, and digital skills (Ilomäki, Kantosalo & Lakkala, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the demand for teachers to adapt to changing times. This necessity is reflected in teachers' digital competence requirements, where digital media is critical for effective T&L (Hibana & Surahman, 2021).

Competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that shape how individuals think and act (Mulyasa, 2004). Teachers must possess high levels of competence to perform their duties and responsibilities effectively. This competence spans pedagogical, personal, social, and professional domains. Without adequate competence, the T&L process may inadvertently fail to meet its objectives (Wawan, 2016).

Since teachers play a central role in designing T&L strategies for students, the success of these processes largely depends on their performance and competence. Thus, competence is vital in managing students and facilitating the T&L process.

➢ *Research Objectives*
The objectives of this study are to:

• Identify the level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters based on the perceptions of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district.
• Determine the level of digital competence among teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district.
• Examine the relationship between the mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, and the digital competence of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district.
• Assess the contribution of mindful leadership practices of headmasters to the digital competence of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district.

➢ *Research Questions*

• What is the level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters based on the perceptions of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district?
• What is the level of digital competence among teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district?
• Is there a significant relationship between the mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, and the digital competence of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district?
• To what extent do mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, contribute to the digital competence of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district?

➢ *Significance of the Study*
The findings of this study will be valuable for the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) in enhancing headmasters' leadership styles and providing more in-depth insights into the digital competencies of teachers. Amid challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoE's goal of producing professional and world-class teachers and capable students remains central to the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM).

This study is crucial for raising awareness among school administrators, relevant MoE departments, and other stakeholders about the current state of headmasters' leadership practices and teachers' digital competencies in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The findings can contribute to the management and training of headmasters and principals at the Aminuddin Baki Institute (IAB), particularly in incorporating mindfulness into leadership training programs. The IAB can also develop modules focusing on challenges in the education system related to digital transformation and prepare teachers to embrace these changes.

For headmasters, this study provides a reference for improving their leadership practices in schools. It highlights the importance of mindful leadership and its potential to positively influence teachers' digital competencies. The findings can also serve as a self-reflection tool for headmasters to evaluate their leadership practices and identify areas for improvement.

For teachers, the study emphasizes the importance of professional development programs offered by the MoE and external agencies in addressing 21st-century education challenges and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Teachers need to recognize the significance of digital knowledge and strive to improve their digital competencies to provide effective T&L.

Ultimately, this study is expected to benefit all parties involved, directly or indirectly, in the pursuit of elevating the teaching profession in line with the goals of the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach suitable for its objectives. A quantitative approach enables the selection of a sample representing the entire population, allowing the findings to be generalized (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). This method is appropriate for addressing the research questions about the mindful leadership practices of headmasters and their relationship with teachers' digital competence in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district. The quantitative approach is also chosen because the study aims to test hypotheses developed based on a review of the literature and relevant theories.

The data collection involves using questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. This method is practical given the time and resource constraints, and it facilitates respondent cooperation (Anita Ithin & Zuraidah Abdullah, 2018). The survey instrument contains 100 items divided into three sections:

➤ *Section A: Demographic details of the respondents.*
➤ *Section B: 43 items assessing the mindful leadership practices of headmasters across six main elements:*

- Leading with values.
- Inspiring vision.
- Encouraging curiosity.
- Empowering others.
- Appreciating others.
- Fostering focus and compassion.

➤ *Section C: 54 items assessing the digital competence of teachers in five key areas:*

- Information.
- Communication.
- Content creation.
- Safety.
- Problem-solving.

A five-point Likert scale is used, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

➤ *Sampling*
The respondents are selected using a simple random sampling method involving national primary school teachers in the Hulu Langat district. Since the study is conducted online, the sampling is limited to teachers in urban areas to ensure internet access and familiarity with the subject matter (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The population includes 56 national primary schools with a total of 4,433 teachers, and the study sample comprises 354 teachers.

➤ *Data Analysis*
The data collected is analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and mean scores, are used to describe the data. Correlation analysis using Pearson's product-moment correlation assesses relationships, while regression analysis identifies factors contributing to the outcomes.

V. FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate that the level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, and the digital competence of teachers in national primary schools in the Hulu Langat district are generally high.

➤ *Findings:*

- The level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers in national primary schools in Hulu Langat, is high.
- The level of digital competence among teachers in national primary schools in Hulu Langat is high.
- A significant relationship exists between the mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, and the digital competence of teachers in Hulu Langat.
- Mindful leadership practices of headmasters, as perceived by teachers, significantly contribute to the digital competence of teachers in Hulu Langat.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the level of mindful leadership practices of headmasters is high, with a mean score of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.535. Similarly, teachers' digital competence is also high, with a mean score of 4.00 and a standard deviation of 0.482.

➤ *Correlation Analysis:*
The analysis shows a significant relationship between mindful leadership practices of headmasters and teachers' digital competence, with a correlation coefficient $r=0.353$ and $p=0.00<0.05$.

➤ *Regression Analysis:*
The regression analysis indicates that 24.7% of the variance in teachers' digital competence is explained by the mindful leadership practices of headmasters.

These findings align with previous studies that highlight the role of leadership in enhancing teachers' competencies. Mindful leadership, which incorporates elements such as focus, compassion, and clarity, provides a supportive environment for teachers to thrive and adapt to the demands of digital education.

The high level of digital competence among teachers reflects their ability to effectively use digital tools and technology in teaching and learning (T&L). This is critical in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

VII. SUMMARY

In conclusion, this thesis critically examines the practices of mindful leadership by headmasters and their relationship with teachers' digital competency in national schools in the Hulu Langat district. This exploration of these two dimensions aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of educational leadership and clarify how leadership approaches influence teachers' readiness and competency in using digital tools for pedagogical purposes. Through an extensive review of existing literature and careful examination of empirical data, this study highlights the importance of mindful leadership in fostering a conducive environment for teachers' digital competency development. The findings emphasize the role of compassionate leaders in creating a positive school culture that encourages continuous learning, adaptability, and the effective integration of technology in teaching practices.

The identified relationship between mindful leadership practices by headmasters and teachers' digital competency in national schools in the Hulu Langat district offers practical implications for educational policy makers, school administrators, and teacher professional development. Understanding the impact of leadership on teachers' digital readiness stresses the need for targeted training programs, ongoing support, and leadership that values and embraces technological advancements. As we navigate an era characterized by rapid technological change and an evolving educational landscape, the synthesis of mindful leadership and digital competence becomes essential. This thesis serves as a foundation for future research efforts, encouraging further exploration of the dynamics between leadership styles, awareness, and the growing demand for digital literacy in the education sector.

Fundamentally, the findings presented in this thesis outline the need for educational leaders to adopt a compassionate approach, cultivating a supportive environment that empowers teachers to navigate the complexities of digital education. By recognizing and embracing the symbiotic relationship between wise leadership practices and teachers' digital competence, educational institutions can pave the way for a more resilient, innovative, and digitally proficient teaching community, ultimately enhancing the quality of education in national schools.

REFERENCES

[1]. Ahmad Fauzi, A. 2014. Amalan Kepimpinan Instruksional dalam peningkatan Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran yang berkesan dalam kalangan pesnyarah. Tesis Ijazah Sarjana. Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Husseion Onn, Malaysia.

[2]. Asari, A., Kurniawan, T., Ansor, S., Bagus, A. & Rahma, N. 2019. Kompetensi Literasi Digital Bagi Guru Dan Pelajar Di Lingkungan Sekolah Kabupaten Malang. *BIBLIOTIKA: Jurnal Kajian Perpustakaan dan Informasi* 3: 98–104.

[3]. Auken, J. Van. 2019. The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Leadership : How Mindfulness Practices Affect Leadership Practices The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Leadership : How Mindfulness Practices Affect. *AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive*.

[4]. Baron, L., Rouleau, V., Grégoire, S. and Baron, C. (2018), "Mindfulness and leadership flexibility", Journal of Management Development, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 165-177. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-06-2017-0213

[5]. Beverage, S., DeLong, K., Herold, I. M. H., & Neufeld, K. (2014). Mindful leadership defined and explained. In Advances in Librarianship (Vol. 38). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-283020140000038000

[6]. Burmansah, B., Rugaiyah, R. & Mukhtar, M. 2019. Mindful Leadership: The Ability of Leader to Establish Connection to Others, Community, and Deal with Changes Skillfully-A Case Study of Buddhist Higher Education Institute Leader. *International e-Journal of Educational Studies*(December): 133–149.

[7]. Çebi, A. & Reisoglu, I. 2020. Digital competence: A study from the perspective of pre-service teachers in Turkey. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* 9(2): 294–308.

[8]. Fuaddudin. (2020). Perubahan Paradigma Mengajar Guru Dalam Menyongsong Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan DI. EL-Muhbib Jurnal, 4(1), 68–81

[9]. Greenwood, J.Y. (2011). African American Teacher Leaders: Selections, Supports, Barriers.

[10]. Tesis Doktor Falsafah. Auburn, Alabama: Auburn University.

[11]. Guillén-Gámez, F. D., Mayorga-Fernández, M. J., Bravo-Agapito, J., & Escribano-Ortiz, D. (2020). Analysis of Teachers' Pedagogical Digital Competence: Identification of Factors Predicting Their Acquisition. Technology, Knowledge andLearning, 1–18.

[12]. Lund, A., Furberg, A., Bakken, J., & Engelien, K. L. (2014). What does professional digital competence mean in teacher education?. Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy, 9(04), 280 298

[13]. Luqman, R. A., Farhan, H. M., Shahzad, F., & Shaheen, S. (2012). 21st century challenges of educational leaders, way out and need of reflective practice. International Journal of Learning and Development, 2(1), 195–208. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v2i1.1238

[14]. Marturano, J. (2014). Finding the space to lead: A practical guide to mindful leadership. New York: Bloomsbury Press.

[15]. Mulyasa, E. (2004). Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi. Bandung: Penerbit PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

[16]. Pebriana, P. H. (2017). Analisis Penggunaan Gadget terhadap Kemampuan Interaksi Sosial pada Anak Usia Dini. Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 1(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v1i1.26

[17]. Pierre du Plessis 2013 The headmasters as instructional leader: Guiding schools to improve instruction, Education as Change, 17:sup1, S79-S92, DOI: 10.1080/16823206.2014.865992

[18]. Reb, J., Chaturvedi, S., Narayanan, J. & Kudesia, R. S. (2018). Leader Mindfulness and Employee Performance: A Sequential Mediation Model of LMX Quality, Interpersonal Justice, and Employee Stress. Journal of Business Ethics. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3927-x

[19]. Setyaningsih, R., Abdullah, A., Prihantoro, E., & Hustinawaty, H. 2019. Model Penguatan Literasi Digital Melalui Pemanfaatan E- Learning. Jurnal ASPIKOM, 3(6), 1200-1214.)

[20]. Siddiq, F., Hatlevik, O. E., Olsen, R. V., Throndsen, I., & Scherer, R. (2016). Taking a future perspective by learning from the past – A systematic review of assessment instruments that aim to measure primary and secondary school students' ICT literacy. Educational Research Review, 19, 58-84. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2016.05.002

[21]. Tondeur, J., Aesaert, K., Pynoo, B., van Braak, J., Fraeyman, N., & Erstad, O. (2017). Developing a validated instrument to measure preservice teachers' ICT competencies: Meeting the demands of the 21st century. British Journal of Educational Technology, 48(2), 462-472.

[22]. Wisalo, P. (2014). "Consciousness" that is overlooked. Retrieved December 21, 2018, from https://bit.ly/31QZ8TH

[23]. Wells, C. (2015). Conceptualizing Mindful Leadership in Schools: How the Practice of Mindfulness Informs the Practice of Leading. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, v2 n1 p1-23.

[24]. Woerkom, Marianne & Kroon, Brigitte. (2017). Mindfulness as substitute for transformational leadership. Journal of Managerial Psychology. 32. 284-297. 10.1108/JMP-07-2016-0223.