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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

EXPLORING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FROM PERSPECTIVE OF FEMALE LEADERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

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Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)
2019

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SAWARAK

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Exploring Thought Leadership from Perspective of Female Leaders in Private Sector

SUSI SURYANDARI BINTI ADNI

This graduation exercise is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resouce Development

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
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The project entitled '[Exploring Thought Leadership from Perspective of Female Leaders in Private Sector]' was prepared by [*Susi Suryandari Binti Adni*] and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (*Human Resource Development*)

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FEMALE LEADERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

SUSI SURYANDARI BINTI ADNI

This study explores thought leadership from the perspective of female leaders in the private sector. The understanding of thought leadership among female leaders differs from one person to another. There were 5 informants who participated in this study and the research was conducted at 4 private companies in Kuching, Sarawak which are Duta Jasa Sdn Bhd, Sacofa Sdn Bhd, Think Big Training Sdn Bhd and BD Enterprise. There are 4 research question were structured based on the objective as the interview guideline for data collection through semi structured interview. Content analysis was conducted to answer the research questions and produce the final result of the report. The findings showed there is universal understanding of thought leadership among female leaders. Based on the findings, it showed that the female leaders aware on how thought leaders are manifested in the organization and on the issues and challenges faced by thought leaders in private sectors. The findings also showed the skills and techniques needed by thought leaders to tackle the issues and challenges. At the end of this study, it can be concluded that this research meets all research objectives which were suggested previously.

Keywords: female leaders, thought leadership, private sector

ABSTRAK

KAJIAN TERHADAP KEPIMPINAN BERFIKIR DALAM KALANGAN PEMIMPIN WANITA

DI SEKTOR SWASTA

SUSI SURYANDARI BINTI ADNI

Tujuan penyelidikan adalah untuk mengkaji pemahaman tentang kepimpinan berfikir dari perspektif pemimpin wanita di sektor swasta. Pemahaman tentang kepimpinan berfikir dalam kalangan pemimpin wanita berlainan antara satu sama yang lain. Terdapat 5 informan telah terpilih dan kajian ini telah dijalankan di empat buah organisasi swasta di Kuching, Sarawak iaitu Duta Jasa Sdn Bhd, Sacofa Sdn Bhd, Think Big Training Sdn Bhd and BD Enterprise. Terdapat 4 soalan kajian telah dibentuk berdasarkan objektif kajian sebagai panduan temuduga untuk proses pengumpulan data melalui temu bual separa struktur. Analisis kandungan telah dijalankan untuk menjawab soalan kajian dan meghasilkan keputusan akhir laporan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan terdapat pemahaman universal tentang kepimpinan berfikir dalam kalangan pemimpin wanita. Berdasarkan hasil kajian, ia menunjukkan bahawa pemimpin wanita mempunyai kesedaran tentang bagaimana kepimpinan berfikir dimanifestasikan di dalam organisasi dan juga isu dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pemimpin berfikir di sektor swasta. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan tentang kemahiran dan teknik yang diperlukan oleh pemimpin berfikir untuk menangani isu dan cabaran. Pada penghujung kajian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahawa kajian ini memenuhi semua objektif kajian yang telah dicadangkan sebelumnya.

Kata kunci: pemimpin wanita, kepimpinan berfikir, sektor swasta

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study was aimed to explore thought leadership from the perspectives of female leaders in private sector. Organizations are experiencing rapidly dynamics changing in innovation where it demands the responsibilities from a leader to involve in organizing task, decision making and coordinating the efforts in progress to achieve the organization's goals. The organizations need a strong and effective leader to survive in this changing environment and able to fulfill the market demand. Leader is viewed as an individual that have the ability to influence others in achieve the organization's goals. Leadership is an important factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness and success as Bryman (1992) defined leadership by emphasizing leadership based on three elements which constitute influence, group and goal.

Thought leadership is a new approach that needs to be focused and concentrate. Past studies on leadership show that the findings emerged new term of leadership so called 'thought leadership'. Peter Cook (2012) in his blog stated that the term was first coined out in 1994 by Joel Kurtzman, the Founding Editor of Strategy & Business.

Thought leadership is quite famous topic among the entrepreneurs to drives a company's success as stated by Fallon (2016), in the business world and to the average person, they commonly discussed about the thought leadership. The term is more popular among business leaders, as previous researches shows that there was little known study that have been conducted on though leaderships especially among the female leaders in private sector, thus the perspectives among the female leaders in private sector might be different compared to the leaders in the business world. This research will be helped to get better understanding about thought leadership from the perspectives of female leaders in private sector.

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To summarize, the study on the understanding of thought leadership among female leaders in private sector is hoped to provides new insight and add a new paradigm for female leaders to consider. This approach would encourage future leaders to develop new ideas to promote changes in thinking styles that benefits others.

1.2 Background of Study

Acknowledging today challenges in leading the organization not only having the ability in influencing others to move but also inspires the followers with the innovative ideas and scales the ideas into sustainable change. Therefore, searching for new approach of leadership makes 'thought leadership' as an alternative in developing the leaders with capability and skills. As stated by McCrimmon (2005), thought leadership is the championing of the new ideas rather than anything to do with managing people or helping group to achieve goal.

There is least amount of known publication of thought leadership in Malaysia context. PwC Malaysia has launched thought leadership publication on trust in business titled "Trust in Business: Delivering Authentic Value" (2016), which it is focused on business leaders and managers. The key finding of this publication is exploring the conversations with business leaders related to the dynamic nature of trust which trust can be categorized as tangible asset of the business.

In addition, thought leadership by western scholars more focusing on the understanding of thought leadership in business perspective which is thought leader part of marketing strategies to stand on the leading edge of industry trends. Few scholars have producing the writings on thought leadership such as Prizemen (2015) have published the thought leadership manual as a guide for entrepreneur in growing their business by recognizing the field expert. Ryde (2008) associating though leader's thinking styles involving executives across the public, private and non-government organisation (NGO). Generally, the studies that have been

conducted on thought leadership may vary in finding due to the several factors such as personal background and experiences that form difference understanding.

Past findings have shown there are different scholars upholding the same views in regards to thought leaderships. Brosseau (2014) stated in her book "Ready to Be a Thought Leader: How to Increase Your Influence, Impact and Success", thought leaders are sources of inspiration and innovation in the organization that make their innovation ideas real and replicable. Brosseau (2014) also emphasized that thought leaders are recognized by his or her ability to galvanize others to think new thoughts, modify the way they have always done things, embark on new behaviours, new paths and new actions to transform the world. It is proven that thinking styles of an individual and the ability to come with innovative ideas able to give big impact and can be a significant competitive advantage.

In conclusion, past findings may vary because of the differences of the demographic and objective of the study. Thus, there is least number of studies that have been conducted to explore the thought leadership from the perspective of female leaders in private sector and this study intend to fill the gap.

1.3 Problem Statement

Thought leadership have been focused on business world which involve the managers and leaders of business as a marketing tool to improve marketing effectiveness and build engagement with consumers. Conceptual writings on thought leadership among researchers focus on defining and exploring the concept of thought leadership that parallel with business strategy. Therefore, it proven by the writings from writers such as Prizemen (2015), Brosseau (2014) and Halderen, Kettler-Paddock & Badings (2013) that discuss on the understanding of thought leadership as an entrepreneur. In can be concluded that they are focusing on how to build innovative strategies on how to develop thought leader that less been focus specifically

on academic study. This writing ends up with manual and models of thought leadership that focused on business managers, leaders or individual that involve in business world. Previous publication focused on business leaders and managers such as Tropf (2015) while there is least amount of known publication that focus on female leaders. Simultaneously, understanding the concept of thought leaders should be based on other perspectives which later can helping to develop ideas or examples on how to become thought leaders in private sector especially in the leaders' position.

Apart from this, most of the studies on thought leadership are dominated by western scholar that indicate some limitations that may varied largely depending on the nature interest of the researcher such as United States of America (Tropf, 2015 ; Alhaddi, 2014). Thus, it is lack of accuracy in understanding of thought leadership in Malaysian context which further studies need to be conduct on thought leadership that focus on different perspective and target population. There are only little-known studies about thought leadership conducted in Malaysia which those studies focus on business such as PwC Malaysia has published thought leadership on trust in business. Past known studies also more focusing on the relationship thought leadership and innovation such as by Alhaddi. Thus, it is lack of accuracy in understanding the thought leadership from Malaysia context and Western context.

Thought leadership have been focused by writers but less academic studies of thought leadership involving private sector. Most of previous study also focused on how to integrate the strategy and implementation such as Gupta, Malhotra, Czinkota and Foroudi (2016). This study examines the relationship between competitiveness and innovation in marketing practices. As there are least number of known publications that have been conducted that focused on the understanding of thought leadership in private sector, this study is intended to explore and have a better understanding on thought leadership based on the perspectives of young female leader in private sector. Hence, there are gaps in previous studies.

In conclusion, there is several of understanding towards thought leadership. This study intends to explore thought leadership from the perspective of female leaders in private sector as there is different understanding of thought leadership. The objective is to explore thought leadership from female leaders' perspective where it will establish the understanding that helps to create paths for leader to embark new action. To conclude, thought leadership is new to Malaysian's leaders that need to be explore more in-depth to gain new insight towards thought leadership. Hence, this study will be conducted to close the gaps from previous study.

1.4 Objectives of Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The main objective is to explore the understanding of thought leadership among female leaders in private sector.

1.4.2 Specific Objective

1. To explore the understanding of thought leadership among female leaders.

2. To identify the issues and challenges that faced by female leaders.

3. To explore the skills and techniques needed to be a thought leader.

1.5 Research Question

This study is using qualitative with exploratory research design that explore for the understanding of an individual as informant for this study. Therefore, research questions search for viewpoints and personal opinion that been described by the informants. The following is research questions for this study:

1. What is the understanding of thought leadership from the female leaders' perspective?

2. Whether the understanding of thought leadership is being manifested by female leaders through the example in leading the organization?

3. What are the issues and challenges in encouraging thought leadership in the organization?

4. What are the skills and techniques needed in order to enhance thought leadership in the organization?

1.6 Definition of Term

Conceptual Definition:

Leadership:	Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. (Rost, 1993)
Thought Leadership:	Thought leadership is the championing of new ideas rather than anything to do with managing people or helping a group achieve a goal. (McCrimmon, 2005, p. 1064)

Operational Definition:

Leadership:	Leadership is an action and ability to lead people or an organization towards achieving the desired goals.
Thought Leadership:	Thought leadership involves innovating ideas, inventions and new solutions to bring positive changes where needed for the organization achievement.

1.7 Research Framework

Research framework shows the outline courses of action or to present the approaches of the ideas or thought. It can be like a map that gives coherence to empirical inquiry. Rusli Ahmad (2014) defined that research framework as the categories of outputs that research can

produce. Therefore, figure below provide an outline for research activities relate to thought leadership that seek the information to answer the research questions.
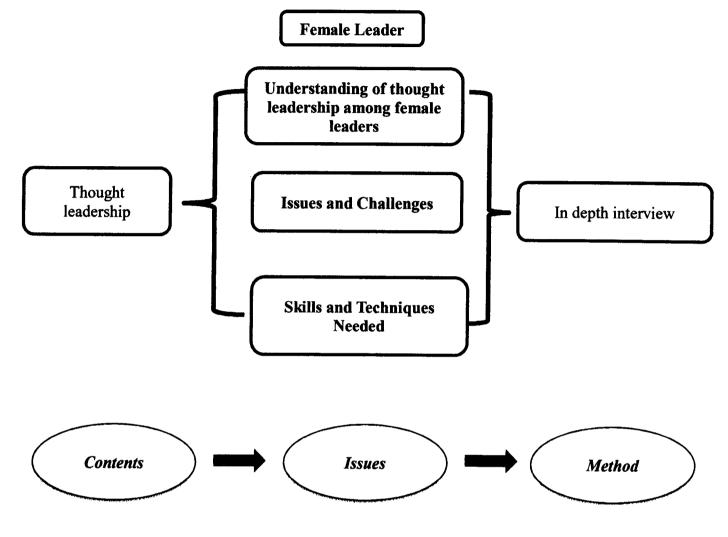

Figure 1.0 Research Framework

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study helped an organization to have a better understanding about thought leadership from the perspective of female leader and also helped to contribute new knowledge toward the organization and educational field. This knowledge may influence to adopt this new concept of thought leadership and helps to provide new insight that could influence others to become thought leaders. Besides, this study helped to expose new ideas and information to build new theory. The findings help the Human Resource practitioner to introduce new ideas

to tackle the issues and challenges, and also help to create initiative to develop thought leadership module based on Malaysian context. This study also helps to initiate future researcher to have the interest in exploring the thought leadership in other perspective.

1.9 Limitation of Study

The limitation of this study is the data collected may have some errors that lead to ineffective result. Hence, this will lead to the objective be achieved inaccurately. In addition, the results do not represent all female leaders in private sector. Moreover, lack of resources to get the information regards this study. Adding to this limitation is time constraint to complete the interview minimizes the number of informants and the data.

1.10 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter discussed of leadership and thought leadership. This chapter discussed about the background of study, problem statement, objectives of study, research question, definition of term, research framework, and significance of study and limitation of study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Leadership is not about the title but the ability to make others to following our ideas or action. After few decades, professional experts still lack of strong evidence to answer on what the concept of leadership that shows the of effective leadership as emphasized by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004), there are still lacking solid evidence to answer on how the leadership matters and what the essential ingredients of successful leadership are. Therefore, thought leadership also consider as a new approach for leader have potential ability in encountering the new challenges that need new ideas or innovation ideas as supported by McCrimmon (2005), thought leadership is the championing of the new ideas rather than anything to do with managing people or helping group to achieve goal.

In this chapter, it discusses on literature review where it shows in-depth grasp of understanding on this research. A literature review mostly surveys on scholarly articles, books and other resources. These resources are relevant and can be used to have a research on specific issues, area of research, summary and critical evaluation of each work.

In this section, it contents the discussion of the concept of leadership, concept of thought leadership, four types of thought leadership, thinking styles and past research on thought leadership which explain the situations or phenomena whereas to challenge the existing knowledge within the boundaries of critical bounding assumptions.

2.2 Concept of Leadership

Nowadays, the interest is focused upon the leadership effectiveness to generate the organization. According to Edward Murray (1995), the overwhelming volume of information on leadership adds to the complexity of trying to determine leadership definition. There are numerous numbers of definitions, Volkmann (2012) supported that there are approximately 1400 different definitions of the words leader and leadership in literature (as cited in Silva, 2016).

According to Winston (2006), leader is the individual who have ability to selects, equips, trains and influences followers who have abilities and skills and focuses the followers to the organization goals. A leader is the one who demonstrates the capabilities of not only by influencing others to move but as well inspires the followers with their innovative ideas, turning the ideas into reality and scale those ideas into sustainable change. There are many types of leadership styles and few examples of common leadership styles are Laissez-Faire leadership, Charismatic leadership and Democratic leadership. Leadership style is depending on the way of a leader uses power to lead the others and leadership styles often correlate with the leader's personality type.

According to Sharma & Jain (2013), leadership is a process by which an individual influence other to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. In addition, in a process to differentiate between a good leader and great leader is about the leaders' capabilities especially in critical thinking process. Chartrand & Rose (2006) stated that associate critical thinking with a core set of cognitive skills that lead to disposition towards its resulting from their ability to interpret, analyses, evaluate, making inference, explain and self-regulation.