An Examination of the Role of Self-reflection in Female Leadership Effectiveness of Manufacturing Industry in Malaysia

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Abstract. Leading effectively is essential to secure an organisation's market share by fulfilling the strong demand in the manufacturing sector during this pandemic. Psychology researchers found that self-reflection is a powerful tool for increasing self-awareness, well-being, self-efficacy and enhance effectiveness. But, there are limited quantitative research conducted to examine the correlation between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness. The questions of "do female leaders' tap on the advantages of self-reflection translating into higher effectiveness and resulted better representation in top management position" are the areas that researcher is interested to investigate in this research. To investigate the role of self-reflection in female leadership effectiveness, minimum of 114 female leaders from manufacturing industries will be invited to participate in the survey. All data collected will be analysed using SPSS and smart PLS, confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) for evaluating Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be used to confirm measurement models while applying "partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM)". It will be used to confirm the reflective measurement models in this research. There are two important theoretical contributions in this research. The new model proposed in this research serves as a new contribution to the field of self-reflective theory pertaining to management. The framework can serve as a guide for future research in leadership studies and by enriching the understanding of self-reflection, self-awareness, self-efficacy and well-being factors, this knowledge will contribute to the academic's literature. The practical contribution is ensuring female contribute and participate fully in thriving Malaysia's economic development by enhancing leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Female Leadership Effectiveness · Self-Reflection · Self-Efficacy · Self-Awareness · Well-Being

1 Introduction

The Malaysia society is undergoing rapid change from its powerful traditional cultural and religious norms to modern values regarding female. Moreover, with the vast and ever-increasing industrial complexity, Malaysia has opened the doors to organizations

which provide opportunities for female to gain employment. [31, 45]. The female labour force rate (FLFR) has increased significantly from 45.9% in 2005 [52]. to 55.4% in Q1 2021, female represent 38.9% (6.23 million) of total labour force (16.01 million). Looking at long-term perspective, female labour participation rate is positively associated with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Malaysia [35]. Between 2001–2008, female employment contributed 4% GDP growth averagely. It has increased to 14% between 2011 to 2016 [28]. Despite an increase in female participation, the phenomenon of female underrepresentation at top management levels persists. [1]. In private sector, only 26% of the firms had a female as top manager i.e. the main decision-maker [3]. The female shares in Malaysia's top 100 Private Limited Corporate only reached only 25.8% in Board of Director position in 2020. As proven from the report published by World Bank in 2017, the profit rate has a significant positive correlation with the representation of females in the boardroom in Malaysia hence it is crucial for gender parity at the top management level to be recognized in the manufacturing industry as the largest female employer in the private sector of Malaysia (61% of females are employed by manufacturing industry in private sector in 2017 and is the 2nd largest contributor in Malaysia's economy, has the highest workforce population which consist of 17.8% according to the [14]. Despite female participation rate has increased significantly in the labour market, the phenomenon of female is underrepresented at the top management level remains [1]. Eagly et al. (1992) [19] emphasized that the effectiveness of female leadership is lesser in a predominantly male leadership environment or with more male subordinates. Traditionally, the manufacturing industry is a male-dominated industry especially in the leadership functions [54].

Due to the contemporary challenges facing in manufacturing industry [4], dynamic and unexpected changes in both economic and social crisis due to crisis, effective leadership is required to master the situation [10] and to navigate its employees to ensure organization sustainability [10] and secure its market share by fulfilling the strong demands in manufacturing sector during this pandemic crisis. Female is found burnout in the current Covid-19 pandemic context because they were impacted by family-role conflict, financial and emotional dimensions of workload [44]. Female leaders may be experiencing work-family conflict while they are not able to balance their work responsibilities and family obligations [17].

Leaders' well-being and wellness were crucial in leading role. The research conducted on self-reflection for leadership well-being concluded that self-reflection is a useful tool for mitigating burnout, increasing self-awareness, building resiliency and fostering well-being. [56]. Self-reflection is a useful tool for mitigating burnout, increasing self-awareness [56]. Self-awareness is treated as a vital element in leadership and career success [9], and, it was defined as one of the most crucial leadership traits [49] as well as the key indicator of leadership effectiveness [29] but there are limited quantitative research conducted to examine the correlation between self-awareness and leadership effectiveness [50]. Only very little attention in organisation research has been given to the role of self-reflection in self-efficacy and well-being. There were studies examining individual's rumination and team learning in sleep quality by Van Woerkom (2002; as cited in [47] and by Gropley (2006; as cited in [47]), and, other few studies focused at the role of both rumination and self-reflection in employee well-being. There has been

no previous research that examined the relationship between well-being and efficacy by examining self-reflection [47]. Based on the researcher's initial review of related literature in various resources available in the market, there is no research found in integrating social cognitive theory in investigating the correlation between self-reflection, self-awareness, self-efficacy, well-being, and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need to investigate if relationships exist between self-reflection, self-efficacy, well-being and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness.

There is insufficient research in discovering the crucial characteristics and competencies needed by female leaders to be effective in leadership role. For few decades, there are plenty of studies on differences in leadership and on gender perceptions have been carried out in business but the correlation between leadership effectiveness and gender is unknown due to female is underrepresented in top management level, also, senior management positions are defined in masculine terms continuously by business managers. However, there is also conflicting information related to the perceptions of characteristics possess by females to be successful in a leadership role therefore it is difficult to identify the characteristics needed by female leaders to be successful [41]. Researcher Esser et al., (2018) [22] argued that a set of competencies shaped by social gender role bias, contemporary leadership challenges, and, perception and expectations from male peers' perspective is required for female leaders working in a male dominant industry. Competencies of management and leadership is a well-researched field that has been discussed and written by many researchers and authors. But, very limited researches studied the competencies of females and males especially in the manufacturing industry [54].

Research on the impact of self-reflection on female leaders' self-perceived female leadership effectiveness so far examined these elements separately and incoherently, based on the researcher's initial review of related literature in various resources available in the market, there is no research found in integrating social cognitive theory in investigating the correlation between self-reflection, self-awareness, self-efficacy, well-being, and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need to investigate if relationships exist between self-reflection, self-efficacy, well-being and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness. Hence, this empirical study on the integration of all these elements is aimed to produce a significant theoretical and practical contribution to the understanding of the association between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness among female managers and provide a brand-new perspective into the field of female leadership.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Self-reflection

Self-reflection is defined as it is either capture the information, process it quickly then dispose it, or, absorb it in detail by putting more effort into analysing and process it. Self-reflection helps individuals to gain insights from processing the experiences that happen in life [56]. Daudelin (1996) [13] stated "reflection is a natural and familiar process". People in the business analyse work experiences, summarise and record learning in various

reports, leader carry out performance review with employees, going through problem-solving processes. In personal lives, people share difficult circumstances with people around them such as spouses, family, friends, support groups or counsellors. Besides, reflection may happen informally, people may experience a sudden breakthrough while during showering, jogging, etc. The various tools used in total quality management programs are in fact a reflection process which request people to pause, to reflect upon critical areas, for example, root-cause analysis, needs of customer, etc. Through empower and involve employees in the decision-making process, manager develop key performance indicator to measure results enables higher level of active reflection. There were needs for a formal reflective practice at the workplace, for example, PepsiCo, Aetna and AT&T embedded higher level of introspection into its management development program, according to an article "Leaders Learn to Heed the Voice Within" published in Fortune. Other than that, "Action-Reflection Learning" (ARL) was also used by Hewlett-Packard, General Motor, Motorola and Exxon to investigate and identify solutions for problems occur. To develop the formal reflective practice for managers, there were three important steps need to be done. First, "an understand of the core processes that make up reflection; second, "an understanding of which of these processes are most likely to promote learning from work experiences; third, "a set of tools to help managers use reflection as a way of learning".

2.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as people's belief that they can do well within the boundary of a specific situation [8]. Bandura (1989) [6] explained the linkage between individual's self-efficacy and well-being which emphasized the importance of self-reflection in social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in own capability to carry out and complete the tasks. Due to the different levels of individuals' efficacy perceptions, people might reflect in many ways. Those with high efficacy might respond to difficulties or challenges with reflections that help them react to situations in a better manner. Those with low efficacious might practice rumination but get stuck in their repetitive negative thoughts because they are focusing on what went wrong. This theory vouches that self-efficacy beliefs are highly related to one's motivation and performance level [6, 38]. Designate self-efficacy as a mediator of transformational and transactional leadership style is a positive step towards increasing the numbers of potential mediators and criteria [34].

2.3 Well-Being

Well-being is defined as health condition of individuals from emotional, mental health, and physical perspective [56]. Transformational leaders required a high amount of effort and energy to demonstrate charisma, develop vision, empowerment and stay connected with subordinates, they are not immune to burnout hence there is a need for rejuvenating. Self-awareness increased through intentional self-reflection, the transformational leaders can model a steady approach to handle uncertainty, look for areas for improvements, and communicate feelings openly [56]. From longitudinal research over 24 months carried out by Zwingmann, Ritcher & Wolf (2015) [57] on leaders and direct subordinates

in a Germany organization twice to investigate the effects of transformational leadership on leaders' emotional exhaustion over a period found that the longitudinal effects of transformational leadership caused burnout and emotional exhaustion. Hence, it is important for female leaders with transformational leadership style to take good care of themselves and spend time focusing their well-being.

2.4   Self-awareness

Self-awareness is defined as the ability to a person to perform self-assessment accurately to understand own self which therefore gained emotional awareness and self-confidence. [2, 42]. People develop self-awareness when people actively pay attention to the "now" moment, "Self-awareness is the heart of leadership" [21]. Self-awareness theory advocates that the person who is self-aware has a greater extend of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and appear to be a more effective leader [9] and manager [39]. Self-awareness brings positive impacts is increasingly being recognized in the workplace, high self-aware leaders are more effective and have higher satisfied teams compared to low self-aware leaders [39, 51]. This is due to leaders with high self-awareness are likely better in integrating the comparisons of behaviour into their own self-perception which are valid and reliable. Adversely, leaders with low self-awareness are more likely to discount or ignore feedback received about themselves [24]. The logic suggested by Atwater & Yammarino (1997; as cited in Tekleab et al., 2008) [53] stated that self-awareness of a leader with transformational leadership is related to the leadership effectiveness.

2.5   Female Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership is the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change. L: Listening and learning from others. E: Energizing the organization. A: Acting for the benefit of everybody. D: Development of themselves and others. E: Empowerment of others to lead. R: Recognition of Achievements [23]. Leadership effectiveness is a concept describes the extent to which the leader's ability to influence the followers or a group rather than the leader is influenced. Vision, direction, and knowledge are cascades down by the leader. It is the result or outcome of a leader's behaviour [15, 20, 41]. Female leaders are expected to use a more an integrative and diversified approach to understanding the different leadership in multiple contexts to be effective [30]. Few theories explain how female leadership effectiveness can be affected. As cited by Evans (2010) [23], the result of meta-analysis done by Eagly and Johnson concluded that female leadership style is evidenced as transformation leadership style hence the transformational leadership model is the best fit for this research. Transformational leaders are willing to spend time for self-reflection and self-discovery [56]. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders developed by Eagly & Karau (2002) [18] is an extension of social role theory based on the importance of advocating gender differences in behaviour and dealing with gender role content. It includes the considerations on the congruity between leadership roles (or other roles) and gender roles, it identifies key processes and factors which affect congruity perceptions, specify the consequences derived from prejudice and the prejudicial behaviours.

2.6   Management Level

Management level is defined as entry-level, middle-level and top-level managers [40]. The research "An empirical analysis of the perceived skills in predicting managerial effectiveness: The Malaysian perspective" carried out by Muthuveloo et al. (2017) [40] found that the management level was the moderating variable of skills and managerial skills effectiveness relationships, it was significantly moderated the relationship of conceptual skill and managerial effectiveness. It is due to the expectations, roles, and skills set of managers is different at the various organizational level, the higher it goes the more complex it is.

From the above literature, current study intends to develop a conceptual framework based on the literature on role congruity theory, transformational leadership theory, self-reflection, female leadership effectiveness, and integrate self-efficacy from social cognitive theory which might heighten knowledge and integrate these theories into the literature on female leadership effectiveness in a contemporary highly dynamic environment. The second is to evaluate the relationship between self-reflection and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness among female leaders at all organizational levels in the manufacturing industry of Malaysia. Additionally, organizational levels are also been specified as moderating variables in this research.

Considering the above mentioned, it is therefore very important to interpret the literature findings or findings from previous researchers in a holistic view, that generated the interest to answer the following research questions: (1) Do self-reflection significantly and positively related to female leadership effectiveness? (2) Do well-being mediate the relationship between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness? (3) Do self-efficacy mediate the relationship between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness? (4) Do self-awareness mediate the relationship between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness? (5) Do well-being mediate the relationship between self-awareness and female leadership effectiveness? (6) Do management level moderate the relationships between well-being, self-efficacy, self-awareness and female leadership effectiveness?

3   Methodology

The quantitative method is used in this research with the objective to gain the concrete answer from data analysis which can be aggregated from a survey to address the research questions [48]. Manufacturing industry is the largest female employer in Malaysia therefore female leaders in manufacturing industry is selected as the population of this study. Female leaders either in entry, middle or top management level of manufacturing company in Malaysia is selected as the unit of analysis to examine the relationship of self-reflection and self-perceived leadership effectiveness. A cross-sectional study is used in this research, the time dimension is to collect data from the respondents at one point in time. When the researchers are not able to manipulate the independent variables due to impractical, impossible, or unethical, correlational research is selected [12, 48]. With nine predictors, the calculated minimum sample size is 114 where these participants were required to answer a survey questionnaire using Likert-scale questions. Non-probability
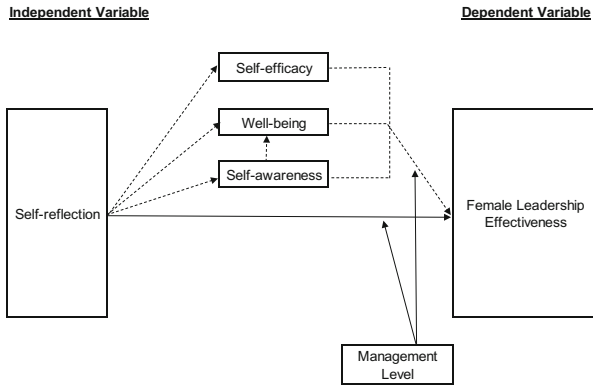
Fig. 1. Research Framework.

sampling was used in this research because the list of the population was not available [32]. Purposive (judgement) sampling, mean the selection of subject who are in the most appropriate position to answer the research questionnaire [48], will be used to obtain information from female leaders of manufacturing industries in Malaysia. This is because they were the only person able to answer about their own self-reflection practices and leadership effectiveness. This is used because this was the only meaningful way for investigation due to the absence of a list of populations. The disadvantage was the result may not be able to generalize to the whole population. After cognitive interview and expert review, the questionnaire will be distributed to the targeted unit analysis for data collection. Convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs will be carried during pilot test. All data will be analysed using confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) "to test and verify the proposed proposition and to confirm the factor structure of a set of observed variables" [36], SPSS and Smart PLS will then be used to confirm both the formative measurement models and reflective measurement models of accepted measures that are being adapted or updated in another context. All data will be collected in normal scale, positively worded hence data manipulation will not be required.

3.1   Research Framework

Figure 1 represent the research framework of this study. Referring to the literature discussed above, self-reflection impact directly on female leadership effectiveness, the relationship is mediated by self-efficacy, well-being, self-awareness and moderated by management level.

Avolio et al. (2004) [5] advocates in which the key element and the very first and important step to leadership success is self-reflection. According to Branson (2007) [7], studies of contemporary theories in educational leadership advocate that the existing comprehension of leadership are no more applicable nowadays because contemporary leadership expects leaders to be "more relational, more sensitive, more empathic, more empowering of others, more open, more communicative and more reflective". There were researches advocates that self-reflection is the first step and main factor to successful leadership, as well as the role of self-reflection in leadership effectiveness. Therefore,

there is a relationship between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness. Researchers are recommended to further analyze the correlation between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness [43]. McCormick (2001) [37] advocated "individual's effectiveness in the leadership role is a socially mediated outcome, leader effort alone does not guarantee attainment of a collective goal".

Bandura (1989) [6] explained the linkage between individual's self-efficacy and well-being which emphasized the importance of self-reflection in social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory vouches that self-efficacy beliefs are highly related to one's motivation and performance level] [6, 38]. Lacerda (2015) [33] found that leadership self-efficacy played a mediating role that mediated the relationship between learning goal orientation, interpersonal communication, and the effective leadership behaviours. Designate self-efficacy as a mediator of transformational and transactional leadership style is a positive step towards increasing the numbers of potential mediators and criteria [34]. Clerkin et al., (2016) [11] focused on two types of well-being which are subjective well-being and neurophysiological well-being and investigated their impacts on leadership effectiveness in leading the organization. Having a better understanding and increase the awareness of neurophysiological health will help leaders have a better insight into themselves and others' behaviour and bodies, in the end, learn and engage adaptive response in volatile and stressful situations. Subjective well-being is a vital factor of leaders influencing themselves in handling a challenging situation at work. Self-awareness theory advocates that the person who is self-aware has a greater extend of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and appear to be a more effective leader [9] and manager [39]. Sutton et al. (2015) [51] found that self-awareness was associated with work-related well-being positively. From the above literature, self-reflection will increase self-awareness, well-being and self-efficacy and they have a positive impact on female leadership effectiveness hence researcher identify self-awareness, self-efficacy and well-being as the moderates between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness.

Considering the aforementioned, it is therefore very important to interpret the literature findings or findings from previous researchers in a holistic view, that generated the interest to answer the research questions stated below. Branson (2007) [7] confirmed there is a positive relationship between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness through developing the "model for guiding reflection for the leading of deep and sustainable educational change". Hence, this study investigates the degree to which self-reflection contributes to predicting leadership effectiveness. As a result, based on these arguments, the following proposition are proposed: (H1) Self-reflection is significantly and positively related to female leadership effectiveness. (H2a) Self-reflection positively associates with well-being. (H2b) Well-being positively associates with female leadership effectiveness. (H2c) Well-being positively mediates the relationships between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness. (H3a) Self-reflection positively associates with self-efficacy. (H3b) Self-efficacy positively associates with female leadership effectiveness. (H3c) Self-efficacy positively mediates the relationships between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness. (H4a) Self-reflection positively associates with self-awareness. (H4b) Self-awareness positively associates with female leadership

effectiveness. (H4c) Self-awareness positively mediates the relationships between self-reflection and female leadership effectiveness. (H5a) Self-awareness positively associates with well-being. (H5b) Well-being positively mediates the relationships between self-awareness and female leadership effectiveness. (H6a) Management level positively moderates the relationship between well-being and female leadership effectiveness. (It is assumed that well-being will has higher impact on female leadership effectiveness for top level management than for entry and middle level management). (H6b) Management level positively moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and female leadership effectiveness. (It is assumed that self-efficacy will has higher impact on female leadership effectiveness for top level management than for entry and middle level management). (H6c) Management level positively moderates the relationship between self-awareness and female leadership effectiveness. (It is assumed that self-awareness will has higher impact on female leadership effectiveness for top level management than for entry and middle level management).

3.2   Measurements

The following measurement scales will be used for data collection: (1) The self-reflection and insight scale (SRIS) developed by Grant et al. (2002) [25] will be used to measure Self-Reflection. (2) Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) [46] will be used to measure Self-Efficacy. (3) The 5-item World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) developed by WHO Regional Office in Europe (1998) [55] will be used to measure Well-Being. (4) The Situational Self-Awareness Scale (SSAS) developed by Govern & Marsch (2001) [26] will be used to measure Self-Awareness. (5) Dhar & Pethe Leadership Effectiveness Scale (DLES) developed by Dhar & Pethe (2003) [17] will be used to measure Female Leadership Effectiveness.

4   Discussion

Since female leaders play a crucial role in Malaysia economy, a need is therefore arising to investigate the role of self-reflection and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness among female leaders within the manufacturing industry of Malaysia. The research findings will contribute to the Malaysian target of achieving 30% female at decision-making position among top 100 PLCs. Thus, this research has significant implications from both practical and theoretical perspectives. There are two important theoretical contributions which are, firstly, the newly proposed model in this research serves as a new contribution to closing research gaps in self-reflection theories pertaining to the management field. This study explores Malaysia female leaders' problems when embarking on a leadership career path and applying the research findings with reference to numerous theories. Secondly, it serves as a foundation for future guidance or examination for researchers or students in leadership studies, especially female leadership effectiveness. The empirical contributions are by examining the effects of management level on the nature of the relationship between self-awareness/self-efficacy/well-being and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness and by determining the degree to

which self-awareness/self-efficacy/well-being mediates the relationship between self-reflection and female leaders' self-perceived leadership effectiveness, this knowledge will add to the literature in academics. Avolio et al., (2004) [5] advocates in which the key element and the very first and important step to leadership success is self-reflection. According to Branson (2007) [7], studies of contemporary theories in educational leadership advocate that the existing comprehension of leadership are no more applicable nowadays because contemporary leadership expects leaders to be "more relational, more sensitive, more empathic, more empowering of others, more open, more communicative and more reflective". With this, it is crucial for this study to contribute to self-reflection theories in research pertaining to the management field.

Eventually, the result of this study is believed to provide valuable insights regarding how these factors - self-reflection, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and well-being affecting the leadership effectiveness of female leaders in the manufacturing industry of Malaysia. It is believed that it will bring a positive contribution to the tripartite system in Malaysia, firstly, Malaysia's government and its agencies such as the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of female (NIEW) Malaysia in designing a comprehensive female leaders development program, for example, female Director's Program. It is hoped to enable Malaysian government to achieves its goal of 30% of female leaders in decision-making roles within the top 100 listed companies of Malaysia. Secondly, it helps in female empowerment within the organizations in which the organizations can drive growth in female leadership by nurturing female leaders. Thirdly, it fosters self-reflection among female leaders which propels female leaders further toward leadership.

5   Conclusion

The main purpose of conducting this research is to find out do female leaders' tap on the advantages of self-reflection translating into higher effectiveness and resulted better representation in top management position. Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that it is therefore important to analyse the correlation between self-reflection and leadership effectiveness [43] because self-reflection is a key factor and first step to successful leadership [5]. It is hoped that the result of this research will inspire the female leaders in manufacturing industry in Malaysia to practice self-reflection which will benefit them from enhancing self-awareness, improving self-efficacy, increasing well-being and eventually enable them to be an effective leader in the manufacturing industry.

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