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The Influence of Teachers’ Age and Educational Level on Strengthening the Relationship between Their Educational Background, Locus of Control, and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of teachers’ age and educational level on their self-efficacy and locus of control, focusing on how these demographic variables interact to shape psychological traits linked to teaching effectiveness. Grounded in Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy and Rotter’s concept of locus of control, the research investigates whether older and more educated teachers exhibit higher self-efficacy and a stronger internal locus of control than their younger or less-educated counterparts. A qualitative methodology was adopted, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 30 teachers in Malaysia, categorized by age and education levels. Thematic analysis revealed that teachers over 50 with master’s degrees reported significantly higher self-efficacy and internal locus of control. In contrast, younger teachers and those with only basic qualifications showed greater reliance on external factors. The findings suggest that age and educational attainment reinforce one another in strengthening key psychological attributes in teachers. Implications highlight the need for tailored professional development strategies focusing on mentorship for younger, less-educated teachers and leadership training for more experienced educators. The study contributes to the understanding of how demographic factors shape teacher confidence and classroom effectiveness, with practical applications for teacher training programs and educational policy.

Keywords; Teacher self-efficacy, locus of control, educational level, teacher age, professional development, teaching effectiveness, qualitative research, Malaysian education.

INTRODUCTION

Research Problem and Purpose

The current research examines the relationship between the age and educational level of the teachers and their locus of control and self-efficacy. Locus of control is the feeling that one can have an impact on teaching results whereas self-efficacy is the feeling that one can accomplish certain teaching tasks. The main research question is whether the older and more educated teachers portray better self-efficacy and an internal locus of control than the younger or the less educated teachers. The research paper will also elucidate the interaction of such demographic characteristics as age and education with these psychological characteristics, which are important in teaching effectiveness.

Self-efficacy and locus of control are both an important part of teaching success. Good teachers who have high self-efficacy and strong internal locus of control have a high probability of implementing good teaching practices, sustaining discipline and creating a positive learning environment. On the other hand, low self-efficacy or other teachers with the external locus of control might have difficulties in classroom management and motivation of the students. Realizing how age plays its part in influencing these psychological aspects and the role that education plays can assist the education institutions in formulating a better training program to meet the needs of the various groups of teachers. Such knowledge may enhance teacher training programs and, eventually, educational performance.

Background and Context

Locus of control plays an essential role in motivation and effectiveness of teachers. Instructors that have an internal locus of control think that they control the classroom performance through their actions whereas instructors that have an external locus of control think that the challenges are caused by external factors. Studies indicate that those teachers who exhibit an internal locus of control are more likely to show self-efficacy and proactive in changing their ways of teaching (Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee, 2022).

Self-efficacy is the idea developed by Bandura (1977) who spoke about the confidence in his or her capability to complete a certain task. High self-efficacy teachers tend to incorporate new innovative teaching methods and feel persistent even in difficult situations (Chang Na & Zainudin Mohd Isa, 2024). Although it has been proven that older teachers with more education are more likely to exercise self-efficacy, it is still unclear on how the relationship between age and education affects locus of control and self-efficacy in the Malaysian context (Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee, 2022).

Research Objectives

The study's objectives are:

- To explore the relationship between age and self-efficacy and locus of control.
- To examine how education level influences self-efficacy and locus of control.
- To investigate whether the interaction between age and education strengthens these psychological traits.

Research Hypotheses

- **H₁:** Teachers with higher education levels and older age will exhibit stronger self-efficacy and a more internal locus of control.
- **H_{1a}:** Teachers with higher educational levels will have a stronger internal locus of control than those with lower educational levels.
- **H_{1b}:** Older teachers will report higher self-efficacy than younger teachers.
- **H_{1c}:** The interaction between age and educational level will result in the strongest locus of control and self-efficacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Locus of Control and Self-Efficacy

Locus of control is the extent to which people hold the belief that they can have control over the consequences of occurrences in their lives. Instructors with internal locus of control feel that their classroom behaviours have a direct impact on the outcomes like success and behaviour of students. Such teachers are more active and assertive, which builds favorable classroom settings (Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee, 2022). On the contrary, external loci individuals ascribe classroom performance to external circumstances such as learner performance or school resources, and tend to have less sense of control.

The belief that an individual can be able to perform certain tasks is referred to as self-efficacy as presented by Bandura (1977). High self-efficacy in the teaching context increases the capacity of the teachers to control classrooms, motivate students and adopt instructional practices. High self-efficacy is associated with teachers who employ more innovative pedagogical approaches, endure challenges, and contribute to improving the results of students (Khageswar Bhati & Laxmidhar Behera, 2024). Both locus of control and self-efficacy are key in the teaching performance because both affect teaching strategies, classroom management, and how teacher relates to students. It has been established that an internal locus of control makes teachers more resilient and more effective in solving problems (Bilgen Kirlan, 2019).

Although a lot of studies have been conducted about self-efficacy and locus of control, there is still a lack of knowledge of how these two components play with other demographic factors like age and education. The interaction between these elements has not received sufficient attention, especially within the teaching effectiveness.

Influence of Age and Educational Level

Age and level of education are some of the very crucial aspects of influence in self-efficacy and locus of control of teachers. Experience normally increases self-efficacy among older teachers. The more years they can spend in the classroom, the more confident they are in handling different teaching situations and believe that their actions directly impact the success of the student (Bhumika Achhnani & Amarin Amareliya, 2020). Internal locus of control is more prevalent among the older teachers, as well, since they have much experience in their work, which facilitates the experience of control over the classroom dynamics (Bilgen Kirlan, 2019).

Conversely younger, less experienced teachers (in most cases) may not have self-efficacy and are more externally

oriented in terms of their locus of control. They are also likely to attribute the classroom challenges to the external problems, which involve the misbehavior of the student or the lack of the institutional support (Figen Akca, Emrah Ulutas, & Cemile Yabanci, 2018). The level of education is also very important. More educated teachers, including those who have a master degree, perceive a higher self-efficacy and inner locus of control. Having greater experience in pedagogy and classroom management techniques makes them more confident and capable of handling any teaching-related issues (Rubashini Ramakrishnan & Norshidah Mohamad Salleh, 2018). Conversely, educators with lower educational grades tend to have a lower sense of self-efficacy and give more external reasons to justify teaching challenges (Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee, 2022).

Research Gaps

Although research has been done extensively on self-efficacy and locus of control, there is a significant lack of studies that have been done to study the combined effect of age and education on self-efficacy and locus of control in teachers. Most of the researches consider these variables independently without considering the age and education interplay. Moreover, the research targeted at Malaysian teachers is scarce, and it is necessary to study the role of age and education as contributing to the phenomenon of self-efficacy and locus of control in this specific case.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research design was deployed to investigate the effect of age and educational level on teachers in terms of their self-efficacy and locus of control. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables the study of personal experience and perceptions of teachers on their teaching practices in a depth manner. The focus groups and the semi-structured interviews were the main methods of data collection. These strategies made the participants express their opinions about whether their age and education influence their confidence in teaching and control classrooms or not. This design was focused on collecting the contextual and rich data, which grasps the multidimensional interaction of the demographic variables and psychological characteristics that influence teaching efficacy.

Participants

Sampling Method

In the study, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to identify the participants that would give the information. Purposive sampling allowed representation of

participants of different age groups and educational background, whereas snowball sampling was used to recruit more participants by allowing them to refer to people.

Age Groups

The teachers were classified in three age groups:

- Under 30 years
- 30-50 years
- Over 50 years

Educational Levels

Educational qualification of the participants was also divided into categories:

- High school diploma
- Undergraduate degree
- Master's degree or higher

Sample Size

The number of teachers sampled was 30, 10 teachers in each of the three age groups, represented equally in the three levels of education. This made the sample balanced and gave a chance of carrying out a detailed analysis of the effects of both age and education on self-efficacy and locus of control.

Data Collection

Semi-structured Interviews

The researcher used semi structured interviews in analysing the perceptions of participants on how their age and education level determine their self efficacy and locus of control. Audio recording and transcription of interviews were done. Some of the sample questions were the following:

- How has your age influenced your belief in your ability to control classroom outcomes?
- In what ways does your educational background affect your teaching confidence?

Focus Groups

Besides individual interviews, there were focus groups that were held to stimulate group discussion of common experience. These sessions enabled the participants to share their views and also gave more insights on the role of age and education in teaching. All the focus groups were composed of 6-8 teachers with similar demographic backgrounds.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about their voluntary participation in the study and their right to withdraw at any point in time by giving an informed consent. Confidentiality of the participants was upheld and their identity was anonymized through data.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was done to analyze the data, and it included revealing the patterns within the data and interpreting them. The inductive method enabled the themes to be generated out of the raw data whereas the deductive method was used in order to match the themes with available theories of self-efficacy and locus of control (Bandura, 1977). The analysis was done with the compare of the findings of the various age and education groups with the aim of examining the relations between the variables and teaching outcomes.

RESULTS

Theme 1: Age and Locus of Control

Results of the analysis showed that there was a significant correlation between the age and locus of control of teachers. The teachers older than 50 years old always presented the higher level of internal locus of control, which means that they believed more in their capability to control the situation in the classroom and impact the success of students. As an example, the teachers, more specifically those having master degrees, in this group were confident of their teaching practices as was the case with the participants like Teacher 7 who showed a strong locus and high self-efficacy (locus of control score: 85, self-efficacy score: 90). The teachers were convinced that their experience enabled them to manage classroom issues, which previous studies also support by implying that age and experience are factors leading to an increased internal locus of control (Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee, 2022).

Younger teachers (less than 30 years) on the contrary tended to report a more external locus. An example is Teacher 1, who received an undergraduate degree and a low score on the locus of control (45), and explained classroom challenges through outside factors like the student behavior and administration. These results are supported by the findings of Bilgen Kral (2019) who provided evidence that younger teachers and less experienced teachers are more likely to explain the difficulty in the classroom due to external factors, which consequently influences their self-efficacy.

Theme 2: Educational Level and Self-Efficacy

There was also a pronounced effect on the educational level of teachers on self-efficacy. Teachers who had attained a master degree or even a higher education degree were found to exhibit much self-efficacy. Specifically, the Teacher 3, who has a master degree (locus of control: 70, self-efficacy: 80), said she felt stronger due to her strong academic background that helped her to overcome classroom challenges more successfully. This observation aligns with the study conducted by Khageswar Bhati & Laxmidhar Behera (2024), which demonstrated that the higher the educational level of the teacher, the higher was their self-efficacy as they believed in their capacity to cope with the difficult teaching tasks.

Conversely, teachers having high school certificates or under graduate degrees were more likely to report low self efficacy scores. As an example, Teacher 6, who has a high-school diploma, displayed moderate self-efficacy (58) and explained that their teaching confidence was frequently determined by the fact that they did not receive a professional education. This implies that the academic level of teachers might make them feel more confident about their teaching skills, which is confirmed by the works of Rubashini Ramakrishnan & Norshidah Mohamad Salleh (2018), who found that teachers with higher educational degrees have more of the self-efficacy because they have a better grasp of teaching practices.

Theme 3: Interaction Between Age and Education Level

The combination between the age and the educational level indicated the greatest impact on self-efficacy and locus of control. Self-efficacy and internal locus of control were reported as the highest in older, more educated teachers (e.g., Master degrees). As an example, Teacher 8 was more than 50 years old and had a master degree, which showed an extremely high locus of control (88) and self-efficacy (92). They believed that experience and higher education gave them the confidence to manipulate the results in the classrooms.

This tendency helps prove the hypothesis that age and education cooperate and reinforce psychological variables of self-efficacy and locus of control as observed by Bhumika Achhnani & Amarin Amareliya (2020). Teachers who are older and more educated seem to be the most empowered in their positions because they have acquired their theoretical knowledge and have the practical experience. It is also supported by Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, and Ming Ha Lee (2022) who proposed that the experience-higher

education interplay contributes to the confidence and the perception of teachers in their ability to control classroom dynamics.

Other Emerging Themes

Although the main aspect of the study was related to age and level of education, a number of other insights were obtained in the course of analysis. The influence of teaching experience on how teachers viewed student behavior was one of the themes. Teachers who had high self-efficacy and internal locus of control tended to perceive student difficulties in terms of factors that were manageable, e.g. they needed a different teaching strategy. Teacher 17 (30-50 years, Master degree, self-efficacy score: 85) said that over time, they had realised the importance of formulating backup plans to win the disruptive students over, and they were able to show resiliency when dealing with challenges.

The other emerging theme was how institutional support contributed to self-efficacy of teachers. Other teachers who had lower education levels (e.g. high school diploma) felt that they could work around the problem of teaching by means of peer and administrator support, although their self-efficacy scores were lower. This implies that self-efficacy could be enhanced through institutional surroundings that facilitate professional growth and learning together with peers, particularly in less qualified teachers.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The results of the current research allow confirming the hypotheses that teachers who are older and better educated have a stronger internal locus of control and self-efficacy. The teachers in the more than 50 age category, especially with a master degree, showed high self-efficacy and strong internal locus of control. These findings are in line with the current literature, including Fung Lan Yong, Melinda Kong, & Ming Ha Lee (2022), which revealed that age and educational background have a positive effect on the confidence of teachers to handle classrooms. The experience that older teachers had made them feel empowered thus enabling them to have improved classroom management skills. In addition, the more self-efficacious teachers showed greater levels of education. The master degree teachers were much more confident about their teaching skills and this confirms the findings of Rubashini Ramakrishnan & Norshidah Mohamad Salleh (2018) who added that higher educational levels lead to higher self-efficacy on the part of the teachers. Meanwhile, teachers below 30 years old (younger teachers) and teachers with high school education

were proved to possess greater external locus of control and less self-efficacy, which means that two distinct factors age and education are one of the most influential in building the confidence and the perceived power of a teacher in the classroom.

Implications for Practice

The results of the current study suggest that age and level of education should be considered in the professional development programs in the teaching to develop the strategies concerning the way of increasing self-efficacy and locus of control. As an example, young teachers, especially with lower education level, may need mentoring program and systematic professional training that will help them to be more confident and to manage their classrooms. Conversely, more qualified and experienced teachers can also be given leadership trainings or act as a mentor to impart their knowledge to their younger counterparts, which would help them feel superior as a leader and a responsible teacher.

It is possible to create special training programs depending on the age and level of education of the teachers. Newer teachers may pay attention to the development of skills of classroom management, the enhancement of their confidence in the power they have to affect student performance, whereas more mature teachers may learn to adjust to the contemporary teaching methods and assume leadership roles in the institution.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study has been useful, there are various limitations to it. It had a small sample (30 teachers only), thus its findings can only be applied to a small group of people. Also, geographic emphasis of the study on Malaysia does not necessarily depict teaching situations in other nations. The other weakness is the possible bias of the interviewer because the personal opinion of the researcher might have affected the process of data collection and analysis. Such constraints should give some reservation to the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond the sample.

Suggestions for Future Research

Other demographic factors like gender, teaching experience and cultural background can also determine self efficacy and locus of control, and so future research should look into them. Moreover, to increase the sample and include a variety of teaching contexts in different regions, would improve the validity of the results and would allow to better understand

the connection between age, education and psychological characteristics in teaching.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

This research has established that older teachers especially with a high level of education develop a high degree of self-efficacy and internal locus of control when compared to younger teachers or less educated teachers. Master degree teachers and those who had more experience were more confident in their teaching skills and they laid the outcome of the classroom to their own effort and not other factors. This confirms the assumption that age, as well as education, play an important role in determining the psychological characteristics and general effectiveness of teachers.

Implications for Educational Practice

These results stress the necessity to customize the approach to developing teachers and recruit teachers to consider age and education level. The young teachers could be helped with confidence and classroom management, whereas more experienced and educated ones could be taught to be leaders or mentors. These kinds of specific interventions will increase teacher self-efficacy and locus of control and eventually lead to better teaching.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study will help in gaining better insights of the impact of demographic variables such as age and education on teaching psychology and performance. It brings out the interplay of these factors and its findings can be of great assistance to the educational institutions that want to enhance teacher development.

Final Remarks

Targeted professional development should be focused on the improvement of self-efficacy and locus of control among teachers, creating an atmosphere of their confidence in the ability to impact student performance and adequately handle classroom situations.

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