

Empowered to perform: A case of university lecturers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

The employees' opportunity to participate in the decision-making process would increase their self-efficacy and performance. This article focuses on a study that investigated the level of self-efficacy and leadership empowerment in a public university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Furthermore, this study also examines the influence of leadership empowerment on lecturers' self-efficacy. Data in this study was obtained using a questionnaire that adapted from previous researchers and distributed to 354 lecturers that selected using a simple random sampling method. The mean score value for leadership empowerment ($M= 4.34$, $SD=.20$) revealed that there is high level practice of this aspect practiced in the university. Furthermore, the mean score value also indicated that self-efficacy among lecturers in the university is at the high level ($M= 4.63$; $SD= .31$). The result of regression analysis (R^2 value) explained that only 51% of variance changes in lecturers' self-efficacy level is influenced by leadership empowerment. However, the β values in the analysis indicated that there is significant influence of each dimension of leadership empowerment i.e. leading by example, participative decision making, showing concern/interacting with the team and coaching on the lecturers' self-efficacy. From the results, it can be concluded that leadership empowerment is one of the crucial aspects in influencing the lecturers' self-efficacy as this practice encourage lecturers to be innovative and motivated to participate in the efforts of achieving university goals and objectives.

Keywords: self-efficacy; empowerment; leadership; lecturer performance; public university

ABSTRAK

Peluang pekerja untuk terlibat dalam proses pembuatan keputusan bakal meningkatkan efikasi sendiri dan pencapaian mereka. Artikel ini memfokuskan kepada satu kajian yang menyiasat tentang tahap efikasi sendiri dan pengupayaan kepimpinan di sebuah universiti awam di Arab Saudi. Selanjutnya kajian ini juga mengkaji tentang pengaruh pengupayaan kepimpinan terhadap efikasi sendiri pensyarah. Data dalam kajian ini diperoleh menggunakan soal selidik yang diadaptasi daripada pengkaji terdahulu dan diedarkan kepada seramai 354 orang pensyarah yang dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan rawak mudah. Nilai skor min bafi pengupayaan kepimpinan ($M= 4.34$, $SD=.20$) menunjukkan bahawa terdapat amalan pada tahap tinggi bagi aspek ini di universiti yang dikaji. Selain itu, nilai skor min juga turut menunjukkan efikasi sendiri pensyarah di universiti tersebut adalah pada tahap yang tinggi ($M= 4.63$; $SD= .31$). Keputusan analisis regresi (R^2 value) menjelaskan bahawa hanya 51% daripada perubahan varians dalam efikasi sendiri pensyarah adalah dipengaruhi oleh pengupayaan kepimpinan. Walau bagaimanapun, nilai β dalam analisis menunjukkan bahawa terdapat pengaruh dimensi-dimensi dalam pengupayaan kepimpinan iaitu memimpin dengan teladan, pembuatan keputusan secara turut serta, menunjukkan timbangrasa/ berinteraksi dengan kumpulan dan kejurulatihan ke atas efikasi sendiri pensyarah. Berdasarkan dapatan dapat dirumuskan bahawa pengupayaan adalah dari aspek penting dalam mempengaruhi efikasi sendiri kerana amalan ini akan menggalakkan pensyarah untuk menjadi lebih inovatif dan bermotivasi melibatkan diri dalam semua usaha untuk mencapai matlamat universiti.

Kata kunci: efikasi sendiri; pengupayaan; kepimpinan; pencapaian pensyarah; universiti awam

1. INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia is experiencing tremendous changes as the growth of economic wealth has transformed the nation in all aspects, particularly

education. Saudi's Ministry of Education as reported by QS Asia News Network (2017) has reported that Saudi Arabia is experiencing an aggressive investment in the key pillar of a knowledge-based economy, namely, education and learning, innovation, and information technology. Thus, the country has given special attention to education particularly the higher education level as the rapid development that is regarded as a renaissance that requires knowledge as the main foundation and mechanisms to achieve the required quantum leap towards a knowledge society (Pavan, 2016). Besides, the universities' academic leaders and staff urged to comply with the needs of Saudization policy implementation. In line with the special attention that had given to the education aspect, Saudi Arabia higher education policy clearly explains the efforts of the government in providing adequate training of university lecturers, who are the key players at universities education, through research and training for quality education (Alamri, 2011) with specific interest on research, teaching, and publication.

However, the impact of the knowledge obtained by local lecturers through training on the universities' performance cannot be over emphasized and need to be coupled with lecturers' self-efficacy. Many lecturers, who have low self-efficacy, reported struggled with their teaching though they trained in their area of expertise (Rowbotham, 2015). According to previous researchers, for instance, Cakiroglu, Çakiroglu, and Boone (2005), Hemmings and Kay (2009), lecturers especially those who possessed a high level of self-efficacy has a significant contribution to the organization output *vis-a-vis* students' achievement for lecturers' self-efficacy affect their instructional or

delivery process as well as the outcome. Finding by Yahya, Mohd. Noor, Othman, Mohd. Isa and Abdul Manaf (2017) also revealed that self-efficacy has a significant influence on training effectiveness for workers. Since self-efficacy identified as one of the key aspects in influencing lecturers' performance, it is important to the Saudi Arabia government, as the main stakeholders of public universities, to know the level of lecturers' self-efficacy. With that, the government can rectify the constraints of optimizing the effectiveness of professional development among their lecturers. Since the Saudi Arabia government has implemented the higher education transformation policy, many efforts are considered to increase the quality of Saudi lecturers. Thus, this study aims to reveal the level of self-efficacy among the lecturers as the previous findings showed that self-efficacy has been identified as among the factors that influenced individual performance. The intention to investigate the lecturers' self-efficacy is due to the lack of empirical studies on this issue in public universities in Saudi Arabia particularly in teaching, research, and professional services. Most of the previous studies were focused on different areas of self-efficacy, for instance, teacher self-efficacy, students' self-efficacy, and technology efficacy.

Previous studies have revealed that self-efficacy is promoted by many factors and among the important factors is leadership empowerment that is practiced in an organization. Mareyke (2014) who was concerned about creating opportunities to develop feelings of self-efficacy believed that this personal belief can be increased by removing conditions that contributed to feelings of powerlessness. In other words, the traditional model of the leader that practiced 'one-man shows' is no longer

appropriate and applicable in universities. As mentioned by Mareyke et al. (2014), giving the employees opportunity to involve in the decision-making process will enhance their self-efficacy and performance. Leithwood and Louis (2012) proclaim that leaders and subordinates have organic interrelationships and need to work and learn together in realizing the mission and vision of an organization. It is believing that delegation of responsibility and authority to the lowest organizational level can enhance individual motivation at work. Further leadership empowerment contributes to the lecturers' self-leadership development as well. According to many previous researchers for instance Blasé and Blasé (2008), Lieberman and Miller (2005), self-leadership can positively influence an individual's performance by promoting their self-confidence, engaging with their colleagues, inhibiting collegial collaboration, and sharing information and resources to improve their teaching quality.

Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, and Drasgow (2000) proclaim that leaders who are practicing empowerment are required to support and encouraging self-management, and promote empowerment. They are also required to model appropriate empowering behaviors, provide social and emotional encouragement, build trust and openness, encourage self-reinforcement, provide information and resources to complete tasks, encourage self-goal setting, and provide and communicate a vision. This model of empowerment behavior inspired subordinates to perform in carrying out their responsibilities. As leadership empowerment is becoming an important concept that is encouraged adopted by public universities in Saudi Arabia, this study aims to investigate this element in the Saudi

public universities' management process. Besides, this study is also an attempt to investigate the effect of leadership empowerment on lecturer self-efficacy. According to previous studies, by practicing the leadership empowerment, the individual self-efficacy, will increase as its significant impact on morale, motivation and performance. However, the study on the impact of leadership empowerment among universities leaders on lecturers' self-efficacy practiced in Saudi Arabia public universities is still limited as many previous studies mainly focus on empowerment in women leadership.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Specifically, this study is intended to achieve the following research objectives;

1. To examine the level of leadership empowerment in Saudi public universities
2. To examine the level of lecturers' self-efficacy in research, teaching, and service of lecturers in Saudi public universities
3. To examine the significant influence of leadership empowerment on self-efficacy

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The section discussed two main variables employed in this study i.e. lecturer's self-efficacy and leadership empowerment.

3.1. LECTURERS' SELF-EFFICACY

The term "self-efficacy" has been defined by Bandura (2006) as the beliefs of individuals in their achievement capabilities in a particular situation or task. It also defines a set of beliefs that determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. According to Yang, Kao, and Huang (2006), in the lecturer profession, the level of self-efficacy (lower or higher) affected performance, commitment, behavioral choices, and pattern of their thinking. It also means a significant factor of job performance for lecturers in major occupational tasks like research, publication, teaching, and community services (Hemming & Kay, 2009). Lecturer self-efficacy encompasses the manner that academic staff views themselves as researchers, tutors, and academics, including their philosophies on their abilities to fulfill the whole responsibilities in all aspects of their work. Lecturer self-efficacy has a significant influence on the professional development of lecturers and their students' learning levels (Cakiroglu, Cakiroglu, & Boone, 2005). Accordingly, it is beneficial for tertiary institutions to evaluate their lecturers' levels of self-efficacy with valid and reliable measurements.

In this study, self-efficacy is defined as lecturers' beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance in terms of research, teaching, and providing professional service to the community (Hemming & Kay, 2009, 2014).

a) *Self-efficacy in research* refers to lecturers' confidence in their ability to complete specific research activities and published the result from that particular research. Research self-efficacy is

particularly useful in identifying the forces at academic work for lecturers regarding whether or not they will engage in research formally in their work.

- b) *Self-efficacy in teaching* refers to lecturers' belief in their instructional capability to teach their students to succeed.
- c) *Self-efficacy in professional service* refers to lecturers' belief in their ability to share and give their professional services to the community at university, national, and international levels.

3.2 LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is needed in the effort of achieving an organizational goal which is known as an important component of effective leadership. Leaders will be motivated to carry out leadership because success in leadership means success in achieving personal goals as well. However, for Fullan (1992), the process of setting an organization goal is the most important yet difficult process for any organization. Only few organizations can achieve their stated goals because of the appropriateness and suitability of the goals and their capability to achieve them. According to Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Thea, Peetsma, Femke, and Geijssel (2011), one possible reason for this unsuccessful achievement is the lower involvement of subordinates in the process of goal setting.

Leadership empowerment is the conduct showcased by formal leadership. The objective is to increase the autonomy of employees through the entrustment of authority, preferment of independent decision-making, and other autonomy-enabling routines like instructing, responses, and the sharing of evidence (Arnold et al.,

2000; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Therefore, leadership empowerment is a crucial decision-making tradition used by leaders who plan to encourage the behavioral indicators of emancipation (Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie, & Morin, 2009; Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012). Communicative emancipation takes place when staff occupational conducts are characterized by active participation in actions that provide support to guarantee employee work efficacy, uninterrupted development in employee duties, work team, and the entire organization (Boudrias, Morin, & Lajoie, 2014).

In this study, leadership empowerment refers to the empowering behavior that displays by leaders' in four aspects i.e. leading by example, leading by example, participative decision-making, coaching, showing concern/interacting with the team in Saudi Arabian university perceived by lecturers (Arnold et al., 2000).

a) Leading by example

This is a set of conducts that reveal a team leader's pledge to self-effort and the efforts of other team members. This includes the leader's positive attitude towards work and personal conducts like hard work and working harder than the rest of the team (A sample conduct may be: setting high values for the performance of self-effort or conduct).

b) Participative decision-making

This refers to how a leader open-up opportunity for team members to actively participate in discussions. This will include using information from team members for decision-making processes that will naturally comprise conduct like inspiring members of the team to articulate

ideas and views (A sample behavior will be using suggestions from a workgroup to arrive at decisions that affect team members).

c) Coaching

This refers to conducts that teach members of a team and assist them to become independent. This category includes conducts like making recommendations on performance enhancements and assisting the team to become independent. (A sample of such conduct will be to assist a workgroup to visualize areas where more capacity building training(s) is/are required).

d) Showing concern/interacting with team

This construct incorporates two main behaviors, for instance, showing concern and interacting with the team. Showing concern demonstrates general regard for team members' well-being. Whereas interacting with a team refers to the display of the behavior by leaders while interfacing with the team as a whole such as keeping track of what is going on in the team and working closely with the team as a whole.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey method design was utilized in this study for collecting the data to answer the research questions. In this survey design, a set of questionnaires with three sections i.e. Demography, Leadership Empowerment, and Self-Efficacy employed to collect data from faculty members in four colleges in Saudi public universities. This questionnaire was adapted from the previous studies to obtain sufficient data from targeted university lecturers and determine their perspectives towards the influence of Leadership Empowerment (LE) on their Self-Efficacy.

- i. Demography: This part comprises a few questions about respondents' demographic background i.e. gender, age, academic position, and working experience.
- ii. Lecturer's self -efficacy: This part comprises three domains that adapted from Velu and Mohamad Sahari (2000). It intends to measure the three domains of Saudi public university lecturers' self-efficacy (i.e. research, teaching, and professional services) in Saudi public universities. The factor loading of EFA for these three domains is ranging from 0.55 to 0.75.
- iii. Leadership empowerment: This part was adapted from Arnold and Drasgow (2000). The items are used to measure the five dimensions of leadership empowerment, such as leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing, showing concern/interaction with the team. Though the original instrument consists of five domains, the result of factor analysis has formed four domains only, i.e. leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, showing concern/interaction with the team. However, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), with the factor loading value range between 0.65 – 0.80, revealed only four factors for this variable i.e. leading by example participative decision making, coaching, showing concern/interaction with the team.

Items of each variable in the questionnaire were validated by five experts in the area of higher education management and language experts. The overall mean ranging from 3.67 to 3.95 given by experts provides the consensus that the items of the questionnaire are valid from the aspect of content, suitability, and the accuracy of the research. Meanwhile, a pilot study was carried out to determine the

reliability of the items. The findings of the pilot study showed the Cronbach Alpha value of reliability for the instruments of lecturers' self-efficacy and leadership empowerment is in the range of 0.71 to .98 which appropriate for research purposes (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, all the items in the instrument suitable for use in this study.

A total of 354 lecturers were selected using a simple random sampling method from three colleges in the Eastern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Dammam, Jubail, and Khobar). The details of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Demographic Distribution of Respondents*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	258	72.88
Female	96	27.12
Age		
20-30	7	2.00
31-40	107	30.2
41-50	198	55.9
51-60	42	11.9
Qualification		
Bachelor	73	20.60
Master	95	26.80
PhD	186	52.50

Work Experience

1-5	11	3.10
6-10	96	27.10
11-15	31	8.80
16-20	140	39.50
21-25	76	21.50

5. FINDINGS

The analysis of data is explained in two parts, descriptive analysis for objectives 1 and 2, and inferential analysis using multiple regression to answer objective 3.

To answer the first and second research objectives, the mean score and standard deviation are utilized. The level of implementation interpreted using Nunnally (1975) that explained in table 2 below:

Table 2: *Interpretation of Mean Score Range*

Level	Mean score
Very low	1.00 - 1.80
Low	1.81 - 2.60
Moderate	2.61 - 3.40
Highly moderate	3.41 - 4.20
High	4.21 - 5.00

(Source: Nunnally, 1975).

Objective 1: The level of Leadership Empowerment (LE) practiced in Saudi public university

According to Table 3, the mean score for the level of LE is 4.34 ($SD=.20$), which explains that the practice of LE in Saudi public

university is at a high level. In addition, the findings of the study show that the practice of each dimension of LE in Saudi public university is at a moderately high and high level with the mean score ranging from 4.09 to 4.58. The findings revealed that participative decision making ($M=4.58$, $SD=.35$) is practiced at the high level in this university, followed by coaching ($M=4.48$, $SD=.39$), leading by example ($M=4.19$, $SD=.57$) and Showing concern/ interacting with the team ($M=4.09$, $SD=.24$). It can be concluded that Saudi public universities practiced participative decision-making higher than other elements of leadership empowerment i.e. coaching, leading by example, and showing concern/interacting with the team.

Table 3: *The Level of Leadership Empowerment*

Variable/Dimensions	Mean	SD	level
Leadership Empowerment Dimensions:			
Leading by example	4.19	.57	Highly moderate
Participative decision making	4.58	.35	High
Showing concern/ interacting with the team	4.09	.24	Highly moderate
Coaching	4.48	.39	High

Objective 2: The level of lecturers' self-efficacy in research, teaching, and professional service

Table 4 indicates the mean score for the level of lecturer self-efficacy is 4.62 (std =.31), which explains that the self-efficacy of lecturers in Saudi public universities is at a high level. In addition, the findings of the study show that the self-efficacy dimensions in Saudi public universities are at a high level with the mean score ranging from 4.29 to 4.62.

Table 4: *The Level of Lecturer Self Efficacy*

	Mean	SD	Level
Self-efficacy	4.63	.31	High
Dimensions:			
Research	4.62	.50	High
Teaching	4.93	.21	High
Professional services	4.29	.71	High

According to the findings in Table 4, the dimension of 'Teaching' obtain the highest mean score ($M = 4.93$, $SD = .21$) followed by the dimensions of 'research' ($M=4.62$, $SD=.50$) and, 'professional services' ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .71$). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that self-efficacy in 'teaching' is an important aspect considered by lecturers in Saudi public universities compared to other dimensions.

Objective 3: The significant influence of leadership empowerment on self-efficacy

Table 5(a) shows the findings of the regression analysis to assess the influence of the four dimensions of LE on the level of SE of lecturers in Saudi public universities. Based on the findings, the value of $R^2 = .51$

indicates that only 51% of the lecturers' SE level is influenced by LE. All the dimensions are significant predictors, namely leading by example ($\beta=.40, p=.01$); participative decision making ($\beta=.26, p=.01$), Showing concern/ interacting with the team ($\beta=.32, p=.01$); and coaching ($\beta=.26, p=.01$). From these findings, it can be concluded that all of the LE dimensions have a significant impact on the lecturer SE level in Saudi public universities.

Table 5 (a): *The influence of LE on SE*

Variables	Self-efficacy
Leading by example	.40*
Participative decision making	.26*
Showing concern/ interacting with the team	.32*
Coaching	.26*
R	.72
R ²	.51
Adjusted R ²	.50
F Value	52.00*

*significant level $p < .05$

For further elaboration, Table 5 (b) shows the findings of the regression analysis to assess the influence of the four dimensions of LE on the level of each SE dimensions.

Table 5 (b): *The influence of LE on SE dimensions*

Predictors	Self-efficacy		
	Research (SE1)	Teaching (SE2)	Professional Services (SE3)
Leading by example	-.28*	-.12	.76*
Participative decision making	-.30*	-.01	-.12
Showing concern/ interacting with the team	.29	.17*	.16*
Coaching	.26*	.30*	.07*
R	.70	.30	.87
R ²	.50	.15	.75
Adjusted R ²	.48	.13	.75
F Value	48.37*	8.43*	150.02*

*significant level $p < .05$

Based on the findings, the value of $R^2 = .50$ indicates that only 50% of the level of Research is influenced by LE, and three of LE dimensions become the significant predictors i.e. leading by example ($\beta = -.28$, $p = .01$); participative decision making ($\beta = -.30$, $p = .01$) and coaching ($\beta = -.26$, $p = .01$).

For the teaching dimension, the value of $R^2 = .15$ indicates that only 15% of the level of teaching influenced by LE and only two dimensions of LE are significant predictors i.e. Showing concern/ interacting with the team ($\beta = .17$, $p = .01$) and coaching ($\beta = .30$, $p = .01$).

Finally, for the professional services dimension, the value of $R^2 = .87$ indicates that 87% of professional services dimension influenced by LE and three of LE dimensions become the significant predictors i.e. leading by example ($\beta = .76, p < .01$), showing concern/ interacting with the team ($\beta = -.16, p = .01$) and coaching ($\beta = .07, p = .01$).

6. DISCUSSION

Empowerment has been hired in educational organizations such as universities as a replacement for traditional hierarchical management structures as a strategy to sustain their competence in the global economic competition (Arnold et al., 2000). The result of this study shows that the practice of leadership empowerment behavior in the Saudi public university is at a high level. The level of leadership empowerment is reflected in the policy of higher education in Saudi Arabia that provides each university with administrative and academic autonomy and leaders of the organizations have their authority to lead the development at the university level (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019). The high level of leadership empowerment behavior in Saudi Arabia university proves relevant of idea on the inapplicability of 'one-man show' leadership in university and the need for empowerment in university administration process to drive the organization to learn and adapt in the complex and fast-changing environment (Fausing, et al., 2015; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). This finding is contradicted with Mohammed Ziyad (2017) that revealed a low level of empowerment practiced in private higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. In other words, this finding showed that academic leaders in Saudi public

universities have more opportunity to empower their authority to the lecturers compare to leaders in Saudi private universities.

Besides, the result of this study has found that the self-efficacy of lecturers in the Saudi public university is at a high level. This result becomes a good indicator of the lecturers, managers, and leaders in Saudi universities. According to Yang, et al. (2006), Hemming, and Kay (2009), the level of self-efficacy (lower or higher) of lecturers affected significantly their achievement, commitment, behavioral choices, and pattern of their thinking. Hemming and Kay (2009) in their study revealed that lecturers in higher education institutes with no self-efficacy are suffering from lower levels of commitment and morale as self-efficacy identified as an important determinant of the capabilities of an individual to sustain and competence in a professional environment.

The finding in this study found that lecturer self-efficacy level in Saudi public university was significantly influenced by leadership empowerment. The results revealed that the level of self-efficacy of empowered lecturers was higher than lecturers who work in a working environment dominated by the top management authority. Boudrias et al. (2014) argued that leaders who display and practice empowerment behavior will influence employees' efficacy that enhances them to improve their work performance continuously. Employees who thought their leaders more empowering were indeed felt a greater sense of autonomy or control in their work, they felt that their job had meaning and it aligned with their values, that they were competent in their abilities, and that they could make a difference. These feelings of

empowerment helped to explain the effects of such leaders on employee's self-efficacy. This is supported by Kocel (2014) that the behavior of leaders in empowering employees including task direction and goal-setting, positively influenced self-efficacy.

Empowerment is also acting as a significant strategy to sustain the employees as well as organizational performance and be competitive in the era of globalization. Therefore, organizations are increasingly looking at employee empowerment as a unique asset that can improve performance and provide a sustained competitive advantage. According to Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990), leader behaviors that promote power-sharing and raise the intrinsic motivation of subordinates are likely to raise their efficacy. A similar statement is also from Redmond, Mumford, and Teach (1993) who found that leaders' conduct in sharing and delegating their power within the organization, including task focus levels identifying aims have a significant impact on employees' self-efficacy. In other words, it can claim as the changes in employees' self-efficacy level were affected by their perception of their leaders' behavior in empowering them.

Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl & Prussia (2013) proclaim that leadership empowerment can promote the subordinates' motivation and performance by delegating authority for job-related decisions and involved them in the decision-making process. Studies in the higher education context revealed that lecturers with high self-efficacy believe that they can contribute positively to organizational achievement i.e. affect student performance, do more research to increase the number of referred publication, and provide more professional services (Ashton &

Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Thus, by empowering behavior, university leaders can create social relationships and indirectly will increase the lecturer's self-efficacy that can affect the organizational outcome positively.

In addition, results in this study found that the variance change in lecturers' self-efficacy level in professional services ($R^2=75\%$) was influenced by leadership empowerment behavior, and higher than self-efficacy in research ($R^2=50\%$) and teaching ($R^2=15\%$). From this result, it can be concluded that leadership empowerment had provided lecturers freedom that risen their self-efficacy to offer their professional services to the stakeholders and communities. According to Oullett (2010), professional services that are provided by academicians involved a series of activities to contribute the application of knowledge that developed in universities to the community (i.e. academic community, schools, other colleges, etc). This activity can be implemented by the initiative of individuals or groups of members of the academic community, and sometimes expected feedback from the community, which can be used in developing further innovation and knowledge.

The R^2 value for self-efficacy in the research indicated that 50% of variance changes in this dimension were influenced by leadership empowerment. As the Saudi government currently emphasized developing a knowledge-based economy, research became a crucial area that needs to focus at the university level. These findings revealed the importance of leadership empowerment for research development in universities. However, the study by Alzahrani (2011) found that lecturers in Saudi Arabia universities lacked encouragement to conduct

research and publish their research findings. He also revealed that lecturers were no-compete among them for publication as this is categorized as volunteer work that does not provide a direct financial benefit. Though these two findings were contradicted, the findings of this current study indicated the success of the Aafaq development plan that launched in 2009 that became an initiative to develop research culture in Saudi Arabia, specifically in higher education institutions including public universities. After 9 years of its implementation, the Aafaq program had given a major impact on the development of research areas in Saudi public universities to improve scientific research skills among Saudi lecturers.

7. CONCLUSION

As a whole, the finding of this study has shown that leadership empowerment and knowledge management have their significant influences on the lecturer self-efficacy in Saudi public university. In addition, this study also demonstrated that the role of knowledge management as a significant mediator on the relationship between leadership empowerment and lecturer self-efficacy. These results clearly show that if the Saudi public university intended to improve the lecturer self-efficacy, these two factors, leadership empowerment, and knowledge management should take into consideration. Furthermore, universities also should practice knowledge management to sustain university performance and heighten the level of lecturer self-efficacy.

Thus, as a whole, it can be concluded that in the effort to have excellent lecturers in an organization, especially in universities, the role of

leadership empowerment and knowledge management needs to be focused on. The stakeholders need to find the best formula to enhance leadership empowerment skills in universities to influence the lecturers' performance effectively. In addition, universities also need to manage all the knowledge in the organization in order to change and adapt to the fast changing global academic and economic environment.

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