

The effect of self-leadership competencies on the perceived ability of school leaders to cope with COVID-19 pandemic crisis challenges in Jeddah schools, Saudi Arabia

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Research

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ABSTRACT

The success and safety of learning in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic depend on the ability of school leaders to cope with the pandemic challenges in schools. This study investigated the effect of self-leadership competencies on the perceived ability of school leaders to cope with COVID-19 pandemic challenges in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this study was to determine if self-leadership had an impact on the mental preparedness of school leaders to lead during the crisis. It also investigated the role of school resources on school leadership capability during a crisis. This study was motivated by the need to get information in readiness for opening schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research used a cross-sectional quantitative survey which was administered to 48 respondents who were all leaders of schools at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The main findings of this study indicated a strong and positive correlation between self-leadership strategies (constructive thought patterns, behavioral strategies, and self-reward) and the leader's perception of their readiness to lead schools effectively. The practical implication of this study's findings is that schools and governments should invest in self-leadership development programs to enable leaders to be prepared to lead in uncertain times. The contribution of the study includes new data and insights to the body of knowledge concerned with positive organizational leadership and crisis leadership in education.

INTRODUCTION

The effect of self-leadership competencies on the perceived ability of school leaders to cope with COVID-19 pandemic crisis challenges in Jeddah schools, Saudi Arabia Countries worldwide have invested billions of dollars in determining the impact of opening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship between possible consequences and other factors that affect countrywide performance has become part of the discourse across national ministries, international organizations, and other stakeholders in education. At the center of this discussion, decisions on how to run schools entrusted in the hands of the school leadership. Even though governments make major decisions, daily running and management of schools remain an ongoing challenge to the school leadership. This challenge is augmented by the COVID-19 crisis that poses a great risk to the operation of face-to-face learning especially in schools whose facilities are not aligned to the social distance requirements. School leaders in Saudi Arabia are struggling with the impending decision to open face-to-face schooling in September 2020. Among the challenges that leaders expect to go beyond health-related challenges and relate to organizational effectiveness in the implementation of policies and procedures. Even though teachers and students may have underlying medical pre-existing conditions, the right to continuity of education of programs poses an additional challenge to educational leaders. Since the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented; there exists no proven record of successful practices, policies, and procedures that apply to schools in Saudi Arabia. Also, studies concerning self-leadership and perceptions of educational leaders in facing COVID-19 educational challenges have not been published as the crisis is less than a year old. Educational institutions and research institutions are in the process of collecting data that will guide decisions and provide a future reference on applications of tested policies and procedures. In essence, the novelty of the crisis provides a unique challenge to educational leaders. The absence of models exposes the leadership into the need for innovation, creativity, flexibility, and rapid learning. Educational leaders, therefore, rely on their self-leadership ability to combat the challenges hence the need to evaluate the relationship between self-

leadership competencies and the perception of ability to overcome COVID-19 educational leadership challenges. Self-leadership competencies provide a guide on self-driven and self-generated measures in understanding the readiness level and need for improvement of leaders in educational institutions.

Research purpose and objectives

Based on the influence of self-leadership competencies on the ability to handle crises among leaders, this study was to investigate the impact of self-leadership on the perception of school leaders' capability to cope with the issues arising from the decision to open schools in September 2020, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The study endeavored to investigate the level of self-leadership competency capabilities to the selected sample of the educational leaders. The following objectives of the study were addressed:

To identify self-leadership competencies of School leaders in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

To determine the relationship between self-leadership competence and perceived ability to cope with COVID-19 challenges in schools.

To determine the factors that impact the perceived ability to cope with COVID-19 challenges in schools among leaders.

Research problem and research hypothesis

The underlying research question of this study was to determine how the self-leadership competencies of school leaders could be improved to increase the ability of leaders to cope with COVID-19 challenges in schools. The sub-questions include:

What is the relationship between self-leadership and coping with COVID-19 challenges?

1. What is the current self-leadership competency level of school leaders in Jeddah?
2. What factors affect the self-leadership competencies of school leaders?

This study is featured in the following hypotheses:

1. Self-leadership has a direct influence on perceived leadership ability to cope with the crisis.
2. The availability of resources mediates the relationship between self-leadership competencies and perceived leader's ability to cope with crises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of self-leadership in crisis management has been overemphasized in studies that have correlated self-leadership competencies with crisis management success. Studies portray the relationship between self-management and the ability to overcome crises on both leadership and followers in different areas of life ^[1]. People who demonstrate self-leadership strategies and competencies demonstrate an easier copying ability on events that affect their operations because of their internal self-direction.

Behavior focused strategies in crisis leadership

Behavior focused strategies contribute to improving emotional intelligence in leadership. These strategies provide a base for self-leadership development and assessment opportunities for emerging leadership abilities. Studies have shown that behavior focused strategies may provide a prediction for career success both in leadership and in specialized career pathways ^[2]. In essence, behavior focused strategies are important components of crisis leadership competencies. Personalized goal setting that is self-driven demonstrates efficiency in providing accountability to the self when pursuing a definite aim. Leaders who demonstrate self-goal setting strategies have consistently performed better than those who do not have self-goal setting skills ^[3]. Studies demonstrate that leaders who engage in self-reflection tend to nurture their ability to self-set their goals and become resilient in times of uncertainty ^[4]. Consequently, followers of leaders who demonstrate self-goal settings tend to emulate this character hence demonstrating better-coping skills in terms of dealing with uncertain circumstances ^[5]. The performance of leaders is also associated with their ability to control their internal dialogue which is necessary when self-goal settings. Professionals who have constantly demonstrated efficiency in self-goal setting habits exhibit a better job satisfaction index compared to their colleagues who do not demonstrate this competency ^[6,7]. Descriptive study that self-goal commitment has a convergent effect on the ability to solve problems. The correlation between self-goal setting ability and problem-solving ability is demonstrated in the commitment displayed by leaders who have self-goal setting competencies.

The role of self-reward in crisis management has been related to the effectiveness of performance before and after the crisis ^[8]. Leaders who portray self-reward competencies have a better approach to crisis leadership in comparison to those who do not exhibit self-reward associated skills. The relationship between self-reward and motivation is positively correlated, as motivation serves a foundational role in crisis leadership. Leaders who are motivated especially those who are self-motivated have a better approach to crisis leadership through their application of an internal source of motivation ^[9]. Leaders who have developed self-reward competency tend to be highly satisfied by their performance and the performance of the organization ^[10]. Self-reward is also positively associated with job satisfaction at different levels of leadership. In essence, leaders who exhibit job satisfaction and self-motivation tend to become better performers at their organizations, which is partially associated with self-reward

competencies. Consistent with the studies of leadership and self-reward, additional research indicates a similar correlation between employees who have exhibited self-reward skills and job satisfaction, job performance, and resilience in times of crisis [11]. Employees who have a better system of a self-reward report a lower level of burnout and stress from their jobs [12]. Studies of burnout and motivation have used self-reward as a mediator between these variables and job performance. A finding showed that self-reward was a strong mediator between job performance and motivation [13]. As one of the behavior focused strategies in self-leadership, self-reward serves as a positive contributor to better crisis management in leadership. Individuals with high emotional intelligence have been determined to use less self-punishment in self-leadership practices [14]. Emotional intelligence on its own has been strongly related to the ability of leaders to overcome crises and lead organizations through the crisis successfully [15].

Emotional intelligence has also been determined as a strong indicator of successful crisis leadership but negatively correlated with self-punishment self-leadership competency. The role of self-punishment in the determination of emotional intelligence [16]. Baker argues that leaders who demonstrate high emotional intelligence use less self-punishment for self-leadership as compared to leaders who score lower emotional intelligence quotient. Demonstrate that an introspective self-examination that is positive provides a better result in the improvement of performance than the use of excessive self-punishment. Self-punishment has been associated with habitual guilt and self-criticism that eventually leads to negative undesirable behavior hence unsuccessful outcomes in self-leadership [17]. Therefore, excessive self-punishment, which involves self-criticism and guilt have demonstrated self-destructive results in self-leadership approaches [18]. It then follows that self-punishment may not provide positive self-leadership outcomes in crisis leadership. Leaders who use excessive self-punishment are less successful in crisis leadership due to the effect of self-criticism and guilt. Most leaders who exhibit excessive self-punishment blame themselves for the organization's crisis hence putting a burden on their leadership ability, which reduces their effectiveness in organizational crisis leadership.

Leaders who have excessive self-punishment inclinations eventually exhibit self-destructive characteristics like addictions and depressive tendencies, which are detrimental to both self-leadership and crisis leadership. Attributes self-observation to the internal self-belief system, which strengthens the internal causes of self-leadership. Self-observation has positive consequences on organizational commitment and innovation hence serves as a contributory factor in crisis leadership. Self-observation demonstrates a strong impact on the ability of leaders to use self-reward and improve job satisfaction hence increasing their job performance, which prepares for crisis leadership [19]. Emphasizes the importance of self-evaluation on emotional intelligence and highlights the role it plays on the improvement of leadership during times of uncertainty. Goleman claims that self-observation allows the manifestation of the awareness of personal passionate and turbulent feelings which is a fundamental process in self-control and self-leadership [20]. Demonstrates that self-awareness is first started by self-observation which enhances self-knowledge and provides useful information that strengthens self-leadership. Self-observation is attributed to successful termination or change of negative self-talk in self-leadership and organizational leadership [21]. Argue that self-observation is an important strategy in the composition of new designs and realization of new plans in problem-solving which is the main component of crisis leadership skills. The association of self-observation to a positive environment culture and self-awareness enhances the ability of crisis leaders to perform better when self-observation is ingrained in their self-leadership skills competencies [22]. Since self-awareness requires self-observation skills, leaders who successfully lead through crisis tend to become better at self-observation and self-awareness. posits that self-cueing has a weak relationship with emotional intelligence in leadership. On the contrary, demonstrate a positive correlation between self-cueing and predictable outcomes of enhanced performance in leadership. Self-cueing as a behavior-focused strategy contributes to better decision-making ability among leaders due to its reflective nature of the approach. Leaders who use self-cueing strategies tend to have better memory which enhances better understanding of the causes and effects of both actions and decisions hence providing better leadership in terms of crisis Self-cueing enhances self-regulation which is a key quality in crisis leadership as it prevents reactionary decision making. acknowledges that self-cueing is a critical component of self-leadership whose role provides a cornerstone implication to the success of both self-leadership and public leadership.

Constructive thought strategies in crisis leadership

Constructive thought strategies provide an interactive contribution to crisis leadership. The constructive thought strategies, which include visualization of successful performance, evaluation of beliefs and assumptions, and self-talk are, demonstrated to provide a positive effect on their relationship to emotional intelligence. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence have been determined to use more constructive thought patterns in their thinking process. Similarly, individuals with high self-leadership competencies have been cited to utilize constructive thought strategies as fundamental in their practice have demonstrated that constructive management which is achieved through effective application of cognitive strategies enhances a leader's cognitive processes, behavior, and decision-making ability. Leaders who imagine the successful implementation of their goals have a better visualization of achievement of their desired goals hence enjoy an increased constructive pattern, which enhances their ability to lead during uncertainty [23]. Constructive thought pattern in leadership is positively and strongly correlated with opportunity thinking rather than an obstacle thinking which enhances the utilization of opportunities during crisis leadership.

Besides, constructive thought strategies facilitate the creation of habitual positive thinking, which influences better performance in leadership [24]. In particular, evaluation of one's beliefs and assumptions help the leaders to analyze their values and decide whether to maintain them or adjust them to their desired goals. Self-talk enables the leader to engage in self-dialogue, a method of improving their thought processes and rationale in times of decision-making. Finally, visualization of the successful performance of a leader imposes positive thinking towards task performance, task reality, personal experience, and actions Constructive thought strategies are associated with creative leadership, which enhances the cognitive construction of assumptions, beliefs,

perceptions, and ways of thought processing ^[25].

Natural reward strategies in crisis leadership

suggests that a natural reward strategy which is one of the self-leadership components is responsible for the leader's inherent enjoyment of tasks. When leaders enjoy what they do, the positive energy resonates with the followers hence improving the performance of the organization (Kotze, 2016). Natural rewards are also a source of self-motivation and resilience in leadership ^[26]. Natural reward strategies are closely linked to intrinsic motivation, which consists of two to primary components. The first component is that leaders view a given task as an enjoyable and pleasant experience hence enhancing performance. The second component is that leaders pay attention to the pleasant inherent reward of action while ignoring the unpleasant aspects of the task hence focusing their energy on the performance of positive actions in an organization ^[27]. Crisis leadership with a focus on natural rewards enhances a positive approach to behavior and addresses the importance of concentrating on synthesizing and dividing activities into tasks without waiting for appreciation from external sources ^[28].

Self-leadership and crisis leadership

An empirical study indicated a strong positive correlation between innate powers and values on crisis management hence the importance of self-leadership in crisis leadership. Internal powers and innate values are closely linked to the self-leadership strategies hence the causality in the relationship between the impact of self-leadership on crisis management ^[29]. Crisis leadership is dependent on adaptable leadership and performance in unpredictable work environments. A quasi-experimental study on the implementation of the self-leadership program in the efficacy of self-leadership adaptive performance and job satisfaction posted findings that the level of self-leadership is positively correlated with a big change level in adaptive performance and job satisfaction over time. As a result, evidence of individual and leadership adaptive performance enhanced through self-leadership training presents an opportunity for self-leadership development as a preparatory approach to crisis leadership ^[30].

An investigation on the relationship between self-efficacy, disaster preparedness, and self-leadership indicated a significant correlation among self-efficacy, self-leadership, and disaster preparedness. Since disaster preparedness is a component of crisis leadership, self-leadership and self-efficacy become critical constituents of intervention programs for crisis leadership preparedness ^[31]. Characteristics of an effective self-leadership training program in administrative operations include effective communication, continuous supervision, creation of opportunities, empowerment of staff, enhancement of self-confidence, and self-management among staff. These characteristics are fundamental to crisis leadership as they prepare the followership to adopt new approaches in times of uncertainty. Ethical leadership and ethical influence are important during crisis leadership. Ethical leadership has been established to be influenced and affected by self-leadership. Based on the construct of the social learning theory that made it applicable that self-leadership and ethical leadership are strategies that affect ethical behavior during crisis leadership make it imperative that self-leadership promotes ethical leadership in crisis leadership ^[32].

Similarly, self-leadership is a contributory factor to authentic leadership, which have positive outcomes on the organization's performance. In a study examining the influence of self-leadership on authentic leadership among public leaders using the abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire (ASLQ), it was found that self-leadership positively influences all dimensions of authentic leadership: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective ^[33].

Innovation and innovative behavior is a critical skill in crisis leadership. The study of the correlation between self-leadership and innovation concluded that there exists a significant influence of self-leadership on innovative behavior of leadership. In essence self-leadership, fuels innovation which is critical to during crisis leadership ^[34].

Team leadership is an attribute of crisis leadership, which is influenced by self-leadership. The ability to know oneself, be aware of oneself, managing oneself, and discipline oneself are key implementation components that influence team leadership through self-leadership. Essentially self-leadership creates strong team leadership ability that is a requirement in crisis leadership success. Crisis leadership is characterized by the need to make decisions in times of stress, chaos, and challenging demands in an organization ^[35]. Self-leadership has been underpinned as a positive contributor to the decision-making performance of leaders during crisis leadership ^[36]. The use of an abbreviation self-leadership questionnaire demonstrated a significant correlation between self-leadership strategies and components of quantum organizations ^[37]. Additional studies show a positive influence of self-leadership strategies on job embeddedness, which is a critical characteristic of crisis leadership ^[38]. A study on coping during difficult situations indicated that self-leadership has a strong influence on the process of leadership preparation and leadership success in an uncertain environment. Self-leadership approach to organizational leadership produces the most positive outcomes in environments and contexts where organizations grapple with crises ^[39]. An additional study on coping skills indicates a strong relationship between self-leadership and stress management. Self-leadership has been determined to decrease stress ^[40].

Intrapreneurship is a fundamental sustaining organizational skill in crisis leadership. Self-leadership has been found to have a significant effect on entrepreneurship. Leaders who exhibit high self-leadership competencies tend to be more entrepreneurial than those with deficient self-leadership skills hence self-leadership competencies are most effective in the return of business after crisis ^[41]. A similar study on the effect of self-leadership on organizational effectiveness and job performance in dental hygienists revealed that self-leadership enhanced job performance ^[42]. A study indicated that qualities of self-leadership and leadership among managers are developed fairly proportionally, while the majority of highly professional performers have developed only competence of self-leadership. In both groups, the common leading motive of behavior seems to be merit recognition ^[43]. established that there exists a correlation between self-leadership

and problem-solving ability. The study concluded from the sample that problem-solving ability was influenced by self-leadership, indicated that self-leadership improved job performance [44]. A self-leadership development program improves communication, competency, and commitment [45].

RESEARCH DESIGN

The empirical part of this study used a cross-sectional research design to collect primary data from respondents by using an abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire [46]. The adoption of a quantitative approach was based on its systematic and scientific merit in investigating the study objectives through the nature of data and their relationships. The selection of an abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire was used to address the research questions. The cross-sectional data collection method using an online survey was appropriate for the descriptive purposes and analysis of research data [47].

Research participants

The study sought to obtain basic data and trends on a singular construct from school leaders in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Because of the scope of this research and the time limitation, it was challenging to access a larger number of educational leaders specifically school leaders who were active online since schools were closed. For the convenience of sampling and distribution, the survey was sent to an online forum of school leaders in Jeddah. Out of the possible 61 members of the forum, 48 participated in the study. All the 48 responses were used for data analysis in this study. Out of the respondents, 65% were females and 35% were male school leaders. In terms of age, the majority of participants aged between 36 to 55 representing 62% of all the participants. Since the forum where the survey was distributed was of Jeddah School leaders, all participants were School leaders and working in Jeddah except one who had just left the city but remained in the forum. In terms of the length of service as educational leaders, 42% of respondents had served between three to five years while 41% of respondents had served more than ten years as school leaders.

Measuring instruments

This study used an online survey hosted on the survey monkey platform, which was preceded by information in a passage to the participants clarifying the confidentiality, anonymity and a voluntary participation option of the study. The survey consisted of demographic questions, and the scale used to measure the variables under investigation. Demographic questions collected data on gender, age, job role, city of work, and the period of service as an educational leader. Abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire (ASLQ) scale is a 9 item scale with the variables measured on a Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). This scale provided information on the respondents' level of self-leadership. Additional two items were added to measure the variables of mental preparedness and availability of resources in the schools.

Research procedure and ethical considerations

All participants in this study were informed of their rights to voluntarily participate as well as their ability to stop their participation at any time of their choice without any consequence. Participants were also informed of the anonymity of the data and data collected was secured in a password-protected server. The tool used in the distribution of the survey and collection of the data was a secure site with password-protected requirements of all the data. Since schools were closed during the data collection periods, Schools' administration could not be reached for approvals of their leaders' participation. This impact, however, is mitigated by the anonymity of the participants hence the ethical consideration of the data collection.

Statistical analysis

Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In determination and estimation of reliability associated with the measuring instrument, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for this purpose. Guidance on reliability in exploratory research was estimated to be as low as 0.6 which was considered an acceptable entry-level [48]. In the determination of the relationship between independent variables, the Pearson correlation of significance was used. In data analysis, the correlation was determined as significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The descriptive statistics analysis was used to determine the mean and standard deviation of items with their minimum and maximum scale limits. Additional statistics reported on the standard error of mean with an indication of the confidence interval of the difference in the mean of variables.

Further one-way ANOVA was used to determine the ratio of variances, the mean square, the sum of squares, and the significance between groups and within groups of variables.

RESULTS

The elaborate estimates of all the variables were collected, analyzed, and tabulated. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation of items of the scale. The highest is 3.45 describing the number of resources that schools have during the COVID-19 crisis. The lowest mean is 2.50, which describes self-visualization as a successful performer in tasks before one does it. The standard deviation is 1.36 corresponding to the self-observation item on the scale. The highest standard deviation was on the item referring to beliefs and assumptions, which was at a 1.61.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation

Table 2 shows the correlation between variables using a two-tailed test with a significance level measured at 0.01 using the Pearson correlation test. From the table, there is a significant correlation between all items on the ASLQ, mental preparedness, and availability of resources. Based on the tabulated results, the Person's r in all variables show a strong relationship between the correlated variables because all the values are close to one. It is also notable that a strong relationship between all variables is conclusive since all Person r values range between 0.767 to 0.977. It is also clear that all of Pearson's r values are positive. This indicates that all variables increase in value when their correlated variables increase in value. Similarly, all variables would decrease in value if their correlated variables would decrease in value hence an observation of positive correlation. The significant 2 tailed value which indicates the statistically significant correlation between variables is also tabulated. All the Sig. (2-tailed) values on the table are less than .05 hence indicating a statistically significant correlation between variables.

Table 3 shows a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) which has been used to determine statistically significant differences between variables. The significant value of all the variables is .000 which is less than 0.05 hence an indication that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean of variables.

Table 4 is a representation of correlation presented through a one-tailed analysis which indicates the possibility of a one-directional relationship between variables. The correlation of significant measure remains at 0.01 level.

Table 5 is a one-sample T-test used to determine whether the variables mean are statistically different from the hypothesized population mean. The table shows the sample mean, the observed t, the degrees of freedom, the p-value, and confidence intervals.

Tables 6 and 7 In determination and estimation of reliability associated with the measuring instrument, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for this purpose as shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Guidance on reliability in exploratory research was estimated to be as low as 0.6, which was an acceptable entry [49].

DISCUSSION

Studies on self-leadership in times of crisis have indicated a close correlation between self-leadership and success in crisis leadership. Competencies of self-leadership have also been studied individually with their contribution to mediation in crisis leadership. Most competencies have shown the ability to predict success in crisis leadership due to their relationship. In this study, self-leadership competencies are divided into three components, which are natural rewards strategies, constructive thought strategies, and behavioral pattern strategies. These strategies have been seen to influence the ability of leaders to perceive self-efficacy during a crisis. Consistent with other studies' recommendations, organizations are encouraged to institute self-leadership training programs to improve the preparedness of the leaders to face uncertainty. Using this argument, it becomes feasible to determine leaders who are prepared to succeed in crisis leadership specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis leadership. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the role of self-leadership in influencing School leaders' perception of readiness to cope with COVID-19 pandemic related challenges in schools.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting).	47	1.00	5.00	2.6596	1.38747
I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (self-observation).	48	1.00	5.00	2.6458	1.36038
I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting).	48	1.00	5.00	2.7500	1.42172
I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	48	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.39909
Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	48	1.00	5.00	2.6667	1.49230
When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	48	1.00	5.00	2.6042	1.45485
Sometimes I talk to myself (aloud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	48	1.00	5.00	2.7708	1.56068
I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	48	1.00	5.00	2.6875	1.51806
I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	48	1.00	5.00	3.1042	1.61429
I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	48	1.00	5.00	3.3958	1.42530
I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	48	1.00	5.00	3.4583	1.50118
Valid N (listwise)					

Note. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Correlations (2-tailed).

	Respondent ID	I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting).	I make a point to keep track of how well I'm doing at work (Self-observation).	I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting).	I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis
Respondent ID Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 48	.026 .864 47	-.008 .955 48	.038 .800 48	-.058 .696 48	-.075 .610 48	-.072 .628 48	-.004 .978 48	-.038 .800 48	.093 .528 48	.131 .374 48	.205 .161 48
I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.026 .864 47	1 47	.925** .000 47	.949** .000 47	.870** .000 47	.915** .000 47	.874** .000 47	.882** .000 47	.831** .000 47	.879** .000 47	.767** .000 47	.853** .000 47
I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (self-observation). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.008 .955 48	.925** .000 47	1 48	.954** .000 48	.956** .000 48	.915** .000 48	.949** .000 48	.913** .000 48	.924** .000 48	.899** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.873** .000 48
I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.038 .800 48	.949** .000 47	.954** .000 48	1 48	.899** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.887** .000 48	.923** .000 48	.860** .000 48	.920** .000 48	.774** .000 48	.882** .000 48
I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance) Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.058 .696 48	.870** .000 47	.956** .000 48	.899** .000 48	1 48	.927** .000 48	.977** .000 48	.931** .000 48	.957** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.902** .000 48	.881** .000 48
Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.075 .610 48	.915** .000 47	.915** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.927** .000 48	1 48	.918** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.892** .000 48	.907** .000 48	.784** .000 48	.877** .000 48
When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.072 .628 48	.874** .000 47	.949** .000 48	.887** .000 48	.977** .000 48	.918** .000 48	1 48	.943** .000 48	.964** .000 48	.888** .000 48	.898** .000 48	.864** .000 48
Sometimes I talk to myself (aloud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.004 .978 48	.882** .000 47	.913** .000 48	.923** .000 48	.931** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.943** .000 48	1 48	.957** .000 48	.956** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.918** .000 48
I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.038 .800 48	.831** .000 47	.924** .000 48	.860** .000 48	.957** .000 48	.892** .000 48	.964** .000 48	.957** .000 48	1 48	.917** .000 48	.924** .000 48	.886** .000 48
I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions). Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.093 .528 48	.879** .000 47	.899** .000 48	.920** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.907** .000 48	.888** .000 48	.956** .000 48	.917** .000 48	1 48	.851** .000 48	.919** .000 48
I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis. Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.131 .374 48	.767** .000 47	.864** .000 48	.774** .000 48	.902** .000 48	.784** .000 48	.898** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.924** .000 48	.851** .000 48	1 48	.928** .000 48
I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis. Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.205 .161 48	.853** .000 47	.873** .000 48	.882** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.877** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.918** .000 48	.886** .000 48	.919** .000 48	.928** .000 48	1 48

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. One-way ANOVA Test ANOVA.

		Sum of Squares	do	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (self-observation).	Between Groups	70.795	4	17.699	47.024	.000
	Within Groups	16.184	43	.376		
	Total	86.979	47			
I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting).	Between Groups	77.701	4	19.425	48.285	.000
	Within Groups	17.299	43	.402		
	Total	95.000	47			
I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	Between Groups	76.494	4	19.123	53.031	.000
	Within Groups	15.506	43	.361		
	Total	92.000	47			
Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	Between Groups	86.191	4	21.548	50.151	.000
	Within Groups	18.475	43	.430		
	Total	104.667	47			
When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	Between Groups	79.770	4	19.943	43.510	.000
	Within Groups	19.709	43	.458		
	Total	99.479	47			
Sometimes I talk to myself (aloud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	Between Groups	101.532	4	25.383	84.305	.000
	Within Groups	12.947	43	.301		
	Total	114.479	47			
I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	Between Groups	90.223	4	22.556	53.616	.000
	Within Groups	18.090	43	.421		
	Total	108.313	47			
I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions). Total	Between Groups	105.875	4	26.469	68.546	.000
	Within Groups	16.604	43	.386		
	Total	122.479	47			
I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	Between Groups	83.003	4	20.751	71.519	.000
	Within Groups	12.476	43	.290		
	Total	95.479	47			

Note. One-way ANOVA Test analyzed from SPSS

As indicated by the results, leaders who established specific goals for their performance portrayed a strong mental preparedness to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Essentially, a positive significant correlation was established between the self-goal setting and the mental preparedness of leaders to lead schools during and after the crisis. Besides, similar reports are evident among leaders who worked towards specific goals set by themselves hence the importance and relationship of self-goal setting and crisis leadership.

Previous studies have shown a correlation of visualization of success of performance and effective performance. In this study leaders who visualized themselves as successful in the performance of tasks before they do them also indicated their mental preparedness to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, leaders who sometimes pictured successful performance before actually doing the task through visualization of performance portrayed a significant positive relationship with their mental preparedness to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Other studies have shown a similar trend when measuring the readiness of staff to face uncertainty using the self-leadership questionnaire.

The role of self-reward on the perceived mental preparedness to lead during a crisis has been discussed as strongly related since leaders who have this competency of self-reward do not need external motivation to take action. In this study, leaders who portrayed a tendency to provide themselves with a reward when they have completed tasks also indicated mental preparedness to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis. On the contrary, leaders who did not tend to reward themselves after completing tasks did not show mental preparedness to lead the schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Most of those who did not practice self-reward did not believe in the ability to confidently lead during a crisis.

Leaders who practice self-talk to work through difficult situations by evaluating their beliefs and assumptions indicated a correlation between their internal dialogue with their mental preparedness to deal with a crisis. These leaders also indicated their habit of mentally evaluating the accuracy of their own beliefs about situations that they are having problems with. Therefore, it is evident that leaders who practice self-talk and evaluate beliefs and assumptions about their effectiveness tend to have mental preparedness to deal with crises. In this study, leaders who practiced self-talk and evaluation of self-beliefs and assumptions portrayed mental preparedness to deal with the COVID-19 crisis during school opening. Similarly, these leaders show their habit of thinking about their own beliefs and assumptions whenever they encounter a difficult situation. In essence, the correlation between evaluating beliefs and assumptions with self-talk leadership further demonstrates mental preparedness for crisis leadership.

Table 4. Correlations (1-tailed).

Respondent ID	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting).	I make a point to keep track of how well I'm doing at work (Self-observation).	I work toward specific goals I have set For myself (self-goal setting).	I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	Sometimes I picture in my mind a Successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis
Respondent ID	1 48	.026 .432 47	-.008 .478 48	.038 .400 48	-.058 .348 48	-.075 .305 48	-.072 .314 48	-.004 .489 48	-.038 .400 48	.093 .264 48	.131 .187 48	.205 .081 48
I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	1 47	.925** .000 47	.949** .000 47	.870** .000 47	.915** .000 47	.874** .000 47	.882** .000 47	.831** .000 47	.879** .000 47	.767** .000 47	.853** .000 47
I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (self-observation).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.008 .478 48	1 .000 47	.954** .000 48	.956** .000 48	.915** .000 48	.949** .000 48	.913** .000 48	.924** .000 48	.899** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.873** .000 48
I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.038 .400 48	.949** .000 47	1 .000 48	.899** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.887** .000 48	.923** .000 48	.860** .000 48	.920** .000 48	.774** .000 48	.882** .000 48
I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.058 .348 48	.870** .000 47	.956** .000 48	1 .000 48	.927** .000 48	.977** .000 48	.931** .000 48	.957** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.902** .000 48	.881** .000 48
Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.075 .305 48	.915** .000 47	.915** .000 48	.953** .000 48	1 .000 48	.918** .000 48	.953** .000 48	.892** .000 48	.907** .000 48	.784** .000 48	.877** .000 48
When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.072 .314 48	.874** .000 47	.949** .000 48	.887** .000 48	.977** .000 48	1 .000 48	.943** .000 48	.964** .000 48	.888** .000 48	.898** .000 48	.864** .000 48
Sometimes I talk to myself (aloud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.004 .489 48	.882** .000 47	.913** .000 48	.923** .000 48	.931** .000 48	.953** .000 48	1 .000 48	.957** .000 48	.956** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.918** .000 48
I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.038 .400 48	.831** .000 47	.924** .000 48	.860** .000 48	.957** .000 48	.892** .000 48	.964** .000 48	1 .000 48	.917** .000 48	.924** .000 48	.886** .000 48
I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.093 .264 48	.879** .000 47	.899** .000 48	.920** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.907** .000 48	.888** .000 48	.956** .000 48	1 .000 48	.851** .000 48	.919** .000 48
I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.131 .187 48	.767** .000 47	.864** .000 48	.774** .000 48	.902** .000 48	.784** .000 48	.898** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.924** .000 48	1 .000 48	.928** .000 48
I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.205 .081 48	.853** .000 47	.873** .000 48	.882** .000 48	.881** .000 48	.877** .000 48	.864** .000 48	.918** .000 48	.886** .000 48	.919** .000 48	1 .000 48

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

In this study, leaders indicated the availability of resources that they would need to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Leaders who indicated the availability of resources in their schools also demonstrated the readiness and mental preparedness to lead the schools during the pandemic. Even though all self-leadership competencies positively correlated with the availability of resources to lead schools, the strongest correlation was between mental preparedness and availability of resources. Leaders who have resources in their schools feel better prepared mentally to lead schools during the COVID-19 crisis.

Hypothesis 1 proposed in this study is supported by the findings of the study that self-leadership has a direct influence on the perceived ability to lead during a crisis. This study used the current crisis of COVID-19 pandemic in schools to determine educational leaders' perception of the ability to lead during

Table 5. One-Sample Test.

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
What is your gender?	19.411	47	.000	1.35417	1.2138	1.4945
What is your age?	19.199	47	.000	3.27083	2.9282	3.6136
Is your school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia?	49.000	47	.000	1.02083	1.9789	1.0627
For how long have you served as an educational leader?	18.361	47	.000	3.10417	2.7641	3.4443
I establish specific goals for my own performance (self-goal setting).	13.141	46	.000	2.65957	2.2522	3.0670
I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (self-observation).	13.475	47	.000	2.64583	2.2508	3.0408
I work toward specific goals I have set for myself (self-goal setting).	13.401	47	.000	2.75000	2.3372	3.1628
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it (visualizing successful performance)	12.380	47	.000	2.50000	2.0937	2.9063
Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task (visualizing performance).	12.380	47	.000	2.66667	2.2333	3.1000
When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like (self-reward).	12.401	47	.000	2.60417	2.1817	3.0266
Sometimes I talk to myself (aloud or in my head) to work through difficult situations (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	12.300	47	.000	2.77083	2.3177	3.2240
I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with (self-talk).	12.265	47	.000	2.68750	2.2467	3.1283
I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation (evaluating beliefs and assumptions).	13.322	47	.000	3.10417	2.6354	3.5729
I am mentally prepared to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	16.507	47	.000	3.39583	2.9820	3.8097
I have resources I need to lead my School during the COVID 19 crisis	15.961	47	.000	3.45833	3.0224	3.8942

Note. One-Sample Test analyzed from SPSS

Table 6. Reliability Test Case Processing Summary.

		N	%
Cases	Valid	47	97.9
	Excluded	1	2.1
	Total	48	100.0

Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 7. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.990	9

Note. Scale: Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ)

the crisis. The findings showed a direct and strong correlation between self-leadership competencies and perceived ability to lead during the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, each competency was tested and a conclusive finding shows that all the competencies had a positive relationship with the leaders' mental preparedness to lead schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypothesis 2 of this study is supported by the findings of the study that the availability of resources in schools influenced the mental preparedness of the school leaders to lead schools during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. A positive and statistically significant relationship has been established between the availability of resources, mental preparedness, and self-leadership competencies. In essence, leaders who exhibited strong self-leadership competencies also showed strong mental preparedness to lead based on the availability of resources.

Previous studies have shown a similar correlation between self-leadership competencies with crisis leadership even though in different contexts. Additional studies have isolated specific self-leadership competencies and investigated their relationship with crisis leadership. Nevertheless, these studies report a similar finding of correlation and positive relationship between crisis leadership and self-leadership.

Recent studies have also indicated that the availability of resources had a strong impact on the perception of the ability for crisis leadership. A similar study in the financial sector that used the same cross-sectional method of approach and the abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire concluded that self-leadership strategies namely constructive thought patterns, behavioral strategies, and natural rewards through the resources availed, positively influenced job embeddedness. Further findings that used the same tool demonstrated a significant correlation between self-leadership strategies and components of quantum organizations. In summary, this study has confirmed both hypotheses as applied to the school leadership in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Practical implications

The findings of this study indicate that leaders who are competent in self-leadership have a competitive advantage in crisis leadership over those who do not have competency in self-leadership. The ability of leaders to set their own goals, observe their performance, visualize themselves succeeding, visualize themselves performing successfully, reward themselves when they have completed a task, think and evaluate their own beliefs and assumptions, then finally try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of their thoughts through self-talk are better prepared to deal with crises.

Therefore, organizations should evaluate their leadership development programs and improve them by including self-leadership training programs as a means to prepare leaders for uncertainty. Proactive leaders may also take steps towards inculcating self-leadership competencies in the organizational leadership practice of self-goal setting, self-reward, visualization of success, visualization of performance, evaluation of beliefs and assumptions, and self-talk. Constant practice of the self-leadership competencies would enhance mastery, which in effect would prepare leaders to mentally be ready to succeed during crisis leadership. Understanding that organizational resources influence mental preparedness for crisis leadership provides a basis for organizations to invest in resources to improve leaders' ability to perceive their readiness to deal with crises. Since leaders who believe that they have enough resources during the crisis are more prepared mentally to deal with that crisis, it then follows that crisis leadership planning should include resource planning.

Limitations and prospects for future research

This study explored the effect of self-leadership competencies on the perceived ability of school leaders to cope with COVID-19 crisis challenges in schools. A significant limitation was the lack of empirical evidence addressing COVID-19 challenges in schools since the pandemic is a novel phenomenon. It was therefore difficult to obtain specific research-based challenges facing educational leaders in schools in Saudi Arabia. This challenge was also increased due to the closure of schools hence the inability to access School leaders in the context of their jobs.

Besides, the focus of this study was on school leaders in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia hence an implication that the findings of the current study must be applied with caution when considering leaders from other sectors in other places. Future studies are encouraged to explore additional evidence and a larger sample size of leaders drawn from different levels of institutions and locations.

Finally, the limitation of this study is also in the methodology used for the study. The use of a cross-sectional method poses challenges when attempting to evaluate the causal nature of relationships hence the inability of this study to make conclusions regarding the long-term consequences for the effectiveness of self-leadership in the prediction of crisis leadership. It is therefore the recommendation of this study that future research engages a longitudinal design approach to assess the long-term effects of self-leadership in crisis leadership.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide an implication and further insights into the importance of self-leadership in crisis leadership in schools. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that leaders who have mastery in self-leadership competencies are better prepared to deal with crisis leadership in schools. It also follows that the availability of resources in schools has a direct impact on the ability of leaders to believe in their effectiveness during crisis leadership. However, in schools where leaders portray low self-leadership competencies, a school should consider enhancing professional development by including self-leadership skills training and increasing resources in schools to enable improvement in crisis leadership. Finally, this study serves to contribute new data and insights to the body of knowledge specifically on the perceptions of school leaders' readiness to cope with COVID-19

challenges in schools, and the role of school resources in crisis leadership preparedness.

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