

Competencies of Effective Village Leadership in Malaysia

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Abstract

In Malaysia, Village Development and Security Committee (VDSC) or locally known as *Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK)* is a community based-organization established by the Federal Government to perform village administration and development. This organization is considered as the village leadership. It consists of at least ten to fifteen members with the village head as chairman and holds an important place in the political, economic, sociocultural systems in this country. A survey of literatures on village leadership shows that only very few studies have been done on the issue of village leadership. Many works on this topic revolved round the role of village leaders, and mainly found in China, Thailand and India. This paper is an effort to contribute to the subject of village leadership in the Malaysian context. This study aims to explore the competencies of effective village leaders in award winning villages in Malaysia. Thrusting upon the qualitative paradigm, the leadership competencies of nine effective village leaders have been explored through semi-structured interviews. The atlasti software version 7.1.5 was used to analyze data and to generated themes such as skills in acquiring funds and resources for village development, writing and presentation skills, entrepreneurship skills, creativity skills in delegating task, and interpersonal skills. These skills are required competencies for village leaders. Findings from this paper can be utilized to improve leadership skills of other village leaders in Malaysia. The findings also implies that some unique attributes in the characteristics of these leaders are common, and can be further explored as a base for the development of capacity building for similar categories of leaders in other villages.

Keywords: Malaysian Village Leadership, Competences, Skills and Local leadership

1. Introduction

Despite the growing number of leadership internationally, local leadership also deserves greater attention. There is growing recognition that local leadership is an important contributor to the growth of places, with institutions such as the OECD (2010, 2012), consultants (McKinsey and Co,1994) and academics commentators alike (Beer, 2014; Stimson, Stough & Roberts, 2001), paying attention to the contribution of leadership to growth. Research on local leadership has recognized different styles of leadership, with authors such as Badaracco (2002) discussing “quiet” leadership, Peter (2012) examining the part played by social embedded leaders within community setting, while Sorenson and Epps (1996) considered a number of leadership structures in their study of four towns in the central part of Queensland, including consensus models of leadership, single dominant leaders, inherited leaders and collective leadership. Rondriquez-Pose (2013) suggested that leadership may be an important component within a set of institutional arrangements that constitute the “missing link” in the understanding of growth processes. Leadership also raises questions about social dynamics within rural communities (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003), their integration with the global economy, and the relationship between rural communities and governments (Argent, 2005).

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The challenges in rural communities are increasing in frequency, complexity, and intensity, requiring the need for effective rural leadership that is practical and capable of addressing multifaceted issues (Avant, Rice & Copeland, 2013). Rural communities often face two major challenges as they attempt to compete for economic opportunities, improve quality of life, and address emerging issues. Precisely, because of the process of youth brain drain, rural communities face real challenges in human capital or the suite of skills, knowledge, and abilities at the community level (Flora & Flora, 2008; Green & Haines, 2007). One of the challenges in human capital is that it is often measured in terms of education levels such as the percentage of educated people who can perform certain skills. A second challenge to human capital pertains to the extent to which communities have members who can negotiate increasingly complicated applications and proposal processes for grant or loan funding. Even more basic: Do leaders in a community know how to run a meeting, to convene a decision-making process, or to make sure that stakeholders in the community are appropriately included in the decision-making processes?

On the other hand, in rural communities, human relationships are intimate and people feel a sense of community (Avant, 2013). Based on close ties of family and friendship, people know each other, help each other, and frequently live their lives in close interaction with a small group of people with similar norms and values (Daley & Avant, 2013, 2004; Martinez-Brawley, 2000). The literature on rural leadership is filled with descriptions of the challenging nature of rural areas. Of the challenges indicated, leadership, which is necessary to assist rural areas in expanding their traditional boundaries, appears to be the most imperative. In this sense, understanding the role of village leaders and the competencies that they have at the rural level is also important. Most of the research on leadership over the past 40 years has focused on large, complex organizations such as businesses, government and military (Rost, 1993). However, research on leadership in the context of community is limited. This paper sets out to advance our understanding of leadership in rural Malaysian villages by exploring the competencies they possess, which in turn have the potential to influence policy outcomes pertaining to training and development for future village leaders.

2. Leadership within Rural Communities

There is a growing body of knowledge focusing on leadership and its relationship with the development and well-being of particular places (Beer, 2014; Collinge & Gibney, 2010; Stimson et al., 2009; Stough, 2003). Researchers made important contributions to our understanding of local leadership with Stimson et al. (2009) examining leadership as part of a broader project focused on the development of endogenous community, and McCann (2013) researched on the ways in which leadership is expressed at the community level. The examination of local leadership has not been restricted only to the development outcomes. Sotarauta, Horlings and Liddle (2012) for example, have argued that there are new ways of understanding leadership as a process, rather than as an outcome; a process which acknowledges and privileges the role of public service professionals and managers in ways that conflict with more conventional accounts of leadership.

Leadership can be best defined as a process, whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Skidmore, 1990). Defining leadership as a process also emphasizes the significance of relationships, individual differences, and the important characteristics of rural communities (Avant, 2006). Rural leadership is different from other forms of leadership mainly because of its setting. In India for instance, it is evident that Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) have certain specific characteristics because of the rural conditions in the country. According to Malik and Yadav (2008), there exists a positive relationship between the rural leadership and its social and economic background. The social and educational background of a leader has a significant impact in shaping the role and

behavior of a community leader. It determines the attitudes and orientations of local leaders toward a participative life at the local level. Moreover, the community-based organization is not only a regulatory agency or administrative branch of the government, but also an indispensable instrument for ensuring socioeconomic progress in rural societies. Therefore, to be an effective leader in rural areas, a special type of leadership style should be present in the leader. Leadership style may be defined as a pattern of specific behaviors or attitudes that a leader places on different leadership functions (Casmir, 2001). Although leadership is viewed as a process, leadership style is the glue that holds the process together.

Moreover, for Stimson et al. (2002), leadership within communities should target the goal of achieving economic and other outcomes; it tends to be collaborative rather than hierarchical. It involves cooperation across a number of institutions, individuals and firms, and it has a distinctive long-term time horizon. Stimson et al. (2009) identified three pivotal contributors to local leadership. It should involve the sharing of power, it should be flexible, and it should be rooted in entrepreneurialism. Other researchers, who examined the role of leaders in rural communities, have suggested that effective local leadership build community resilience and help secure an economic future for a community. Smailes (2002a; 2002b) found that leaders have a pivotal role in providing ideas and a vision for the future. Thus, they provide a focus in which community identity and belonging could be fostered. Sorenson and Epps (1996) identified four key qualities of effective rural leadership. They need to have the ability

- To formulate a realistic vision of the community's economic and social development.
- To achieve a high level of community approval of, if not active commitment to, that vision.
- To motivate key persons and groups to achieve the vision, and
- To lead by example.

Research and writing on local leadership is often explicitly concerned with transformational leadership, rather than transactional leadership (Bass, 1985). In transactional leadership, leaders and followers exchange needs and services to accomplish independent objectives, or a form of leadership by bartering, and giving positive reinforcement for good work (Sergiovanni, 1991). Transformational leadership theories have evolved from the transactional theory (Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership goes beyond the attempt of the leader to satisfy the followers through transactions or exchanges based on contingent rewards. In other words, transformational leaders develop followers to the point where they are able to take on leadership roles and perform beyond established goals (Avant, 2006; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Each of the leadership models discussed offers suggestions of various aspects that might be suitable for village leadership. Taken together, these and literally hundreds of other leadership models identify fundamental aspects of leadership that are suitable for studying effective village leadership. In summary, some of these aspects include the significance of teamwork, environment and the importance of tasks and relationships.

In Malaysia, VDSC or JKKK is the principal body for village administration at the rural level. Village leaders, who act as agents of change at the village level, should possess various competencies and perform certain roles to ensure that they can effectively carry out their leadership functions. Based on recent statistics, there are 107,282 JKKKS all over Malaysia, administering 15,525 villages throughout the country (Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, 2013). These numbers are quite significant in representing rural communities for the development of the rural areas. The government believes that the village heads or the *ketua kampung* are able to articulate the needs and aspirations of village people to the district officers around the country. They are responsible to the district officer and district councils charged with carrying out various government programs at the local level.

This includes economic and infrastructure development, poverty eradication, and other general assistance programs involving various government agencies.

Surveying highly effective leaders is consistent with previous qualitative studies (Folta et al., 2012, Boehm & Staples, 2008, Madinah Mohamad & Abu Daud Silong, 2010, Spendlove, 2007), which described roles, behaviors, interactions, characteristics, and competencies associated with excellent leadership. However, not much is known about effective village leaders in this country, particularly of those who act as agents of change at the village level. As an operational definition, the leader is an individual who has been appointed as the head or the chairman of the JKKK organization by the state and has the potential to change the behavior of most of the members of the community. Our definition of competency in this context is knowledge, values, ability or skills and behavior to deal with community issues; to resolve problems in community; and to be able to communicate effectively with people in the community and relevant stakeholders. At the community level, leaders are usually respected and they give advice and encouragement to local residents (Flowers & Waddell, 2004).

Thus, the aim of this study is to identify and describe various leadership traits and competencies of effective village leaders in award winning villages. This study will examine the competencies of these successful village leaders, and hopes to contribute to knowledge about leadership training and development for future village leaders in this country. The next section explains the methods used in this study.

3. Materials and Methods

This research explores the experiences of nine successful village leaders in Malaysia. The names were identified based on an agreed upon criteria by the researcher and officers from the Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA). Once the list was released, the researcher contacted the respondents. Upon obtaining their consent to participate, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and the confidentiality procedures. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for later analysis. A semistructured interview guide to craft the questions was used to solicit information from the respondents in this research. The interview guide included semistructured questions designed to explore the leaders' thoughts and perceptions about the characteristics of good leaders and their specific skills, knowledge, and ability needed to function in their leadership role.

The interview transcripts were first reviewed for accuracy before initial analysis was conducted primarily through coding. For analysis, the researchers coded each interview, once by hand and once by using Atlasti 7.1.5 software, which is designed to facilitate management of qualitative data. As coding proceeded, several additional themes emerged and were added to the framework. The coding process was therefore an iterative process, grounded in the data. Codes were then merged and linked to one another to capture connections between relevant concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researchers triangulated the data by comparing responses within and across each interview. Dependability was addressed through detailed record keeping. The codes generated were further synthesized into clusters, culminating in the identification of themes. The researchers reviewed these records at key points in the research process to ensure that the findings remained true to the raw data. Conformability was addressed by reporting thick descriptions, direct quotes, and excerpts from the raw data that support both interpretation and conclusions drawn by the researchers. The quotations given as illustrations were selected because they represented the best expression of consensus on given issues. To maintain confidentiality, direct quotes from the transcripts were coded and reported by pseudonyms (i.e., informant JKKK UL or officer agency 1).

4. Results and Discussions

Nine of the effective village leaders were interviewed. The leaders' ages ranged from 46 to 67 years old. Most of them resided in the southern region of Malaysia. Two of them lived in the northern states, and one each lived in Selangor, Terengganu, and Pahang. Most of them have SPM as their level of education; three possess lower school certification, while only one has a Bachelor's degree. They had an average of 18.33 years of experience as JKKK chairpersons. Most of them were self-employed and three of them were pensioners from government service. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. The labels were derived according to the names of the location the participants come from, for easy referencing.

4.1 Competencies for Effective Village Leadership

This study generated six major themes based on the experiences of nine effective JKKK leaders in the award winning villages. The themes are the competencies required by village leaders and are as follows: (1) skills in acquiring funds and resources for village development, (2) skills in writing and presenting request for government allocations, (3) skills in entrepreneurship, (4) interpersonal skills, (5) skills in conducting programs for social activities, and (6) skills in building cooperation and engagement. These competencies are related to the roles leaders have to perform in the village administration and are described in the following sections.

4.1.1 Skills in Acquiring Funds and Resources for Development

One of the key leadership competencies that are crucial to a village leader is related to the aptitude to seek financing for administration and development. This is because one of the challenges faced by these organizations is that they do not receive fixed allocation from government to manage and administer the village in spite of the role and responsibilities that have been described for them. A major intricacy to JKKK organizations is when they have to look for sources of funding each month to pay utility bills such as electricity and water for the mosque (*surau*), community center and refrigerated room used for the storage of frozen goods generated by that particular village. In this sense, the leaders must be creative in sourcing for funds and looking for other avenues of finance, which could solve the problem of funding for the utilities. Thus, they need the skills for acquiring funding and resources for their organization. Based on their experiences, the respondents said that they have to know to identify sources of funds available. In addition, they must plan their programs with attractive success-driven agenda to ensure that they can convince and hence acquire the finances required from politicians or government departments in their respective constituents. This is very important because the credibility of village leaders and conviction of the program, which are put together in the eyes of the politicians, will ensure that their applications will be accepted and pursuant to that, many programs and community activities can be carried out at the village level all year round. Without these resources, activities and programs concerning village developments cannot be executed. In acquiring funds for planning activities in the village, Respondent PK indicated that he has to have good relationships with government departments and politicians. He further clarified:

We get this money, we conduct many programs with agricultural department, fisheries, veterinary, with district officer, with health, KEMAS, religious program which we do simultaneously with religious events or we call freelance speakers. We also frequently obtain contributions from UMNO head regions. That's why when we talk about village development and we have begun to build a name, after that it would be easy for us to tell them, each program will be supported. So, the source of finances from projects to sponsors we have obtained. Apart from that, the departments themselves, departments also have allocations for programs. They are just waiting for villages to ask. When we go

to ask them, they will be happy. It is difficult for them to arrange for program participants, so we arrange participants, then they come to our place, we will prepare food, They will give us allocation RM 200-300 to prepare for the programs., so that will be collected and we will send a report after we have spent...ah, then...that is the way. (Respondent PK)

Apart from this, financial resources can also be obtained through participating in competitions held by the state and federal government. Leaders of JKKK concentrate on these competitions because of the lucrative cash prizes that could be used as revolving capital for village development and ensuing costs.

4.1.2 Writing and Presentation Skills to Request for Government Allocations

Most of the respondents clarified that one of the skills, which needs to be grasped by village leaders is the skill to write viable working papers that fulfill the prerequisites outlined by government departments or agencies. This is more important when they have to write proposals to build infrastructures and amenities in the village such as the construction of public halls, stalls, landscaping, and so forth, in their respective constituencies. Skills in producing good working papers are essential to ensure applications for allocation will be successful to facilitate the development of infrastructures in the village. This was presented by one respondent as follows:

Now like when you reside in Ministry, Pak Long requested for an open hall...what is the size of the hall? Length? The opening? So, if Pak Long says he asks for an open hall so Pak Long will attach his sketches and asks for a quotation. Opening 50 meters, length 80metres, ok metal frame or whatever...so Pak Long includes everything so he would include technical aspects wahhh...everything is completed...when I say send the application for the hall, you must send it to the technical department...this is also made known to the officers from the departments to Pak Long....after that when they say look here, they say again...LXXXXX always gets the projects...so whatever we do is not known...ah, like the gazebo...the opening is 10 meters x 10 meters wood frame... (Respondent UL)

Other things that require consideration are that applicants must show determination as in the frequency of going back and forth to the government departments when applying for allocation from government departments to ensure that their applications are getting due attention and subsequently approved as one informant elaborated:

If we don't do the working papers, don't meet them, don't show determination, and don't go once, twice, thrice... (Respondent PK)

4.1.3 Entrepreneurship Skills

Another important competency for JKKK leaders in the award winning villages is related to entrepreneurship skills. Most of the respondents in this research demonstrated a high level of entrepreneurship to ensure they have a solid financial resource and can generate consistent and stable income. They act as entrepreneurs who take advantage of opportunities, delve into businesses, develop them, and drive them to succeed; or venture into tourism industry, such as villagestays or homestays. They establish cooperatives and take part in group agriculture, own businesses and own Class F contractor licenses. They are skilled as entrepreneurs and are always discussing ways and means to find activities, which could

generate income. One of the respondents explained how he was involved in entrepreneurship by establishing cooperatives:

We establish cooperatives so that those who are involved, some of them do not own a homestay and their houses cannot be converted into a homestay, but they are quite active, involved, so in terms of income from homestay, they will miss out, so we want them to take care of their economy so they can benefit, we established a homestay cooperative, ah, so people who have homestay must be involved and those who are not involved we invite them to participate, so that the income generated from the homestay can be shared...ah, ...shared income. (Respondent TK)

Apart from that, they also work on group agriculture, inventing great ideas and innovations such as offering tourism packages, which are more attractive than those already available, and executing projects at minimum cost by reusing agricultural waste to make organic soil, and so on, which could be sold at competitive prices. All these actions were conceived by the leaders through mutual cooperation with villagers, funds from department, technical advice services, staunch support from government agencies and government departments alongside views and ideas obtained through local politicians such as state representatives and other relevant political figures.

4.1.4 Creativity in Planning Economic and Social Activities

Village leaders need to be creative to seize opportunities to generate economy through activities and programs to increase villagers' income opportunities. In this regard, village leaders must be creative to diversify any types of products which could generate income and increase villagers' economy. For example, those who are involved in the homestay business will be creative with regard to planning additional activities such as visiting fruit orchards, flying fox activities, eagle hunting fish package, tract or walking path activity, and other suitable supporting activities, which tourists can participate in the village. Furthermore, each village has many products labored by villagers, which can be sold or marketed. Among these activities are farming catfish, processing frozen snacks, diversifying herb plants, processing organic soil, and so on. All these activities can generate income and open job opportunities to local residents. This issue was elaborated by a respondent:

That is their own creativity-things, we can develop the village...he's creative...I have a homestay, so I created a fruit corner at the village, at the side of the house. Tourists can plant rambutan trees, two to three trees ah, that'swe have a fruit corner. So if tourists come and the fruits are ripe, apart from offering it in a package, we can sell it as well. Now all the houses have rambutan trees. It's not hard to obtain the seeds as we get it through a program via JKKK, we give each house 4 plants, 4 plants...exist in the fruit corner. Not a problem...but we need to plan and be creative. (Respondent TU)

Apart from being creative in diversifying activities and products, which could generate villagers' economy, the village head has to be creative as well in planning programs and activities, to be conducted throughout the year such as organizing family day, organizing competitions sport activities in the village, and so on. Sometimes, creativity is up to the JKKK members to frame and plan various programs and activities. All these activities will benefit village development because programs that have been arranged by each committee member will be attended by villagers. Participations such as these strengthen relationship and unity, which could enhance social capital amongst villagers. Social capital is a feature in the community, which is based on the interaction between individuals and groups. This includes

mutual trust, reciprocity, collective identity, mutual cooperation, and the sharing of opinion on certain issues. Social capital includes a solid bond among family and friends, and mutual dependence on each other. Creativity in planning activities and social programs in the village was explained in detail by an informant as follows;

You try looking for a sport activity, which does not require any capital, think yourself, ok the village taxi is like a leaf-sleigh, you don't need to look far, you can pull it, fill up a bottle, find a bottle without any capital, fish the bottle, all those do not require capital. Find things around the area. (Respondent PT)

They must also be creative in fortifying the relationship between villagers as it is very important to unity. Leaders will be arranging events to create a bond between villagers through religious events in mosques and *suraus*, *Yasin* recital programs, *gotong-royong* during celebratory feasts, and so on. In this regard, a respondent explained how he planned to fortify the relationship with the villagers:

We have a grouping, which has to be renewed weekly, that means it cannot be left idle. At the very least, we meet at the masjid every week. Even if we don't discuss, we still meet... We meet, we do like Yasin every night at the masjid, the following week at a home, which means we go from houses here. Depends, if they want to cook rice, serve water, as long as when we go to the house, it is filled up. At times there aren't enough people, during feasts how will people come, because they will think of who will come to my house if I didn't attend. This is repeated weekly. We have our own kariah. Like us, we have 38 houses. If only males, then it will be around 50 people...ah, full. So let's say he doesn't attend. They send children to attend, like this, the next day if it floods we will send children to his place...we follow our turns in a year's schedule and we can estimate when his turn will come...so he needs to prepare money for a prayer for those who have passed on...all...In one and a half years, it will be our turn again...so then we can round up the people. During the Yasin recital, prayers for those who have passed on, al Quran recital, we read the prayers before eating, marhaban, then we will discuss what we have to do, and how to resolve issues. (Respondent PT)

4.1.5 Skills in Delegating Roles

Another important competency for village leaders is the skills of delegating roles to members of the committee. First, the leader has to build a strong and effective team among the villagers. Usually, the leaders will appoint their committee. Selected committee members must know their tasks and roles and plan suitable programs and activities. Mastery in disbursing roles and delegating tasks by JKKK chairpersons to other committee members benefits that particular JKKK because various programs and activities can be planned all year long apart from simplifying the task and role of JKKK chairpersons. One of the respondents emphasized the importance of delegating roles to each other in the organization:

We give them a role. If he is capable, we will appoint them as one of our committee. There are many who are wise and young village children, who are experts in computer and ICT were selected to be members of the committee and given roles that could contribute to village development. (Respondent UL)

4.1.6 Interpersonal Skills

Village leaders cannot perform their leadership roles well if they do not have good interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skill is the ability of a leader to build, instill and maintain good relationships with villagers. Such skills are very important for a village leader because

he needs to build social relationships, to understand, to respect, and to develop a sense of acceptance in the community, thus establishing an amicable relationship between leaders and villagers. Village leaders are those who earn the trust of villagers because of their reputation and the roles they play with regard to maintaining relationships with government departments, politicians of the area, and so on. Hence, the characteristics or traits, which are essential to village leaders, are their ability to build and maintain relationships with villagers. In this regard, village leaders will ensure that their relationships with villagers are always amicable. They appreciate and respect villagers. They also take care of them by visiting their houses, attending events hosted by villagers, getting to know them, and knowing their houses. Moreover, they respect the elderly and accept their views. A respondent, in his description, explained

Encik Dahalan knows everyone in the village, including the children. If you count 33 houses, there are around 400 over households. (Respondent PK)

They show high respect to those older than them. They are sympathetic with the young. A respondent elaborated that village leaders must respect the elderly and the youths as all of them have their own advantages, and they are sources that could be harnessed for exposure to village development.

Yes, it's like this...Pak Long always...Pak Long's idea...the elders must be respected...one day, the youth are loved...we will not lose anything even though we are older, right...Pak Long loves to talk. Why must we show off, why? One day, if we are blessed with long life, when we are older, the younger kids will do to us...it's ok. Insha Allah (with god permits)...but don't fight them, what's important is they have to accept our views, criticisms as well. The youth can get away with things, but if an elderly gives opinion, they will clobber us...the elderly had a lot of experience. (Respondent UL)

They strive to establish good relationships by getting to know each villager, preparing villagers' profiles, planning all types of activities to foster better relationships between them. They also strive to maintain the good relationship by being caring and by considering all their needs as well as accepting and respecting villagers with different understandings, especially of politics. In this respect, a respondent stressed the importance of maintaining good relationships:

It's actually like this, even in our own village have oppositions, we have a big camp here, but the camp is not as active, but as village leaders, we cannot, I have to support the government, first, I am a retiree, second, I am a government pensioner and village leaders must support government so nevertheless, they are my people I have to be fair and ... (Respondent PW)

4.1.7 Skills in Establishing Cooperation and Consensus Among Villagers

JKKK leaders need to build and foster good relationships with villagers to increase understanding and unity amongst villagers. Unity amongst community members will ensure a consolidated effort to attain the goals of economic development and social relationships. In line with this, each JKKK leader strives to ensure that unity among residents is always heightened. One of the informants stated this as renewing *sillaturrahim*. It means that leaders will strive to build relationships with villagers and ensure that they meet regularly to enhance their relationships and to tie their loyalty toward leaders. In terms of this, leaders will always be consulted on any issues. JKKK leaders will plan activities to enable them to meet frequently and such meetings will be used as platforms to inform them of important updates pertaining to village development. Among the things that are routinely done by JKKK

leaders, are to ensure their presence at all times and sessions. They attend funerals, feasts, celebrations, *gotong-royong* activities, weddings, and religious programs such as congregational prayers, weekly *Yasin* recitals, monthly *gotong-royong* activities, and Islamic celebrations. With regard to religious ceremonies, one informant clarified that Islamic programs will be prepared on a weekly or monthly basis. For example, the respondent explained the way he handled religious programs as follows:

As continuation, we have once a month, we have weekly, every night. All the ustaz from elsewhere comes, ustaz from MRSM. We pay from the masjid's money, if early enough; we have contribution from the government department. (Respondent PK)

Apart from that, leaders give room and accept views from all levels of community. They appreciate and accept their differences in politics. They have good rapport with other institutions such as youth clubs, *suraus*, *masjids*, neighborhood associations, and all decisions are made through meetings. In this respect, a respondent stated:

His skill as an addition, this actually we must always discuss and ask for others' view. We cannot focus on ourselves only. Ah ... why we, if we have 11 to 12 members. JK, each is focused. So after discussion, we summarize what we understand and we can make one decision. (Respondent TK)

5. Conclusion and Future Scope

In conclusion, this empirical study was carried out to identify competencies for effective village leaders for village development. In presenting the competencies of effective leadership for village development, some of these competencies are very important, and are unique attributes of village leadership. The competencies are skills in acquiring funds and resources for development, writing and presentation skills, entrepreneurship skills, and creativity in planning for social and economic activities. This study focuses on village leaders who act as agents of change, focusing on bringing more developments to the areas, looking after village security, tackling social issues and strengthening livelihood through making available more entrepreneurial opportunities.

These skills that have been identified ensure that the leaders have the required competencies. Therefore, a systematic program of leadership developments effort must be initiated. Thus, the Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA) has conducted courses for the development for village leaders. However, these courses are conducted on an ad-hoc basis. Thus far, no systematic assessment of training needs has been conducted. Educating village leaders, specifically for rural development, has the double advantage of qualifying them to carry on constructive undertakings. Moreover, training programs for village leaders should aim principally to improve their competence to deal with development programs and to sustain their confidence so that they are enabled to draw out and rely upon the strength of their community that they represent or that they are associated with.

Based on this study, these four propositions are offered here as bases, indicating the general area on which leadership training programs should be constructed.

First, leadership training should aim to improve the technical skills and knowledge required by the leaders to perform their roles and functions in the community. In this, particular attention should be paid to those areas such as skills in acquiring funds and resources for development, writing and presentation skills, entrepreneurship skills, and creativity in planning for social and economic activities. Attention should also be given to the problems associated with changes in roles as development takes place in the community.

Second, leadership training should aim to increase the understanding of the leader with regard to the individual and social forces, which operate within the community and

which affect the community from outside. By understanding what motivates people and how they tend to react to different situations, leaders are encouraged to develop their own skills and confidence in communicating and dealing with people. Such skills would enable them to recreate their relationships with other members of the community.

Third, leadership training should aim to be concise, particular and relevant. To this end, it must be conceived of as ongoing programs, training experiences related to real life events rather than as a series of infrequent and unrelated courses. To be effective, it must provide a regular and constant refreshment and reinforcement for people whose main concerns are the lives they lead and the functions they exercise.

Finally, leadership training should aim to improve the morale and self-confidence of the leaders so that they are encouraged to think of times of change and development as times of opportunity and not as times that threaten their personal positions.

Thus, it is recommended that the INFRA utilizes these competencies identified and the propositions offered as a base among other similar research works for the improvement of a training model for village leaders in the future.

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Table 2
Village Leadership Competencies Framework

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability associated with creating vision and direction of the organization and the community for development. ▪ The ability to plan and implement various socio-economic projects. 2. Creativity in planning social activities and fund-raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to be creative, innovative in planning and managing resources for village development. ▪ The ability to seize business opportunities, obtain resources and assistance for development. ▪ Learning the skills of effective fund-raising. Understand key components of effective fund-raising including how to identify and approach potential resources. 3. Knowledgeable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suitably experienced and have in-depth knowledge in village development and administrative aspects and provide necessary advice as needed by villagers. ▪ Has wide knowledge about government agencies and departments, which can assist village development. 4. Communication skills and influence skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The leaders' ability to clearly disseminate information in an engaging way. Show concern, respect and fairness, and underpin effective communication and influencing. ▪ Present ideas in a stimulating engaging way. ▪ Can put themselves in other people's shoes, empathize and appreciate. ▪ The ability to listen to others, discuss in an open and honest atmosphere. 5. Entrepreneurial skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generating ideas to diversify local-based economy. ▪ Recognizing and envisioning, taking advantage of available opportunities. ▪ Formulating strategies for taking advantage of available opportunities. ▪ Goal-setting skills. ▪ Acquiring business operational skills. 6. Networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to establish good rapport with politicians and government departments to obtain advice and to get resources. 7. Teamwork and delegation skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to work in team, collaborative problem-solving atmosphere. The ability to compromise, seek consensus and build mutually acceptable decisions. Empower and motivate team members to accomplish goals. ▪ The ability to trust other people to perform. The ability to broadly share responsibility and accountability. The ability to allow members of the organization to perform both routine tasks and administration to achieve the development goal. 8. Writing and presentation skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to present information and ideas effectively, good verbal and written communication. The ability to prepare reports, write meeting minutes and prepare a comprehensive village profile. 9. Developing good values and leadership practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to model effective leadership traits including credibility, integrity, enthusiasm, commitment, honesty, openness, caring, and trust. 10. Adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to adapt to situations and be flexible when confronted with various problems or volatile surroundings. 11. Interpersonal skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to build relationships and adjust to how individuals, organizations and cultures function and react. The ability to sense how others feel. The ability to foster rapport with stakeholders involved.
