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Relationship between Social Awareness and Self-Leadership Capabilities: A survey of Indonesian librarians

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Abstract

This study explores how social awareness influences self-leadership—specifically self-goal setting and self-reward—among Indonesian librarians. Using a survey of 406 respondents, data were analyzed via PLS-SEM. Findings reveal that empathy, service orientation, developing others, and political awareness significantly enhance self-leadership. However, leveraging diversity showed no impact. These results highlight the importance of interpersonal and emotional competencies in shaping self-regulation. The study offers insights for organizational development, suggesting that enhancing social awareness fosters self-leadership in professional settings. Data were collected through validated online questionnaires using purposive and convenient sampling, contributing to understanding emotional intelligence in the workplace.

Keywords: Social awareness, Self-leadership, Librarian, Indonesia

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1.0 Introduction
As the information needs of society continue to evolve, librarians have become essential in promoting access to knowledge, supporting digital literacy, and encouraging lifelong learning within their communities. In Indonesia, librarians face unique challenges, from resource limitations to rapidly changing technological demands, all of which require them to adopt a proactive approach in their professional roles. This context demands that librarians not only perform their core duties effectively but also take charge of their professional development and adapt to new responsibilities (Masrek et al., 2021). To meet these demands, self-leadership becomes a crucial capability, allowing librarians to navigate their roles with independence, resilience, and a focus on continuous improvement.

One of the factors that potentially influences self-leadership is social awareness, which encompasses the ability to understand and respond to the needs, emotions, and social dynamics of others. For librarians, social awareness is especially relevant, as their work often involves engaging with diverse community members and addressing various information needs (Sheldon, 2009). By cultivating social awareness, Indonesian librarians could strengthen their capacity for self-leadership, fostering the drive to set personal goals and sustain motivation, even in challenging environments. Understanding this relationship could shed light on the ways librarians can harness interpersonal skills to further their professional growth.

However, despite the importance of self-leadership in the field of librarianship, there has been limited research examining how social awareness specifically impacts self-leadership among librarians in Indonesia. In the context of a rapidly evolving information landscape in a multicultural country, Indonesian librarians find themselves in a distinctive position, facing the dual challenge of adapting to

technological advances while catering to the diverse needs of a heterogeneous population. This underscores the importance of examining their social awareness and self-leadership skills, as these competencies are indispensable for navigating interpersonal dynamics, fostering innovation, and encouraging community engagement. While existing studies in other fields highlight the benefits of social awareness for personal and professional development (e.g. Ufie et al. 2024; Yuniarto et al., 2024), there is a notable gap in the literature when it comes to Indonesian librarians. Exploring this gap is critical, as it could reveal valuable insights into how these professionals can enhance their self-leadership capabilities to better serve their communities and adapt to their dynamic roles. To address this research gap, this study poses the following question: How does social awareness influence self-leadership capabilities, specifically self-goal setting and self-reward, among librarians in Indonesia?

2.0 Hypothesis Development

Empathy, a pivotal component of social awareness, has been demonstrated to play a substantial role in the enhancement of self-leadership capabilities. This enhancement is achieved by fostering self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and meaningful goal-setting. Empathic individuals have the capacity to align their personal goals with the needs of others, thereby enabling them to set objectives that promote both individual and collective success. Goleman (1996) emphasized empathy as a cornerstone of emotional intelligence, critical for leadership and self-management, while (Barbuto et al. 2007) linked empathy to intrinsic motivation, a key driver of self-leadership behaviors such as self-goal setting and self-reward. In the field of library science, Farmer (2003) emphasized that empathetic librarians demonstrate superior leadership abilities by virtue of their superior understanding and capacity to address user needs, thereby establishing a robust correlation between empathy and professional advancement. These findings underscore the pivotal role of empathy in fostering self-leadership, suggesting that the cultivation of this skill can enhance interpersonal effectiveness and self-regulatory capabilities across a range of professional settings. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework of this study, with self-leadership capability as the dependent variable and social awareness as the independent variable.

Social awareness is defined as the capacity to understand and respond to others' emotions and needs, demonstrated through empathy, service orientation, active support for others' development, leveraging diversity, and political awareness (Serrat & Serrat, 2017). This skill encompasses recognizing social dynamics, appreciating diverse perspectives, and understanding how to effectively navigate and positively influence social and organizational contexts. Self-leadership capabilities, on the other hand, reflect an individual's ability to self-motivate and direct through proactive behaviors like self-goal setting and self-reward (Houghton & Neck, 2002). These behaviors involve assuming personal responsibility, setting purposeful objectives, and consistently reinforcing one's progress toward achieving these goals. According to the theoretical framework, the dependent variable will be treated as a second-order construct, while the independent variable will be handled as a first-order construct. Treating self-leadership capabilities as a second-order construct allows for a comprehensive view of the various behaviors and strategies that collectively define this capability, such as self-goal setting and self-reward. By structuring self-leadership as a second-order construct, it is possible to capture the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of self-leadership, emphasizing how different self-regulatory behaviors work together to enhance an individual's overall self-leadership. On the other hand, treating social awareness as a first-order construct simplifies the focus on its direct impact on self-leadership capabilities. This approach recognizes social awareness as a foundational influence on self-leadership behaviors, grounded in specific skills like empathy, service orientation, and political awareness. A first-order approach enables a clear assessment of how these distinct components of social awareness contribute directly to fostering self-leadership.
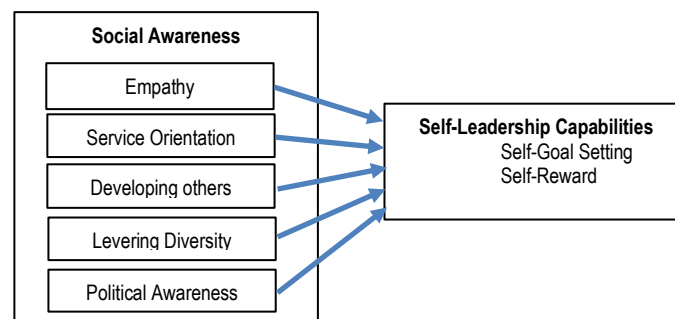

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework
(Source: Developed by the author)

Several dimensions are commonly used to assess self-leadership; however, this study focuses specifically on self-goal setting and self-reward among librarians. For librarians, self-goal setting refers to the ability to engage in self-regulation by leveraging reference-dependent preferences and loss aversion, which helps individuals with present-biased preferences to overcome self-control challenges (Koch & Nafziger, 2011). Self-reward, on the other hand, is the ability of a librarian to intentionally provide themselves with incentives or positive reinforcements in recognition of their accomplishments or successful behavior changes, thereby enhancing motivation and reinforcing desired behaviors (Brown et al., 2017). According to Yu, Park, and Jang (2018), personal and professional factors strongly influence self-leadership, with social awareness being one of the personal factors that may play a significant role in librarians' ability to self-direct and sustain motivation.

Social awareness is a crucial skill that enables individuals to navigate and positively influence social and organizational environments (Serrat & Serrat, 2017). It is comprised of several key dimensions, each contributing uniquely to one's ability to understand and respond effectively to the emotions, needs, and dynamics of others—and potentially influencing one's self-leadership capabilities. Empathy, defined as the ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives while taking an active interest in their concerns, enhances self-leadership by fostering a heightened awareness of social dynamics. Individuals with strong empathy are better equipped to set meaningful goals that align with the needs and values of those around them, reinforcing a sense of purpose and accountability in their self-regulation efforts. This social attunement can motivate individuals to engage in self-leadership behaviors that consider both personal and collective outcomes. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed: *H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between empathy and self-leadership capabilities.*

Service orientation, which involves anticipating, recognizing, and meeting others' needs, encourages individuals to cultivate a proactive mindset focused on adding value and responding effectively to the concerns of those they serve (Serrat & Serrat, 2017). In the context of self-leadership, this orientation fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability, as individuals who are attuned to others' needs often set goals that reflect a commitment to positive impact. This focus can enhance self-motivation and reinforce personal discipline, as the drive to meet and exceed expectations supports the continuous self-regulation and reward mechanisms inherent to self-leadership. Furthermore, service-oriented individuals are more likely to develop adaptive strategies, such as setting higher personal standards and celebrating small wins, which sustain motivation and support goal achievement. To this effect, this study hypothesizes: *H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between service orientation and self-leadership capabilities.*

Developing others involves sensing what others need to grow and actively supporting their progress by bolstering their abilities (Serrat & Serrat, 2017). This skill cultivates a mindset of mentorship and empowerment, encouraging individuals to invest in the success of those around them. In the context of self-leadership, those who focus on developing others often set personal goals that reflect a commitment to shared growth and collaborative achievement. This approach not only enhances interpersonal relationships but also strengthens one's self-regulatory behaviors, as individuals who support others' development are more likely to apply similar standards to their own growth. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and accountability, developing others reinforces self-discipline and self-motivation, critical components of self-leadership. Based on this premise, the following hypothesis is formulated: H3: *There is a positive and significant relationship between developing others and self-leadership capabilities.*

Leveraging diversity involves cultivating opportunities by engaging with and valuing the perspectives of individuals from varied backgrounds (Serrat & Serrat, 2017). This dimension encourages openness, adaptability, and the ability to see challenges and solutions through a broad lens, which can be especially beneficial for self-leadership. By embracing diverse viewpoints, individuals enhance their own problem-solving abilities and are better equipped to set inclusive, well-rounded goals. Furthermore, those who leverage diversity often develop stronger interpersonal skills, which can improve self-regulatory behaviors such as self-goal setting and self-reward. This inclusive approach fosters a growth mindset, where individuals are motivated not only to develop themselves but also to create environments that reflect diverse strengths and talents. Given this background, the following hypothesis is developed: H4: *There is a positive and significant relationship between leveraging diversity and self-leadership capabilities.*

Political awareness involves reading a group's emotional currents and understanding the underlying power dynamics within social and organizational contexts. This skill allows individuals to navigate complex social environments with greater insight, helping them to align their personal goals with the broader objectives and expectations of their group or organization. In the context of self-leadership, political awareness fosters strategic thinking, as individuals who are attuned to power relationships and emotional climates are better equipped to set realistic and contextually relevant goals. Political awareness also enhances self-regulation by enabling individuals to adjust their behaviors to better influence and work within social dynamics, strengthening their resilience and adaptability. By recognizing and responding to group dynamics, those with high political awareness can maintain motivation and accountability in their self-leadership journey. Against this background, the present study hypothesizes that: H5: *There is a positive and significant relationship between political awareness and self-leadership capabilities.*

3.0 Methodology

This employed a survey research methodology. The survey methodology was chosen because it facilitates the collection of quantitative data, which enables the use of statistical analysis to examine the relationships between variables systematically and objectively. The population of this study amounted to 5,055, while the sample technique used was purposive and convenient, totaling 406 Indonesian librarian respondents. The total number of respondents is considered reasonable because it is sufficient for statistical analysis and adequately represents the target population. The questionnaire items were meticulously adapted from established sources in the literature, ensuring alignment with the constructs of social awareness and self-leadership to accurately reflect the variables under investigation. To enhance the instrument's validity and reliability, both pre-testing and pilot testing were conducted. These preliminary assessments confirmed the robustness of the items, confirming the instrument's suitability for the main study. The target population included librarians from various Indonesian libraries, thereby capturing a diverse range of professional experiences. Given the absence of a reliable sampling frame, a purposive and convenient sampling approach was employed, focusing on individuals who were both accessible and willing to participate. This approach allowed for effective data collection within the practical constraints of the study. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the hypothesized relationships within the theoretical framework. SmartPLS version 4.0 was selected for the PLS-SEM analyses due

to its user-friendly interface and widespread adoption among researchers, facilitating an efficient and detailed examination of the direct and indirect effects between social awareness and self-leadership dimensions within the context of Indonesian librarians.

4.0 Findings

4.1. Demographic

Of the 406 respondents, 287 are female, representing 70.7% of the sample, while 119 are male, accounting for the remaining 29.3%. The largest age group is 25 - 30 years, comprising 25.6% of participants, followed by those aged 31 - 35 years at 21.9%. Participants aged 36 - 40 and 41 - 45 years each make up 11.6% of the sample, indicating a balanced representation in these mid-age groups. Among the total sample, 399 participants provided valid responses, with 7 classified as missing data (1.7%). Educationally, the majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, constituting 79.8% of the total sample and 81.2% of valid responses. Master's degree holders represent 10.8% of the total, or 11.0% of valid responses. Only a small portion, 1.7% of the total sample (1.8% of valid responses), have a PhD. This distribution suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of younger adults with a high level of education, particularly at the Bachelor's level.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Convergent validity reflects the degree to which measures of related constructs are correlated, indicating they capture the same underlying concept. Factor loading represents the correlation between observed variables and their latent constructs, with higher loadings (typically above 0.7) suggesting a strong representation of the construct. Composite reliability assesses the internal consistency of indicators within a construct, with values above 0.7 indicating satisfactory reliability. Lastly, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the amount of variance captured by a construct relative to measurement error, where an AVE of 0.5 or higher suggests that the construct explains at least 50% of its indicators' variance. As shown in Table 1, all these requirements are met, with factor loadings above 0.7 for all items, composite reliability exceeding 0.7, and AVE above 0.5, suggesting that convergent validity can be assumed.

Table 1. Factor Loading, Composite Reliability & Average Variance Extracted

	Item Code	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Self-Leadership	BFGS1	0.709	0.911	0.561
	BFGS2	0.766		
	BFGS3	0.739		
	BFGS4	0.794		
	BFSR1	0.749		
	BFSR2	0.771		
	BFSR3	0.748		
	BFSR4	0.712		
Developing Others	SADO1	0.873	0.881	0.712
	SADO2	0.850		
	SADO3	0.808		
Empathy	SAEM1	0.890	0.909	0.768
	SAEM2	0.879		
	SAEM3	0.859		
Leveraging Diversity	SALD1	0.828	0.878	0.707
	SALD2	0.831		
	SALD3	0.863		
Political Awareness	SAPA1	0.811	0.881	0.712
	SAPA2	0.853		
	SAPA3	0.866		
Service Orientation	SASO1	0.883	0.894	0.738
	SASO2	0.855		
	SASO3	0.839		

(Source: Processed by the author)

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Based on HTMT

	Developing Others	Empathy	Leveraging Diversity	Political Awareness	Self-Leadership	Service Orientation
Developing Others						
Empathy	0.768					
Leveraging Diversity	0.918	0.728				
Political Awareness	0.720	0.618	0.756			
Self-Leadership	0.692	0.651	0.609	0.653		
Service Orientation	0.936	0.812	0.839	0.641	0.663	

(Source: Processed by the author)

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is distinct from other constructs within a model, ensuring it captures a unique concept. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is commonly used to assess discriminant validity by comparing correlations

between constructs. HTMT calculates the ratio of average correlations between different constructs to those within the same construct. An HTMT value below 0.85 (or 0.90 in some cases) indicates that constructs are sufficiently distinct, supporting discriminant validity. As presented in Table 2, this requirement is also met suggesting discriminant validity can be assumed.

4.3. Structural Model Assessment & Hypothesis Testing

Path analysis is a statistical method for examining direct and indirect relationships between variables within a model, essential for hypothesis testing. Beta (β) indicates the strength and direction of relationships, where a significant beta (typically with a p-value < 0.05) supports hypothesis acceptance. Additionally, f^2 measures effect size, helping to gauge each variable's contribution, with values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 representing small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The R^2 value reveals the model's explanatory power, showing the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Higher R^2 values support hypothesis acceptance by indicating strong model fit. Q^2, which assesses predictive relevance, indicates how well the model predicts new data; a positive Q^2 value suggests sufficient predictive accuracy, further supporting hypothesis acceptance. Together, these metrics aid in deciding whether to accept or reject hypotheses based on significance, effect size, explanatory power, and predictive relevance. As shown in Table 3, out of the five hypotheses, H1: Empathy → Self-Leadership Capability, H2: Service Orientation → Self-Leadership Capability, H3: Developing Others → Self-Leadership Capability and H5: Political Awareness → Self-Leadership Capability are supported while H4: Leveraging Diversity → Self-Leadership Capability is not supported.

Table 3. Path Analysis

	β	T value	P values	f^2	R^2	Q^2	Hypothesis
H1: Empathy → Self-Leadership Capability	0.225	3.838	0	0.045	0.461	0.253	Supported
H2: Service Orientation → Self-Leadership Capability	0.149	1.896	0.029	0.223			Supported
H3: Developing Others → Self-Leadership Capability	0.196	2.617	0.004	0.023			Supported
H4: Leveraging Diversity → Self-Leadership Capability	-0.022	0.289	0.386	0.234			Not Supported
H5: Political Awareness → Self-Leadership Capability	0.262	5.177	0	0.007			Supported

(Source: Processed by the author)

5.0 Discussion

The findings indicate that social awareness, specifically through empathy, service orientation, developing others, and political awareness, has a significant positive influence on self-leadership capabilities—namely, self-goal setting and self-reward—among Indonesian librarians. The positive relationships identified in H1, H2, H3, and H5 suggest that these social awareness dimensions are crucial for enhancing self-leadership behaviors, as they enable librarians to set meaningful goals and reward themselves for achieving milestones along their professional journey. Librarians who demonstrate high levels of empathy are more inclined to establish personal and professional goals that are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of those they serve, fostering a deeper sense of purpose and accountability (Phillips, 2017). Likewise, librarians with a strong service orientation tend to align their self-directed efforts with the broader mission of community service, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation and commitment to continuous improvement (Shahzad & Khan, 2023). Moreover, the capacity to develop others—an essential dimension of social awareness—enables librarians to cultivate leadership capabilities not only in themselves but also in their colleagues, creating a ripple effect of empowerment within their institutions.

Those who possess political awareness, meanwhile, exhibit a strategic understanding of organizational dynamics, allowing them to navigate complex social networks and institutional expectations with greater efficacy (Mari, 2020). Such individuals are better positioned to set achievable, contextually informed goals and to celebrate incremental progress through self-reward mechanisms, reinforcing their self-leadership competencies. Conversely, the results for H4, which proposed a relationship between leveraging diversity and self-leadership capabilities, were not supported. This unexpected finding suggests that, within the Indonesian library context, leveraging diversity—although an important organizational strength—does not directly fuel the personal processes of goal setting and self-reward among individual librarians. Diversity may contribute to the richness of workplace interactions and institutional decision-making (Hopf et al., 2021), but it appears less influential as a driver of individual self-leadership behaviors in this specific environment. It is plausible that the value of diversity is perceived more at the collective or systemic level rather than internalized at the individual level for personal development purposes. Thus, initiatives aimed at promoting diversity may enhance organizational culture broadly without necessarily translating into increased self-directed leadership behaviors at the individual librarian level. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Bakar, Ishak, and Abidin (2014), Nurul et al. (2017), and Vann, Sparks, and Baker (2017), which have consistently emphasized the pivotal role of interpersonal and social competencies in shaping effective self-leadership. The evolving role of librarians in the digital age increasingly demands not only technical skills but also advanced social and leadership capabilities. Librarians are now expected to navigate complex information ecosystems, collaborate across diverse stakeholder groups, and respond proactively to the changing needs of their communities. In this regard, social awareness becomes not merely a supportive attribute but a central driver of professional effectiveness and resilience.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study contributes to the understanding of how social awareness influences self-leadership capabilities, specifically self-goal setting and self-reward, among Indonesian librarians. The findings highlight that empathy, service orientation, developing others, and political awareness are significant drivers of self-leadership, emphasizing the role of interpersonal skills within self-leadership frameworks. These results not only expand theoretical insights but also offer practical guidance for library management. By focusing on social awareness skills in training programs, libraries can better equip their staff to set meaningful goals, sustain motivation, and engage more effectively with their communities, ultimately enhancing both individual and organizational performance. However, the study has some limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, and the purposive sampling method limits generalizability. Additionally, the lack of a significant relationship between leveraging diversity and self-leadership suggests a need for further exploration. Future research could address these limitations by using more diverse sampling and mixed methods, as well as examining other cultural and organizational contexts. Such studies would deepen the understanding of social awareness in self-leadership, supporting more targeted professional development strategies in librarianship and beyond.

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