MEDIATING EFFECT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL ON THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' PERCEIVED TEACHERS' EXPECTANCY AND SELF-ESTEEM

by

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LIST OF ABBREVATION

1. BCAG = Between-Class Ability Grouping
2. HAC = High-Achievers' Classes
3. LAC = Low-Achievers' Classes
4. LoC = Locus of Control
5. PTE = Perceived Teachers' Expectancy
6. PTEa = Perceived Teachers' Expectancy of academic achievement
7. PTEd = Perceived Teachers' Expectancy of disciplinary problems
8. TE = Teachers' Expectancy
9. TEa = Teachers' Expectancy of academic achievement
10. TEd = Teachers' Expectancy of disciplinary problems

KESAN MEDIASI LOKUS KAWALAN TERHADAP HUBUNGAN SEBAB-AKIBAT ANTARA PERSEPSI PELAJAR TERHADAP JANGKAAN GURU DAN ESTIM KENDIRI

ABSTRAK

Kajian mod campuran ini bertujuan mengkaji kesan mediasi Lokus Kawalan terhadap hubungan sebab-akibat (*causal relationship*) antara persepsi pelajar terhadap jangkaan guru dengan estim kendiri pelajar di sekolah-sekolah yang mempraktikkan sistem pengelasan pelajar berdasarkan pencapaian akademik. Kewujudan bias hubung balas (*correspondence bias*) antara guru-guru di sekolah-sekolah tersebut turut dikaji. Untuk bahagian kuantitatif kajian ini, seramai 795 pelajar-pelajar tingkatan dua (Tahun 8) yang terdiri daripada 446 pelajar lemah dan 349 pelajar cemerlang serta 72 orang guru dari lima buah sekolah menengah di Pulau Pinang telah dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan. Manakala, 10 orang guru dan 7 orang pelajar telah dipilih dari dalam kalangan sampel untuk kajian bahagian kualitatif. Untuk bahagian kuantitatif, estim kendiri diukur dengan menggunakan *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (Rosenberg, 1965), manakala Lokus Kawalan diukur dengan menggunakan *Internal Control Index* (Dutweiller, 1984), dan persepsi pelajar terhadap jangkaan guru pula diukur dengan menggunakan *Scales of Perceived Teachers' Expectancy* (Prihadi, 2009). *Scales of Teachers' Expectancy* telah dibina untuk mengumpul data tentang jangkaan guru terhadap pelajar. Semua skala telah diterjemahkan ke bahasa Malaysia dan skor kebolehpercayaan konsistensi dalaman (*Cronbach's alpha*) yang didapati untuk setiap skala adalah melebihi 0.6. Temubual berpenghujungan terbuka (*open-ended*) telah dijalankan terhadap para pelajar dan guru-guru. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh daripada persepsi pelajar terhadap jangkaan guru ke atas estim kendiri pelajar dimediasikan oleh Lokus Kawalan mereka. Dalam erti kata lain, estim kendiri pelajar tidak dipengaruhi persepsi pelajar terhadap jangkaan guru sekiranya mereka mempunyai Lokus Kawalan dalaman. Walau bagaimanapun, kesan mediasi tidak kelihatan dalam kalangan pelajar-pelajar cemerlang. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa bias hubung balas wujud dalam kalangan guru-guru. Ini bermakna guru-guru mempunyai jangkaan yang berbeza terhadap pelajar-pelajar cemerlang dan pelajar-pelajar lemah hanya berdasarkan pengelasan mereka; pelajar-pelajar cemerlang dijangka untuk mempunyai keinginan untuk meningkatkan pencapaian mereka manakala pelajar-pelajar lemah pula dijangka akan terlibat dalam masalah-masalah disiplin. Beberapa tema yang bermakna telah muncul sepanjang analisis data kualitatif. Tema-tema ini berfungsi dalam menerangkan fenomenon tersebut dengan lebih mendalam. Tema-tema yang muncul adalah seperti kedengkian berbalas antara pelajar-pelajar cemerlang dengan pelajar-pelajar lemah, tekanan daripada matlamat-matlamat pihak pengurusan sekolah, dan keterlibatan peranan pusat-pusat tuisyen.

MEDIATING EFFECT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL ON THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' PERCEIVED TEACHERS' EXPECTANCY AND SELF-ESTEEM

ABSTRACT

This mixed method study is looking at the mediation effect of Locus of control on the causal relationship between students' perceived teachers' expectancy and their self-esteem in the schools where Between Class Ability Grouping is practiced. The existence of correspondence bias among the teachers in such schools is also investigated. A total of 795 form two (year 8) students (446 low achievers and 349 high achievers) and 72 teachers from five secondary schools in the state of Penang were selected via purposive sampling method to participate in the quantitative part of this study. 10 teachers and 7 students from were taken from the sample in order to participate in the qualitative part of this study. Quantitatively, self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), while Locus of Control was measured by using Internal Control Index (Dutweiller, 1984), and Students' perceived teachers' expectancy is measured by using Scales of Perceived Teachers' Expectancy (Prihadi, 2009). Scale of Teachers' Expectancy was developed in order to collect the data about teachers' expectancy towards the students. All scales were translated into the Malay language and internal consistency reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha) were found to be above 0.6 for all scales. Open-ended interviews to the students and teachers were conducted in order to collect the qualitative data. Results showed that students from low-performers' classes had their internal Locus of Control mediates the influence of their perceived teachers' expectancy on their self-esteem; in other words, their self-esteem would not be influenced by their perception of teachers' expectancy if they have internal Locus of Control. However, mediation effect was not shown among high-performer students. This study also discovered that correspondence bias occurred among teachers, which means that teachers developed different expectancy towards high and low achiever students without any further consideration; they expect high-achievers to be willing to improve their achievement and low-achievers are expected to be involved in disciplinary problems. Some meaningful themes emerged during the qualitative data analyses and played their roles in explaining the phenomenon even deeper. The themes are namely reciprocal envy between high and low achievers, pressure from the school managements' goals, and the involvement of tuition centers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Many studies on self-esteem have been done in school context (for example: Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Burton, 2004; Ferkany, 2008; Flouri, 2006; Humphrey, 2004; Lawrence, 2006; Miller & Daniel, 2007; Miller & Moran, 2005; Prihadi & Chin, 2011; Prihadi & Chua, 2012; Prihadi, Hairul, & Hazri, 2010; Prihadi & Hairul, 2011; Smith, 2002; Swinson, 2008). Many of the researchers maintained that self-esteem is an important factor to be considered in education (Burton, 2004; Ferkany, 2008; Flouri, 2006; Humphrey, 2004; Smith, 2002; Swinson, 2008), while some others have argued that students' self-esteem has no significant effect on academic achievements, hence it is not necessary for a school to conduct some specific actions to enhance it (Baumeister, et al., 2004; Miller & Moran, 2005; Miller & Daniel, 2007). Nevertheless, a meta analysis by Ferkany (2008) indicated that when academic achievement is taken as the only result of education, self-esteem will not be recognized as an important academic factors (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). When students' social behavior is taken as one of the factors that determine their success, role of self-esteem is considered important (Ferkany, 2008; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008; Mruk, 2006). While academic achievement might be a common measurable element of academic success, students' social behavior is an important element to be considered in developing a functional nation.

Recently defined as individuals' sense of worthiness and competence (Mruk, 2006), self-esteem plays a significant role in school context; it is important to the motivation children need in order to be academically successful (Branden, 1994; Cigman, 2004; Ferkany, 2008; Lawrence, 2006). Low self-esteem is related to potential offensive and delinquent behavior (Donellan, Trezesniewski, Robins, Moffit &Caspi, 2005; Fergusson & Harwood, 2002), while high but unstable self-esteem leads to hostile and antisocial behavior (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger&Vohs, 2005; Kernis, Grannemann & Barclay 1989). In other words, an adequate self-esteem is significant in determining students' future behavior and further success (Block & Robbins, 1993; Ferkany, 2008; Martin et al., 2005, Von der Haar, 2005). Thereby, facilitating students' self-esteem might be a part that supports the schools' academic goals, without making it as an educational priority (Ferkany, 2008). Moreover, self-esteem can be seen as a construct that mediates between ability and achievement; self-esteem could influence subsequent achievement, and achievement could influence subsequent levels of self-esteem (Humphrey, 2004). Thereby, having a school with self-esteem-enhancing environment is an equal need of every student.

As equal as the need of education, the need of self-esteem enhancement is considered equal in every student. However, they have differences in many aspects, such as in terms of knowledge, skills, interests, motivations, and academic abilities. Because learning could be varied in terms of method, pace, preference, and many others, in order to deliver education more effectively, students are to be grouped based on their common attributes (Hallam, Ireson, & Davies, 2002). In the context of Malaysia, the most common student-grouping practice in public secondary schools is to group students in separate classrooms for most subjects, based on their level of

ability, which refer to their prior general academic achievements (Aminuddin, Tajularipin, & Norhasni, 2009). This grouping practice is termed as between-class ability grouping (BCAG) (Ireson & Hallam, 2001; Slavin, 2006)

In general, there are several reasons in practicing BCAG. They are namely: raising standards, matching work to pupil needs, the demands of different curriculum subjects, making the best use of teacher expertise, the national literacy and numeracy strategies (in the UK), meeting the non-academic needs of pupils, school and class size, resources, timetabling, school ethos, and accountability to outside bodies (Ireson & Hallam, 2001). Overall, it is summarized that schools' main consideration when taking decisions about grouping practices is related to students' academic achievement and the need to match the work to the students' need. In other words, the aim of BCAG is to enhance their academic achievement. Kulik (2004) supported the practice of BCAG by advocating that typical students in a non-grouped class might gain one year on a grade-equivalent scale in a calendar year, whereas the typical students in BCAG would gain 1.3 years; and the effects were positive for high, middle, and low groups in cross grade program.

However, in term of self-esteem enhancement, BCAG might not always produce the desired results. Several studies indicated that the practice of BCAG jeopardized students' psychological well-being, especially self-esteem (Al-Fadhli & Singh, 2006; Gamoran, 1992; Good, 1981; Slavin, 2006; Prihadi, et al., 2010; Tong, 2002). Even though academic achievement is one of the most important aspects to be considered in an educational system (Gamoran, 2002; Kulik, 2004; Saleh, Lazonder, & DeJong, 2005; Smith, 2002; Slavin, 1990), students' psychological well-being, such as self-esteem, significantly contributes to their future success (Ferkany, 2008). Studies has been done in Malaysian context related to BCAG and its influence on

students' self-esteem (Prihadi, et al., 2010; Prihadi & Chin, 2011), and it was reported that students who assigned to the lower academic group had their self-esteem negatively influenced by the grouping practice. Therefore, it is significant to obtain a deeper knowledge in how students' self-esteem is influenced by the BCAG in order to understand how to maintain and improve their self-esteem adequacy without having to alter the BCAG practice.

As an introduction to the study, this chapter is structured around the self-esteem in school setting related to BCAG, perceived teachers' expectancy (PTE), and locus of control (LoC). The chapter describes the research background, which drives the problem of the study, while articulating the specific research objectives and research questions. After discussing about the problem statement, the chapter then outlines the significance of this study and the used terms, followed by an explanation of the structure of the thesis, framing of the thesis would as well be described.

1.2 Background

In spite of the fact that BCAG is not a formal government policy, it is a common practice in most of the public secondary schools in Malaysia (Hassan, et al., 2009). Even though the practice of BCAG was mentioned to elevate many academic aspects of the students (Ireson & Hallam, 2001; Kulik, 2004), it was stated as well that BCAG affects students' socio emotional domains, students feel stigmatized being assigned to low-achievers classes, and such feelings affect their academic achievement (Slavin, 1987). Even students' attitude towards certain subjects, such as science, is influenced by the grouping practice, where they develop their attitude based on the grouping system instead of their interests (Chin & Lim, 2011). It is also suggested that having students being 'labeled' as high or low achievers leads the

teachers to have different expectancy towards different groups; they tend to expect students from high-achievers' classes (HAC) to be academically excellent, and students from low-achievers' classes (LAC) to be problematic (Good, 1981; Oakes, 1985; Tong, 2002). Subsequentially, teachers' different expectancy might affect the students' perception of themselves (Al-Fadhli & Singh, 2006; Rosenthal, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; 1992; Tong, 2002).

According to Slavin (1990, 2006), any educational system should avoid BCAG, because there are no research evidences that the system would significantly improve student academic achievement. The latter statement is supported by social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1989), which suggested that high-achievers might give a good model for the lower achievers if they are mixed in a classroom. On the other hand, BCAG limits the good model for the lower achievers due to the separation. Moreover, when labeled as 'lower-achievers', students are far more likely to become delinquent, truant, or drop out of school compared to the other students (Goodland, 1983; Oakes, 1985). In BCAG-practicing schools, it was argued that students' disposition of being placed in higher or lower groups might serve as prior information for teachers, which determine the level of teacher's expectancy (Myers, 2008). Subsequently, a phenomenon called *correspondence bias* might lead teachers to put higher expectancy towards students from the HAC and lower expectancy towards students from the LAC. This argument was based on the theory of attribution (Heider, 1958), and *correspondence bias* (Ross, 1977). Both theories are discussed thoroughly in the chapter 2 of this thesis.

Thomas L. Goods (1981) and Jeannie Oakes (1985) discovered that due to their expectancies, teachers who are assigned to teach in LAC are likely to focus on controlling the students' behavior in order to avoid disciplinary problems, while in

HAC, teachers are likely to center on supporting students to improve their academic achievements. This different kind of teachers' behavior would be perceived differently by students from different groups. Furthermore, students would perceive their teachers' expectancy based on the teachers' overt behavior, without knowing that it was a result of a correspondence bias. Sequentially, in line with the theory of symbolic interaction (Cooley, 1912; Mead, 1934; and Myers, 2008; Stryker, 2002), students' perceived teachers' expectancy (PTE) affects their way to evaluate their own worth and competence, which resulted as their self-esteem (Mruk, 2006).

Accordingly, Burns (1982) and Humphrey (2003) have argued that teachers and peers are extremely influential in the context of self-esteem. Humphrey (2001) has argued that teachers strongly influence the self-esteem of their students because they are perceived as experts and authority figures, and because they are one of two primary sources of feedback about academic competence (the other being the child's peer group). In the context of BCAG, neither teachers nor peer group would give positive feedback to LAC students, especially when they have to be compared to their counterparts in HAC. Therefore, the PTE between HAC and LAC students would be different, hence contribute differently to their self-esteem.

A study in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, found that students from different groups possessed different PTE. Students from LAC perceived that their teachers tend to control students' behavior to avoid disciplinary problems, while students from HAC perceived that the teachers were more likely to support students to improve academic achievements (Hazri, Prihadi, & Hairul, 2010). It was also discovered that students had their self-esteem significantly influenced by their PTE, instead of by the teachers' actual expectancy (Prihadi et al., 2010). Apart from that, PTE can also

influence students' attitude towards science subject (Prihadi & Chin, 2012), which lead to their academic achievements in the related subject.

In line with the relationship between PTE and self-esteem, it was argued that self-esteem is an integral sum of self-worth and self-competence (Mruk, 2006; Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). This two-dimensional model of self-esteem means that in order to have positive self-esteem, a student must feel confident about both his/her sense of self-worth and his/her sense of self-competence. Referring to this model, self-worth of HAC students is being supported by their being addressed as 'better', and their self-competence is supported by their previous academic reports, which are obviously higher than the other group. On the other hand, LAC students might perceived that their teachers expect them to be academically incompetent and 'worthless' due to their tendency to be involved in disciplinary problems, thus their self-esteem might be challenged.

According to Larsen and Buss (2008), self-esteem measures of many areas are correlated. A person with high self-esteem in one area also tends to have high self-esteem in the other areas as well. Self-esteem is considered significant for an individual, because it would influence ones' overt behavior (Coopersmith, 1967; Ferkany, 2008; Mruk, 2006), feelings that one is competent to cope with the challenges one faces and worthy of happiness (Branden, 1994). Thus, students with inadequate self-esteem level are likely to have social or disciplinary problems as bad as delinquent behavior, while students with adequate self-esteem level are likely to behave appropriately, as well as having better self-evaluation and expectancy. Therefore, self-esteem is an important attribute to be included in the concern of teaching and learning process; furthermore, knowledge on maintaining self-esteem at an adequate level plays important role to help the students in facing future challenges

and competitions (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008) and reducing unwanted behavior tendencies among students in the country.

Regardless the significance of self-esteem in determining students' behavior, some studies indicated that self-esteem might not be the only factor affecting students' behavior; the compound between LoC and self-esteem appears to be the important predictor (Flouri, 2006; Ryckman, 1993; Swinson, 2008). LoC refers to an individual's feeling about the placement of control over one's events and about one's responsibilities for those events. The concept of LoC measures the extent to how an individual attributes the cause of one's behavior to internal or external sources (Rotter, 1990). LoC refers to students' feeling about the placement of control over their events and about their responsibilities for those events. The concept of LoC measures the extent to how an individual attributes the cause of one's behavior to internal or external sources (Rotter, 1990). For instance, a student with external LoC would likely to think that his high academic score was due to the teachers' kindness to him, while a student with internal LoC would likely to admit that her low academic score was due to her being lazy. Furthermore, a previous study in Indonesia suggested that LoC mediates the influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem adequacy (Prihadi & Hairul, 2011a), and altering LoC might be the way to protect students' self-esteem from the negative influence of their own PTE (Prihadi & Chua, 2012).

The concept of LoC suggests that students differ in the extent to which they believe that their own behavior leads to the outcomes they experience subsequently. Students with high internal LoC perceive strong causal relationships. They are as well more likely to attempt to influence others due to their assumption that their efforts would produce success. They are more active in seeking information and

knowledge concerning their situation. On the other hand, students with external LoC do not always acknowledge the consequences of their behavior, and hence may be reluctant to take responsibility for their actions, tend to blame external factors for failure, and give credit to others on success. External factors that might be blamed or credited are ranged from the difficulty of an exam, poor instruction by a teacher, negative behavior of the teachers, or even bad luck (McCown, Driscoll, & Roop, 1996). Furthermore, it is suggested that children they class, as 'mal-adaptive, unmotivated and uncooperative' are more likely to be 'externals' (Swinson, 2008).

Ryckman (1993) believed that LoC depends on the behavior of significant others, which teachers could be considered as one of them. Warm and supportive teachers who often praise students for their behavior and being consistent on their preference would likely to provide condition for the students to learn to accept blame for failure and credit for success. In relation to this study, teachers' classroom behavior would likely to influence students' LoC through the students' perception. Students' who perceived their teachers to be supportive would likely to have internal LoC (Ryckman, 1993); therefore, related to the findings of Prihadi et al., (2010), in BCAG-practicing schools, there are some possibilities that HAC students tend to have more internal LoC, while LAC students tend to have more external LoC.

Similar to self-esteem, LoC is a significant predictor of behavior; individuals with internal LoC take more responsibilities for the outcomes of their behaviors compared to individuals with external LoC (Gregory, 1981). Students with internal LoC feel that they have the abilities to control the outcome of their behaviors. Thereby, they would likely to try to ensure success and overcome failures than their counterparts with external LoC. Some studies even suggested that internal LoC positively predicted better self-care and health-related knowledge (Ireland, 1997;

Miles, Sawyer, & Kennedy, 1995). Despite working separately in determining students' attitude and behavior, LoC and self-esteem are related to one another. Related to the previously mentioned statement by Gregory (1981), internal LoC related to the students' belief on how able they are to control the outcome of their behaviors. This statement indicated that there is a relationship between LoC and self-esteem. Students with internal LoC might be likely to have higher self-esteem compared to their counterparts with external LoC.

Relationship between self-esteem and LoC is more obvious when self-esteem is defined according to two-dimensional model by Tafarodi & Swann (1995) and Mruk (2006). Schunk and Pajares (2004) argued that internal LoC could be referred to self-efficacy; a belief that one can do what it takes to achieve a specific goal (Bandura, 1989; Locke, 2003). This definition of self-efficacy is identical to the definition of self-competence in two-dimensional model of self-esteem. Thus, internal LoC should be related to self-esteem; individuals with internal LoC are likely to possess higher self-competence, which is an important factor of the self-esteem.

In BCAG environment, teachers who fell into correspondence bias might show different classroom behavior to different groups of students. Students' observation on teachers' classroom behavior leads them to develop their PTE, which sequentially affects their self-esteem. However, students' LoC would play its role in mediating the effect (Prihadi & Hairul, 2011a).When the internal LoC of the student is higher, his/her self-esteem is less affected by his/her PTE. The fact that individuals' internal or external LoC mediates their self-evaluation is in line with the view that any reinforcement did directly affect individuals; it is their perception on the reinforcement that mediated the relationship between the reinforcement and the

behavior (Rotter J. , 1990). This view was supported by Ryckman (1993), who advocated that students who perceived that academic success was controlled by chance or fate relied less on their experiences in dealing with current behavior, studied less, and performed poorly than the students who perceived that academic success was determined by their own skills and competence (Ryckman, 1993). Statements by Rotter and Ryckman led to a belief that LoC mediates the effect of external influences on self-appraisal in Symbolic Interactionist' points of view.

Process of how students' PTE influence their self-esteem mediated by LoC in BCAG environment is going to be explored in this study, followed by another exploration on the occurrence of correspondence bias among teachers in the identical environment. Figure 1.1 illustrates the assumption on how the process took place, based on the discussed statements.

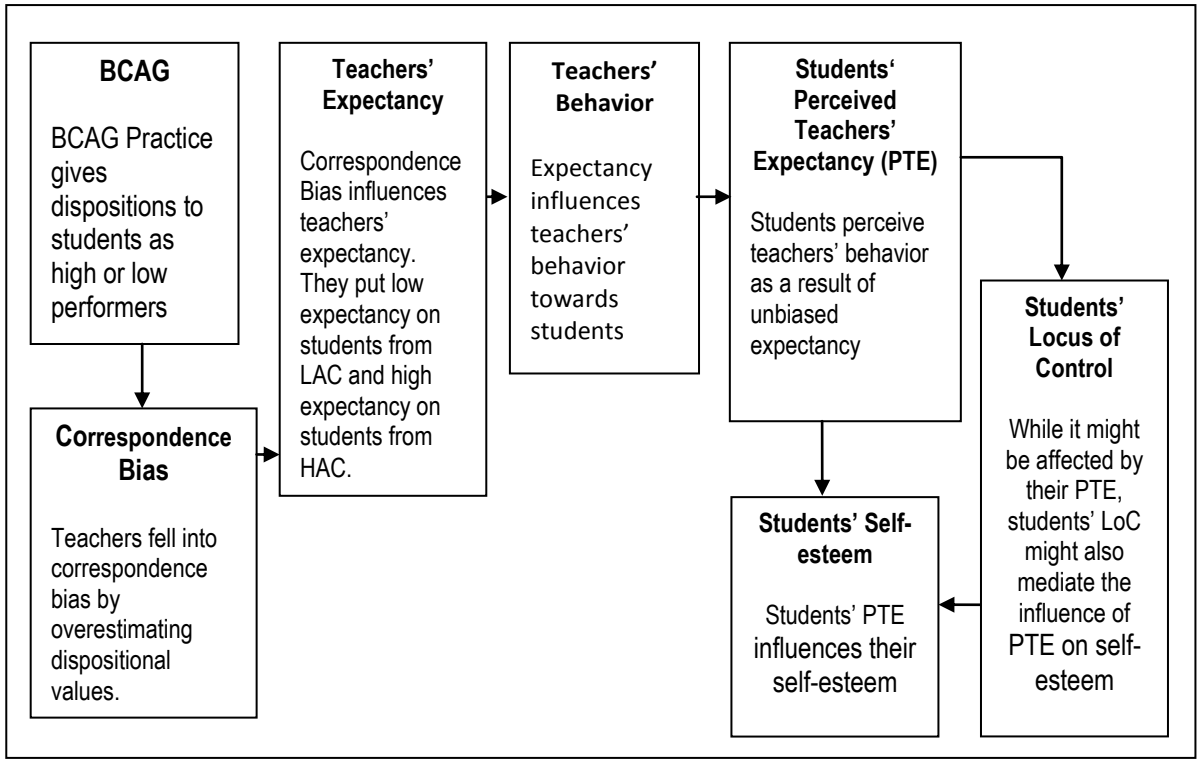

Figure 1.1 Flow of how teachers' expectancy might determines students' self-esteem in BCAG practices [Adapted from Theory of Symbolic Interaction Theory (Myers, 2008; Stryker, 2002), and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005), and Two-Dimensional Model of Self-esteem (Mruk, 2006)].

1.3 Problem Statement

The previously presented backgrounds indicate that in BCAG environment, students might take teachers' classroom behavior as representative of teachers' expectancy towards the students, without knowing that the behavior was affected by correspondence bias. This is a disadvantageous for the students, especially the students from LAC. However, the influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem may be mediated by students' LoC. While enhancing and maintaining healthy students' self-esteem is significant, knowing the way in which LoC plays its mediating role is critical in order to control the self-esteem of the students (Hagborg, 1993; Miles et al., 1995; Myers, 2008; Rotter, 1990; Secada, 1992).

Moreover, studies in Malaysian context has reported that students from HAC and LAC have significantly different PTE; HAC students perceived that their teachers expect them to have high academic achievements and LAC students perceived their teachers to expect them to be potentially problematic (Hazri, et al., 2010; Prihadi, et al., 2010; Prihadi & Chin, 2011). It was also reported that students' perception on teachers' behavior significantly affect students' self-esteem, where LAC students' self-esteem were reported to be significantly lower than HAC students (Prihadi et al., 2010). Even though the latter research did not involve LoC as one of the variables and did not approach self-esteem as an integral sum of self-worth and self-competence, the finding indicated the fact that students were psychologically affected by their PTE, which was derived from the way they perceived their teachers' behavior. Thus, information on how the practice of BCAG might influence teachers' expectancy towards students is significantly required in order to control students' PTE, which sequentially affect their self-esteem. Furthermore, a qualitative study by Prihadi & Chin (2011) indicated that teachers tend to expect LAC students to have disciplinary problems and HAC students to excel academically, even before the academic year started. The occurrence of correspondence bias was obvious among the interviewed teachers.

In other words, previous researches and preliminary studies in the identical population context reported that LAC students were negatively affected by the practice (by having their self-esteem decreased because they perceived that their teachers expected them to be potentially engaged in disciplinary matters), while the self-esteem of HAC students were positively affected by the same practice. Therefore, even though the practice of BCAG was intended to deliver education more effectively, it was also indicated to be psychologically handicapping particular

group of students, which could not be considered as a pleasant result of an educational system. Thus, it is urgently significant to get a deeper knowledge on the phenomenon in order to avoid the unwanted psychological effect of BCAG practice.

First, it is important to investigate the difference between teachers' expectancies towards different groups of students segregated by BCAG practice (Theory of attribution - Heider, 1958). Subsequently, the occurrence of correspondence bias among teachers in BCAG-practicing schools should as well be investigated, because teachers' expectancy is indicated as the result of prior information and experience, instead of their observation to the current batch of students (Theory of Correspondence Bias - Ross, 1977).

Second, it is necessary to investigate whether teachers' different expectancies towards different groups of students would affect their classroom behavior (Theory of self-fulfilling prophecy – Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). In order to collect clearer data on teachers' classroom behavior and its effect on the students, it is important to investigate the students' perception of teachers' classroom behavior. Based on the presented background of this study, different students from different groups might have different PTE, which would lead them to believe that their teachers have specific expectancy towards each of them. In other words, instead of teachers' actual expectancy, it is the PTE that contributes to students' self-esteem. For instance, when the students perceived their teachers to be academically supportive, they would believe that they are expected to be able to be academically excelled. On the other hand, when the students perceived their teachers are tend to focus on disciplinary matters and being less academically supportive, they would believe that their teachers are not expecting them to have adequate academic achievement; instead, they might believe that their teachers expect them to have problematic tendencies.

Third, it is important to investigate how PTE affect students' self-esteem (Theory of Symbolic Interactions – Blumer, 1962), and how their LoC mediates the effect. In other words, when the students develop a belief that their teachers expect them to have high academic achievement, would their LoC affect their way to evaluate themselves better than when they develop a belief that their teachers expect them to have disciplinary problem? Two-dimensional model of self-esteem (Mruk, 2006) included self-competence as one of the elements of self-esteem. Furthermore, self-competence was addressed to be identical with self-efficacy and LoC (Bandura, 1989; Locke, 2003; Schunk & Pajares, 2004); thus, LoC is one of the factors that determine self-esteem. Based on the knowledge that self-esteem is a significant predictor to future behavior (Crocker & Park, 2003; Gegory, 1981), it is important to get a further knowledge on how students' LoC might mediate the effect of PTE on their self-esteem. This knowledge will help teachers and educational stakeholders to avoid some unwanted psychological effects while keeping the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, there is gap of literature to be filled. Although some previous researches have been done around the issues, studies on the specific issue of how students' LoC mediates the effect of PTE on self-esteem in BCAG environment have never been done in Malaysian context before. For instance, Azizi, Asmah, Zurihanmi, and Fawziah (2005) were focusing on cognitive application in BCAG practice; Aminuddin, Tajularipin, and Norhasni (2009) studied on how to practice BCAG to enhance English achievement related to philosophy of education in Malaysia; and Hazri et al. (2010) aimed to see difference of perceived teachers' behavior between LAC and HAC students. Another study related to students' psychological well-being in BCAG-practicing schools was done by Prihadi et al.

(2010), addressed on how BCAG-practice predicts students' self-esteem through perceived teachers' behavior. Finding of the latter quantitative study was then supported by a qualitative study by Prihadi & Chin (2011), which emphasized that teachers' correspondence bias was perceived by the students as the actual teachers' expectancy that influence the students' self-esteem. Nevertheless, although the report of the latter research assumed the existence of correspondence bias, LoC was not among their observed variables. LoC was taken into account in a study in Indonesia by Prihadi & Hairul (2011a). They maintained that among students in internationally-standardized school in Indonesia, LoC moderates the influence of PTE on students' self-esteem. However, the study was done in a non BCAG-practicing school.

Accordingly, this study is investigating how LoC mediates the influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem, and exploring how correspondence bias affects teachers' expectancy in BCAG-practicing public secondary schools in Malaysian context. Other issues to be investigated are the difference between HAC and LAC students in terms of their LoC, and the way LoC mediates their self-esteem. It is important to emphasize that this current study is conducted in BCAG-practicing schools, because BCAG environment might generate different atmosphere for the teachers and the students compared to their non-BCAG counterparts.

1.4 Research Objectives

Overall, aim of this research is to obtain deeper understanding on how students' LoC mediates the effect of their PTE on self-esteem, and to explore the existence of correspondence bias among teachers in BCAG environment.

In line with the overall aims, the specific objectives of the research are to:

1. Identify the influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem.
2. Identify the influence of students' PTE on their LoC.
3. Identify how LoC mediates the effect of students' PTE on their self-esteem.
4. Identify the existence of 'correspondence biases' among teachers in BCAG-practicing schools.

1.5 Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

In order to set a research structure based on its specific objectives, several research questions are elaborated. These research questions are going to be analyzed and answered chronologically in order to develop a solid platform to continue on each consecutive step of the research, followed by the descriptions of Null Hypotheses assumed for each research questions.

1.5.1 Research Questions

Despite this study is not placing the difference of self-esteem levels and LoC between students' groups as an objective, it is important to understand the differences in order to get the information on how teachers' expectancy predicts the students' self-esteem and LoC before investigating the relationships among variables. Furthermore, even teachers' expectancy and the existence of correspondence bias among teachers happened before the whole phenomenon takes place, they might not predict students' self-esteem directly; hence they are investigated separately from the other variables. Therefore, research questions to be answered are:

1. Is there any significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their PTE?
    a. Is there any significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their perception that their teachers expect them to be academically potential (PTEa)?
    b. Is there any significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their perception that their teachers expect them to be potentially involved in disciplinary problem (PTEd)?
2. Is there any significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their self-esteem?
3. Is there any significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their LoC?
4. Is there any significant influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem levels?
    a. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students?
    b. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students?
    c. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students?
    d. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students?
5. Is there any significant influence of students' PTE on their LoC?
    a. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEa on the LoC of the HAC students?

b. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEd on the LoC of the HAC students?

c. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEa on the LoC of the LAC students?

d. Is there any significant influence of students' PTEd on the LoC of the LAC students?

6. Does LoC significantly mediate the effect of students' PTE on their self-esteem?

   a. Does LoC mediate the influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students?

   b. Does LoC mediate the influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students?

   c. Does LoC mediate the influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students?

   d. Does LoC mediate the influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students?

7. Is there any significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards students' from HAC and LAC?

   a. Is there any significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards HAC and LAC students in term of their academic achievements?

   b. Is there any significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards HAC and LAC students in term of their potential disciplinary problems?

8. How correspondence biases occur among teachers?

1.5.2 Null Hypotheses

Null hypothesis typically proposes a general or default position, such as that there is no relationship between two measured phenomena (Adèr, Mellenbergh & Hand, 2007). Null hypotheses are to be tested by statistical analyses in order to be rejected or accepted. Rejection of null-hypotheses shows that the measured phenomena are related to one another. The opposite of null hypothesis is alternative hypothesis, which proposes that two measured phenomena are related to one another. In quantitative researches, a rejection of null hypotheses measures a wider range of possibilities compared to an acceptance of alternative hypotheses (Adèr et al., 2007). Based on the research questions, several null hypotheses are developed over the quantitative questions of this study. They are namely:

1. There is no significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their PTE.
    a. There is no significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their perception that their PTEa.
    b. There is no significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their perception that their PTEd.
2. There is no significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their self-esteem.
3. There is no significant difference between students from HAC and LAC in term of their LoC.
4. There is no significant influence of students' PTE on their self-esteem levels.
    a. There is no significant influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students.

b. There is no significant influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the HAC students.

c. There is no significant influence of students' PTEa on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students.

d. There is no significant influence of students' PTEd on the self-esteem levels of the LAC students.

5. There is no significant influence of students' PTE on their LoC.

   a. There is no significant influence of students' PTEa on the LoC of the HAC students.

   b. There is no significant influence of students' PTEd on the LoC of the HAC students.

   c. There is no significant influence of students' PTEa on the LoC of the LAC students.

   d. There is no significant influence of students' PTEd on the LoC of the LAC students.

6. LoC does not significantly mediate the effect of students' PTE on their self-esteem.

   a. LoC does not significantly mediate the effect of students' PTEa on the self-esteem of HAC students.

   b. LoC does not significantly mediate the effect of students' PTEd on the self-esteem of HAC students.

   c. LoC does not significantly mediate the effect of students' PTEa on the self-esteem of LAC students.

   d. LoC does not significantly mediate the effect of students' PTEd on the self-esteem of LAC students.

7. There is no significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards students' from HAC and LAC
    a. There is no significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards HAC and LAC students in term of their academic achievements
    b. There is no significant difference between teachers' expectancy towards HAC and LAC students in term of their potential disciplinary problems

The research question number 8 (How correspondence bias occur among teachers?), consists a qualitative sense, hence null hypotheses would neither be developed nor quantitatively tested; instead, qualitative analyses would be conducted in order to answer the research question number 8. Sequentially, qualitative data would be collected, and the qualitative findings of this research provide supports to have deeper understanding of the quantitative findings of this research.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is meant to contribute a better knowledge and understanding towards the phenomenon of the practice of BCAG in its relations to students' PTE, self-esteem, and LoC, as well as the teachers' correspondence bias. While academic achievement is considered as an important goal of education, students' self-esteem plays a significant role to determine their social behavior. Together with academic achievement, self-esteem will determine the students' future success (Ferkany, 2008). Therefore, in spite of the fact that practicing BCAG is a prerogative right of every educational institution and proposing an alteration to such mature practice is hardly possible to be done in short period, it is worthwhile to acquire more

understandings on how students' self-esteem should be improved and maintained in BCAG environments. Furthermore, this study is expected to fill the gap of literature due to the limited numbers of research in the area of social psychology in educational settings, as mentioned in the previous subsections.

Findings of this study, which consists of how involved variables related to one another, will contribute to the reviewed theories. In general, whether the findings confirm or negate the existing theories, they will enrich the understanding of BCAG-practice and its influences on students' psychological well-being in the Malaysian context. In a more specific way, the knowledge on how LoC mediates the influence of PTE on students' self-esteem might lead to the further research on how to improve the self-esteem by altering the LoC within the context of BCAG environment. Findings of this study will also contribute to the research area of social psychology in educational settings, educational psychology, students' grouping, students' self-esteem, and related issues in Malaysian context.

Practically, capitalization of the acquired knowledge is expected to minimize potential negative influence of PTE to self-esteem, which eventually reduces the frequency or intensity of any psychological and disciplinary problems such as loss of motivation, truancy, juvenile crimes, and dropouts. It is eventually expected that maintaining appropriate LoC among students would potentially improve their self-esteem as well as their academic achievements.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations

Although focusing on the students' self-esteem as an indirect results of BCAG practices, this study will neither looking at the BCAG as instructional methods nor identify the best methods in enhancing students' self-esteem. This study is looking at

how LoC mediates the influence of PTE on students' self-esteem, where PTE is believed to be a result of BCAG practice. This research is neither meant to alter the existing practices of BCAG nor any policies around its practices. The study is focusing on BCAG-practicing public secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan / SMK), which are located in the state of Penang, Malaysia, in terms of:

- Students' PTE.
- Students' self-esteem.
- Mediation effects of students' LoC on the effect of their PTE on their self-esteem.
- Correspondence bias among teachers in BCAG-practicing schools.

This study does not control the extraneous variables that might be involved, such as students' physical conditions, social economic status, gender, ethnic groups, parenting styles, or any other dispositional and situational differences that might influence their levels in term of the variables mentioned in this study. This study would neither explore other psychological traits such as self-concept, resilience, or personality, even though they might be related to explored variables.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Several key terms would be defined conceptually and operationally in this section. Those key terms are BCAG, correspondence bias, teachers' expectancy, self-esteem, LoC, students' PTE.

1.8.1 Between-Class Ability Grouping

The definition of BCAG is the practice of grouping students in separate classes according to ability level (Slavin, 2006). Some schools have their own standards, but