

Talent Development Program in Higher Education Institution: An Investigation of Students' Leadership Profile

(Program Pembangunan Bakat di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi: Satu Penyiasatan Profil Kepimpinan Pelajar)

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ABSTRACT

One of the challenges in ensuring sustainability leadership among students in the context of higher education institutions is through the talent formation strategy at the residential college level. This study was conducted to identify differences in the student leadership profile of residential college students who participated in a talent development program held at a Malaysian university. This survey study involves a total of 183 participants among residential college student leaders to identify the student leaders' leadership profile from the aspects of creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, autonomy, perseverance, and emotional intelligence. The study identified differences in the student leadership profiles before and after implementing the talent development program. The study's findings show that students' creativity, thinking skills, and perseverance were high before and after the program. Communication and collaboration have successfully been improved due to the program, while aspects of autonomy and emotional intelligence remain moderate. It is recommended that universities plan more focused activities in the talent development program and identify better strategies for developing student leadership characteristics, especially in autonomy and emotional intelligence.

Keywords - Leadership, talent development, residential college leaders, higher education

ABSTRAK

Salah satu cabaran dalam memastikan kepimpinan kelestarian dalam kalangan pelajar dalam konteks institusi pengajian tinggi adalah melalui strategi pembentukan bakat di peringkat kolej kediaman. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti perbezaan profil kepimpinan pelajar pelajar kolej kediaman yang menyertai program pembangunan bakat yang diadakan di universiti Malaysia. Kajian tinjauan ini melibatkan seramai 183 orang peserta dalam kalangan pemimpin pelajar kolej kediaman untuk mengenal pasti profil kepimpinan pemimpin pelajar dari aspek kreativiti, komunikasi, kolaborasi, pemikiran kritis, autonomi, ketabahan, dan kecerdasan emosi. Kajian mengenal pasti perbezaan profil kepimpinan pelajar sebelum dan selepas melaksanakan program pembangunan bakat. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan kreativiti, kemahiran berfikir, dan ketabahan pelajar adalah tinggi sebelum dan selepas program. Komunikasi dan kerjasama telah berjaya dipertingkatkan kerana program ini, manakala aspek autonomi dan kecerdasan emosi kekal sederhana. Adalah disyorkan supaya universiti merancang aktiviti yang lebih tertumpu dalam program pembangunan bakat dan mengenal pasti strategi yang lebih baik untuk membangunkan ciri kepimpinan pelajar, terutamanya dalam autonomi dan kecerdasan emosi.

Kata kunci - Kepimpinan, pembangunan bakat, pemimpin kolej kediaman, pendidikan tinggi

INTRODUCTION

Residential colleges play an essential role in developing students' character and personality. It should be a second learning centre apart from the university campus to support students' learning out of the campus. Various programs are planned and organised to provide continuous exposure to developing aspects of students' skills and knowledge, such as sustainable campus activities, report and writing strategies, motivational talks and computer skills. As mentioned in Anuar Razak et al. (2019) a residential college is a vital hub for providing accommodation services that support academic progress and facilitate an effective learning process. It also plays a pivotal role in fostering students' self-formation, personal development, and leadership activities. Moreover, through mobility program activities, residential colleges can nurture and develop staff and students' potential talents and abilities.

The Students High Council (SHC) is crucial in empowering students' development and soft skills. Providing opportunities for them to organise and plan international activities on the university campus can strengthen their sense of responsibility and trust as leaders. The experience of developing and carrying out international activities can foster awareness, gain experience, and build up skill-building skills. Therefore, cooperation between the students' residential management and the SHC is essential to involve both parties in international activity planning. By doing so, they can work together to develop and implement activities that promote the development of critical and creative thinking, advocacy, and monitoring of injustice and human rights. Additionally, the SHC can equip learners with agency, a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others. To ensure the success of these activities, it is crucial to recruit, train, and utilise volunteers with professional-level services, organisational or leadership skills, and a sense of humour (Anuar Razak et al., 2019)

Improving student leadership programs, especially for undergraduate students, also seems to have a large 'bang for your buck' because of the early intervention point (most undergraduate students are between 18 and 24 (Bernal-Turnes & Ernst, 2023)); and the breadth of stakeholders impacted. For example, we know that student leadership development programs can lead to positive outcomes for higher education institutions, future employers, and, of course, the students themselves. Suppose student leadership development could be better linked with ethics and more strongly reflect the cumulative evidence of effective

leadership development in organisations (as well as the current needs of organisations and expectations of society). In that case, we can expect a positive ripple effect within communities.

Leadership Development Program in Higher Education

Research on student leadership development provides important insights into standard procedures and the criteria for successful initiatives. Student leadership development occurs in many contexts, such as leadership-focused courses, occasional retreats, multi-year programs, and unique experiences (like study abroad). - investment in student development programs, university initiatives, and expectations (university goal).

Research shows that a more traditional classroom approach is used with less emphasis on some of the more common business techniques like coaching, mentoring, and stretch assignments. Jenkins (2013) found that discussion-based pedagogies were most frequently used in leadership development within a specific course format, followed by methods intended to improve conceptual knowledge of leadership (such as research projects) and activities focused on personal development. Activities that build skills (like role-playing or simulations) and conventional assessments (like exams and quizzes) were found to be relatively less frequently used in leadership classes.

Investigations into what is currently done in student leadership development reflect, to some extent, what is commonplace for organisations, with an added emphasis on some of the more traditional classroom approaches and less emphasis on some of the popular business techniques like coaching, mentoring, and stretch assignments. In a large-scale survey of leadership educators, Jenkins (2013) found that leadership development within a specific course format most frequently utilised discussion-based pedagogies, followed by approaches designed to enhance conceptual knowledge of leadership (e.g., research projects) and personal growth activities. Techniques that were shown to be relatively less frequently used in leadership classes were skill-building activities (e.g., role-playing or simulations) and traditional assessments (e.g., exams and quizzes). Discrete experiences, such as study abroad or leadership retreats, are also commonly used for student leadership development. Leadership workshops or retreats catered to the current leaders of student organisations might happen once a semester or once an academic year. Many schools also utilise external vendors or national leadership experiences,

to engage select students in leadership development - social, academic and other advantages for students' involvement in student leadership programs towards sustainability leadership, employability and education 4.0 - based on student perception (Abu-Tineh et al., 2009).

Character Development among Student Leaders

Every university has its vision and mission to ensure that all the strategic plans are well-planned. According to Strategic Plan UTHM (2021 - 2025), a university's direction in empowering students' talents and abilities in these leadership areas is also demonstrated (Muhammad Zahir, 2022). In this regard, one of the strategic plans that is an essential element in shaping students' character in a more holistic leadership field is Edu-Train. In this context, one of UTHM's strategic plans has focused on the Edu-Train goal, which aims at developing, providing training and producing holistic students which comprise ethics, self-formation and moral values that can be instilled and sustain good characters in the realm of work. The holistic characteristics that can be developed include a few elements: personality, cognitive, affective, and conative development. This element is a threshold of direction that UTHM has formulated in line with the mission and vision set to be a great university and to produce many graduates who are competent in this field of leadership.

Talent Development Program can also train students to have excellent communication skills, including the use of terms, themes, and languages, and students can also develop mature thinking skills when making decisions. According to Taar and Palojoki (2022), it is one of the important components that all students need today to have effective communication skills in providing an opinion and students with communication skills also help in empowering these organisational skills better where a problem will be discussed together and decide on a wise decision according to the consent of all members of the group.

Another finding from Tholia et al. (2022) also mentions that some students will feel embarrassed, nervous and unable to be a leader in a team. The actions and character highlighted by friends in an organisation can also form an excellent natural feeling in influencing a person to be better in leading, managing problems and managing the organisation better according to the example of a good example by teammates. With this good example, forming a great attitude of confidence in themselves is also possible. Students who participate in any matter will have good communication skills and intelligently manage conflicts with the professional

ethics set in an organisation.

According to Samadun and Dwikoranto (2022), students' application of critical thinking skills is essential for effective problem-solving in the learning process. Implementing a problem-based learning model can train students to overcome various problems directly to improve their critical thinking skills. Silberman et al. (2021) believe that Team-Based Learning (TBL) improves critical thinking skills. TBL is an active learning strategy that encourages students to think critically to solve problems.

Rauf et al. (2020) study revealed that final-year students have a high level of emotional intelligence, indicating that the longer students are involved in university activities, the higher their emotional intelligence. A study by Ain et al. (2021) revealed that students with good emotional intelligence are capable and mature in reasoning while facing difficult situations. Emotional distress can also train a student to be more creative, innovative and wise to be an alternative to managing conflict more effectively. Emotional intelligence also enables students to manage emotions well and problems in the organisation. This emotional intelligence can also be formed naturally in students through involvement in a leadership program where each student should have a critical value in solving the problem with relevance.

Another area of research that focuses on students' personality, leadership, and character development aims to teach the students' inner strength and motivation. One of the essential skills to survive in this 21st century is the ability to be independent in the hybrid and blended learning context. Similarly, as students' leaders, they are expected to be more autonomous, resourceful and persevering to enable more self-directed action and persistence in handling activities and organisation where students' activities are conducted in various modes such as webinars, online forums and minimum physical interaction/hybrid mode. According to Abu-Tineh et al. (2009), organisers and training providers face challenges in designing e-learning programs and further emphasise persistence and autonomous learner among characters that must be developed and focused. The study suggested that a well-designed program can develop persistence and a high level of autonomy.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study aimed to investigate leadership character development among college student leaders involved in a Talent Development Leadership Program (PKH).

The program is an annual program held for candidate leaders who opt to represent their respective colleges. Participants of the PKH program combine students from eight residential colleges of the UTHM. This descriptive study is conducted to identify key areas of the leadership profile to be developed in the next PKH program.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study conducted by the researcher is in the form of a descriptive survey study (Chua, 2013). According to Chua (2013) descriptive research provides information about conditions, situations, and current events.

This study used a survey research design and it was conducted among 118 residential college leaders at UTHM. The early selection process involves senior students who voluntarily participated in several college-level activities, including interview processes. A total of 23 of the most performed candidates from each college participated in the five-day PKH program organised by the principal council, fellows, and assistance fellow council, and in collaboration with the Students Housing Centre. The sample size used in this descriptive study is considered sufficient for statistical descriptive analysis. For determining the sample size for mean difference analysis, Cohen (1992) suggested a minimum sample size of 26 people for a large effect size of 0.05 and a power of 0.8.

This PKH program was implemented in two modes, online (synchronous) and offline (asynchronous), to comply with the SOPs outlined by the National Security Council. This program's activities were designed to teach potential leaders

leadership characteristics and produce a more holistic profile of leaders with good knowledge, teamwork, collaboration, organisation skills, morals, and a sense of identity (national identity). Such a holistic leadership personality is deemed vital for them to lead their organisation towards reviving the function of the residential college, not only as a place to stay but also as a role as a second learning centre on campus.

A personality inventory is used to identify the character profile of a candidate leader based on several key components such as creativity, intellectual (creative thinking), communication skills (introvert and extrovert), autonomy, collaboration skills (controller and supporter), emotional intelligence and perseverance. This inventory is modified from Sidek's Personality Inventory as cited in Nazihah Ibrahim (n.d), which comprises 90 items to represent the personality components. Participants responded to the inventory based on a 10-point scale and the score was interpreted based on these four scale categories: from 1.00 to 2.59 (very low: character not yet developed). From 2.60 to 5.09 (low: character emerging), from 5.10 to 7.59 - (moderate: expressing character), and from 7.60 to 10 (high: character is well developed). The data were further analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following graph in Figure 1 shows a spider web describing the mastery level of the leader's character traits evaluated for all participants before and after the program. The larger the arc shown, the higher the participants' mastery of the leader's characteristics.

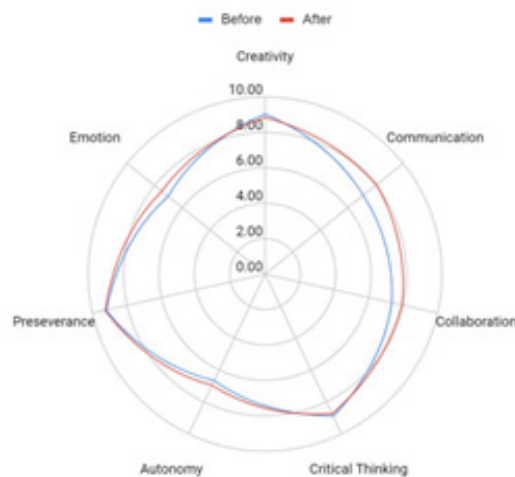


FIGURE 1. Spider web analysis before and after the PKH program

TABLE 1. Mean score of leadership elements before and after the PKH program.

| Elements | Score (Pre) | Score (post) | Int. |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|
| Creativity | 9.05 | 8.85 | High |
| Communication | 7.12 | 8.12 | High |
| Collaboration | 7.37 | 7.95 | High |
| Thinking Skills | 8.87 | 8.76 | High |
| Autonomy | 6.63 | 6.97 | Moderate |
| Perseverance | 9.18 | 9.28 | High |
| Emotional Intelligence | 7.02 | 7.47 | Moderate |

Based on the findings of this study, it was found that PKH participants sustained a high level of mastery of the elements of creativity, thinking skills, and perseverance at the beginning and end of the program. The participants improved communication and collaboration, while the findings imply that their characters still scored moderately in the autonomy and emotional intelligence elements. It is recommended that universities plan more focused activities in the talent development program and identify better strategies for developing student leadership characteristics, especially in autonomy and emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

The personality profile of the respondent can be used as a guide for the PKH organiser to find strategies to revise their module activities for the next PKH program. Management can also design activities that can increase the mastery of leaders' autonomy and emotional intelligence to produce holistic and versatile student leaders.

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