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Leadership among Education Students in Universiti Utara Malaysia: Significance of Leadership Development Programmes

(Kepimpinan dalam Kalangan Pelajar Pendidikan di Universiti Utara Malaysia: Kepentingan Program Pembangunan Kepimpinan)

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the significance of leadership skills development programmes among education students at Universiti Utara Malaysia. Leadership skills are a combination of characteristics that allow individuals to guide, encourage, and motivate others to achieve common goals. The motivation for this study lies in the need for future leaders to be fostered in the education system to lead their teams to give their all. Good leaders would acknowledge and value individual efforts, offer constructive criticism, and promote a happy and encouraging work atmosphere. The main issues addressed in this paper include factors that can be influenced by good development of leadership skills among education students through leadership development programmes. Data were collected through surveys among the students in the School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia. The study's results supported that leadership style and ability enhance personal characteristics, social skills, and decision-making ability, all of which are required for effective leadership. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by supporting ethical and moral leadership, knowledge related to preparation for educational leadership roles, and positive impact on students' achievement.

Keywords - leadership skills, leadership development, education student, Universiti Utara Malaysia

ABSTRAK

Kertas kerja ini menyiasat kepentingan program pembangunan kemahiran kepimpinan dalam kalangan pelajar pendidikan di Universiti Utara Malaysia. Kemahiran kepimpinan adalah gabungan ciri-ciri yang membolehkan individu membimbing, menggalakkan, dan memotivasikan orang lain untuk mencapai matlamat bersama. Motivasi kajian ini terletak pada keperluan untuk pemimpin masa depan dipupuk dalam sistem pendidikan untuk memimpin pasukan mereka untuk memberikan yang terbaik. Pemimpin yang baik akan mengiktiraf dan menghargai usaha individu, menawarkan kritikan yang membina, dan menggalakkan suasana kerja yang gembira dan menggalakkan. Isu utama yang dibincangkan dalam kertas kerja ini termasuklah faktor-faktor yang boleh dipengaruhi oleh pembangunan kemahiran kepimpinan yang baik dalam kalangan pelajar pendidikan melalui program pembangunan kepimpinan. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan di kalangan pelajar di Pusat Pengajian Pendidikan Universiti Utara Malaysia. Keputusan kajian menyokong bahawa gaya kepimpinan dan keupayaan meningkatkan ciri peribadi, kemahiran sosial, dan keupayaan membuat keputusan, yang kesemuanya diperlukan untuk kepimpinan yang berkesan. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan dengan menyokong kepimpinan etika dan moral, pengetahuan berkaitan persediaan untuk peranan kepimpinan pendidikan, dan kesan positif terhadap pencapaian pelajar.

Kata kunci - kemahiran kepimpinan, pembangunan kepimpinan, pelajar pendidikan, Universiti Utara Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Leadership development among education students is critical to their development as educators and leaders in the educational arena. Education institutions may generate competent and compassionate professionals who can make a positive difference in the lives of their students and the greater educational community by cultivating these abilities. A leadership development programme is an organised and purposeful endeavour aiming to improve individuals' leadership talents and potential, especially among education students. These programmes are undertaken in various settings, including educational institutions, enterprises, government agencies, and non-profit organisations, to develop successful leaders who can drive good change and inspire others.

A few questions that have always been asked regarding leadership: What qualities distinguish an excellent leader? Do particular personality features make people better suited to leadership jobs, or do situational factors make some people more inclined to take charge? When looking at leaders around us, whether it is our boss or the President, one can wonder why these people are so successful. People have been interested in leadership throughout history, but various formal leadership theories have recently evolved. During the early twenty-first century, there was a surge in interest in leadership. Early leadership theories concentrated on the characteristics that differentiate leaders from followers, although subsequent theories examined additional variables such as situational considerations and skill levels.

Researchers have argued that there are several assumptions concerning the capacities that future leaders will need: a) ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, b) attitudes and skills in life-long learning, c) more varied leadership roles, d) higher levels of collaboration with professionals and parents (Allio, 2005). Several assumptions will affect the student's leadership performance. The effectiveness of leadership training programmes can be determined by assessing whether or not student leaders believe the leadership training programmes help increase and enhance their a) understanding of leadership knowledge, b) leadership skills, and c) leadership performance-related attitudes (Callahan & Mabey, 1985).

Interest in student leadership development remains high (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018). According to Posner and Brodsky (1992), many higher education institutions provide some form of leadership development for their students. This statement was supported by other researchers who said that most higher education institutions have one or more leadership programmes in place for students (Hamdan Said et al., 2013). Callahan and Mabey (1985) state that interdisciplinary courses focus on leadership theories, traits, behaviours, and case studies. Professional programmes focus on leadership from a disciplinary perspective such as educational leadership, business, or political leadership. Traditional student affairs approaches may include one-time non-credit programmes coordinated mainly through student affairs administrators (Huey, 1994). Leadership development programmes are very significant because those programmes, such as workshops, help students understand effective leaders' specific behaviours and actions.

Students' leadership not only can be measured by involvement in development programmes, but society has its own ability to build up the student's leadership skills because society has a responsibility to guide, shape, and influence the next generation of leaders, with a most important obligation to help discover and release their untapped potential. The young are vital because they represent the future of every country, needing to be, among many desirable attributes, hopeful, entrepreneurial, and productive. To be best prepared to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges, they must develop leadership skills (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997). Young people, especially education students at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), need opportunities to take leadership roles and improve their leadership skills. Allio (2005) and Fish (2011) once said that, unlike theoretical knowledge, leadership development programmes should provide actual leadership experience, a practice-based infrastructure, and hands-on learning activities. According to Wurr and Hamilton (2012), a university setting should provide ample opportunity and fertile ground for learning leadership.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Leadership among education students in UUM holds significant importance as it plays a crucial role in shaping the future of education and fostering competent leaders. The significance of this research lies in understanding and promoting effective leadership skills and development among education students, equipping them to become inspiring and capable leaders in their respective fields. By understanding and promoting effective leadership skills, this research has the potential to contribute to the betterment of education, empower future leaders, and positively impact the educational

landscape in Malaysia. According to Karagianni & Montgomery (2018), in their article Developing Leadership Skills Among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Review of Leadership Programmes, the term' leadership' has different meanings among scholars. Approaches can differ in terms of their emphasis on personality characteristics, relation influence, cognitive and/or emotional abilities, character in relation to group orientation, and appeal to self versus collective interests.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a one-method design. The significance of leadership programmes among education students in UUM was evaluated by using a survey instrument applied as a Google Form instrument online. This instrument focused on quantitative survey data.

Survey Instrument (Google Form)

The survey instrument and questionnaire, adapted from the study by Hamdan Said et al. (2013) titled 'Effectiveness of Leadership Training Programs in Public Universities of Malaysia in Developing Students' Knowledge of Leadership,' were utilized to collect data from a sample of over 420 education students. The aim was to assess their knowledge of leadership and the perceived effectiveness of leadership development programs from their perspective."The respondents were chosen randomly to answer these surveys. This questionnaire consisted of three items: respondents' demographic, knowledge of leadership, and effectiveness of leadership development programmes. For the demographics, this researcher asked for the gender, current semester and their course. For the knowledge of leadership and effectiveness of leadership development programmes questions, a five-point Likert scale was chosen to collect the respondent's opinions and attitudes concerning the questions items. The five-point Likert scale was chosen because this scale is a global scale that is used to assess attitudes and views. It is a scale with five answer points which has two utmost poles and a neutral option linked with intermediate answer options, and for this study, Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section goes through the study's findings, which was collected from 100 education students in UUM. This component will also be separated into three sections: respondents' demographic, knowledge of leadership, and effectiveness of leadership development programmes. Each finding will be explained using figures and tables, and certain data will be calculated using a suitable formula or format. This finding will answer the main issues that were addressed in this research paper.

Demographic of respondents

The table below shows the sample data of respondents according to their gender, semester and courses.

TABLE 1. Gender

Gender	Frequency
Male	45
Female	55

The gender in the sample data shows that among the 100 education students in UUM, 55% of respondents are female, and 45% are male.

The semester in the sample data shows that among the 100 education students in UUM, 18% of the respondents are from semester 2, which is Year 1 students; 34% of the respondents are from semester four students, who are Year 2 students, 1% from semester five and 23% of them are from semester six which is from Year 3 student and 24% are from semester eight student who is from Year 4 student while 0% from semester 1, 3, and 7. This shows that there were no respondents from those semesters.

The courses in the sample data showed that among the 100 education students in UUM, 31% of the respondents are from Bachelor of Education (Hons) (Information Technology) from different semesters, 26% of the respondents are students from Bachelor

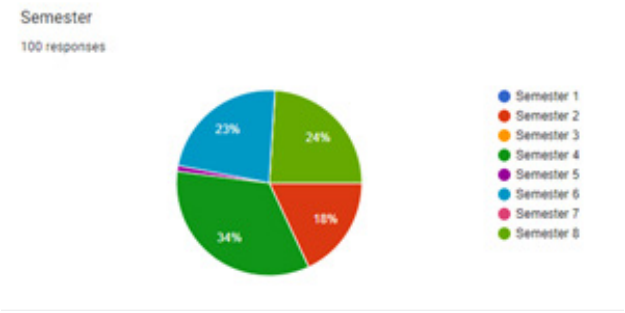


FIGURE 2. Semester

of Education (Hons) (Moral Education). In contrast, 15% of the respondents are students from Bachelor of Education (Hons) (Business Management) and (Guidance and Counselling), and last but not least,

TABLE 2. Semester

Semester	Frequency
1	0
2	18
3	0
4	34
5	1
6	23
7	0
8	24

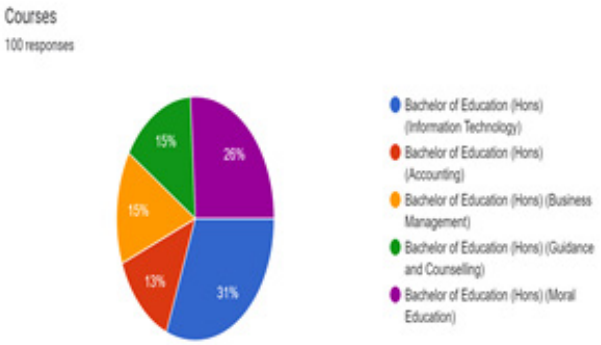


FIGURE 3. Course

TABLE 3. Courses

Courses (Bachelor of Education (Hons))	Frequency
Information Technology	31
Accounting	13
Business Management	15
Guidance and Counselling	15
Moral Education	26

13% of the respondents are students from Bachelor of Education (Hons) (Accounting). All of these respondents are from different semesters.

Knowledge of Leaderships

This second part will elaborate on the findings from eight different questions, which are:

a. I better understand the difference between leaders and leadership (Q1)
b. I have a better understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers (Q2)
c. I know more about leadership qualities and characteristics of effective leaders (Q3)
d. I better understand the purpose of effective leadership in organisations (Q4)
e. I have a better understanding of the importance of leadership in organisations (Q5)
f. I know more about the impact of ineffective leadership in organisations (Q6)
g. I better understand the difference between management and leadership (Q7)
h. I know more about the importance of applying appropriate leadership styles in my setting (Q8)

The data for each of these questions were collected and analysed using the Likert scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 was rated as strongly disagree and 5 was rated as strongly agree.

TABLE 4. Survey Responses in Frequency and Percentages for Knowledge of Leaderships.

Likert Scale				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Formulas or formats will be used to calculate the respondents' knowledge about leadership according to each question. The Likert Scale was introduced by Rensis Likert, a psychologist and educator at Columbia University. He wants to measure subjective psychological attitudes in a "scientific" way. Each sentiment level in a Likert's item must be given a value to differentiate it from other sentiment levels. In the original conception of the Likert scale, this value representation was just a number. Lower numbers indicated negative attitudes, and higher numbers indicated positive attitudes.

Sentiment level = Strongly Disagree until Strongly Agree.

Numerical Value = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Total = Numerical Value * Responses

Respondent's Knowledge = Total / Number of respondent

Average = Total of Number Respondent's Knowledge / How many questions

Table 5 displays the percentage of the education students' knowledge about leadership. From this table, the frequency of every question will be explained in detail based on the table shown.

TABLE 5. Percentage of the education students' knowledge about leadership

	Percentages for Knowledge of Leaderships				
Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1	0%	0%	7%	43%	50%
Q2	0%	2%	2%	29%	67%
Q3	1%	0%	7%	42%	50%
Q4	1%	0%	6%	34%	59%
Q5	1%	0%	3%	47%	49%
Q6	1%	0%	4%	29%	66%
Q7	0%	1%	4%	49%	46%
Q8	0%	0%	7%	33%	60%

Based on Q1: I better understand the difference between leaders and leadership, this shows that 50% of the education students in UUM strongly agree that they understand that statement, 43% agree with that question, and only 7% of education students in UUM feel neutral about that question, neither agree nor disagree. According to the formula given above, the sentiment level of the respondent's knowledge for Q1 is 4.43 mathematically, and the respondent agrees with that question. For Q2: I have a better understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers, 67% of respondents strongly agree that they know the relationship between leaders and followers, 29% of them agree with that question, and only 2% of respondents neither agree nor disagree and disagree regarding Q2. The number of sentiment levels of respondents' knowledge about leadership is about 4.61, which strongly agrees.

Besides that, for Q3: I know more about leadership qualities and characteristics of effective leaders, 50% of respondents strongly agree, 42% of them agree, 7% of respondents neither agree nor disagree, and only 1%, equal to one person, strongly disagree about this question. The sentiment level of respondents' knowledge is around 4.4, which is under agree level. For Q4: I better understand the purpose of effective leadership in organisations. A huge number of education students strongly agree with this question, which is 59%, 34% of them only agree, 6% neither agree nor disagree, and 1% strongly disagree with this Q4. The sentiment level of respondents' knowledge is 4.5, which is under strongly agree.

For Q5: I have a better understanding of the importance of leadership in organisations, 49% of respondents strongly agree that they understand the importance of leadership, 47% of them agree, 3% neither agree nor disagree, and 1% strongly disagree with Q5. The sentiment level of respondents' knowledge is around 4.4, just below the agreed level. For Q6: I know more about the impact of ineffective leadership in organisations, 66% of respondents know more about the impact of ineffective leadership in organisations, 29% agree, 4% neither agree nor disagree, and only 1% strongly disagree about this question regarding the impact of ineffective leadership organisations. The sentiment level of respondents' knowledge regarding leadership is around 4.5, around a strongly agreed level.

Next, for Q7: I better understand the difference

between management and leadership, 46% of respondents strongly agree that they better understand the difference between management and leadership, but 49% of them agree that they know about the difference between management and leadership, 4% of them neither agree nor disagree and only 1% disagree about the question. The sentiment level is around 4.4, which is around the agreed level. Last but not least, for Q8: I know more about the importance of applying appropriate leadership style in my setting, 60% of education students in UUM strongly agree that they know more the importance of applying appropriate leadership style in their setting, 33% agree that they know more the importance of applying appropriate leadership style in their setting, 7% neither agree nor disagree. The sentiment level of respondents' knowledge is around 4.5, which is a strongly agreed level. The average number for leadership knowledge among education students in UUM is about 4.5, which means that respondents, especially education students, have more knowledge about leadership.

Effectiveness of Leadership Development Programmes

In this part, respondents need to evaluate how far this leadership development programmes give them positive effectiveness according to four questions:

i. I believe that succession and leadership pipeline is essential in sustaining leadership in an organisation
ii. I believe that a leadership development programme can identify the students' key behaviour
iii. I believe that a leadership development programme can improve the students' performance
iv. I believe that cultural change is essential in sustaining leadership in an organisation

The data for each of these questions will be collected and analysed using the Likert scale from 1 to 5 in which 1 is rated as Strongly Disagree and 5 is rated as Strongly Agree.

Likert Scale				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

To calculate how effective the leadership development programmes are to them, here are the formulas or formats that will be used.

Sentiment level = Strongly Disagree until Strongly Agree.

Numerical Value = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Total = Numerical Value * Responses

The effectiveness = Total / Number of respondent

Average = Total number of effectiveness / How many questions

TABLE 6. Effectiveness of Leadership Development Programmes

	Percentage of Effectiveness (%)				
Item	1	2	3	4	5
Q1	1%	0%	5%	42%	52%
Q2	0%	0%	5%	34%	61%
Q3	0%	2%	4%	40%	54%
Q4	0%	0%	9%	30%	61%

Based on Q1: I believe that succession and leadership pipeline is important in sustaining leadership in an organisation, 52% of respondents strongly agree that they believe that succession and leadership pipeline is important, 42% of them agree, 5% of them neither agree nor disagree and only 1% of respondents strongly disagree with the question. The sentiment level is around 4.4, which is below the agreed level. For Q2: I believe that a leadership development programme can identify the students' key behaviour, 61% of education students in UUM strongly agree that a leadership development programme can identify the students' key behaviour, 34% agree with that question, and only 5% of them neither agree nor disagree. The sentiment level of effectiveness is around 4.6, which is a strongly agreed level. Besides, Q3: I believe that leadership development programme can improve the students' performance, 54% of respondents strongly agree that they believe that leadership development programme can improve the students' performance, 40% of them agree that leadership development programme can improve the students' performance, 4% of them neither agree nor disagree and only 2% disagree that leadership development programme can improve the student's performance. The sentiment level is around 4.5. Last but not least, Q4: I believe that cultural change is important in sustaining leadership in an organisation, 61% of respondents from education students strongly agree that cultural change is important in sustaining leadership in an organisation, 30% of them agree, and 9% of them neither agree nor disagree. The sentiment level is around 4.5, which is a strongly agreed level. The average number for effectiveness of leadership development programmes is 4.5. According to this average, this researcher is sure that leadership development programmes are the most effective, especially for the education students in UUM.

In summary, to be a good leader, individuals first of all need to understand the differences between leaders and leadership. They also need to understand the relationship between leaders and followers better because good leaders are moulded through experiences, continued study, and adaptation. After that, they will know a few characteristics that a good leader needs to have, such as integrity, delegation and good communication skills. Researchers also agree that leadership development programmes significantly enhance students' leadership qualities because 84% of education students saying 'yes' to this open question can benefit from that kind of programme.

CONCLUSION

Leadership development programmes surely can cover many leadership skills, especially the education at UUM, because certain leadership programmes can allow them to guide, encourage and motivate others to achieve their common goals. The findings showed that leadership development is significant because most of the education students at UUM have a positive impact on them. The leadership development programmes provided opportunities, especially for education students at UUM, to apply their knowledge and skills during their practicum in school or elsewhere in the organisation.

Education students who engage in leadership development programmes gain a comprehensive toolkit that equips them to excel in their professional careers and as influential members of their communities. The significance of leadership development programmes also extends to the larger educational landscape. As schools and educational institutions face evolving challenges, including technological advancement, changing demographics, and diverse learning needs, leaders with a strong foundation in leadership skills are better positioned to navigate these complexities and drive innovation. Leadership development is crucial for an organisation to cultivate effective leaders who can navigate challenges, inspire teams, and drive success. The first implication is about succession planning. If the study highlights successful leadership development, it implies a strong pipeline for succession planning. The recommendation is about cultivating a learning culture. Foster a culture that values continuous learning and development for leaders and all of us, especially education students in UUM.

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