Leadership Development is Character Development
(Pembangunan Kepimpinan adalah Pembangunan Sahsiah)

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on student leaders who have been elected by their peers to hold various positions in society and clubs in the university setting. It explored the leadership qualities that student leaders had and the influence of their character on those leadership qualities among student leaders. A total of 59 participants from a local university in Malaysia, University of Putra Malaysia (UPM) and the National University of Malaysia (UKM) were involved, with 33 males and 26 females. Leadership Personality Inventory (LPI) online was used to assess the character dimensions. Participants were asked to do a self-rating on 10 different leadership qualities. Findings showed that student leaders chosen by their peers had very high integrity. Multiple regression results showed that the Neutral Character dimension was the most significant predictor for the leadership quality of showing concern for others. The Open Character dimension was a crucial predictor for self-confidence. Similarly, the Relational Character dimension was an important predictor for both charisma and integrity. To a certain extent, the character of leaders influences the leadership qualities that they display readily and some leadership qualities such as charisma need to be further enhanced through leadership training.

Keywords: Personality, Leadership Qualities, Leadership Training, Student Leaders

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada pemimpin pelajar yang telah dipilih oleh rakan sebaya mereka untuk memegang pelbagai jawatan dalam masyarakat dan kelab dalam persekitaran universiti. Ia meneroka kualiti kepimpinan yang ada pada pemimpin pelajar dan pengaruh watak mereka terhadap kualiti kepimpinan dalam kalangan pemimpin pelajar. Seramai 59 peserta dari universiti tempatan di Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) dan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) terlibat dengan 33 lelaki dan 26 perempuan. Inventori Personaliti Kepimpinan (LPI) dalam talian digunakan untuk menilai dimensi watak. Peserta diminta membuat penilaian kendiri pada 10 kualiti kepimpinan yang berbeza. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pemimpin pelajar yang dipilih oleh rakan sebaya mereka mempunyai integriti yang sangat tinggi. Keputusan regresi berganda menunjukkan bahawa dimensi Perwatakan Neutral adalah peramal yang paling signifikan untuk kualiti kepimpinan menunjukkan keprihatinan terhadap orang lain. Dimensi Watak Terbuka ialah peramal penting untuk keyakinan diri. Begitu juga, dimensi Watak Relasional merupakan peramal penting untuk kedua-dua karisma dan integriti. Sedikit sebanyak, perwatakan pemimpin mempengaruhi sifat kepimpinan yang mudah dipamerkan dan beberapa sifat kepimpinan seperti karisma perlu dipertingkatkan lagi melalui latihan kepimpinan.

Kata kunci: Personaliti, Kualiti Kepimpinan, Latihan Kepimpinan, Pemimpin Pelajar

INTRODUCTION

Future leaders are trained in universities. The development of leadership abilities is one of the seven soft skill components in the Malaysian tertiary education system (Shakir, R., 2009). Undergraduates' human capital development is prioritised. Every institution must include student leadership training as a programme learning outcome that graduates are expected to have as a consequence of their time at the university. In addition to leadership development and training that is directly related to the academic curriculum, a lot of student societies and clubs are established on campus to give students chances to learn and apply leadership skills as part of their extracurricular activities. Students are expected to have acquired soft skills, particularly leadership qualities, in addition to technical knowledge and skills by the time they graduate from a programme.

Prior research has demonstrated that students understand the value of leadership since, according to a student survey on views towards student leadership, they consider leadership experience to be significant both on campus and beyond (Shertzer, J., Wall, V., Frandsen, A., Guo, Y., Whalen, D. F., & Shelley, M. C., 2005). Societies as a whole and organisations alike require good, capable and effective leaders. Research has indicated that effective leadership has the potential to impact workers' job satisfaction, well-being, and organisational commitment (Yang, C., 2014; Pierro, A., Raven, B. H., Amato, C., & Belanger, J. J., 2013; Hochwarter, W. A., Witt, L. A., Treadway, D. C., & Ferris, G. R., 2006). As such, students' future careers will depend on their ability to lead, and this ability can be built and developed while they are still completing their undergraduate degrees.

Research has been done on the value of student leadership among nursing students (Curtis, E. A., Vries, J. D., & Sheerin, F. K., 2011; Zilembo, M., & Monterosso, L., 2004; Heller, B. R., Drenkard, K., Esposito-Herr, M.B., Romano, C., Tom, S., & Valentine, N., 2004), engineering students (Ozgen, S., Sanchez-Galofre, O., Alabart, J. R., Medir, M., & Giralt, F., 2013), youth ministry students (White, D. A., 2004), and business administration department students (Unsar, A. S., & Karalar, S., 2013). The majority of these studies looked at how well leadership and leadership practices work with students in general. According to the researcher, in order for student leaders to further develop their leadership abilities with the incorporation of an awareness of their own personality, their strengths and weaknesses, it is also crucial to evaluate what leadership qualities and personality traits they already possess. Being a leader is an art with its own distinctiveness (Barry, T. J., 2002). Therefore,

in order to create an influence on the lives of others, successful leaders must be able to use whatever resources they have, including their personalities and leadership abilities, in accordance with the demands of their members and circumstances. The study's focus is on a cohort of young leaders who have been chosen by their peers to occupy a variety of roles in the groups and clubs at a private college. The purpose of this study is to investigate the leadership attributes and personality traits of student leaders in order to identify the personality types that are most predictive of these attributes. In order to help these up-and-coming leaders become more equipped to lead in the future, it seeks to offer insights into areas where leadership traits can be strengthened.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Those with the ability to influence others' attitudes, ideas, feelings, and behaviours through interpersonal skills are considered leaders. They direct and oversee the group's performance (Pierce, J. L., & Newstrom, J. W., 2006). Studies on the traits that can assist distinguish effective leaders from ineffective ones have been conducted in the past (Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A., 1991; Lord, R. G., DeVader, C. L., & Alliger, G. M., 1986). There exists a correlation between individual variations and the emergence or efficacy of leadership, as demonstrated by a meta-analysis on the association between individual attributes and leadership effectiveness (Hoffman, B. J., Woehr, D. J., Maldagen Youngjohn, R., & Lyons, B. D., 2011).

Effective leadership is thought to be influenced by personal attributes, according to the notion of leadership traits. A successful and effective leader is thought to possess certain physical and psychological traits that set them apart from non-leaders (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). Various studies conducted in the past have highlighted distinct leadership attributes exhibited by leaders (Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A., 1991; Hogan, R., Curphy, G. J., & Hogan, J., 1994). According to Pierce and Newstrom (Pierce, J. L., & Newstrom, J. W., 2006), the majority of reviewers share common traits for effective leadership, including initiative, responsibility, self-assurance, adaptability, sociability, integrity, tenacity, and insight. The majority of these traits have been found through studies conducted on working-class leaders embedded in Western society. Research on students' leadership abilities in Malaysia is lacking, and because of contextual, cultural, and geographic variations, findings may vary from those of other research. In the context of Malaysia, the current study aims to investigate the kinds of leadership

attributes that student leaders possess.

PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

A person's persistent patterns of actions, ideas, and emotions that are particular to them and endure across time and in various contexts are referred to as their personality. It can be investigated from multiple angles using diverse personality theories. The eight fundamental facets of personality identified by Friedman and Schustack (Friedman, H. S., & Schustack, M. W., 2012) include trait, behaviourist, biological, psychoanalytic, humanistic, and interactionist.

From the standpoint of traits, personality is understood as a stable, long-lasting pattern of behaviours. Personality inventories (Hughes, R. L., Ginnett, R. C., & Curphy, G. J., 2006) can be used to measure personality traits since they are distinctive to an individual's behaviour, comparatively stable, and consistent (Feist, J., & Feist, G. J., 2009). Personality traits can be produced by unique experiences during a lifetime, even though they are inherited and impacted by genetics. These characteristics are flexible beings. Certain psychological characteristics change over time, individuals may modify and adjust them as they undergo life events and acquire new strategies for adjusting to their surroundings. Despite being common features that can be used to classify persons using generalised characteristics, each person's pattern of attributes is unique (Cloninger, S., 2013).

Curtis, Vries, and Sheerin (Curtis, E. A., Vries, J. D., & Sheerin, F. K., 2011) proposed from the literature review that certain personality traits like extroversion, openness, and motivation to manage, as well as interpersonal qualities like effective communication and approachability, can support nurse leadership. A highly thorough meta-analysis between the five-factor model of personality and leadership was conducted by Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (T. A. Judge, J. E. Bono, R. Ilies, & M. W. Gerhardt, 2002) using 222 correlations from 73 studies. They discovered that three major personality qualities were associated with leadership: conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion. Conscientiousness and openness were found to be the next most reliable and robust correlates of leadership across leader emergence and effectiveness, after extraversion. Over a variety of study contexts and leadership metrics, including leader emergence and effectiveness, extraversion and leadership were consistently connected. It is anticipated that personality dimensions will be able to predict leadership traits among student leaders. In this study, personality traits will be measured using a different personality inventory.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

Participants in this study included 59 student leaders from a private Malaysian university who served as leaders of academic organisations (n = 17) and non-academic societies (n = 42). There were 59 participants in all, including 33 men and 26 women. 19 people served as presidents, 4 as vice presidents, 16 as secretaries, 4 as treasurers, and 16 as committee members, among other leadership roles. During a leadership camp, each participant filled out the Leonard Personality Inventory (LPI) online and the other study questionnaires that the researcher gave them.

INSTRUMENTS

Following many years of research into Malaysians' personality qualities, Leonard Yong developed the Leonard Personality Inventory (LPI) (Yong, L., 2007). Five personality dimensions— Openness, Analytical, Neutral, Relational, and Decisive—were evaluated using this tool. It has 100 items, each of which is assessed on a 5-point scale (1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither strongly agree nor disagree, 4 being somewhat agree, and 5 being strongly agree). Online access to the LPI was provided via www.leonard.com.my. Alpha Cronbach reliability coefficients, which range from 0.71 for Decisive to 0.80 for Openness, were used to assess the dependability of the LPI (Yong, L. M. S., 2003).

The list of ten attributes that make up leadership traits is provided by Manning and Curtis (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). The participants were asked to circle a number between 1 (low) and 10 (high) to rate their own performance on each of the ten leadership attributes. The eleven characteristics were: 1) Vision: the ability to identify what should and could be done, as well as a sense of purpose. 2) Ability: possesses the necessary job knowledge and experience to direct and decide in order to produce desired outcomes. 3) Enthusiasm: the individual dedication that spurs others to take interest in the goals the leader is attempting to achieve. 4) Stability: the capacity for emotional balance and objectivity when interacting with oneself and others in trying circumstances. 5) Concern for others: exhibits genuine concern and interest in the well-being of followers and others. 6) Self-confidence: the inner fortitude that results from readiness and the ability to do challenging tasks. 7) Persistence: the will

and resolve to keep going after challenging things until they are finished. 8) Vitality: vivacious, endowed with courage and fortitude. 9) Charisma: the captivating capacity to pique people's interest and win them over. 10) Integrity: the quality of being trustworthy that comes from honesty, moral fortitude, and the bravery to keep your word (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for this instrument's component with the current research sample showed a good level of reliability, 0.89.

RESULTS

Leadership Qualities

Table 1 displayed the means and standard deviations of the leadership attributes. Among student leaders, integrity received the highest score (M = 8.03, SD = 1.52). Integrity was followed by tenacity, vision, concern for others, passion, ability, self-confidence, and energy. Their average scores, which fell between 7.00 to 7.90, were deemed average, and they needed to improve on those leadership attributes (Manning & Curtis, 2007). Charismatic leadership had the lowest score (M = 6.76, SD = 1.86). It could take a lot of effort to raise student leaders' charismatic leadership level. The leadership traits exhibited by student leaders were mediocre overall. Regarding gender and the leadership position held, there was no discernible variation in the leadership attributes of student leaders.

PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Five personality score components were used as predictor variables in eleven standard multiple regressions for all leadership traits (see Table 2). Findings indicated revealed the following variables showed statistical significance in the regression model: integrity, F (5, 53) = 2.73, p < 0.05; charisma, F (5, 53) = 3.04, p < 0.05; concern for others, F(5, 53) = 4.01, p < 0.01; and overall leadership traits, F(5, 53) = 2.66, p < 0.05. Score neutral for personality was the most significant predictor of the leadership quality and concern for others, with the highest beta weight (β =.133, p < 0.01). According to the investigation, people who scored higher on the Neutral personality scale were also more inclined to be caring towards other people. Additionally, self-confidence was significantly predicted by open personality score (β =.092, p < 0.01). Individuals exhibiting more extroverted personality traits were also more likely to be confident in their interpersonal interactions. A significant predictor of both charisma (β =.071, p < 0.05) and integrity (β =.062, p < 0.05)was the relational personality score. Individuals who possessed robust relational personality traits were more inclined to exhibit their leadership attributes, such as integrity and charm. Finally, it was discovered that the Analytical personality score had a suppression effect and was a significant predictor of vitality (β = -.083, p < 0.05). Vitality and analytical personality score had a negative connection (r =-.290, p < 0.05). According to the investigation, individuals with high Analytical personality scores were more likely to exhibit low vitality.

TABLE 1. Leadership Qualities among Student Leaders

Leadership Qualities	Mean	SD	N
Integrity	8.03	1.52	59
Persistence	7.71	1.52	59
Vision	7.61	1.53	59
Concern for others	7.49	1.38	59
Enthusiasm	7.46	1.85	59
Ability	7.42	1.49	59
Stability	7.41	1.69	59
Self-confidence	7.27	1.95	59
Vitality	7.24	1.55	59
Charisma	6.76	1.86	59
Overall	74.41	11.81	59

SD: Standard Deviation, N: Number of Participants

TABLE 2. Multiple Regression Predicting Leadership Qualities according to Personality

Personality	Vision		Ability		Enthusiasm		Stability		Concern for Others		Self-Confidence	
	r	β	r	β	r	β	r	β	r	β	r	β
Openness	.241	.044	.232	.008	.252	.024	.226	.041	.067	-.028	.509**	.092**
Neutral	.057	-.009	.281*	.061	.281*	.058	.292*	.069	.414**	.133**	.135	-.021
Analytical	-.060	-.006	.020	-.017	-.045	-.006	.058	-.008	.000	-.062	-.120	-.014
Relational	.148	.006	.207	.000	.279*	.031	.053	-.017	.043	-.042	.410**	.033
Decisiveness	.094	-.007	.220	.032	.111	-.010	.019	-.014	.125	.057*	.322*	.013
R Square (R²)	.063		.122		.131		.116		.274**		.304**	

TABLE 2. Continuation

Personality	Persistence		Vitality		Charisma		Integrity		Overall	
	r	β	r	β	r	β	r	β	r	β
Openness	.322*	.034	.140	-.004	.265*	.000	.332*	.042	.367**	.254
Neutral	.160	.000	.162	.066	.152	-.001	.215	-.006	.293*	.349
Analytical	.011	.013	-.290*	-.083*	-.047	.016	.013	.044	-.066	-.124
Relational	.297*	.029	.239	-.010	.445**	.071*	.357**	.062*	.355**	.162
Decisiveness	.251	.008	.092	.035	.329*	.029	.110	-.045	.238	.099
R Square (R²)	.137		.169		.223*		.205*		.200*	

*P < 0.05 ** P < 0.01

DISCUSSION

The results show that student leaders with excellent leadership qualities and integrity are those selected by their peers. Since honesty is regarded as the most crucial attribute of leadership, these student leaders have the potential to be excellent leaders in the future (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). High-integrity student leaders possess the moral fortitude and honesty necessary to guide their followers and inspire confidence in those who have selected them. They will honour their commitments and win the respect and allegiance of their members and supporters (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). Charisma is the leadership attribute that student leaders rank lowest on, indicating a need for additional training to improve this attribute. Others are drawn to charismatic people with great enthusiasm, admiration, and loyalty (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). Student leaders must receive training in relationship- and communication-building techniques in order to elicit these kinds of responses from their followers. This will allow them to connect with followers and arouse their emotions in order to accomplish greater objectives (Hughes, R. L., Ginnett, R. C., & Curphy, G. J., 2006), as well as to be adaptable in their interactions with them based on their needs and character (Yong, L., 2007).

The current research supports the use of personality traits as indicators of leadership potential. People who scored well on the Neutral personality component were also more inclined to be caring towards other people. This outcome is predicted because people with high Neutral personality dimensions are excellent listeners, typically very supportive of others, and constantly prefer to act in a way that pleases other people (Yong, L., 2007). Leaders who have a high level of the Neutral personality factor are likely to be people-centered, putting others' needs and interests first and earning the admiration of their followers. Individuals with high Open personality dimension scores were also more likely to be highly confident in themselves. This data lends credence to the theory that people with an openness personality profile enjoy trying new things, being different, and learning about new concepts and experiences (Yong, L., 2007). They also take risks and are confident enough in themselves to take on difficult projects (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007). Since the results suggest that self-confidence was strongly correlated with openness and because prior research has demonstrated that openness to experience is necessary to maintain leadership effectiveness, it is imperative that leaders be receptive to ideas and experiences (Holland, B., & Hogan, J., 2003).

The results also show that individuals were more likely to be charismatic and honest if they scored well on the Relational personality factor. It was discovered that those who fit the Relational personality profile enjoyed interacting with people, motivating others, and sharing their emotions with them (Yong, L., 2007). Because they are gregarious, powerful, and endowed with charisma that piques followers' interest and inspires trust, leaders with high Relational personality traits will have an edge when establishing human relationships (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007; Jugde, T. A., Bono, J.E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M.W., 2002). The results seem to suggest that leaders with high Relational personality dimensions are able to communicate, relate, and express ideas or feelings. As a result, they can convey to their followers that they are courageous and have the strength of character to stick by their convictions (Manning, G., & Curtis, K., 2007), and these traits were consistently correlated with leadership (Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W., 2002).

Last but not least, individuals with high Analytical personality dimension scores were more likely to exhibit low levels of vitalism. This result supports the hypothesis that the link between analytical intelligence and effective leadership may be curvilinear (Hughes, R. L., Ginnett, R. C., & Curphy, G. J., 2006). Since mental capacity has been shown to affect the relationship between social skills and job performance, communication between leaders and followers may be impacted when a leader's analytical intelligence is too high (Ferris, G. R., Hochwarter, W. A., & Witt, L. A., 2001). Because of their propensity for correctness and precision, leaders with high Analytical personality scores may succeed in providing detailed instructions and structures. However, because of this, they may become overly specific when setting procedures and goals (Yong, L., 2007). Consequently, excessive analysis can impede vitality as it may require more time to make decisions. If a choice takes too long to happen, enthusiasm can wane.

A person can become a more effective leader by being able to adapt to the demands of a given circumstance by understanding their personality and leadership abilities. Being a leader is more than just possessing certain attributes (Pierce, J. L., & Newstrom, J. W., 2006). A person with particular personality traits is naturally more likely to exhibit specific leadership qualities and participate in certain behaviours that are associated with effective leadership, as personality is linked to leadership quality. Being a leader requires more than just possessing certain leadership traits; one must also be conscious of their dominant personality trait. What will make them effective leaders is their effort to enhance and develop other, less obvious traits,

tailoring them to the traits, objectives, and actions of their followers (Pierce, J. L., & Newstrom, J. W., 2006).

Student leaders can be assisted in identifying their main personality dimension, as well as their strengths and limitations, by using the Leonard Personality Inventory. Being self-aware of their personality will help them grow as a leader because they will be able to address their areas of weakness and motivate themselves to do more in their areas of strength. It is intended that by cultivating and strengthening their leadership traits, these student leaders will bring out the best in people and, in the process of exercising their leadership, develop others' leadership traits as well, assisting others in becoming leaders in their own right. The researcher concurs with Barry (Barry, T. J., 2002) that an experience that profoundly impacts our lives and the lives of others should serve as the foundation for meaningful leadership instead of performance evaluations alone. It's critical to cultivate those traits in order to influence others and set an example for them.

While the empirical findings suggest that personality factors can predict student leaders' leadership attributes to some degree, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study when interpreting the findings. It is impossible to ascertain the causal association between personality and leadership traits due to the cross-sectional methodology of this study. In the future, it would be beneficial to conduct a pretest and posttest study to determine whether receiving leadership training over time will improve leadership abilities. The use of self-report measures to measure leadership attributes is another weakness of this study. It's possible that participants will provide responses that are acceptable in society. As such, the research findings' depiction of those student leaders' leadership traits differs from their true traits. It would be beneficial if peers or followers assessed those leadership attributes as well. Another limitation of the study was the way personality, and the five dimensions of personality scores that make up personality, were used as predictor variables for leadership traits in student leaders. The results show that variables other than personality account for a sizable amount of variance. Future research on the characteristics of leaders among students may take into account additional factors like age, gender, and efficacy of leadership.

In conclusion, there is a high degree of integrity among the student leaders who were selected by their peers to head groups and clubs. A leader's personality might have an impact on the leadership traits they exhibit more easily. To improve their leadership abilities and become greater leaders in the future, these up-and-coming leaders require additional leadership training.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study emphasises how important personality is in determining a student leader's capacity for leadership. The results show that characteristics like charm, integrity, interpersonal skills, and analytical thinking have a big impact on how leaders interact with their peers and give their followers confidence. While charisma and relational skills are highlighted as areas where student leaders may benefit from additional training to strengthen their capacity to connect and motivate others effectively, integrity emerges as a cornerstone attribute, crucial for winning respect and trust. The study also promotes a more comprehensive view of leadership that goes beyond natural qualities, highlighting the need of continuous learning and self-awareness among student leaders in order to acquire a variety of skill sets suited to the demands of leadership positions.

It is clear from looking ahead that developing student leadership effectively calls for a multipronged strategy that includes both personality testing and focused training programmes. Institutions can enable student leaders to handle a variety of issues and create inclusive settings by giving them the tools they need to assess their strengths and opportunities for growth. In order to better understand the dynamic interaction between personality traits and leadership effectiveness and to design more comprehensive leadership development programmes that are suited to the changing needs of student leaders in educational settings, future research should investigate longitudinal studies and a variety of methodologies. In the end, educators and institutions can better assist the development of student leaders who are not just competent but also compassionate, flexible, and able to bring about positive change in their communities by utilising the insights gained from this study.

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