Student Leadership Competencies Development During the Covid-19 Pandemic for Higher Learning Institution

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Abstract: This research's primary goal was to understand attributes for developing student leadership competencies that emerged following the covid-19 pandemic. This study employed a qualitative approach. Throughout various methods applied in this research occurred due to the combination within interview sessions, focus group interviews, documentation review, and casual talks with a group of current and previous student leaders. The findings indicate that several attributes influence the development of student leadership competencies: 1) Emotional intelligence, self-belief, confidence, and responsiveness are all individual characteristics.; 2) Academic activities, student and faculty interactions, peer interactions, and leadership positions in the group and student organisations are all examples of student experiences and involvement.; and 3) Institutional constraints, such as financial constraints. The study's conclusions guide practitioners such as student affairs staff, academics, and the higher learning ministry regarding the best strategies for training future leaders to lead effectively during and after a pandemic.

Keywords: student, leadership, higher learning institution

1. Introduction

The young generation, mainly students at higher learning institutions, should prepare to resume future leadership roles, particularly during and after the Covid-19 pandemic [1]. The position is to accomplish this through education and related activities [2]. Today's society necessitates the formation of student leaders. Higher learning institutions are the first to take this assignment [2, 3]. Leaders who lead society need to take critical action to train those leaders now, particularly during high emotional stress, such as the current pandemic. Students are required to improve their leadership skills through various activities and experiences [4]. In this regard, the job of a higher learning institution is to act as facilitators, assisting students in attaining maturity and developing into perfect individuals. The development of student leadership is a view as a critical and necessary aspect of life that they ought to pursue [5].

Research by A. Bennet, D. Bennet, and J. Lewis (2015) defined leadership among students as the process by which an individual is subject to change, resulting in increasingly complex behaviour resulting from conquering growing life obstacles [6]. A higher education institution has a significant impact on students. The hours spent by the students at the institution and the qualities associated with their involvement in college activities may affect the quality of their experiences [7]. The matter is observed during the current pandemic. Among these experiences, the formation of student leadership is deemed the most critical. R. Dunn (2020), advocated that student leadership should be emphasised [8].

Numerous environmental elements affected leadership development during the pandemic, such as living distant from one's parents, student-faculty engagement, student-student engagement, college sports, volunteerism, mentoring peers, class projects in groups, and class presentations development accordingly. The concept that leadership compels one with discretion to connect dissimilar people via everyday experiences, vigilance, and social responsibility is also discussed [9]. Four domains were proposed in this research: 1—acceptance of self-development, 2—self-development is recognised 3—interaction and action between individuals and groups, 4—between oneself and others, interaction & action.

J. M. Amis and B. D. Janz (2020), presented strategic imperatives that organisations in various sectors, in particular, should take into account while adjusting to a new social situation. Individual accountability, a long-term vision, and capabilities are emphasised in the strategic approach and individuals' capacity to build, adapt, and harmonise. The long-term perspective of this idea is forward-looking [10].

2.0 Literature Review

Numerous experts and scientists have examined leadership. Leadership is a skill that can be acquired. Students acquire leadership skills through class and extracurricular activities [11]. Elements affecting leadership competency development include a student's course[12] , decision-making latitude [13], and class size also its type [14]. According to [15] research, success and living away from home are vital components of student leadership development. Interactions between students, professor engagement, university activities, and class participation also contribute to student development. These qualities benefit the learner during his or her educational journey. However, attributes such as friends, family, neighbours, and higher learning institutions may contribute to leadership competencies. Self-autonomy, which includes competency, individual self-esteem, and belief in human capabilities, may benefit leadership development [13].

Additionally, self-ability, or trust in someone able to create and act to accomplish stated goals, plays a role in developing leadership competencies [16]. Extroversion is a critical component in student leadership development [17]. Emotional intelligence is another critical factor in developing student leadership competencies [18]. The purpose of this research is to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Justify the understanding of leadership.
2. Establish a definition for the concept of leadership development.
3. How do students communicate leadership experiences throughout their stay at a postsecondary institution of higher learning and throughout their lives?
4. How does the student explain the knowledge, ability, and attitude necessary for effective leadership?
5. What components of leadership competency development are most effective

3.0 Methodology

The results were triangulated using individual interviews with participants, focus groups, a literature review, and informal encounters with participants throughout the study process. Reporting mathematical analysis for a qualitative paper will show various conclusions. However, the results of this research will only highlight the conclusion of the study. The reporting style is not new, and a few papers have published a similar approach [1, 2, 5]. Previous and current student leader in Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Terengganu is the selected group for the study. Indeed, after conducting thoroughly individual interviews, focus groups, and research on the development of leadership competencies, The researcher gathered data from other sources in order to conduct a more thorough examination [19]. Qualitative data is organised in the following five steps.

3.1 Approach

Each of the six steps was carried out precisely. Following triangulation and an opinion poll, the researcher proposed a framework of professionals and specialists regarding the suggested framework.

1. Data organisation

2. Adding additional classifications

3. Themes or recurrences

4. Comparing emergent hypotheses to existing data

5. Experimenting with emergent hypotheses in the presence of data

6. Reporting on the findings

4.0 Findings and Results

In response to the first question, students justified and defined the term leadership as follows:

- orienteering others utilising their teamwork
- planning and organising in group or society
- steering and pushing peers at their best

Concerning the second issue, which is defined as the development of leadership competencies, the majority of students agreed

- attributes in upgrading leadership
- elements facilitating the human performance in time in general
- all the elements that eventually make someone capable of leadership

In response to the third question, how do they describe their personal leadership experiences throughout their academic years at a higher learning institution. The finding shows that students discussed the value and impact of family, school, neighbours, and friends contributed to their

personal leadership experience. Only a few students say that their leadership attributes are influenced by family, school, neighbours, and friends. They also mentioned that academic instructors, classmates, university programs, student activities, different student organisations, and class leadership significantly impact their leadership attributes. Results obtained for the fourth question explain the required skill, attitude, and knowledge that should be installed to a student for them to be influential leaders. From the study, students combined the terms "knowledge" and "skill," and they said it is critical to learn about leadership theories, models, and approaches in the new norm via seminars and courses since attitudes do not change without the proper information.

4.1 Leadership Knowledge Abilities and Attitudes

Leadership knowledge is intrinsically linked to oneself, people, the surroundings, self-perception, utilising previous experiences, comprehending differences between diverse viewpoints, recognising diverse cultures, demonstrating innovation and creativity in leadership, using contemporary leadership techniques and new technology. Attitude is associated with receptivity to new surroundings and ideas, understanding others, respecting their viewpoints, being responsible, acting ethically, being optimistic, committed (excessively pragmatic work relationships, advancement via involvement leadership, and optimism for the future, people, and student organisation).

4.2 Ability and Actions of a Leader

The ability of a good leader requires attributes in communication and verbal-nonverbal skills. The analysis concluded that students agreed that the leadership attributes are affected due to pandemics and need to be enhanced through a proper monitoring program. The following attributes skills are interpersonal, active listening, and the ability to motivate others to achieve higher goals, establishing a changing culture, enhancing teaching and learning, management of time effectiveness, and assessing both frail and robust areas, collaboration through technological networks, conversation skills, dispute resolution, and the ability to provide an appropriate presentation. For the fifth question, what are the new characteristics of a successful student leader who demonstrates competency, especially post-pandemic. Students have proposed the following practical frameworks for them to still play the role of a leader through leadership development such as:

- factors affecting the background: age, gender, and academic performance
- structural variables: the learning environment (class and type of learning institution)
- excitement, intellect, self-belief, extroversion, and self-confidence are all personality traits.
- before beginning university, consider the following: family, instructor, classmates, and neighbors.
- significant factors relating to the institution organization include student-faculty relationships, peer relationships, participation in classroom activities such as class projects and presentations, involvement in various university sections, membership in university associations, and leadership experience at the institution of higher learning.

5.0 Discussion & Conclusion

The analysis revealed that higher learning institutions sometimes overlook student leadership competency development, especially during a worldwide pandemic, as a critical matter. This matter relies on peers, family, and school, the surrounding environment, all of which are connected to the period before higher education institutions stepping in to admit students, yet they are all significant and practical factors. In terms of background variables, the finding demonstrated that one's principal could be beneficial for developing leadership competencies. Students with varying extracurricular activities possess varying levels of leadership ability. Academic achievement also affects the development of leadership competencies. According to W. Deng, X. Li, H. Wu, and G. Xu (2020), students with better academic achievement have more significant leadership potential [20]. Gender is another practical component of developing student leadership competencies. C. Fritz and D. Knippenberg (2017) recognised that male students perceive their leadership qualities and talents as superior when male students are compared to female students [21]. Before joining a higher learning institution, structural variables influence the development of student leadership competencies. D. Karagianni and A. Jude Montgomery (2017), found that life experience may affect a student's leadership ability [22]. The work also offered participation elements such as relationships with university instructors, interaction based on students' comments during interviews, triangulation findings, peers, membership in organisations, and university involvement.

Additionally, self-autonomy, self-belief, and extroversion are critical in developing leadership competencies, as evidenced by N. L. Nilsson (2022), and C. Amelink, S. Artis, and T.-J. Liu (2015) research [23] [24]. Students identified emotional intelligence as a critical component of developing leadership competencies, which aligns with the findings of D. Lang et al., (2020) [25] [26]. Examining the development of student leadership competencies can assist student affairs, student society, and higher education administrators align their policies and goals with leadership development and growth. Additionally, it aids the management of student affairs in directing their institution's initiatives for student leadership development. The research findings suggest that 1) Students should be more involved in intellectual, cultural, and pedagogical debates at their universities., 2) students are should also more involved in a student-faculty relationship in various areas, 3) student-classmate relationship should be tighter since students keen to help each other, and 4) Executives in higher education should examine the factors that influence student leadership development.

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