

The Influence of Public University Student Leadership on Democratization Education in Malaysia

Anuar Safian

Faculty of Islamic Studies

University Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

21300 Terengganu, Malaysia

Abdullah Ibrahim

Faculty of General Studies & Advanced Education

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

21300 Terengganu, Malaysia

Ahmad Aizuddin Md Rami

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,

43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

Wan Khairul Aiman Wan Mokhtar

Faculty of Islamic Studies

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

21300 Terengganu, Malaysia

Farah Syazrah Mohd Ghazalli

Faculty of General Studies & Advanced Education

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

21300 Terengganu, Malaysia

Khoirun Nisak Mat Saad

Faculty of General Studies & Advanced Education

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

21300 Terengganu, Malaysia

Received: Dec. 5, 2021 Accepted: Jun. 5, 2022 Online published: Jul. 17, 2022

doi:10.5296/ijhrs.v12i3.20089

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v12i3.20089>

Abstract

Malaysia's progress depends on the effectiveness of leaders in maintaining unity based on the principles of Rukun Negara and upholding the existing law. The development of democratization education is extremely important to ensure the well-being of our beloved Malaysia. This process must take place perfectly for the well-being of Malaysian citizens towards continuing to lift the country's progress in the future. Students are the front line of the country on their shoulders carrying the trust of leadership and the future of the country. They play an important role as future leaders and need to have a high level of understanding and appreciation of democratization and duty as Malaysians. Specifically, this research examines the impact of student leadership on the democratization of education in Malaysian public universities. The student leadership questionnaire developed by Kouzes & Posner in 2007 and the democratized education questionnaire developed by Evans & Rose in 2007 adopted a cross-sectional survey method in the data collection process. A total of 326 student leaders of Peninsular Malaysia Public University participated as the study's Respondents. Student leadership has also had a 39.6% impact on democratized education. This research can be used by national leaders, university administrations, and the Ministry of Education as a guide for assessing the leadership of future national leaders. It can be used as a basic reference to improve various knowledge of leadership management based on democratization education as the basis for the formation of the identity of Malaysian leaders.

Keywords: democratization education, student leadership, public university, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The dream of soaring by the National Education Philosophy (Falsafah Pendidikan Negara) is to produce perfect human beings who are balanced in terms of physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (PIES) which can contribute to the development and progress of the country to achieve the government's aspirations in the coming years full of the challenges to generations, the linear who will lead the country. The education system in Malaysia is the backbone in producing leaders and citizens who have the values of citizenship and appreciate democratic education. Leaders who can appreciate the values of democracy are contributors to the economic development of a country (Ahmad Antory Hussain, 1991; Abdul Aziz Bari,

2008).

Meanwhile, Barnes and Morgeson (2007) argue that every effective leadership organization needs to increase a high level of commitment to the development of effective student leadership at all levels in the future. In this regard, the Malaysian government has decided to undertake a transformation in the education system on a large scale to cultivate students' identity and citizenship values and understand democratization since school days based on initiatives introduced under the National Key Result Areas (NKRA). Based on the School-Malaysia Standard of Education Quality (School-MSEQ), the ongoing transformation process in the country's education system demands high-impact, quality, efficient, and effective organizational leadership as well as the ability to mobilize school people, public and private educational institutions towards the achievement of the organization's goal of producing students who have the values of citizenship and understand the system of government of the country.

Therefore, the education system in Malaysia is the backbone to produce leaders and citizens who have the values of citizenship and appreciate democracy because education is a major contributor to human capital and the country's economy. According to Mohd Najib Abdul Razak & Muhyiddin Yassin (2012), education is a medium to trigger creativity and a generator of innovation in producing a young generation with high citizenship values, knowledgeable, able to think critically and creatively, have strong leadership skills, and able to communicate effectively globally.

In this regard, investment in leadership development activities is important to produce great individual leaders in the field of leadership as well as ready to face future challenges that will bring national excellence (Ahmad Atory Hussain, 1991; Abdul Salam Muhammad Shukri, 2014 Rothwell, 2011; Razali et al., 2021) in their study suggested that succession plans be implemented in an organization and country to find potential and talented new leadership while Chaudhary Imran Sarwar (2013) and Abdul Razaq Ahmad (2005) stated that the selection of future leaders who understand citizenship development and education democracy is dependent on the intrinsic desire factors and potential inherent in each potential leader that can be measured using the theory of "triads of typical-ideal ethically effective" which is a combination of effectiveness defined by Bass and Avalio (2004).

Issues

There were a series of protests by student leaders related to the democratic system in Malaysia, including the demand for academic freedom at PWTC (Zulhimi Paidi et al, 2011; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 2012). The failure of student leaders to comply with university rules and AUKU 1971 by the University of Malaya student leaders who organized a rally to demand justice against the then Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (Zulhimi Paidi & Rohani Abdul Ghani, 2003). The phenomenon of lack of voting awareness among Malaysia's young generation is very worrying. According to the Deputy Chairman of the Election Commission (EC), Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, 70% of the 4.9 million Malaysian voters who are eligible to vote did not register as voters. As of 2018, there are 15.2 million Malaysians who have reached the age of 21 and are eligible to vote but only 10.3 million

have registered to vote (Bernama, 2018).

Research Objective

Among the purpose of the study is to observe the relationship between student leadership and democratization education of Public University students in Malaysia. Looking at differences in student leadership and democratization education based on demographic aspects (age, gender, and occupation of the head of the family). The main influence of student leadership on the democratization education of Public University student leaders in Malaysia.

Methodology

According to Noraini (2010), its purpose is to get some opinions of the researched population on a certain problem or problem, observe some variables and examine the relationship between the variables. Survey methods are used to determine trends in population attitudes and behaviors, opinions, and characteristics (Creswell and Clark, 2007).

This study uses quantitative research methods. According to Cohen et al. (2000), if the research involves a large number of respondents, quantitative methods are appropriate. The advantage of this design is that a large amount of information can be collected at one time, the cost is low, and it is easy to operate (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In addition, the use of questionnaires can cover a large number of samples at low cost, thereby making comparisons between studies more detailed and objective (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). The study was conducted as per the existing situation without any manipulation on the subject. The period of return of questionnaires from subjects is limited to one month. Reminders are not made to subjects if the re-acceptance rate of the questionnaire exceeds 60% because a study sample of more than 200 people is considered acceptable for the study without having a significant impact on the study results (McMillan, 2004)

Finding and Discussion

Student Leadership and Education Democratization of Public University Student Leaders in Malaysia

Since the establishment of public universities since independence more than 50 years ago, public universities have aimed to provide the country with skilled manpower and become leaders of parliamentary approval policies (Abdul Aziz Bari, 2008; Saifuddin Abdullah, 2010). The EPU report also clearly shows that public universities are agents of change and will satisfy the government's desire to cultivate or produce skilled human capital in the 2020 Vision (Abdul Razaq Ahmad, 2005; Abdul Rashid Moten, 2008). The clear vision and mission of an organization with credible leadership will lead Malaysia to become a developed country in accordance with its model, because Malaysia does not want to imitate any developed country (Najib Tun Razak, 2009).

Universities, students and, government leaders are an inseparable symbolic relationship. According to Ainon Mohd (2005), in the life of students at the university, the emergence of

certain student leaders is so strong in shaping the struggles of students on campus. According to Mohd Salleh Abbas (1997) and Saifuddin Abdullah (2010), leaders are principled individuals, initiative, and think about the needs of organized life whether in challenging or non-challenging situations.

History has shown that education is the core in the development of a strong individual, the construction of an intact society, and the formation of a harmonious national life (Ahmad Zaki Abd. Latif, Azam Hamzah & Azhar Mad Aros, 2012).

The aspect of leadership is one of the aspects that get the attention of various parties in preparing young people who also consist of students as a group that will become national leaders (Goleman, 2000). Leadership can be described as a process of influencing the group in specific situations and times that can stimulate members to work willingly to achieve common goals. This is further supported by the opinion of Greenleaf (1998) and Graham (1991) who stated that efficient and effective leadership can determine the progress and backwardness of an organization.

Leaders are individuals who are authoritative, skilled, resilient, and charismatic. According to Goleman (2001), the process of forming and producing the best leaders takes a long time. Good leaders today are not born as leaders naturally (Rami et al, 2018) instead they are formed through a process of leadership formation that continues since school days (Azizah Nordin, 1991). Co-curricular activities also have a role in shaping the personality of the leader in students. This finding is supported by Aziah Ismail, Yaakob, and Yahya (2006) who stressed that co-curricular activities are held to produce leaders among students.

Logically, the strength of the student movement depends on the strength of charismatic leaders in encouraging students' ideas to fight for an issue (Zaini et al., 2021). This is reinforced by the opinion of Goleman, Boyatris, and McKee (2002) who stated that the struggle of a leader is based on the experience and education gained by the leader. Universities are institutions responsible for producing leaders in the future. At the university, the talents and potential of the self are nurtured so that the students are more successful in organizational leadership or human capital development leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Johari Hassan and Sutinah Safar, 2010).

In Malaysia, the potential of students' self and leadership is tested through the organization of seminars or study tour programs and various other activities that require the work of the students themselves. According to Johari Hassan and Sutinah Safar (2010) also, with the involvement of students in such activities, student leaders need to know the financial costs, venue selection, publicity, and so on. This is reinforced by the study of Kamaruddin Said (2014), without adequate preparation in terms of mental, emotional, and physical, the course of the program is likely to fail. This also explores and tests the level of leadership of the students themselves.

Division of tasks, communication skills, and teamwork are at the heart of success in such programs (Konezak, Stacy & Trust 2000). To manage it, student leaders need to have auxiliary knowledge that is not the subject of their studies at the university. Student leaders

need to plan carefully to increase the program's effectiveness (Joseph, 2007). As such, their level of leadership will be tested and unearthed in line with the will of the country today.

5.2 Differences in Student Leadership on Democratization Education Based on Demographic Aspects

The findings show that there are no significant differences for student leadership aspects on democratization education based on demographic aspects. The education system in Malaysia has provided equal opportunities to all Malaysians regardless of social status and gender. This clearly shows that every Malaysian whether male or female has an equal opportunity to get a perfect and high education as possible regardless of race and skin color.

Therefore, good and effective leadership building through democratization education can be applied through civic education and co-curricular activities, student involvement in uniformed bodies, singing national anthems, and celebration of important national days and the like (Rizal Uzir, 2002; Fadhilah Ideris, 2002). Leadership behavior is a person's natural feeling to give service and this shows that the characteristics of leadership are born from a leader who is instilled through a standard educational process (Green Leaf, 1977; Saifuddin Abdullah, 2013; Muhyidin Yassin, 2013)

The findings of the study contradict the study by Kauzes and Posner (2007) who found that there are differences between genders based on leadership where female leaders are more likely to adopt more democratic characteristics than male leaders. Norsidah Mohd Nordin (2018) stated that female leaders are more likely to have interpersonal relationships in their leadership than male leaders. Female leaders are more likely to have service-giving behaviors (Andersen & Hansson, 2010; Arnold and Loughlin, 2013) or show feelings of love and compassion (Sarros et al., 2009)

In addition, the results of this study also contradict the study of Rost (1995) who found that overall, females showed less social power than males. Women were found to act as supporters. Perceptions of women's leadership were found to be quite satisfactory and more inclined towards task structure orientation than consideration. Looking at the age aspect, the results of the analysis of differences in student leadership variables also show that there are no significant differences for the dimensions of leaders as models, leaders who trigger ideas, leaders who foster cooperation, and leaders who motivate motivation. Only the leader dimension of the source of inspiration had a significant difference with the age factor. However, these five aspects are important to produce a competent leader.

These findings are consistent with the studies of Goodwin and Capella (2012), Dannhauser and Boshoff (2006), Mujtaba and others. (2010), Nurfarhana (2009) and Pekerti (2009) They generally found that based on the age level of the leader, there is no significant difference in leadership. This is because leadership behavior is a person's natural feeling of providing services (Greenleaf, 1977), which shows that the characteristics of leadership come from the leader himself.

The results of the study show that male and female respondents are outstanding in certain aspects of democratization. This is consistent with the research of Evan and Rose (2007) and

Finkel (2002), who support the research findings that gender influences the democratization of student leaders' education levels.

5.3 The Relationship between Student Leadership and Democratization Education

The findings of the study found that the relationship between student leadership and democratization education is significant and positive. This indicates that the higher the level of leadership of public university students, the higher the level of democratization education among public university student leaders.

Therefore, the responsible parties, especially public universities, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Education Malaysia need to enhance and strengthen student leadership programs to ensure the appreciation of the values of citizenship and democratization to ensure the government's aspirations and goals to become a developed nation in line with the desire of State Transformation 2050.

The findings of this study are consistent with the study of Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz (2017), Abdullah Mohamad (2016), and Anthony Alexander (2012) who found that democratization education is not only the responsibility of government but also the responsibility of all components of society, race, and country in addition to being able to understand and perform rights and duties in a polite, honest, and democratic and sincere manner as an educated citizen in his life as a responsible citizen. It also conforms to studies showing that the level of democratization education has a direct and indirect positive impact on democratic attitudes (Evans & Rose 2007; Hoskins et al., 2008; Mattes & Mughogho, 2010).

In addition, these findings are also supported by Saifuddin Abdullah (2010), Ku Hasnan Ku Halim (2013), and Aditya Wahyu (2014) who stated that the students are the mainstay to produce world leaders in the future. Hence, moral and academic education that is capable of shaping the personality and good leadership characteristics are needed to ensure that students are prepared to face the responsibilities as national leaders.

The study of Abdul Razaq Ahmad (2005), Baharom Muhammad et al. (2008), and Brown (2007) also stated that faith-based love and well-being to self, family, society, and hence religion, race, and country can be directly dignified through the construction of democratic educational quality from the leadership dimension. The spirit of nationalism and patriotism will fail to be nurtured without the tolerance, awareness, and sensitivity of society towards each other (Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Khoo Kay Kim, 2001; Mohammad Rodzi Abd. Razak, 2009).

The Influence of Student Leadership on the Democratization Education of Public University Student Leaders in Malaysia.

The study found that there is an influence of student leadership on the democratization education of student leaders in Public Universities in Malaysia. Student leadership is very important because they understand about democratization education since they were in school until the ivory tower Saifudinn Abdullah, 2008). MPP) systematically elected in campus elections exactly the general election. If the government is more serious about raising

awareness of citizenship development and democratization education, then student leaders should be trained and given more space to move actively openly without being restricted by any act (Saifuddin Abdullah, 2008, 2009; Ku Hasnan Ku Halim, 2009).

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of studies by Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008), Megerian and Sosik (1996), Warech and Smither (1998), and Mayer et al., (2000) who also found that charismatic student leaders show dimensions of leadership students have a significant influence on the dimensions of democratization education on the dimensions of understanding democracy, political freedom, and is committed to democracy.

Conclusion

Student leadership plays an important role in the democratization education of public university students in Malaysia. The importance of student leadership, seen in terms of its influence in empowering the development of democratization education of public university students in Malaysia. The influence of student leadership on these dimensions of democratization education can be further enhanced through subscales in student leadership, factors of gender, age, and occupation of the head of the family identified as playing a role in these variables. Indeed, this study has made a very useful contribution to the field of leadership and university management in producing future national leaders.

References

- Abdul, A. B. (2008). *Perlembagaan Malaysia: Asas-asas Masalah*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Abdul, R. A. (2015). *Mahasiswa Abad ke 21*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Abdul, S. M. S. (2016). *Konsep Tentang Perpaduan Nasional: Suatu Tinjauan Awal*. Terengganu: Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.
- Alston, B. (2009). *An examination of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership practices*. United States – Florida: D.B.A. Nova Southeastern University
- Ambali, A. R., Sulaiman, G. E., & Rozaili, H. (2011). Servant leaderships value and staff's commitment: Policy implementation focus. *American Journal of Scientific Research*, 13, 18 – 40.
- Arnold, K. A., & Loughlin, C. (2010). Individually considerate transformational leadership behavior and self-sacrifice. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 31(8), 670-686. Retrieved May 05, 2011, from Academic One File. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731011094748>
- Aziz, F., Md Rami, A. A., Zaremohzzabieh, Z., & Ahrari, S. (2021). Effects of Emotions and Ethics on Pro-Environmental Behavior of University Employees: A Model Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Sustainability*, 13(13), 7062. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137062>

- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. P. (2017). *Designing and conduction mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Goleman, D. (2011). *Leadership: The power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Johari, H., & Sutinah, A. S. (2010). *Pembinaan Kecemerlangan Diri Pimpinan Pelajar Menerusi Penglibatan Dalam Aktiviti Kokurikulum Di Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*, Skudai. Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Joseph, P. T. (2007). *EQ and leadership*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Kamaruddin, M. S. (2014). *Perpaduan Nasional Dalam Pelbagai Perspektif*. Kuala Terengganu: Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2006). *Student leadership practices inventory: Facilitator's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge*. (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mohamad, R. A. R. (2009). *Peranan akidah dalam perancangan pembangunan ummah: Satu analisis dalam konteks masyarakat kini*. *Jurnal Usuluddin*. Dibentangkan dalam Seminar Pemikiran dan Penghayatan Islam 2002, pada 26 Oktober.
- Rand, L. J. (2004). *The leadership practices of residence student leaders*. Retrieved from *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*. Canada: University of New Brunswick, Canada).
- Razali, F., Rami, A. A. M., Nazuri, N. S., & Suhaimi, S. S. A. (2021). Relationship Between Leadership, Resilience, and Competence Amongst Police Officers in Klang Valley, Malaysia. *Asian Social Science*, 17(11), 39-47. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v17n11p39>
- Rami, A., Md, Abdullah, R., & Ariffin, W. J. (2018). Strengthening social capital: Local leader's strategy toward developing rural community. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 765–774. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3846>
- Rami, A. A. M., Zaini, S. N. M., & Aziz, M. F. A. (2021). Career Decision Making among Malaysian University Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(2), 703–714. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i2/10189>
- Rizal, U. (2002). *Nilai-Nilai Kewarganegaraan di Kalangan Pelajar Sekolah Menengah Tinggi Kajang*. Tesis Sarjana Pendidikan. Fakulti Pendidikan: UKM.
- Saifudin, A. (2009). *Kalau Saya Mahasiswa*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara.
- Saifudin, A. (2009). *Politik Baru, Mematangkan Demokrasi Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur : Institut Terjemahan Negara.

Saifudin, A. (2010). *Benarkan Mahasiswa Berpolitik*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2009). *Research method for business; A skill-building approach* (5th ed.). New York: John Wiley & Son Inc.

Sekaran, U. (2000). *Research method for business; A skill-building approach* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Son Inc.

Zaini, S. N. M., Rami, A. A. M., Arsad, N. M., & Anuar, M. A. M. (2021). Relationship of Academic Performance and Academic Self-Concept with Career Decision-Making among UPM Undergraduate Students. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 17(2), 50-61. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v17i2.13403>

Copyright Disclaimer

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).