

An Analysis On Student Leadership Behaviour: A Higher Education Institutional Perspective

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Abstract: This study examines the relationships between leadership character, competencies and commitment on student leadership behaviour. A regression analysis is used to examine the relation among selected variables. The study was conducted among final year business school students in a university in Malaysia who are conducting their final year managerial projects. The results showed that leader's character, competencies and commitment are significantly influenced on strong leadership behaviour outcomes. This study contributes to the dynamics of the causative relations between the selected variables, as well as highlights the importance of delivering strong leadership behaviour among university students for their future careers in the government or private organizations.

Index Terms— Character, competency, commitment, leadership and university students

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's surroundings of emerging global markets, intensity in competition, progression in product life-cycle, and the expansion in complexity of associations with suppliers, customers, employees, and government [1], [2]), organizations have realized that leadership has become an important aspect of running businesses for future survival. Intense competition generated from globalization and open market condition. Leadership promotes competitive advantage and is ultimate factor to followers in order (i) to motivate, (ii) to guide others in realizing the vision, objectives, mission, (iii) to be creative, innovative and promote new ideas for organizational growth and (iv) adaptable to changes; as well as to acquire the dynamics of culture - to empower and engage members, build teamwork and enhance members' capabilities ([3],[4]). Other than business competencies, teamwork and communication as professional skills ([5]), leadership skills has been also recognized as an important tool in developing future leaders among university students who will be living in a challenging life of rapid changing global society. The goal of higher education institution is to develop and prepare future leaders for the professional business environment; however there are still few formal training opportunities are offered in assisting university students in establishing their leadership skills [6]. Leadership behaviour among university students leads to higher level in becoming a successful student [7]. Leadership behaviours among students are very difficult to develop due to inexperience as a leader in the class. A good leader is a role model to his or her group members, followers as well as colleagues. This could possibly develop valuable behaviour of the students in possessing strong leadership behaviour. Leadership involves a versatile process that requires working with others in personal and professional relationships to accomplish a goal or to promote positive change.

Although leadership competencies and behaviours can be developed in many different ways, there has been an emerging consensus that leadership is transferred from one situation to another where one person emerges as leader from a group. There are huge responsibilities and challenges need to be faced when being a leader especially in developing the good character, competency and commitment as leaders. Therefore, a good leader in the university environment would be a good team player in getting better results. Taking on leadership roles in the class, association, club and others will prepare students for confront many challenges that they might encounter after their university life. The objective of this research is to; a) examine does personal character has a significant causal effect on student leadership behaviour, b) examine whether level of competency has a significant causal effect on student leadership behaviour, and c) examine whether commitment has a significant causal effect on student leadership behaviour.

2 Literature Review

The role of leadership is a key factor in an organisation's performance and achievement indication. The study of leadership is an active field of inquiry because it has been practiced for a long time and there is a large body of academia pertaining to it ([8], [9], [10]) mentioned, studies on leadership continue to expand as the number of new theories and models continue to be introduced. Leadership promotes change through the influential process between leaders and followers ([11]; [12]). The influence that leadership has on organisational effectiveness seems to suggest its importance. As [13] said; "Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationship in a group or organisation".

2.1 Personal Character

[14] stated that character is viewed as the accumulation of traits or habits in living towards a successful life. Character is considered as a total qualities or traits, specifically in moral and social attitudes of an individual ([15]). [16] believed that character is an expression of an individual's moral orientation, willpower, conscience as well as principles. According to [17] that "humans have the potential for morality, the ability to choose between good or bad." In this reference, [18] has categorized the 'good' character into three sections namely; (i) moral knowing (moral awareness, knowing moral values,

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perspective takings, moral reasoning, decision-making), (ii) moral feeling (conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control) and moral action (competence, will, habit). [19] mentioned that integrity is an important element contributing towards leadership. In this support, integrity is part of the three facets of personal characteristics, along with level of maturity and an abundance mentality [20]. Covey also states that these facets function as a fundamental element in great achievement and trust. Trust is gained by being concerned and having respect for followers [21]. Certain characteristics have been importantly regarded especially in the workplace environment for a leader. For example, the characteristics of a leader has to be based on his or her core values such as integrity, trust, truth and human dignity influencing on the leader's vision, ethics and behaviour. Thus, [22] stated that all leaders must have the ability to create a compelling vision, that takes people to a new place and the ability to translate vision into reality.

2.2 Level of Competency

[23] defined competencies as a set of specific skills, abilities, knowledge that qualify an individual to demonstrate concentrated tasks. A successful individuals or organizations are able to identify and benefit from these talented capabilities. According to [24] competencies serve as the foundation for professional development as well measuring performance. They also mentioned that a core competency has to be able to demonstrate a long-term strategic advantage, cause beneficial factor on perceptions, and hard to be simulated by others. Competencies provide a useful platform for effectiveness in leadership. It initiates the experience, lessons to be learned, development of new knowledge to provide guidance in benefiting others and organizations [25] The concept of competency is applied to define an individual overall abilities and knowledge in which focusing on performance especially in the workplace. [22] and [17] have divided competency into three main categories namely; (i) professional competence, (ii) social competence, and (iii) conceptual competence.

2.2.1 Professional Competence

The concept of professional competence has been defined as a set of specified area of knowledge and skills, strong comprehension of processes and technologies, business environment and competitor awareness [17]. Individuals functioning at a specific competency level should be able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities in enhancing either individual or group functionality. This concept has been regarded as dynamic due to the fast changing business environment landscape.

2.2.2 Social Competence

Social competence is the proficiency of an individual to use the relevant skills in every aspects of life. According to [7], social competence is referring to the ability of an individual to communicate effectively with other individuals. It consists of individual features and adaptive tendency in the social environment. [30] defined social competence as the ability to utilize the environmental and personal resources to obtain a beneficial development results. Therefore, being able to coordinate thoughts and questions, possessing sense of humor and communicate effectively with others have been an important attributes in performing well in given tasks or responsibilities.

2.2.3 Conceptual Competence

An individual has the talent to gather various ideas, issues or observations into a clear and informative explanations and problem-solving. As [26] stated that conceptual competence consists of thinking systematically, the ability to understand different situations based on one's level of experience and knowledge acquired as well as understanding on the processes incurred. It refers to the process of identifying patterns or connections and addressing the underlying issues involved.

2.3 Commitment

Commitment has been defined as the determinant quality of the individual's identification with and involvement towards organization [15]. This refers to the employees' expectations to be trusted and respected as well as conscientiousness of 'going extra mile' for the organization. As stated by [27], it implies that employees perform their job at level best in their abilities and that to be loyal and dedicated to their employing companies.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative analysis served the purpose of this study. A survey questionnaire is used in obtaining the required information. [28] explained that surveys are the most widely used technique in the behavioural sciences in acquiring data to measure personal and social information of individuals or organizations. Population is represented by a group of people or organization in which interest the researchers on specific study ([29]). The samplings in this study are the final year undergraduate business students in three public universities in the Northern Region of Malaysia. The data has been analyzed by using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. A regression analysis was undertaken in order to justify the significant relationship between selected variables.

3.2 Measurement of Instrument

The variables are anchored by five (5) point Likert scale and were measured by applying instruments as follows; a) Self-Assessment Leadership Instrument (SALI) identifies the implementation of leadership behaviour among student [16]. Students are required to identify the types of leadership in solving the group task or project. It contains 12 items of questionnaires, and b) Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire – Form XII. The LBDQ is a testing instrument to evaluate leadership behaviour of a student. The LBDQ is used to describe the quality of leader toward their group member. It contains 10 items of questionnaires.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on Table 1, there is a positive relationship between character (independent variable) and leadership behaviour (dependent variable) since the Pearson Correlation is 0.400, where the correlation is significant at the 0.029 level. Then, these two variables between competency (independent) and leadership behaviour (dependent) are perfectly related as the level of correlation significant is at 0.015 and the Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.439 showed the significant association. There is also a direct relationship between commitment (independent variable) and leadership behaviour

(dependent variable), where the level of correlation is significant at the 0.020, while the Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.424 indicated the significant association. Given that the Pearson correlation ranged from 0.400 to 0.439 and both have one star shows that all independent variables have positive relationship with the leadership behaviour. The significant value indicated the value of 0.00 between independent and dependent variables proving that all variables are significantly correlated.

Table 1

| | | behavior | character | competency | commitment |
|------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Behavior | Pearson | 1 | .400* | .439* | .424* |
| | Sig. | | .029 | .015 | .020 |
| | N | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Character | Pearson | .400* | 1 | .781** | .782** |
| | Sig. | .029 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Competency | Pearson | .439* | .781** | 1 | .776** |
| | Sig. | .015 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Commitment | Pearson | .424* | .782** | .776** | 1 |
| | Sig. | .020 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.1 The regression analysis is shown in Table 2 as follow:

| Variables | Beta | t-Ratio | Sig. t |
|---|------|---------|--------|
| Behaviour | | 6.513 | .000 |
| Character | .064 | 0.206 | .029 |
| Competency | .247 | 0.803 | .015 |
| Commitment | .182 | 0.590 | .020 |
| R Square = 0.211 Durbin-Watson = 1.435 Sig. F = 0.000 | | | |

Table 2 indicated that $\beta = 0.064$, $P < 0.05$ was found significant and positively related to the leadership behaviour. The competency aspect has the significant effect, Sig. t = 0.015 toward the leadership behaviour among undergraduate business students. The idealized influence $\beta = 0.247$, $P < 0.05$ was found significant and absolutely related to the leadership behaviour. The dimension of commitment also has a significant effect Sig t = 0.020 toward the leadership behaviour. The commitment indicates $\beta = 0.182$, $P < 0.05$ was found significant and positively related to the leadership behaviour.

5 CONCLUSION

All the three independent variables (character, competency and commitment) result showed positive feedback in implementing leadership behavior among undergraduate business students. based on the result stated that relationship between character and leadership behaviour among

undergraduate student has a significant relationship that reach the significant level of P-value is 0.029. This result strengthens by University of Baghdad that there have an existence of the positive relationships between the character and the kind of leadership personality were statistically significant. The results states that based on the research questions has been proved there are significant relationship between competency and leadership behavior accepted at the significance level of P-value is 0.015. According to [30] stated that student leadership competencies has closely related toward attitude leadership variables and behaviour leadership variables. Based on the relationship between commitment and leadership behavior that have significance influence where significant level of P-value is only 0.020. Based on the journal by [31] and [32] that to be a leader a person must willingly to have committed to continue their jobs and have effort to achieve the goals. There are some relationships related between characters, competency and commitment of student in the class with leadership behavior of them. Based on SPSS data analysis there are only 21.1% of R^2 have real behavior as a leader. The R^2 determined that only 21.1% of character, competency and commitment have effect through the leadership behavior. Based on Vince Lombardi quotes "Leaders aren't born, they are made" states that students remains fewer in ethical values of behavior in themselves. Although the percentage not exceed 50% for R^2 value, our result still have significant relationship between independent and dependent variable. This is because character, competency and commitment are not strength factors to determine the leadership behavior. As a leader, students must be able to develop the vision and mission of the projects. To be a leader there is not only related with characters, competency and commitment but also have more behavior style needed to be applied.

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