



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF CONCEPT AND RESPONSE TOWARDS STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG STUDENTS LEADERS IN UNIVERSITY PUTRA MALAYSIA

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This is a quantitative research using correlational method. The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between self concept and ability to handle stress on academic achievement of student leaders in University Putra Malaysia. The sample size consists of 106 respondents who are the Student Supreme Council and Student Representative Committee. Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) was used to evaluate respondents' self concept and for respondents' responses strategy the Response Strategy Questionnaire were used. The respondents' CGPA is used to evaluate their academic achievements. The findings illustrate that there is no significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement. Correlation between self concept and academic achievement is not significant ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.950$). Meanwhile there is a significant relationship between respondents' response strategies and academic achievements $X^2 (10, N = 106) = 19.721$, $p = 0.032$. This would mean that the respondent's response strategy is influenced by his or her academic achievement. The value of frequency contingency, 0.396 illustrate that the relationship is positive and low. The findings from this research will provide information to those who intend to plan beneficial programs for the university or the community in general.

Key Words: academic achievement, students' leaders, self concept, University Putra Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Student leaders are very advisable to give priority to their self concept. For the reason being that when they do, they could understand themselves better by knowing their personal strength and weakness and also knowing talent and skill possessed. Upon noticing all these, the individuals known as student leaders can mould their daily behaviour into being someone undaunted by everyday challenges and could venture on novelty. All of these can be achieved because the individual entitled as student leader know who he or she really is and the expanse of one's ability. Such action indirectly enables the student leader to build self-confidence (Ahmad Zabidi Abdul Razak, 2003).

Student leaders who possess high self concept often strive for self-development. They know how to improve and want to improve their weaknesses and own high internal motivation. All of these will build a high self-confidence (Ahmad Zabidi Abdul Razak, 2003). However in daily lives, student leaders could not escape from the various sources of life pressure in campus such as grappling with examination and assignment, trying to be stable financially and emotionally and to fulfill lecturers' expectation (Smith and Renk, 2007).

Hence, the aspect of self-concept and stress handling response are vital and need to be emphasized in producing student leaders with excellent academic achievement because behaviour is set by the individual's self-concept. Meanwhile, if the behaviour appears in an inconsistent form, it will contradict with the individual's tendency and result in the occurrence of tense and pressure. Due to that, student do not enjoy studying and unable to give attention to learning. Therefore, the stress handling response is important in our effort to overcome stress where every individual would use different responding strategy (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

In addition, institutions of higher education also play a role in producing ideal graduates by preparing them with humanity skill (*soft skill*). Organizational skills that are achieved through the organization's character building activities would complement undergraduates with knowledge and additional skills required to confront current challenges.

According To YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Badawi (2005) Malaysia's Fifth Prime Minister, the government policy currently stresses on the development of human capital aspect. Thus, a careful planning must be made especially in higher education level, where committed, disciplined, high quality and responsible human capital will become employers' choice. The human capital that is produced must be able to think critically and creatively, skilled at solving problems, and capable in creating new opportunities. Apart from that, they are

required to have resilience and capability to face global environment that is ever changing.

Problem Statement

The importance of leadership is one of the elements in humanity skill. Leadership can be defined as a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve the same objective (Northouse, 2004). When leadership is defined as a process, it involves a leader and followers interaction and it is not referring to the characteristics of the leader. As for influence, it exists when the leadership leaves some impact on the followers. A leadership directs and encourages the group towards the achievement of goals. A group is a leadership existence context.

Students' involvement in co-curriculum activities gives large impact on their interpersonal skill and personality development. A research done by Fauziah Abu Hassan, (2008) on Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) students found that there is a high difference in mean measurements between students who hold leadership post and students uninvolved in any co-curriculum activities. This was also supported by Shamsaadal Sholeh Saad, Mohd Ismail Mohd Yunus and Hishamuddin Mohd who then added that co-curriculum activities can help boost individuals' potential in self development. In addition to that, Walker, Rohanida Abd. Manaf and Mohd Sofian Omar Fauzee had established that co-curriculum activities can provide the students with preliminary practice in dealing with leadership, personality and society. (in Fauziah Abu Hassan, 2008).

According to the writer's observation as a college fellow, student leaders have felt frustration towards themselves, isolation, stress and unprepared for certain difficulty at certain point in their leadership and learning in the university. Consequently, the pressure will interfere with the students' emotional stability and this will take a great toll on their academic achievements. If student leaders fail in the process of completing the university learning, it will be such a big loss to the race and country. According To Nik Mustafa (2007), this matter will also affect the 2006-2020 National Mission in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RM Ke-9) in which it hopes to produce educated, creative, innovative, progressive and critical thinking young generation.

Self concept and the stress handling responses are seen as factors which influence a student's learning especially the student leaders. Eventually, the two factors would bring implications on their academic achievements too (Rosdi Yusof, 2009). Due to that, this study will try to find the connection between self concept and stress handling responses on student leaders' academic

achievements; whether self concept and stress handling response have any influences towards the student leaders' academic achievements.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between self concept and student leaders' academic achievement.
2. To examine the relationship between responses strategy and student leaders' academic achievement.
3. To determine which responses strategy often used by student leader; problem focused or emotion focused.
4. To distinguish the differences between student leaders' self concept according to gender.
5. To determine student leaders' self concept level.

METHOD

Research Design

A quantitative research and correlation design were used for this survey. This type of research is aimed to examine the interrelationship between independent variable and dependant variable. Mohd Majid Konting (2004) elucidated that correlation study gives emphasis on establishing how close the links are between the study variables. To help achieve that purpose with less hassle, a survey was conducted using questionnaire form. It is used to get standard figures which will then be analyzed by using the statistics descriptive method and correlation coefficient in finding the connections. This chosen method also allows and enables the researcher to observe the research phenomenon while gathering sufficient data and information.

This study will examine how far the independent variables which are self concept and stress handling responses, contribute to the dependent variable which is the students' academic achievement.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). UPM students were selected because UPM is an accredited university.

Research Sample

The research sample consists of UPM male and female full-time student leaders who have posts in Student Representatives Committee and Student Supreme Council organization. Respondent selection was made based on clustered sampling method. In its basis, the sampling method enables information to be gathered from a selected part of a larger target group. This was done during the

Organizational Empowerment Course which was attended by selected UPM student leaders. During this course, the questionnaire was administered to them to be answered. This methodology was used because it is easier for the researcher to deal with the respondents as they were all accumulated in one place.

Research Instrument

The research instrument chosen was a set of questionnaire containing orderly designed questions. A total of 150 forms of questionnaire were circulated. The number of respondents that were analyzed was 106, aged between 18 to 27 years. The time allocated for them to attempt the questionnaire was 30 minutes only, and all the questions must be answered. The form constitutes three portion namely, the respondents' background information, "Tennessee Self-Concept Scale" (TSCS) and Response Strategy Questionnaire.

Data Analysis

All data was gathered and analyzed using *Statistical Package for The Social Science for Window SPSS* version 15.0. The data is then further analyzed, interpreted and concluded based on the research objectives and questions formed. Descriptive statistics in a form of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to evaluate the respondents' background and give primary view for the variables measured. The Pearson correlation coefficient, t-test, and *chi-square* were used to test the relationship between the study variables.

Pearson Correlation statistic's tool (r) was used to study the interrelationship of two variables where self concept is the independent variable and academic achievement is the dependent variable. Same goes with another pair where stress handling response becomes the independent variable and academic achievement becomes the dependent variable. Based on Tuckman statistic, when all variables are proposed, correlation test is applicable.

FINDINGS

The data analysis is divided into two parts. The first part is information on self concept that covers the differences in self concept based on gender and the relationship between self concept and academic achievement. The second part is the information on stress handling response which also covers the relationship between the response strategy and academic achievement.

The relationship between self concept and academic achievement

Pearson Correlation test was used to identify the relationship between self concept and academic achievement. The results attained are as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between Self Concept and Academic Achievement

	<i>Academic Achievement</i>	
Self Concept		0.06
	Sig r	0.950

Note: N = 106; $p > 0.05$

Based on Table 1, the correlation between self concept and academic achievement is not significant ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.950$). This finding surprisingly shows that there is no relationship between student leaders' self concept and their academic achievements.

Response strategy

Basic descriptive analytical method is used to identify which response strategy often used by respondent when facing problems. Like those indicated in table 2, a majority of 57.2 percent ($n = 50$) of respondents use Positive Reevaluation strategy in facing problem. Whereas 24.5% of respondents chose Evasion strategy and 22.6% prefer Self Control strategy. As for Finding Social Support strategy and Problem Solving Plan, each was respectively chosen by a respondent. Apart than all these, there were no other strategies that became their option.

Table 2, Respondents Response Strategy

<i>Response Strategy</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Self control	24	22.6
Finding social support	1	0.9
Evasion	26	24.5
Problem solving plan	1	0.9
Positive reevaluation	50	57.2
Total	102	100.0

Pearson *chi-square* test method was used to determine the relationship between response strategy and student's academic achievement. Response strategy distribution based on academic achievement is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Response Strategy based on Academic Achievement

		Academic achievement			Total
		Second Class Lower	Second Class Upper	First Class	
Self control	N	7	15	2	24
		6.6%	14.2%	1.9%	22.6%
Finding social support	N	0	0	1	1
		.0%	.0%	.9%	.9%
Evasion	N	7	18	1	26
		6.6%	17.0%	.9%	24.5%
Problem solving plan	N	0	1	0	1
		.0%	.9%	.0%	.9%
Positive reevaluation	N	9	39	2	50
		8.5%	36.8%	1.9%	47.2%
Total	N	24	76	6	102
		22.6%	71.7%	5.7%	100.00%

Chi-square independence test analysis on the other hand indicated significant relationship between response strategy and academic achievement, $X^2(10, N = 106) = 19.721, p = 0.032$. This means that there are certain respondents' response strategies that are influenced by the respondents' academic achievements. Meanwhile Contingency coefficient value, 0.396 showed that the relationship is positive and low (Table 4).

Table 4. The Relationship between Response Strategy and Academic Achievement

		Sig
Pearson Chi-Square, X^2	19.721	0.032
Contingency Coefficient	0.396	0.032

Gender and Age

The respondents in this research consist of 106 full-time UPM student leaders who are appointed as either the Student Representatives Committee or Students Supreme Council. A majority of 70 respondents (66 %) made of female students while the rest of 36 respondents (34 %) are male students (Table 5). In terms of age distribution, most respondents are around 21.11 years old with a standard deviation of 1.563. The youngest respondent is 18 years old while oldest is 27 years old.

Table 5. Respondent Frequency According To Gender

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	36	34.0
Female	70	66.0
Total	106	100.0

Race

87 students amounting to 82.1 percent of the respondents are Malay. This is followed by a total of 11.3 percent or 12 students with Chinese ethnicity and 4.7% or 5 students with Indian ethnicity. Only 1.9% or 2 respondents are from other ethnicity (Table 6).

Table 6. Respondent Frequency Based on Gender

<i>Race</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Malay	87	82.1
Chinese	12	11.3
Indian	5	4.7
Others	2	1.9
Total	106	100.0

Academic Achievement

Respondents' academic achievements are measured based on their CGPA. The lowest CGPA is 2.5 while the highest is 3.9. Overall, the respondents' academic achievements are good with an average of 3.24 CGPA and the standard deviation of 0.328. To have a deeper analysis, the researcher has classified the respondents' CGPA based on UPM classification of degree and found that most respondents (71.7%) are under the second class upper category, 22.6 % are in second class lower and only 5.7 % or 6 students are under the first class category (Table 7).

Table 7. Respondent Academic Achievement Distribution

<i>Class CGPA</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
First Class	6	5.7
Second Class Upper	76	71.7
Second Class Lower	24	22.6
Total	106	100.0

Student Leaders' Self Concept

Self Concept Level

“Tennessee Self-Concept Scale” (TSCS) was used to determine the respondents' self concept level. To serve the fifth objective of this research, basic descriptive analysis was used to study the overall distribution of respondents' self concept level and also each self concept construct.

According to Table 8, only a total of 16 respondents (15.1%) possess a fully positive and high self concept. Sadly, over 90 respondent or (84.9%) possess a fully negative or low self concept.

A much detailed analysis at a construct level on the other hand indicated that 14.2% of respondents have a high identity reflection, 29.2 % owns a high self reflection satisfaction, 15.1 % owns a positive attitude reflection, 14.2 % owns a high self physical reflection, 15.1 % own a positive moral and manner reflection, 50.9 % owns a positive personal reflection, 12.3 %p owns a high family ties reflection and 19.8 % owns a positive and high social reflection. Informations on this analysis are displayed with much detailed in Table 8.

Table 8. Level Distribution of Respondents' Self Concept

<i>Construct</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Overall Self Concept	High	16	15.1
	Low	90	84.9
Identity Reflection	High	15	14.2
	Low	91	85.8
Self Reflection Satisfaction	High	31	29.2
	Low	75	70.8
Attitude Reflection	High	16	15.1
	Low	90	84.9
Self Physical Reflection	High	15	14.2
	Low	91	85.8
Moral and Manner Reflection	High	16	15.1
	Low	90	84.9
Personal Reflection	High	54	50.9
	Low	52	49.1
Family Ties Reflection	High	13	12.3
	Low	93	87.7
Social Reflection	High	21	19.8
	Low	85	80.2

Differences in Self Concept Based on Gender

T-test analysis was used to serve the fourth objective of the study which is to distinguish the differences between male student leaders' self concept ($M = 312.36$, $SD = 33.23$) and female student leaders' self concept ($M = 323.30$, $SD = 27.14$). The alpha used was 0.05. The study results showed that there was no significant differences between the male and female self concept mean, $t(104) = -1.18$, $p = 0.072$. This result indicates that self concept is not influenced by gender (Table 9).

Table 9. Mean Score for Self Concept According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig t
Male	36	312.36	33.23	-1.18	0.72
Female	70	323.30	27.14		

DISCUSSION

The study findings have proven that there was no significant relationship between self concept and student leaders' academic achievements. The correlation between self concept and academic achievement is also not significant ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.950$). Undeniably, the examination results reflect the students' achievement in academic assessment and it is also continuous process of self development. Nevertheless, the study results revealed that there was no significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement.

Based on existing literature, there were some researchers who had found significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement, but there were also researchers who obtained the same finding as to what this research had arrived to. This could be due to some of the factors that influence the research findings such as sample used, research location, research focus, different respondents and so on.

However, another finding indicated that there is a significant relationship between response strategy and respondents' academic achievements, $X^2(10, N = 106) = 19.721$, $p = 0.032$. This means respondents' response strategies are influenced by their academic achievements. Furthermore, coefficient contingency value, 0.396 shows that the relationship is positive and low. This is indirectly showing that the right use of response strategy would lead to academic excellence where stress can be overcome by using the right and effective response strategy. Hence a student leader's life would become more organised and easy and leadership can be done properly. This is supported by studies carried out by Clifton et al. (2004) and DeBerard et al. (2004) which

established that response strategy is the highest contributor on students' academic achievements.

From the findings we can also tell which response strategy is mostly chosen and which are not. The list of response strategies from the most used to the least are as followed: (1) A total of 57.2 percent ($n = 50$) of respondents use the Positive Reevaluation strategy in facing problem. (2) Second choice is Evasion strategy (24.5%) and (3) the third choice is Self Control strategy (22.6%). (4) Fourth choice Finding Social Support strategy and (5) the fifth's choice which is only used by a respondent is Problem Solving Plan strategy. Other strategies were not chosen by the respondents. From here it is evident that the student leaders use both types of response strategies which are the emotion focused and problem focused. However majority of them preferred emotion focused compared to problem focused.

Nonetheless, the response effectiveness does not depend on strategy or effort solely, but also rely on the individual's evaluation towards the pressurising situation, and the suitability of the response strategy chosen (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). This is supported by studies conducted by Asmawati Desa, (2006) where the research outcome showed that 96.8 % of the subjects are emotional when they are stressed out. Similar finding was also obtained by Muhd Shukri Husin (1996) which stated that youth often use social, behaviour and also emotional response.

Apart from that, the finding of this study also indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean of male and female leaders' self concept, $t(104) = -1.18$, $p = 0.072$. The majority of the respondents is female with 70 respondents or 66 percent ($M = 323.30$, $SD = 27.14$) and only 36 respondents or 34 percent ($M = 312.36$, $SD = 33.23$) are male student. This has revealed that self concept is not influenced by gender. This is supported by studies conducted by several other researchers such as (Asmah Bee Mohd Noor, 1975), and (Chiam Heng Keng 1976). Their study provided similar findings which from the variant analysis achieved, they found that self concept between male and female student does not show significant difference.

Undeniably, the similar findings that were obtained by both this research and other researches have further strengthen that there were no significant difference between male and female students self concept. Although, the study on student leaders' self concept is a new study and never been carried out yet in the past, the researcher had made an effort to refer and study literature writings which examine student's self-concept. It is only nature to do that because a student leader himself is a university student.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also revealed that out of all respondents, there are only 16 respondents or 15.1 % student leaders who possess a fully high and positive self concept while the rest of 90 respondents or 84.9 % possess own a fully negative or low self concept. The minimum level of self concept of a normal person is 346. Hence, the research respondents can be classified as having low self concept level.

Rahil et al. (1995) stated that a student's self-concept is something related to the student's personality, mentality and self ability. Based on this theory, Universiti Putra Malaysia student leaders could be regarded as having low self concept profile. The truth of matter is the student leaders actually can and should apply the self concept theory in their daily lives. If the self concept level increases from low to medium and finally to a high level, it is guaranteed that the student leaders can have a high capacity for a good leadership and academic excellence. Although there was no significant association between self concept and academic achievement, the writer strongly believed that a high self concept is vital and can help students to create a better self understanding and acknowledgment.

Study Implications

This study has several profound and practical contributions and implications on the development of student leaders and university students generally, especially in local public university. Self concept is an important element that should exist in each student. As a student leader who has multiple responsibilities they must be wise in managing time especially for their organization activities and studies. Hence, when facing pressure, they need to know the best means to deal with it which is by using the right response strategy. Consequently, the student leader would be able to undergo a perfectly planned life where they can enjoy activities in student organization, have high and excellent self concept and excel academically.

Furthermore, the products that are produced by the university will be seen as the cream of the crop which has good ability to function in organization and excelled in academic field. This kind of graduates will become an attraction to the employers. As for student leaders, job opportunities will be wide open for them as they possess excellent leadership and academic skill. As a result, the percentage of unemployed graduates can be reduced. Likewise, the country will be more successful since the employees chosen are those who possess potential and whose leadership talent has been honed to its best during the years in the university.

Proposal

Although the study implications sound promising, there are still weaknesses which need improved. Due to this, a more detailed research has to be conducted to see and identified other various criteria that a student leader should have apart from self concept and stress handling response. Apart from that, humanity skill might also be put together along with self concept.

Nevertheless, the findings in this research might at least intrigue other researchers to continue to study other factors that contribute towards student leaders' academic achievement apart from self concept and stress handling strategy. They can also try to use different approach by adding and expanding the study scope.

Apart from that, the information in this research can also be made as a guide and reference for all involved party to monitor the development of student and give them the guidance needed. The lecturers, counsellor, college principal, the university and ministry can also plan various intervention programmes or student development activities that can improve student leaders' self concept and academic achievement.

In addition to that, this research can also enrich the researchers' knowledge and skill in dealing and managing with study and research. It is very helpful to the researcher and the society in terms of knowledge gaining. Hence, it is very encouraged that the study is expanded by combining student leaders from each public university in our country and by combining humanity skill, self concept and other elements.

Apart from that, by using quantitative approach, the information that is obtained in this study is more structured. To seek a deeper and more extensive understanding about the relationship between the variables, future study can integrate both quantitative and qualitative approach. The aspects that should be studied using qualitative approach are self concept and how effective are the response strategies used by student leaders that enable them to continue to expand and live productively. In addition, interviewing technique could be employed to explore the subject mentioned.

Ultimately, it is hoped that the concerning parties can plan and implement suitable programme continuously. Especially to university students which required guidance on finding the right response strategy to use. Besides that, emphasize should be given to self concept in order to produce excellent student leader, especially in academic and leadership field. This noble attempt will work out well if all parties including the university, society, family, school,

government willing to give cooperation and help especially to university students.

One of the human capital components is leadership and this element has been outlined in higher education humanity skill module (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2006). Integrated higher education system is hoped to produce well established graduates that will lead the social, economic and country politics situations that are increasingly challenging and complex.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has successfully determined the interrelationship between each variable which are self concept and response strategy and their relationship with academic achievement. Overall, the researcher found that each student leaders need to have a high self concept. This will indirectly give them confidence to use the right response strategy when facing problems. As student leaders, they need to show best example especially by having excellent leadership and academic achievement. This is because they are the role model to other students. Hence, it is hoped that the information generated from this study will be by fully utilized by all parties.

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