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**THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING
MALAYSIAN STUDENT LEADERS' WORD CHOICES AND
STYLES**



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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
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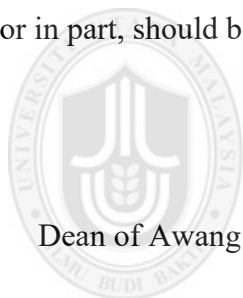
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Abstrak

Kepimpinan yang berkesan bergantung pada komunikasi strategik, merangkumi isyarat lisan dan bukan lisan dalam memupuk kerjasama, mengurus konflik, dan mempengaruhi rakan sebaya. Di sekolah berasrama penuh di Malaysia, pemimpin pelajar beroperasi dalam persekitaran berbilang budaya yang dibentuk oleh norma budaya, nilai masyarakat dan tuntutan akademik. Namun, kajian dalam konteks ini masih terhad. Kajian ini meneliti bagaimana pemimpin pelajar di Malaysia menggunakan bahasa, khususnya pemilihan kata, ungkapan inklusif, dan pemingkaian linguistik, untuk menggalakkan kerjasama, mempengaruhi rakan sebaya, dan mengurus konflik dalam konteks institusi mereka yang unik. Berpanduan teori pemingkaian Goffman, kajian ini mengumpul data melalui perbincangan kumpulan fokus dan temu bual bersama pemimpin pelajar dari beberapa sekolah berasrama penuh terpilih di Malaysia. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pemimpin pelajar menyesuaikan gaya bahasa mereka untuk memupuk keterangkuman, mengekalkan keharmonian, dan menegaskan kewibawaan. Mereka menggunakan bahasa yang sesuai dengan budaya, membingkaikan mesej bagi menyokong penyelesaian konflik, serta mengaplikasikan isyarat bukan lisan seperti perubahan nada suara dan bahasa tubuh untuk meningkatkan penglibatan rakan sebaya dan memperkukuh kehadiran kepimpinan mereka. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada program latihan kepimpinan dengan menekankan kepentingan komunikasi yang inklusif, kepekaan budaya, dan teknik pemingkaian yang berkesan. Ia menawarkan cadangan praktikal untuk pembangunan kepimpinan belia dan strategi komunikasi rentas budaya dalam konteks sekolah berasrama penuh di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Pilihan kata, Bahasa pemimpin pelajar, Gaya kepimpinan, Sekolah berasrama penuh, Malaysia

Abstract

Effective leadership hinges on strategic communication, incorporating both verbal and non-verbal cues that empower leaders to inspire collaboration, manage conflict, and influence others. In Malaysian boarding schools, student leaders navigate multicultural settings where cultural norms, societal expectations, and academic pressures shape their communication styles. Despite the complexity of these environments, research on how these factors influence student leadership communication remains limited. This study explores how Malaysian student leaders utilize language, particularly word choice, inclusive expressions, and linguistic framing, to foster collaboration, influence peers, and manage conflicts within their distinctive institutional contexts. Guided by Goffman's framing theory, this study collected data through focus group discussions and interviews with student leaders from selected Malaysian boarding schools. Findings reveal that student leaders adapt their language styles to promote inclusivity, maintain harmony, and assert authority. They employ culturally appropriate language, frame their messages to support conflict resolution, and use non-verbal cues such as tone modulation and body language to enhance peer engagement and strengthen their leadership presence. This study contributes to leadership training programs by highlighting the importance of inclusive communication, cultural sensitivity, and effective framing techniques. It offers practical recommendations for youth leadership development and cross-cultural communication strategies within the context of Malaysian boarding schools.

Keywords: Word choices, Student leader's language, Leadership style, Boarding schools, Malaysia.

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List of Abbreviations

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
WEF	WEF - World Economic Forum
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness
MEB	Malaysian Education Blueprint
MOE	Ministry of Education
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah
PPPM	The Malaysian Education Development Plan
PTAs	Parent-Teacher Associations
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
NNS	Non-Native Speakers
NS	Native Speakers
EI	Emotional Intelligence
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
NPQEL	National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders
POS	Power of Style

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In today's society, leadership holds a fundamental role, regardless of one's occupation, as leaders are often regarded as "meaning makers" (Northouse, 2021). These meaning-makers employ language—whether it be in English, Malay, French, or any other language—to shape their words, values, and beliefs, thereby constructing a shared reality that fosters commitment and trust in their mission. It is essential for leaders, and indeed for all individuals, to exhibit sensitivity and awareness. The choice of words, with its potential to convey various interpretations, impacts credibility and ethical considerations of a leader. Therefore, various institutions, including universities, schools, corporations, and government bodies, place great importance on nurturing leadership potential within their respective domains (Zaim et al., 2021). Recognising the global perspectives on leadership and understanding the skills necessary for effective leadership in the face of adversity are crucial aspects to consider.

Effective leadership is a cornerstone of success in any organization, and communication plays a central role in ensuring leaders can effectively guide, motivate, and influence others. In educational institutions, particularly in Malaysian boarding schools, student leaders are often tasked with significant responsibilities, including managing peers, organizing events, and resolving conflicts. These roles require not only leadership skills but also the ability to communicate effectively in a culturally diverse and academically demanding environment.

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APPENDIX A

Gred Purata Sekolah

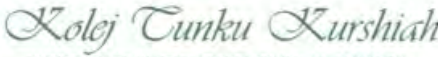
BAHAGIAN PENGURUSAN SEKOLAH BERASRAMA PENUH							
SIJIL PELAJARAN MALAYSIA (SPM) 2021							
ANALISIS GRED PURATA SEKOLAH (GPS)							
BIL.	SEKOLAH	BIL. CALON	GPS		%BEZA	CATATAN	%LULUS
			2021	2020			
1	SEKOLAH TUN FATIMAH	139	0.84	1.42	41.06	⤴	100.00
2	SEKOLAH SERI PUTERI	167	0.97	1.34	27.47	⤴	100.00
3	SBP INTEGRASI GOMBAK	120	1.06	1.00	6.80	↘	100.00
4	KOLEJ TUNKU KURSHIAH	137	1.09	1.18	7.60	⤴	99.92
5	SEKOLAH SULTAN ALAM SHAH	172	1.16	1.07	9.17	↘	99.87
6	THE MALAY COLLEGE KUALA KANGSAR	122	1.21	1.41	13.93	⤴	99.91
7	SEKOLAH MENENGAH SAINS TUANKU AISHAH RO	116	1.37	1.39	1.60	⤴	100.00
8	SM SAINS KUALA TERENGGANU	46	1.40	2.04	31.44	⤴	100.00
9	SM SAINS JOHOR	91	1.47	1.65	11.05	⤴	100.00
10	SM SAINS SERI PUTERI	88	1.49	1.54	3.42	⤴	99.87
11	KOLEJ ISLAM SULTAN ALAM SHAH	298	1.51	1.24	21.49	↘	99.94
12	SM SAINS MUAR	122	1.53	1.65	7.56	⤴	100.00
13	SM SAINS HULU SELANGOR	142	1.56	1.34	16.15	↘	99.84
14	SM SAINS MUZAFFAR SYAH	133	1.56	1.82	14.17	⤴	99.75
15	SM SAINS KOTA TINGGI	131	1.56	1.23	26.94	↘	100.00
16	SM SAINS TUANKU MUNAWIR	115	1.60	1.78	10.05	⤴	99.81
17	SM SAINS KUCHING UTARA	103	1.63	1.67	2.56	⤴	99.78
18	SM SAINS SULTAN MAHMUD	112	1.72	1.65	4.25	↘	99.80
19	SM AGAMA PERSEKUTUAN LABU	134	1.73	1.82	5.05	⤴	100.00
20	SBP INTEGRASI SABAK BERNAM	110	1.74	2.08	16.71	⤴	99.73
21	SM AGAMA PERSEKUTUAN KAJANG	148	1.74	1.78	1.99	⤴	99.81
22	SM SAINS ALAM SHAH	110	1.76	2.05	14.18	⤴	99.59
23	SM SAINS KUALA SELANGOR	146	1.79	1.92	6.66	⤴	99.47



Universiti Utara Malaysia

Appendix B

Consent Letter from School



71760 BANDAR ENSTEK, NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA
Tel: 06 7979 800 | Fax: 06 7940 753 | Kod Sekolah: NEB 4056
Email: ktk@kdc.edu.my | Web: www.ktk.edu.my
Kordinat GPS: 2.7298290, 101.7939580

Rujukan kami : KTK.100-2/2/2 (90)
Tarikh : 3 Januari 2020

Ketua Penyelidik/ Pensyarah Kanan
Pusat Pengajian Pendidikan dan Bahasa Modern
Universiti Utara Malaysia
06010 UUM Sintok
Kedah Darul Aman
(u.p.: Datin Dr. Minah Harun)

Tuan,

KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI KOLEJ TUNKU KURSHIAH

Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas adalah dirujuk dan surat rujukan UUM/CAS(SEML)/J-3/1 bertarikh 15 Disember 2019 adalah berkaitan.

2. Sehubungan dengan itu, pihak Kolej tiada halangan kepada pihak Universiti Utara Malaysia untuk membuat kajian di Kolej Tunku Kurshiah sepertimana yang dipohon oleh pihak tuan.
3. Kepsama tuan diharapkan untuk menjalankan kajian pada masa di luar waktu PdPc. Ini adalah untuk memastikan waktu pembelajaran murid tidak terganggu. Sekian untuk maklumi dan lindakn tuan.

Terima kasih.

Universiti Utara Malaysia

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"
"BERSIH, MUFAKAT, SEJAHTERA"

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,


(HJH ANISMAH BT. MOHD)
Pengetua

A World-Class Institution With Malaysian Identity

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPATION IN A FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW/IN-DEPTH

INTERVIEW

CONSENT FORM

I have been asked to participate in the research (focus group/ face-to-face interview).

I understand that this is a voluntary act and there are no right or wrong answers in the interview sessions. I agree to participate fully in the session(s).

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

IC Number: _____

Mobile/HP number: _____

APPENDIX D

In-Depth Interview Question

FRGS S/O Code 13137

UUM

Mengenai Kepemimpinan Pelajar

About Student Leadership

Temu bual ini terdiri daripada dua bahagian: Bahagian I – Profil dan Bahagian II – Pandangan Pelajar Mengenai Kepemimpinan.

This interview consists of TWO sections: Section I – Profile and Section II – Opinion on Leadership.

BAHAGIAN I – PROFIL SECTION I – PROFILE

Nama:

Name: _____

Jantina:

Gender: _____

Umur:

Age: _____

Bangsa:

Ethnic Group : _____

Jawatan / AJK (yang mana berkenaan) :

Position(s) held :

- | | |
|----------|-----------------------|
| 1) _____ | Tahun /Year(s): _____ |
| 2) _____ | Tahun /Year(s): _____ |
| 3) _____ | Tahun /Year(s): _____ |
| 4) _____ | Tahun /Year(s): _____ |
| 5) _____ | Tahun /Year(s): _____ |

Tingkatan:

Form: _____

Bahasa yang dikuasai :

Language(s) you are proficient in.: _____

Tempoh menjadi pemimpin pelajar:

Duration as a student leader: _____ tahun (jumlah tahun) /year(s) (total of years)

BAHAGIAN II – PANDANGAN MENGENAI KEPEMIMPINAN

SECTION II – OPINION ON LEADERSHIP

1. Adakah anda pernah mempunyai pengalaman memimpin? Sekiranya ya, ceritakan sedikit tentang pengalaman anda.

Have you had experience in leading (people)? If yes, tell a bit about your experience.

2. Bagaimana anda mencapai apa yang anda kecapai sekarang?

How do you become what you are now?

- 3.a. Apakah yang menjadi inspirasi anda dalam memimpin?

What has become your inspiration in leading?

- b. Siapakah yang menjadi inspirasi anda dalam memimpin?

Who has become your inspiration in leading?

- 4.a. Siapakah yang mendorong anda menjadi seorang pemimpin?

Who has encouraged you to become a leader?

- b. Bagaimanakah dia mendorong anda?

How does he/she encourage you?

5. Apakah faedah menjadi seorang pemimpin pelajar?

What are the benefits of being a student leader?

6. Apakah kriteria yang perlu ada pada seorang pemimpin yang baik?

What are the criteria needed for a good leader?

- 7.a. Bahasa apakah yang anda gunakan untuk berkomunikasi dengan pelajar lain?

What language(s) do you use to communicate with other students?

- b. Bahasa apakah yang anda gunakan untuk berkomunikasi dengan guru anda?

What language(s) do you use to communicate with your teacher?

8. a. Adakah kursus kepimpinan pelajar perlu diajar di sekolah?

Should a leadership course be taught in school?

b. Nyatakan sebabnya.

State your reason.

9. a. Adakah penting bagi seorang pemimpin pelajar untuk memiliki kemahiran interpersonal?

Is it important for a student leader to possess interpersonal skills?

b. Sekiranya ya / tidak, nyatakan sebabnya.

If yes / no, state your reason.



Appendix E

Focus Group Discussion Question

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW with STUDENTS

1. How should a leader behave in performing his/her daily duties?
 - a. What desirable characteristics should leaders have?
 - b. What type of leadership skills should a leader have?

2. How can the school facilitate student leadership development?
 - a. What can the school do to assist?
 - b. What are the suggested activities/courses that school can conduct or help to conduct?



Appendix F

In-Depth Interviews: Malay Transcript Samples

G2-12: *Okay, untuk datang daripada mana tu saya rasa mungkin daripada keturunan ka sebab ayah ayah. Dari atas atas memang selalu jadi ketua pemimpin. Dan lepas tu bagaimana kecap tu mungkin orang nampak kat diri sebagai orang yang boleh cakap kat depan. Mungkin dari segi tu saya rasa sekarang apa yang saya bercakap tu macam sifat-sifat tu saya boleh guna dalam kelas dalam luar, kiranya mudah untuk saya communicate dengan orang.*

G2-12: *Dia kalau ikutkan masa jaga hati tu mesti tak boleh tukar la la tu. So mesti la saya macam “ni kalau boleh esok pakai baju yang lebih sopan sikit” kira lebih baik la atau pun “boleh la esok” atau pun kadang-kadang macam kawan kan ada yang biasalah stoking kiranya bagi hadiah stoking macam tu. So depa akan faham benda tu.*

Appendix G

In-Depth Interviews

English Transcript Samples

G2-12: *Okay, as for where it comes from, I think it might be from my heritage because of my father; and even further up, they have always been leaders. And as for how I achieved it, maybe people see me as someone who can speak in front of others. Maybe that's why I feel now, whatever I'm saying, these traits, I can use them in class or outside; it means that it's easy for me to communicate with people.*

G2-12: *If we're talking about maintaining relationships, it's something that you can't just change right there and then. So, I'll be like, 'maybe tomorrow you could wear something a bit more proper,' that's better. Or I'd say 'tomorrow can be better' or sometimes, with friends, it's common to give them socks as a gift to hint at things like that. So, they'll understand.*

