

# Self-Leadership:

## Challenges of Malaysian Students Toward Industrial Revolution 4.0

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**Abstract**—The impact of globalization, liberalization and the changing attitudes of society towards future leaders requires adjustment and improvements in leadership style. A leader is not born naturally. We always hear the phrase “Born to Be a Leader”, but the expression is not always found in the realm of reality. Some say that leadership is inherited from the parents. To produce human capital with superior knowledge, skills and personal capabilities, self-leadership is seen as an important component that needs to be present in every individual today. This study aims to explore the needs and challenges of self-leadership based on the perceptions of student leaders. An explorative qualitative study utilizing the interview method used four randomly chosen student leaders as research participants. The data were collected through interviews. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Qualitative data analysis summarized that there are four main strategies found in student self-leadership which are behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, constructive mindset strategies and superior leadership strategies. There are also important elements that can be attributed to these strategies. The implication of this study is to make self-leadership necessary in the individual of a future leader.

**Keywords**—self-leadership; challenges; students; Industrial Revolution 4.0; interviews

### I. INTRODUCTION

Self-leadership is another important element in the leadership field in facing the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Self-leadership is an element that is given little emphasis in the leadership field. Whereas the most frequently heard word ‘caliph’ is a special title given to humans and not to the angels or other beings. The word ‘caliph’ refers to humans made by Allah SWT to carry responsibilities on the earth as per the words in (Surah→ in English or just Al-Baqarah [1]. Since born, humans are fated to become leaders basically for themselves and the heaviest if they were to lead the society.

In fact, subsequent researches about leadership is already growing in developed countries for the past 3 decades. Houghton and Neck check the quotation style or paper template stated that the concept of self-leadership has begun to receive the attention for discussion in previous research highlights regarding organization [2]. According to Bryant and Kazan, within the life of an individual, there is a need to familiarize oneself with mastering the confidence in decision

making and good decision-making process [3]. This is supported by Mans and Sim that stated self-leadership utilize a specific set of behavioural and cognitive strategies designed to form individual achievements [4].

Therefore, self-leadership can be surmised as the ability to self-influence to achieve the goals desired by oneself. The decisions made by oneself will portray the level of self-leadership, whether good or bad, or open for improvements. Self-leadership emphasize the importance of internal rather than external factors that controls the behaviour of an individual. In this era of globalization, the issue of diminishing morals among the students of Malaysia are concerning the citizens of today. Everyday, we can see on television and newspaper the exposure of various criminal activities perpetrated by students in schools. According to Malaysia Education, the issue of skipping school is at the top of the list compared to other disciplinary violations. As many as 67,053 cases were reported in 2017 compared to other disciplinary cases. From that statement, it can be surmised that the level of students’ discipline of today is at a very concerning level.

Research on self-leadership is very limited and the literature review done revealed that very little research has been conducted regarding self-leadership among the students of Malaysia. According to Sharifah Md. Noor, research on self-leadership is scarcely conducted, even if some were conducted, it is only by Master and Philosophical Doctorate candidates in local universities [5]. Nevertheless, the leadership education is given little attention in the aspects of a leader. In addition, Rosnazirah and Hussein stated the personality of oneself that forms a role model is a contributing factor in the improvement of student achievements [6]. Inferring from that, self-leadership is seen as one of element that is suitable for practice in the field of leadership.

### A. Problem Statement

The issue of diminishing morals among the younger generation is becoming very concerning for today’s society. The younger generation is the inheritors that would continue to develop the country in the future. However, if this generation loses their way, what are we supposed to do? Should we continue to silence ourselves? The insistence of life and vulnerability to outside influences are the cause for the widespread disciplinary issues in schools. Based on the

increasing amount of juvenile crime cases portrays the Gen Y and Gen Z becoming less wise and susceptible to emotions when committing wrongdoings.

School students today are not only involving in skipping school, vandalism and bullying but also has begun to delve into more extreme crimes; student involvement in drug deals, sex crimes, murder, gang membership and militant have all been recorded within the juvenile crime records. As many as 467 arrests involving school students were made in 2017 and the number has increased to 577 arrests in 2018 [7]. The involvement of school students in these juvenile cases are becoming more serious and need the attention of all parties.

If before, children are merely throwing rocks at others, now they are willing to steal, burn and kill to the point it can severely affect others. Negative elements spread through sophisticated technologies and the freedom of social media usage among the teenagers is contributing to the diminishing and impairment of morals among the younger generation of today. The tendency of children to rely on violence in solving conflicts and differences are very concerning. The trend among those under 14 years old for solving problems through violence without considering the consequences seems to spread.

Until today, very few researches have been done regarding the aggressive behavioural patterns among the students of Malaysia. Therefore, facing the internal and external challenges from the effects of globalization, liberalization and the progress of information and communication technology requires changes in the education of Malaysia. This education transformation must align with the National Educational Philosophy with the goal of creating a physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually balanced individual. The focus of the education transformation should not only consider the academic aspects alone; to develop the younger generation that are futuristic with high social and moral quality, self-leadership is seen as one of the strategies that should be applied in the change.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the challenges faced by students in confronting the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The findings of the research could bring awareness to the education stakeholders that the factors discussed are all based on the perception of the students. Hence, in changing the country's education pattern, their perception and opinions should not be ignored. Subsequently, the society and stakeholders need to be aware and tackle the issue seriously.

### *B. Purpose of the Research*

The purpose of the research is to identify the challenges faced by Malaysian students in confronting the Industrial Revolution 4.0 based on the perception of student leaders. Specifically, these objectives; i) exploring the challenges faced by students based on the perception of student leaders, and ii) identifying improvement challenges faced by students based on the perception of student leaders.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *A. Research Design*

To fulfil the stated research objectives, qualitative method utilizing structured interviews was employed. Qualitative research method allows for in depth exploration for acquiring comprehensive findings to achieve research objectives [8]. Therefore, it is believed that qualitative research can help in acquiring, exploring and understanding the researched subject Berg [9].

### *B. Research Population and Sample*

Sample for qualitative research in the form of purposive sampling was decided based on the consideration towards the information gained [10]. This research involved the head of student leaders and three student leaders from urban and rural schools. All four research participants were consisting of upper secondary students and has served as school leaders with more than five years of experience. There are no rules in determining the sample size in a qualitative research, but usually a small sample (1 – 8 people) is enough as long as the sample fits all the sampling criteria. Satzinger, Jackson and Burd stated that a small sample size is enough if the objectives has been achieved [11].

### *C. Data Collection Procedures*

Interview protocols was certified by an expert in the language field and another expert in the leadership field before the interview sessions were conducted. The interview protocols have also been improved to facilitate participants' understanding and increase the credibility of the conducted interviews. This method is the most suitable considering the researcher wants to gain the opinions and information regarding the necessity of self-leadership among students. The interview method possesses the advantage in terms of acquiring and exploring other people's experiences and obtain a unique data [12].

For the school location selection, both urban and rural schools were taken into consideration as to acquire a comprehensive information and to fulfil all requirements. The interviewees also must agree to become a willing research participant and will provide the required responses and data in line with the research requirements. Therefore, the researcher assumed that a total of four research participants were reasonable and manageable.

### *D. Data Analysis Procedure*

During interview, data was recorded using an MP3 recorder to facilitate the transcription process. The interview transcripts was then analysed thematically to obtain the themes for the research objectives. It involves encoding and identifying certain themes and category based on all the interview transcripts obtained from the interview sessions [13].

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To explore the challenges faced by students, a total of 4 student leaders were interviewed. Afterwards, the data obtained were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed

five main challenges as described by the student leaders in confronting the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Details of the challenges are as follows:

#### A. Parents and Family Background

Parents' role towards children's education are very important in shaping the children's behaviour and success. Children development are influenced by their surroundings. Family background and parent's socio-economy status also leaves huge impact in children's self-achievement. Love and support from family members are also just as important in shaping children's behaviour. Children devoid of love from the parents due to divorce or chaotic household will face problems and it will become an obstacle in their learning.

The situation is described as follows:

*"2010 was like that, so starting from there, I was taught by my parents to learn discipline for myself and around other people since I was little..."*

(RP1, 16-17)

The second research participant also provide the following description:

*"...I was raised in a family of police; my father was a policeman and I became a school prefect when I was in standard 3 (9 years old)"*

(RP1, 27-29)

The fourth research participant also provide the following description:

*"...I was the eldest son in my family. My father was a lecturer and my mother was a surveyor. Both of them were pretty busy but would still spend time together with the children during the weekends..."*

(RP4, 18-23)

To summarize, parents in this new millennium are facing various changes, challenges, crisis and dilemma. Surrounding pressure and various challenges in the form of living costs and technological advancement requires parents to be smart in managing the family. Cooperation, understanding and support from the parents are crucial in shaping the children's behaviour. Ignorance of responsibilities and marital relationship can lead to a lot of problems that would jeopardize the harmony and happiness of a family. Hence, parents are the role models for the children.

#### B. Self-actualization

Self-actualization refers to achieving a meaningful personal potential for oneself [14]. For Maslow, humans are born with an inner power to produce a maximum personal potential known as self-actualization. To achieve self-actualization, there are several stages. It starts from the basic stage that is physiological needs followed by safety needs, then social needs, before rising to esteem needs and finally, self-actualization. Students that possess a high self-actualization will be more motivated to learn and avoid involving

themselves in disciplinary violations such as thefts, fights, loitering, vandalism, drug abuse and various others.

The situation is described as follows:

*"...in our era, there are a lot of problems, symptoms, so many influences that could drove us to harm's way. Therefore, self-awareness (self-actualization) enable us to take care of ourselves from all those things..."*

(RP1: 85-88)

The second research participant also provide the following description:

*"...we need to train ourselves to make decisions, whether positive or negative, it is very crucial, and we can't take it lightly as it is a cause or a key to the makings of an individual..."*

(RP2, 97-100)

Self-actualization plays the main role in the students' challenge for self-leadership. To develop self-leadership within each individual, self-actualization needs to be applied first. Student goals are usually positive when they are at the earlier stage of schooling, but their self-actualization begins to diminish as they progress through the years especially when they spend a long time in their schooling period [15]. This issue becomes more apparent and clearer for students facing problems in their learning [16]. Personal changes don't only rely on the individual alone but also relies on how the reflection process occurs. This is what drove an individual to create new, fully motivated behaviour and become strong to actualize it.

#### C. Peer Influences

Younger generation of today agreed that peer influences drive them to commit various unexpected things. Peers is defined as a group of students or teenagers of around roughly the same age between one another. At the earlier stage, teenagers between the age of 14 to 18 display signs of reliance on their peers. The choice and setting of their self-identity couple with emotional confusion have moved from their parents to their peers. According to Steinberg and Monahan, teenagers will look for peers to appease this situation [17]. Reliance on peers will begin to subside once they enter the age of 19 to 30 years old as their social focus and attention will emphasize on finding a life partner. Peers also become a mechanism of life transition; that is completing the cycle of life from adolescence to adulthood. In the context of peers, the first research participant described the following:

*"...we can educate them by giving them the chance to social with the public..."*

*"...those who are brave enough to step forward, they will have the chance to share their ideas..."*

*"...we started mingling with the classes next to mine in what I called an informal approach..."*

(RP1: 149-152)

Aside from that, the third research participant believes that peers also have major influence on shaping the behaviour and traits of teenagers. Some of the statement described:

*"...we consider them as a group that wanted to change but had no desire to help us approach people like this, we're not forcing them and rather inviting them to shape a good character..."*

*"...we close in the distance with groups like this and we approach them and try to change their character while also shaping our own..."*

(RP3: 177-183)

To summarize, even though these research participants are among school leaders, they feel a major responsibility to see their peers having good characteristics and behaviours. This is supported in a research by Furnham and Cheng on the teenagers of China that shows the influence of peers affecting the attitudes towards peer behaviour through moderator locus of control [18]. In addition, researchers have found that hobbies, interests, happiness, life prosperity and options to own things among youth need to have mutual familiarity or agreement between peers [19]. However, peer influences also affect students when they are facing a problem. Influence from peers has cause teenagers to shift their role models from their parents to their friends for guidance on how to behave or how to act. It has been found that teenagers have the tendency to make their peers as guides or models to build their personality [20].

Therefore, if they were to mingle with a positive group of friends in all aspects of their life, then it is not impossible for them to have a positive mentality and behaviour as the good peer influences has seeped into their being.

#### *D. Student Involvement in School Activities*

The level of student involvement in school activities are associated with the co-curriculum activities. Students are not only focused on studying in class but also adding to their experiences with outdoor activities. According to Reaves et al, co-curriculum activities can add important experiences and skills for students [21]. Aside from that, students' interest in participating outdoor activities are due to support from their surroundings such as teachers, parents and peers. This is supported in the research by Mohd Jaflus Bahari which describes a conducive learning environment will increase students' involvement and social skills [22]. This situation is described by the first and third research participant as follows:

*"...in physical education, we can play together, for example, at night, they invite us to play futsal together, that is how we bridge the gap while at the same time just have some talk..."*

(RP1: 200-202)

*"...at school, there is a corner for students to talk about something that they know, so from there they will build the mental maturity and eventually build self-leadership..."*

(RP3: 271-274)

Therefore, through involvement in outdoor activities, students will have the opportunity to build and develop their self-potential and afterwards develop their self-leadership. In Malaysia, students are on secondary level are required to join the three fields of co-curriculum; club and associations, sports and games, and uniformed unit. However, not all students are interested in actively participating in these outdoor activities. There are some passive students that are not interested to join the activities organized by the school.

According to Mohd Jaflus, structural factors are the main factors that hinders students' involvement in school activities followed by students' intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. He referred the structural factor to the school's infrastructure and equipment, time allocation and budget investment. Intrapersonal factors refer to students' internal factors such as interacting with other students or between students and teachers [22]. Interpersonal factors on the other hand refer to external factors that influence the students' personality such as pressure, culture, ability and skills. Therefore, all three dimensions on the school's surroundings are challenges in influencing students' involvement in school activities. Students' involvement in school activities provide a positive effect on the students' personality in building self-confidence and courage. This is supported by Darlin et al in which it was found that students that participate in schools' activities have higher values, higher aspiration and academic achievements compared to students who are not involve in any activities [23].

#### *E. Teachers' Role*

In facing the digital advancement in this era of globalization, teachers' role is sorely needed. Teachers are the guides that will direct students to achieve brilliant success. Teachers are the source of inspiration for students and are able to motivate and influence students' excellence in academic and character [24]. A teacher plays the role of advisor, counsellor, motivator, consultant and keeping an eye on student discipline [25]. This statement is voiced by research participant 1 and 2 as follows:

*"...sometimes teachers would combine our class, because we can help in teacher teaching others..."*

(RP1: 188-189)

*"...every divided group was appointed a leader based on teacher's observation...at the same time they can learn to lead..."*

(RP2: 254-255)

Based on the excerpt above, it is clear that teachers are role models that students can refer to other than their parents. A good teacher personality can influence the students. The main challenge for teachers of today is not only to prepare themselves parallel to the change in the national education system by expanding idealistic teaching professionalism, but also to develop a young generation that are culturally literate, possessing high social and moral quality, is futuristic and positive to achieve advancement and change. Teachers need to raise students' interest towards the process of learning, guiding them with effective learning skills and shaping learning behaviour [26]. A good relationship between teacher and

student can improve interpersonal skills and create excitement for students to learn throughout the learning session whether in classroom or within school surroundings [27].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of this research have presented five challenges of Malaysian students' self-leadership to compete in the industrial revolution 4.0 based on the views and perception of student leaders. In general, even though the views of the student leaders are considered public opinion, they must be taken into consideration accordingly. This is because student leaders of today represent their fellow peers in school. These younger generation are valuable asset for the country. Therefore, schools act as the main agents for socialization and change in sowing and nurturing leadership within students. Through close collaboration between school administrators, teachers and parents, it can create a conducive school atmosphere and excited learning environment for students aside from their own home.

Therefore, this research is conducted with the purpose of exploring the challenges faced by students based on the perception of student leaders. Data was collected through qualitative research using interview methods with four student leaders. Findings have identified five main challenges to students' self-leadership in facing the industrial revolution 4.0. The main features are parents and family background, self-actualization, peer influences, students' involvement in school activities, and teachers and school roles. Shaping self-leadership within a student requires cooperation and support from the parents, family, teachers and school administrators. From this research, it is hope that the findings would be able to contribute to the development of human capital.

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