

Performance Analysis of College Student Leadership Skills During Covid-19 Through Online Extra-Curricular Activities

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has hit our way of life in every aspect. Our education system is also included. Before the pandemic starts, most higher learning institutions use a face-to-face approach, and extra-curricular activities also follow the same way. New normal is a popular term nowadays. Every college student activity is required to adapt and tune to meet their objective. Student affairs units are required to investigate the new term and adjust accordingly. The unit is responsible for the development of the student's soft skills. This research reported the finding on how the unit adapts to the procedure of organising student activities. An online platform has its advantages and disadvantages. Still, in this research, the student feedback who organises an event during two different situations are recorded to get first-hand data on whether student skills like Leadership, Communication and Teamwork are well developed, especially during the pandemic. Data from student feedback reported that students had organised more than 150 activities through their society. The popular program is on academics, sports and recreation and volunteerism. During the pandemic, spiritual event shows an increase. Furthermore, these types of programs are the attributes of preparing a student to be excellent in leadership.

Keywords: Higher Learning Institution, Leadership, Student.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 slammed the door shut on many facets of daily living in the early year of 2020. It stymied international travel, hampered economic development, and hampered global education. COVID-19 became a massive pandemic in a matter of months Zhu *et al.* (2020), creating huge uncertainties (Altig *et al.*, 2020) and upending the educational system's traditional operation. It has recalibrated education as a distant, screen-based activity, confining most students to online instructor assistance. According to UNESCO, 1.6 billion children have missed school during this crisis, and as (Larsen *et al.*, 2021) discussed, 'nearly all schools have been stopped' and have been substantially restructured.

The same thing happens in Malaysia, where higher education institutions adapt in response to a pandemic, with top executives first challenged to make rapid-fire choices while prioritising the health and safety of students, academicians, and staff. In early January 2020. Academic authorities began by postponing student activities, relocating students, transferring teaching and learning online, and amending university rules and procedures. Second-wave effects followed soon after that in Malaysia, where most higher education activities use the online approach. Then in mid-May 2021, the Third wave continued. The impact not only happens to higher education in Malaysia, other countries such as Saudi Arabia also face the same (Alghamdi, 2021).

As administrators of their student affairs divisions, unit heads must lead during times of upheaval and crisis. Students' skills and knowledge through alternative learning platforms must be continued. Extra-curricular activities need to be readjusted and realigned to ensure student soft-skills enhancement is not damaged due to the pandemic. Standard procedures of extra-curricular activities implementations held by face-to-face approach, manual operation, and costly student activity need to be altered to suit the online approach (Rose, 2020), organising activities through automation and cost-friendly. This research tries to demonstrate the performance of the output from student activities. To report whether it is affected when the transition of organising student programs before and during the pandemic. Honestly, the transition from the old ways of running activities to an online platform should not affect student skills. The most skills that need to be measured are leadership and communication skills (Chun, 2021), which are vital to prepare them for our future succession (Meyer & Rinn, 2021). Comparison of student feedback data obtained from student society activities will be used to verify the hypothesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Not many studies focus on extra-curricular activities via an online approach that could enhance student development, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. As noted, during this time, mental pressure is high, and new learning and management skills are required (Kecojevic *et al.*, 2020). A recent study by (Hassan *et al.*, 2021) investigates the difficulties and advantages of Web 2.0-based learning for foreign students of English as a Second Language (ESL). The results were gathered via focus group interviews. The finding indicated that international students of English at the university experienced various obstacles during the Covid-19 epidemic, including a lack of technical resources, expertise and technical difficulties such as lousy internet connection and difficulty uploading big files, and password loss. Information and Communication literacy is essential to enhance student academic and skills development. A study by (Sarwanto & Marzuki, 2020) demonstrates the impact of students' ICT literacy on evaluating the efficacy of e-learning at school. According to the study's findings, the use of e-learning in the process of learning must be improved to increase students' ICT literacy. The online learning approach also affected academicians, not only college students. The issue is discussed by (Rasheed *et al.*, 2020). The purpose of this research is to uncover the barriers that students and instructors encounter while using technology in blended learning settings. Students and academics confront three fundamental difficulties: technical proficiency and competence issues, technological inadequacy, and technological complexity.

For student skill development outside of academics during the pandemic, standard procedures for student activity implementations generally based on a face-to-face approach, manual procedures, and costly student activities must be modified to accommodate an online approach through automation and value-driven. Previously, before Covid-19 starts as a pandemic, Blended learning has been introduced into our education system. Blended learning integrates traditional face-to-face learning with technology, the internet, and distance learning (Muxtorjonovna, 2020). The goal is to demonstrate the benefits of blended learning in education and the critical components of a successful blended course. By combining the benefits of online and in-person learning, the quality of the blended course may be improved. Findings also indicate that students from many fields enjoyed online conversations. It enabled them to express themselves and explore ideas and encourage critical thinking by extending class themes, giving students more influence over their learning (Bosman *et al.*, 2020). The online platform also could cover a significant number of student participants (Moghal *et al.*, 2019). More students are included in the class, so the probability for them to acquire knowledge and skills will be high.

Students volunteer and participate in the various local community and charity programs and campus activities, including organisations, clubs, mentoring, and student government. Through these programs, student skills attributes such as Leadership, Flexibility and adaptability, Critical thinking, Communication, emotional intelligence, and Creativity and innovation are indirectly developed. (Kaul *et al.*, 2020) summarised several characteristics and practices that influential leaders embodied amid a pandemic and discussed them in the context of the COVID-19, mainly to prepare the student as a leader during a crisis. The COVID-19 epidemic has forced students to be adaptable and flexible to navigate their education (Isley *et al.*, 2021). The first was the abrupt shift to virtual coursework, followed by more gradual adjustments in different areas of public health. The catchphrases of 2020 were "flexibility" and "new normal." When physical contact is limited due to COVID-19, extra-curricular activities must flourish and promote social connections in the virtual realm (Finnerty *et al.*, 2021). Critical thinking is defined as a model of intellect mainly intended to deal with real-world issues (Halpern & Dunn, 2021). Critical thinking skills may be developed and used to real-world issues such as COVID-19, which are offered as an example of a current problem that requires a new solution. Social and emotional intelligence both directly and indirectly leads to improved student performance. (Iqbal J, 2021). There are three subscales of emotional intelligence (self-consciousness, self-adjusting, and self-encouragement) that directly, positively, and significantly affect students' academic performance, especially during a pandemic.

3. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Student programs organise outside of the classroom are defined as extra-curricular activities. In this research, student activity is also classified as an informal learning opportunity offered by higher learning institutions that do not come within the scope of the school's regular curriculum (Ng, 2021). Many structured and productive leisure activities may be found at all levels of an institution. Community-based organisations, academics athletics, student governments, student newspapers, art, music and theatre, for example, may offer students a variety of learning opportunities to help them develop social, physical, and intellectual abilities. Evidence has been found in many studies of the beneficial effects of activities on students' growth and academic issues. Activities that are both constructive and well-organised program are an excellent way for a student to spend their time since they offer a variety of informal learning opportunities:

- a) to help the student enhance their social, physical, and intellectual abilities, as well as their academic achievement
- b) to add to one's feeling of well-being and being a member of a community
- c) to promote active participation and self-reliance concerning inclusiveness
- d) to form supportive social networks among peers and academicians in a favourable atmosphere; and
- e) to develop a sense of civic skills and be able to use practical problem-solving

4. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

This study is driven by practical issues the Student Affairs Unit faces in its operation at a UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Dungun, Malaysia, to maintain student skills such as leadership, managing, communication, and teamwork COVID-19. Before the pandemic, most of the activities is done physically. The cost of organising such an event is high. However, many students could participate in the face-to-face approach. This situation could give more experience to the student and develop their skills, especially to the organising committee. When the pandemic started, all the physical and face-to-face activities were being put on hold and switched to online platforms. Drastically, the cost of organising events is low. Still, due to the limitation of internet access, the task to maintain and measure student achievement on their required skills is difficult, but student

skills need to be pushed on. This research's primary purpose is to demonstrate that there is not much difference in the student experience in their skills development, whether the student extra-curricular activities are held face-to-face or through an online platform approach. Students give their feedback results when they submit their programs report. The data is used as data for the analysis.

The feedback given by the student will be analysed in Excel. The score given by the participating student will be calculated. The calculated score will show the average value. The actual data collection was administered using an online approach, and it has been done using Google Form. Two types of statistical analyses are utilised in this research. The first one uses descriptive where the program types and the number of events organised by the student for two different situations. Descriptive statistics such as percentage is used. The interpretation of averages scores in the variables was utilised as a reference to interpret the scores. Average values less than 2.33 were considered low, values between 2.34 and 3.67 were considered moderate, and values between 3.67 and 5.00 were considered high. Table 1 listed the given question for all the participating students.

Table 1 Feedback question was given to the organising committee

Question No	Details
1	Is the program has developed your critical thinking & problem-solving skills
2	Do you think the organised event has developed your communication skills
3	Did the program has developed your teamwork
4	Do the organise events teach a student in terms of work ethics and professionalism
5	Did the program has improved your continuous learning & information management
6	Do the event has developed your entrepreneurship skill
7	In your opinion, the program has tune-up your critical thinking & problem-solving skills
8	Did the program has developed your Leadership skills

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Officially, COVID-19 started to become a pandemic in Malaysia in early January 2020 (Shah *et al.*, 2020). The first data analysed is the student feedback submitted for Semester September 2019 to January 2020, which is most of the activities held by face-to-face approach. Figure 1 summarises all the programs organised within the semester. In the figure, the student program is divided into nine different types of general learning sections. As shown in the pie chart, the most program organised by student society is keen on the Academic side. It is vital for a good Leader, and they need to acquire broad knowledge, especially in academics (Khoshhal & Guraya, 2016). Then, the second most organised program is Sports and Recreation. This type of program is suited to be held in a physical situation. This program projects teamwork skills among students (Mohd Nizah *et al.*, 2016). Then the third most organised program is related to volunteerism. This program shows that students want to give back to others, especially to the community (Grant *et al.*, 2020); this activity also boosts student confidence levels.

PROGRAM TYPE	NO OF PROGRAM
Entrepreneur	8
Academic	56
Culture and heritage	19
Intellectual discourse	1
Spiritual	15
Volunteerism	25
Public Speaking	3
Innovation and Technology	13
Sports and Recreations	42

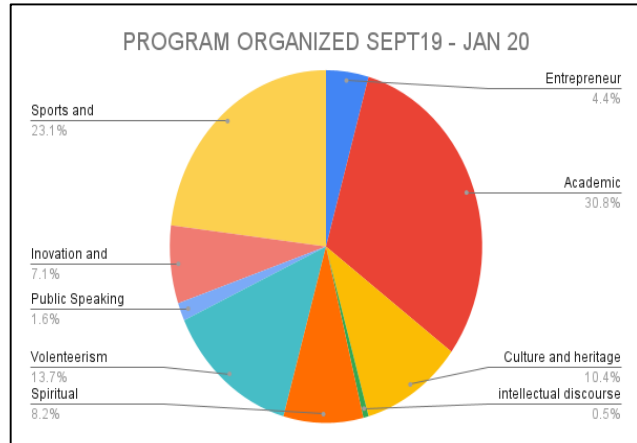


Figure 1. The summary of student extra-curricular activities for September 2019 to January 2020 (before COVID-19, Face-to-face approach).

Figure 2 depicted the number of programs organised by student society during the pandemic and through online platforms. The data from this semester is selected because the condition is similar, and the feedback submitted is similar. The gap between the selected semester is close to one year. It has been shown that programs related to academics still dominate, followed by sports and recreations, spiritual and culture and heritage, which has a similar number of programs be organised through online approach. Additionally, volunteerism is drastically drop compared to the same semester a year before. Students feel that this type of program is not suited to be held through an online platform. However, they are still trying to cope with the situation and manage to organise a few programs.

PROGRAM TYPE	NO OF PROGRAM
Entrepreneur	9
Academic	94
Culture and heritage	10
Intellectual discourse	2
Spiritual	10
Volunteerism	4
Public Speaking	6
Innovation and Technology	7
Sports and Recreations	10

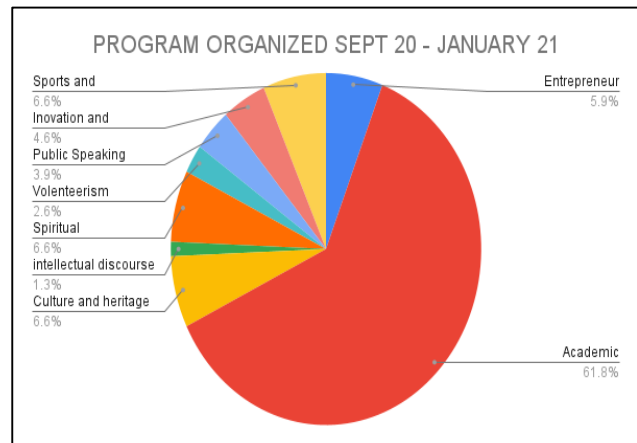


Figure 2. The summary of student extra-curricular activities for September 2020 to January 2021 (a year after Covid-19, Online platform approach).

In terms of student skills development from the extra-curricular activities, the questions listed in Table 1 are given to the organising committee for them to answer. For September 2019-January 2020, 182 students answered it, and for Semester 2020-January 2021, 175 students give their feedback. The scale for each question is from 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest mark. Table 2 shows the comparisons between the average marks for both semesters concerning the given question. It has been seen that from the figure only question related to Communication and Leadership skills does not affect much even the program held has been transferred from physical to an online approach. All other developing student skills are dropped below four but still more than the

average 3, which is at High scale. Showing that, with proper planning and a suitable program, the other element can also be increased to more than average 4.

Table 2 The calculated result obtained from the given questions related to organised programs

Question No	Sept. 2019 - Jan. 2020	Sep. 2020- Jan. 2021
1	4.45	3.83
2	4.48	4.31
3	4.52	3.83
4	4.44	3.72
5	4.45	3.85
6	4.32	3.70
7	4.48	3.75
8	4.31	4.00

6. CONCLUSION

Organising extra-curricular activities through online platforms is the new normal for a college student to adapt (Coman *et al.*, 2020). With restrictions introduced to minimise the spread of COVID-19 among them, students need to be familiar with the online approach in enhancing their skills, especially leadership. It has been shown that using face-to-face or online approaches, the learning process and development of student skills can be done by the appointed student affairs unit. The result shows that the average satisfaction score is at a similar value. The required student skills, which are leadership and communication skills, are still relevant from the student's understanding. The average value is reflected even when learning and organising an event through an online platform, and the average score is at the same point. The average value shows that students still want to learn and explore new knowledge, even with pandemics affecting students' everyday lives. To be an effective leader, a student who lives in the new norm needs to master these skills; both skills are the most required. Moreover, the student affairs unit needs to focus on enhancing student skills development and planning other skills that show a drop to an expected value.

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