UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES AND MOTIVATION TO LEAD ON PERCEIVED CAREER ANCHOR OF UNDERGRADUATES IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

AISHATH SHAZLA

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By

AISHATH SHAZLA

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

August 2015

DEDICATION

To my husband Hussain Musawwir , and my children, Yuman, Manha and Maira

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Science

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Chairman : **Associate Professor Jamaliah Abdul Hamid, Ph.D**
Faculty : **Educational Studies**

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of leadership attributes and motivation to lead on perceived career anchor of undergraduates in selected Malaysian public universities. The respondents of this survey were 711 undergraduate students studying in public universities by using quota percentage sampling. Results indicate that the respondents have a high level of leader attributes and moderate levels of motivation to lead. Pearson correlation analysis showed Leadership attributes and motivation to lead (MTL), have significant relationships with career anchors. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis revealed that while leadership attributes was a significant predictor for all perceived career anchors. MTL predicted all career anchors, except technical and challenging career anchors. Finally, the study found Gender and levels of LA were significant factors in explaining the differences in undergraduates' preference for all types of career anchor. Levels of MTL only explained the differences of preference for six types of career anchors, except for life style and independence career. Program of study did not contribute to explaining any differences in preference of career anchor. Research findings supports the research hypothesis that undergraduates who have been exposed to leadership development have gained greater emotional and cognitive maturity that enable them to be more open to a broader range of career anchors. Hence, Universities should provide opportunities to their students in order to explore how their talents, attributes and values fit with occupations in the job market. The findings from this study provide a contribution to the knowledge of the relationship leadership and career anchor perception of undergraduate students.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemnkakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai nemenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENGARUH ATRIBUT KEPIMPINAN DAN MOTIVASI UNTUK MEMINPAN TERHADAP TANGGAPAN KERJAYA UTAMA GRADUAN PRASISWAZA DI UNIVERSITI AWAM TERPILIH MALAYSIA

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Pengerusi : **Prof Madya Jamaliah Abdul Hamid, Ph.D**
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Tujuan objektif kajian ini ialah meneliti kesan ciri-ciri kepimpinan dan motivasi bagi membentuk pilihan kerjaya utama di beberapa university terpilih di Malaysia. Bilangan responden untuk survey ini adalah 711 prasiswazah yang menuntut di universiti awam di Malaysia. Responden tersebut dipilih menggunakan persampelan peratus kuota. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa para responden mempunyai ciri kepimpinan pada tahap yang tinggi dan sederhana untuk ciri motivasi. Analisa korelasi Pearson mendedahkan bahawa ciri kepimipinan dan motivasi untuk meminpin mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan pilihan kerjaya utama. Seterusnya, analisa regresi kepelbagaian menunjukkan bahawa ciri kepimpinan merupakan peramal signifikan untuk semua pilihan kerjaya kecuali pilihan kerjaya teknikal dan mencabar. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa jantina dan tahap ciri kepimpinan merupakan faktor signifikan dalam menerangkan perbezaan pilihan kerjaya dalam kalangan prasiswazah. Tahap motivasi untuk meminpin hanya menerangkan perbezaan pilihan untuk enam (6) kerjaya sahaja.Gaya hidup dan kebebasan terkecuali daripada analisa ini. Jenis kursus pembelajaran tidak menjelaskan sebarang perbezaan dalam perbezaan pilihan kerjaya. Hasil kajian ini menyokong hipotesis kajian, iaitu, prasiswazah yang terdedah kepada pembangunan kepimpinan meningkatkan kematangan emosi dan kognitif. Keadaan ini membolehkan mereka utama yang lebih luas. Justenu, pihak universiti haws memberi pelvang kepada para pelajar untuk meneroka bagaimana bakat merek ciri-ciri dan nilai-nilai yang sesuai dengan permintaan pasaran buruh. Penemuan daripada kajian ini memberi sumbangan pengetahuan terjaya utama di kalangan para prasiswazah.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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I hereby confirm that
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Declaration by members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- The research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- Supervision responsibilities as stated in the University Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

Youths today generally have high ambitions and wishes in the job they seek. The wishes of youths in college education include high paying jobs (Johnson & Elder,2002;Gomez, 2003), jobs that offer them autonomy in their work, and jobs that give them a lot of margin in incorporating their personal needs within work space and time (Yeo & Li, 2011). In Malaysia, there has been broad news coverage on the probable cause for unemployment among graduates (Sim, 2013). Among the causes highlighted were the selectiveness of graduates when it comes to choosing employment, poor command of the English Language, poor interactive skills, and more. Graduates are said to want only certain kinds of jobs, which match their individual personality and competence (Ismail, 2011).

Here, motivational theory in career choice enables us to explain the drive behind the individual's purpose and choice of career. Within the motivational framework, the reward incentive theory propounded by Locke (1968) offer a perspective that people are willing to commit themselves to a task or work if they aspire to achieve the promised reward (such as high salary and perks). On the other hand, psychological theory and in particular personality theory offers an explanation to differences in people's behavior, needs, and preferences (Ismail, 2011; Amstrong & Rounds, 2008), while the social cognitive theory attempts to explain how people come to perceive things and how they think over tasks, activities or commitments to ensure there are returns benefits to their general self-efficacy, life and professional outcomes, and personal life achievement (Bandura et al., 2001).

There is yet another theory in career selection – the Social Learning Theory (Krumboltz et al., 1976), which explains that as people develop as a result of their experiences, and interaction with and knowledge of the environment, they respond by choosing careers that enable them to act upon their past experiences and knowledge of the environment using skills and values that have been acquired throughout the learning/development process.

Youths are continuously being exposed to new knowledge and experiences. In particular youths in universities are exposed to new faculty experiences, residential and campus life, formal and informal learning opportunities, and multi-level interactions with faculty members, administrators, maturing peers, and external community members when they engage in communal activities organized by the university. They also have opportunities to attend seminars and listen to talks by leaders, professionals and careerists, philanthropists and business people. In addition, universities also run annual or perennial programs such as leadership development programs and employability programs and career awareness programs to fulfil the mandatory social role expected from universities (Astin, 1993). As a result, undergraduates evolve through their experience and engagements in the various activities in the campus. One of the skills that cut across leadership development, employability and career

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awareness programs is leadership skills. Much literature has been written that explains how leadership skills lead to better self-management and more active participation in decision making (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999), better ability to interact and work with others (Abdul Hamid, Krauss & Ismail 2008), better skills in managing tasks so that outcomes are delivered as expected (Endress, 2000; Dugan, 2006; Krauss & Abdul Hamid, 2013),and better motivation to keep on the right track to task completion (Bardou, Byrne & Perez, 2003).

Undoubtedly leadership skills have been cited by employers as an important criterion for selective choice of employment (Ismail, 2011). There is a possibility that university education having fostered a certain level of leadership identity and skills amongst their undergraduates might unwittingly have also fostered certain types of job expectation amongst those undergraduates. The Social Learning Theory also suggests the possibility of the consequences and implication of past learning and experiences on adult life decisions which includes career selection. Hence, undergraduates in Malaysian public universities may be more inclined to seek careers that would provide them the platform to fulfil their leadership aspirations.

1.2   Background of the Study

Many career choice or career decision studies have been based on motivational theory which highlights "content" factors such as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivational factors, and incentive and rewards that attract people to some careers but not to others (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2011; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1961; Vroom, 1964). The "process" view of motivation claim that people change and they make decisions about their careers based on their increasing maturity and experience, their changing contexts as they shift from one phase of life to another, their evolving sense about the meaning of work, their maturing sense of self fulfillment, and their general cognizance of the changing environment or context of their work (Bandura, 1997). In combination, the content and process view of the motivational theory encompass both the characteristics of individuals and their context, and the development and interaction between them (Astin, 1993). The university is a social context in which many in the late adolescent stage of life experience. Within this context, they are exposed to many stimulus and phenomenon, all of which are micro contexts that shape their career choices (Lent et al., 2007). The examination of content and process drivers as a source of motivation in career decisions may help to unearth in what ways those "specifics" uniquely associated and embedded within the developmental context of academic experience in public university campuses influence career choices amongst undergraduates in Malaysia.

To understand the impact and implication of social developmental context onto an undergraduate's career decision making choices, the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989) is particularly useful. Banduras' social cognitive theory postulates that people (in this case, undergraduates too) observe and learn from the environment and they visualize the future they would aspire for themselves in their personal lives, and in their future careers, based upon what they had observed and experienced (Lent et al., 2007; Astin & Astin, 2000).

The context of public university in Malaysia is unique. The public university is known as a social agent with social responsibility (Dugan, 2006; Astin & Astin, 2000, Krauss

& Abdul Hamid, 2013; Hamid & Krauss, 2013) to the nation to ensure that the younger generation will continue to contribute back to society in terms of economic rejuvenation and expansion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), new ideas and innovations (Shakir,2009), and ensure community survival through sustainable leadership (Astin & Astin, 2000), commitment to social development and its sustenance (Krauss & Abdul Hamid, 2013; Hamid & Krauss, 2013), and entrepreneurialism (Shakir, 2009; Seetha, 2014).

Universities attempt to fulfil their social responsibility through holistic development of the intellect, during curriculum and non-curriculum activities so that the outputs produced by the university promise to deliver future generations with leadership ability and integrity (Astin & Astin, 2000), future professionals with quality, self-employed or employees with sound career abilities, and ethical responsible citizenry. Leadership, Careerism, Professionalism, and Citizenry form the crux of social developmental context of the public university (Krauss & Abdul Hamid, 2014). In this research, the focus is on Leadership and Careerism, or more specifically the development of Leadership Attribute and Leadership Motivation and Career orientation vis-à-vis career anchor. In fact, leadership is not entirely estranged from career choices, nor from employability which is a close auxiliary to career choice. According to Seetha (2014), undergraduates with leadership skills and experience figure strongly on employability index given by employers. These undergraduates are more likely to be enlisted, trained, and inducted in a broader selection of available careers in comparison to those who have no record of leadership. Good leadership skills are perceived to run synonymously with being successful in careers, and undergraduates with leadership skills therefore appear to have higher job marketable rate (Shakir, 2009).

In their study on student leadership of undergraduates in Malaysia, Abdul Hamid and Krauss (2009, 2011) discovered several factors about student leadership amongst undergraduates. One of their major findings was that, throughout the nation undergraduates' averaged score of their self-perception of their leadership skills and attributes were much higher than their averaged score of their motivation to lead. This finding led the researchers to suggest that while leadership training in campus should continue to emphasize skills training, the training curriculum should concentrate also on developing the bridge to help undergraduates willingly accept leadership identity and role, and foster willingness to assume leadership responsibility. Only by embracing both can the university nurture leadership readiness amongst their undergraduates. Taking the study of Abdul Hamid and Krauss as the base indicator of leadership development in Malaysia public universities, this present Master's study attempts to study how the level of leader attribute and leader motivation amongst the undergraduates relate and predict their choice of careers.

At the university, undergraduates also become more aware of and critical of the kinds of careers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and the nuances of job characteristics (Turban & Keon, 1993; Lim & Soon, 2006) they would want to have. According to Schein (1990), many individuals develop a pattern of job preferences based on their increasing self-awareness or self-knowledge of their own interests, personality, and self-concept. Experience through socialization with others also creates awareness of the kinds of jobs they would want to consider seriously, and they also become more aware about the way they prefer to work (Perrone et al., 2001). Young teenagers are influenced in their choice of career by their socialization with adult role models (Perrone et al., 2001), or by their fellow peers (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). Young children's career choice are

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affected by their parents' academic aspirations (Bandura et al., 2001). Young undergraduates on the other hand, are influenced in their career choices by their observations of faculty members, or through their contact with numerous friends and acquaintances during seminars and through exposure in various projects (Edwards & Quinter, 2011), or through their program specializations (Bandura et al., 2001).

Schein's (1990) career anchors provide one of the many models of the types of careers people would go for, and it is used in this study as the dependent variable to examine the preference of career choices amongst undergraduates who have different levels of leadership skills or attributes and leadership motivation. DeLong (1982) believes that career anchors contain a broad range of applications in addition to fitting to individuals in search of a career or changing the career , and to assisting organizations with career planning and management (CPM). Steele (2009) asserts that career anchors are the most fitting model for evaluating today's career options. There is some contemplation of the likelihood of change in value brought regarding variations in work experiences and age, however there is still adequate stability in the career anchor model to enable the model to be useful to both individuals and organizational career management (Steele, 2009).

It is important to study the effect of leadership skills and leadership motivation on career anchors that undergraduates would likely prefer, because the results of the study will inform us about the kinds of job that students most competent in leadership skills as opposed to those less competent, would be most interested to seek. If the career preference of those undergraduates with high leadership motivation and leadership skills slants heavily toward certain types of career choices more than to others, it would then indeed be advisable for universities to consider developing a more proactive career preparation program to provide some balance to compensate for the overwhelming effect of leadership skills and leadership motivation training. In this way, universities stand a better chance in helping their undergraduates to help prepare themselves to face a highly competitive (Omar, Bakar and Rashid, 2012) and narrowing (Wye & Ismail, 2012), job market.

1.3   Problem Statement

Undergraduate perceived career anchor in relation to their leadership skills and leadership motivation are new to the field of higher education. Although research in employability skills (e.g.Omar, Bakar & Rashid, 2012) and employability awareness of Malaysian college students have been conducted (eg.Shafie &Nayan 2010), These employability components overlooked the effect of self-development training such as leadership skills and leadership motivation programs organized by universities as part of the university social responsibility agenda. As a result, many of these Malaysian career related studies overlooked how the university training itself might have affected career choices and decisions of undergraduates.

Krauss and Hamid (2013) in their study on Malaysian undergraduate leadership skills and motivation, reported that undergraduates with high leadership skills tended to enjoy being involved and challenged in many types of activities. Several researchers noted that undergraduates who have held leadership positions tended to be more positive in meeting new challenges (Barbuto, 2001); knew more about authority and hierarchy and more willing to respect and tolerate them (Abdul Hamid & Krauss, 2008); and

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appreciated the depth and extent of building networks of alliances (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Debnath, Tandon and Pointer (2007) found out that those individuals having leadership skills/attributes are leadership motivated, look for specific and more complex job. All these suggest that undergraduates with high levels of leadership skills/attributes and leadership motivation might be drawn to career that include challenge and autonomy.

To date, no study has been administered in Malaysia to examine the effects of leadership attributes and leadership motivation on undergraduates' choice of career anchor. Therefore, the importance of examining the relationship and predictive effect of leader attributes and leadership motivation on the choices of career anchors of Malaysian undergraduates is evident. There is also a need to establish whether programs of study, which provides the stable factor in contrast to the varying levels of leadership skills and leadership motivation, would also affect Malaysian undergraduate's choice of career anchors.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to find out the relationship between leadership attributes and leadership motivation with perceived career anchor.

The Specific objectives are:

1. To determine the level of leadership attributes (LA) and motivation to lead (MTL) among undergraduates in selected public universities in Malaysia.
2. To examine the distribution of perceived career anchors among the under graduates.
3. To determine whether undergraduates' perceptions of their leadership attributes and motivation to lead are significantly related to their perceived career anchors.
4. To find out whether gender and program of study, level of leadership attributes, and level of motivation to lead are predictive of preference for career anchors among Malaysian undergraduates in selected public universities.
5. To find out whether there is any difference in preference of career anchors based on the undergraduates' gender, program of study, level of leadership attributes and level of leadership motivation.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following research questions.
Research question 1: What are the levels of leader attributes and motivation to lead among Malaysian undergraduates?
Research question 2: What is the distribution of preference for career anchors among the undergraduates?
Research question3: Is there a significant relationship between undergraduates' perceptions of their leadership attributes and their motivation to lead to their choice of career anchors?
Research question 4: Are gender, program of study, and the levels of leadership attributes and motivation to lead predictive of preference for career anchors?

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Research question 5: Are there significant differences in the undergraduates' perceived career anchors based on their gender, program of study, and different levels of leader attributes and motivation to lead?

1.7   Definition of Terms

1.7.1   Leader Attributes

There are many sets of leadership attributes but in this research the leadership attributes will be defined as skills in accepting and presenting leadership identity, in providing vision of change, in maintaining group dynamics, and in managing emotional stability on the job. These constructs were taken directly from the Leadership Skills and Attributes Instrument developed by Abdul Hamid and Krauss (2011), but the number of items were reduced to prevent close similarities of concepts. With regard to the reduction, the researcher refers to Bandura (1997), who explicitly argued against the use of generic efficacy scales that were broad. He posited that efficacy scales, including leadership efficacy scale, need to be specific to the domains of function within the role. The researcher also referred to Astin and Astin (2000) who explicated that the leadership role of undergraduates must be understood in their context of collegial relationship with their peers and not in the context of cooperate leadership that is often associated with performance.

1.7.2   Motivation to Lead

Chan and Drasgow (2001) states Motivation to lead as an individual differences construct that affects a leader's or leader-to-be decision to assume leadership roles and responsibilities. The level of motivation to lead affects his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader. Motivation to lead consists of three categories: affective identity motivation to lead, non-calculative motivation to lead, and social normative motivation to lead. In this research, we shall use only the affective identity aspect of motivation to lead, taken directly from Chan and Drasgow (2001)'s work. The affective identity measures genuine enthusiasm and delight in taking up leadership role and responsibility with nine items. In this research, some modifications were done to change negative items to positive ones to avoid cognitive confusion.

1.7.3   Perceived Career Anchor

Schein (1996, 1990) defines career anchors as his or her self-concept, consisting of: self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values that govern one's work related choices, and the evolved sense of motives and needs pertaining to career. Scheins' career inventory (1990) describes eight career anchors: Independence, Security, Technical, Managerial, Entrepreneur, Service Contribution, Challenge, and Lifestyle.

1.8   Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the outcome of this research will contribute to the understanding of how leadership skills and leadership motivation among undergraduates may affect their choice of career anchors. If relationships were found among leader attributes, motivation to lead and preferred career anchors of Malaysian undergraduates, this finding may lead to improvements and modifications of university training and self-development programs in relation to how they prepare their students for flexibility and openness to meet the challenges of competitive and narrowing job market.

This study, thus, will contribute to the knowledge base of leadership attributes and leadership motivation within the career-planning field and might also enlighten the practice of teaching career and professional skills to college students.

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