A LEADER'S COMPASS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AWARENESS IN BUILDING A LEADERSHIP MINDSET AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Social awareness serves as the cornerstone of a dynamic leadership mindset among students, empowering them to inspire, support, and uplift their peers and communities. This research paper delves into the pivotal role of social awareness by collecting data from 246 college students. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the study employed Cronbach's alpha (with a reliability exceeding 0.70) to analyse the relationship between social awareness and leadership development. Given the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions and mental well-being, there is an urgent need to investigate the correlation between social awareness and the leadership mindset among college students. Understanding this relationship is crucial in cultivating compassionate leaders capable of effectively addressing diverse challenges and fostering unity in our rapidly evolving world. The study highlights five crucial aspects of social awareness- Vision and Communication, Active Listening and Curiosity, Decision Making and Emotional Intelligence, Empathy and Relatability, and Open-Mindedness and Self-reflection- that significantly influence students' leadership mindset. Interestingly, the research found that a student's academic percentage does not affect their leadership mindset. The results of this study hold significant implications for educational institutions and leadership development programs, as they seek to equip college students with the social and emotional skills necessary for effective leadership.

***KEYWORDS**: Social Awareness, Leadership, College Students, COVID-19, Compassionate Leaders.*

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Introduction

In an ever-evolving world, the demand for effective and ethical leaders has never been more crucial. The realm of leadership transcends mere management; it embodies the art of inspiring, guiding, and motivating individuals and teams toward collective goals. As we stand on the cusp of a new era, we find ourselves facing unprecedented challenges, from global pandemics to environmental crises, social justice movements, and economic shifts. Navigating this complex landscape requires leaders who possess not only technical expertise but also a profound understanding of human dynamics and the broader societal context.

At the core of effective leadership lies the ability to empathize, understand, and connect with others. This emotional intelligence, demonstrated through social awareness, empowers leaders to grasp the needs, concerns, and aspirations of their teams, followers, or communities. Social awareness encompasses the perceptiveness to discern emotions, perspectives, and diverse cultural backgrounds, creating a foundation for fostering cohesive and inclusive environments. Integral to transformational leadership, it involves traits like active listening, compassion, and an open-minded approach that embraces diversity.

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Recognizing the significance of nurturing leadership qualities from an early stage, college campuses present an ideal breeding ground for fostering young leaders. As emerging adults embark on their educational journeys, they encounter numerous opportunities to develop not only academic expertise, but also essential life skills. Integrating social awareness into the educational landscape can empower students to become well-rounded leaders, fully equipped to tackle the multifaceted challenges that await them.

Need for the Study

This study is imperative due to the interplay of several pressing factors, each highlighting the pivotal role of social awareness in shaping college students' leadership mindsets. Firstly, the rising rates of anxiety and depression among students within academic environments call for a comprehensive approach to student development, emphasizing the importance of emotional resilience. Simultaneously, the surge in entrepreneurial interest and the prevalence of college fests underscore the necessity of equipping students with collaborative skills, aligning with social awareness principles like active listening and relatability. Additionally, the current emphasis on diversity and inclusion in the business world underscores the value of leaders who can understand and leverage diversity; social awareness, with its focus on empathy and cultural competence, is essential for these roles. Furthermore, the growing global demand for sustainability necessitates leaders who can navigate complex ethical and social dimensions of sustainability challenges, and social awareness equips students with the necessary tools. Finally, the enduring significance of diversity and inclusion threads through all these factors, underscoring the need for leaders who comprehend diversity intricacies, and social awareness facilitates an environment where diverse perspectives drive innovation and equity. In light of these interconnected elements, this study becomes a crucial exploration of how social awareness empowers college students with the holistic leadership mindset essential to navigate multifaceted challenges in academia and beyond.

Review of Literature

Dr. Naz, Dr. Afzal, Dr. Aziz Sial(2023) studied Emotional Intelligence And Leadership Skills Among University Students In Pakistan and concluded that the active role of universities influenced the growth of students with high Emotional intelligence level, while comparing students with EI factors and as a whole find that there is gape between the content and the skill development among the university students, the emotional self-regulation, emotional self-awareness, and interpersonal skills are the key factors that helps to add leadership qualities in the students. Furthermore, the factors of developing confidence and Emotional Intelligence have direct relation with the leading qualities, these qualities inculcate the flexibility and authority among the learners that helps to polish their sense of responsibilities. **Damon A Williams (2023)** studied Strategic Diversity Leadership Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education   It underscores the importance of strategic diversity leadership in higher education, promoting both inclusivity and excellence. This review highlights the need for evidence-based approaches, competency development, and accountability systems to drive meaningful change in educational institutions. **Katherine L. Brewer, Lynne E. Devnew (2022)** researched on Developing responsible, self-aware management: An authentic leadership development program. They viewed self-reflection experiences as a way to gain self-awareness of who they are as leaders and be more present in their leadership. In this self-reflection, students reported gaining a greater sense of self (self-concept clarity), which gave them more confidence in their leadership.

María Pilar Cáceres-Reche, Miguel López-Gómez , Fernando José Sadio-Ramos, Blanca Berral-Ortiz and José Antonio Martínez-Domingo(2021) studied Student Leadership at University and concluded that women score significantly higher in leadership practice, that is to say, they perform an effective and successful representation of peers in the tasks they perform and in the representation of their peers. **K.Faridah Mydin, Muhammad Syawal Amran(2019)** studied Socially Responsible Leadership Capacity among Student Leaders at university in Malaysia and concluded that participation in leadership activities helped the students to identify their personal qualities. And effective leadership requires the students to possess teamwork skills as well as collaborative and cooperative skills. **Paige Haber-Curran, Daniel Tillapaugh(2017)**, studied Gender and Student Leadership: A CriticalExamination and concluded that leadership educators play a pivotal role in fostering social awareness and challenging gender biases in leadership. Empowering students to lead without gender-based limitations aligns with the goal of developing inclusive, compassionate leaders. Further insights can be found in the sourcebook. **Benjamin Paul Correia-Harker(2016)** researched on Understanding the Role of Leadership Motivation in College Student Leadership Development and concluded that leadership motivation is a

critical component for all students' leadership development that leadership educators must attend to if higher education intends to maximize its impact on students' leadership development. **Adesoji A. Oni Jeremiah A. Adetoro(2015)** studied theThe effectiveness of student involvement in decisionmaking and university leadership: A comparative analysis of 12 universities in South-west Nigeria. The research findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between student involvement in decision-making and leadership effectiveness. It also reveals that there are significant differences between decision-making with student involvement and decision-making without student involvement**. Dugan, J. P. (2006)** studied Involvement and leadership: A descriptive analysis of socially responsible leadership. This paper examined leadership development and the role of involvement in leadership learning using the social change model. The social change model of leadership was created specifically for college students and involves social responsibility to enhance students' level of self-awareness and ability to work with others. A questionnaire was administered to 912 university students in the US, the results highlighting the significant relationship between community service and leadership development.

Objectives of the Study

- To test the effect of academic percentage on the leadership mindset of students.
- To test the association between Gender and leadership.
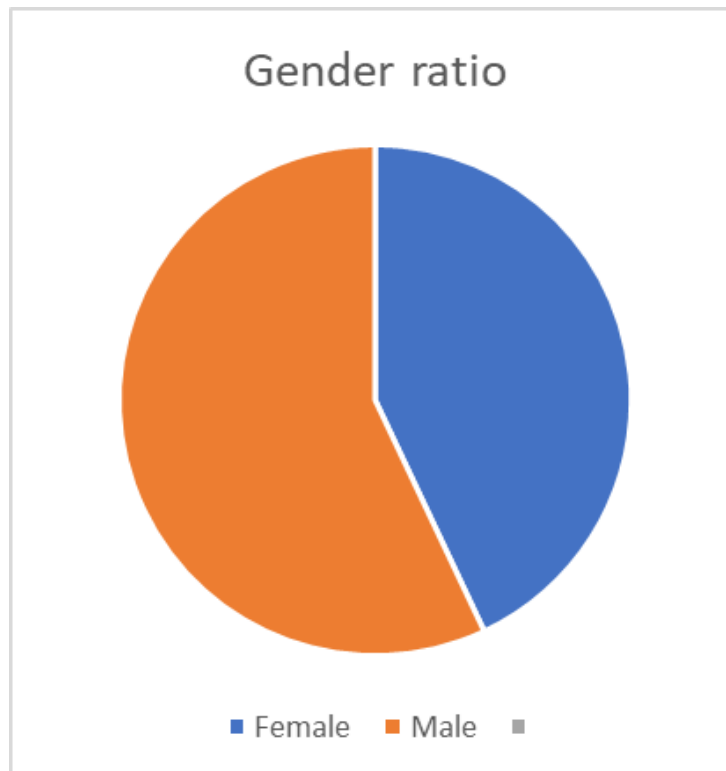- To study the impact of number of leadership positions on social awareness of student.

Methodology of Study

Primary data of 246 college students through convenient sampling was collected through a questionnaire which included five factors of social awareness that determine a student's leadership mindset. SPSS was used for analysis of the data. Reliable secondary data was used.

Analysis and Interpretation

Out of 246 responses, 57% were male and 43% were female.

75.1% belonged to the age group 17-19, 15.7% belonged to the age group 19-21, and 9.2% belonged to the age group 21 above.

Gender ratio

■ Female ■ Male ■

Age group of respondents

A bar chart showing age group of respondents with percentage on the horizontal axis (0.00% to 80.00%):
- 21 above: approximately 8%
- 19-21: approximately 15%
- 17-19: approximately 75%
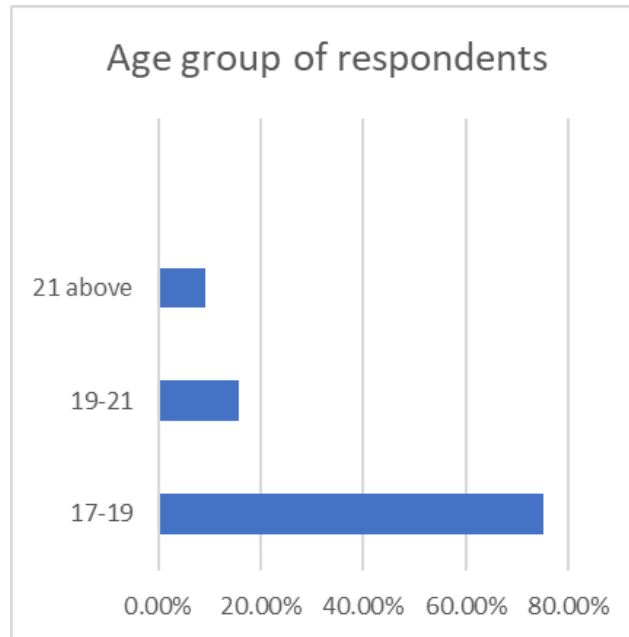
Cronbach Test

The reliability of our measurement instrument, designed to assess the leadership mindset of students, was rigorously evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. In our research, it serves as a crucial indicator of the consistency and dependability of our measurement tool.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	246	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	246	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

The cronbach alpha of the five factors are shown below:

Vision and Communication

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.709	5

Decision Making and Emotional Intelligence

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.711	5

Active Listening and Curiosity

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.734	5

Empathy and Relatability

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.718	5

Open Mindedness and Self Reflection

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.752	5

All Variables

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.752	.760	5

Result

The cronbach alpha shows a value of over 0.7. This fulfills the condition of reliability test.

One-Way ANOVA Test

Analysis and Interpretation

One-way ANOVA analysis which was aimed to explore the potential impact of academic performance, as measured by students' percentages, on their leadership scores, considering various factors related to leadership and social awareness was conducted.

Table showing One way ANOVA for percentage and leadership score

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Vision and communication	Between Groups	13.692	20	.685	2.048	.005
	Within Groups	126.675	379	.334		
	Total	140.367	399			
Decision making and emotional intelligence	Between Groups	15.686	20	.784	1.991	.007
	Within Groups	149.301	379	.394		
	Total	164.987	399			
Active listen in Gan curiosity	Between Groups	6.814	20	.341	1.071	.006
	Within Groups	120.558	379	.318		
	Total	127.372	399			
Empathy and relatability	Between Groups	22.050	20	1.102	2.472	<.001
	Within Groups	169.021	379	.446		
	Total	191.070	399			
Open mindedness and Self reflection	Between Groups	21.840	20	1.092	2.674	<.001
	Within Groups	154.750	379	.408		
	Total	176.590	399			

Result

The leadership score is a cumulative score of the above five factors. Hence, it was proved that a student's percentage has no affect on their leadership mindset. Institutions hence should encourage every student to take up leadership roles, despite their academic percentage.

Chi-Square Test

Analysis and Interpretation

CHI-SQUARE test was done for gender and the five leadership stages. The leadership score was divided into five stages from 1-5(1 being stage 1, the lowest and 5 being the highest).

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Stages	246	100.0%	0	0.0%	246	100.0%

Gender * Stages Crosstabulation

			Stages					Total
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3	stage 4	stage 5	
Gender	Female	Count	6	8	16	56	54	140
		Expected Count	7.4	8.0	14.8	54.6	55.2	140.0
	Male	Count	7	6	10	40	43	106
		Expected Count	5.6	6.0	11.2	41.4	41.8	106.0
Total		Count	13	14	26	96	97	246
		Expected Count	13.0	14.0	26.0	96.0	97.0	246.0

Bar Chart
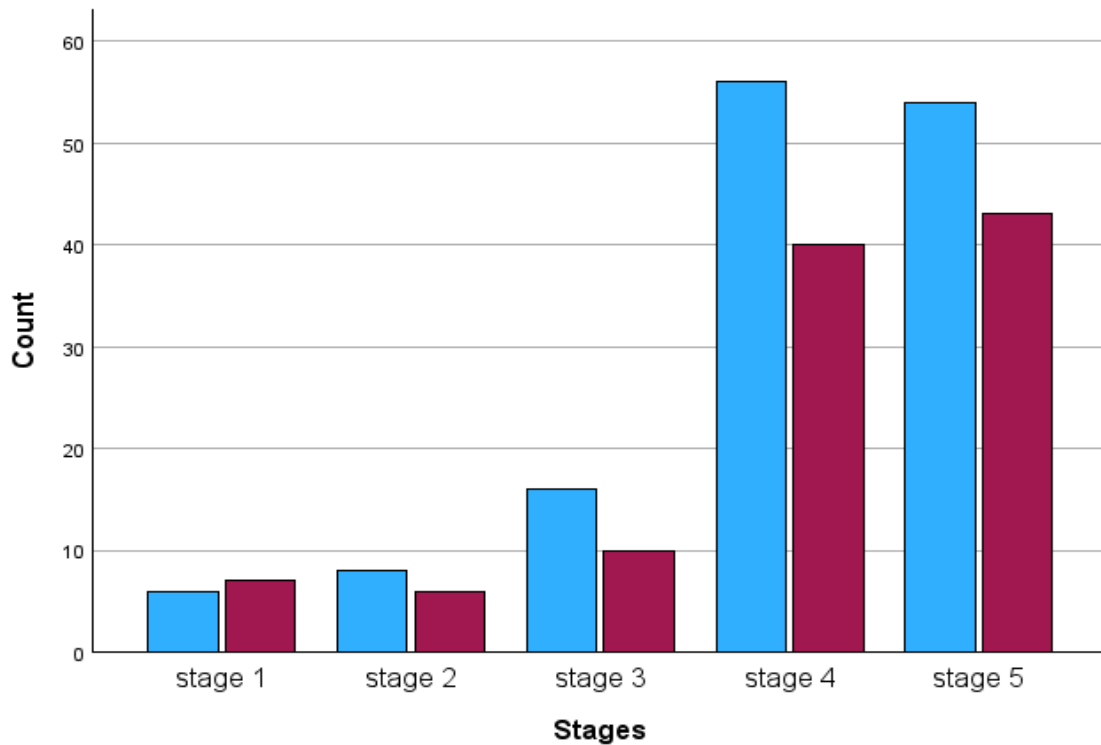
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.981[a]	4	.913
Likelihood Ratio	.976	4	.913
N of Valid Cases	246		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.60.

Result

The results have proved that females have a better leadership mindset. Male students can be more encouraged to participate in activities and take up leadership roles. This especially can be implemented in fields like fine arts.

One Way ANOVA

Analysis and Interpretation

One way ANOVA was conducted to test the relationship between the number of leadership positions taken by a student and the level of their social awareness

Table showing the social awareness of students according to their number of leadership positions

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Awareness score	Between Groups	37.883	3	12.628	2.156	.024
	Within Groups	1417.344	242	5.857		
	Total	1455.227	245			

Result

This test was done to determine if there any relationship between the number of leadership positions taken by students and their level of social awareness. The results of the test showed that the more number of leadership positions a student takes, the better is their level of social awareness.

Conclusion

Social awareness plays a pivotal role in building a leadership mindset among college students. We concluded that the academic performance of a student doesn't determine their leadership potential, which emphasizes the need for equal opportunities for all the students. Furthermore, female students seem to have a better leadership mindset. Hence, male students in particular should be encouraged to explore leadership roles. Because of taking more number of leadership positions, it was observed that the five elements of students, their social awareness is gradually increasing. Hence, students should be encouraged to take up more leadership positions. Cultivating social awareness not only shapes better leaders but also fosters responsible and skilled global citizens.

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