

DEVELOPING YOUNG LEADERS WITH CHARACTER THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative design. The study population was active students who are members of student organizations at Pamulang University, with a sample of 106 respondents selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis used multiple linear regression to determine the partial and simultaneous effects between variables. The results of the study indicate that emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication have a positive and significant influence on students' leadership styles. Partially, interpersonal communication had a dominant influence ($X^2 = 0.452$) compared to emotional intelligence ($X^1 = 0.308$). Meanwhile, the results of the simultaneous test showed that the two variables together explained 51.8% of the variation in students' leadership styles, while the remaining 48.2% was influenced by factors outside this study. These findings confirm that effective leadership is determined not only by intellectual ability, but also by the ability to manage emotions and establish effective communication. Therefore, the development of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills needs to be a primary focus in student leadership development programs at universities to produce young leaders with character, adaptability, and high integrity.

Keywords:

Emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, leadership style, students.

Introduction

In today's dynamic world, the need for young leaders with strong character is increasingly urgent. As the future generation of the nation, students have a strategic role in creating social, economic, and political change in the future. However, being an effective leader does not only depend on intellectual ability, but also on the ability to manage emotions and build healthy interpersonal relationships. Therefore, emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication are two key competencies that need to be developed to shape young leaders with character and integrity.

According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence encompasses an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions and those of others. A person with a high level of emotional intelligence tends to be able to cope with pressure, control negative impulses, and empathize with others. In the context of

leadership, this ability enables young leaders to understand the needs of team members, build trust, and create a harmonious work environment. This is in line with the views of Boyatzis, Goleman, and McKee (2013), who state that leadership based on emotional intelligence produces leaders who are inspiring, adaptive, and able to motivate others toward common goals.

In addition to emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication also plays an important role in building leadership character. DeVito (2016) explains that interpersonal communication is a two-way, meaningful exchange of messages between individuals, which forms the basis for building social relationships. Leaders who are able to communicate effectively not only convey messages clearly, but are also able to listen actively, understand other people's points of view, and provide constructive feedback. In the context of student organizations, good interpersonal communication is the foundation for teamwork, conflict resolution, and the creation of a positive organizational climate (Tubbs & Moss, 2017). Developing young leaders with character means instilling values of integrity, responsibility, empathy, and strong social skills. A leader's character is reflected in the way they think, behave, and interact with their environment. Young leaders with character are not only able to guide others, but also set an example in their actions and decisions. Thus, the development of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication is an integral part of the process of shaping student leadership character (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

In the current era of globalization and technology, the challenges for young leaders are increasingly complex. They are required to be able to deal with rapid change, social conflict, and organizational pressure with emotional maturity and good communication skills. Therefore, higher education and student organizations have a responsibility to foster these two aspects so that students are not only academically excellent but also ready to become future leaders with character, humanism, and adaptability to change. Based on this rationale, this article focuses on the importance of developing emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication as a means of building student leadership character. Through understanding and strengthening these two aspects, it is hoped that a generation of young leaders will emerge who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally and socially mature in carrying out their leadership responsibilities.

Theoretical Framework

Student leadership in campus organizations is a social process that involves the ability of individuals to influence, direct, and motivate members to achieve common goals. Student leadership styles are influenced not only by cognitive abilities, but also by emotional factors and interpersonal skills. In this context, emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication are two important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of leadership in campus organizations. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. Individuals with high emotional

intelligence are able to control themselves, empathize, and adapt to various social situations. In the context of student leadership, emotional intelligence enables a leader to understand the feelings of members, maintain a positive work atmosphere, and make decisions that take emotional and social aspects into consideration. Student leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit a more democratic, empathetic, and communicative leadership style.

In addition, interpersonal communication also plays an important role in shaping student leadership styles. According to DeVito (2016), interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between two or more people that is direct, reciprocal, and meaningful. Leaders with good interpersonal communication skills are able to build harmonious relationships with their members, convey messages effectively, and create an open organizational atmosphere. In campus organizations, effective interpersonal communication can increase trust, minimize conflict, and strengthen collaboration among members (Tubbs & Moss, 2017). Emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication have a complementary relationship in influencing leadership style. Emotional intelligence underlies a person's ability to manage emotions when communicating, while interpersonal communication is a means of expressing empathy, motivation, and direction to members. Thus, student leaders with high emotional intelligence will be better able to communicate effectively, which will ultimately be reflected in a positive leadership style that is oriented towards human relationships (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013).

The framework of this study suggests that emotional intelligence (X1) and interpersonal communication (X2) influence student leadership styles (Y) in campus organizations. This relationship can be explained as follows: the higher a student's emotional intelligence, the better their ability to understand and guide others, which has an impact on their leadership style. Similarly, the more effective a student's interpersonal communication skills are, the better their leadership style in managing teams and making decisions. In other words, the two independent variables reinforce each other in shaping the character and effectiveness of student leadership.

Based on this description, the following research hypotheses can be formulated:

H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on student leadership style in campus organizations.

H2: Interpersonal communication has a positive effect on student leadership style in campus organizations.

H3: Emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication simultaneously have a positive effect on student leadership style in campus organizations.

Thus, the theories underlying this study provide a conceptual basis that the ability to manage emotions and build effective communication relationships are key factors in shaping an inspirational and adaptive leadership style among students in a campus organizational environment.

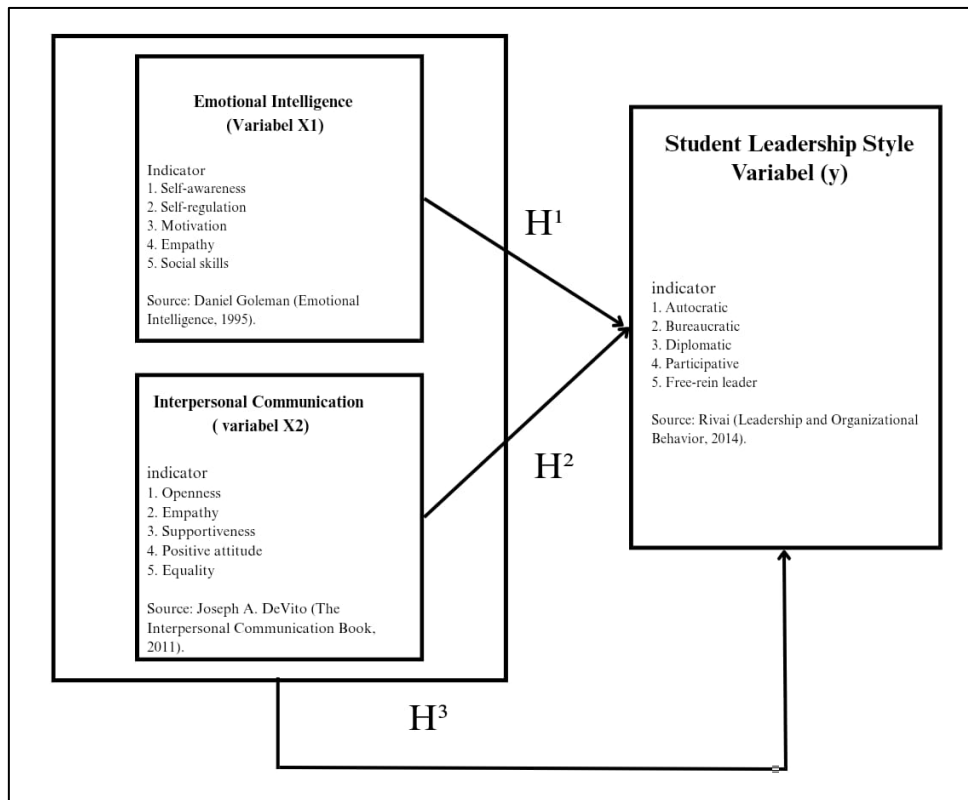


Figure 1 Framework of Thinking

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative research design, which aims to determine the influence of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication on the leadership style of students in campus organizations. The research population consists of all students who are active in student organizations at Pamulang University. The research sample was determined using purposive sampling, with the criterion being students who had served as organization administrators for at least one term. The sample size was set at 106 respondents to obtain representative data.

Data collection was conducted through a closed questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The research instrument included three main variables: emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and student leadership style, which were adapted from the indicators of Goleman (2001) and DeVito (2016). Before use, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability.

The data obtained were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis with the help of the latest version of SPSS software to test the simultaneous and partial effects between variables. The results of the analysis were used to test the hypotheses formulated earlier and explain the relationship between variables empirically.

Results

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 1. Simple regression test of the Emotional Intelligence variable (X1) against the student leadership style variable (Y)

		Coefficients ^a		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	9,954	3,188		3,122	,002
	Kecerdasan Emosional	,727	,078	,677	9,374	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on the results of the simple linear regression test in the table above, the constant value was 9.954 and the coefficient for the Emotional Intelligence variable (X1) was 0.727. The significance value (Sig.) for the Emotional Intelligence variable was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that Emotional Intelligence (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Student Leadership Style (Y). This means that the higher a person's emotional intelligence, the better their leadership style. The resulting regression equation is: $Y = 9.954 + 0.727X$, which indicates that every one-unit increase in emotional intelligence will increase a student's leadership style by 0.727 units.

Table 2. Simple regression test of the Interpersonal Communication variable (X2) against the student leadership style variable (Y)

Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	9,068	3,051		2,972	,004
	Komunikasi Interpersonal	,724	,072	,703	10,091	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on the results of simple regression, the equation $Y = 9.068 + 0.724X$ was obtained with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that Interpersonal Communication (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Student Leadership Style (Y). The better the interpersonal communication, the better the leadership style.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

		Coefficients ^a		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	6,464	3,127		2,067	,041
	Kecerdasan Emosional	,331	,125	,308	2,639	,010
	Komunikasi Interpersonal	,465	,120	,452	3,869	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on the table above, the constant value is 6.464, while the regression coefficients for Emotional Intelligence (X_1) and Interpersonal Communication (X_2) are 0.331 and 0.465, respectively. Therefore, the multiple linear regression equation can be written as follows: $Y = 6.464 + 0.331X_1 + 0.465X_2$.

These results indicate that both Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Communication have a positive influence on Students' Leadership Style. The higher the level of students' emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills, the higher their leadership style will be. The significance values of Emotional Intelligence ($0.010 < 0.05$) and Interpersonal Communication ($0.000 < 0.05$) show that both variables have a positive and significant effect on Students' Leadership Style. Furthermore, the highest Beta value is found in the Interpersonal Communication variable (0.452), indicating that it has the most dominant influence in enhancing students' leadership style compared to Emotional Intelligence.

Analysis of Correlation Coefficients and Multiple Determination Coefficients

Table 4. Results of the Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Determination Coefficient Tests

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,726 ^a	,527	,518	3,967

a. Predictors: (Constant), Komunikasi Interpersonal, Kecerdasan Emosional

b. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on the table above, the R value is 0.726, indicating a strong and positive relationship between Interpersonal Communication (X_1) and Emotional Intelligence (X_2) with Students' Leadership Style (Y). This means that the better the students' interpersonal communication and emotional intelligence, the better their leadership style will be.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.518 shows that the two independent variables are able to explain 51.8% of the variation in students' leadership style, while the remaining 48.2% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. Thus, interpersonal communication and emotional intelligence contribute significantly to shaping students' leadership style.

Partial Hypothesis Test (T-Test)

Table 5. Partial Hypothesis Test Results (T-Test)

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6,464	3,127		2,067	,041
Kecerdasan Emosional	,331	,125	,308	2,639	,010
Komunikasi Interpersonal	,465	,120	,452	3,869	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on Table 3, which presents the results of the partial test (t-test), the Emotional Intelligence variable (X_1) has a calculated t-value of 2.639 with a significance value of $0.010 < 0.05$. This means that the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value ($2.639 > 1.985$), so H_{a1} is accepted and H_{01} is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that Emotional Intelligence (X_1) has a positive and significant effect on Students' Leadership Style (Y).

From the same table, the Interpersonal Communication variable (X_2) has a calculated t-value of 3.869 with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This indicates that the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value ($3.869 > 1.985$), so H_{a2} is accepted and H_{02} is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that Interpersonal Communication (X_2) also has a positive and significant effect on Students' Leadership Style (Y).

In conclusion, the results of the partial test indicate that both Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Communication have a positive and significant influence on Students' Leadership Style, meaning that the better these two aspects are, the better the leadership style demonstrated by the students will be.

Simultaneous Hypothesis Test (F-Test)

Table 6. Simultaneous Test Results (F-Test)

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1804,366	2	902,183	57,319	,000 ^b
	Residual	1621,191	103	15,740		
	Total	3425,557	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Gaya Kepemimpinan Mahasiswa

b. Predictors: (Constant), Komunikasi Interpersonal, Kecerdasan Emosional

Source: Processed SPSS Version 25 output, 2025

Based on Table 4, the SPSS output shows that the calculated F-value is 57.319, which is greater than the critical F-value ($57.319 > 3.09$) with a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected.

This means that the variables Interpersonal Communication (X_2) and Emotional Intelligence (X_1) simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on Students' Leadership Style (Y). In other words, good interpersonal communication skills and emotional intelligence together can enhance students' leadership style.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication significantly influence student leadership styles within campus organizations. Both variables play a positive role in shaping leadership effectiveness, confirming that leadership ability depends not only on intellectual intelligence but also on a person's ability to manage emotions and establish healthy social relationships. This finding aligns with Goleman's (2001) view that emotional intelligence helps individuals recognize, understand, and control their own and others' emotions, thereby enabling them to create harmonious working relationships.

Based on the results of the regression analysis, it was found that interpersonal communication had a greater influence ($X_2 = 0.452$) than emotional intelligence ($X_1 = 0.308$). This indicates that the ability to communicate effectively is a crucial aspect in creating a good leadership style. A leader who can convey messages clearly, listen actively, and provide constructive feedback will more easily foster trust and reduce the potential for conflict within the team. These results support DeVito's (2016) view that interpersonal communication is the primary foundation for establishing effective social relationships and is key to successful collaboration within an organization.

Nevertheless, emotional intelligence remains a crucial factor in shaping leadership character. Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to be self-controlled, empathetic, and adaptable to various social situations. In the context of student

organizations, these abilities help leaders maintain harmony, understand members' situations, and make decisions that consider both emotional and social aspects. This aligns with the findings of Boyatzis, Goleman, and McKee (2013), who emphasized that leaders grounded in emotional intelligence tend to be more inspiring, adaptive, and humanitarian-oriented.

The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) of 0.518 indicates that emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication together explain 51.8% of the variation in student leadership styles, while the remaining 48.2% is influenced by other factors such as personality, organizational culture, and individual experience. These findings provide practical implications: leadership development in higher education should focus not only on improving academic and technical skills but also on training in emotional and social communication.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for educational institutions to design student leadership development programs oriented toward character building. Activities such as training in effective communication, emotional management, and leadership role simulations can help students hone empathy, responsibility, and social sensitivity. Through this process, students are expected to become leaders who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and socially mature.

However, this study has limitations due to its use of a quantitative approach and purposive sampling method, making the results less generalizable. Future research is recommended to employ a qualitative approach to more deeply explore how the interaction between emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication occurs in real-life leadership practices.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that effective leadership arises from a balance between cognitive, emotional, and social abilities. Strengthening emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication is a strategic step in developing a generation of young leaders with character, integrity, and adaptability to changing times.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication have a positive and significant influence on student leadership styles within campus organizations. These two variables play a crucial role in shaping leadership effectiveness, with the ability to manage emotions and communication skills being key factors in creating leaders with character, integrity, and the ability to adapt to organizational dynamics.

The analysis shows that interpersonal communication has a dominant influence on leadership style compared to emotional intelligence. This illustrates that the ability to communicate effectively, both in conveying ideas, listening to members' opinions, and

providing feedback, is key to a leader's success in building cooperation and trust within an organization. Nevertheless, emotional intelligence remains a crucial element because it helps leaders maintain self-control, understand members' feelings, and make decisions that consider social and emotional aspects.

Simultaneously, these two variables contributed 51.8% to the variation in student leadership styles. This finding confirms that effective leadership stems from a balance between intellectual, emotional, and social abilities. Therefore, the development of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication should be a crucial part of student leadership development and training programs in higher education.

Furthermore, this research offers practical implications for educational institutions to prioritize character building through activities such as training in effective communication, emotional management, and empathy- and collaboration-based learning. By strengthening these two aspects, students can develop into aspiring young leaders who not only excel academically but also possess emotional maturity and social skills to face future leadership challenges.

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