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(IJEPC)**www.ijepec.com**IMPLEMENTING A CAMPUS FOOD BANK: EXPERIENCES OF
UiTM CAWANGAN PULAU PINANG DURING CRISIS AND ITS
IMPACT ON STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**Mohd Rozaiman Aziz^{1*}, Siti Nur Fathini Muhsain², Siti Nur Fadzilah Muhsain³¹ Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Kampus Permatang Pauh, Penang, MALAYSIA.

Email: man@uitm.edu.my

² Department of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Kampus Permatang Pauh, Penang, MALAYSIA.

Email: fathini@uitm.edu.my

³ Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Kampus Bertam, Penang, MALAYSIA.

Email: sitinurfadzilah077@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1058026**Abstract:**

Food insecurity is a potential problem among students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia, driven by financial constraints and rising living costs, making them particularly vulnerable to this issue. In attempts to manage food insecurity, HEIs initiated the establishment of food banks especially during periods of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This article aims to illustrate the operationalisation of campus-based food bank at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP) that engaged the student leaders in its operation during the pandemic. Thematic analysis of student representative testimonies revealed key leadership skills acquired through the management of the food bank such as crisis management, decision making and problem solving, communication and negotiation with the patrons, team work and volunteer coordination, and compassion for the students and their welfare. The findings confirm that the management of food bank can be a practical training ground where students develop essential skills outside the classroom. This paper discusses the role of student-led welfare initiatives in building social responsibility and leadership, focusing on the operational challenges and the leadership development of students who manage the food bank. These findings necessitate the need for increased institutional commitment to embed food security issues into comprehensive student welfare policies.

**Keywords:**

Food Bank, Higher Education Institution, Leadership, Student, Crisis

Introduction

Food insecurity among students in Malaysia, particularly those in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), has become an increasingly recognised issue. Many students, especially from low-income or B40 households, face substantial financial constraints that hinder their ability to access consistent, nutritious meals. The rising cost of living, limited financial aid, and the need to self-fund education and accommodation often leave students with insufficient funds to meet basic food requirements. A significant proportion of students are forced to skip meals, rely on low-cost, low-nutrient foods, or reduce their daily food intake in order to manage tight budgets.

According to Jamil, Sulaiman, Adznam & Zainal Badari (2020), more than half of university students in Peninsular Malaysia have experienced food insecurity due to financial constraints, highlighting the urgent need for effective food bank systems on campuses. Addressing food insecurity is crucial, as it directly impacts students' academic performance (Ahmad Nadzri, Mohd Shukri & Abu Bakar., 2020). Ensuring adequate nutrition through food bank initiatives not only supports students' well-being but also contributes to better educational outcomes.

A key aspect of managing campus food banks is the vital role of student leaders in addressing food insecurity among their peers. Their involvement provides an opportunity to develop essential leadership skills through active participation and collaboration. Student leadership plays a crucial role in raising awareness and ensuring the effective implementation of food bank initiatives within universities (Jamin et al., 2021). Research has shown that service programs involving students in campus food pantries offer practical experience in community service, allowing them to understand the complexities of food insecurity while fostering empathy and leadership skills (Redding, McDaniel & Allen., 2022).

Students are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted their overall health and academic performance. During such periods, food pantries and food banks became essential resources (Tran et al., 2025). This underscores the importance of ongoing support and resources for campus-based food banks to ensure long-term food security for students.

While these programs effectively nurture leadership qualities, it is important to recognise that not all students may feel equally empowered or supported in such initiatives. This may limit the extent to which leadership skills are developed. However, there is a gap in research exploring the different leadership qualities that can be cultivated through food bank initiatives. Most studies in Malaysia have primarily focused on food banks' role in alleviating hunger, providing daily meals, and reducing food waste. Therefore, this article examines the implementation of a food bank initiative at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP) during the COVID-19 crisis, with a particular focus on the leadership qualities developed among student leaders. During the Movement Control Order (MCO), many students—both on and off campus—relied heavily on food bank initiatives led by their peers. This study aims to explore the different leadership qualities that emerged during this critical period.

Literature Review

Food As Basic Human Need

Food is one of the basic necessities required by humans. Adequate and balanced food intake provides essential nutrients to the body, promotes healthy growth and functioning, and helps prevent health issues or diseases. A lack of proper resources and inadequate food consumption is a significant challenge in ensuring food security among the population. Food security can be defined as a condition where individuals have the ability and access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs, allowing them to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2020).

In general, individuals affected by the lack or limited access to food security are often those from underprivileged or impoverished communities, who may also be impacted by climate change in their respective countries (Junaidi, Amir & Amril, 2020). This is evidenced by a study conducted by the World Bank, which found that a significant portion of the income of low-income groups is allocated to food expenses. This situation is further exacerbated by rising inflation rates, which contribute to reduced access to food (Laborde, Lakatos & Martin, 2019).

Recognising the issues faced, the Malaysia Food Bank Program (PFBM) was introduced as one of the people-centric initiatives by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living to assist underprivileged groups in accessing food, thereby indirectly alleviating their cost of living. This program aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 2, which aims for Zero Hunger, and SDG 3, which focuses on ensuring Good Health and Well-Being by 2030 (Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living, 2019).

The Role of University-Based Food Bank

The Malaysia Food Bank Program has also been expanded to higher education institutions through the Student Food Bank Program. Launched on February 15, 2019, at UiTM CPP, this initiative aims to address the high cost of living faced by students and alleviate their burdens, enabling them to focus more on their studies. The program specifically targets students from the B40 group to receive assistance. Students in need are identified by the Student Affairs Department (SAD) at each university, which is responsible for providing student data to the university and the ministry for further action (Berita Harian Online, 2019).

Food banks among university students are crucial as students also face financial challenges and food insecurity. Several factors necessitate the establishment of food banks within higher education institutions, including limited financial resources, high tuition costs, other financial obligations, and the need to ensure the well-being and health of students, particularly those from the underprivileged group (B40). University students often encounter significant financial burdens due to limited income, tuition fees, rising living costs, and other essential expenses such as transportation, accommodation, and learning materials. These financial pressures can lead to food insecurity, where students are unable to afford or access sufficient, and nutritious food. The establishment of food banks in higher education institutions is therefore a necessary intervention—not only to combat hunger, but also to maintain students' overall well-being, academic performance, and mental health. This contributes to a more equitable and supportive university environment.

University food banks provide much-needed support to students facing food insecurity. They help ensure that these students can stay focused on their education without undue concern over

financial constraints and daily meals. The significance of these food banks has become particularly relevant and justified during the COVID-19 crisis, which profoundly impacted the global economy (Byrne & Just, 2021). Consequently, the demand for food banks surged as food shortages also affected university students quarantined in dormitories. Various stakeholders, including the government, corporations, and individuals, have collaborated to contribute to food banks through monetary donations or food supplies. This collective effort ensures that students confined to campus residences during the COVID-19 wave have adequate access to food. Table 1 summarises previous findings on food insecurity in Malaysian university students.

Leadership Through Food Bank Service

Additionally, food bank programs managed by student leaders can have a positive impact on the development of good leadership qualities through volunteerism. Implementing such initiatives through social responsibility programs has been shown to cultivate a generation of youth with strong character and high empathy, capable of becoming effective leaders in the future (Nurja, Mat & Husin., 2023; Redding et al., 2022). As noted by Kadir, Rahim, Husain, Rais & Yulia, 2024, volunteering programs such as foodbanks help shape critical social skills. Thus, managing foodbanks exposes students to real-world leadership experiences where they are required to plan, organise, and lead teams. They engaged in logistics management, beneficiary selection, and monitoring inventory, which provides them with hands-on leadership experience. Effective communication is essential for the success of foodbank programs. Students involved in foodbank management often interact with diverse stakeholders, including university administration, non-government organisations, local businesses, and student communities.

Foodbank operations rely on collective effort. Delegating tasks, coordinating volunteer schedules, and resolving interpersonal conflicts enhances collaborative leadership. Indeed, participation in community service projects, like foodbank management, strengthens students' ability to work in teams and lead diverse groups (Lemon & Strong, 2016). In this context, this paper synthesizes lessons learned from the implementation of the food bank at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP), during the COVID-19 pandemic in detail, to recommend the use of food pantries as a means to promote student success and retention in universities.

Table 1: Summary of Food Insecurity Among Malaysian University Students from Previous Studies

Study	Sample Size & Population	Prevalence of Food Insecurity	Key Findings
M.R & N.A, 2024	286 undergraduate students in Universiti Sains Malaysia, Health Campus	44.7%	Socioeconomic factors and weight status were associated with food insecurity.
Ali & Jaafar, 2023	300 undergraduate students from Malaysia's selected public universities	31% high & 38% marginal food insecurity	Significant association between food insecurity and current academic performance, during COVID-19.
Elias & Sutantri, 2023	383 undergraduate students in International Islamic University Malaysia Kuantan	21.41%	Significant associations between parents' income, financial status, academic performance and working part-time with food insecurity.
Ahmad, Sulaiman & Sabri, 2021	663 undergraduate students in seven faculties in Universiti Putra Malaysia	62.8%	Students whose father were employed and from low income families had strong associations with food insecurity. They were likely to perform poorly academically and feel more stress.
Jamil et al., 2020	427 undergraduate students in public universities in Peninsular Malaysia	60.9%	Financial constraints were a major factor to food insecurity.
Bakar, Ismail, Sidek & Rahman., 2019	307 at six faculties of the International Islamic University Malaysia	54.4%	Food insecurity was significantly associated with time constraints, spending on books, miscellaneous items, parents' income and scholarship type.
Ramlee, Ali, Zalbahar, Wahab, & Jaafar, 2019	96 undergraduate students from two universities in Terengganu	22%	High cost of living was among the main factors contributing to food insecurity.

Methodology

The methodology of this article is divided into two main sections to address both the implementation process of the campus food bank and the thematic analysis of leadership skills gained by student leaders involved in its management.

Description of Food Bank Implementation at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang

Location

The food pantry is located at the administration centre of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP), situated at the heart of the campus. The space used for the pantry is a modified section of the Student Representative Council (SRC) room. The food pantry is equipped with multifunctional shelves and basic equipment to organize and store food supplies effectively.

Financial Support and In-kind Goods

Table 2 shows the detailed information on food bank contributions from various parties during the Movement Control Order (MCO) 1.0 and 2.0. During this period, students were not allowed to leave the campus or their rented homes. Their meals and beverages were provided by the university three times a day. On the basis of humanitarian concerns, various parties contributed to the students residing on campus and in rental homes.

Overall, the total contributions received by the students were estimated to be RM 69,180.00 in various forms. These contributions were not provided all at once but in stages. For example, Sarah Café provided cooked meals to students regularly from March 2020 to April 2020. Among the main contributions were dry food, snacks, and cooked meals. In addition, essential items such as soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and medications were also donated. Being considerate towards female students, sanitary pads were also distributed during this period. During the Hari Raya celebration, some students were still stranded on campus and in their rented homes. Therefore, the Student Affairs Department (SAD) collaborated with donors to provide Hari Raya dishes for them.

The contributions made by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living highlight the vital role of the government in supporting those in need. This demonstrates the government's commitment to provide assistance to students who were affected by the situation. Lecturers and staff from UiTM CPP, as well as alumni of university also contributed dry food and cooked meals as a sign of the academic community's commitment to supporting students. Meanwhile, donations from the Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (YaPEIM) and Humanitarian Care Malaysia Berhad (MyCARE) underscore the important role of foundations and NGOs in providing aid to the community in need. This reflects the commitment of the private sector and non-governmental organisations in addressing global issues affecting the world at that time.

In addition to this, contributions from individual donors also reflect the support provided by ordinary citizens to those in need. This illustrates that every individual, even within their personal capacity, can make a significant impact in assisting communities in need. Internal associations such as the Persatuan Sukan & Kebajikan Kakitangan (PSKK), Kesatuan Kakitangan Umum Universiti Teknologi MARA (KKUUiTM) and Persatuan Wanita UiTM

(PEWANI) at UiTM CPP exemplify the support extended by internal organisations to those in need, particularly among university students.

Table 2: Summary of Contributions to the Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP) Food Bank, During COVID-19 Movement Control Order (MCO).

No.	Donor	Type of Contribution	Estimation Value (RM)
1	Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living	Dry food, beverage, basic necessities	15,322.00
2	Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (YaPEIM)	Pack food, dry food, Hari Raya food	12,000.00
3	Individual/ Non-government organisation (NGO)	Dry food, snack	9,198.00
4	Staffs of UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang	Dry food and cooked meals, beverage, basic necessities, medical supply and women's essentials	6,588.00
5	Sarah Café	Varieties of cooked meals	5,400.00
6	Majlis Pengurusan Komuniti Kampung (MPPK)	Dry food	4,216.00
7	Penang's Government	Dry food	3,000.00
8	Malaysia Relief Agency (MRA)	Basic necessities	2,140.00
9	Deputy of Chief Minister 1	Dry food	1,987.00
10	Humanitarian Care Malaysia Berhad (MyCARE)	Basic necessities	1,847.00
11	Alumni UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang	Dry food	1,630.00
12	Persatuan Wanita UiTM (PEWANI) UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang	Dry food	1,569.00
13	Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM)	Bun bread	1,140.00
14	Kesatuan Kakitangan Umum Universiti Teknologi MARA (KKUU iTM) UiTM CPP	Dry food	1,078.00
15	Legasi Z Sufi	Bun bread	970.00
16	Persatuan Sukan & Kebajikan Kakitangan (PSKK) UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang	Basic necessities	563.00

17	CEA Technologies	Hari Raya food	550.00
Total			69,198.00

Distribution Method

Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart of the food bank at UiTM CPP during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are three categories of contributors: primary contributors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and internal associations of UiTM CPP, as well as individual donors. Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living serves as the primary contributor to the food bank, consistently providing donations to UiTM CPP on a regular basis, specifically once a month. Meanwhile, contributions from NGOs include organisations such as the Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (YaPEIM), Humanitarian Care Malaysia Berhad (MyCARE), and the Malaysian Relief Agency (MRA). Internal associations of UiTM CPP contributing to the food bank comprise the Kesatuan Kakitangan Umum Universiti Teknologi MARA (KKUiTM) and Persatuan Wanita Universiti Teknologi MARA (PEWANI).. Additionally, individual donors, including UiTM CPP lecturers and members of the public, also contributed to the food bank.

All food bank contributions were entrusted to the Student Affairs Department (SAD) for distribution to all students affected by COVID-19, both those residing on campus and those in rented accommodations. Student Affairs Department (SAD) collaborated with the Student Representative Council (SRC) to ensure that all relevant students received the food bank assistance. The SRC, in turn, worked in synergy with the College Representative Committee (CRC) and Non-Resident Representative Committee (NRRC). The roles of these two committees differ based on the students' accommodation arrangements. Students residing in campus dormitories fall under the responsibility of College Representative Committee (CRC), while students renting off-campus accommodations fall under the purview of Non-Resident Representative Committee (NRRC). Due to these different living arrangements, the types of aid provided also differ. College Representative Committee (CRC) ensures that students in dormitories receive dry food items, as cooking is not permitted in the residential colleges. Meanwhile, underprivileged students (B40) renting off-campus accommodations are supplied with raw food items such as rice, cooking oil, eggs, and instant food.

Food Bank Service

The dissemination of information regarding this program was carried out through various social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram, to ensure effective communication with students. The services provided by the food bank included the distribution of food supplies, both perishable and non-perishable, throughout the implementation period. During this period, a total of 315 students benefited from the food bank initiative. However, due to movement restrictions imposed during the Movement Control Order (MCO), access to the food bank was limited to representatives from each dormitory room, who were responsible for collecting food supplies from the storage facility. Feedback from students was gathered periodically through telephone and video interviews, as well as WhatsApp messages, to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and address the needs of the participants.

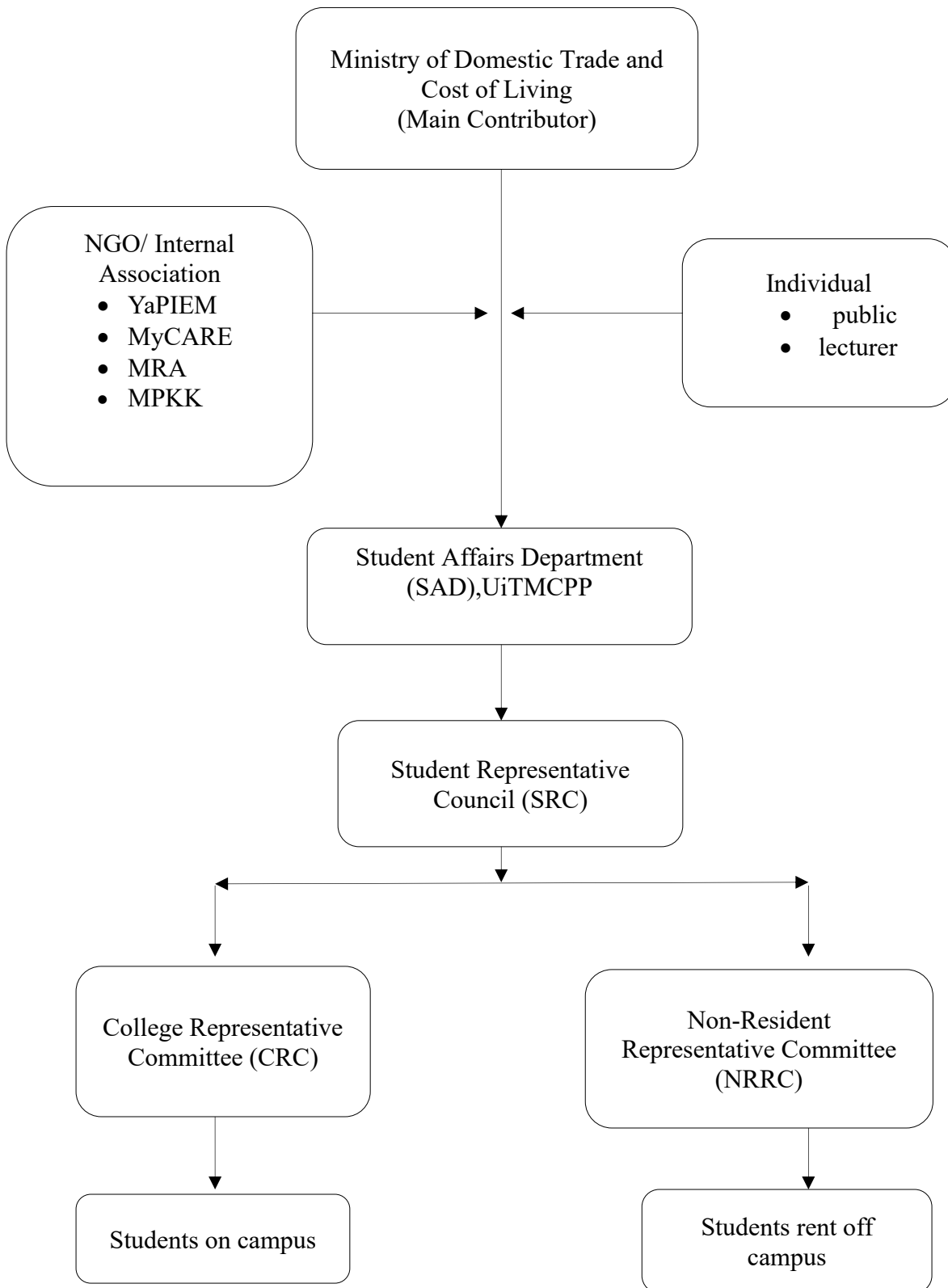


Figure 1: Food Bank Distribution Process at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP), During COVID-19 Movement Control Order (MCO).

Analysis of Leadership and Management Skills Acquired by Students

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyse the leadership and management experiences of student representatives involved in managing the food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim was to examine how participation in such initiatives contributed to the development of skills. Thematic analysis approach was used to examine testimonies from student leaders to identify overall impact on student leadership skills developed through their participation. The participants consisted of 14 members of Student Representative Council (SRC), who were directly involved in the coordination of food bank throughout the pandemic. These students handled tasks that include logistics, communication with stakeholders and food planning as well as distribution.

Data were collected using sources such as social media communication from official SRC communication channels to capture notes, real-time discussions, planning and problem solving interactions. Informal conversations and observational data were noted during food distribution events to document spontaneous reflections and collaborative efforts among the students. Transcripts and messages were systematically categorised into recurring leadership themes. Thematic analysis ensured that leadership traits emerged from the data organically and accurately reflected the lived experiences of the student leaders during the pandemic. The method for recognising the theme includes phases such as familiarisation with the data, generating codes based on repeated keywords, behaviours or expressions related to the skills that were grouped into preliminary themes based on similarity. The grouped themes were reviewed and defined to reflect specific competencies.

Results and Discussion

Food Bank in Campus

Campus food banks or pantries are specifically designed to assist students from low-income background. Persistent food insecurity among students can lead to various implications, such as poor academic performance and disruptions to physical and mental health (Gupton, Trost & Collins, 2018). As a means to address concerns regarding food insecurity, academic leaders have established on-campus food pantries to meet the basic needs of students.

According to Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living in 2020, a total of 12,251 students benefitted from the food bank program implemented in public universities across the country. Failure to secure adequate food supplies among university students can disrupt various aspects of their health (Ramlee et al., 2019). In this regard, universities must collaborate with various parties to establish food banks that support both the well-being and academic success of students. Overall, UiTM CPP was the third higher education institution in Malaysia and the first UiTM branch campus to launch the food bank program by Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living in 2019. This campus food bank became particularly active during the Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Feedback from Students

The methodology used by the researcher involved interviews and surveys with recipients of the food bank distribution, who were students from the UiTM CPP. The rationale for selecting this campus branch is that it is the first campus of UiTM and the third public higher education institution (IPTA) in Malaysia to initiate the food bank distribution program. All the students expressed gratitude and appreciation for the assistance provided, especially for distributions

coinciding with festive periods such as Hari Raya. This indicates that the food bank initiative successfully achieved its objectives and was managed effectively.

Leadership Development Through Food Bank Management

Thematic analysis of student leadership experiences revealed that handling the food bank enhanced crisis management, problem-solving, and communication skills (Figure 2). One of the critical theme identified was crisis management. Students often had to respond quickly to unexpected food shortages and changing needs. One student shared, *"We had to act fast to ensure all students received meals,"* showing their ability to stay calm and make quick decisions under pressure. Students also reported improvements in decision-making and problem-solving, especially in planning logistics and sharing limited food supplies fairly. As one SRC member said, *"We had to decide how to distribute supplies fairly and sufficiently while ensuring students kept informed."* This shows how student leaders had to balance speed and fairness when making important decisions.

In terms of communication, many students became more confident in talking and working with different groups. They worked closely with university staff, donors, and fellow students. One student explained, *"I learned to communicate effectively with students, patrons, and university management,"* which shows their improved ability to work with others. Team leadership was another key skill students developed. They organised volunteers, assigned tasks, and ensured all activities followed COVID-19 safety rules. One student said, *"It is challenging to coordinate all the processes while making sure we follow the COVID-19 protocols,"* showing how they learned to lead under difficult conditions.

Lastly, students developed more empathy and social awareness after seeing how their peers struggled during the lockdown. One student expressed, *"It is sad to see friends struggling every day, mentally drained and being far from families,"* which shows that they became more understanding of others' emotional and social needs.

Broader Implications on Student Leadership and Social Responsibility

At universities, the Student Representative Council (SRC) is an organisation established to develop and strengthen students' leadership skills. The SRC serves as an intermediary body between students and university management. It is committed to addressing students' concerns and needs with the objective of enhancing student satisfaction in terms of facilities and services at higher education institutions. At the same time, the SRC also maintains relationships with external institutions, including ministries, government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the community. This indicates that the SRC plays a significant role both within and beyond the campus. In addition to fostering individual leadership skills at the university level, the SRC is actively involved in community-level issues. This involvement has been associated with increased public engagement and volunteer activities among university students.

In this context, this article highlights students' participation in Student Representative Council (SRC) activities related to social responsibility. Socially responsible leadership is a term commonly used in business and collaboration to assess contributions toward improving community and environmental well-being (Komives, 2011). Recently, this concept has been widely adopted and interpreted in organizational contexts, such as universities, where social responsibility among students is promoted through their training programs as well as volunteer

initiatives (Mydin & Amran, 2019). Research indicates that student participation in community programs enhances their leadership skills while fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce & Van Egeren, 2007). Across various forms of learning, leadership occupies a crucial position as one of the key outcomes of student development that educational methods aim to achieve (Hishamuddin & Shukor, 2021). Moreover, leadership can serve as a critical determinant for graduates securing positions in the labor market and as a significant factor in career development.

In the food bank program at UiTM CPP, one of the key factors for effective implementation and maintenance was the utilisation of student services as the primary driving force. Student leaders, together with other students, collaborated to ensure the success of the food bank. This demonstrated that student leaders took an active role in meeting the needs of students and supporting the campus community. They did not simply lead from behind but are directly involved in efforts to assist those in need. Furthermore, collaboration between student leaders and university management was essential in ensuring that aid is distributed effectively. As a result, the assistance was provided accurately and efficiently. During the COVID-19 pandemic, student leaders faced numerous challenges and obstacles while attempting to deliver aid to students. These challenges included logistical issues, health and mental well-being concerns, campus regulations, and the management of limited resources. However, their efforts to overcome these barriers reflect a strong commitment to the welfare of students.

Managing a food bank in universities provides students with a unique opportunity to develop essential leadership and management skills. As reflected in Figure 2, through food bank activities, students gain experience in logistics, food recovery, and meal preparation (Schonberger, Boyer & Chase., 2018) –skills that are vital for efficient operational management. These experiences not only benefit them in future professional and personal lives, but also foster a sense of community responsibility. Furthermore, this will also enhance students' analytical and strategic thinking skills as well as their ability to collaborate and communicate effectively (Heiselt & Briley, 2010). It also requires students to make decisions under pressure, resource allocation and delivery (Cansoy, 2017).

As noted by Sivan, Tam & Chow (2023), the efforts of student leaders to distribute aid to students also contribute to fostering a strong spirit of cooperation within the campus community. This creates an environment where all members of the campus community support one another in facing the challenges they encounter. Such actions generate a positive social impact within the campus community. It demonstrates that student leaders not only pay attention to the issues faced by students but also take concrete and effective actions to address these problems.

Student leaders must manage aid programs with careful attention, such as collecting donations, organizing the distribution of assistance, and ensuring that the process runs smoothly. Good organisation will ensure that aid reaches students promptly and without unnecessary difficulties. After the aid is distributed, student leaders should continue to monitor and assess its impact. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of the program, identifying any shortcomings or imperfections, and making necessary adjustments or improvements. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the assistance provided remains relevant and meaningful.

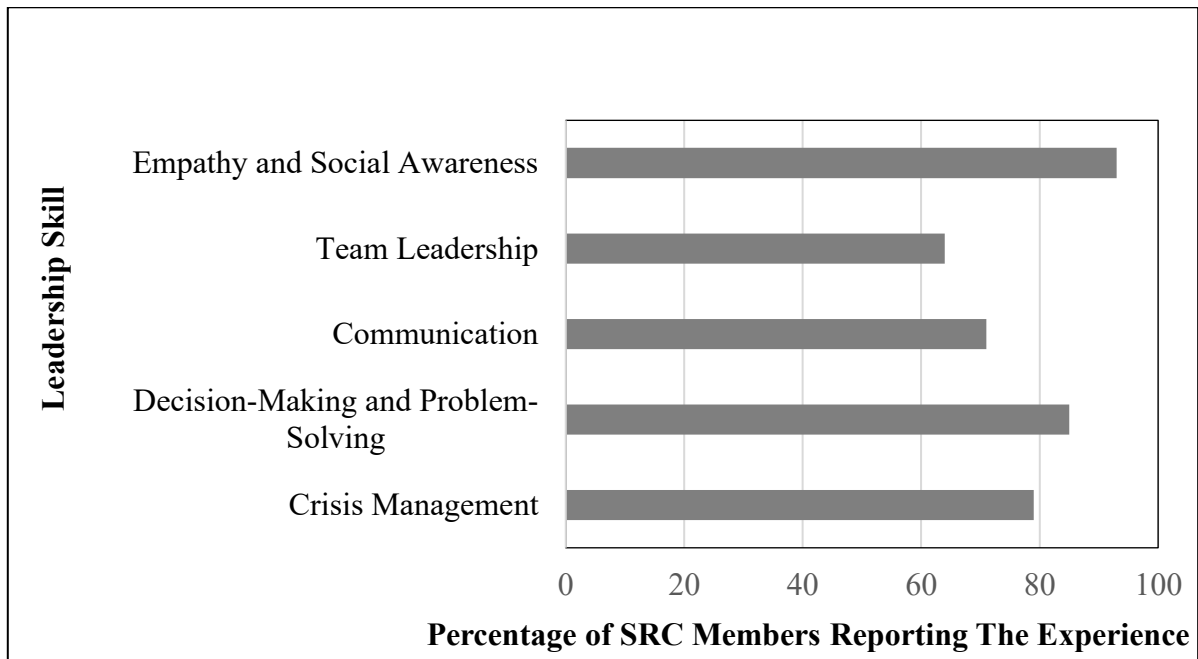


Figure 2: Leadership and Management Experiences Reported by Student Representative Council (SRC) While Managing Food Bank at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang, during the COVID-19 Movement Control Order (MCO), N=14.

The mechanisms for addressing food insecurity vary across campuses due to differences in logistics, available assistance, and student awareness. Interventions at the campus level (with the support of student leadership) can help alleviate the need for individual-level handling. Social responsibility programs represent the commitment of an organization or institution to act economically while considering the social environment. Social responsibility programs, such as food banks, are initiatives that help shape identity among students. Through such programs, students are taught to understand the hardships faced by others and to develop empathy towards them. These skills are essential in shaping quality leaders. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic ended and quarantine measures in college were lifted, visibility and promotion of food bank activities at HEIs were less widely disseminated. This has raised questions about the status of food banks, whether such programs still exist at HEIs or if they were merely an improvised initiative that ended after the pandemic phase? Given that food insecurity continues to affect financially vulnerable students, it is important that food bank programs remain active and well-supported.

Managing a university food bank not only addresses students' basic needs but also equips those involved with critical leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. These competencies are essential for both their personal growth and future career development.

Conclusion

The study has successfully achieved its objectives by documenting the implementation and management of campus food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic and analysing the leadership (and management) skills acquired by student leaders involved in its management.

The results showed that food bank programs in HEIs particularly when led by students, not only can serve as a critical intervention to stop food insecurity, but also serve as a practical platform for leadership development and management. Indeed, by gaining these critical skills, students become more prepared for the workforce in various industries, including NGOs and corporate social responsibility (CSR) roles. Additionally, the implementation of food bank also supports national goals such as SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), while encouraging Malaysia's vision in producing holistic, employable graduates.

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