
Balancing Leadership and Learning: A Study on Students Representative Council/Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) Members' Academic Performance at Politeknik Mersing Johor

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Abstract. This study investigates the relationship between student leadership roles and academic performance, focusing specifically on members of the Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) at Politeknik Mersing Johor. Student leadership is often associated with the development of soft skills such as communication, responsibility, and time management. However, balancing leadership commitments with academic responsibilities can be a challenging task for many student leaders. This research aims to explore how JPP members manage their dual roles and whether their involvement in leadership activities positively or negatively affects their academic performance. An academic record with qualitative insights gathered. The findings reveal that most JPP members demonstrate strong academic performance despite their leadership responsibilities. Key contributing factors include effective time management, increased motivation, and the development of self-discipline as a result of their leadership experiences. However, challenges such as fatigue, time constraints, and stress were also reported, particularly during peak activity periods. The study concludes that student leadership, when supported by proper guidance and institutional mechanisms, can complement academic success rather than hinder it. It recommends that higher education institutions offer support systems, such as time management workshops and academic flexibility, to help student leaders thrive in both areas. The outcomes of this study are valuable for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to nurture well-rounded, high-performing student leaders.

Keywords: Student Leadership, Academic Performance, JPP, Time Management, Higher Education, Politeknik Mersing Johor.

1. INTRODUCTION

In any institution, student representative council plays an important role in shaping the development of well-rounded individuals who are capable of managing responsibilities while striving for academic excellence. At Politeknik Mersing Johor, members of the Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) serve as key representatives of the student body, acting as a bridge between students and the management. Their roles involve organizing programs, addressing student concerns, and contributing to institutional decision-making processes. While these leadership opportunities provide JPP members with valuable skills such as communication, problem solving, cooperation, teamwork, they also facing with challenges in balancing leadership responsibilities with academic performance.

Being a student leader comes with a lot of time, effort, and dedication requirements. Meetings, event preparation, and administrative duties are commonplace for JPP members, which could cut into their study and other academically related time. Consequently, there is increasing worry that if appropriate measures for striking a balance between leadership and learning are not in place, these new duties may have a negative impact on their academic achievements. On the other hand, leadership roles have also been associated with the development of discipline, personal growth, and soft skills—all of which, when handled well, may favorably impact academic achievement.

This study focuses on examining the relationship between leadership roles and academic performance among JPP members of Politeknik Mersing Johor. Specifically, it aims to explore how JPP members manage their dual roles, the challenges they face in maintaining academic excellence, and the strategies they adopt to balance these commitments effectively.

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights to Politeknik Mersing Johor in understanding the needs of student leaders. Additionally, the results may serve as a guideline for developing support mechanisms and policies that foster both academic success and effective student leadership, ensuring a holistic approach to student development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) is the student representative body across Malaysian polytechnics and community colleges, constituted under provisions aligned with *Akta 174 (Institusi-institusi Pelajaran (Tatatertib) 1976)*. JPP functions as a bridge between students and institutional management and as a platform for developing student leadership and holistic student development. *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar* offers students a structured pathway to develop leadership capacities, civic awareness, and institutional engagement; on the other hand, the responsibilities and time commitments associated with representative roles can compete directly with the study time and cognitive resources required to maintain strong cumulative grade point averages (CGPAs).

Marcketti & Kadolph (2010) define leadership as the ability to influence others to achieve a vision or a set of goals. The implementation of instructional innovations and, potentially, the enhancement of student academic achievement may be significantly influenced by leadership. Good leadership is exhibited by students who assume leadership roles while maintaining excellent academic performance while fulfilling their responsibilities. It cannot be underestimated how imperative leadership training and knowledge is for today's students. Students must face the explosive global economy of today's work-environments in their potential jobs. To succeed, students will require leadership skills such as the capacity to recognize and integrate many knowledge sources, manage oneself, and motivate others. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate theory, training, and experience models with leadership education.

Mark and Michael (2012) state that the impact of leadership involvement on academic performance is not always positive or negative but rather depends on the role's level of intensity, the person's resilience and time management abilities, and the existence of institutional supports that lessen the demands of leadership. As highlighted by Joyce et al. (2024), student council leadership meaningfully contributes to the institution atmosphere and academic performance. Students' leadership can lead disciplinary engagement, boosted communication with every level of position and positively influenced student learning outcomes and the larger academic climate. These findings emphasize how student representative council can enhance not only academic performance but also the relational dynamics that support education.

Academic success has been found to be significantly influenced by student empowerment. According to a study by Gill et al. (2011), students who feel empowered are more likely to grow in their skills, self-assurance, and drive for academic success. According to related study, empowered students take charge of their own learning objectives and absorb higher-level cognitive skills, which enhances their perceived academic achievement.

In a similar vein, Lwehabura, referenced in Muli (2011), said that students who are given the freedom to choose their own courses of study and accept accountability for the results of those choices typically score higher on tests. The process of giving someone official permission, independence, or confidence to carry out particular tasks is referred to in this context as empowerment.

According to the Enrollment Management & Student Affairs Unit of University Pointe (2012), student leaders are regarded as role models among their friends. Therefore, it is crucial that student leaders balance their leadership duties with their academic performance.

All these findings support the crucial balance between leadership responsibilities and academic performance among members of the *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP)*. By providing valuable opportunities or support mechanisms for personal growth, decision-making, and the development of essential soft skills, they can also present significant challenges in maintaining consistent academic performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative case study design to explore how student leaders, specifically members of the *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar*, balance leadership responsibilities with their academic performance. Data were collected from questionnaire responses. These responses provided evidence that reflected students' perceptions and satisfaction how JPP could balance their role as leader and academic performance. The findings may also provide insights for higher education institutions to support student leaders in balancing their leadership roles with academic excellence.

Data Sources

a) Questionnaire responses

A structured questionnaire was administered to students to obtain direct feedback on balancing leadership responsibilities with their academic performance. The instrument comprised quantitative items measured on a Likert scale to capture students' levels of satisfaction on academic performance and a leader. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the quantitative data. This approach provided a more comprehensive understanding to support student leaders in balancing their leadership roles with academic performance.

Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaire responses were analyzed to identify key patterns and insights. The questionnaire responses provided evidence of factors and importance of *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar* in balancing leadership roles and academic performance. This source also ensured that the findings were not only accurate but also meaningful to understand and provide a full supporting mechanism for them to balance and maintain their roles as a leader and academic performance in the institution.

4. RESULTS

Questionnaire responses

A Likert scale was employed as a rating tool in the survey to measure on balancing leadership and academic performance among JPP. The mean value, which represents the average score of all Likert-scale responses, was then used to summarize the overall trend of students' opinions. A percentage for demographics and CGPA's question to indicate those result and higher mean score indicates stronger agreement or greater satisfaction, while a lower mean score reflects weaker agreement or dissatisfaction.

The interpretation of mean scores on the 5-point Likert scale is as follows:

- 1.00 – 1.80 = Very low/Negative (Strongly Disagree)
- 1.81 – 2.60 = Low/Negative (Disagree)
- 2.61 – 3.40 = Moderate (Neutral)
- 3.41 – 4.20 = High/Positive (Agree)
- 4.21 – 5.00 = Very High/Very Positive (Strongly Agree)

A total of **42 respondents** from two batches or sessions as *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar* participated in the survey. The results of the analysis are as follows:

A) DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1. The Percentage of Demographics Items

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
A1	Gender	
	Male	47.6%
	Female	52.4%
A2	Department	
	Department of Commerce	31.3%
	Department of Information & Communication Technology	54.8%

		Department of Electrical Engineering	14.3%
A3	Semester	Semester 1	0%
		Semester 2	0%
		Semester 3	21.4%
		Semester 4	0%
		Semester 5	52.4%
		Semester 6	21.4%
A4	How did you join the Student Representative Council?	Volunteer	19%
		Recommended by Lecturer	50%
		Recommended by Friends	16.7%
		Appointed without election	11.9%
A5	How long have you served as a member of the Student Representative Council?	0-6 months	28.6%
		6 months – 1 year	57.1%
		2 years	11.9%
A6	Do you recommend your friends or juniors to join the Student Representative Council?	Yes	95.2%
		No	4.8%

Table 1 showed a few questions about *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar* background or demographics were asked to respondents. For gender, 47.6% from male *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar* and 52.4% were female. There are 3 departments involve which are Department of Commerce 31.3%, Department of Information & Communication Technology 54.8% and Department of Electrical Engineering 14.3%. Based on result there were 21.4% JPP from semester 3 and 52.4% from semester 5 while 21.4% from semester 6 that were experienced as JPP leader. Then, there are many JPP members were recommended by lecturer which is 50%. The highest that served as JPP members within 6month-1 year which is 57.1% since this research for new batch of JPP members. However, the percentage to recommend to friend as JPP members is higher which is 95.2%

B) LEADERSHIP KNOWLEDGE

Table 2. The Mean of Leadership Knowledge

No	Item	Mean	Intpretation
B1	I understand my leadership roles clearly.	4.62	Very High (Very Positive)
B2	I have sufficient knowledge about effective leadership	4.47	Very High (Very Positive)
B3	Leadership helps me improve communication and decision-making	4.64	Very High (Very Positive)
B4	I know the appropriate leadership style in a student organization.	4.42	Very High (Very Positive)
B5	I am confident that I am capable of exercising effective leadership for the organization/institution that I will lead in the future.	4.52	Very High (Very Positive)
B6	When I interact with the members of the organization I lead, I will pay attention to their responses and feelings towards my words, gestures, and behavior.	4.59	Very High (Very Positive)
B7	I always participate in various leadership training programs, whether on campus or off campus, to enhance my leadership skills with greater confidence.	4.40	Very High (Very Positive)

Table 2 showed majority of the respondents strongly agree that they learn and got a lot of leadership knowledge as JPP members. This result showed students nowadays should have a lot of experience in soft skills especially

leadership skills to ensure they more confidence in communication and their potential as a leader in working environment soon. It proves that students need leadership education and qualities to succeed in inspire others (Marcketti & Kadolph, 2010).

C) LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Table 3: The Mean of Leadership Practices

No	Item	Mean	Interpretation
C1	I can balance my leadership tasks with academic workload.	4.30	Very High (Very Positive)
C2	I always attend and participate actively in JPP programs.	4.54	Very High (Very Positive)
C3	I practice teamwork and collaboration in JPP activities.	4.57	Very High (Very Positive)
C4	I am capable of managing meetings effectively.	4.38	Very High (Very Positive)
C5	I often involve other members in making decisions	4.47	Very High (Very Positive)
C6	I practice effective communication with team members	4.52	Very High (Very Positive)
C7	I am able to manage conflicts within the organization effectively.	4.26	Very High (Very Positive)
C8	I always greet, smile, and show respect to everyone, whether I know them or not	4.50	Very High (Very Positive)

Table 3 presents the mean scores for leadership practices among Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) members. Overall, the findings indicate that the respondents demonstrate very high levels of leadership practices across all measured items. The highest mean score was recorded for C3 ("*I practice teamwork and collaboration in JPP activities*", M = 4.57), suggesting that JPP members place significant emphasis on teamwork and collaborative efforts in fulfilling their leadership roles. Similarly, high mean scores were observed for active participation in JPP programs (C2, M = 4.54), effective communication with team members (C6, M = 4.52), and showing respect towards others (C8, M = 4.50).

On the other hand, the lowest mean score was reported for C7 ("*I am able to manage conflicts within the organization effectively*", M = 4.26). Although this item scored slightly lower compared to the others, it is still categorized as very high, representing that JPP members generally possess commendable conflict management skills.

Overall, the results suggest that JPP members show strong leadership skills, particularly in the parts of teamwork, communication, and active participation. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative and communicative leadership approaches in student representative councils, as they contribute positively to organizational effectiveness and personal development.

D) FACTORS DRIVING THE BALANCE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMICS PERFORMANCE

Table 4. The Mean of Factors Driving the Balance between Leadership and Academics Performance

No	Item	Mean	Intrepretation
D1	Support from lecturers helps me balance leadership and academics.	4.38	Very High (Very Positive)
D2	Support from peers makes it easier for me to manage leadership tasks and studies.	4.61	Very High (Very Positive)
D3	Family encouragement is an important factor in maintaining my academic performance.	4.50	Very High (Very Positive)
D4	The institution provides suitable facilities/spaces for me to carry out my leadership responsibilities.	4.28	Very High (Very Positive)
D5	Awards/recognition provide me with the motivation to remain active.	4.47	Very High (Very Positive)
D6	Leadership gives me the opportunity to build beneficial networks for my academics.	4.57	Very High (Very Positive)

Table 4 presents the mean scores for the factors driving the balance between leadership and academic performance among *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP)* members. Overall, the results indicate that all factors are rated at a very high level, showing that various forms of support and motivation significantly influence students' ability to balance their leadership roles with academic commitments. The highest mean score was recorded for D2 ("*Support from peers makes it easier for me to manage leadership tasks and studies*", M = 4.61), suggesting that peer support plays the most crucial role in helping JPP members effectively balance both responsibilities. This is followed closely by D6 ("*Leadership gives me the opportunity to build beneficial networks for my academics*", M = 4.57) and D3 ("*Family encouragement is an important factor in maintaining my academic performance*", M = 4.50), indicating that both networking opportunities and family support strongly contribute to student success.

Conversely, the lowest mean score was observed for D4 ("*The institution provides suitable facilities/spaces for me to carry out my leadership responsibilities*", M = 4.28). Although it is still categorized as very high, this finding suggests that institutional facilities and spaces may require further enhancement to better support student leaders.

Overall, the findings highlight that peer support, networking opportunities, and family encouragement are the most influential factors in balancing leadership and academics. These results underscore the importance of fostering a supportive environment—socially, institutionally, and academically—to enable student leaders to thrive in both areas.

E) SATISFACTION & SKILLS

Table 5. The Mean of Satisfaction & Skills

No	Item	Mean	Intrepretation
E1	I am satisfied with my experience in JPP	4.52	Very High (Very Positive)
E2	Leadership involvement improves my time management skills.	4.50	Very High (Very Positive)
E3	Leadership involvement helps me manage stress better.	4.04	High (Positive)
E4	I feel that I am given a fair opportunity to grow.	4.35	Very High (Very Positive)
E5	I am satisfied with the balance between leadership responsibilities and academics.	4.45	Very High (Very Positive)

The findings show on Table 5 that students have a very positive perception of their involvement in the *Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP)*. Overall, they are highly satisfied with their experience, as reflected by the high mean score of 4.52. Leadership involvement is perceived to significantly enhance their time management skills

(Mean = 4.50) and helps them maintain a good balance between leadership responsibilities and academics (Mean = 4.45). Students also feel that they are given fair opportunities for personal growth (Mean = 4.35). Additionally, participation in leadership roles has a positive effect on stress management (Mean = 4.04), although to a slightly lesser extent compared to other aspects.

F) ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Table 6. The Mean of Academic Achievement

No	Item	Mean	Intrepretation	
F1	I believe leadership involvement affects my academic performance positively.	4.45	Very High (Very Positive)	
F2	Leadership responsibilities do not affect my academic performance.	4.28	Very High (Very Positive)	
F3	I am able to manage my study time well despite being busy with leadership activities.	4.30	Very High (Very Positive)	
F4	I believe that leadership experience helps improve my academic discipline.	4.52	Very High (Very Positive)	
No	Item	Percentage	Intrepretation	
F5	CGPA before joining the Student Representative Council (JPP)	3.01 – 4.00	95.2%	Positive
		2.01 – 3.00	4.8%	Low
F6	CGPA after joining the Student Representative Council (JPP).	3.01 – 4.00	92.9%	Positive
		2.01 – 3.00	7.1%	Low

The findings from Table 6 show that students perceive a very positive impact of leadership involvement on their academic achievement. Students strongly agree that leadership involvement positively affects their academic performance (Mean = 4.45) and that their academic performance is not negatively affected by leadership responsibilities (Mean = 4.28). They also report being able to manage their study time effectively despite leadership commitments (Mean = 4.30) and believe that leadership experience helps improve their academic discipline (Mean = 4.52).

In terms of academic results, the majority of students had high CGPA scores both before and after joining the Student Representative Council (JPP). Before joining, 95.2% of students had a CGPA between 3.01 and 4.00, while after joining, 92.9% maintained a CGPA in the same range. Only a small percentage of students scored lower, indicating that participation in JPP did not negatively impact academic performance. Overall, the data suggest that leadership involvement in JPP supports both academic performance and discipline, without compromising students' CGPA

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, balancing leadership and learning among Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Pelajar (JPP) members at Politeknik Mersing, Johor reveals that student leadership participation has a highly positive impact on both personal growth and academic performance. Students described strong satisfaction with their experiences in JPP, highlighting that leadership roles help improve time management, stress management, self-discipline, and decision-making skills. They also emphasized how leadership duties offer chances for individual growth and development, boosting self-esteem and social skills that are beneficial both within and outside of the classroom.

The analysis of CGPA data shows that the majority of students maintained high academic achievement before and after joining JPP, representing that participation as JPP members activities does not compromise academic performance. This proposes that students are able to effectively balance their academic responsibilities with leadership commitments, proving that including leadership development into their overall educational experience is feasible.

These findings are significant as they provide practical insights for higher education institutions regarding the design and support of student leadership programs. By nurturing environments that encourage student engagement in leadership roles while offering guidance on time management and academic planning, institutions can enhance holistic student development. Based on the results, it is recommended that institutions promote active involvement in leadership roles, provide mentorship and training programs, and implement structured support systems to ensure students can maximize both academic and leadership outcomes.

Overall, this study highlights that participation in JPP not only strengthens leadership skills but also reinforces academic performance and commitments, emphasizing the importance of student leadership programs in producing well-versed graduates who are accomplished of managing multiple responsibilities effectively.

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