# The Role of Self Leadership for College Students in Starting a Business: A Phenomenological Approach of Start Up in Jakarta

# Baby SM Poernomo<sup>1</sup>, Jana Sandra<sup>2</sup>, Ade Suryana<sup>3</sup>, Sunarmin<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>STIAMI- Institute of Social Sciences and Management, Jakarta, Indonesia muhammadisaindrawan@pancabudi.ac.id

#### **Abstract**

This research is aimed at answering the question of how to apply student self-leadership in managing start-ups and what efforts are made by universities to improve student self-leadership so that they can lead their start-up businesses to progress and develop. This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Data collection is done through unstructured interviews and in a fluid atmosphere. This type of interview is an effort to find problems more openly where the parties involved are invited to ask for opinions and express their opinions, ideas in depth. In this study, interviews were conducted with 20 students who run start-ups in Jakarta. This research shows that self-leafdership is very much needed for those who are building startup businesses, especially students. By understanding self leadership, students can motivate themselves to always think constructively and leave destructive thoughts behind. With self-leadership, students can also correct mistakes they have made and at the same time find solutions for future improvements. This study proves that self leadership strategies consisting of behavior focused, natural rewards and constructive though patterns are important aspects that support student success in building startup businesses.

Keywords Self leadership; start up; mahasiswa



# I. Introduction

The term startup is already familiar to the ears at this time, and is very familiar to millennials. The startup itself actually appeared around 1998 – 2000, to be precise at the beginning of the global economic crisis. In the early days, start-ups were known only as small businesses in the field of services and products that sold goods needed by the community on a small scale (Kiwe, 2018). Startup is also known as an uncertain business and only temporary until finally it gets a more precise and permanent model and form (Blank and Dorf, 2012).

In this millennial period, there are many startups managed by young people. Based on data released by Nasscom (2014), start-ups built in the United States reached 47,000 and were followed by a significant number in the UK (4,500), India (4,200) and China (3,300). Meanwhile in Indonesia, there were 2000 start-ups at that time in 2016 and it is even suspected that this figure brought Indonesia to the highest number of start-ups in Southeast Asia (Nasscom, 2014). Of the 2000 start-ups built, the largest type of business is in the fields of technology, science, and engineering with a percentage of 60.8%. It is a quite a fantastic amount. Meanwhile, the food and accommodation sector ranks next (11.4%) and education services which include training institutions, foreign language courses, home schooling managed to reach 9.4%. In 2019, Indonesia had 2102 startups that were finally able to rank 5th in the world and continue to grow. With the development of very promising startups, the government also provides great support both in terms of

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finance and capacity building to improve the quality of its human resources, with the realization of the 1000 digital startup Movement and the establishment of the Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf).

It takes a leader who is not only able to manage others but more importantly has the ability to lead himself. At this time, many start-ups managed by students are discontinued. This is due to the lack of self-leadership from the managers. They are not good at controlling themselves, so they often lose their cool, become very critical, behave inappropriately, want to do everything, but are unable to maintain self-respect. Leadership is multidimensional, not only leading and managing subordinates, but also managing and 'leading' colleagues and superiors. In other words, as leaders we don't only lead or manage down, but also lead up and lead across, because every leader almost certainly has a leader and has colleagues, or at least that can be categorized as such. Until now, there are still many students who manage start-ups do not understand what is meant by Self Leadership. CNBC Indonesia stated that 65% of startup companies did not grow as expected due to internal problems. Problems often occur in organizations caused by a lack of self-leadership which results in startups being less reliable in facing competition and uncertainty (Kurniullah, A.Z. 2021).

On that basis, this research is aimed at answering the question of how to apply student self-leadership in managing start-ups and what efforts are made by universities to improve student self-leadership so that they can lead their start-up businesses to progress and develop. This research will make a major contribution, especially to universities so that they can provide guidance to students managing start-ups related to increasing self-leadership and also other parties who are interested in pioneering business start-ups.

### II. Review of Literature

## 2.1 Self Leadership

Charles C. Manz and Henry P Sims Jr (1980) from the University of Pennsylvania were the two people who most vigorously published their works on self-leadership in the 1980s. Self leadership is another understanding of self influence. This has been known as an aspect that focuses on a person's cognitive abilities which is also the development of intrinsic motivation theory (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

Regarding motivation, other researchers, namely Konradt et.al., 2009; Godwin et.al., 1999 suggests that self-leadership is an attempt to give direction to oneself to behave in the way that other people expect of us. An extraordinary effort if a startup founder can increase the effectiveness of his organization through self-planning, self-direction, self-monitoring and self-control (Jackson, 2004). This is also in line with the opinion of Ho & Nesbit (2009: 451) who argue that self-leadership is a process of influencing oneself to direct one's cognition and actions to achieve the desired goal, and Neck & Manz (2004) as quoted by Kalyar (2011). defines self-leadership as "a process of influencing or leading oneself through the use of specific sets of behavioral and cognitive strategies." Certain behaviors and cognitive strategies aimed at increasing effectiveness and performance are also referred to as self-regulation (Frese and Fay, 2001) cited by Boss & Sims Jr. (2008).

Pearce & Manz (2005) argues that in implementing self-leadership, a number of supporting factors are needed, which according to him consist of:

### 1. Urgency

When the development of self-leadership is well established, the urgency as one of the barriers to self-leadership will disappear. With high self-leadership in the organization,

any urgency situation will not be a problem because all individuals who face it will be able to solve it well.

### 2. Employee Commitment

Commitment to the organization is a consequence of self-leadership (Houghton & Yoho, 2005), Neck & Houghton (2006) as quoted by Chung et.al., (2011).

3. Creativity and self-leadership according to some experts are important antecedents for individual innovation (Kalyar, 2011): the higher the individual's ability to develop new ideas, the more likely he is to develop his innovations which will ultimately affect group and organizational innovation.

# 4. Interdependence

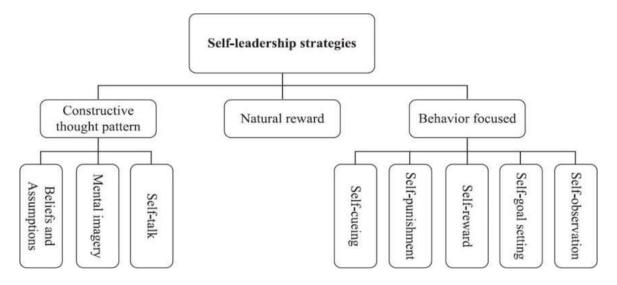
Self-leadership is needed when the dependence in performing the tasks in the organization is not so high. Thus, the development of self-leadership is inadequate in the scope of certain production processes in manufacturing where the degree of interdependence is high.

# 5. Complexity.

The more complex the work to be done, the less effective the development of self-leadership abilities will be, because in a situation like this it is impossible for one person to be able to master various fields at once.

### 2.2 Self Leadership Strategy

In order for self-leadership to be achieved properly, individuals need to use three strategies that are carried out at the individual level (Houghton & Neck, 2002) and Ho & Nesbit (2009) as shown in the picture below:



Sources: Houghton & Neck (2002), Ho & Nesbit (2009) Figure 1. Self Leadership Strategies

Neck and Houghton (2006) and Ho & Nesbit (2009) suggest that from the picture above it can be concluded that Self Leadership Strategies consists of 3 aspects, namely (a) Behavior-focused strategy, (b) Natural rewards, and (c) ) Constructive thought patterns. Behavior-focused strategy is a strategy aimed at managing oneself with the aim of increasing self-awareness and self-discipline to direct the behavior of carrying out tasks that need (mandatory) to be done, even though it may not be a pleasant task. or easy. The

methods included in the Behavior Focused Strategy are: Self Observation, Self Goal Setting, Self Reward, Self Punishment, and Self Cueing Strategy.

Self-observation involves increasing one's awareness of when and why one engages in certain behaviors. Self-awareness is a necessary first step to changing or eliminating ineffective and unproductive behaviors. Therefore, each individual must be able to more effectively set goals to change his own behavior. The second aspect, namely Self-goal setting, is an individual's effort to set a goal for one's personal. Each leader must be able to set the goals and direction of his business in order to significantly increase the level of individual performance. The third aspect is Self-reward. This is a gift that is self-respecting. Self-reward doesn't need to be something expensive or luxurious but can be something simple or physically intangible, such as congratulating yourself on an important achievement, or something more concrete like a special vacation on the completion of a difficult project. The fourth aspect is Self-punishment. This is feedback to correct oneself from previous failures. Self punishment is a positive self-introspection to encourage improvements in a positive direction. The last aspect is Self-cueing strategy. This can serve as an effective way to encourage constructive behavior and reduce or eliminate destructive ones.

The second strategy is the natural reward strategy, which according to Manz & Neck (1999) is a strategy that focuses on positive experiences related to the task and the process of achieving it. Existing work is considered a valuable thing, because it is able to motivate and benefit from an economic point of view. Employees must see their work as fun, rewarding and motivating. A natural reward strategy is intended to create a situation in which a person is motivated or rewarded by the pleasurable aspects of a task or activity, helping to create feelings of competence and self-determination, which are task-related to improve performance. There are two natural reward strategies. The former builds more fun features on the activity so that the task itself becomes a natural reward. The second strategy shapes perceptions by focusing attention on the unpleasant aspects of a task and turning them so that the unpleasant aspects become highly profitable.

On the other hand, constructive thought strategy is used by individuals to influence or direct themselves by using cognitive strategies. Neck et.al., (2003) and Godwin et.al.. (1999) suggests that there are three methods that can be used to carry out this strategy: 1) Visualizing successful performance, known as mental imagery which is defined as an effort to imagine a successful task execution before the task is carried out. Individuals who envision successful performance prior to the work being carried out are more likely to appear successful when faced with an actual task. 2) Self-talk, is an individual's attempt to reflect on himself honestly without any intention of manipulating his search for his identity. Self talk is an attempt by someone who, when overwhelmed with pessimism, is able to replace it with a more optimistic self-dialogue. 3) Evaluating beliefs and assumptions, namely identifying and replacing dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions, mental imagery, and positive self-talk. Individuals must be able to replace irrational beliefs and assumptions with more constructive thought processes.

## 2.3 Definition of Start Up

The term startup is always identified with a startup that uses information technology in its products. If it does not use elements of information technology, then the business can be said to be a Small and Medium Enterprise (Baskoro). While the definition of digital startup according to Eric Ries (2011) is a group of individuals who create and sell new products or services in uncertain market dynamics in search of the right business model, so that startups face changing market conditions with a very high level of uncertainty.

Historically, the term start-up itself became internationally famous during the dotcom bubble. The dot-com bubble phenomenon or sometimes called the information technology bubble is a speculative bubble that occurred between 1998 – 2000 (culminating on March 10, 2000 when the NASDAQ reached 5,132.52 points) when stock markets in industrialized countries experienced a significant increase in equity value. sharply thanks to the growth of the Internet industry and related fields. The rapid growth of the Internet began in 1993 and lasted until the 1990s, which was marked by increasingly advanced World Wide Web technology after the release of the first version of the Mosaic web browser.

Paul Graham (in Cahyadi, 2014) defines "a start-up is a company designed to grow fast. The only essential thing is growth. Everything else we associate with start-ups follows from growth". In essence, start-up is a step in producing something new. A start-up business is a business that is just developing with technology, the web, and related to the internet (Mudo, 2015). A startup is an organization designed by a beginner and as he goes along he looks for characteristics or identity to find the right business model in order to provide optimal profit (Blank, 2013).

Adora Cheung Co-founder and CEO of Homejoy, one of the hottest U.S Startups in 2013 said that startup is a state of mind. A key attribute of a startup is the ability to grow. Startups are designed to grow quickly. In accordance with the technology and internet tools, startups focus on growth that is not limited by geography, because it can reach almost all regions in the world. This is what distinguishes startups from other small businesses.

In 2016, Indonesia had 2,000 startups, according to the research institute Nasscom, this figure is the highest in Southeast Asia. The majority of startups are new companies based on technology, science, and engineering with a percentage of 60.8%, education at 9.4%, food and accommodation services at 11.4% and the rest is divided by retail, business administration, and construction. Steve Blank (2010), defines a business startup as an organization formed to seek a repeatable and scalable business model. Some of the characteristics of a company that can be classified as a startup company include: (1) the age of the company is less than 3 years, (2) the number of employees is less than 20 people, (3) the income is less than \$100,000/year, (4) is still in the developing stage, (5) generally operate in the field of technology, (6) products made in the form of applications in digital form, (7) usually operate through the website.

### III. Research Method

This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The term phenomenology is etymologically derived from the Greek. From the root word "phenomenon" or "phenomenon" which literally means "symptoms" or "what has appeared" so that it is real to us (Drijarkara, 1962; Suprayogo and Tobroni, 2001). The term phenomenology was introduced by Johann Heinrickh Lambert, in 1764. However, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is more regarded as the father of phenomenology, because of the intensity of his studies in the realm of philosophy. Phenomenology that we know through Husserl is the science of phenomena. Husserl's phenomenological concept also refers to the verstehen concept of Max Weber. Verstehen is understanding. Reality is to be understood, not to be explained. According to Husserl, phenomenology is an interest in something that can be understood directly with their senses, where all knowledge is obtained through sensor devices "phenomena" (Wolf & Wallace, 1986). Meanwhile,

Schutz said that phenomenology as a method is formulated as a medium to examine and analyze the inner life of individuals in the form of experiences regarding phenomena or appearances as they are, which is commonly called the stream of consciousness (Campbell, 1994). According to Schutz, the task of phenomenology is to connect scientific knowledge with everyday experience, while everyday activities and experiences are the source and root of scientific knowledge (Craib, 1994).

Determination of informants in phenomenological research depends on the capability of the person being interviewed to be able to articulate their life experiences (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, Creswell (1998) said that the requirements of a good informant are: "...all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon". While the research location can be in a certain place or spread out, taking into account the individual who will be the informant. The problem of number is not the main thing, although Creswell said that the number of informants is sufficient as many as 10 people (Cresswell, 1998), the most important thing is the occurrence of data redundancy. The main data collection technique in phenomenological studies is in-depth interviews with informants to uncover the currents of consciousness. In the interview process, the questions asked were unstructured, and in a fluid atmosphere. In this study, interviews were conducted with 20 students who run start-ups in Jakarta, using unstructured interview techniques because this type of interview, according to Sugiyono (2010), is an effort to find problems more openly where the parties involved are invited to ask for opinions and express their opinions, ideas in depth.

Creswell (1998), explains the data analysis techniques in phenomenological studies as follows: (a). The researcher fully describes the phenomena/experiences experienced by the research subjects. (b). The researcher then finds statements (interviews) about how people explain in detail the statements and treat each statement as having equal value, then the details are developed without repeating. (c). The statements are then grouped into meaningful units, the researcher details these units and writes a text explanation about the experience accompanied by careful examples. (d) Researchers then reflect on their thoughts by using imaginative variations or structural descriptions, looking for all possible meanings and through divergent perspectives, considering the frame of reference for the phenomenon, and constructing how the symptoms are experienced. (e). The researcher then constructs the entire explanation of the meaning and essence of his experience. (f). Researchers report the results of their research. The report shows that there is a unity of meaning based on the experiences of all informants. After that, the researcher wrote the combined description.

#### IV. Results and Discussion

From the interviews conducted to 20 students starting up pioneers, it is summarized in the following table.

**Table 1.** Results of interviews with students who own Start Up

Themes	Number of students answer	Start Up founders' opinions
Where do students know Self Leadership?	5	From Interpersonal Communication Subject
	5	From Leadership Subject
	8	From Seminar and Workshop on Entrepreneurship
	2	From Start Up Mentoring

Students' views on self-	5	Self leadership is not only for leadership
leadership		development but also business development
	5	Self Leadership makes a person motivated to move forward
	6	Self Leadership directs a person to be independent, creative, committed, disciplined
	4	Self Leadership will increase EQ (Emotional Ouotient)
What are the most important factors that can support self-leadership?	14	- Commitment
	6	- Creativity
The main aspects of the strategy to improve self-leadership	6	- Eliminate unproductive behavior and must be able to change positive behavior for yourself (Self Observation)
		- Must have clear and measurable goals (Self Goal Setting)
		- Encourage constructive behavior and reduce or eliminate destructive ones (Self Cueing)
	5	- Correct yourself by looking at the mistakes that have been made and strategies to fix them (Self Punishment)
		<ul> <li>We must be able to overcome stress so that it is not prolonged and start to respect ourselves (Self Reward)</li> </ul>
		- We must see work as something that is fun, profitable and makes us motivated (Natural Reward)
	9	- Must always think about success (Visualizing successful performance)
		- Build a more optimistic dialogue with yourself and reduce negative/pessimistic dialogue (self talk)
		- Replacing irrational beliefs with more constructive thought processes (Evaluating beliefs and assumptions)

From the results of interviews with 20 students managing business start-ups, it was found that self-leadership needs to be possessed by every individual, not only for the development of leadership but also for business development. In addition, the informant also said that Self Leadership makes a person motivated to move forward and can direct someone to be independent, creative, have a disciplined commitment and can increase a person's Emotional Quotient (EQ). However, from 20 informants interviewed, it turned out that only 2 people said that they knew about Self Leadership from Start Up mentoring eventhough this is very important for every student who will become an entrepreneur. Meanwhile, the most important factors in Self Leadership according to the informants are commitment, as stated by 2 students managing start-ups in the fashion and culinary fields.

"The most important thing is commitment. Someone who has high creativity, and good ability will not succeed without commitment and earnest effort. I myself initially founded a start-up because of my motivation to become a successful entrepreneur. I am a person who has a high business spirit and my commitment to creating new jobs for fresh graduates. Without the encouragement from within yourself, it is difficult to achieve success." (AMfashion start-up founder)

"" Commitment is the first aspect. Based on my experience, I have dreamed of becoming a successful entrepreneur since I was in high school. My academic achievement is always above average but I never have time to participate in ex-school activities because my time is spent studying and reading books. When I was in the first semester at university, I also felt the same way. But considering that at the university where I studied, students were encouraged to build start-ups, there was even a special time for mentoring, so my commitment grew stronger. From then on, I was committed to starting a start-up and I had to finish college." (EK – Food and Beverage start-up founder)

This is in line with the statements of Houghton & Yoho (2005) and Neck & Houghton (2006) as quoted by Chung et.al., (2011) which says that commitment to the organization is a consequence of Self Leadership. Meanwhile, related to the main aspects of the Self Leadership strategy, from 20 people interviewed, it turned out that 9 people said that the most important thing is that we must always have positive thoughts and think about success.

"My team and I always try to always think positively, even though as a startup business our business sometimes goes up and down. But we have ambitions to be successful entrepreneurs. Therefore, we always think for success, success and success. I think it is important for us to motivate ourselves with constructive thoughts and get rid of irrational thoughts. (YU- student managing fashion start-up)

"You have to have the spirit to move forward. Although in the early days of building a business many difficulties and obstacles were encountered, but we still have to be optimistic and always imagine success not failure. Thus, we have a spirit that never goes down. We have to make work something fun. If we encounter difficulties, we always consult with mentors and friends who have already started a start-up. The point is we never give up and always think positive.

(SE- students managing start-up English training services)

This is in line with Manz & Neck's (1999) statement regarding natural rewards, where we must consider work as something fun and not difficult. In addition, to encourage someone's success we can also use a constructive thought strategy with 3 methods presented by Godwin et. al. (1999) namely visualizing successful performance, self talk and evaluating beliefs and assumptions.

Meanwhile, 6 start-up managers said that the most important factor to improve self-leadership is eliminating unproductive behavior and turning it into productive for oneself (self-observation) and encouraging constructive behavior and reducing or eliminating destructive ones (Self Cueing). In addition, as a start-up entrepreneur we must set a clear and measurable goal (Self Goal Setting). This is in accordance with the statements of Neck and Houghton (2006) and Ho & Nesbit (2009) From 20 start-up managers, only 5 people said that it is important for business people to evaluate themselves and realize the mistakes that have been made and at the same time think about way out (Self Punishment). In addition, if the work has gone according to expectations, it is important for leaders to respect themselves. One of the goals is to avoid stress (Self Reward) as stated by the founder of a start-up in the field of training services:

""It is very important to evaluate the actions we have taken and more carefully look for what things need to be improved, so that at any time we can learn from mistakes. And if we and our team have succeeded in carrying out a project successfully, don't forget to also reward yourself. Thus we are increasingly confident that success can be achieved step by step. The most important thing is to always be optimistic." (SW – Founder of fashion start-up)

""Periodically, my team and I always evaluate the business strategies that we have implemented, such as promotional strategies, especially during this pandemic, what strategies must be done so that the business can continue to run. Never be afraid or ashamed to admit mistakes, because it is with the mistakes we make that we can improve ourselves for the better. And if we with the support of the team and employees succeed in making new breakthroughs or new strategies that can be accepted by the community, we should give awards to the team, employees and including ourselves, because this will motivate us to work even better." (FI – Founder of a food and beverage start-up)

This is in line with the opinion of Neck & Houghton (2006) and Ho & Nesbit (2009) which say that Self Punishment is important for every start-up leader to be able to immediately correct mistakes and make various changes. From the interview it was also known that self-reward is also an important thing even if it is only with a simple act of congratulating yourself on an important achievement or pampering yourself with a vacation.

### V. Conclusion

From the analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that self-leafdership is very much needed for those who build startup businesses, especially students. By understanding self leadership, students can motivate themselves to always think constructively and leave destructive thoughts behind. With self-leadership, students can also correct mistakes they have made and at the same time find solutions for future improvements. This study proves that self leadership strategies consisting of behavior focused, natural rewards and constructive though patterns are important aspects that support student success in building startup businesses. The limitation of this study is that this study only examines self-leadership in start-up founders. For future research, the author suggests that a more indepth study be conducted on the self-leadership of business people with a different approach.

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