

The Impact of Community Service Experience on Self Esteem among UiTM Pahang Students

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ABSTRACT

Community service is motivated by the need to help others without waiting for anything in return. Those who have taken on community service projects have greatly benefited from their work, gained memorable experiences, and also built unique character traits. The importance of involving in community service activities among youths has been emphasized by the Malaysian Government through its Ministry of Education's eleven areas of reform which saw the community service component being added as part of the ministry's range of actions to inculcate students with core, universal value and strong Malaysian identity. It is believed that childhood experiences and upbringing form the basis on which one's self-esteem is built, but experiences in adulthood and how we deal with them also affect our self-esteem levels. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to determine the impact of community service experiences on self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students. A set of questionnaire was distributed to a cluster of Diploma of Office Management students who have organized community service projects for their Organizing Events (OMT290) course. The data were analyzed for descriptive and regression analysis using the SPSS Version 21. It is hoped that the findings would provide significant contributions to the areas of community service and character building of young people.

Keywords: *community service, self-esteem.*

Introduction

Increasingly, the involvement of youths in community service programmes, such as the involvement in IM4U programmes, have been highlighted extensively by the Malaysian Government through its administrative arms as being something hip and "in-trend". Based on the news coverage received for such programmes in the conventional and alternative mass communication media, the general public has also been giving good responses and feedbacks to the programmes. The general assumption made is that such programmes have tangible benefits for youths, the community and the nation itself. According to Hedin (1989), community service provides the opportunity to apply academic learning to real human needs and to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning occurred. It was further stated that community service experience provides the youths, majority of whom are higher institution students, with the motivation necessary to put forth effort in academics, gives them more opportunities to integrate and elaborate on their knowledge, and increases the likelihood of transferring theoretical knowledge to actual practice.

Reed (2006) stated that volunteering in community service is increasingly being recognized as playing an important role in the building of strong and connected communities. The study further supported the notion that community service volunteering builds and strengthens relationships within local communities, contributes to population health and provides a sense of fulfillment and wellbeing to active citizens. The initiatives enable individuals to contribute their time and skills to help improve their communities, with the goal of enhancing individual's awareness on the community as well as enhancing self awareness. Research has defined self-esteem in many ways. Some defined it as what we think and feel about ourselves. It is our self-evaluation and our sense of self-worth. Steel (2006) defined self-esteem as a fundamental human need. Those with sufficient self-esteem have confident in their thinking and coping. Self-esteem creates feelings of worthiness and the entitlement or right to success and happiness. Meanwhile, community service is one of the activities that can make the self-esteem become more exposed towards self-

confidence and self-awareness. The community service experience can also facilitate the growth of participants' sense of responsibility toward others and it may also be used to predict how a person will act in the future (Reed, 2006).

Akil and Lingan in *The New Straits Times* on September 12, 2012 reported that the Ministry of Education, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had announced that every primary and secondary school student will be required by 2017 to participate in community service in order to develop values-driven Malaysians. The report also stated that the community service component will be part of the Education Ministry's range of actions suggested in the *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan 2013-2025* to inculcate students with core, universal values and a strong Malaysian identity. Implicitly, the statements showed that in addition to inculcate strong individual values among the students, the importance of exposing these students, of whom would be the youths and later the leaders of the nation, to community service experience, would also help these youths to start developing better self-esteem.

The researchers found that it is important to conduct this research in order to determine the impacts of community service experience on self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students. After going through literature of past studies, it was found that research conducted among the youths as volunteers in community service activities has been lacking. Therefore, the researchers have decided to fill the gap and contribute to the body of knowledge by conducting a research on a cluster of Diploma in Office Management students taking the Organizing Events (OMT290) course as part of their study plan. The students were selected based on their experiences serving as volunteers and organizers in community service projects.

The research was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the level of self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students.
2. To determine the impact of community service experience on self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students.

The research answered the following questions:

1. Is there a significant impact between community service experience and self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students?
2. What are the levels of self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students?
3. How much variance in self-esteem can be explained by scores on connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy?

The Benefits of Community Service Involvement

Community service has become a widespread in Malaysia recently. Though it can be defined in various definitions, community service is generally an action or work that benefits the community, performed by volunteers, which come from groups of people or organizations that are not paid for their time. Fenzel and Leary (1997) as well as Giles, Honnet and Migliore (1991) defined community service as "a way to engage students in the learning process by having them provide meaningful services to others, and to connect this service experience with their academic curriculum" (as cited in Celio, 2007). In several countries around the world, community service is part of their school curriculum. In the United States and Canada for example, community service is known as service learning and it is mandated as the requirement to graduate high school (Celio, 2007).

A great number of studies been done on how exactly students benefit from their involvement in community service activities, which showed numerous kinds of benefits. Several studies emphasized the effects of community service experience on various elements of students' learning, "including their sense of social responsibility and personal efficacy, the development of important life skills, and an enhanced sense of political, social, and cultural awareness" (Yoon, Martin & Murphy, 2012, para.3). Latham (2003) also articulated the value of involving in community service programmes:

Teens say the benefits received from volunteering are: Learning to respect others; learning to be helpful and kind; learning to understand people who are different; developing leadership skills, becoming more patient, and better understanding of citizenship. Young people involved in community service are more likely to have a strong work ethic as an adult (p.2).

Hence, it was found that the psychological, social and cognitive benefits are the most significant benefits experienced by the students participating in the community service programmes (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2005).

Community Service Experience and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is commonly associated with pride. Hewitt (2009) interpreted self-esteem as “beliefs, for example, “I am worthy”, “I am competent” and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame” (p.217). It is vital to have self-esteem as this belief or emotion will later determine the characteristics of a person. Self-esteem cannot be obtained through conventional schooling nor is it ingrained in a person since birth. The best way to develop one’s self-esteem is through experiences. Either positive or negative life experiences, they breed attitudes toward the self which can be desirable and cultivate positive feelings of self-value, or can be undesirable and establish negative feelings of self-value. Therefore, other than benefit the community in terms of social responsibility, experience in serving the community is also seen as a means to cultivate positive self-esteem among the youngsters.

Many literatures of past studies have observed the evidence of favourable impacts of involving in community service activities on one’s self-esteem development. Pleasants, Stephans, and Selph (2004) suggested that community service experience provides students with chances to realize that they can do something for the community and make a difference, and it does not merely stimulate their interest to participate in community service (as cited in Yoon, Martin & Murphy, 2012). Barclay (2007) also provided an apt description of this quality in her research, stating that involvement in community service programmes tend to develop a more self-reflective attitude and sense of importance of community relationships among the participating students. Youniss and Yates (1997) also asserted that “students do not become paralyzed by the challenges they encounter, but rather often experience a sense of agency and a feeling of responsibility to the forces for social change” (as cited in Yoon, Martin & Murphy, 2012, para.15). Through one example of a community service, namely Project HERO, Florek (2010) suggested that students’ engagement in community service programmes could help develop their self-esteem. She also noted that through family cooperation, community service and mentoring, participants of this project “will learn to better appreciate themselves and their community, and later guide them in building positive self-esteem” (Florek, 2010, p.70).

Consequently, though many literatures were found on this issue, there are still a lacking number of studies done in Malaysian context, particularly the impact of community service participation on students’ self-esteem. Therefore, it has been the researchers’ aim to conduct this study in order to determine if there is any significant relationship between community service experience and students’ development of self-esteem.

Research Framework

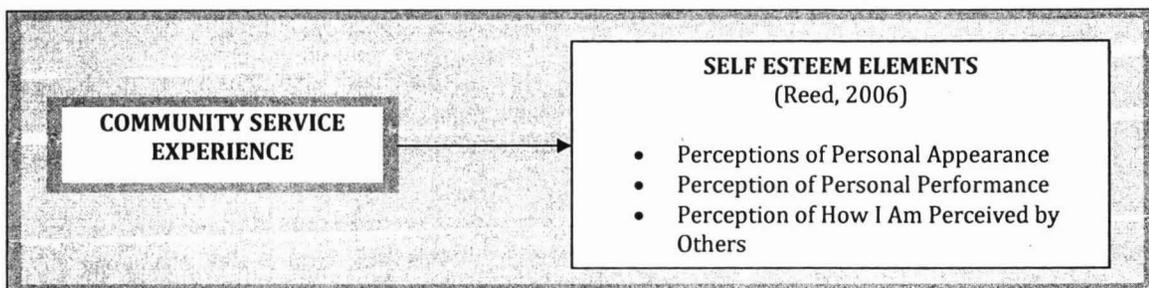


Figure 1: The Impact of Community Service Experience on Self-Esteem among Organizing Event among UiTM Pahang Students

Methodology

A set of questionnaire was used as the instrument of the study. This study used cluster sampling method, where seven out of nineteen groups of semester four and five students who have conducted community service projects in fulfilling their OMT290 course were selected as the respondents. 135 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

The questionnaire designed by Reed (2006) was adapted to measure the relationship between community service experience and self-esteem in this study. Section A included items designed to gather demographic information such as gender, age, number of community service experience and type of community service activity they were involved in. Section B consisted of 19 items which measured the three dimensions of Community Service Experience, namely Connection to Community (4 items), Civic Awareness (8 items) and Civic Efficacy (7 items). Section C, which measured the respondents' self-esteem comprising of 16 items was divided into three elements: 1) Perception of Personal Appearance (4 items); 2) Perception of Personal Performance (6 items); and 3) Perception on How I Am Perceived by Others (6 items). The responses to each item were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

The Alpha scores obtained for all sections are above .70 levels and this was generally acceptable for field research (Hair, Babin, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2006). Therefore, the data suggested that the questionnaire was a reliable instrument to consistently measure the level of each variable of the study.

Table 1 : Cronbach's Alpha Scores for the Overall Study Pilot Test and Actual Survey

Scales	Pilot Test Reliability Coefficient (Alpha) (n=30)	Actual Survey Reliability Coefficient (Alpha) (n=132)
All sections	.722	.849

Findings and Analysis

A total of 135 survey questionnaire was distributed to the students. They were given a week to complete the questionnaire. However, only 132 respondents returned the questionnaires. Therefore, the total response rate was 97.8 % (n = 132). The data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.

The sample was made up from BM118 semester four and five students who were involved with community service projects in fulfilling their OMT290 course. The items in the demographic part of the questionnaires include gender, age, number of community service experience and the type of activity. Responses to the questions in Section A provided a good picture of the background of the respondents, as shown below:

Table 2: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	30	22.7	22.7	22.7
Valid Female	102	77.3	77.3	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents in this study. The number of female respondents was higher than male respondents. It shows that 77.3% of the respondents were female and only 22.7% were male. This is normal since female students outnumbered male students in BM118 programme.

Table 3: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-20 years old	114	86.4	86.4	86.4
Valid 21-23 years old	18	13.6	13.6	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows the number of respondents based on their age. The majority of 114 (86.4%) respondents were in the age group of 18 – 20 years old. Another 18 (13.6%) respondents were in the age group of 21 – 23 years old. Therefore, generally, the respondents in this study were youngsters ranging from 18 to 23 years old.

Table 4: The Number of Community Service Experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-4 times	105	79.5	79.5	79.5
Valid 5-9 times	13	9.8	9.8	89.4
Valid 10 times and above	14	10.6	10.6	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows the number of community service experience. The majority (79.5%, n = 105) of students who participated in this study have had community service experience of between 1 – 4 times. There were also 10.6% (n=14) of the respondents who have had more than 10 community service experience. Another 9.8% (n=13) respondents have 5 – 9 times community service experience. The above result indicated that the majority of the respondents in this study were novice to community service activity.

As can be seen in Table 4, the community service activities were categorized into four types. From the total of 132 respondents, there were 87.1% (n = 115) students who have organized organizational and charitable activities. Meanwhile, there were 7.6% (n = 10) students focused on cultural and festive activities and only 5.3% (n = 7) students were involved with recreational and sporting activities. This indicated that the majority of the respondents participated mainly in organizational and charitable activities.

Table 5: Type of Community Service Activity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Cultural & Festivities	10	7.6	7.6	7.6
Valid Organizational & Charities	115	87.1	87.1	94.7
Valid Recreational & Sporting Events	7	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

The items in Section B measured community service experience, while Section C measured self-esteem levels. The respondents circled statements that corresponded to each section using a Likert Scale from 1=Highly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree and 5=Highly Agree. In these two sections, items number 27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 were put in the negative form. Thus, the researchers have normalized the data by recoding the negatively worded scale items. Below are the summary of the findings:

RQ 1: Is there a significant impact between community service experience and self-esteem among students of UiTM Pahang?

H1: *There is a significant relationship between community service experience and self-esteem among students of UiTM Pahang.*

Table 6: Correlations

		CSE	SE
CSE	Pearson Correlation	1	.633**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	132	132
SE	Pearson Correlation	.633**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	132	132

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A correlation analysis was then run based on each of these constructs and the results were reported in Table 6. The results showed a significant relationship between community service experience and self-esteem. This data supported hypotheses 1, that there is a significant impact between community service experience and self-esteem. This emphasized that students' self-esteem is affected by their community service experience. As Cohen (1997) suggested, this indicated a large correlation, which shows that community service experience does give an impact on the respondents' self-esteem. This result is aligned with Reed's (2006) findings.

RQ 2: What are the levels of self-esteem among UiTM Pahang students?

The following table showed the analysis on the levels of self-esteem among the respondents. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert Scale, making 3 as the scale mid-point. According to Reed (2006), the scales of 3.5 to 4.5 were in a slightly positive range. Thus, a mean score of 0.376 (SD = 0.33) indicated a moderate level of self-esteem among the respondents.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SE	132	3.7625	.33723
Valid N (listwise)	132		

According to Rosenberg (1989), the person with high self-esteem does not consider himself better than others, but neither does he consider himself inferior to others. Meanwhile, the low self-esteem people are more likely to feel awkward, shy, conspicuous and unable to express themselves with confidence.

Table 8 shows the analysis on each of the self-esteem elements. The element of Perception of Personal Appearance, has the highest mean score indicating $M = 4.04$ and $SD = 0.56$. Meanwhile, the element of Personal Performance has the second highest mean score of 3.99 ($SD = 0.56$) and the element of How I Am Perceived by Others has the least mean score of 3.25 ($SD = 0.57$). This indicated that majority of the respondents have positive perception towards their own personal appearance. As stated by Timothy, Sheldon S. and Noorman (2001), people want to feel good about themselves and are motivated to increase their self-esteem.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SE_PA	132	4.0473	.56267
SE_PP	132	3.9937	.56196
SE_Perceived	132	3.2465	.57510
Valid N (listwise)	132		

RQ 3: How much variance in self-esteem can be explained by scores on connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy?

The following section answers Research Question 3. To explore these questions, multiple linear regressions were used to analyze the data. This involved all of the independent variables being entered into the equation at once. The results showed how much unique variance each of the independent variables (connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy) has, and explained the dependent variable (self-esteem) (Pallant, 2001). Hence, it was important to determine whether the data set met the basic assumptions before applying any statistical technique to analyze the data. For instance, the assumptions of normality and linearity must be met to conduct parametric tests such as multiple regressions. Thus, this section discussed assumptions of multiple regressions, followed by findings to answer Research Question 3 using multiple linear regressions.

A number of assumptions about the data were checked before running the output using SPSS. Hair et al., (2006) explained that assumptions of multiple regression analysis apply both to the individual variables (independent and dependent) and to the relationship as a whole. Thus, testing for assumptions must occur not only in the initial phases of the regression, but also after the model has been estimated. In the following section, the researchers discussed testing the assumptions and corrective actions to take if violations occur in multiple regression analysis.

Regarding the sample size and issues of generalizability, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) gave a formula for calculating sample size requirements, taking into account the number of independent variables used: $N > 50 + 8m$ (where m = number of independent variables: $8 \times 3 = 24 + 50 = 74$). For this section, there are two independent variables, namely connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy. Thus, $N = 132$ cases do support the sample size and generalizability of the results by the ratio of observations to independent variables for this study.

In addition to sample size, multicollinearity was examined before performing the result. The simplest and most obvious means of identifying collinearity is an examination of the correlation matrix for the independent variables. The presence of high correlations (generally .90 and higher) is the first indication of substantial collinearity (Hair et al., 2006). This was supported by Pallant (2001) who stated that multicollinearity exists when the independent variables are highly correlated ($r = .9$ and above). Thus, the correlation matrices in this study showed that the correlation was lower than .9.

A direct measure of multicollinearity is tolerance, which is defined as the amount of variability of the selected independent variable not explained by the other independent variables (Hair et al., 2006). Very low values of tolerance (near 0) indicated that the multiple correlation with other variables is high, suggesting the possibility of multicollinearity. This was calculated by the formula: $1 - R^2$ for each variable. Tolerance value should be high, which indicates a small degree of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2006). The values for the three independent variables were quite respectable (.607, .443 and .467), and less than .7, so it appeared to have not violated this assumption.

Second measure of multicollinearity is the variance inflation factor (VIF), which is calculated simply as the inverse of the tolerance value (Hair et al., 2006). Based on this study, the VIF was below 10 which indicated no collinearity problem, thus not violating the assumption (VIF = 1.647, 2.264 and 2.141).

Multiple regressions are very sensitive to outliers (very high or very low scores) (Pallant, 2001). Checking for extreme scores should be part of the initial data screening process. Outliers can either be

deleted from the data set or, alternatively, given a score for that variable is high, but not too different from the remaining cluster of scores (Pallant, 2001).

The presence of outliers can be checked by either from the Scatterplot or Mahalanobis distances that are produced by the multiple regression program. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) defined outliers as cases that have a standardized residual (as displayed in the scatterplot) of more than 3.3 or less than -3.3. Additionally, outliers can be identified by inspecting the Mahalanobis distances whereby it was identified that the values is below critical values of 16.27 for three independent variables (Mahalanobis value =9.567) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Thus, this study did not violate the assumption because Mahalanobis distance was below the critical values. Besides, the cases displayed from the Scatterplot were within a range of -3 to 3.

In conclusion, it was observed that this study did not violate the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Besides, the Mahalanobis was below critical value of 16.27 for three independent variables while variance inflation factor (VIF) below 10 whilst tolerance was less than 7. What is more, the sample size was generalizable, hence can be repeated with other samples.

The Determinants of Self-Esteem

In order to determine the best set of predictor variables in predicting self-esteem, a multiple linear regression method was used. Based on the linear method used, two predictor variables were found to be of significance in explaining self-esteem. The two predictor variables are Civic Efficacy and Connection to Community.

The following discussed further details in answering Research Question 3 which was to identify how much variance in self-esteem can be explained by scores on civic efficacy and connection to community. Hence, the hypothesis was postulated as:

H2: *There is a positive, linear, and significant relationship between variance of self-esteem and the factors: (a) connection to community (b) civic awareness and (c) civic efficacy.*

The R-squared of 0.441 implied that the three predictor variables explained about 44.1 percent of the variance in the self-esteem. Expressed as a percentage; this means that the model explained 44.1 percent of the variance in self-esteem.

Table 9: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.664 ^a	.441	.428	.25498

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Service Experience, Civic Awareness and Civic Efficacy

b. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem

The ANOVA table (Table 10) revealed that the F-statistics (33.713) was moderate and the corresponding p-value was highly significant (0.000) or lower than the alpha value of 0.05. This indicated that the slope of the estimated linear regression model line was not equal to zero, confirming that there was a linear relationship between self-esteem and the three predictor variables.

Table 10: ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.576	3	2.192	33.713	.000 ^a
	Residual	8.322	128	.065		
	Total	14.898	131			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Service Experience, Civic Awareness and Civic Efficacy

b. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem

The results of the analysis presented above allow the researchers to answer the third question posed at the beginning of this section. The question asked on how much variance in self-esteem scores can be explained by scores on these three scales or how well do the three measures of control (connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy) predict self-esteem. The Beta value for connection to

community explained 19 percent (after rounding up, $B=.118$), civic awareness explained 1 percent (after rounding up, $B=.013$) whereas civic efficacy explained 53 percent (after rounding up, $B=.530$) in predicting self-esteem.

Table 11: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	1.817	.221		8.228	.000		
	CSE_CC	.116	.052	.188	2.220	.028	.607	1.647
	CSE_CA	.010	.076	.013	.134	.893	.442	2.264
	CSE_CE	.361	.066	.530	5.482	.000	.467	2.141

a. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem

After assessing the statistical significance of the result, the test of hypothesis reached statistical significance (Sig =.000, this really means $p<.0005$), thus the researchers support the hypothesis. This result was in line with Hair et al. (2006) who assumed that the higher the value of R^2 , the greater the explanatory power of the regression equation and the better the prediction of dependent variable. The empirical result of relationships and differences on each of the choice of self-esteem reflected that connection to community, civic awareness and civic efficacy lead to better self-esteem. Thus, the researchers support Hypothesis 1. It should be noted that community service experience appeared to be a determinant of self-esteem in this study.

Conclusion

From the findings discussed above, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed that community service experience does have significant impact on ones' self esteems. Though the respondents were only limited to the cluster of students taking the OMT290 course, the researchers believed that the majority of the youngsters who have been involved in community service activities, whether it be cultural and festivities, organizational and charitable or recreational or sporting activities, they gained lots of benefits from their experiences. Pleasants, Stephans, and Selph in Yoon, et al., (2012) supported the findings of this research and denied some of the previous research which indicated that community service experience has no significant impact to the self esteem of youngsters (Reed, 2006).

With the strong support shown by the Malaysian Government lately through its many community service activities organized by the IM4U organizations and also with the commitment shown in incorporating community service component into the Ministry of Education's eleven areas of reform (Chapman, Kulasagaran, Chen, & Aminuddin Mohsin, 2012) in order to inculcate student with core, universal value and strong Malaysian identity, the researchers believed that the respondents of this study would also become part of a well balanced and healthy adults who have healthy self-esteem; adults who hold themselves as worthy of being loved and loving others; worthy of being cared for and caring for others; worthy of being touched and supported and touching and supporting others; worthy of being listened to and listening to others; worthy of being encouraged and encouraging others; worthy of being reinforced as "good" people and recognizing others as "good" people. The researchers believed that youngsters with healthy self-esteem will have productive personality who would achieve success to the best of their ability in all aspects of their life. They can be the leaders who are skillful in dealing with people and who are always ready to help anyone who needs assistance or guidance. This is the kind of generation that would help Malaysia achieves its Vision 2020.

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