

Involvement In Youth Program: What Are The Major Determinants

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade we have witnessed the soaring number of social problems among the youth in the nation. In addressing the issue, the government has taken the initiative to organize various forms of Youth Programs. Thus, this paper attempts to explore the issues that will influence teenagers' involvement in Youth Programs. The exploration of the study referring to selected identifiable variables related to the social problem, lifestyle, self-development, economic and government policy is useful as a framework for profiling the teenagers' involvement towards Youth Program. Using data that were cross-sectionally examined, this paper seeks to investigate factors that influence teenagers to involve in Youth Program. Focusing on the districts of Marang and Dungun, 262 samples were selected among youth. For the purpose of getting an insight and a good generalization, five constructs were theoretically formulated and hypothesized to address the research question. The results revealed that the variables were moderately correlated and significantly related for youth involvement in Youth Program.

Keywords: *Economic and government policy, lifestyle, self-development, social problem, youths*

Introduction

Understanding of the youth world and how we look at it is built up through active exploration, experimentation and involvement with their activities. The confusion of meanings, mental and emotional activities often drives to the misunderstanding of the different roles performed by youth that need attention. Referring to the debated issues that seem to have no ending, it is suggested that social problems among youth have become a major concern of the nation. Their large representation if not been seriously addressed may affect the development of the nation. A generally accepted definition refers to 'youth' as a person that falls under the age category of between 15 to 40 years old. This age group totaled to be approximately 11.5 million, representing almost 47% of the Malaysian population (UPEN, 2005). Using the data generated by UPEN, our computation of the youth group population estimated that there were about 24,000 and 14,000 young people in the districts of Dungun and Marang respectively.

The youth generations are trainees to the triumphant society that are stretched out by the previous generations. This triumphant society will go on if our youths really understand their roles in developing and leading the country to a more challenging height. However, if we look at the conditions assaulting our youth's generation nowadays, quite a number of them do not have adequate capability and ability, thus unable to think of their precious assets to the country. In fact, it is not surprising at all if we are informed by the various forms of media like the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, or through the word of mouth about the social problems among the teenagers and youths. Among the common news include the youth involvement in illegal racing, drug addict, sexual abuse, gangsterism and so forth.

Naturally, from the psychological perspective most of the young people enjoy spending their time in activities that provide them pleasure without assuming responsibilities. Unfortunately, most of the activities are found to be non-beneficial to them, to the societies and to the nation as a whole. Youth are the target group that is supposed to participate in sport activities at whatever levels according to their capabilities. However, as stated by Manan (2007), majority

are not active in sports. They are inclined to waste their time in the activities like illegal racing, surfing the internet, loitering in supermarkets, and so on. All these activities will eventually create more problems rather than generating a positive outcome. Those activities mentioned will lead the young people to other problems, for example sexual abuse, illegal racing, drug addict, criminal cases such as murder, gangsterism, rape and so on.

Role of the Ministry of Youth and Sports

Ministry of Youth and Sports was set up in 1953 with the establishment of the Cultural Division under the Department of Society Welfare that was responsible towards the development of youths. Nine years later in 1964, this Cultural Division was transformed to be the Ministry of Information. At that time, because the activities and more youth programs were actively developed, the Division of Youth was set up under the ministry. The Ministry of Youth and Sports was responsible to accomplish the policies of the Malaysian government especially in the development of youth and sports. In addition, other objectives that were supposed to be achieved included producing the Malaysian youth with the ability and capability of contributing to the nation's economic growth based on their physical and mental strength. The ministry was also responsible to generate better and healthy youth in terms of their lifestyles, ethics, responsibility, tolerance, positive values, good morals, and other positive personal characteristics. In addition, one should realize that they (youth) are the explorer to the development and serenity of the races, religions and country.

Tagging along with the vision 2020, by the year 2010 the youth society will have certain qualities that are much needed as a person, a variety of knowledge and skills, implementation capabilities, superiority lifestyles, illustrating patriotic spiritualism and perceiving globalization challenges. All these act as a primary source in social improvement and economic growth. In striving to achieve the vision, there is this mission of developing and creating a generation of youth that is presentable, business oriented, possessing management skills associated with good moral values as well as quality lifestyle. Together with the mission, the strengthening and establishing of national integration among the Malaysians in achieving vision 2020 need to be respected. As such, several youth development function areas need to be seriously addressed. Among them include:

- i. Provide educational and practical programs for young generation to be organized by private sectors, public sectors, youth bodies and non-governmental bodies.
- ii. Establish leadership developmental programs and build good ethical values in creating self-confidence, self-esteem, family institution and relationship, religion and socialism with the intention of creating a generation that can play the major role effectively.
- iii. Improve practical skill programs, business opportunities and entrepreneurship programs with the aim of establishing new generation's survival and building successful careers.

In reaching the above planned missions, the Youth Development Department was divided into four specialized branches namely management, leadership management, economic development, and social development, followed by fixed specialization function.

Problem Statement

Youths are always considered as a precious asset to any nation of the world. As technology advances, social values change, spirit of enjoyment arises, and more problems prevail. The negative development has prevented our young generation from becoming a quality and dependable youth to lead our country. Therefore, attempts should be initiated by encouraging the youth generation to be involved in more youth programs that are able to generate high quality teenagers. Realizing its importance, the government is continuously planning and organizing various forms of activities under the Youth Programs in order to build up quality teenagers.

The question now is whether they (teenagers) have adequate abilities and capabilities to lead the success of the nation. Apparently, majority of teenagers today do not have a well-built physical and mental strength. As a result, they will be more likely influenced by the western lifestyle and actively seeking entertainment and activities that provide enjoyment. They are blocked from thinking of becoming leaders for the next generation. Therefore, this research aims to explore as to what extent the youth programs are able to build up better and quality teenagers based on several identifiable determinants which include social problems, lifestyle, self development, economic and government policies.

Scope of Study

The investigation of this paper focuses on the teenagers from the state of Terengganu. For the purpose of getting a good exploration, the districts of Dungun and Marang were selected to uncover the phenomena of the youth population. Based on the data compiled by UPEN Terengganu, there were approximately 172,857 young people in the state. As the study covers only two districts, our samples were made up of students of higher institutions, colleges and secondary schools. Only those from the town area were selected for the study. Thus a sample of 285 respondents formed the desired sample size. To ensure the relevancy of the study, Youth Departments of Marang and Dungun were respectively consulted to furnish information about the Youth Program and its activities.

Literature Review

Involvement in Youth Program

According to Manan (2007a), majority of the young people in the nation are not active in sports or other community activities. They prefer to spend their time in the activities like illegal racing, surfing the internet, loitering in supermarkets and so on. In getting a good control of the youth development, several Youth Programs are organized covering activities such as those related to physical, mental and psychological aspects, and sports. In fact, a lot of programs are held each year that help youth to fulfill their time with activities that give benefits to them. Examples of such activities are Community Sports League 2007, Fitkid World Championship 2007, Port Dickson International Triathlon 2007, Talent Identification 2007 and many others (Fathul Radzi, 2007).

Social Problem

According to National Institute on Social Problem (2007), a social problem is a condition that at least some people in a community view as being undesirable. Everyone would agree about some social problems, such as murder and DWI traffic deaths. Other social problems may be viewed as such by certain groups of people. Teenagers who play loud music in a public park obviously do not view that activity as a problem, but some other people may consider it an undesirable social condition. Some non-smokers view smoking as an undesirable social condition that should be banned or restricted in public buildings. Every newspaper is filled with stories about undesirable social conditions such as crime, violence, drug abuse, and environmental problems. Such social problems can be found at the local, state, national and international levels.

As mentioned by Norudin and Noor Rohaya (2007), illegal racing has been continuously shaping the way youngsters seek entertainment. Illegal racing involves activities that require competition in speeding the automotive whereby at the end of the whole program, there will be a winner prohibited by law. The development of entertainment technologies is so severe and to some is unnoticeable that societies are trapped to its usefulness. Parents must be aware of entertainment products that glorify extreme driving and illegal street racing in the forms of DVDs, home videos, and computer and video games. Speeding is one of the most prevalent

factors contributing to traffic crashes.

In another development, as reported by National Institute on Drug Abuse (2007), many people see drug abuse and addiction as strictly a social problem. They tend to characterize people who take drugs as morally weak or as having criminal tendencies. They believe that drug abusers and addicts should be able to stop taking drugs if only they are willing to change their behavior. These common myths have stereotyped and stigmatized not only those with drug problems, but also their families, their communities, and the professionals who work with them. Drug abuse and addiction represent a major public health problem, one that affects many people from all walks of life, a problem that has wide-ranging social consequences. Addiction does begin with drug abuse when an individual makes a conscious choice to use drugs, but addiction is not just "a lot of drug use." Recent scientific research provides overwhelming evidence that not only do drugs interfere with normal brain functioning creating powerful feelings of pleasure, but they also have long-term effects on brain metabolism and activity.

In Malaysia, reported cases of drug addiction, child abuse, loafing, juvenile delinquencies, unhealthy lifestyles and strains on the family units are on the rise. Criminal cases involving juveniles, for instance, have increased by 62 percent from 2,408 cases in 1980 to 4,012 cases in 1995. In the period of 1990-95, 60 percent of the juvenile cases involved teenagers between the ages of 16 to 18 years. Almost 35 percent involved children between 13 to 15 years old, while 6 percent involved children between 10-12 years old (Malaysia, 1997). These social problems may be attributed to a change in the values that are held by the society today. If this trend persists, it may have a detrimental effect on the moral fabric of future generations in Malaysia. Even the involvement in smoking in some cases could be associated as a social problem. Ennett and Bauman (1993) confirmed that social position was associated with the adolescents' smoking behavior with isolates being more likely than those in cliques or liaisons to be current smokers and subsequently confirmed that peer influence and peer selection contributed equally to the homogeneity in cigarette smoking observed in the adolescents' cliques.

Lifestyle

Based on Malhi (2006), the word 'lifestyle' can be defined as someone's way of living. It also includes the things that a person or particular group of people usually do such as exercise; eat healthy food and so on. As mentioned by Fathul Radzi (2007), the need to associate sports activities to a lifestyle is essential in shaping the right behavior of the youth generation. All parents should constantly encourage their children to actively involve themselves in sports activities as their lifestyle. Being active in sports will help them to have a healthy body and mind. The involvement in sports can train them to be more disciplined, willing to sacrifice, having team spirit and aware of the importance to take care of their health. But parents cannot force their children to focus on the sports, while at the same time forget to force their children to focus on their study. According to Manan (2007b), effort done by certain organizations like "Pemuda UMNO" in organizing a football tournament called "Pemuda UMNO league" is one of those sports developments which can shape the positive value of the youth in the nation. In addition, this program also has the objective of finding the new football talent in order to boost the image of sports in Malaysia.

The government has embarked on a few projects, many of which are focused on teenagers, since they are the crux of the future generation. There was, for instance, the "Rakan Muda" programs to propagate a healthy lifestyle among youths and aimed at instilling positive values among them (Malaysia, 1996).

Self-development

Self-development can be defined as the critical build-in of the good attitude for someone's self. The good behavior helps someone to succeed in his life. Self-development also includes the relation between a person and the society Malhi (2006). Reviewing the work of Mod Nadzri (2006), among the participants from Pahang involved in self-development programs like "Jatidiri Kesukarelaan Nasional", the changes occurred among the participants were materialized. The

program held consisted of participants of various races ranging from 18 to 25 years old. During the program, candidates were exposed to the basics of society communication and the approach towards 3K concepts (Kemahiran, Keusahawanan dan Kepimpinan). The program was further expected to develop youth in acquiring abilities in order to face the new globalization challenges. The implementation of Social Youth Development Program, according to Cawangan Pembangunan Sosial (2007) is another example of an attempt to equip youth with the spirit of self-development. The main purpose of this program is to provide and enhance the suitable activities in order to encourage interaction within the society as well as promote closer interaction with the governmental authorities and agencies. Hence the two-way interaction is expected to be accomplished not only at the domestic but also at the international levels. Examples of this kind of program include Youth Nation's Day, Youth National Convention and many others.

The concept of self-development used to be associated with values. Kilby (1993) says that values give structure and direction to an individual's life, help supply the meaning to existence, create specific motives prominent in the major choices of life, influence how an individual perceives things and determine his thinking. In a more collective sense, the behavior of a society is directly linked to the values that the society upholds.

Economic

According to Chang (2004), the term 'economics' comes from the Greek for oikos (house) and nomos (custom or law), hence "rules of the house (hold)". Economics is the social science that studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. A definition that captures much of modern economics is that of Lionel Robbins in a 1932 essay: "the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses." Scarcity means that available resources are insufficient to satisfy all wants and needs. Absent scarcity and alternative uses of available resources, there is no economic problem. The subject thus defined involves the study of choices as they are affected by incentives and resources.

Realizing the need to promote economic development, "*Program Pembangunan Belia Niaga*" was thus initiated. Through Majlis Penggalakan Ekonomi Belia (2007a), the program was conducted under the initiative of Ministry of Youth and Sports to attract the young people to involve in the business sectors. Through the program, they were trained, guided, and partly financed in order to stimulate them to be successful entrepreneurs. Examples of activities held were Entrepreneur Training Program, Seminar, Technical Entrepreneur Training, Youth Entrepreneur Award, Youth Development Project and other activities.

Government policy

According to Chang (2004), governments worldwide are responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by developments in national and global networking. The move towards establishing national and global information infrastructure policies is reflected in a number of significant government reports and documents which act as a blue print for youth development strategies. For example, the government has provided some form of budget and assistance in order to attract youth groups to be entrepreneurs. Among the authorities that were responsible for the execution of this measure were Youth Department, Permodalan Usahawan Nasional Berhad (PUNB) and the sport Ministry.

The concern of the government was further reflected in Majlis Penggalakan Ekonomi Belia (2007b) commitment, where the program under one of the Ministry of Youth and Sports' initiatives was designed to attract the youths to involve in agricultural sectors. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is an agency who was responsible to provide some form of assistance in the form of budget from "*Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pembangunan Ekonomi Belia*" in order to give the loan facilities to the youth through "Belia Tani" Scheme. This scheme will help the youth to be the successful and competitive entrepreneur. .

Research Methodology

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework below explains the relationship among the variables that are deemed integral to the dynamics of the situation investigated. The framework attempts to explain the involvement of Youth Program based on the relationship with social problem, lifestyle, self-development, economic and government policy.

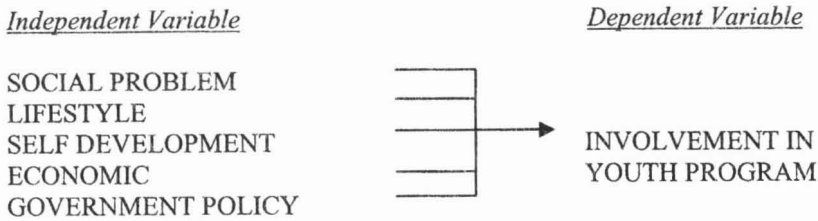


Figure 1: Schematic Diagrams for the Theoretical Framework

Hypothesis

- Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between the social problem and involvement in Youth Program.
- Hypothesis 2:** There is a relationship between the lifestyle and involvement in Youth Program.
- Hypothesis 3:** There is a relationship between the self-development and involvement in Youth Program.
- Hypothesis 4:** There is a relationship between the economic pursuit and involvement in Youth Program.
- Hypothesis 5:** There is a relationship between the government policy and involvement in Youth Program.

Data Collection Approach and Instrumentation

The primary data were gathered through questionnaire (indirect qualitative) and interview (direct qualitative) methods. Students from UiTM Dungun, Polytechnic Dungun, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Lela Segara and Infrorana College formed the sample of our investigation. The teenagers who made up the respondents of this research were under the age category of 15 to 40 years old. Students were selected as the unit of analysis because it is much easier to get their accessibility.

The questionnaires contained eight sections; the first section was designed to gather information about the respondent's personal background related to respondent's sex, race, age, education level, family income, whether the respondent is one of the Youth members and other questions. In the second section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked about their awareness towards youth, categorization of youth, and knowledge about youth association. The third section was about the respondent's perception towards the Youth Program. The fourth section was about the first independent variable that is social problem. One of the questions asked was whether or not the Youth Program will reduce the social problems among teenagers. The fifth section concerned the healthy lifestyle contributed through the youth program. The sixth section focused on self-development and instilling good attitude among respondents. The seventh section measured economic factors such as the employment opportunity. The final section of the instrumentation measured the effectiveness of the Youth program as influenced by the government policies.

Sampling Method

285 students were selected as respondents. The distributions of the samples were made up of the students at UiTM (Dungun), Polytechnic Dungun, Sekolah Menengah Lela Segara (Marang) and Inforana College (Marang). Even though the selected sample size may not be able to represent the large population of youth in Malaysia that is 11.5 million, the data collected will provide a good scenario about their development. This study adopted the non-probability sampling as the sampling method. By using Quotas sampling respondents were selected on a convenience basis to represent the population of the study.

Findings

Analysis of reliability

The analysis taken at this stage is to determine stability and consistency of the questions that were distributed to the respondents using Cronbach's alpha measurement of reliability. With the Alpha value for all the variables displaying the score of more than 0.8; the internal consistency of the instrument is reliable and established.

Analysis on Profile

Using the frequency analysis, the distribution of demographic profiles of the respondents was established. These demographic questions were made up of gender, race, age, living area, educational level, family income, parent's occupation, and youth program.

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Profile (n=228)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender :Male	80	30.5
Female	182	69.5
Age : 15-20 years old	135	51.5
21-30 years old	127	48.5
Education: SPM and below	117	44.6
Certificate	35	13.4
College (Dip and Degree)	110	42
Home : City	109	41.6
Village	153	58.4

Analysis of t Test

Table 2: Independent Samples Test between Gender and Perception of Youth Program

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
MeanC	Equal Variances assumed	.502	.479	-2.054**	260	.041	-.19946	.09709	-.39064	-.00828

Note: ** p < 0.05

Table 3: Independent Samples Test between Area and Perception of Youth Program

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
MeanC	Equal Variances assumed	3.393	0.67	-1.476	260	.141	-.13443	.09107	-.31376	-.04489

Note: ** p < 0.05

Table 4: Independent Samples Test between Age and Perception of Youth Program

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
meanC	Equal Variances assumed	1.721	.191	3.013	260	.003	.26709	.08866	.09251	.44167

Note: ** p < 0.05

The table above shows the t-test between gender, place of residence and age, and perception of the youth program. The results displayed that there was a significant difference between gender, and age group, and the perception of youth programs as indicated by the p-value of 0.041 and 0.003

respectively. While for the case of place of residence, the p-value of 0.141 demonstrated that there was no significant difference as to the perceptions of the youth program.

Analysis of Variance

Table 5: Education Level and Involvement in Youth Program

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.523	2	5.262	10.657**	0.000
Within Groups	127.879	259	.494		
Total	138.403	261			

Note: ** p < 0.05

Table 6: Multiple Comparisons between Education Level and Involvement in Youth Program

MeanC		Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
(I) Taraf Pendidikan	(J) Taraf Pendidikan				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
SPM and below	SIJIL	-.30241	.13538	.067	-.6251	.0167
	College Education	.28574**	.09332	.007	.0658	.5057
SIJIL	SPM and below	.30241	.13538	.067	-.0167	.6215
	College Education	.58815**	.13637	.000	.2667	.9096
College Education	SPM and below	-.28574**	.09332	.007	-.5057	-.0658
	SIJIL	-.58815**	.13637	.000	-.9096	-.2667

Note: ** p < 0.05

This analysis aimed to conclude as to what extent the variable concerning educational level of the teenagers (youth) was able to stimulate the involvement in the Youths Program. Generally, those with higher educational levels have better perceptions towards involvement in Youth's Program and are more willing to participate in the program. From the above results in table 5, the F value is 10.657, indicating the significant difference between the educational level of the sample and the involvement in youth program. Further analysis of the above indicated that there was a significant difference between those with Certificate and College Education (Degree), SPM and College Education. Using the Post Hoc the following p-value of 0.000; and 0.007 respectively provided the explanation of the status of statistical difference among the variables. As for those with SPM and Certificate, there was no significant difference between them as indicated by the p-value of 0.067.

Analysis of Correlation

This analysis explains the relationship between the five identifiable variables and the perception of youth program. It will further explain the significance of their relationship.

Table 7: Correlations between Mean

	Mean C Perception of youth program	Mean D Social Problem	Mean E Life- styles	Mean F Self- development	Mean G Economic	Mean H Government Policies
MeanC	1	.562**	.549**	.527**	.466**	.530**
MeanD		1	.776**	.737**	.595**	.554**
MeanE			1	.874**	.652**	.684**
MeanF				1	.770**	.737**
MeanG					1	.759**
MeanH						1

Note: ** p < 0.05

The above table shows the correlation between social problems, lifestyles, self-development, economic pursuit, and the government policies, and the perceptions of respondents of the youth program. Based on the correlation score of 0.562, 0.549, 0.527, 0.466 and 0.530 respectively, it indicated that their relationships were moderately correlated. The usefulness of the variables in indicating their role was established as all of the variables were significant at 5% level of significance. The strength of the relationship followed the rule of thumb in social science research as suggested by Burns and Bush (2000).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that based on the frequency, correlation coefficient and cross-tabulations analysis, the hypotheses can be accepted and are highly correlated. Thus the need to strategize the usefulness of the selected independent variables in promoting the attractiveness of youth program should be continuously deployed. The changing of the lifestyle, as well as the enculturation of inappropriate western values, has created numerous social problems. Focus on the economic pursuit at the expense of shaping the interest of the youth in nation building should be balanced. Failure to accommodate each other will definitely cost the whole nation economically, socially, and psychologically.

There is a need to review the existing Youth Program involving activities such as those related to physical, mental and psychological aspects, and sports. A mechanism for evaluating the success of the program should be made more transparent and practical as it is very much related to the issue of social problem, lifestyle, self development, economic pursuit, and government’s active participation. Otherwise, the concern of generating high quality teenagers will end up with inefficient utilization of resources invested.

Malaysian people should be alert to youth program activities. Actions must be taken immediately to ensure that Malaysian citizens know about the significant contribution of youth program in developing future competitive Malaysians. The management of the NGOs,

associations, and governing authorities should confidently certify that the proposed youth programs are interesting and beneficial not only to the targeted group but to the nation as a whole. Another effort should be the intervention from the government which is greatly essential in making the youth program more relevant in terms of geographical coverage, demographic membership, social stratification, and economic pursuit. In getting the program workable, assistance in the financial matters, management, promotion and advertising will be strongly supported. In fact, the promotion of youth program could be done either locally or even internationally. In addition, youth program should execute more charity and donation activities to any organizations that are in need. Through this approach, the possibility of communicating positive image about the youth will be further enhanced. Furthermore, the program could be used to develop a good rapport with the members of the society rather than continuously discriminating each other. Among the activities that can be done include donating funds for charity events, or other forms of gathering for developing group cohesiveness.

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