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E-CONFERENCE ON
GREEN & SAFE CITIES
2022

“Sustaining the
Resilient, Beautiful and Safe Cities
for a Better Quality of Life”

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e-PROCEEDING OF
1st INTERNATIONAL E-CONFERENCE ON
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**“ Sustaining the Resilient, Beautiful and Safe
Cities for a Better Quality of Life ”**

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SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS ON MALAYSIAN YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Youth participation in the execution of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been emphasised by international entities such as the United Nations (UN) and is being discussed academically. As an emerging populace group which would be affected by prevailing decisions on sustainable development, they are termed as one of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) in the SDGs. This study aims to look at youth's participation and inclusion in SDG-related activities in Malaysia, specifically in meeting the three core sustainability principles - economic, social, and environmental. This study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches through social media analysis and a survey. Three youth associations were purposefully chosen, and their engagement in SDG-related initiatives was assessed by examining their social media presence. Furthermore, 238 youth from Malaysia were polled on-line to get responses on the most successful ways to promote the SDGs. This study found that SDGs linked to economic, social, and environmental, have been prioritised by the selected youth associations. The social media analysis concluded that these youth's SDG-related initiatives aimed to fulfil SDG11 on establishing "sustainable cities and communities". The descriptive study also noted that Malaysian youth are inclined towards learning about SDGs and their underlying ideas through mass media, social media, and the education system. The conclusions of this study are not generalisable. Nonetheless, it offers unique insights into the progress of SDGs in Malaysia due to youth participation and enriches the existing literature within the context of sustainable development. More extensive youth categories, according to survey respondents, will be required in future works. The SDGs' knowledge and partaking among youth in educational institutions and employed youth can also be investigated further.

Keywords: *Malaysia, Social Media, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainability Policy, Youth's Participation*

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global commitment which has prompted countries to mobilise their prevailing resources in order to achieve sustainability standards. The SDGs serve as a challenge for each country under the United Nations (UN) to fulfil its development objectives based on the 169 targets and 232 distinctive indicators, as defined in the global agenda. On the basis of the three sustainability principles (economic, social, and environmental), this 15 years sustainability agenda must be guided by the “whole of nations” and “whole of society” approach. Thus, the nations’ development initiatives, roadmaps and action plans should incorporate the SDGs elements that benefit people and the earth in general. Other than the government, the SDGs have become a post-Millennium Development Goal’s (MDG’s) moral responsibility for many parties, including corporations, academia, civil society, and grassroots organisations, to respond to. Based on the concept of “leaving no one behind”, the SDGs aim to encourage inclusivity and partnership in accomplishing the ultimate objectives for sustainability.

Past research has declared that youth should be included in SDG implementation and require special consideration because they would be impacted by the sustainability challenges and policy decisions (Mohanty et al., 2019; Sheridan et al., 2014). However, the available literature focuses more on the youth’s SDGs comprehension than youth’s actions. More research on youth participation in SDGs is needed as it will demonstrate the younger population’s voice and actual conduct toward the sustainability agenda. A few researchers have confirmed that youth participation in sustainability-related activities could support SDG achievement (Syed Azhar et al., 2020; Yusof & Ariffin, 2020).

Youth have been identified as SDG actors, and the UN has recognised them as one of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) in progressing and activating SDGs in their respective capacities (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2020). A few write-ups also highlighted youth roles in sustainability progression and SDGs as role models (Mohanty et al., 2019), innovators (Odelami & Fasakin, 2019) and change agents (Mohanty et al., 2019; Odelami & Fasakin, 2019; Syed Azhar et al., 2020; Xu, 2017). On a worldwide scale, youth have been offered the opportunity to speak at the UN forum about SDGs challenges. At the regional level, a comparable framework is available, and individual nations have started offering forums for adolescents to contribute towards SDGs’ progress in the nation. Notably, depending on the political setup, the acknowledgement of youth representation and the process of youth inclusivity in the SDG governance mechanism varies. This signifies that the extent of youth participation in SDGs by means of a formal setup and institution differs depending on the policies of the nation.

As of August 2022, it was reported that Malaysia has 15001 youth associations registered with the Registrar of Youth (ROY) (<https://roy.kbs.gov.my/en/>). This indicates that Malaysia’s youth movement can potentially be involved in SDG-related activities. Thus, this research aims to determine how the associated youth in Malaysia partake in SDGs. This study combines two ways of research methods: a social media analysis and an online survey. To be specific, this research also attempts to answer the followings research questions:

- a) What kinds of SDG-related activities do Malaysian youth organise and participate in?
- b) What is the best SDG promotional strategy for the youth in Malaysia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature investigates and explores the youth’s understanding of SDGs. Several studies have been conducted to link youth knowledge and comprehension of the SDGs comprehension of SDGs (Mawonde & Togo, 2021; Odelami & Fasakin, 2019; Zamora-Polo et al., 2019). According to some studies, youth awareness of SDGs is still not up to the mark, and

youth are less engaged in them. All of this stemmed from institutional and non-institutional barriers to their awareness of the SDGs. Thus, it is recommended that the notion of sustainability and SDGs should be included in the curriculum of educational institutions, along with organisational obligations to SDGs (Hawa et al., 2021; Mawonde & Togo, 2021; Zamora-Polo et al., 2019).

A few studies on the awareness of the youth about SDGs have been undertaken in Malaysia, and the results show a mixed picture. Most of the research was carried out among the youth at educational entities. Zul Ilham et al. (2021) investigated the link between SDG awareness, attitude, and practice among school-aged youth. It was found that school-aged children have a sufficient understanding of SDGs as a result of their educational exposure, and are eager to partake in SDG-related tasks. The observations by Afroz and Ilham (2020) and Tuan Ismail et al. (2022) on awareness about SDGs among university youth are contradictory. This signifies that university students' understanding of SDGs is influenced by their exposure, knowledge, and institutional approaches. Mahadi et al. (2022), Mohd Yusof et al. (2022), and Mohd Yusof and Ariffin (2021) are other studies on SDGs and youth. These studies concentrate on youth leadership, SDGs initiatives, and collaboration with SDGs stakeholders. It was ascertained that the majority of material in the Malaysian context emphasised more on youth and sustainability or sustainable development values instead of SDGs, as a particular concern.

Social media should be extensively utilised as a potent communication tool in endorsing and increasing SDG awareness among diverse community cohorts, especially the younger generation (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021; Odelami & Fasakin, 2019; Tuan Ismail et al., 2022). Around the world, social media has also been used to help localise SDGs at the governmental level (UCLG, 2019). Singapore, for example, is reaching out to the younger people through social media platforms and social media celebrities (Singapore's Voluntary National Review, 2018). Hence, SDGs should be publicised and disseminated at all levels of an organisation and in all institutions. SDGs actions at an organisational level should also be conveyed well since they show a clear commitment to the global goals and provide a way to encourage involvement (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021). At the organisational level, however, the utilisation of social media to depict SDG involvement and spread SDG-related information is negligible (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021; Zamora-Polo et al., 2019).

There have been a few research works on the utilisation of social media to convey SDGs at the organisational level (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021; Syed Azhar et al., 2020). For example, de la Casa and Caballero (2021) looked at how SDGs were presented at three tiers of communication:

- a) Declarative: The entity constrains its commitment to writing or partaking in SDG activities without totally integrating SDGs into its policies and approaches
- b) Informative: The organisation formulates SDGs obligations, informs SDGs, conducts SDGs training, and generates sustainability reports.
- c) Participative: Organisational members take part in SDGs execution and turn into sustainability leaders. The SDGs were distributed and conveyed through a variety of means.

According to Syed Azhar et al. (2020), student-driven initiatives linked to sustainability on campus were monitored and assessed on the basis of social media postings. It was observed that social media is the most effective medium for disseminating sustainability-related information to the youth at institutions, raising awareness, and introducing pertinent regulations (Michael et al., 2020; Syed Azhar et al., 2020). Social media can also be used to promote higher education's sustainability initiatives/branding (Saleh et al., 2021) and encourage additional engagement (UNDP, 2013). Youth were also found to deliberate on SDGs informally in the informal sector – for example, on social media (Sheridan et al., 2014).

Given the importance of social media in communicating SDGs and the need to explore the topic of SDGs and youth, this study aimed to answer one crucial question: *“How do youth associations in Malaysia participate in SDGs activities as portrayed on their social media platforms, and what is the best way to promote the SDGs to the youth?”* The methods utilised in this study will be explained in the following part, followed by the outcomes and discussion.

METHODOLOGY

The whole research process for this study is depicted in Figure 1 below. This study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach was employed through desktop research. A previous study by Syed Azhar et al. (2020) conducted desktop research by retrieving and reviewing data and information on student-based sustainability activities posted on the university’s website and social media. Another study by de la Casa and Caballero (2021) also analysed organisational social media on how SDGs were being communicated. Therefore, this present study attempt to replicate a similar study design. This study aimed to investigate the kinds of SDG-linked activities held by three Malaysian youth associations and how they were disseminated to the target demographics. Utilising the purposive sampling technique, three youth associations were selected as a case study and the content of their primary social media platforms, Facebook, was analysed. The youth association selection criteria is for a youth association that is active in SDGs advocacy. For ethical reasons, the names of the youth associations will remain anonymous and be known as YO-A, YO-B and YO-C. Researchers observed and analysed the official Facebook pages of three youth associations to see what kinds of SDG-linked programmes were being publicised on their social media. The initiatives were then classified as online/virtual, physical/face-to-face, and hybrid activities. Throughout the analysis, researchers have been tracking the events held by youth associations from 2015 to 2021 – A period after the UN declared SDGs. To obtain a clear view of which SDGs became their primary emphasis, the plotting and alignment of their SDG activities with the 17 global agenda goals was presented.

Separately, a Malaysian youth online survey was conducted to determine realistic SDGs promotion techniques as the best means to engage the younger generation with the SDGs. Simple questions were designed to identify the most preferred SDG strategies among the Malaysian youth, and the data from 238 respondents were analysed using descriptive analysis. Few limitations need to be acknowledged in this study. First, the number of online survey responses is insufficient as the authors expected the response to be more than 384, as proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This is due to the time constraint in conducting the survey. Secondly, the Facebook page operated by the selected youth association is not up to date and is less informative in terms of its posting, thus, limiting a comprehensive analysis. The authors, nevertheless, continue the research procedure as it would improve the future study’s process.

Figure 1
Research Process



RESULTS

This section will discuss the study's findings and results from the social media analysis and the online survey. It will be arranged based on the research objectives:

Types of SDG-related activities Participated and Organised by the Malaysian Youth

Based on the social media analysis, the three youth associations considered for this study were found to have embarked on the values of sustainability and SDGs. It was due to the association's purpose of establishing, equipped with a vision and mission towards advocating the SDGs. Two youth associations (YO-A and YO-B) have been set up in Malaysia as the country's chapters and are linked to an international organisation. These global entities were International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs), whose main aim was to promote the SDGs worldwide. Malaysian youth leaders who would lead the Malaysia chapter were exposed to SDGs and trained by the international partner. Both YO-A and YO-B have been given entire autonomy in determining their own approach and formulating SDG activities tailored to Malaysian youth. YO-C, on the other hand, is a Malaysian youth association established by a team of young Malaysians who wanted to make SDGs a priority in their campaigning. It is made up of young individuals who have been exposed to SDGs by means of different SDGs initiatives and have been made mindful about them throughout their undergraduate studies at local or international educational institutions.

Based on the activities portrayed on their social media, the component of SDG16 on inclusion and SDG17 on partnership were highlighted by the youth associations through their SDG-related activities. Firstly, the inclusion is essential for youth associations' programmes to follow the idea of "leaving no one behind" as the mantra of the SDGs. The idea behind SDGs is that sustainability principles should take into account the participation and involvement of all kinds of communities. At the same time, the partnership is necessary to ensure that these associations may form wider networks and collaborate with other SDG-focused organisations. This indicated that these youth associations worked hard to include all kinds of youth and communities as target groups (for example, marginalised populaces and individuals with disabilities) and engage with all parties relevant to their SDGs support. Second, collaboration is one option for implementing SDG-linked initiatives, as these youth associations cannot

perform independently. This approach provides the resources and experience that these youth associations lack. To carry out their SDG-linked activities, these youth associations collaborated with government agencies, international partners, academia, the commercial segment, and other NGOs. This was found from the social media analysis of the three youth associations.

Table 1 presented below provides a mapped version of the SDG-related activities that were organised by these three youth associations, along with the 17 goals pertaining to the SDGs (Figure 2). It demonstrates the fulfilment pertaining to the pillars of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) which are translated as activities. The actions of youth associations for every pillar will be outlined in this section, and will be linked to the 17 SDGs throughout the results discussion.

Figure 2

United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

Table 1

Mapping of SDGs-related Activities Initiated in Youth Associations

Youth Assoc iation	SDG Focus																
	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
YO-A	/	/	/	/	/	x	x	/	x	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
YO-B	/	/	/	/	x	x	x	/	x	x	/	x	x	x	x	/	/
YO-C	/	/	/	/	x	x	x	x	x	/	/	/	x	/	/	/	/

Table 1 shows the activities related to SDGs that the three youth associations have organised. As pointed out by the social media analysis, all three entities have utilised social media to convey their advocacy and endorse their SDGs initiatives. Facebook is the official social media platform for all youth entities. As per the observation and analysis, these associations focus on at least one or more sustainability elements. Their SDG-linked initiatives

were designed to deal with economic, social, and environmental issues. These are essentially the pillars of long-term development. This signifies that, through their operations, these youth associations conform to the values of sustainable development by addressing three key issues about human well-being. The activities were carried out utilising a social work approach as well as other methods (hands-on, face-to-face, and Web-based programmes). The types of actions of the three youth associations in relation to SDGs are elucidated in the next subsection:

Activities Related to Social Sustainability

Disaster management and readiness, decreasing poverty, improving the quality of education, sustaining public health, and endorsing gender equality are the areas on which these youth associations focus for their social sustainability projects. In general, the three youth associations' social sustainability actions achieved SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG17 (Partnership for the Goals). The following discussion provides further enlightenment on the types of activities conducted and participated in by these youth.

One of YO-A's endeavours to relieve the victims' burden was to provide material relief after natural disasters. When extreme floods hit a few Malaysian states in 2021, YO-A started a crowdfunding effort to offer food, medical help, and other essential assistance to the impacted communities. The initiative was started by collaborating with other NGOs associated with disaster management. University students who volunteered were also a part of the programmes. Incidentally, the campaign has sparked their interest in community service by introducing them to the spirit of volunteering. YO-A sponsored a number of aid initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, and specific financing was set up to encourage public donations. They donated food to the affected villages in an attempt to assuage poverty and ease the suffering of the victims.

Another approach deployed by YO-A and YO-C for social well-being was to reduce poverty by ensuring equal access to education. YO-C has started a fund-raising campaign to help underprivileged school-going kids in West Malaysia. The fund-raising campaign's purpose was to improve educational facilities and provide educational materials to the B40 community's pupils. As a result, these poor children now have access to necessary educational tools and a conducive learning environment. As part of the "teaching programme," the young volunteers also provide free tuition at some schools, mostly in rural areas. It has given these volunteers new opportunities and experience. During the Malaysian shutdown, both YO-A and YO-B helped students who needed to undertake online study. Many e-learning related webinar series were held. Interactive learning approaches were also introduced to students in primary, secondary, and higher education. As a result, the youth have been exposed to a new pattern of learning experiences and are providing social support for their peers.

Other educational initiatives aim to improve partakers' knowledge of SDGs. All three youth associations have provided different sustainability curriculums and training to their members and equivalent NGOs. For example, YO-A supports SDG-related programme management and teaches how to track programme impact. The SDGs were introduced to the youth, and they were mentored on how to gauge the impact and align each youth programme with the SDGs. Because their programmes target a variety of community groups, these youth associations must be cognizant of impact evaluation. Thus, programmes should be gauged and assessed in terms of their outcomes. Furthermore, all three youth associations provided leadership training. This assures the association's survival and leadership continuity. YO-A and YO-B are also organising huge gatherings wherein they assemble many youth and prospective leaders. Symposiums and camps associated with leadership and SDG are held to boost their camaraderie and present networking prospects. Furthermore, it functions as a forum

for young individuals to express their views on related issues impacting their generation. Thus, it galvanises Malaysian youth for discussing matters pertinent to SDGs.

During Malaysia's COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the three youth associations prioritised the protection of well-being and health issues. The associations made considerable use of social media to encourage social distancing and the requisite precautions to avoid being affected by the deadly illness. For example, YO-A advocated a healthy lifestyle which members and followers could embrace throughout the lockdown. They also contributed towards raising public awareness about the importance of vaccination in the battle against COVID-19. The associations are able to reach a broader audience and target demographics by using social media. More health-related considerations included providing youth advocacy and backing for mental well-being and bipolar disorder, particularly during the lockdown phase when everyone was struggling to adjust to the new norms. Youth associations like YO-A provide programmes to the target group and act as enablers and companions to youth in need of mental and social support. Only a few health-linked initiatives were implemented by YO-B and YO-C. Some programmes organised by both associations have been carried out in both real and virtual environments. They are promoting health education and protection initiatives. First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training as a life-saving method was also provided to the youth and the general public.

Gender equality is one of the initiatives prioritised by YO-A. During the lockdown, the majority of the association's programmes were delivered remotely via a webinar series. One of the YO-A's 2020 programme themes is women's empowerment. Gender discrimination is addressed, as well as sex education, sexual assault and harassment, and role of women in national development. This demonstrates that YO-A values and appreciates women's contribution to society. In Malaysia, just a few youth associations have advocated for gender equality and supported efforts to empower women. Thus, YO-A's commitment to women's empowerment is a matter of pride. Human rights and anti-racism issues are also addressed by YO-A. They advocate for equal treatment for all people, regardless of gender or race. Rather than fostering hatred, the association promotes diversity as a strength. According to this study, YO-B and YO-C do not provide gender equality-related initiatives, implying that SDGs pertaining to equality principles are not their priority. The following Table 2 illustrates that the three youth associations have organised social sustainability-related programmes. However, the types, focus area, and degree of activeness vary depending on the association. It was discovered that all the youth associations focused more on education-related activities and health advocacy, which was actively done during the pandemic. This indicates that the youth associations are more concerned with the education and health issues among the younger generation during COVID-19, which affect the youth's social sustainability. Disaster management, gender equality and human rights issues were less prevalent among these youth associations.

Table 2

Types of SDGs-related Activities Concerning Social Sustainability

Youth Association	Types of SDG-related Activities (Social)					
	Disaster management	Equal access to education	SDG and leadership training	Health advocacy	Gender equality	Human rights
YO-A	/	/	/	/	/	/
YO-B	x	/	/	/	x	x
YO-C	x	/	x	/	x	x

Note: The activeness of the activities varies from each youth association

Activities Related to Economic Sustainability

YO-A is less concerned with long-term economic viability. Just a single webinar on job opportunities was held during the pandemic. YO-B held programmes on economic sustainability as part of the entrepreneurial theme. Entrepreneurship workshops which focus on social entrepreneurship and foster the establishment of small and medium-sized firms were organised. These were carried out with the help of a regional partner. On YO-C's media outlets, there are no mentions of economic or skill development initiatives. According to the analysis, all three youth associations provided fewer (or almost nil) skill development and economic progress training and seminars (refer to Table 3). This indicates that these three associations have paid little attention to economic sustainability initiatives. Nevertheless, the current endeavour has aided the progress of SDG8 in terms of decent work and economic growth.

Table 3

Types of SDGs-related Activities Concerning Economic Sustainability

Youth Association	Types of SDG-related Activities (Economic)	
	Career webinar	Entrepreneurship workshop
YO-A	/	x
YO-B	x	/
YO-C	x	x

Note: The activeness of the activities varies from each youth association.

Activities Related to Environmental Sustainability

YO-A continuously posts topics regarding environmental sustainability on their social media in order to increase awareness amongst the general public as well as educate them. The most commonly highlighted issues include sustainable waste management, low carbon initiatives and climate action. YO-A also continues to market and promote the concept pertaining to 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). It is an effort to make aware and educate members of various associations as well as other target groups regarding the requirement for protecting the environment with efficient disposal of waste sustainably. Other waste management topics have also been emphasised, like food waste as well as other types of waste. For instance, discussion topics like sustainable fashion have now become important to minimise waste in the era of fast-fashion culture. One of the key objectives of the programme is to persuade the younger generation to integrate a sustainable lifestyle. During the pandemic, YO-A taught its members as well as the community regarding efficient disposal of facemasks, as failing to do so could severely impact human and environmental health. All these advocacies pertaining to waste management aim at maintaining a balance in biodiversity.

The advocacy of these associations regarding environmental sustainability prior to the lockdown period was more related to physical activities. For instance, YO-A and YO-C encouraged tree planting, carrying out beach clean-up operations, protecting the mangrove ecosystem, maintaining a balanced biodiversity as well as bringing in innovative nursery techniques in order to develop an edible garden. This provides indirect support for sustainable solutions that foster sustainable living. YO-A also advocates various policies by encouraging members and the community to take up environmental initiatives, like scholarly discussions pertaining to the Paris Agreement's provisions. The youth group is also involved in commemorating important days like Earth Day, Environmental Day, Ocean Day and Wildlife Day to showcase their commitment towards sustainability of the environment.

Another initiative of YO-A and YO-C pertains to safeguarding of endangered animals, which was achieved via their activism work. One of the priorities of YO-C is safeguarding wildlife and sea turtles. Since the creation of YO-C as youth-led association, various wildlife conservation projects have been initiated. Prior to the pandemic, this would be done physically via volunteer work as well as hands-on projects, wherein a majority of the youth participants would coordinate and engage with other NGOs. During the lockdown period, YO-C undertook virtual wildlife conservation projects for educating and make aware the youth regarding safeguarding and saving endangered species in order to secure sustainability as well as continuation pertaining to their programmes. Frequently, YO-C would post short videos and infographics aimed at creating community empathy regarding the biodiversity issue.

YO-A and YO-C carried out their environmental efforts in a digital manner via virtual environmental seminars, webinar series, photos, short films and infographic posts via their official social media channels during the lockdown. The infographic would give attractive and captivating information to grab the reader's attention towards the youth association's specific issues. It also aims to make the community aware of the environment's safeguards. The primary target would be the youth that are involved in the educational system and youngsters from specific communities who can help execute environmental conservation efforts. As per this study, YO-B was found to be less engaging when it concerned environmental goals. Overall, the environmental sustainability activities have been found to be able to contribute towards the following global goals: SDG12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG14 (Life Below Water) and SDG15 (Life On Land). The following Table 4 portrays that YO-A is more engaging with the SDG activities that contribute to the environmental activities.

Table 4

Types of SDGs-related Activities Concerning Environmental Sustainability

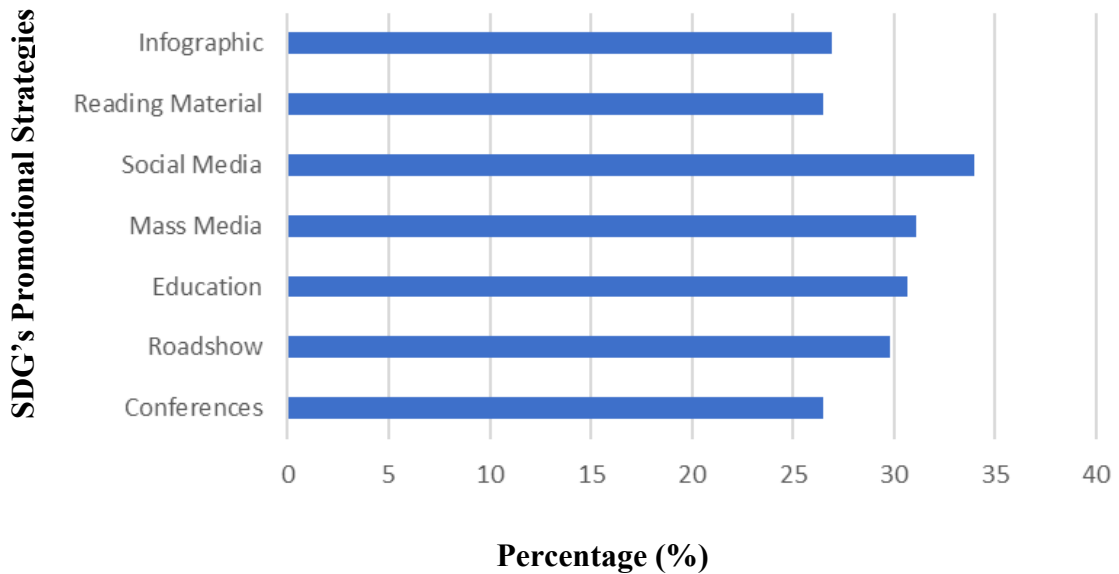
Youth Association	Types of SDG-related Activities (Environment)						
	Sustainable waste management	Low carbon	Climate action	Tree planting	Beach cleaning	Promote environmental laws and policies	Wildlife protection
YO-A	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
YO-B	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
YO-C	x	x	x	/	/	x	/

Note: The activeness of the activities varies from each youth association.

The Appropriate SDGs Promotional Strategy for the Youth in Malaysia

As to explain the second research objective, the subsequent analysis pertains to the put forward SDGs promotional strategies based on the perspective of the youth. It also offers an understanding pertaining to the best manner in which the youth can be engaged with the SDGs. Extraction of the data was done from an online survey that included the university's youth as well as members of youth associations. In relation to Figure 3, Malaysian youth have proposed the best use of social media to educate and raise awareness of the SDGs among the community (and the younger generation). Almost 35% of the respondents agreed on the use of social media to promote the SDGs to the younger population. Using social media has been considered as the most efficient and effective approach to make the community aware of SDGs, as most of them have at least one personal social media account. These findings are in line with this study's social media analysis, which has identified that the three youth associations have employed social media platforms like Facebook to promote SDGs amongst the younger generation.

Figure 3
SDG Promotional Strategies



SDGs can also be promoted via mass media, which can be regarded as the second most effective strategy. The findings show that more than 30% of the younger generation still consider mass media to be an effective medium that can help with the promotion of sustainability. Traditional mediums like radio, television and newspapers can also be employed to create awareness amongst a larger population about SDGs, particularly for non-social media users. The use of social and mass media specifies that these two mediums can be regarded as the most practical approaches towards promoting SDGs to a larger population. Social media could also be employed to approach a younger generation that is always referred to as “digital natives”. Simultaneously, mass media can be employed to target the non-social media user, typically the other generation cohort. Both media are complementary to reaching the specific target audience.

As per the respondents, educating the population on SDGs is regarded to be the third best approach. This has been confirmed by more than 30% of the study’s respondents. As per the previous literature, informal and formal education can be considered as a way for promoting sustainability principles amongst community as well as young generation. This includes integrating both off-class and in-class activities pertaining to the learners who face the issues associated with sustainable development. Based on their observation as well as real experiences, these learners can put forward sustainable solutions that can deal with specific issues. This could also be a way in which learners can be exposed to identifying sustainability issues that could impact them in the future. Previous works of literature have also described that promotion of SDGs for the youth should be done via education and activities.

The survey result showed that the least effective strategies pertaining to promotion of SDGs would be conferences and reading materials. This also suggests that in the country, SDGs should be exposed by employing interactive strategies instead of formal platforms (i.e. academic discussion, conferences and forums). This clarifies that youth tend to choose the most easily accessible way for gaining information regarding SDGs, like employing the existing social and mass media.

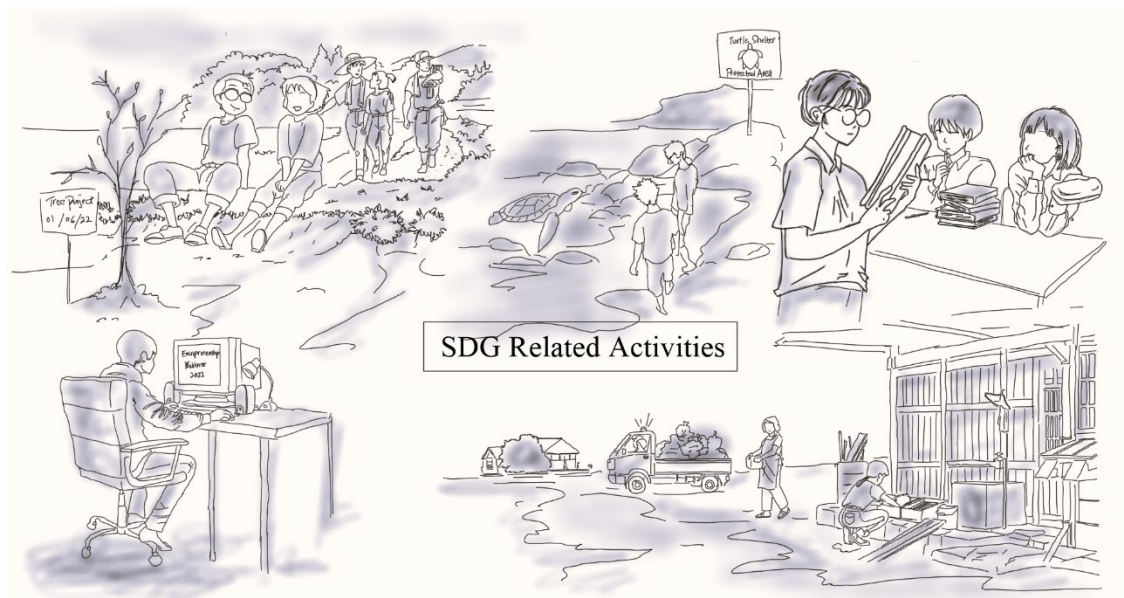
DISCUSSION

The study has identified that the three selected youth associations have focused on more than one sustainability pillar for promoting their SDG-associated activities. They integrated the economic, social or environmental issues related to sustainability principles in their activities, as portrayed on their social media, Facebook. However, these three youth associations are less focused on activities associated with economic sustainability. Regarding social sustainability, most youth associations focus on health (i.e. mental health and depression) and education, as both were alarming issues to the younger population during the pandemic. This study discovered that only a few youth associations were dedicated to environmental sustainability activities, and they were done in physical or virtual mode.

Illustration 1 shows the SDGs activities pertaining to youth associations that have been considered in this study. Their key activities include health support, education-based programmes, biodiversity conservation and social welfare protection. All these activities are aimed at enhancing social well-being as well as fulfilling the basic needs of target groups. Offering enhanced access to education as well as social welfare assistance has shown that these youth associations have made an effort to address the critical issue of the Malaysian community: poverty. Their activism turned more evident and sought after, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic period and natural disasters that hit Malaysia in the past few years. For instance, a few of the youth associations were seen to offer mental health support as it was proven that during the lockdown period, the youth suffered from mental health concerns (Alam et al., 2021). These associations also initiated crowdfunding in order to help the impacted community, particularly during the pandemic situation. It enabled them to help the affected community by channelling food assistance as well as educational materials to the students.

Illustration 1

Types of SDG-related Activities Organised by the Youth Associations



However, prior to the pandemic period, their activities were more concentrated on face-to-face and physical activities like voluntary work and environmental protection activities. For them, it was easy to garner more participation as well as approach their target groups without any limitations. However, during the pandemic period, these associations continued to actively promote their advocacy by employing online platforms and execute their activities via virtual campaigns as well as webinars to minimise the risk of getting infected. On the brighter side,

online activities allowed them to reach a broader audience from everywhere without being restricted by mobility and accommodation problems. During the pandemic, they also had a chance to identify new issues to be advocated, transforming their roles as youth advocates. This situation, according to Mohanty et al. (2019), is a way for how youth could become role models in addressing sustainability challenges and bringing out actual change. Moreover, as stated in Mahadi et al. (2022), participating in SDGs will strengthen youth leadership values.

According to this research, social media is found to be very useful for these youth associations to spread awareness regarding SDGs and describe their activities related to the global agenda. These activities were done in the form of publishing infographics and organising webinars with topics related to sustainable development. This shows that social media like Facebook is the youth association's primary medium of SDG awareness and works as a virtual space for young people to discuss sustainability issues (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021; Sheridan et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the youth associations in this study do not seem to enhance the Facebook use in promoting their association and their SDG undertakings. It is indicated in the regularity of their posts and presence in the virtual space. The reason could be that other platforms like Twitter and Instagram are more in trend among the Malaysian youth. Nonetheless, the associations still use Facebook as a social media platform to reach a wider audience and spread the SDG's message. By continuing to use social media to promote sustainability, it shows that associations (including youth societies) must keep publicising the sustainability ideologies and act on them, as recommended by de la Casa and Caballero (2021).

This study has significantly contributed to how SDGs and sustainable development concepts are being communicated in youth associations. In short, it can be said that the spread of SDGs awareness by these youth associations is at the informative and participatory level, based on Saleh et al. (2021) and de la Casa and Caballero (2021). The goals are to keep the youth and other social groups aware about the SDGs and draw active participation in the movements. The analysis of their social media shows that these associations of the youth are devoted to SDGs, spread awareness about SDGs, provide guidance about SDGs issues, and let members actively participate in SDGs activities. This research also encounters that mass communication and information could uphold the SDGs. Therefore, educational programmes related to sustainability are required so that young learners can be provided more awareness and knowledge, or aspects of sustainability could be included in certain courses as stated in previous studies (Hawa et al., 2021; Ilham et al., 2020; Odelami & Fasakin, 2019; Zamora-Polo et al., 2019).

This research also ascertained that all the three youth associations put emphasis on several SDGs. From the study of the social media, all the youth associations similarly directed their attention on the following SDGs - 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 16, and 17. It suggests that these young members design and launch movements to fulfil the objectives of social sustainability by emphasising on providing basic necessities, such as food, education and health as their main activity. Fulfilling these three basic human necessities may resolve, at some extent, the poverty issues of the community, creating sustainable communities and cities.

In this research, youth associations had also promoted the extensiveness and collaboration in the implementation of their programmes. This suggests that youth associations are required to establish teamwork to implement their activities. Collaboration with participants from various segments will improve the youth association's abilities and proficiency in dealing with real-world issues related to SDGs. Multi-stakeholders' collaboration in SDGs undertakings involving youth could also increase awareness of SDGs and promote more participation (de la Casa & Caballero, 2021). Nonetheless, although the association in this research have emphasised inclusiveness and partnerships in their undertakings, there was not much representation of diverse groups.

However, few SDGs were overlooked and not on the agenda of youth associations: SDG6 (Sanitation and Clean Water), SDG7 (Clean and Affordable Energy) and SDG9 (Infrastructure, Industry and Innovation). In effect, not all such youth groups emphasise SDG5 (Gender Equality) and all of the environmental aims (SDG12, SDG13, SDG14, SDG15). Previous study by Tuan Ismail et al. (2022) has also revealed that younger generation of Malaysia place less significance on the gender equality issue as mentioned in SDG5, portraying the matter as only being promoted by an interested youth group. SDG8 (Economic Growth and Decent Work), related to economic sustainability, also received insufficient consideration from these youth associations. Few programmes are being conducted to expose the specific groups to commercial activities, such as business development and entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is required to take action to enhance economic sustainability since the UN has stated the importance of social entrepreneurship for the youth to promote the advancement of SDGs (UNDESA, 2020).

Overall, these youth associations have been focusing on several significant SDGs for youth sustainability and well-being. The activities organised were on the view that the fulfilment of an SDG will influence the fulfilment of other SDGs based on the idea of spillover. These youth associations have been found to be dedicated and committed to a small number of SDGs, and they will improve the social welfare that contributes towards sustainability. As Mohanty et al. (2019) mentioned, youth is the catalyst for SDG achievement and could provide solutions for creating a sustainable community. Hence, Malaysian youth's contributions to SDGs progression are significant and should be acknowledged in the existing policies related to sustainable development (i.e., Malaysian Plans and the SDGs Voluntary National Review).

CONCLUSION

The concluding remark of this research is that the association formed by youth puts focus on SDGs that are contributory to environmental, economic and social sustainability. Physical and in-person interaction is a widespread programme style employed by these youth associations. Nonetheless, as a result of COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown, youth have come up with a mixed strategy for arranging sustainability events, using virtual and online methods. The Malaysian youth are endlessly dedicated to sustainability schemes as they are the generation that will protect the planet. Therefore, a greater importance has been placed on different efforts to attain social welfare, economic progress and environmental sustainability.

This research has several shortcomings, and its outcomes cannot be universally extrapolated. The youth association that was selected for the purpose of the study did not represent the actual youth populace of Malaysia. As a result, there is a requirement for a more complete analysis involving the younger generation. Moreover, the authors confined the investigation of social media to just the Facebook platform as the official social media preference of the youth association. It was recommended that other social media boards utilised by such associations (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and podcasts) should also be studied to provide better conclusions. The existing youth in education and the workforce must also be studied to determine their viewpoint on the SDGs. This will multiply the number of studies pertaining to the SDGs' progress and may contribute to the research in the matter of sustainable development. Nevertheless, this study furthers the understanding of how SDGs were publicised at the level of the youth associations, offering fresh conclusions in the Malaysian context.

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Surat kami : 700-KPK (PRP.UP.1/20/1)

Tarikh : 20 Januari 2023

Prof. Madya Dr. Nur Hisham Ibrahim
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Cawangan Perak



Tuan,

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