

**Contemporary Youth Wellbeing Assets:
Early Challenges towards Realization of Malaysia Youth Policy**

Haslinda Abdullah, Dzuhailmi Dahalan*, Steven Eric Krauss,
Abdul Hadi Sulaiman & Azimi Hamzah

*Youth Social Health and Well-being Laboratory
Institute for Social Science Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia*

*Corresponding author email:
dzuhailmi@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper intends to analyse the contemporary assets of youth wellbeing in the context of Positive Youth Development (PYD). The development of asset is a concept that synthesis the factors of individual and context. Its existence serves to protect or prevent behaviors that can affect health and able to improve the opportunities and the PYD. The current study shows all internal assets (excluding assets of Healthy Lifestyle) showed a high score compared to external assets score. Nevertheless, Malaysian youth feel they lack the support of the members of the neighborhood, as well as less opportunity to engage in meaningful activities. This lead to the youth do not see themselves as part of the community members. This study involved 6822 respondents aged between 13-17 years from across the country using stratified random sampling technique. Thus, the development of youth no longer should be viewed as an isolated structure but it is even need to combine youth and communities through youth-adult partnerships.

Keywords: *Well Being, Youth Asset, Positive Youth Development, Malaysia Youth Policy*

Introduction

The Malaysia Youth Wellbeing Studies and Assets is to become one of the main Malaysian Youth Policy (MYP) mechanisms assessment to be carried out in 2018. Asset development is a concept of positive human development that synthesizes context and individual factors. Its existence serves to protect or prevent behaviors that affect health and highlight the existing potential. At the same time, it seeks to increase positive developmental outcomes. Theory and research related to asset development/community development assets are designed to reframe

human development goals and direction so that the whole image of the power and potential of individuals can be highlighted (Benson, 2007).

Methodology

This paper highlighted the finding of the Youth Assets 2015 alone (Haslinda et al., 2015). This study uses a quantitative approach in understanding the development of the welfare of youth in Malaysia. It was designed as a long-term study with a pilot study in 2014 as a baseline to a series of subsequent studies. This study uses the concept of 'national survey of secondary school students aged between 13 and 17 years. The age range is adopted based on baseline studies that shows there is a need for youth information as early as possible to enable early intervention to take place. The sample consisted of high school students nationwide. Stratified random sampling was used to identify areas, schools and respondents. Since the population of secondary school students in Malaysia are so large (222,718 students), a group of researchers have decided the sample for this study was between 6500 to 7000 respondents. This means nearly 500 respondents per country (14 states) is estimated to have participated in this study.

Research Findings

Research shows all internal assets recoded a higher score than the external assets except assets 9, i.e. domain Healthy Lifestyle Practices indicating a low percentage compared to other internal assets. The findings show that young Malaysians generally see elements of oneself and relationships with others as a source of strength to control internal assets at a high level compared to external support elements that include family, school and community.

The findings indicate expectations; Constructive Use of Time; Learning commitments; Social competence; and Healthy Lifestyle Practices) at the level of 'good' based on interpretation of domain asset score (51-75%). Meanwhile, 3 domain assets are at the level 'excellent' with a score between 76-100%.

Almost the majority of the assets (23 out of 48 assets) were around score 75.1-100%, which is interpreted as an asset 'excellent'. 15 of which consists of internal assets of which 5 recorded the highest development assets are Positive View of Personal Future (88.6%); Patient (84.9%); Responsibility (83.3%); Obstacles Facing skills and Hygiene (82.7%); and Social Justice (81.5%). Meanwhile, there are 7 external assets recorded a score of 'excellent' in which 3 assets recorded the highest development of Family Support (88.5%); Family Limitation (84.4%); and

High Expectations (82.7%). All these scores indicate Malaysian youths feel they lack the support of the members of the neighbourhood (score over a moderate level), as well as less opportunity to engage in meaningful activities. The indicators presented in neighbourhood asset are the relationship with the neighbours and the youth or youth involvement in community activities. Youth also see their neighbourhood as not 'youth-friendly' except their relationship with their own family and their experiences at school. In the biological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) the development of youth, families, schools and society are seen as three important factors that affect the healthy development of young people. From these findings, two of the three elements that seem to exist and be felt in the lives of youth in Malaysia, while the neighbourhood is seen as less 'youth-friendly'. This matter should be given attention.

The low scores on assets Sleep and Nutrition Habits reflect the low level seen in the domain of Healthy Lifestyle Practice among respondents. Although this scenario is quite common among the youth, but it shows a trend that is not healthy especially when it is associated with obesity problems involving children and youth in Malaysia. Obesity is closely associated with a pattern of behaviour that is often practiced by someone in the house. It is well known, the youth of today have more choices of food and financial resources to spend. These findings also provide an indicator that the role of parents in the development of children's health should be given serious attention. Therefore, a strong basic education related to healthy eating habits is important to be learned and practiced. Education and awareness programs that promote healthy eating habits, especially in schools needs to be more extended. In fact, parents also need to be made aware of harm unbalanced eating habits, so that controlled aspects of the lifestyle of their children at home can be improved.

Conclusion

It is recognized that the types of relationships existing in the community can help the youth learn and master the interpersonal competence, animates the existing and indirectly increase their zeal to contribute something greater to society and the state. But, in general what can be highlighted from the previous research related to youth development in Malaysia is the willingness of Malaysian youth to 'jump' and 'sink' voluntarily and wholeheartedly in the society is still not visible when MYP discuss the concept PYD as the core policy. Based on the discussions of Youth Asset Review 2015 in this paper, the effort to improve the external assets of the nation's youth needs to be reviewed so that pragmatic steps can be implemented. This is

to make the 'presence' of youth in this country as unique, benefiting the national development and blessed by the 'Creator'.

References

- Azimi, H. & Zanariah, M.N. (2007). Readiness of youth as pillars of developed countries. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Youth Research and Development Malaysia, Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia.
- Benson, P.L. (2007). Developmental assets: An overview of theory, research, and practice. *Approaches to positive youth development*, 33-58.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531.
- Dasar Belia Malaysia (2015). Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Malaysia.
- Dzuhailmi, D., Krauss, S.E., Azimi, H. & Abd. Hadi, S. (2014). Pegangan agama dalam kalangan belia awal pelbagai kaum di Malaysia. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities, e-Bangi*, 9(1), 117-130.
- Haslinda, A., Wasitah, M.Y., Azimi, H., Krauss, S.E., Dzuhailmi, D. & Abd. Hadi, S. (2015). Kajian pembangunan kesejahteraan/aset belia Malaysia: *Laporan Akhir Kajian* - Institut Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia (IYRES), Institut Pengajian Sains Sosial, Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Ismail, R., Ghazalli, M.N., & Ibrahim, N. (2015). Not all developmental assets can predict negative mental health outcomes of disadvantaged youth: a case of suburban Kuala Lumpur. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 452.
- Leffert, N., Benson, P.L., Scales, P.C., Sharma, A.R., Drake, D.R. & Blyth, D.A. (1998). Developmental assets: Measurement and prediction of risk behaviors among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, 2(4), 209-230.
- Scales, P.C. (2000). Building students' developmental assets to promote health and school success. *The Clearing House*, 84-88.
- Scales, P.C. (1999). Reducing risks and building developmental assets: Essential actions for promoting adolescent health. *Journal of School Health*, 69(3), 113-119.
- Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., Leffert, N. & Blyth, D.A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4(1), 27-46.
- Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., Roehlkepartain, E.C., Sesma, A. & Van Dulmen, M. (2006). The role of developmental assets in predicting academic achievement: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29(5), 691-708.

Scales, P.C., Roehlkepartain, E.C. & Fraher, K. (2012). *Do Developmental Assets make a difference in majority-world contexts? A preliminary study of the relationships between Developmental Assets and international development priorities.*

Scales, P.C. & Taccogna, J. (2000). Caring to try: How building students' developmental assets can promote school engagement and success. *NASSP Bulletin*, 84(619), 69-78.

Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., Roehlkepartain, E.C., Sesma, A., & Van Dulmen, M. (2006). The role of developmental assets in predicting academic achievement: A longitudinal Study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29, 691-708.

Wasitah, M.Y. (2012). Penerapan Elemen Pembangunan Belia Positif dalam Perencanaan Program Rakn Muda Jiran Muda. Tesis PhD Tidak Diterbitkan. UPM Serdang.