AT-RISK GENERATION Z: VALUES, TALENTS AND CHALLENGES

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ⓘ **Azlina Abdullah**[1+]
ⓘ **Mohd Mahadee Ismail**[2]
ⓘ **Aminah Albani**[3]

[1]*Senior Lecturer, Social, Environment and Developmental Sustainability Research center, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor, Malaysia*
[2]*Senior Lecturer, Department of Government and Civilisation Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang Selangor, Malaysia.*
[3]*Postgraduate Student, Social, Environment and Developmental Sustainability Research center, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor, Malaysia*

(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, the opportunity to acquire for education and training are widely open to all individuals, regardless of their ethnics and demographic backgrounds. As a civilized society, it is a collected responsibility to ensure there is no one among the young people generation who are left behind to enjoy the country's prosperity and grab the opportunities arising in the era of globalization together. In fact, teenagers or young generation who are considered at risk should not be regarded as a problem to society or the state. We have accepted that every individual has the potential to be highlighted and shared if they are given a meaningful chance and opportunity. The study on "At-risk Generation Z: Values, talents and life challenges in the 21st century and the future" attempts to discuss the growth of changing in the state and society, particularly in the economic, political and social development based on the context of globalization and cyber world today also their impact on the at-risk Generation Z. The main research problem of this study is related to the current debate about the Generation Z and the question of their identity, values, potential and talents. What are the identity and values of the at-risk Generation Z, how to develop their potential and talents in order encourage them towards creating an innovative idea, and thus how they can utilize their potentials and talents in confronting the challenges in the future along the mainstream youth. This situation is equivalent with the objectives of National Youth Policy which aims to highlight the potential of each youth to celebrate diversity and differences. The study will also try to get the reaction and views from Generation Z about their expectations and life challenges they faced at present time and in the future. The data collection process using mixed method combining the quantitative and qualitative methods. This study involves 400 respondents among at-risk Generation Z who have been identified and engaged in deviant behavior and family in poverty. With education and training opportunities, exposure to new experiences along with the aspiration to change, can certainly be a driving force to the at-risk Generation Z to learn, recognize their potential, nurture their talent, and increase the capacity and resilience to the current social change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made significant changes to all the communities around the world. These significant changes created numbers of problems which require debates and solutions. In the context of today's global development and cyber world, Malaysian populations also been affected of these changes including the youngers among Generation

Z. The new world thinking order through the process of the market system and the cyber world would give a new challenge to the Generation Z.

Today, the expansion and innovation in information technology have increased better information which can be used to develop the nation. Simultaneously, the 'global village' information and communications technology can also give negative impacts on the current social harmony. These kinds of social media have successfully formed a social interaction platform for the young generation to exchange their views and share the information to other community in the fastest connections. This situation is assumed to be able to foster a healthy and good solidarity and nationalism for prosperity.

Abdul (2014) stressed that the trend of young population particularly among well-educated people is increasing until the year 2020. This situation implied that the role of young people in the changes of the community is very significant to build the country in the future. Furthermore, the connections and skills of the young people to the internet technology and openness of cyberspace will enable them to use it for the community empowerment purposes.

1.1. Past Studies on Today Young Generation

In the past ten years, the literatures and studies on youths were more emphasized on the question of identity, self-esteem and patriotism among youths (Mohd, 2015), youth and information technology, youth and 1Malaysia nation, youth, political participation and new media. On top of that, many studies also focused on the youth perspective as contributor to the social problems, including crime such as illegal racing, drug abuse, free sex and pregnancy out of wedlock, delinquency and crime and so forth.

Besides, research on the youth development or young talent is still lacking, or too general in nature. A book which was published by Universiti Putra Malaysia Publisher has specifically discussed about youth development in the 21st century with 13 chapters focused on two main themes of youth and ICT and youth issues. This book mentioned that youth roles and views are significantly important to be considered by all parties in order to implement a clear framework to develop various national policies with a proper and effective perspective (Nobaya, 2009).

There are also recent comparative studies between generations. Master's thesis by Nur (2015) and Tan (2012) studied about the Generations X and Y in the workplace with focusing on deviant behaviors and motivation in the workplace. Nur Ain found that the Generation X more often engaged in malpractice behavior in the workplace in comparison with the Generation Y. Whereas Tan stated that the level of motivation among the Generations X and Y is significantly different. Beside the question of young generation identity, behavior and motivations, the study on traveling culture, purpose and with whom they were going for travel, and also consumerism culture while traveling, especially in choosing hotels and foods, are also attracted by the researcher such as Tan (2015). Hasni (2014) studied on saving habits and the factors affecting financial literacy among the Generation X.

An interesting study on the soft skills among youth entitled 'Social competence in emerging adults' done by Ang et al. (2013) was based on the soft skills definition made by MOHE, and examined to what extent the approach of education and school systems influenced social competence among the youth. Ang emphasized that there was a need to develop human capital to sustain socio-economic development and technological innovation in the country. In order to achieve these goals, it is very important for youth to acquire social competence so that they can compete at the international level. However, an increasing number of unemployed graduates have shown a lack of social competence among graduates.

2. GENERATION Z CONCEPTUALIZATION, AT-RISK YOUTH, VALUES AND TALENTS

2.1. Generation Z

Generation Z is a generation of young people who were born between 1995 and 2009. This generation was born and grew up during the digital era with a diversity of complex and sophisticated communication devices or gadgets such as iPads, PDA, smartphone, tablet, BBM and other electronic devices. Social media applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Wechatt, Twitter and others have successfully formed a main social interaction platform for young people to exchange their views and share the information to other community in the fastest connections.

The usage of the internet with various gadgets, directly and indirectly, has influenced the personal development and behaviors of the young people. In short, Generation Z is very much related to the technology at all times along their daily lives. They have a sense of freedom, curiosity, exploration of a new and meaningful experiences and internet according to their own needs, preferable to make their own decision, thinking about personal satisfaction and social effects especially among their millennium friends.

2.2. At-Risk Youth

Many scholars argued that all children are in a risk category. However, they faced different levels of risk. Risky youth is often referred to children, adolescents or young people who are stigmatized in risky situations. The risky situations can be identified based on factors that are considered as risky and involved either the adolescents themselves, their families or surrounded communities. The risky that are embodied in adolescents are like inability characteristics, low self-confidence, or victims of abuse.

An adolescent is also can be considered as risky if the family background and surroundings in which they grow up are at risk and can influence the development of childhood lives. The risky family background and surroundings are such as poverty, single mother/father family, and low educational level family. Despite those factors, the other risky situations which can influence the meaning of risky youth are community factor, the neighborhood or school. The situations like low-income communities, the high rates of crimes in the neighborhood areas and rates of students leaving primary school are considered as a negative environment which can influence the progressive and development of good adolescents and young people. Risky young people can be identified through the school records system, data sources or administrative statistics, survey findings on young people or families, statistical population, local government data and so forth.

To sum up, risky youth can be categorized as risky based on several indicators which involving adolescents, families or surrounding communities. Indicators such as the level of literacy, school dropout, experience of abusive, physical disability or suffered from particular disease and problems of attitudes can be identified at an individual level. While indicators such as poverty, low early education at home, the large numbers of siblings, homeless, single mother or father, highly dependent on welfare, dysfunctional family, abuse or domestic violence and various problems in the family are considered as risky at family level. At the community level, the measurement of risky communities includes poverty, crime, unemployment or pregnancy out of wedlock.

2.3. Generation Z Values and Talents

In the 21st century, globalization has made significant changes to all the communities around the world. Young people are among the most affected group of the globalization, especially in the rapid development of cyberspace today. The new world thinking today through the process of the market system and the cyber world would give a new challenge to the young people. The influence of global cultural integration into the local identity can be seen through the community of consumerism culture particularly among young people. Global change, namely economic or cultural globalization, and inability of young people to escape from these changes, have put their economic position particularly, in risky and uncertainty condition compared to the previous generation.

Mass media always labeled the young people as future country's leadership, valued state assets and as the main factor in determining the successful or failure of the country in the future. "If we want to perceive the country in the future, we have to look at our today's young people. If their morality is good and virtuous, of course, the country in the future will definitely will be in stable and prosper. But if otherwise, then the society needs to prepare to face with any negative possibilities in the community and country". The weak generation, either in terms of physical, thinking, intellectual, morality and not talented, can be considered as contributors to the destruction of the country. Therefore, in Malaysia, the development of human capital should not only focus on high level of knowledge, but also need to stress on the talented benchmarks with high creativity and innovation. This should be a priority in the national development policy.

2.4. Generation Z At-Risk Study in Malaysia: Values, Talents and Life Challenges in the 21ˢᵗ Century and the Future

The life of today's young generation is strongly influenced by cultural trends, technology and current social issues. In fact, the world economic condition and changes in the local economic is certain to happen, especially with the formation of ASEAN community, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) and fall in global oil prices will be a major challenge to the young generation. The impact of globalization on young people can be seen through a variety of complex ways and this situation required young people to rethink on their sense of identity and place in the society. Thus, in the context of the rapid changes of the world and Malaysia particularly, various issues and challenges existed in developing the potential, talent and innovation of the young generation which is important to study for the future country development and prosperity purposes.

Malaysia is clearly stated in the national transformation agenda which was introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak who has put the development of youth talent as one of the key elements in the national agenda. Even, one of the Malaysian Youth Policy (NYP) 2015 statements is to strengthen and highlight the potential of youth as a leader of country strategic development in the future based on the Federal Constitution and Rukun Negara. There are three NYP main goals about young people, firstly – to increase youth involvement at the national, regional and international levels as responsible citizens in various initiatives; secondly – to highlight the potential of each youth and celebrate diversity and difference; and thirdly - to expand the access towards priority areas and youth development initiatives as to make it beneficial to all target groups.

The research on "Generation Z At-Risk: Values, Talents and Life Challenges in the 21ˢᵗ century and the future" is a study under Young Researchers Incentive Grant (GGPM-2016-020), University Kebangsaan Malaysia for the years 2016-2017. This study is still in early stage. This study attempts to discuss the growth of changing in the state and society, particularly in the economic, political and social development based on the context of globalization and cyber world today and also their impact on the Generation Z specifically the risky Z-generation. The focus of the study on the risky Generation Z is assumed that Generation Z is living in this mainstream spectrum, especially those who are in the positive environment or surroundings such as in higher education institutions and good achievement in education at primary or secondary school, then their ability to build their lives and the future is higher than risky Generation Z. Moreover, various youth and adolescent programs in many national and international levels were found to mainly involve the target groups among the mainstream Generation Z.

The main research problem of this study is related to the current debate about the Generation Z and the question of their identity, values, potential and talents. What are the identity and values of the risky Generation Z, how to develop their potential and talents in order to encourage them towards creating an innovative idea, and thus how they can utilize their potentials and talents in confronting the challenges in the future along the mainstream Generation Z. This situation is equivalent with the objectives of NYP which aims to highlight the potential of each youth to celebrate diversity and differences. In summary, this study aims to identify the at-risk Generation Z profile

with a focus on the at-risk generation who has potential and talent, but, they are living in poor family group and also the adolescents who are engaged in deviant behavior. This study will identify and examine their identity, values and talents. On top of that, the study will also try to get the reaction and views from Generation Z about their expectations and life challenges they faced at present time and in the future.

The data collection process combined the quantitative and qualitative methods by using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. This study involved 400 respondents among Malaysian Generation Z at-risk. Purposive sampling method was used in the sample selection process. Secondary data was obtained from official sources related institutions, websites, empirical studies of previous scholars, mass media reports and other authority sources. Data obtained through this mixed method will be integrated using a triangulation approach so that all collected data will complement to each other in addressing the problems and research questions.

3. CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, the opportunity to acquire for education and training are widely open to all individuals, regardless of their ethnics and demographic backgrounds. Hence, with this education and training opportunities, exposure to new experiences along with the aspiration to change, can certainly be a driving force to the Generation Z at-risk to learn, recognize their potential, nurture their talent, and increase the capacity and resilience to the current social change in line with mainstream Generation Z. Exposure and advancement over the internet technology with a strong identity and moral values definitely will be beneficial to their talent development and the creation of innovation for the advantage of their future. As a civilized society, it is a collected responsibility to ensure there is no one among the young people generation who are left behind to enjoy the country's prosperity and grab the opportunities arising in the era of globalization together. In fact, teenagers or young generation who are considered at risk should not be regarded as a problem to society or the state. However; we have to accept that every individual has the potential to be highlighted and shared if they are given a meaningful chance and opportunity. Thus, an effort and creative action in identifying potential and building talent among the young generation must be implemented continuously.

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