MOBILIZING YOUTH IN CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM: A CASE OF MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Reducing Crime is one of the efforts that had been outlined in the Government Transformation Program (GTP) by the Malaysia Government. Various policies and efforts had been implemented to minimize crime rate and subsequently improve the quality of life of the citizens. Many programs and policies as counter measures of crime involving youth were also done. Nonetheless, it does not really address the whole problem. For instance, the government introduced the Reducing Crime National Key Results Area (NKRA) to combat crime, as well as upgraded public security and the performance of the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM). The rate of crimes committed by youths has increased although the overall crime index in the country has decreased. Hence, concerted actions not only by all enforcement and related government machineries are necessary but more significantly the initiative and involvement of all Malaysians are required. Since youth constitutes around 45 percent of the Malaysia total population, their participation in combating crime in community is very crucial. Therefore, this paper tried to explore crime issues and situation involving youth in Malaysia and how to mobilize them in all of the strategies and programs outlined in the country. Based on the survey towards more than 800 youth respondents in Malaysia, the findings revealed that youth involvement in the community has the potential to maximize their sense of community and eventually avert crime.

Keywords: Crime, Prevention, Youth, Program.

Introduction

Safety of lives and properties of citizenry is the highest priority of any community or government (Maslow, 1976). A secured environment has a major contribution to robust as well as sustained

economic wellbeing and growth of the society. Public security is known to be one of the vital pillars towards becoming an advanced nation by 2020. However, the local media have been replete with reports of crimes and violence in Malaysia such as snatch thefts, sexual crimes, and kidnappings, in the last few years (Sidhu, 2006). According to the National Transformation Programme (NTP) Annual Report 2016, the rate saw an annual decrease of 9% annually between 2010 until 2016. In 2009, there is a total of 209,817 number of cases recorded while last year, it dropped to a total 112,354 cases (Ashwin, 2017). Even though there was significant reduction in the crime rate, the trend showed an emerging pattern of aggressive behaviour among youths in Malaysia (Hariati, 2017).

Crime is a serious and growing international problem. It has given rise to a variety of problems related to fear of crime and has become a major trouble for residents in urban areas (Nasar & Jones, 1997). Crime can have a negative effect on communities and country at large. The negativity of crime could go beyond the residents of the community in which the crime occurs, but, can further lead to unsafe feeling and adverse effects to public motivation, attitude, behavior, and their overall activities. While, fear of crime is an emotional reaction and a sense of fear as well as anxiety that makes the individual believe himself to be in a state of risk of the threat of crime (Lee, 2001; Farrall, Gray, & Jackson, 2007). Consequently, crime and fear of crime could affect job achievement which then may lead to unstable economic level. Even developed States suffer crimes, most particularly in areas where the population is dense, and income disparities are high. In Malaysia, the fear of crime among the public is high although the crime rate is decreasing. The people still have doubts and skeptical about public safety despite a huge reduction in the crime index (Razak, 2017).

Specifically, property crimes, the crime index in Malaysia recorded an increase of 4.6 percent between January and April, 2016. According to Director, Federal Police Crime Prevention and Community Safety Department Director, there are about 38,877 number of property crimes recorded in the first quarter of 2016 that involved 12,216 motorcycle thefts, 6662 house break-ins and 3656 cases involving cars.

The most worrying are that some cases of crimes were committed by youth has increased in Johor, Kedah, Melaka and Kelantan states and Johor with highest increase of about 0.45 percent (Royal Malaysia Police Department, 2008). This report indicates that the rate of crimes committed by youths has increased although the overall crime index in the country has decreased. In this regard, UNODC (2005) stressed that crime was both the cause and consequence of poverty, insecurity, and under-development. Addressing crime, therefore, is a necessary precursor to youth revitalization efforts. Youth are heavily at risk of becoming involved in criminal activities. They are more likely to involve in gangs which can lead to serious consequences like becoming victims of rival gang clashes. This is due to their unawareness that they may be a part of a gang without they realized and join the gang activities like fights, seek for revenge and so on (MCFP, 2014).

Recognizing crime and fear crime issues in Malaysia, the government implemented crime reduction programmes such as National Key Results Area (NKRA) based on Government Transformation Plan (GTP) during the Tenth Plan (2011 – 2015) to combat crime, upgrade public security and the performance of the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM). Considering the fact that crimes rate among youths is rising in Malaysia (The Star/Asia News Network, 2011; Mohd

Farhaan, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to involve youths in all of the strategies and programs outlined in the country in order to speed up the government efforts to reduce crime as stated as the first NKRA in Government Transformation Program (GTP). Hence, this paper tries to explore crime issues and situation involving youth in Malaysia and how to mobilize them in all of the strategies and programs outlined in the country. Specifically, the study attempts to determine whether youth play major roles in crime prevention program in the community and how to enhance their involvement and participation.

Literature Review

Over the last few decades, many cities around the world have seen alarming increases in the levels of youth crime. Deviance, crime and disorder occur in every society and Malaysia is no exception. Even stricter punishments had been imposed on the previous criminals, serious crimes are still happening. In fact, Everson and Pease (2001) highlighted that there are offenders who were brave enough to repeat the same crimes thus contributed for the bulk of detected crime against the same victim. Crime or more specifically criminal and violent behavior has become a major concern in recent years across the world and have gained considerable popularity in term of the number of researches being conducted and results being debated (Baharom & Muzaffar, 2008). There is some thought such that crimes only happened at the particular time. As one of the experts, Levisohn, (2009) argued that fraud is increasing during the time of recessionary where the country was having difficulties in economic by the time at where the crimes occurred. Crime rates vary extremely across regions and countries. Aldrin et al. (2012) state that the issue has given rise to various problems in terms of fear of crime and has become a major disturbance for residents in urban areas (Nasar & Jones, 1997) even they have null experiences as the victims. This can be explained by public knowledge of crime and justice are derived from the media (Dowler, 2003). Even it is accepted that there is a crime that was not reported, the crime rate is still high. This phenomenon told us that our efforts in preventing crime are vital since the crime, through both of its impact on the victims and indirect effects on the wider community has such a strong links to both health and wellbeing of the entire population around the world. Any discussion of deviance or crime remains incomplete without a further discussion on its definition regardless how serious the crime is.

Crime is thought to be a complex phenomenon that has various cumulative effects on the aspects of finance and psychology such as the loss of justice, insurance, security, property, and victimization (Laleh and Mostafa, 2015). Past research has found that students who were affected and became victims of crime have the poor academic achievement (MacMillan and Hagan, 2004; Wei and Williams, 2004). Another effect includes Malaysia's high crime rate has turned tourists away thus affect our country's income. Crime is related to both harm and violence; harm to individuals, destruction of property, and the denial of respect to people and institutions and the issue of crime becomes more worrying since the criminal act will lead to the loss of the victims' lives while the crime occurs (Birkbeck and Lafree, 1993). According to (Adler, Mueller and Laufer, 2004), crime is the violation of some law that causes harm to others'. Another scholar, (Crowther, 2007) has put forward his idea of crime such that it consists of acts that contravene the law and act therefore punishable by the criminal justice system. Thus, crime can be viewed as a harmful behavior that might affect society's daily activities and their lifestyle.

In Malaysia, the statistics of juvenile delinquency is increasing year by year (Rosilawati, et.al, 2016). According to the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), occurrences of crime can be considered into two types, which are index crimes and non-index crimes (Aldrin et al., 2012). Index crimes are crimes that are normally reported and have sufficient significance to be considered as vital as an indication towards the level of crime, for instance property crimes such as house break-ins (Syerrina and Nuzlinda, 2014; Aldrin et al., 2012). Non-index crimes on the other hand, comprise cases of crime that are not considered to be a measurement of crime streams. Non-indexed crimes usually involve crimes that are more commercial in nature such as fraud cases, insurance fraud, currency forgery, breach of trust and others (Aldrin et al.,2012).

Youth in Crime Prevention

The increasing number of crime in Malaysia has heightened the public consciousness and has created an urgency to tackle this problem (TANG, 2009). Prior to this, Malaysia government has established Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) in the year 1993 as a part of government effort to prevent crime. As a non-governmental organization, MCPF has objectives to be realized which are promoting awareness of crime prevention; rehabilitation of offenders at all times; getting public participation in crime prevention efforts of the Government and other interested parties and NGOs. The final achievement for MCPF is to have peace and stability and manageable crime level in Malaysia (MCPF, 2014). Volunteer Petrol Control Scheme (SRS) is one of the program proposed to curb the crime. According to Minister in the Prime Minister Department, the program has helped to reduce the national crime index by 9.8 percent in 2011. The achievement of the program lies from the involvement of the community in the certain area in which SRS strengthen the capacity of the policy service as well as involving the community to reduce crime.

More importantly, crime rates have also spiked among the country's youth. Most observations show that majority of the youth are in crime because of poverty, which drove them into criminal acts for survival (Omboto et al., 2012; Prior & Paris, 2005). Another reason is youth tend to imitate, and they are easily influenced to get involved in crimes. In some cases, crimes committed by the youth are out of excitement games not related to constructive living (Omboto et al., 2013). Hornby (2007) defined youth as the time of life when a person is young especially the time before a child grows into an adult. Mostly, youth is defined as "the passage from a dependant childhood to independent adulthood" when young people are in transition between a world of rather secure development to a world of choice and risk (Eurostat 2009: 17)

The National Youth Policy (2010:10) in its position on the meaning of youth hypothesized that "the way in which a nation describes its youth is related to the object conditions and realities that exist on ground especially historical and contemporary socio-economic and political issues that need to be addressed." Authoritative expert from Universiti Malaya, mentioned that the age of youth in Malaysia are between 15 and 40 years old. This aligns with the definition by The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia which states that youth are the generation who fall under the same age. However, as preparation for Malaysia to be a developed nation by the year 2020, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has reviewed the National Youth development Policy (1997). The amendment was made in defining youth where their range of ages are in between 15 to 30 years old. According to a statistic from Department of Statistics (2014), the numbers of youth

with the new range of ages are about 9.1 million or 30 percent out of total Malaysian population. Whatever the age limit, youths are women and men who are considered to be young, vibrant, resourceful and who are engaged in social enterprises that need and mental capacity and physical strength (Suleiman, 2006).

Besides that, Ministry of Youth and Sports also has implemented Community Friend Program, also known as Crime Awareness Team as a part of government efforts towards achieving 1Malaysia Idea. The program aims to promote crime issue among young generation. One of the proposed program is Volunteering Youth Squad. By introducing Volunteer Program, the ministry hopes to reduce crime rates, specifically street crime rate and ultimately will satisfy the Key Performance Indicator for the Minister of Youth and Sport. Under the umbrella of Program Rakan Muda, the effort has been focused on "help to prevent" and "help to not involve in crime" among youth and finally will reduce the crime rate.

Methodology

This study employed quantitative approach which data were collected via survey questionnaire. The populations of the study were youth ages 15-40 years old (set in according to Youth Development Policy 1997) throughout Malaysia. The respondents were selected based on recommendations and selections from various youth association in Malaysia. The instrument consists of demographic background and youth involvement in crime association and crime prevention programs. Part C contains ten items on youth involvement in crime prevention in community. Quantitative data were descriptively analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Similarly, reliability via Cronbach alpha (section C, 0.888 and section D, 0.849) and normality tests through skewness and kurtosis (section C, -0.689; 0.468 and section D, -0.241; -0.120) were performed to ascertain the validity of the instruments and constructs used in the study. The findings provide a more integrated framework of mobilizing youth in the community to combat crimes. Also, the study highlights and acknowledges the importance of public participation in policy making process, including the stage of policy implementation.

Findings

The result of the study was based on 953 sets of questionnaires from the total of one thousand sets that were distributed among the respondents. Due to missing data, 883 out of 953 numbers of data were retained as clean data after data screening processes. The results were analyzed using SPSS based on the research objectives. Similarly, descriptive statistics through frequency and percentage were employed in analyzing items and their corresponding questions.

Demographic

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed base on the data obtained from the questionnaire. There are nine (6) components in this section which are gender, religion, race, state, age and membership of youth association. The following table consists of the data obtained after the screening process.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	f	%
Gender		
Male	358	40.6
Female	524	59.4
Total	**882**	**100.0**
Missing	1	-
Religion		
Islam	774	87.8
Buddha	41	4.6
Hindu	21	2.4
Christian	44	5.0
Others	2	.2
Total	**882**	**100.0**
Missing	1	-
Bangsa		
Malay	739	84.2
Chinese	52	5.9
Indian	23	2.6
Others	64	7.3
Total	**878**	**100.0**
Missing	5	-
State		
Perlis	1	.1
Kedah	216	24.5
Pulau Pinang	3	.3
Perak	4	.5
Selangor	70	7.9
Kuala Lumpur	3	.3
Negeri Sembilan	1	.1
Sarawak	70	7.9
Melaka	3	.3
Johor	209	23.7
Pahang	27	3.1
Terengganu	2	.2
Kelantan	200	22.7
Sabah	71	8.0
Labuan	3	.3
Total	**883**	**100.0**

Age		
15 to 20	119	13.5
21 to 25	480	54.6
26 to 30	148	16.8
31 to 35	76	8.6
36 to 40	56	6.4
Total	**879**	**100.0**
Missing	4	-
Membership of Youth Association		
Yes	111	12.8
No	759	87.2
Total	**870**	**100.0**
Missing	6	-

The results of the above the demographic table shows that most the respondents are female with 59.4 percent (n=524) while male respondents represent 40.6 percent (n=358). Also, this analysis explores five (5) religions which are Islam, Buddha, Hindu, Christianity and Others. The finding of the analysis showed that dominant of respondents were (87.8 percent, n=774) members of Islamic religion. Similarly, of the four different races of the respondents, Malay recorded (84.2%; n=739) the highest number of respondents and Indian recorded the lowest number of respondents with only 2.6 percent (n=23).

More so, Kedah recorded the highest number of respondents with 24.5 percent (n=216) while both Perlis and Negeri Sembilan recorded the least percentage number of respondents with only 0.1 percent (n=1) respectively. The majority of the respondents' age are 21-25 years old which are equal to 54.6 percent (n=480) and respondents in the age between 36-40 years old are the least number of respondents with 6.4 percent (n=56). There are 4 (four) missing data identified in this variable. Few of the respondents are membership of youth association with only 12.8 percent (n=111). Majority of respondents are not members of such association with 87.2 percent (n=759) with six of the items as missing data.

Role of Youth in Crime Prevention in Community

Youth should be involved in organizing and carrying out approaches to prevent violence in their communities. They contribute a valuable viewpoint on the problem as they build knowledge and skills which will help them make positive contributions to their neighborhoods. Based on the nine developed items to examine the role of youth in crime prevention in community, the items or questions were structured on 5 (five) scale from very disagree, disagree, less disagree, agree, and very agree. The following table is obtained after data screening process pertaining crime prevention through involvement of youth in community.

Table 2: Role of Youth in Crime Prevention

No.	Items/Questions	VD	D	LD	A	VA	Total	M	SD
1.	Youth association either in states or district level should add some more activities and programs pertaining combating crime among youth.	1 (.1)	2 (.2)	36 (4.1)	425 (48.1)	419 (47.5)	883 (100)	4.43	0.595
2.	It is essential for youth to get involved in community in helping to decrease the rate of crime.	2 (.2)	6 (.7)	34 (3.9)	488 (55.3)	353 (40.0)	883 (100)	4.34	0.608
3.	Do youth participate voluntarily at your place?	21 (2.4)	73 (8.3)	242 (27.4)	391 (44.3)	156 (17.7)	883 (100)	3.67	0.941
4.	It is important to create continuous activities and programs related to combating crime among youth.	2 (.2)	4 (.5)	51 (5.8)	489 (55.4)	337 (38.2)	883 (100)	4.31	0.619
5.	The crime rate will decrease if there are awareness among youths in combating crime.	1 (.1)	1 (.1)	52 (5.9)	429 (48.6)	400 (45.3)	883 (100)	4.39	0.613
6.	Youth are being accepted in helping to reduce crime rate at your place.	2 (.2)	20 (2.3)	128 (14.5)	479 (54.2)	254 (28.8)	883 (100)	4.09	0.732
7.	Youth could help in reducing crime rate among them through programs sponsored by youth association at your place.	3 (.3)	8 (.9)	94 (10.6)	518 (58.7)	260 (29.4)	883 (100)	4.16	0.665
8.	Severe punishment should be imposed on youth for those who involved in crime activities.	2 (.2)	9 (1.0)	87 (9.9)	405 (45.9)	379 (43.0)	882 (100)	4.3	0.706
9.	Specific programs should be implemented on youth for those who get involved in crime.	2 (.2)	4 (.5)	53 (6.0)	484 (54.8)	340 (38.5)	883 (100)	4.31	0.623
10.	Community services should be served on youth for those who get involved in crime activities.	5 (.6)	9 (1.0)	60 (6.8)	459 (52.0)	350 (39.6)	883 (100)	4.29	0.687

*f: Frequency, *%: Valid percent, VD: Very Disagree, D: Disagree, LD: Less Disagree, A: Agree, VA: Very Agree, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation

Discussion

Youth is the most important element as future leaders. Almost all governments of countries of the world, including advanced countries have sought new approaches to harness the potential of young people and address the problems facing them (Olaleye, 2010). The youth of a country have a significant impact on the national building as they shape the future of a nation by replacing the previous generation in key cultural, political and social roles. In Malaysia, the government has established and from time to time reviewed National Youth Development Policy to ensure its effectiveness in promoting and supporting nation planning and development. However, as like other country globally Malaysia also facing increasing pattern of crime among youth.

Table 2 above shows that youth association either in states or district level should add some more activities and programs pertaining combating crime among youth (95.6%; n=429), youth to get involved in community in helping to decrease the rate of crime (95.3%; n=429) and youth participation voluntarily at their place 62%; n=429) were roles that youth played in crime prevention. Also, creating continuous activities and programs related to combating crime among youth (93.6%; n=489), awareness among youths in combating crime (93.9%; n=429) and youth are accepted to help in reducing crime at their place (83%; n=429) as a means of crime prevention for youth. In addition, Youth could help in reducing crime rate among them through programs sponsored by youth association at their place (88.1%; n=429), severe punishment should be imposed on youth for those who involved in crime activities (88.9%; n=429) and specific programs should be implemented on youth for those who get involved in crime (93.3%; n=429). Lastly, community services should be served on youth for those who get involved in crime activities (91.6%; n=429) as a means of crime prevention through youth.

In the context of Malaysia, the government has taken divergence ways in the prevention of crime. In the quest of addressing the increase in crime rate in Malaysia, the government initiated "management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible" (Hough et al., 1980). Specifically, the Royal Malaysian Police have set up a new department known as Crime Prevention and Community Safety (CPCS) in 2014. The department is responsible to manage all programs and activities involving crime prevention and community safety. The department have the following objectives:

1) To take proactive and integrated steps pertaining crime prevention aspects.

2) To formulate and determine appropriate policy that aligned with its function.

3) To collect and analyse data to plan the crime prevention strategy.

4) To strengthen its human capital.

5) To create collaboration as well as to enhance positive perception among community on security issues.

6) Responsible as consultative role to cultivate the society to work together in preventing crime.

This approach "actively engage with police and other governmental agencies to help tackle immediate crime problems" (Wortley, 2010; Geason & Wilson, 1988). Based on this study, youth has confirmed it when 95% of the respondents agreed that more programs and activities should be developed and involved them. Furthermore, the government introduced a more social inclusive approach (preventive turn) that not just only deterred youth from crime but also led to transform and engage youth to socio-economic gesture. One of the efforts is community service which viewed by more than 90% respondents to be served on youth who get involved in crime activities This approach employed more actors and stakeholders in the prevention of crime among youth via some programmes.

Conclusion

Like many other countries, Malaysia is also keen to ensure a good quality of life in both urban and rural areas, which is in line with the mission to become an advanced nation by 2020. In other words, both urban and rural areas will experience harmony in work and life within a secure environment. A safe and secure environment is where the population can conduct daily activities freely without fear of any violence or crime. Hence, crime prevention is important for the safety of all Malaysians. Of course, the government played an important role in preventing crime and reducing the crime rate. But in order to strengthen more of this effort, society especially youth should work together to take their part in combating crime. Youth involvement in the community has the potential to maximize youth's sense of community with those around them, and ultimately youths have opportunities to be active agents in their development and to improve communities in which they live (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). This finding is in line with preventive 'turn' as a community Safety approach with a philosophical shift in crime prevention practice. The approach stressed that crime prevention goes beyond police-led dependent, and declared that 'preventing crime is a task for the whole community' and youth inclusive. The intention was to incorporate a wide range of organizations and interests to consider local crime problems and preventive measures.

Acknowledgement

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