

KADAZAN-DUSUN PARTICIPATION IN POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN SABAH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the involvements of Kadazan-Dusun youths from Buayan village in youth development program. The program was implemented with objectives to enhance their soft-skills by using structured group activities. The program focused on seven components of soft skills (i.e., time management, social competence, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, leadership, emotional control and self-confidence). Altogether, 21 rural youths participated in this study who were divided into two groups, (n=7) involved in structured group activities and (n=14) were not involved in structured group activities. A set of questionnaires which consists of two sections were used to measure the demographic profiles and the seven components of soft skills by using 16 items which were adapted from the Life Effectiveness Scale (Neil, 2005). Various activities such as motivational talks, future career talks, youth discussions, motivational song and games were implemented as a part of youth development program. It was assumed that there would be differences in each of the seven components of soft skills between the two groups of youth after program implementation. The Mann Whitney U test was used to analyze the differences between each of the seven components between the two groups. The study however, showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in all components of soft skills after program implementation. The research findings provide some information for researchers to redefine the contents and the duration of youth development program to ensure that the objectives of such program can be achieved.

Keyword: Youth Development Program, Kadazan-Dusun, Time Management, Social Competence, Achievement Motivation, Intellectual Flexibility, Leadership, Emotional Control and Self-Confidence

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini mengenal pasti keberkesanan aktiviti kumpulan berstruktur yang dilaksanakan oleh peserta Program Pembangunan Belia dan Komuniti, Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Kajian ini memfokuskan tujuh komponen kemahiran insaniah (pengurusan masa, kecekapan sosial, motivasi pencapaian, fleksibiliti intelektual, kepimpinan, kawalan emosi dan keyakinan diri) dalam kalangan belia Kadazan-Dusun di Kampung Buayan. Seramai 21 orang belia kampung turut serta dalam kajian ini. Mereka dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan (8 orang terlibat dengan aktiviti kumpulan berstruktur dan 14 orang lagi tidak terlibat dalam sebarang aktiviti). Satu set soal selidik yang mengandungi dua bahagian digunakan bagi

mengukur profil demografi dan tujuh komponen kemahiran insaniah dengan menggunakan 16 item yang diadaptasikan daripada Life Effectiveness Scale (Neil, 2005). Pelbagai aktiviti kumpulan berstruktur seperti ceramah motivasi, ceramah kerjaya, diskusi belia, nyanyian lagu motivasi dan permainan dijalankan. Pengkaji menjangkakan bahawa terdapat perbezaan min bagi setiap komponen dalam kemahiran insaniah antara dua kumpulan belia (iaitu yang terlibat dengan aktiviti dan yang tidak terlibat dalam sebarang aktiviti). Walau bagaimana pun ujian Mann Whitney U mendapati tidak terdapat perbezaan min bagi setiap komponen kemahiran insaniah antara dua kumpulan belia dalam kajian ini. Dapatan kajian ini memberikan informasi kepada pengkaji untuk menilai kembali kandungan aktiviti dan tempoh masa bagi pelaksanaan aktiviti. Hal ini bagi memastikan kandungan dan aktiviti yang diterapkan dalam aktiviti kumpulan berstruktur dapat dijalankan dengan lebih berkesan dan membawa manfaat kepada belia khususnya di kawasan pedalaman pada masa akan datang.

Kata Kunci: *Kadazan-Dusun, Kecekapan Sosial, Motivasi Pencapaian, Kawalan Emosi dan Motivasi Pencapaian*

INTRODUCTION

Youths are one nation's great asset and are expected to continuously lead the country to future success. It is therefore imperative that a supportive environment and limitless opportunities are provided and created to offer positive youth development so that our young ones become productive individuals and society in the future. Societies should focus on youth development so that they can strive for personal growth and development and can achieve a better future for themselves as well as play their roles as productive individuals and help to reduce society's problems.

Successful youth needs to have skills such as leadership, proper time management, and social competence. They should have high achievement motivation, must acquire good intellectual flexibility, should be able to control their emotions and have high self-confidence. Providing youth with opportunities to develop in positive direction has always been focus of both government and non-government organizations in Malaysia. Therefore, various programs and activities have been designed, planned and implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Youth Council, youth societies, youth clubs and other stakeholders. The aim of all these programs was to instill positive development among youths and enhancing their abilities to face challenging and competitive future careers. According to Larson, Jarret, Pearce et al. (2004), youth programs and extracurricular activities, which are organized in schools, can help to prepare youths to face with life challenges which can help to enhance their psychological well-being. The modern society recognizes the importance of youth programs in providing opportunities for positive development among youths (Smith, Akiva, Arrieux & Jones, 2006),

When discussing the importance of implementing the programs to enhance

positive youth development, the discrepancies in the nature of opportunities available to urban and rural youth should not be ignored. In Sabah, there are a great numbers of youth lives in rural areas. Based on Census Report 2010, showed that there are 1,059,600.00 youths live in urban and 807,700.00 live in rural areas (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2010). Even though, statistics shows that more youth live in urban areas rather than rural areas in Sabah. Urban youth have access to many facilities such as youth clubs, support groups, and other community programs. On the other hand, rural youth have surroundings rich in nature that they can explore and helps them to develop many skills. Nevertheless such environment sometimes lacks structure and proper guidance. Therefore, there is a need to focus on providing structured opportunities for rural youth to enhance their social inclusion into mainstream society. This kind of social inclusion opportunities for rural youth can help in reducing inequalities between urban and rural communities and may create positive environment for rural youths who need it the most.

Thus, keeping in mind, the need and importance of positive youth development programs for rural communities, the present study focused on developing positive youth development program and determining its effectiveness. This program was developed and implemented by Youth and Community Development Program from University Malaysia Sabah. The objectives of the research are to instill positive development among youth in rural areas by focusing on the seven components of soft skills. The program was conducted for rural Kadazan-Dusun youths in Buayan Village. The program was implemented by 14 university students who were guided by their lecturers to implement each of the structured activities as a part of youth development program.

METHODOLOGY

Instruments

A set of questionnaires comprised of two sections; Section A, which was used to collect the demographic information, and section B, which measured seven components of soft skills (i.e., time management, social competence, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, leadership, emotional control and self-confidence) were used in the present study. As for the components of soft skills in Section B, each of the components was measured using two items. Higher overall scores indicated positive elements of soft skills. The items used to measure soft skills were as follows: time management 'I plan and use my time efficiently'; social competence 'I am competent in social situations'; achievement motivation 'I try to get the best results when I do things'; intellectual flexibility 'I am open to new ideas'; leadership "I am a good leader when a task needs to be done"; emotional control 'I can stay calm in stressful situations'; and self-confidence 'When I apply myself to something I am confident I will succeed'. The response scale provided was: 1 (False, not like me) to 8 (True, like me). As for the demographic scale, there were nine items measured (i.e., age, academic level, religion and number of siblings).

Participants

There were 21 Kadazan-Dusun youths who took part in this study. From these 21 participants, only 7 of them involved in the positive youth development program which was implemented within a single day. Their ages ranged between 16 to 40 years old (mean= 24, SD=9.80). The participants were selected based on convenient sampling. The total population of Buayan village consists of approximately 400 people. There are 26 families that constitute total population of village and on average each family has 15-16 members including immediate and extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives. However, approximately 60-70 falls into the category of youth. Majority of youth from this village are working and studying outside of the village.

Geographical Location

The research was conducted at Buayan village, which is one of the ten jungle villages, located at Crocker Range, Sabah, Malaysia. Most of the people in Buayan village are Kadazan-Dusuns. They proficiently speak Dusun and Malay.

As for the geographical location of the village and accessibility, there are two rivers crossing the logging road to Buayan village. During the rainy season, the road will be slippery and the level of the water in the river will rise which would normally cause difficulty for motor vehicles to access Buayan village. These obstacles impacted the accessibility of the village people to nearest town, market and other facilities, which consequently make it difficult for them to be involved in large-scale economic activities. In future, if a proper road has been built, it will take only an hour to reach this village, which can help creating more opportunities for educational and economic activities. In addition, with no proper access road, the villagers have no electricity. There is no electricity in this village and they only get their electricity supply from solar panels and generators (personal communication, Harold Mark, administration staff at SK. Buayan, 7 November, 2014). Lack of infrastructure and facilities such as road, electricity and less economic activities seems to create environment, which is less motivating for youth to develop in a positive way. It can reduce their achievement motivation in educational setting and further hamper their personal development.

During the visit, we had the opportunity to talk with Mr. Peter Muwil (57 years) the Headmaster of SK Buayan and discuss on the overall educational condition at the village. According to him, the achievement of his students are still not satisfactory in comparison with other schools in the urban areas. In 2012, for example, only two students out of eight passed the UPSR examination. The result got better in 2013 when six students out of eight passed the examination. In 2014, he targeted that two of his students will pass with 5A.

Positive Youth Development Program Content

In group-structured activities, we first conducted the self-introductory session with the participants. The aim was to build rapport between the facilitators and participants

before implementing other activities. This was followed by the second activity, which was a video presentation about the university, students' activities and sharing university life experiences. Trained university students conducted this activity. It was assumed that these activities could also instill the intellectual flexibility (i.e., open to the new experiences and ideas). The structured group activities further continued with the motivational talks and ended with the motivational song titled 'Dreams and Hopes'. The facilitators sang this song together with the youths to instill the achievement motivation component, which was one of the seven elements that were being measured.

After this activity, the career talk was delivered and the session ended by giving the opportunity to each participant to complete the future career inventory. The objective was to help each participant to understand which career is suitable with his or her personality. Most of the participants seemed interested to know their careers that will suit their personalities. After they have filled the inventory, the facilitators guided the participants to interpret their scores' from the career inventory. The feedback from the youths was positive and they were really interested to know the results. It was assumed that this activity might help them to understand their social competency. It was assumed that this activity might help them to understand their social competency such as communication skills and dealing with new people.

After conducting the above-mentioned activities, a small group discussion was arranged between the facilitators and youths. In the small group, youths had opportunity to ask questions and understand the messages that was delivered during the two previous talks. It was assumed that this activity would help to instill their self-confidence by giving them the opportunity to express themselves and share their opinions with the facilitators and lecturers. Furthermore, this activity can also help them to control their emotions when they are giving their opinions and asking questions from the facilitators. We assumed that this activity would help them to practice emotional control such as reducing their nervousness when they share their views and ideas about life with the facilitators.

The small group discussion was followed with a game called 'youth voices'. The youth and the facilitators participated in the game. Each participant was blindfolded and stood on a line. They were asked to give their opinions whether they agree or disagree on statements (e.g., people without goals succeed because they know where they are going) given to them. They showed their agreement/disagreement by choosing to go to the right (if agree) or to the left (disagree) of the line. Participants were further asked about their opinions on their decision choosing their level of agreement towards each statement given randomly. It was observed during program evaluation that some of the participants could express their opinions by giving some examples based on their own life experiences. The aim for this game was to boost the leadership, emotional control and self-confidence in expressing their opinions, attitude, knowledge and actions of young people (Jayaraja & Tielemeans, 2011). While conducting each activity, we also stressed upon the importance of

time by reminding each participant to be punctual in each of the activity that was conducted. Furthermore, the issue and importance of proper time management to accomplish future plans was also highlighted in the motivational talk.

In each activity, the researchers stressed the important elements of attitude change, which was assumed to be influenced by the source (the facilitator), communication channels (video, games, songs and group discussion) and the target group (youths) (Getrude Cosmas, 2003). These three elements were highlighted in delivering messages for the youths. This is to ensure the participants can understand the message. The researchers' approach was based on the Hovland, Janis and Kelly theory (1953) which focuses on 'who says, what to whom and with what effect' which focuses on the source (facilitator and lecturers), what (the messages), to whom (youths) and with what effects (the assessment of the structured group activities).

RESULTS

The Reliability of Each Component in Soft Skills

Table 1 shows the reliability coefficients for each component in soft skills. The reliability of each scale in this study was acceptable (i.e., time management, social competence, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, leadership, emotional control and self-confidence)

Table 1: The Reliability for Each Component in Soft Skills

Eight Components of Soft Skills	Kadazan-Dusuns (N=21)
Time Management	.77
Social Competence	.62
Achievement Motivation	.64
Intellectual Flexibility	.60
Leadership	.50
Emotional control	.53
Self-confidence	.82
Total	.88

Descriptive Data

Table 2 shows the pattern of Kadazan-Dusun Youths' demographic characteristics (see Table 1 for the detailed description).

Table 2: A Detail of 21 Kadazan-Dusun Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	(Frequency)	(%)
Gender		
Male	12	57.10
Female	9	42.90
Number of siblings		
1-5	10	47.62
6-10	11	52.38
Involvement in Youth Program		
Yes	14	66.67
No	6	28.57
Missing values 1	4.76	
Stay with		
Parents	12	57.14
Parents and siblings	7	33.33
Friends	1	4.76
Others	1	4.76
Levels of academic		
Primary school	8	38.10
Secondary three	7	33.33
Secondary five	6	28.57
Types of Programs		
Uniformed units	2	9.52
Sports	5	23.82
Academic program	1	4.76
Arts	6	28.57
Voluntarily program	6	28.57
Missing values	1	4.76

There were 21 Kadazan-Dusun youths who participated in this study. The participants were all from Buayan village, which is located in Crocker Range. As for their religious affiliation, all of them are Christian, and most of the youths reported that they gather at the chapel during Sunday prayers and are always involved in youth activities, which are organized by the chapel. The youths also reported that they practice Kadazan-Dusun traditional culture in their daily lives activities such as mitatabang (helping each other), respecting the elderly and using their local language in daily conversations. In terms of their academic level, most of them completed secondary school. The vast majority of their parents are farmers.

Table 3: The Results of the Mann Whitney U Test on Each of the Components in the Soft Skills Between the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Components	Group	N	Mean Rank	Z	Sig
Time Management	Experimental	7	10.50	-.51	.60
	Control	14	11.25		
Social Competence	Experimental	7	10.50	-.51	.60
	Control	14	11.25		
Achievement Motivation	Experimental	7	11.00	-.66	.51
	Control	14	10.29		
Intellectual Flexibility	Experimental	7	12.00	-1.03	.30
	Control	14	10.50		
Leadership	Experimental	7	11.00	-1.11	.27
	Control	14	9.42		
Emotional Control	Experimental	7	9.50	.00	1.00
	Control	14	9.50		
Self-Confidence	Experimental	7	9.57	-1.363	.64
	Control	14	11.00		
Soft Skills	Experimental	7	9.50	-.91	.36
	Control	14	11.75		

Note: Experimental group (Youths who involved in the structured activities)

Control group (Youths who were not involved in the structured group activities)

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test showed that there were no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in each component of soft skills. In this study, the experimental group comprised of seven youths who participated in the structured group activities implemented by the researchers, while the control group represents the fourteen youths who did not participate in the structured group activities.

DISCUSSION

One positive way to involve youths to participate in the structured group activities and other positive youth development programs is by understanding their needs and interests and addressing these needs appropriately. Therefore, we hope that the outcome of these activities, which only involved a small number of participants, can help us to redefine the content and duration of each activity, which was implemented. According to Flores (2007), it is difficult to develop any good program without evaluation or assessment of the effectiveness of the program. We believe that, positive feedback from youths based on their involvement in youth programs is important in evaluating the effectiveness of the program. The youths' positive feedback post activities can help the organizer of any youth programs to design good modules. This model comprised of appropriate activities and implementation

strategies, which is in line with the youths' needs and interest.

The researchers in the present study found out that the structured group activities used was appropriate with the rural youth. The activities were organized according to their needs and were able to sustain their interest throughout the day, and youth appeared to look forward for another activity. They participated actively and showed great deal of interest. However, overall duration of structured group activities, which was for only one day, did not show any significant effects on each of the soft-skill component.

Thus, findings of the present study can also be used to highlight the fact that the duration of the program is very important to achieve the desired outcomes of the program. In the present study, the structured group activities were conducted for only one day only, which might not be sufficient to instill significant changes on the seven components of soft skills. Mary Tan's (2005) study found that the youth program which was implemented for 3 months, showed significant changes in the seven elements (i.e., social competence, active initiative, leadership, intellectual flexibility, achievement motivation, emotion control and self-confidence). However, one of the elements i.e., time management did not show significant change.

During the present study, the researchers also believed that one of the limitations of this study is the duration of the program. According to Grossman and Rhodes (2002), youth in relationships lasted for a year or more reported the largest number of improvements in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcome. This study revealed that there were no significant differences between youths who were involved in program and those who were not involved in the program of developing the seven components of soft skills. We however, believe that the youths can gain knowledge from the activities and have good opportunities to interact with the university students and lecturers which can enhance their motivation for studying in institutes of higher learning and provide them with a better view of university life.

As for the suitability of activities in the positive youth development program it was found that the activities were suitable in terms of content, duration and format. It was reported by one of the participants of the program that she enjoyed it and will look forward to be a part of any other program of such kind in near future (Personal communication, Patricia John, youth, 7 November, 2014). Therefore the program was helpful in familiarizing them with contents and format of positive youth development programs. In future they can approach any program targeted on youth with more confidence and less anxiety.

We did not find any significant difference in each of the seven components of soft skills between the youths who were involved, and those who were not involved in the program. However, we believe that the youths can gain knowledge from the activities that were implemented during positive youth development program and have good opportunities to interact with university students and lecturers.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the content and time duration needs to be considered in organizing and implementing any youth development programs to enhance positive youth development. It was found that the program did not show any significant effects to each component of the soft skills. This might be due to number of possible reasons such as time duration of the program, relationship building between the trainer and trainees, and other surrounding distractions during program implementation. In the future, it might be practical if the organizer of any youth development programs should visit the location to understand the needs of youths who have different cultures and ethnicities. Moreover, before inviting youths to participate, briefing them about the youth programs before implementation can help in lessening their anxiety so that they can approach the program with more confidence. This can improve the likelihood for achieving the objectives of youth development programs in future.

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