

## **SOCIAL PROBLEM AFFECTING THE YOUTH IN MALAYSIA AND THE POSSIBLE WAY TO SOLVE THEM**

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### **Abstract**

In 2017 alone, Malaysian have been shocked and horrified to been exposed over many incidents involving social problem committed by youth in the country like bullying, drug abuse, violence, gangsterism, rape, even murder. To highlight few tragic incidents which had caused a deep psychological impact to the Malaysian society until today happen in early June 2017 when the whole country were sad over the tragic news on the death of one local university student by the name of Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain, 21 years old. The victim who was still a undergraduate student passed away at one local university after he was found dead with several bruises and burns on his body. The victim has been believed to have been subjected to severe physically abused committed by his own university colleagues. Less than two week after the first tragic incident happen, Malaysian again was dismayed to been exposed with the death of T. Nhaveen, 18 years old who was few days earlier have been declared by the hospital to be brain-dead after he was brutally assaulted and sodomised by five youths. According to medical investigation, the victim had suffered internal bleeding and injuries to his abdomen and private parts. There also evidence of cigarette burn marks on the victim back. In September 2017, the whole country mourned over the death of 23 individual mostly pupils due to blaze at one religious school in the country capital, Kuala Lumpur. After thorough investigation had been carried out by the police, it was found that the school was burned down by seven teenagers aged 11 to 18 years old. All the mentioned tragic incidents above is totally unthinkable to the Malaysian society which still uphold its eastern value, tradition and culture. As such, it is the object to the paper to examine further over the issue concerning the social problem affecting the youth in the country by identifying the cause to the problem, examine the effect it generates, and highlighting possible solutions to deal with them.

**Keywords:** Youth, problem, cause, effect and solution

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Before going further into the research, it is important for us to know the definition of the word "youth". Who can be regarded as a "youth"? On this matter, the United Nations (UN), for statistical purposes, defines the word "youth", as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985), and endorsed by the General Assembly (See further A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981). (Division of Social Policy and Development Youth, December 15, 2017). All United Nations statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbooks of statistics published by the United Nations system on demography, education, employment and

health. As for those group of people under the age of 18 years old, they are often been regarded as children. This is in line with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC) which defines "children" as persons up to the age of 18. Similar position has also been taken on the definition of children by Malaysia through its legislation namely Child Act 2001 [Act 611]. It is also worth to note that according to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia as to 2017, nearly 30% of Malaysia's population of 32 million is under 18 years with the number of boys slightly higher than girls. The exact composition of children under the age of 18 years was 29.4 per cent, which was 9.4 million children out of the current population. The number of male children which is 4.9 million persons is more than females which is 4.6 million persons. (The Star Online, November 15, 2017). As for this paper, the researchers will only give their focus on social problems affecting the targeted group of youth under the age of 18 years.

There are many social problems existed in the society which can heavily affected and influence the youth. Any criminal activities which already in place in a society involving drugs, fighting, gambling, robbery, theft, sexual violence can easily affect the youth. Being young and immature, these youth can easily been influenced by their surrounding and as a result it could potentially making them to get involve in social problem of their own like bullying, smoking, school absence, drug abuse, gangsterism, prostitution, unwanted pregnant, rape, murder and others. The social problem affecting the youth is not something which is uncommon to us. Such problem not only affects the Malaysian society but also affecting all society in the world. It would be naive to say said that certain society don't encountered with such problem. The only thing which we can say about the issue would be the extend of such problem face by one society towards another. Such problem is also not something new as it has also happen to each generation from the past until today. Each society and generation has their own problem affecting their youth and developed their own mechanisms to tackle the matters holistically and effectively.

The millennium youth that we are now engaging with has also problems of their own and they are not totally immune from social problems existed within the society. The concern issue have always been there but it was not been seriously examine and properly address. However due to several major events which have happen recently in the country, the issue begin to open the eyes of the Malaysian public which at the same time eager to find solutions to it.

## **2. SELECTED CASES AND STATISTIC STUDY**

Among the major events which have catch the Malaysian society eye to the social problem affecting the youth in the country can be summarized by referring to the following reported cases which had happen recently. On 1 June 2017, a 21 year old local university student, Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain was found dead in hospital after suffering from a very severe physical act of bullying. The act was believe to have done by several numbers of youth belonging to the same university and from other local university. According to the news report, when the victim was rushed to the hospital, his body was found to have been 80% covered in bruises and burn marks which was believe due to a belt, rubber hose, iron and hanger. Further investigation was carry carry to identify the main cause which lead to the dispute and it was believe that it all happen because of a dispute over a laptop. A total number of 36 suspects have been remanded and the case is being investigated for murder under the Penal Code [Act 574]. (The Star Online, June 3, 2017).

Less than two weeks after the first dreadful event, the nation was again shock to learned another similar event which had happen to the 18 year old, T. Nhaveen where the victim of a viciously assaulted at the hands of a group of teenagers. According to the news report, when the victim was send to the hospital, he was already unconscious. It was stated that the victim was declared brain dead ever since he was subjected to a horrific physical and sexual assault at the hands of his tormentors. According to the reported news, on the day of the incident the victim and his friend were buying burgers at one stall when they encountered two people, who were Nhaveen's former classmates. The two taunted Nhaveen and called him names, including "pondan" (sissy). The victim pleaded with the two to stop taunting him, and warned them to back off. However, the two then called their friends to the scene. The group then began assaulting the victim and his friend. The friend managed to escaped but the victim was later dragged to a field and was further assaulted. The group, aged 16 to 2, allegedly inserted a blunt object into the victim's anus. The suspect is now being charged with murder under the Penal Code [Act 574]. Nhaveen's case has since garnered attention on social media, with Malaysians as well as international community expressing an outpouring of sympathy an condolences towards the victim and his family. (Audrey Dermawan, June 15, 2017).

As the country try to get through the two major incidents which have happen in June 2017, another horrific incident took place on September 14, 2017 when one religious school (Tahfiz) in the country capital was burned down and had killed 23 peoples mostly the school students. The incident had received both local and international attention. At the beginning it was believe by many that the incident happen due to negligent or

lack of safety component inside the school building. However, further investigation revealed shocking truth when the police announced that they might have been a possibility of foul play in the incident and have further announced the arrest of seven suspects aged between 11 and 18 years for the case. All the suspects have been charged accordingly under Penal Code [Act 574] for murder and mischief with fire as well as for drug abuse under the Dangerous Drug Act 1952 [Act 234]. The incident's motive is believed to have arose from a misunderstanding after teasing between the suspects and a group of residents at the tahfiz school's hostel that started few days before the incident. (Ida Lim, Malay Mail Online, September 16, 2017).

Besides focusing on the three highlighted cases mentioned above, it is also equally important to know the exact figure concerning delinquencies or crimes committed by the youth in the country. According to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia, the number of juvenile offenders in the country has declined 10.3 per cent from 5,096 cases in 2014 to 4,569 cases in 2015. From the given statistic, as for the first offence committed by this group had decreased 12.1 per cent from 4,725 cases in 2014 to 4,125 cases in 2015. On the other hand, as for the repeated offence, it has recorded an increase of 12.4 per cent from 371 cases in 2014 to 417 cases in 2015. According to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia also, the highest percentage of children involved in criminal activities were connected to property-related crimes, drug and people-related crimes. (Children Statistics, Malaysia 2016, December 15, 2016).

Though the given statistic has shown a declined of cases on such issue, it must be noted that such statistic did not take into account the number of unreported cases throughout the country. Since the crime was committed by children, there is possibility the case are not being reported accordingly and being settle between the parent or the adult especially when it involve cases which is less serious in nature and could be settle without having judicial intervention. Beside that, we have not been informing with the latest statistic figure for the year 2016 and 2017 on such issue. However, it should be noted though there is a clear sign of decline in statistic for the number of first offence committed by youth, the statistic has also recorded an increase of reported crime committed for repeated offence. Beside having such statistic, all the mentioned three major incident cases clearly show to us that the social issue affecting youth in the country has reach the level where it can no longer be tolerated any longer. Malaysian are not use to been exposed with such gruesome story especially when the suspect involving young children as young as 11 year old. The society begins to ask many questions on the arising issue and start to pointing finger of fault towards each other.

### **3. CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM**

There can be no single causes which can be identifiable give rise to the problem. As mentioned earlier, every society faced with their own social problems. Without taking proper prevention steps, such social problems can eventually influence the youth. Though it is very difficult to highlight every possible causes to the problem, there can be several major causes which can easily affect the youth to get into social problem of their own namely due to parenting failure, negative or bad influence which come from their own peers, uncaring teachers, as well as mass media cum entertainment influence and the arrival of social media. Great responsibilities of parents in educating the children first handed which give most significant effect to the children basic understanding on life and morality. (Zaleha Sulaiman, 1995). Every parent want their children to grow up and become good people. Hardly any parent wants their child to grow up and become bad people. Often parent or anyone from the family will guide their child on any possible way in becoming good individual and to become adult properly. It is also a real fact that children interacted with their parents closer than any other people and such the behaviour as well as parents' attitude will eventually shape social behaviour of the children. (Mahyuddin Shaari, 2009). If the parent fails to behave accordingly, it will certainly affect their children upbringing, thus making their own children vulnerable to many problems faced by the society. Parents' influence and responsibilities importance cannot be emphasis more to the point. Parents are the most important socialization agent for their children before influence of other socialization agent. (Johari Talib, 2007). Beside that, being parent, they also have both moral and legal duty to protect their own children from harm. In facing with many social problems in the society, parent monitoring or supervision of their children is very important and they cannot be neglectful in such matter.

Peers and youth social circle also plays the second important part in the development of youth's social behaviour. If the children started to be friend with bad people, it can easily drag them into many social problems that are being face by our society. Of course, children are entitle to make friend of their own, but without proper guide, they can easily fall into trap from anyone that in contact with which will affect their life in a long run. Since peers and youth social circle plays important part in the development of youth's social behaviour and could potentially become the cause of the problem, it is equally important for everybody especially the parent to be aware of their children friends.

Besides having parent which are close to the children, teacher also can be seen many to have such close

relationship with the children. This is because beside spending much time at home, children also spend much time in school and in study. Good teacher always ensure their pupil are not being left without any proper guide. Good teachers always ensure their students are properly educated so that they will not become a victim to any social problems faced by the society. Important to highlight here that, beside having parent, teacher should play active role in monitoring as well as educating their pupil from getting affected with any social problem.

In this modern world, mass media especially entertainment which are serve and accessible openly to the youth also can easily affect the behaviour of the youth. With the rise of social media, youth can easily access to varieties of entertainment and other negative or bad influence not only that come from within the country but also from outside the country.

All the above causes might related to the case of Zulfarhan, T.Nhaveen, and the Tahfiz Centre the reason which drive the perpetrator to commit such offence. Again, there is no substantial evidence to say so definitely. Looking closer into the cases, it can be deduced that all the cases centralize on aggression behaviour. Study has shown that family, friends, and media are the characters which cultivate aggressive behaviour among youth. **Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı..** This concludes that the cause of social problem among youth in Malaysia did not turn away from family, peers, school and media. The negative side of the interaction between the youth and the socialization agent in any form; neglect, abandon, discrimination, marginalization and influence in negative way, can all directs the behaviour of youth towards social problem.

#### **4. EFFECTS OF THE PROBLEM**

As it is hard to identify the single cause which give rise to the problem, it is also equally hard to know exactly the effects of the problem can cause. However, from all the mentioned three cases highlighted above, it is clear that the effects of the problem touch not only the life of the victim themselves, but also the life of their friends and family. It is also affect the life of the perpetrator as they will faced with uncertain future by subjecting themselves to the judicial process which are now currently they being subjected to. Not only the incident causes an uproar among our society, it also gain international attention, thus creating bad perception by outsiders toward the country social problem and its social stability. (Malaysiakini, September 15, 2017). The bigger effect of the social problem is the perception generated in the public society regarding the country educational institution **Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı.** as well as government capability to tackle these issues.

#### **5. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Society that we are living in nowadays isn't what it was a decade ago. People change and so does the society they live in. The problems that our grandparents had faced and experienced with our parents aren't the same that our parents experience with the youth. In today's world, youth are been exposed to many major social problems that could affect their life negatively. Social problem affecting the youth cannot be solving through a single action. There can be no single solutions to address the problem. Everybody must play their role to tackle the issue holistically and effectively.

##### **5.1 Parental Role**

Parents play a very important role to reduce or to put an end the social problem affecting the youth. They play a very important role because unlike others, they are the most closes individual to the youth namely their own children. Unlike others also they have the ability and capability to monitor and take any possible action on their children to stop their children from getting exposed or involve with any social problems as much as possible. As such, monitoring process play a very important tool to such role. Parents should monitor and protect their children at all time. In modern times, many parents busy with their professional career or work and leave their children without proper monitoring and guide. However, this should not be an excuse for them to carry out their basic responsibility in taking care of their children. Parents also need to set aside their ego and work together with other people like teacher in order to protect the interest of their own children.

##### **5.2 Community Role**

Community or the society must also play their role in ensuring the youth are not exposed with any social problems and getting involved with it. Community should not remain silent when they see any social ills happen in front of them. The community cannot leave the matter solely to the children parent and authority to take action on such matter. Similar with the duty given to the parent, community can also monitor their

surrounding and take any proper action in order to protect the youth from being exposed to crimes or any social ill as well as ensuring the youth from committing any crimes of their own. The best way to do this is by having neighbourhood watch which encourage community to work together to protect the community that they are living in including protecting the youth. Malaysia already have such initiative known as "Rukun Tetangga" which was created in 1975. However in light with the recent events concerning the arising issue affecting the youth in the country, such division need to be further strengthen and aggressively improve in order for the volunteer to face all the arising problem which affect the youth efficiently and effectively.

### **5.3 School Role**

School must play their role by constantly educating their students and create awareness among the students on all the social problem issues existed in the society and how to deal with such problem. School management must not ignore the issue and pretend everything is perfect in the society or worst let the youth face with the problem by themselves. Students must be well prepare at early age to face with all the social problem existed in the society. Teacher must guide their pupil properly so that they will not become the victim of any social problem in the society or becoming part of the problem themselves. Teachers must also be proactive to solve any arising issue beforehand. They must immediately react to any problem affecting their pupil in school by taking any appropriate measures. For this to work, school must actively engage with the parent either privately or through the existing Parent Teachers Association (PTA) or engage the matter directly to any relevant authorities. If they encountered any problem among their student which they unable to handle, they must immediately contact the children parent. If the problem becoming so serious, they must have courage to report the matter to any relevant authorities like the top school management, education department, or the police.

### **5.4 Non - Governmental Organizations Role**

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are legally constituted corporations created by group of individual that operate independently from any system of government. They are also regarded as non-state actors. In every society including in Malaysia, NGOs has been and will always play a very significant role to create and maintain good and well manner society. There are various number of NGOs in Malaysia that have play the role dealing with the arising issue such as Women's Centre for Change (WCC). WCC is a registered, tax-exempt, non-profit organization set up in 1985 to help women and children facing crisis, irrespective of race, religion, or social background. WCC outreach work expanded to reach out to children and youth, mainly focusing on personal safety and sexuality. With their valuable experience of working with women, children, and youth, WCC successfully created three main sections in their outreach work namely Child sexual abuse programmes for primary schools, RESPEK programme for youth, and Outreach talks to the public. The initiatives taken by this group has certainly help the youth in the country to face with many social problems engulfing the nations. The initiatives taken by WCC on the matter can become good example for other NGOs in the country to follow.

### **5.4 Governmental Role**

There are also many steps taken by the government to take to control and bring down crimes as well as social problems in the Malaysian society. In fact, controlling and reducing crime has been one of the main objective of the Malaysian government for the last many years. This can be clearly seen in through the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) which is an effort taken by Malaysia's government to address several key areas concerning the people of the country. The programme was unveiled on January 28, 2010 by the Malaysian Prime Minister, His Honourable Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak. Under the GTP, the government has implemented the National Key Results Areas (NKRAs) in order to improve the socio - economic growth as well as social well - being of the Malaysian society. The NKRAs are the priority needs of the people which focusing on the area of reducing crime, fighting corruption, improving student outcomes, raising living standards of low income households, improving rural basic infrastructure, improving urban public transport, and addressing the issue concerning cost of living. All the initiatives taken by the government through the mentioned NKRAs has the long term aim to control and reduce social problems facing the country. (Economic Transformation Programme, December 15, 2017). The government has also taken steps to strengthen law concerning the protection of the youth in the country which can be clearly seen with the enactment of the Child Act 2001 [Act 611]. On July 2016, the government has gazetted the Child Act (Amendment) 2015 whereby it's provide for comprehensive structure for the act in protecting the safety and welfare of the children in the our country. The new amendment also provide heavier penalty for those found guilty of abusing, exploiting or neglecting children which has been increased to RM50,000 and the prison sentence was increased to 20 years. (New Straits Times, July 16, 2016). To stop

the spread of bad influence which might come from internet and affect the youth in the country, the Malaysian government has also enacted the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 [Act 588] and had promised to continue taking steps to improve and strengthen the such law along with the enforcement.

The government has also initiated many programs and activities targeting the youth the country through various ministry in the country like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and others. The programs and activities were done in order to prevent the youth in the country from being exposed or involved with any social problems. Most of the programs and activities are conducted in forms of academics, leisures as well as sports. The government through the Budget 2018 announcement has introduced many work life balance policies which aim to allow workers especially parent to monitor their children constantly like flexible working arrangement (FWA) and children day care centre in a workplace.

There is also proposal to put forward a "Anti-Social Act" aiming to deter and punish anti-social behaviours in our country especially among children, teenager and young adult. However, instead of targeting the youth, the act should also cover anti-social behaviour among the adult. Once the anti-social behaviour among adult able to be control and prevented, it would stop the spread of such anti-social behaviour towards the youth thus reducing and put the end to the arising problem. Since there is an increased in the number of repeated offender among youth which has been mentioned earlier in the given statistic above, the government can also consider initiating the Preventing Repeat Offenders Program (PROP) by identifying youth, at an early age, who are at risk of becoming chronic juvenile offenders. To be considered for the program, a youth must be entering the system at certain age which going to be decide by the government and assessed at high risk for re-offending. The criteria for youth assigned to the program include having difficulties at school, family relationship issues, substance abuse, and gang associations. The program will provides intensive probation services to youth and their families, in the hopes of preventing recidivism.

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