



## Youth Awareness on Youth Development Law

**Asmah Laili Yeon<sup>1\*</sup>, Alias Azhar<sup>2</sup>, Zainal Amin Ayub<sup>3</sup>, Siti Alida John Abdullah<sup>4</sup>, Rozita Arshad<sup>5</sup>, Safiah Suhaimi<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>School of Law, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>School of Law, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, <sup>3</sup>School of Law, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, <sup>4</sup>School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, <sup>5</sup>School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, <sup>6</sup>School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia.  
\*Email: [asmah485@uum.edu.my](mailto:asmah485@uum.edu.my)

### ABSTRACT

Lack of awareness and understanding of youth development law amongst youth and policy makers is quite significant. Among the reasons that have been identified to be the root cause of this weakness is due to the failure or less priority given by the youth societies and related organization which are responsible in providing quality programmes for youth. In light of the above gap, the paper examines youth awareness on youth development law from the perspective of policy makers and youth themselves. This is a social-legal study, which involves two types of data collection; first, interviews with 53 policy makers/management from ministries, youth departments, youth agencies and societies; and result from a survey amongst Malaysian youth amounting to 4703. This study found that a majority of the respondents (the policy makers from ministries, state youth departments, youth societies and agencies) agreed that youth in Malaysia have a very low awareness or knowledge of the law relating to the youth. The lack of awareness also may be subjected from the absence of the legal awareness programme conducted by the related governmental agencies and organizations. However, the result of youth view is in contrast where the level of awareness of youth concerning policies of youth in law is quite high at the average of 77.8%. Nevertheless, the result shows more than 20% of youth in Malaysia do not aware about the existence of youth policy in law.

**Keywords:** Youth Law, Youth Policy, Youth Awareness

**JEL Classifications:** K1, K12, K120

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The letdown of the enforcement of law regarding youth could have been snowballed from the lack of awareness and understanding on law by youth themselves. Abdul et al. (2012) stated that awareness comes before understanding and understanding comes with knowledge, whether or not the youth knows about certain issues. As to the awareness of youth on the law relevant to them, Asmah et al. (2016) found that youth knowledge of law relevant to the youth development was largely influenced by the factor of their involvement in the activities organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports or youth societies. Accordingly, Zulkhlimi et al. (2015) in his study among computer science students on Malaysian law related to computers and digital contents had found that lack of understanding and unable to grasp most of the law terminologies had led them to become low awareness related

to the law in their area. In that light, it can be noted that youth awareness on law relevant to them are influenced by their direct involvement in the particular matters, however, it is not a guarantee of full understanding of the substances of the provisions due to the legal terms used. Therefore, this paper intended to examine youth awareness on youth development law.

In Malaysia, the principle law governing activities and development of youth is the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act, 2007 (YSYDA, 2007). The act defined youth as a person not <15 years and not more than 40-year-old. The objective of the act is to register youth societies, promote and facilitate the development of youth in Malaysia from the aspect of education, research and human resource, to establish a National Youth Consultative Council, to establish the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development and to provide for related

matters (YSYDA, 2007). Among the scope activities involving the youth as stated in Section 2 of the YSYDA (2007) includes to build youth character, to develop patriotism, to spread the principles of Malaysian National Pillars, to create the awareness among youth against negative elements and values, to enable youth awareness of culture, the environment, sports, health, spirituality and social welfare. In addition, it is also to provide opportunities for youth participation in urban and rural community development programmes, to provide opportunities for training in leadership, skills and entrepreneurship and to assist the youth to adapt and form positive attitudes in facing the challenges and exigencies of life through the use of educational and life skills components.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Griffin (1993) points out that youth are treated as “key indicator of the state of the nation itself.” As such, Faizal (2007) emphasizes that youth of Malaysia have a critical role to play in the country’s effort to achieve the status of a fully developed country by 2020. The total population of youth in Malaysia, according to the Department of Statistic in 2014 is 13.67 million and the largest group in the society.

Basically, legislations which are subjected to Malaysian youth can be divided into two categories. Firstly, legislations which are related to “minor,” and secondly, legislations related to young people who have reached “the age of majority.” The legal differences between the groups can be seen in the statutory definitions in the legislations. The statutory definition uses the term “minor” for persons under the age of 18, or clearly uses the term “child” or mentioning of a particular age. The clear term of definition can be found under the Child Act and in Penal Code, whereby it stated that the age of criminal responsibility in Malaysia is 10-year-old. On the other hand the person who is over the age of 18 statute known as “majority” or adults. The age of majority in Malaysia is 18 (Age of Majority Act, 1971). Section 11 of the Contract Act 1950, for example, clearly state that a person who has attained the age of majority, according to the law is competent to enter into a contract. There is also the specific definition for certain national obligation as in the Election Act 1958 which dictates any Malaysian citizens aged above 21 years who are residents in a constituency during the voter registration process are eligible to register to vote. And the Road Transportation Act 1987 gives a variety of driving age in Malaysia at early of 16-year-old.

The principle statute to govern on youth activities and development is the YSYDA (2007). As for legislation on youth education, the legislations include Education Act and University and University Colleges Act, 1971. With regard to legislations on economic regulations and protection of youth, the Malaysian government enacted several laws in ensuring the youth workers to enjoy good working conditions, to secure employment and livelihoods (United Nation, 2002). The Employment Act 1955 sets forth the minimum standard of terms and conditions of employment for employees, including the youth workers in the private sector. Youth workers in Malaysia are also protected under the Children and Young Person (Employment) Act 1966. The law stipulates young person under the age 16 may be employed under certain conditions as specified in the statute and restrict working hours and working days for them.

The Child Act 2001 is a direct response to Malaysia’s commitment to comply with the UNCRC. The act governs children in need of care and protection, children in need of protection and rehabilitation, children beyond control and children in conflict with the law. It consolidated three previous statutes; the Juvenile Courts Acts, 1947; the Child Protection Act, 1999; and the Women and Girls’ Protection Act, 1973. The Act nevertheless is not the appropriate legislation that covers the rights of youth offender, but the offender under the age of 18. Farah (2008) stated the act though complements the UNCRC, it doesn’t suffice to protect the general rights of the child and young offender in the court. Nadzriah (2013) in her findings concludes that there the law governing crimes and juvenile justice in Malaysia are inadequate to protect young people who came into contact with the Malaysian juvenile justice system and need to be improved to make it in line with the international standards and norms.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research which involves two types of respondents; (a) Policy maker and enforcement agencies and (b) youth. Interview was conducted among 44 officers in the selected ministries, departments, organisations and agencies which are related to youth development programme and 6000 survey instruments was distributed amongst youth in Malaysia. However, the respond rates received only 4703 questionnaires.

## 4. PERSPECTIVE OF POLICY MAKERS AND ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES: YOUTH AWARENESS ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LAW

The national policy on youth development is governed by the YSYDA (2007). This is the main statute referred to by ministries, public and private organization. The eight policies of youth development are stated in Section 34(2) of YSYDA (2007) which covers youth knowledge development, youth attitude development, youth leadership and organizational development, youth vocational and entrepreneurial development, the inculcation of a healthy lifestyle in the youth and facilities for social interaction for the youth. The majority of respondents agreed that their activities in youth development in accordance with the law. According to R18, “National Youth Development Policy is the primary reference material for institutions/departments and related officers to serve as an important guide for the execution of a task. This includes Youth Development and Societies and Act 2007.” R40 also is of the opinion that “management and activities of youth are in accordance with the provisions of the act.”

With regards to awareness of the law and rights of youth, the findings of the data revealed that youth lacks on the awareness on the law. The majority of the respondents agree that youth in Malaysia show low or no knowledge on the law which are applicable to them (R11, R16, R19, R23, R28, R31, R34). R16 and R34 firmly stated that they doubted the youth has the awareness about the law while R36 stated that the low awareness on law was due to their own ignorance. According to R23, “youth in Malaysia

has no knowledge or aware of the existence on the eight policies on youth development. They don't even know that the act is on youth development, except that it is applicable only for youth societies." The lack of awareness also may be subjected from the absence of the legal awareness programme conducted by the related governmental agencies and organizations (R17, R26).

The legal awareness programmes so far organized by a number of respondents are limited to focus on criminal law and road safety and laws (R17). R18 stated that "such programmes with Polis Di Raja Malaysia (PDRM) are organized as part to fulfill our objectives under NKRA that is to prevent and fight crime. But the programmes are in small scale." There is also effort done by human rights body, however restricted to organize the programmes at university level, R17 mentioned that "The universities' administration are reluctant to allow us to give lectures on human rights and law to the students." The respondent added that "They are afraid that (after the programme) the youth would start demanding their rights." R26 and R27 answered their department have not done any programme on law awareness. R34 suggested that law awareness programme should be made compulsory course to the youth.

When asked whether the respondents' ministries and organizations organize such programme to raise the awareness of law among the youth, the data showed that such programme is not given priority in many of the respondents' institutions (R3, R5, R6, R11, R17, R29, and R32). According to R3, the ministry do not specifically organize programme which highlighted the awareness of law among youth. He is quoted as saying "At the moment, we do not specifically focus on on legal awareness programme. There is programme on misconduct on social media, indirectly it would discuss on law." R5 responded by saying that "At the time being, there is no such programme on legal awareness and such for the youth." R6 stated that the only programme on law awareness done was to promote the enactment of YSYDA (2007). R11 was firm in saying that his ministry department's programmes designed for the youth are focused on promotion and development of the youth, nothing on legal aspect.

At government's ministries and agencies, the programmes on legal education are at basic level and/or indirectly given through other awareness programmes. R18 revealed that his department organized a minimum number of legal awareness programme. He was quoted "Under the (law) programme series, we organized two or three programmes under the programme series." While R19 stated that the basic legal education programme of his department included in the Biro Tatanegara scheme. As for state-level department, R29 emphasized that since they are not law enforcement agency, the only they can do is to advise the youth at their talk on preventing crimes. He is quoted as saying "We could only advised the youth through our talk programme, giving them information on the crimes and its punishments." This was supported by R27 who agreed that the department's definition on legal awareness programme which are organized talk joined by AADK and police briefing the youth on drugs, road safety and related matters.

Some of the respondents answered that their department do not have the position to organize programme on enhancing legal awareness among the youth. According to R31 and R32 such programmes are under the jurisdiction of another department or the legal bureau department. R31 responded "At the state level, at our department, we do not have such programme, it is under the legal bureau department." According to R17, representing a human rights body stated that the body aims to disseminate legal knowledge to all young people both at school and universities and educate them to respect the rights rather than demanding more rights but stated that one of the biggest challenge is the universities administration are reluctant to allow the body to have their programme.

Contrarily, according to R34 and R36, their organization had organized several series on programme to enhance legal awareness among the youth. R34 stated that many programmes are organized in collaboration with relevant non-governmental organizations to improve knowledge on law. While R36 stated that the programme is a regular event in Sabah. "We do organize several legal awareness programmes in towns in Sabah. We also invited AADK, PDRM and Prison Department in our programmes." From the findings, it can be concluded that, legal awareness programme is not an important focus to the ministries and governmental agencies.

## 5. YOUTH AWARENESS ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LAW

### 5.1. Profile

The total of respondents involve in this study is 4703 youth. Result in Table 1 shows the composition of respondents are 21.1% from age group 15 to 20 years, the age group 21-25 years is 30% and 26-30 years is only 19.8%. Then, 31-35 years is 14.1% and 36-40 years is 15%.

According to Table 2 there are 4694 respondents (youth) who are 55.6% male and 44.4% female.

Based on the Table 3, 2273 respondents have higher education qualifications such as Diploma, Degree, Masters and Ph.D qualifications. The Diploma holder is 23.7 %, followed by Degree

**Table 1: Age**

Age	Frequency (%)
15-20	991 (21.1)
21-25	1408 (30.0)
26-30	934 (19.8)
31-35	663 (14.1)
36-40	707 (15.0)
Total	4703 (100.0)

**Table 2: Gender**

Gender	Frequency (%)
Male	2608 (55.6)
Female	2086 (44.4)
Total	4694 (100)

level is 20.3% and Masters level is 3.7%. The lowest is PhD level about 0.7%.

Table 4 shows majority of respondents (82.8%) has agreed with the statement Malaysia has laws that protect the interest of youth. Only 17.2 % disagreed with the fact Malaysia laws gave protection to youth. The result also indicates that a majority of 75.5% of the respondent is aware that Malaysia has the policy which is written in a statute regarding youth knowledge development. Only 24.5% did not aware of the existence of such policy. Further, with reference to the policy on youth attitude development, majority 76.4% of the respondents are aware of such policy and the balance 23.6% did not aware of the policy. There is a small increase in percentage of awareness of youth leadership and organizational development policy, i.e., 77.9% compared to the earlier policy. Only 22.1% did not aware about the policy.

Based on Table 5, 77.6% of respondents are aware of youth vocational and entrepreneurial development policy. There is no major difference with the other three policies as above in terms of their awareness. In referring to the inculcation of a healthy lifestyle policy, 78.8% of respondents are aware about the said policy and

majority 78.4% of the respondents are also aware about the policy of facilities for youth social interactions. Majority 78% of the respondents are aware about the policy on youth partnership in development as illustrated in Table 5. The awareness of the policy of international relation and networking amongst youth shows 77.9% of the respondents also aware about the policy.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In relation to youth programmes/activities, it is distinctively clear in the act which interprets youth activities including activities which create the awareness among youth against negative element and values. Nevertheless the result of the study shows the programmes initiated or organized by the ministries, youth departments and youth societies which related to awareness of law and regulation is very low in numbers. It is concluded that the legal awareness programme is not the priority of these organizations. For that reason, it is recommended the ministries, youth departments and youth societies and organization to include legal awareness programmes is compulsory as part of their activities to youth. This will increase youth awareness in the aspect of benefits (positive implication) and punishment (negative implication) of their

**Table 3: Higher education qualifications**

IPT qualifications	Frequency (%)
Diploma	1116 (23.7)
Degree	953 (20.3)
Masters	173 (3.7)
Ph.D	31 (0.7)
Total	2273 (48.4)

**Table 4: Law, knowledge, attitude and leadership**

Level of agreement	Frequency (%)
<b>Malaysia has law protect youth</b>	
Disagree	809 (17.2)
Agree	3893 (82.8)
Total	4702 (100.0)
Mean	7.34
Standard deviation	1.923
Median	8.00
<b>Youth knowledge development</b>	
Disagree	1152 (24.5)
Agree	3550 (75.5)
Total	4702 (100.0)
Mean	6.95
Standard deviation	2.255
Median	7.00
<b>Youth attitude development</b>	
Disagree	1109 (23.6)
Agree	3588 (76.4)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	6.96
Standard deviation	2.186
Median	7.00
<b>Youth leadership and organizational development</b>	
Disagree	1037 (22.1)
Agree	3660 (77.9)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.02
Standard deviation	2.182
Median	7.00

**Table 5: Entrepreneurship, healthy lifestyle, social interaction**

Level of agreement	Frequency (%)
<b>Youth vocational and entrepreneurial development</b>	
Disagree	1054 (22.4)
Agree	3643 (77.6)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.08
Standard deviation	2.194
Median	7.00
<b>Inculcation of a healthy lifestyle</b>	
Disagree	998 (21.2)
Agree	3699 (78.8)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.16
Standard deviation	2.199
Median	8.00
<b>Facilities for youth social interaction</b>	
Disagree	1014 (21.6)
Agree	3683 (78.4)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.12
Standard deviation	2.207
Median	8.00
<b>Youth partnership in development</b>	
Disagree	1032 (22.0)
Agree	3665 (78.0)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.11
Standard deviation	2.201
Median	8.00
<b>International relation and networking amongst youth</b>	
Disagree	1039 (22.1)
Agree	3658 (77.9)
Total	4697 (100.0)
Mean	7.10
Standard deviation	2.237
Median	7.00

decision and actions. This programme can educate them to be a good moral and noble person.

From the above findings, it is concluded the level of awareness of youth concerning youth policies in YSYDA (2007) is quite high at the average of 77.8% of their level of awareness. However, more than 20% of youth in Malaysia do not aware about the existence of youth policy in our law. This scenario should be transformed because ignorance of law is not an excuse and we need youth to be well equipped with knowledge and skill in order to support and aid their society and organization. Ministries, youth departments and youth societies should organized more activities and programmes relating to legal awareness among youth.

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