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Factors Influencing Youth Participation in Sustainable Development Goals through CSR Program

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an effort by businesses to allocate their resources to assist the development of mutually beneficial and long-term relationships with their communities. This study explores factors that influenced youth participation in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through CSR programs. Using a quantitative method and respondents residing outside urban areas in Malaysia, the findings revealed that all variables influenced youth participation in SDGs through CSR. This study is beneficial for youth and CSR for innovative solutions aligned with environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This study provides recommendations for integrating youth voices into CSR strategies for greater SDG alignment.

Keywords: Youth; Self-interest; Self-motivation; Self-awareness; Corporate Social Responsibility

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1.0 Introduction

Since youth are increasingly changing physically, mentally, and socially, policy decisions about community planning, economic growth, social care, and environmental health have a significant impact on youth, and they will carry over into adulthood. The involvement of youth in community has been in lots of discussion many years ago as stated by the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2005) "Community shall allow youth opportunity to have a positive effect on the implementation of plans and services that can concern them," However, the issue remains as how much should youth be allowed to participate or engage in community or to what extent they can share their voice of ideas for sustainable development in the country. Participation should be inclusive enough to include those who are not part of a formal association or have no influence. Aside from the right of youth to participate in planning and other decision-making activities that affect their lives, a growing number of youth participation enthusiasts have hypothesised additional incentives that will promote the practice. According to Chawla (2002), youth participants directly benefit from the cultural and networking dimensions of planning processes when they embrace the opportunity to have a voice in public policies and feel more connected to their community and the world, thereby counteracting community marginalisation. A statement by Green and Kreuter mentioned that building strong relationships with youth, direct communication to the target audience, and indirect contact with the correct audience through social networks are important. Indirectly, this may reinforce the youth's understanding of social responsibility and value sustainable development goals.

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For many years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts in Malaysia have been driven by the government. The CSR framework in The Silver Book by the Putrajaya Committee on GLC High Performance is considered one of the comprehensive frameworks that guide companies in enforcing their CSR activities. The framework does not dictate what the companies should do; however, it suggests seven fields of CSR that companies should focus on. Allowing this freedom means trust and highly encourages them to come forward and build community through various CSR programs.

Youth is an important asset to the country. They are the country's future leaders, and therefore they must be knowledgeable, analytical, have forward vision, understand policies, governance, be actively involved with the environment, Ives et al., (2017) and be trained to get closer to the community Delgado (2006, 2015), Borojovic et al., (2023) have made significant contributions to the theoretical and analytical foundations of youth participation. Besides that, Wallerstein and Duran (2006) stated that youth participation had the potential to enhance health outcomes through the implementation of innovative prevention mechanisms, new conceptions of a group of respondents, and beliefs. Pritzer and Schuster (2016) and Teixeira (2016) agreed that youth participation in the process of young people influenced the institutions that affect their lives. It includes various strategies that encourage youth expression and involvement in decision-making, such as curriculum creation, policy reform, group organisation, and participatory analysis and assessment. Pritzer and Schuster (2016) further mentioned that more awareness must be dedicated to implementing evidence of the importance and potential of youth participation to lead and transform the formal intellectual foundations of youth participation to the advancement of youth participation as a central strategy for social work. Looking into how important youth are to the country and with SDGs becoming the central attention, therefore, the objective of this study is to assess factors influencing youth participation in SDGs through the CSR program, and to determine which is the most influential factor in this case.

SDGs	Universities			
	Educational level	Research and knowledge transfer level	Operational level	Social level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the specific areas of contribution - Selection of specific SDGs 	<p>Universities as educators.</p> <p>Introduction of SDGs in university curricula, academic competences, learning outcomes, etc.</p> <p>Objective: provide students with knowledge, skills, and motivation to understand and address the SDGs.</p>	<p>Universities as knowledge creators.</p> <p>Boosting research outcomes which can be transferred to society, providing new sustainable knowledge paradigms (e.g., degrowth).</p>	<p>Universities as organizations.</p> <p>Adherence to the SDGs framework (e.g., gender equality, reduced inequalities, and responsible consumption within universities).</p> <p>Putting these goals at the core of their functional and organizational mission.</p>	<p>Universities as stakeholders.</p> <p>Participation in think tanks, negotiations, and policy making in relation to sustainable development at the local and international level.</p>

Fig. 1: The Incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Youth Generation and Participation

According to the World Bank (2007), youth should be understood as a developmental period between childhood and maturity, rather than a rigid concept depending on age. Certain social or cultural rituals may also mark the transition to adulthood in some societies. Besides that, youth were in their transition period in terms of the physical, psychological, and social transformation into adulthood, and effective youth involvement in community development. The personality traits influence the link between youth participation and increased community involvement. In addition, according to Scales and Leffert (1999), influences proved crucial, notably the importance of setting an example for everyone else. To capitalize on these findings, extension and community development workers may focus more on creating chances for young people to set an example for other youth. These may contribute to substantial youth participation, which would positively impact other components of youth and community development. For example, through boosting future reference settings, youth take on leadership positions with other youth, boosting their social and community growth. Besides that, motivating factors for community involvement are also essential.

The involvement of young people in political and social development in their community can ensure that all young people have access to the resources and tools they need to make a living, become productive citizens, and contribute to community development. The right to participate, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (refer to Table 1.0), saw the Incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in higher education. With this move, Burkey (2013) and Kubisch (2005) believed that having young citizens represent the ideas and feelings in SDG nurtures compassionate, sustainable, and equitable societies.

2.2 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The preservation of the global environment is crucial for sustainable economic and social development across different generations. Hence, sustainable development has gained significant attention in recent years (Olawumi & Chan, 2018). In Malaysia, we can see the government working together with Non-Government Organizations to commit to achieving SDGs. Many countries already involved the youth in achieving SDGs in their home countries, such as India, Canada, Honduras, Singapore, and others. The focus varies from

ensuring no poverty, quality of education, clean water, life on land, and life below water. According to the PWc Survey (2015), sustainability goals became the primary point to express their commitment to achieving SDGs by 2030. Besides that, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN MDGs 2020) are a helpful framework that provides clear and easy-to-understand SDGs through their categories, which need to be addressed on all levels. The World Economic Forum recently stated that the working population is overwhelmingly made up of young people and is underrepresented in global issues. The World Economic Forum's recent version commissioned studies to understand how these young people see the world. Career prospects and development are crucial to them as rewards, a sense of self, and social influence.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The concept of CSR evolved from early philanthropic endeavours to its status as a more formalised and sometimes mandated norm. This evolution signifies a shift from purely voluntary acts to a more integrated approach where businesses align their operations with societal well-being and environmental concerns (Kujur, 2023). In Malaysia, the actual case is that CSR is voluntary. Combining sustainable activities and Corporate Social Responsibility will amplify institutional behaviors, making it easier for these organizations to improve the business climate through corporate social responsibility (CSR) and organizational sustainability. Aguinis and Glavas (2019) mentioned that empirical evidence on corporate social responsibility and youth sense-making also impacts their family, community members, and nationality.

2.4 Self-awareness, Self-motivation, Self-interest

Self-awareness is a multidimensional theoretical concept that can be defined as "understanding your own emotions, values, and personal goals" (Greenberg et al., 2017); focus and reflect on one's inner processes or own experiences, as well as being aware of other's perceptions (Sutton, 2016), shaped positive development (Stevens & De Looze, 2018), (Esther, et al., 2022). Greenberg et al. (2017) stated that improving self-awareness can, in turn, improve one's positive development. Based on all statements, all authors put a high value on self-awareness as it may lead to significant psychological well-being.

Self-motivation leads to people's involvement in certain activities. Through participation in youth programs, young people have access to opportunities to learn and build important skills. The youth participated in activities that provided a benefit to meet personal goals or develop skills. However, our findings suggest that youth may leave activities, or never join them, based on different sets of motivations than the reasons they stay in activities (McGuire et al., 2023). Youth reported developing a connection to 3 personal goals that linked the self with the activity, learning for the future, and developing competence, and pursuing a purpose (Dawes, et al., 2011).

Self-interest is related to a norm and ought to be a powerful determinant of behaviour. Weeden & Kurzban (2017) argued that self-interest remains a potent factor in the context of several issue opinions. Further, taking a broader view of human interests, they see self-interest effects not only in economic opinions but also in various cultural/social domains. This norm influences people's actions and opinions as well as the accounts they provide for their actions and views (Miller, 1999).

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a survey design to examine factors influencing youth participation in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. A structured questionnaire was developed to capture data related to the independent variables (self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-interest) and the dependent variable (youth participation in SDGs). All items were measured using an interval-level scale, whereby respondents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was utilised to ensure consistency and reliability in measurement.

The questionnaire was self-administered to allow respondents to provide informed and independent responses, thereby facilitating the accurate assessment of their perceptions and opinions. In addition to primary data collection, secondary data was obtained through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including previous empirical studies and theoretical works related to youth participation, CSR, and SDGs. The study population comprised youths residing in the Kuala Selangor district. A total sample of 400 respondents was selected, representing diverse age groups, religions, and ethnic backgrounds within the youth community. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure everyone had an equal probability of selection, thereby enhancing the representativeness and fairness of the data collection process. Each survey item was measured using a five-point Likert scale. As the data were collected from a single district, the findings of this study are context-specific and may not be generalisable to other geographical settings.

4.0 Findings

A total of 434 questionnaires were distributed to youths in Kuala Selangor, of which 400 were returned. However, 18 responses were incomplete, and only 382 were analysed, which yields a response rate of 95.5%. The respondents comprised 249 females (65.18%) and 133 males (34.55%). Most respondents were between 21 and 30 years, accounting for 261 participants. In terms of age, the highest contributor is the 21 – 30 years old due to the nature of this study, with a frequency of 261 respondents. Respondents came from all races, and findings showed that the highest contributor to the study is the Malay race, with 309 respondents or 80.89%. This is as expected, as this research was conducted in Kuala Selangor, Selangor, which has the most Malay residents. Simultaneously, the Chinese have a frequency of 21 respondents with a percentage of 5.50 %, Indian has a frequency of 33 respondents with a percentage of 8.64 %, and the non-Bumiputera have a minor frequency of 19 respondents, which accumulates by 4.97%.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables—self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-interest—and the dependent variable, namely youth participation in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs in Kuala Selangor, Selangor. The findings indicate that all three independent variables were positively correlated with youth participation. Specifically, self-awareness demonstrated a moderate relationship and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.384$). Therefore, H1, there is a significant relationship between IV and DV, is accepted. Self-motivation findings showed a weaker yet positive correlation ($r = 0.272$), indicating a slight but meaningful relationship. In this situation, a small relationship is portrayed between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between self-motivation and youth participation in corporate social responsibility in Kuala Selangor. In contrast, self-interest exhibited a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.579$), hence H1- there is a significant relationship between IV and DV is accepted. For the most influential factor influencing youth participation in SDGs through CSR programs in the Kuala Selangor district, the multiple regression analysis suggests that self-interest (0.482) is the most influential factor associated with youth participation in SDGs-related CSR programs.

5.0 Discussion

Demographically, comparing between female and male youth, the findings revealed that females responded more to the survey as compared to young males. There are several reasons behind it, like drawing upon established literature regarding gender-specific behaviours in online environments and survey methodologies. Garcia et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2022) commented that young women's digital habits and emotional experiences could increase their engagement with online surveys.

5.1 *The relationship between self-awareness and youth participation in SDGs through CSR.*

The correlation test results between self-awareness and youth participation in SDGs through CSR programs in Kuala Selangor, Selangor, indicated that there exists a positive, moderately significant relationship. This is like prior studies by Czajkowska & Ingaldi (2023), Castka (2009), Zulkifli and Amran (2006), and Ramasamy and Ting (2004). The result score shows a range of medium, perhaps due to the location of Kuala Selangor, which is located far from the main city, such as Kuala Lumpur. Not many CSR programs are being implemented in Kuala Selangor, and not many youths have a strong knowledge and awareness of SDGs and CSR. Therefore, only some youth managed to share their experiences participating in SDGs and CSR programs. The positive correlation also indicates that youth are aware of the importance of getting involved in SDG through CSR programs, which helped to shape a positive development in their lives.

5.2 *The relationship between self-motivation and youth participation in SDGs through CSR*

The correlation for this factor between IV and DV is positive; however, due to the small sample size, it indicates that there is only a slightly significant relationship. The self-motivation factor can be seen as the least contributor, perhaps due to minimal SDG and CSR-related programs being held in Kuala Selangor. Not much encouragement was received from the family, local community, private sectors, and NGOs; therefore, it affected the level of self-motivation among youth to participate in SDGs through CSR programs. This finding corroborates with Amran (2018), gaining government recognition for CSR undertaken by the private sector is critical to enhancing and improving their collaboration with the local people in the future. The award is given to private and foreign enterprises that have demonstrated a beneficial impact on their participation in corporate social responsibility projects that also benefit local communities. Their membership with this group fostered strong collaboration and public understanding that everyone has a responsibility to support one another. Partnering with several selected public higher education institutions can also improve the country's education system by fostering closer links. In Malaysia, the most popular theme in CSR practices in the community is education, the highest being giving scholarships, followed by an internship in companies, schooling, and educational equipment. On that note, perhaps more education-related programs, like linking quality education SDG 4 with CSR programs, may increase the self-motivation among youth to participate.

5.3 *The relationship between self-interest and youth participation in SDGs through CSR*

The finding for this factor, which is self-interest, saw a correlation score of 0.579, which means there exists a strong and significant positive relationship between IV and DV. This result showed similar achievement with the past studies, such as Cohen (1988), Muwazir et al. (2017), and Weeden & Kurzban (2017), in terms of self-interest, which gained the highest correlation value as compared to the other factors in the aspect of youth participation. Types of CSR programs can also contribute to a higher rate of self-interest. The desire to accomplish the following was a driving force behind the urge to participate: do the right thing, feel fulfilled, contribute to community development, restore or contribute to spirituality, enhance personal growth, encourage sharing among communities, improve life for future generations, assist in the resolution of day-to-day problems, accomplish something valuable in the community and act responsibly for the country's development

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study, which assesses factors that influence youth participation in SDGs through CSR programs, focused on 3 factors (self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-interest) as IV. Looking into the research findings, the situation on youth participation in SDGs through CSR program in Kuala Selangor, Selangor, Malaysia, saw the 3 factors as IV do correlate with the DV. For significance, it ranges from medium to medium significant, slight significant, and strong significance. The findings indicate that the respondents have

some level of awareness about SDGs and CSR, they participated in some of the programs. In terms of the self-motivation factor, youth are seen as more dependent on each other, like friends or families. Having people they know, respect, and feel comfortable with makes the youth active and motivated to participate in CSR programs. By looking into the perspective of youth and factors that influenced their decision to participate in the SDGs through CSR, it helps the local government, NGOs, foundations, ministry, and private sectors to come up with a more innovative CSR program, thus, more youth involvement can be obtained. It is also further recommended that more factors should be explored that may encourage youth to actively participate so their voices can be integrated into CSR strategies for greater SDG alignment.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of research concerning youth, SDGs, and CSR. Youth is an important asset to the country. By having a young generation with good awareness, high motivation, and high interest and willingness to participate or work with the community, the process of inculcating good values among youth can be sustained.

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