

## Youth as Stakeholders and Their Engagement Towards Government Programmes (GP)

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### ABSTRACT

The study looks into youth as Stakeholders and their engagement in government programmes. The implementation of programmes by a country, government or company will generate fruitful outcomes if the plans and programmes are well received by the stakeholders. Stakeholders are both internal and external. However, the focus of this study is the external stakeholders namely the citizens of this country with specific focus on youth. In the context of Malaysia, generally government programmes are implemented with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. This study is carried out using focus group discussions (FGD). It presents the findings from the FGD focussing on the young adults of different ethnics. The research questions aimed to answer the following: What are the government programmes identified by the stakeholders? What are the reactions of the stakeholders toward the identified programmes? And to what extent do the stakeholders engage in the identified programmes? From the FGD, it was found that stakeholders identified government programmes from five sectors namely housing projects, transportation, healthcare, education and financial support. Several stakeholders reacted positively toward the benefits of the programmes, however they had negative reactions on certain programmes. Some stakeholders stressed that regardless of the positive and negative aspects of the government programmes, they monitored and showed concern on the effectiveness of the programmes implemented. This is evidence of how engaged youth were in the government programmes. Recommendations were offered by the stakeholders for successful implementation of current and future government programmes.

**Keywords:** *Stakeholders, engagement, reaction, youth, government programmes.*

### INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder Engagement Theory is considered important to gauge the effectiveness and the salient aspects of implementation of government programmes. Stakeholder theory involves both internal and external stakeholders. Among the developing countries, Malaysia has always seen major reform and modernisation in most of their development programmes. From the past government to the current new government under Pakatan Harapan (PH), much attention has been given to improve the quality of life of the citizen. Before PH, the previous government under Barisan Nasional (BN), had introduced 1Malaysia with the sub-tag "People First, Performance Now" reflecting the commitment to make the government more performance-oriented and accountable for results. Under PH, the focus is on rebuilding the nation and fulfilling dreams.

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Stakeholder engagement, also known as 'Citizenship Participation' is an important element in nation building and maintaining an equitable power balance in an organisation or a country (Greenwood, 2007; Ihugba & Osuji, 2011). Stakeholders, who can be categorised as internal and external stakeholders according to Hill and Jones (2001), are defined as "those groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives" (Freeman & McVea, 2001, p.23). The implementation programmes by a country or company will generate fruitful outcomes if the plans and programmes are well received by the stakeholders. Likewise, without stakeholders engagement the successful implementation of programmes would be dubious and uncertain.

This study looks at the role and relationship of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the Government Programme (GP) initiated by the government of Malaysia under the current government of Pakatan Harapan (PH). The building block of the current development programmes initiated by the current government is aimed at improving the quality of life of Malaysian citizens. The importance of stakeholder engagement in governmental policies and programmes have become a hot topic in recent years ever since US President Barack Obama introduced global engagement in his country's foreign policy. Where Malaysia is concerned, stakeholder engagement in GP is an overriding target. Hence, it is pertinent to explore the role and to what extent stakeholder engagement contributes to the successful implementation of government programmes and to what extent the critical factors underlined by the programmes under the new government had triggered the citizenship participation. Through a qualitative method via focus group discussion (FGD), this study hopes to transcend the assumption that stakeholder engagement is imperative in the successful implementation of government programmes. This study hopes to contribute to the enhancement of stakeholder engagement in terms of future steps and initiatives toward the accomplishment of government programmes.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is an instrumental element in nation building and may include either internal or external stakeholders (Hill & Jones, 2001). Internal stakeholders are stockholders, organisational employees including managers and Board members. External stakeholders are customers, suppliers, governments, unions, local communities and the public. Various studies in this area have found that stakeholder engagement can positively benefit both the organisation and society (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Greenwood, 2007; Ihugba & Osuji, 2011).

In the case of a nation, which is considered "an organisation" at a bigger scale, it is said that the implementation programmes by a nation's government will generate fruitful outcome if the plans and programmes are well received by the stakeholders. Likewise without stakeholders engagement, the implementations of programmes would not meet the superordinate goals aimed to enhance the well-being of the people.

This study looks at the role of stakeholders engagement in the implementation of the Government's Programme (GP) initiated by the new government of Malaysia, Pakatan Harapan. Under the previous government, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), through GTP 1.0 and 2.0, were aimed at improving the quality of life of Malaysian citizen. Earlier studies by the Performance Management Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) of Malaysia found that more than half of the respondents were aware of GTP's trajectory and goals. However, on average the rakyat's perception of the GTP came in at 7.4 out of 10. This

study by *PEMANDU* surveyed 2040 respondents to assess the general public awareness and perception of the GTP. However, the study did not dwell into elements that trigger the interest of Stakeholder engagement towards government's program. With the change of government, more programmes are initiated with similar goals and expectations.

Various studies (Sandeep et al., 2008; Saks, 2006; Crabtree, 2005; Baumruk, 2004; Kahn, 1990) have shown that engagement is a two way relationship between the employer and the employee, and in this context the relationship between government and the people. A classic study by Kahn (1990) showed that employees are more likely to exchange their engagement for resources and benefits provided by the organisation. Saks (2006) argues that one way for individuals to repay their organisation is through their level of engagement.

The importance of stakeholder engagement in governmental policies and programmes have become a hot topic in recent years ever since 'global engagement' became a buzz word under Barack Obama's administration. Where Malaysia is concerned, stakeholder engagement in government's programmes is an overriding target and need to be investigated. Hence, the current study was conducted to explore the people's awareness towards the new government's initiatives to improve further the people's well being.

Through a qualitative method via focus group discussion (FGD), this study hope to transcend the assumption that stakeholder engagement is imperative in the successful implementation of government programmes. This study hopes to contribute to the enhancement of stakeholder engagement in terms of steps and initiatives towards the accomplishment of future government programmes.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the government programmes identified by the stakeholders?
2. What is the extent of stakeholders' engagement towards the identified programmes?
3. What are the factors that enhance or discourage stakeholders engagement?

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The word "stakeholder" first appeared, in this usage, in 1963 in an internal memorandum at Stanford Research Institute (Wang & Dewhirst, 1992) and has since become a prominent concept in the corporate and academic communities. The theory is defined as a person who holds a stake in the activities of the organisation in some ways it is similar to shareholders. Stakeholders may include employees, customers, suppliers the state, the local community, society, bankers, special interest groups, the environment and technological progress (Argenti, 1993). Freeman (1983) defined a stakeholder as any individual or group who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organisation's objectives.

Freeman (1984) is generally attributed as the founding father of the Stakeholder Theory, a theory that had evolved over the years to be one of the most crucial theories in discussing value creation and trade in the business world. The main premise of the Stakeholder Theory is that if we could really understand the relationship between a business and the groups as well individuals who can affect it or are affected by it, then we would be able to manoeuvre through any changes in the business world and emerge successful.

The stakeholder theory started out to understand how value can be best created which will benefit all stakeholders without any "trade-offs" in the changing business world. While capitalism is the dominant means to understand value creation and trade, the

stakeholder theorists are concerned with the relationship between business and other institutions within a society.

According to Freeman et al. (2010, p.10), “stakeholder theory has evolved to address the problems of (i) understanding and managing a business in the world of the twenty-first century (the problem of value creation and trade); (ii) putting together thinking about questions of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability with the usual economic view of capitalism (the problem of the ethics of capitalism); and (iii) understanding what to teach managers and students about what it takes to be successful in the current business world (the problem of managerial mind-set).”

Given the rapid changes in financial markets and regulation of public policy in an increasingly globalised business environment, the stakeholder theory is increasingly relevant to understand how capitalism, ethics, sustainability and social responsibilities can be combined into new ways of thinking about business.

The researchers therefore aim to shift the thoughts into understanding how implementation of Government programmes within the framework of stakeholder theory can impact the Government’s stakeholders such as the public, the elitist, the businessman and other groups within the society.

### *Stakeholder Theory Components*

The next question that needs to be addressed is therefore, what are the important components of Stakeholder Theory. Figure 1 below is the figure by Freeman et al. (2007) as the standard picture of value creation and trade among stakeholder’s theorists.

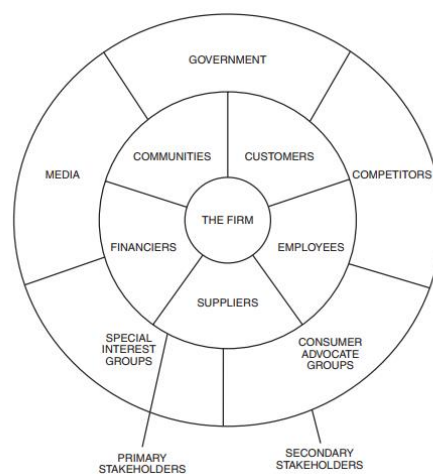


Figure 1: Creating values for stakeholders by Freeman et al. (2007)

Freeman (2007) stated that business can be defined as “set of relationships among groups which have a stake in the activities that make up the business. Business is about how customers, suppliers, employees, financiers (stockholders, bondholders, banks, etc.), communities, and managers interact and create value.”

The main person in a business therefore must be the owner or financiers who expect a financial return based on their investments. The employees are dependent on the firm for their jobs and livelihood. With a special skill offered to the company, employees expect wages, benefits and job satisfactions from the company. Certain levels of employees such as

the management teams would be expected to participate in decision making and shouldering greater responsibility in comparison to the others.

Customers and suppliers on the other hand trade resources of products and services with the firm and receive the benefits of the resources given by the firm. Customers are expected to be satisfied with products or services given, otherwise the firm must rectify whatever dissatisfaction raised by the customers. Suppliers that are committed to help firm perform better are assets to the company.

Finally, the local community grants the firm the right to build facilities and, in turn, it benefits from the tax base and economic and social contributions of the firm. Concepts such as business ethics, social responsibility and sustainability of environment become the main discourses involving the local communities.

While the employees, suppliers, customers and local community make up the core or primary stakeholders of almost every business, there are other stakeholders that need to be considered as well. These are the secondary stakeholders or the larger group of stakeholders that can affect the business as well. Their impact may not be seen as direct and immediate, but they are important components that would ensure the viability of a business. These are groups such as the government, the media, competitors, special interest groups as well as non-governmental organizations.

With the current emphasis on communication technology, the mode of communication among the people has shifted tremendously. The Internet has become a preferred mode of communication and resource for the people especially among the younger generation (Samsudin, 2018). He stressed that the emergence of the internet facilities, influences and changes the way citizens participate in social issues. This view is supported by Bahtiar et al. (2018). They reiterated that social media allows marginalised youth to communicate with friends and fostering their engagement in various issues as well as allowing them to share and express their opinions. Hence, this would steer them towards participation in political activities and other social engagement. Nurzali (2016) also voiced out similar views that the young generation shared interests and practices in new media which then opened up the possibilities of engagement with other individuals online.

Other scholars (Ika Karlina, 2018; Ali et al., 2018; & Ali & Sonderling, 2017) viewed that communication and information technology has changed the way the government communicate with the public. Social media has the potential to promote a positive perception of the government through the dissemination of information which enhance citizen and government relationship. Ali et al. (2018) found that social media plays a role and has the advantage in channelling the information compared to the traditional media.

Now within the context of the current research, the researchers aim is to look at the Government Programme, whereby the main firm would be the Government institution, whereas the stakeholders would be defined as people who are affected or have the power to affect the implementation of the government programmes. In this study, the main focus is the youth, who are customers of the government programmes, eligible voters and future leaders of the country. Using the stakeholders' theory, this research is a reflection of the engagement of youth as stakeholders who are instrumental in determining the successful implementation of government programmes.

It is very important for this reflection to be done for a couple of reasons. Michael Gonin (2007) expressed that for a stakeholder study to be important, it must address the direct consequences of the research and how the work will shape the context in which value creation and trade takes place.

This study will shed light onto the success of Government Programmes and its acceptance among its stakeholders. This knowledge can later on be translated to ensure more success and better value creation in place for upcoming government policies and programme implementation.

### *Stakeholder Theory and its Importance to Government Policies*

Studies on Stakeholder Theory and its link to Government policies are not new. Flak and Rose (2005) studied how the stakeholder theory can be adapted to understanding the concept of e-government. One of the interesting arguments made by Flak and Rose (2005) is that Stakeholders Theory is appropriate to be considered in relations to government policies as government can be conceptualised as the management of relationships and interests of societal stakeholders. He also argued that government agencies face increasing demand to run a government like a business with budget optimising for their stakeholders. Stakeholder Theory is a better-fit of management theory for the government context than the conventional profit-maximising management theories.

The researchers agree to the observation of Flak and Rose (2005). The government programme was very much business-like with its focus on achievement economically with many key performance indicators to be achieved as well as key areas to be tackled. Therefore, it would be refreshing to reflect upon the implementation of government programmes from the perspectives of Stakeholders Theory to evaluate the budget-optimising aspect of government programmes and its benefits to its societal stakeholders.

The Guardians in New Zealand (2008) study stakeholder engagement to understand how effective it is in its engagement and communications with stakeholders. This research provides direction for communication strategy, insight into stakeholders' perceptions and knowledge of the organisation, and helps to provide an understanding of what stakeholders want, what drives their satisfaction, and how the Guardians measures up to this.

Evidences also suggest that engagement is related to emotional experiences and wellbeing (May et al., 2004). These researchers have found that emotional factors are linked to an individual's personal satisfaction and the inspiration they obtained from their involvement with organization. Robinson (2006) identified some key areas in stakeholder engagement among organisation's employees. Their research found that engagement was closely linked to feelings and perceptions about being valued and involved. Among the drivers of engagement included effective leadership, a commitment towards employee' well-being, two-way communication between stakeholders and employer/government. Along similar line, Lawler and Worley (2006) argue that in order for organisations to have positive impact on stakeholder engagement, people need to be empowered.

Gomes (2006) studied the management of stakeholders in local government decision making. Using triangulation study method of case study, interview and document analysis, Gomes (2006) concluded that decision making by the government is stakeholder based process. The stakeholders influence the decision making based on their powers and interests in the operation's success and outcomes. Gomes (2006) built on the work of Mitchell (1997) that the model of the Stakeholders Theory is based upon three dimensions, namely power,

legitimacy and urgency. Mitchell (1997) said that there are three types of powers involving public policies. Firstly, normative power results from laws and requirements over which the organization has no control. Secondly, coercive power issues from physical means. Thirdly, utilitarian power results from dependence because the organization has to behave against its own will in order to achieve resources.

Urgency on the other hand means that the stakeholders management can be seen as a result of time criticality and sensitivity. In other words, a stakeholder is said to have urgency in a situation where his/her demands have to be dealt with in a short time otherwise the organization will be in serious trouble.

Mitchell (1997) then argued that the third dimension should be the legitimacy of the stakeholders on the issue as there are actors that has demand on an organization but the demand is neither legal nor moral. The concentration should be on stakeholders that have legitimate stakes.

Stakeholder theory, by contrast, as developed by Freeman (1983), represents a major alternative, in that the manager's task is to protect the various rights of all stakeholders. Organizations are seen as social institutions, with responsibilities beyond their judiciary responsibility to shareholders, directors and employees (Bowie, 1982). Another scholar Palgrave (1992) defines stakeholder as anyone whose welfare is tied with a company. Thus, one can conclude that the major purpose of stakeholder theory is to help board of directors and managements understand their stakeholders' environments and manage more effectively within the terms of the relationships that exist for their companies. It is also the purpose of stakeholder theory to help directors and managers improve the value of the consequences of their actions, and minimise the harms to stakeholders.

Anyway, some criticisms of stakeholder theory have suggested that it provide unscrupulous directors and managers with a ready excuse to act in their own self-interests. Thus resurrecting the agency problems that the shareholder wealth maximization imperative was designed to overcome. opportunistic directors and managements could more easily act in their International own self-interest, by claiming that their actions actually benefit some stakeholder groups, (Phillips, 2003).

In terms of Kahn's (1990) classic definition of engagement, employees feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply into their role performances as repayment for the resources they receive from their organisation, and in the context of this study, the government and youth relationship. When the government fails to provide these resources, individuals are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their roles. Hence, the amount of commitment and engagement an individual is prepared to devote toward their citizen role may be contingent on the economic and socio-emotional resources received from the government via the GP.

## METHODOLOGY

Focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted among three different groups of stakeholders. The first group comprises of experienced professionals and activists group within the age range of 45 to 55. The second group comprises of young professionals within the age range of 30 to 44 years. The third group comprises of young multi-ethnic adults (Malay, Chinese and Indian) within the age range of 20 to 29. All three groups have a combination of male and female participants with a total number of five participants in each group.

This paper focusses on the third group which comprises of young adults from multi-ethnic backgrounds (Malay, Chinese and Indian) within the age range of 20 to 29. The choice on youth was made due to the importance of youths' perception on government's programmes since they are the future leaders of the country.

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview respondents were invited to elaborate on each question. Thematic analysis was carried out to identify popular trends in the responses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of this research is on the external stakeholder namely the citizen. The research questions aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the government programmes identified by the stakeholders?
2. What are the reactions of the stakeholders towards the identified programmes?
3. To what extent do the stakeholders engage in the identified programmes?

The following projects were identified by the stakeholders:

- a. **Housing projects** - the stakeholders were aware that Perbadanan PR1MA Malaysia (PR1MA) is the main provider of homes in urban and sub-urban areas which are considered affordable to the Rakyat particularly the middle-income (M40) group.
- b. **Transportation** – the stakeholders identified several transportation projects which they knew had been implemented by the current and previous government. This includes: Mass Rapid Transit(MRT), Express Rail Link (ERL), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System, Light Rapid Transit (LRT) and e hailing.
- c. **Healthcare** – the stakeholders expressed their appreciation for the healthcare support provide by the government namely Klinik 1Malaysia which is now rebranded to Klinik Komuniti under the new government and the public hospitals.
- d. **Education** – the stakeholders indicated their awareness of the educational support namely PTPTN and MyBrain provided by the government. They said:
- e. **Financial support** – Majority of the stakeholders interviewed agreed that Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) was helpful for short term support. MyBrain was also mentioned by stakeholders.

What are the stakeholders' reactions towards the programmes?

Several stakeholders mentioned the following regarding housing projects:

S1: I think PR1MA is close to my heart, I'm getting older, I want to buy a house. They marketed it as something affordable. But when me and my sister ask to, but it was accessible. For me that was cool.

S2: there are also strict rules, when you own the PR1MA house you can't rent out to second party, or can't sell it within a period of time, 3 years...



The stakeholders also highlighted their reactions towards transportation:

S3: no rarely, but MRT is very convenient.

S1: I'd have to say MRT is very convenient, the buses are 1 Ringgit, the places they go are very convenient, it goes to to Damansara, I never had the opportunity to go and have internship at Damansara before, but when they had MRT, I had the opportunity, I had the chance, oh I can do this, I can go to Damansara...

S1: because right now i rely on GRAB and you can't cheat either, (GRAB, yes yes I agree) (is it cheaper to take GRAB) (cheaper faster convenient than public transport I do agree) (cheaper, I always thought GRAB is still more expensive than public transportation) you have to look at the time.

S2: I grab when I'm in overseas of course, but talking about the ERL meaning from KL Sentral to airport, from my point of view, yes at one time the price was cheaper, and now it's increasing.

S2: So let's say if you really take the LRT, and you want to take monorail, you have to walk a distance, but now they consolidate and they make it interchange (you have to walk from Jalan Hang Tuah), yes correct especially the Hang Tuah, because I taught at Sun Jing High School, so I remember I took bus from PJ, I alighted in KL Sentral, I took monorail, I reached Hang Tuah, and then you will see they have to walk a distance and then to take Ampang line or Sri Petaling line. But now they consolidate under a station, so that's the interchange lah, I see this as convenient.

In terms of healthcare, the stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the programmes such as Klinik 1 Malaysia and Public hospitals that they felt were convenient and affordable.

S1: I think Klinik 1 Malaysia is really helpful, cuz it's like 1 Ringgit, but the con was if you want MC, you have to go to an established clinic, which ... (ok) so I saw when I worked, when I start my internship, it's like adults can't afford to get sick, unless you have panel clinics, but if not, you can't afford to get sick.

S4: 1 Ringgit, just 1 Ringgit, and how I know about this I have *Klinik 1 Malaysia* right behind my house, and it doesn't trouble us, no long wait, because it's Kampong Baru. It's like I always go there because no long wait.... There was this klinik called *Klinik Wawasan*, and *Klinik 1 Malaysia*, the medicine was the same. My dad has his panel, so he just swipe the card, so medicine the same and he paid 200 something. At *Klinik 1 Malaysia* he only paid 5 Ringgit or 8 Ringgit (that's a huge difference ah).

S2: wards at public hospitals have *kelas 1, kelas 2, and kelas 3*, yes. So if you can afford, certain payment, you can choose *kelas 1*, and then you pay your own, it's kind of like private, and for those who can't really afford, and then you go for kelas 3, kelas 2, from my point of view, that's good.

Where education is concerned, the stakeholders believed that the programmes were of benefit to them.

S1: I think for my diploma, it was private university, but it was for me affordable, it was 24k for 2 years and a half, but I still use PTPTN, because at that time you also have to look at your family, like can they afford it or not, and that time I can't afford it, so PTPTN was very very helpful, because not only say they'd pay your loan, they also pay your pocket money.

S2: I remember when I studied in bachelor, and I ask PTPTN, I haven't got a job, so I couldn't pay back, they say never mind, you can pay 20 Ringgit. *Sedikit sedikit lama lama jadi bukit*. Better than none right. So why can't you just pay 10 Ringgit and 20 Ringgit, you just let the account flows, correct or not?... MyBrain was a good program, should continue.

The government's effort to alleviate the suffering of the lower income groups through BR1M was well received by majority although there were voices among the stakeholders of the need for the government to strategise and offer long term solution.

S2: The BR1M, yes brim, brim definitely, one point I agree, another point, em no. (ok, so why you do agree, why you don't agree) now brim it is good that you helped those families who are really in need, alright, and then like my parents, my grandparents they are very happy, even though the amount is not really that sufficient 1000+, but still you know at least they appreciate.

To what extent do the stakeholders engage in the identified programmes?

A feeling of appreciation among the stakeholders goes a long way in terms of creating commitment and engagement among the youth.

S2: so my parents, my family members they all appreciate this BR1M that's one point... BR1M it is good that you helped those families who are really in need...

S2: I really appreciated PTPTN because they gave us 1500 cheque. And we can use this 1500 cheque and we bank in to CIMB bank we can use that money to buy whatever we wanted especially laptop, I remember when I studied bachelor, I saw all my friends they got laptop and for me I couldn't afford you know, and then I went to laboratory I went to computer lab and did my assignment. Luckily my uncle bought 1 for me and I enjoyed that laptop, and I paid back that money to my uncle using PTPTN.

S1: I see help the lower income, some places the consultation is 30 Ringgit 50 Ringgit, so you can't even see a doctor and ... so I think Klinik 1 Malaysia is really helpful.

S2: I think in terms of healthcare; the government has done a great job. In healthcare lah, no doubt, no doubt... our healthcare system is really good, compared to other country again...

However, a few stakeholders disagreed with some of the programmes implemented by the government. For example:

S3: Somehow I disagree with BR1M, like you said you don't know where the source of the money, and what the impact on the country right now

S2: It's really true BR1M is just for short term, although they have certain criteria to identify these recipient for this BR1M, yet what next, once you get BR1M, of course you want to ease their daily burden...the government should come out with other long term solution that really helps those family who are in need, looking for job, or increase their soft skills, salary, or maybe teach them how to be involved in SME, using online or what not, not you just give them money.

S5: I think that BR1M is good, but it's not the solution that we want...important that solution would be long term so we could live well years down the road when we are old....

S5: At some point when I had to support myself, I work, and then finance my own education and then also I felt that all this, the support that the government gives, the education, only applies to some students, and also who willing to actually wait, for the process to approve, and some documentation, it's not easy.

S2: MyBrain now they stopped! They cut budget for universities, all research university, and they talk about I want you to know have good ranking, one way you want us to have good ranking, and then the other way you cut our budget. What's that?

Interestingly, some stakeholders stressed that regardless of some of the positive and negative aspects of the government programmes, they monitored and showed concern on the effectiveness of the programmes implemented.

S4: Although, I may not agree with some of things that government is doing, but I know my friends and I keep track of what's going on...we chatted with whoever interested in the issue...we are very open, and we question many things...we want the best for us...for the country.

S5: I agree that the government has tried its best...I support their effort to get everyone to pay back PTPTN because people may travel or migrate, and they won't pay back...that's a loss for the country...I do care.

It is also to note that two stakeholders expressed their beliefs that their support for the government programmes was crucial in making the programmes a success and obtaining a reciprocal reaction from the government in initiating appropriate actions in improving the programmes. The stakeholders believed that they have been empowered because they were not prohibited from voicing out their opinions and grievances. They were also interactive online and this widened their social network. This finding is consistent with Nurzali (2016). He found that the young generation shared interests and practices in new media which then opened up the possibilities of engagement with other individuals online.

S2: ...I know, our support is important as this will trigger the government to make the right moves...no support, no program. Our input is important also...if not, the government will never know, so I will share my concerns whenever I can.

S5: I think it's necessary that we show our support...see first...then if there's a problem, we can voice out through social media...I'm sure government will respond.

The findings of the study revealed that the youth were keeping track of government programmes and were aware of many of the programmes directly impacting on their lives. They were very open and accepting towards the efforts made by the government to enhance their wellbeing. They expressed support for the programmes and recognised the limitations. This is in line with Nalick (2016) who stressed that there is a point of intersection between the government and the stakeholders on certain programmes and activities. This will encourage acceptability among the stakeholders which in turn will sustain collaborative relationships.

Various studies in this area have found that stakeholder engagement can positively benefit both the organisation and society (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Greenwood, 2007; Ihugba & Osuji, 2011). Similarly, the findings of this study supported the views expressed by these scholars whereby the stakeholders interviewed clearly indicated that they and the people close to them benefitted from the government's programmes due to their engagement.

The stakeholders have expressed that they had the opportunity and freedom to voice out their opinions and concerns. They were certain that their opinions played vital roles in prompting the government to do better. This has been highlighted by Lawler and Worley (2006) who argued that in order for organisations to have positive impact on stakeholder engagement, people need to be empowered. They also stressed that involvement is maximised when the highest possible level of power is given to the people, which will then result in a maximum level of engagement.

The stakeholders have also expressed their appreciation of the government programmes that have benefitted them. With that appreciation, the stakeholders were willing to go the extra mile to give back in terms of supporting the government's efforts. This can be likened to reciprocal obligation. Saks (2006) and the earlier work of Kahn (1990) suggested that people are more likely to exchange their engagement for resources and benefits provided by their organization, and in this context the government.

### CONCLUSION

The study looks into youth as stakeholders and their engagement towards government programmes. The implementation of programmes by a country, government or company will generate fruitful outcomes if the plans and programmes are well received by the stakeholders. Stakeholders are both internal and external. However, the focus of this study is external stakeholders namely the citizens of this country with a specific focus on youth. In the context of Malaysia, generally government programmes are implemented with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people.

This study was carried out using focus group discussions (FGD). It presents the findings from the FGD focussing on young adults of different ethnic groups. The research questions aimed to answer the following: What are the government programmes identified by the stakeholders? What are the reactions of the stakeholders toward the identified programmes? And to what extent do the stakeholders engage in the identified programmes? Through the FGDs, it was found that stakeholders identified government programmes from five sectors namely housing projects, transportation, healthcare, education and financial support. Several stakeholders reacted positively towards the benefits of the programmes, however they had negative reaction on certain programmes. Some stakeholders stressed that regardless of the positive and negative aspects of the government programmes, they monitored and showed concern on the effectiveness of the programmes implemented. These are evidences of how engaged youth were in the government programmes.

The results of this study clearly indicate the sensitivities of youth in government programmes. Although they are aware of the existence of several programmes and are in full support, there are programmes in which they are not in total agreement. Some of the reasons cited are that the programmes such as BR1M only benefit the recipients for a short time. Another programme that received criticism from this youth group was MyBrain. They felt that the programme should not have been stopped. Hence, what we could imply from these results were that the youth group would like to see programmes that are strategically planned and implemented for the benefit the people both short term and long term.

What the researchers of this study are trying to achieve through this research is that good governance and sensitivity towards the needs of the stakeholders would help in reducing grievance, aloofness and indifference towards the acceptability of government programmes. Understanding the stakeholder's reasons for engagement will help the government to fulfil their needs and hence creating a cost effectiveness in the implementation as well as achieving a win-win situation. Often just the chance to sound off and feel that their voices are being heard is all that people are looking for and this can easily avoid problems before they arise. It is recommended that the government empower the youth by involving them in the planning and decision making related to programmes that affect their wellbeing and future.

There are many reasons for the current researcher wanting to conduct a stakeholder survey, but at the core of all is hopefully a desire to understand and serve all stakeholders better. This study is able to identify gaps and issues that have not been dealt deeply by earlier researchers. It is clear that there is a lack of research around what can enhance engagement and whether or not interventions such as interpersonal dialogue, communication and training be used to enhance government-stakeholder engagement.

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