



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**SELF-ESTEEM, EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND SELF EFFICACY OF
YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN THEATRE PERFORMANCE**

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By

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Youth are important assets for the continuous development of the nation. Youth are also in a critical stage for development. Therefore, many youth development programmes have been conducted to help youth to develop and equip them with the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to enable them to meet the future challenges and become indispensable leaders of tomorrow. A major developmental task during youth is the creation of a sense of identity. Theatre is one of the most common developmental programme used in the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia because through performing, the youth are able to project a new identity and discover themselves (Courtney, 1980). However, in Malaysia, theatre has not been embarked forcefully as a developmental programme for the youth. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine whether theatre will be suitable in youth identity development programme in Malaysia. This study determine the effects of theatre performance towards the identity development of the youth; specifically the development of self-esteem, emotional maturity and self-efficacy. Six selected elements of theatre performance were also used to



determine their influence towards the development of these three identities. The respondents for this study comprised of all the diploma students majoring in theatre from year one right up to the final year of two higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The number of respondents responded to the self-administered questionnaires were 109. The findings show that majority of the respondents have a high level of self-esteem and self-efficacy. The findings also show that majority of the respondents have a moderate level of emotional maturity but the overall respondents' emotional maturity can be considered high as almost half of the respondents reported to have a high level of emotional maturity. The other findings of this study show that theatre performance had equal influence towards the development of self-esteem, emotional maturity and self-efficacy. Among the six elements of theatre performance, role-playing, improvisation and characterization have the greatest influenced towards the development of the respondents' self-esteem, emotional maturity and self-efficacy. These findings imply that theatre performance is a suitable youth identity development programme as it helps to develop the youths' inner resources, identity, positive attitude and meet the basic needs for youth to be competent. The study recommended that theatre to be incorporated as one of the youth identity development programme in Malaysia, to give greater emphasis and to incorporate the three most influential theatre performance elements; role-playing, improvisation and characterization into other youth development programmes and to incorporate theatre into the academic curriculum in school.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**ESTIM KENDIRI, KEMATANGAN EMOSI DAN KEYAKINAN DIRI
BELIA YANG MENYERTAI TEATER**

Oleh

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Golongan belia merupakan aset bernilai kerana mereka adalah pewaris yang akan meneruskan kesinambungan pembangunan negara. Golongan ini juga berada pada tahap umur kritikal dalam perkembangan manusia. Justeru itu, banyak program pembangunan belia telah dikendalikan untuk membantu pembangunan para belia bagi melengkapkan mereka dengan sikap, pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang sesuai bagi membolehkan mereka berkeupayaan menghadapi cabaran-cabaran mendatang dan sebagai penyumbang utama pembangunan masa hadapan. Pembentukan identiti merupakan asas penting dalam pembentukan belia. Teater merupakan salah satu program pembangunan yang biasa digunakan di negara-negara barat seperti Amerika Syarikat, Britain, Canada dan Australia untuk membentuk identiti belia. Ini adalah kerana menerusi teater, para belia dapat menampilkan identiti baru serta menerokai dirinya sendiri (Courtney, 1980). Di Malaysia, teater masih belum diterokai dengan sepenuhnya sebagai sebuah program untuk pembangunan belia. Oleh demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti kesesuaian teater sebagai sebuah program untuk pembentukan identiti belia di Malaysia. Kajian ini



akan mengenalpasti kesan-kesan teater terhadap pembentukan identiti dikalangan belia terutamanya terhadap pembentukan estim sendiri, kematangan emosi serta keyakinan diri. Sebanyak enam elemen dalam teater telah dipilih untuk mengenalpasti pengaruh mereka terhadap pembentukan identiti tersebut. Responden kajian terdiri daripada 109, semua pelajar dari tahun satu hingga tahun akhir yang mengambil kursus diploma pengajian teater dari dua buah institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia. Borang soal-selidik telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data.. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa majoriti daripada responden mempunyai estim sendiri and keyakinan diri yang tinggi. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa majoriti daripada responden mempunyai kematangan emosi pada tahap yang sederhana. Walau bagaimanapun, secara keseluruhannya, tahap kematangan emosi di kalangan responden adalah tinggi kerana hampir setengah daripada responden-responden mempunyai tahap kematangan emosi yang tinggi. Keputusan kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa secara keseluruhannya teater mempunyai pengaruh yang sama terhadap pembentukan estim sendiri, kematangan emosi dan keyakinan diri. Tiga daripada enam elemen teater iaitu teknik permainan watak, improvisasi dan perwatakan mempunyai pengaruh yang terbesar terhadap pembentukan estim sendiri, kematangan emosi dan keyakinan diri responden. Ini menunjukkan bahawa teater adalah sesuai dijadikan sebagai program pembentuk identiti belia kerana ianya membantu menyerlahkan identiti, membentuk sikap positif dan membentuk belia yang berdaya tahan. Adalah disarankan supaya teater dijadikan sebagai salah satu program pembangunan identiti belia di Malaysia dan di masukkan ke dalam kurikulum akademik di sekolah-sekolah.. Selain daripada itu, ketiga-tiga elemen teater yang

mempengaruhi pembentukan identiti belia iaitu permainan watak, improvisasi dan perwatakan boleh diperkenalkan dan diberi penekanan dalam program-program pembangunan belia yang lain.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Youth are important assets for the continuous development of the nation because youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Youth comprises a large proportion of the total population in Malaysia; 41.5% of the total population falls in the ages ranged between 15 to 39. According to the Eight Malaysia Plan (2001), in year 2000, there are 4.37 million youth between the ages of 15 to 24. It is projected that by year 2005, this number will increase up to 4.98 million. This covers almost one fifth (20%) of the total population.

Therefore, in the Eight Malaysian Plan (2001), the thrust for youth development is to equip youth with the necessary attitudes, knowledge, skills to enable them to rise to the challenges and cope with the effects of rapid economic development and globalization. Greater attention will be given to ensure the youth recognize their critical responsibilities and contribution towards national development as well as enhancing national unity.

Youth Development Programmes

There are many youth development programmes in Malaysia that aim to benefit the youth. These youth development programmes aim to prepare the youth through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical, and cognitive competencies (National Collaboration for Youth Members, 1998). However, the focus is mainly



on sport activities, leadership trainings, healthy lifestyle programmes such as “Rakan Muda”, community social services (Seven Malaysia Plan, 1996) and the most recent proposed approach; the national service.

According to the Eight Malaysia Plan (2001), the focus for the youth development programmes for year 2001 to 2005 will be to ensure that youth contribute effectively to nation building. Programmes such as leadership training, skills training, entrepreneurships, healthy lifestyles activities such as ‘Rakan Muda’, sports and cultural activities will continue to be implemented. Under the cultural activities, programmes implemented will cover areas such as traditional and modern performing arts, script writing, arts and music. Theatre was somehow not being embarked forcefully.

Identity Development through Theatre

The history of theatre in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries is one of the increasing commercialization of the art in the west. This is accompanied by technological innovations, the introduction of serious critical review, expansion of the subject matters portrayed to include ordinary people, and an emphasis on more natural forms of acting. Theatre, which had been dominated by the Church for centuries, and then by the tastes of monarchs for more than 200 years, became accessible to merchants, industrialists, the bourgeois and then the masses (Cohen, 1993).

In the early 20th Century -- as society battled to determine the ultimate goals and meaning of political philosophy in the life of the average person after the war, the

commercial theatre advanced full force, manifesting itself in the development of vastly popular forms of drama such as major musicals beginning with Ziegfeld's *Follies* and developing into full-blown musical plays such as *Oklahoma!*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Showboat*. Ever greater technological advances permitted spectacular shows such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Miss Saigon* to offer competition to another new innovation: film (Cohen, 1993).

With the advent of movies, the small-town professional playhouses either closed due to the competition from this new art form or were converted to movie-houses. Theatre-lovers in these small communities still wanted the real thing -- live theatre -- and they took heart from such European examples as the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Antoine's Little Theatre in France, and others, and began to produce amateur theatre in small groups and associations. At first known generically by the term "little theatres", these groups soon came to prefer the appellation "community theatres" as more accurately reflecting their goals and ideals: to celebrate, promote and perform the dramatic arts using the pooled talents and resources of the community. The average community theatre doesn't aspire to professional status (although most aspire to professional standards). Only a small percentage of members go on to pursue a career in professional theatre. All of them, however, share a love and enthusiasm for theatre (Cohen, 1993).

With the presence of this community theatre, more and more people have the opportunity to get access and watch theatre. A new understanding and like for theatre was born. The benefits of theatre have upon individuals and society was



discovered. One of the most important functions of theatre in human society is to give one the experience of situations that they do not encounter often enough in real life (Wilson, 1994). In dramatic performance, one draw upon skills of imitation and mimicry in many ways. In addition one learn lines and especially songs, primarily by imitation (Pradier, 1990). Live performance is not just a simulation of everyday behavior, it is a biological stimulator (Pradier, 1990). Actors, singers and dancers, when performing effectively, actually energize their audience. One symptom of this physical activation is the clapping, whistling, screaming and stamping of feet that is evoked from an audience that is really moved by the performance. Performing arts restore the integrity of mind and body while still maintaining the playful mode (Pradier, 1990). According to Wilson (1994), the study of theatre is of great value to psychologists because it is a vital part of life. Essentially human preoccupations and conflicts are played out on stage and in films, not just for entertainment, but also for self-discovery, catharsis and impetus for social change. Psychology, then, as 'the science of behavior and experience' and theatre as 'a mirror to life' each has a lot to offer the other.

Evolution of Theatre in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the traditional Malay drama, or better known as *Bangsawan* or 'Malay Opera', is based on traditional and modern themes, brought into Malaysia from Persia in the 19th century. It was a popular form of entertainment until television took over. *Mak Yong*, a traditional form of dance-drama from Pattani and Kelantan, is based on traditional tales of the region and is performed by an all female cast. The *Wayang Kulit* (Shadow Puppets), most popular in Kelantan, is a

form of drama, which is performed using puppets. In Kelantan, there are three main varieties of wayang kulit: wayang golek, wayang jawa and wayang siam, which are taken from the great epics of Hindu literature but adapted to the local scene. Unfortunately, the public performances of the wayang kulit have declined drastically in number since the 1930's when there were over 130 master puppeteers or dalangs. Today there are only about five active dalangs left, but efforts are being undertaken to ensure that the wayang kulit does not disappear altogether (Windows to Malaysia.Com Sdn. Bhd., 2002).

Modern Malaysia theatre has its roots in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, with a sprinkling of activity in Penang, Melaka, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. The Malaysian theatre is as exciting and as varied as its people, with the languages used being Bahasa Melayu, Chinese, Tamil and English. There is also comedy, mime, puppetry and children's theatre. The Bahasa Melayu theatre has benefited much from Malaysian writers who have been active since after World War Two (1941 – 45). Post 1969, playwright directors ventured further to draw the urban Malay elite to modern theatre. The English language theatre started from scratch after Independence in 1957. The 90's dubbed the most exciting era for the Malaysian performing arts scene, theatre especially, saw the advent of younger and trained Malaysians as well as foreigners (Windows to Malaysia.Com Sdn. Bhd., 2002).

This is because theatre acting does not require any *'pre requisites'* such as music knowledge, basic steps in dancing and beautiful voice. Everyone's life is a drama.

Everybody has a story to tell. There are stories for every mood, for every age, for every people and for every occasion. In theatre, chances are they can be one or more of the following: child, grandchild, brother or sister, friend, student, baby sitter or dreamer. Roles can easily come to perfection with experiences and practices. Therefore, getting started in acting is much easier. Many production houses, schools, colleges and private companies are mushrooming to recruit, train and develop the local people, the younger generation especially, to become good performing artists and to produce good performances. Some of the more popular theatre groups in Malaysia today are 'The Kualu Group', 'Five Art Centre', 'National Arts Academy', 'The Actors Studio', 'Dramalab' and 'The Instant Café Theatre Company'.

Malaysian Youth Involvement in Theatre

Akademi Seni Kebangsaan and Universiti Teknologi Mara, the two selected higher learning institution for this study, offers a diploma course in Theatre. Their objective is to produce creative performers, to nurture artistic talent and to develop leadership in the arts. Therefore, the basic syllabus covered in the courses offered involved basic acting, improvisation, voice and movement, theatre history and dramatic theory.

Besides, currently there are at least twenty-five theatre groups in Malaysia that are actively involved in training youth in theatre performance including the two higher learning institution involved in this study. Majority of these groups are doing the English theatre, except for a handful, which are doing a combination of Chinese

and English theatre or Malay and English theatre. To date, all the participants are required to pay a certain amount of fees in order to participate in the training courses offered as these courses are specially designed for those who are interested and are not part of a course offered in school. Therefore, the number of youth in Malaysia participated in theatre are not many but there is an increased based on the increasing number of theatre groups in Malaysia; though there is not much information about this. Hence, there is indeed a lack of study in this area and there is a need to explore the contribution of theatre towards youth identity development.

Problem Statement

Youth is a critical stage for development because it is a stage of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1950). A major developmental task during youth is the creation of a sense of identity. Though identity is not formed exclusively in youth, identity is significantly transformed during this period of life (Kroger, 1996). Therefore, many developmental scientists, policy makers and practitioners working with youth believe that enhancing the lives of youth with positive opportunities and experiences could reduce the likelihood and magnitude of youth related problems (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Dryfoos, 1996).

Realizing this, many youth developmental programmes have been organized to help youth to develop. Among all, performing arts, theatre especially, is the most common developmental programme used especially in the United States, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Courtney, 1980). Performing allows the

youth to discover about themselves and their lives. Performing gives them the ability to project a new identity and this kind of developmental activity is vital (Courtney, 1980). Studies show that sustained involvement in theatre arts associates with a variety of development for youth: gains in reading proficiency, gains in self-concept and motivation and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others. According to Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958), understanding delinquents, entails examining their identity problems and their attempts to escape from parental authority. In their rejection of parental values and in their experimentation with new roles, it is inevitable that the young will engage in deviant acts at some time. Therefore, theatre, which involves role-playing gives the youth an opportunity to experience new roles instead. In summary, success in the theatre, becomes a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning and development.

In Malaysia, theatre has not been given much consideration as a youth developmental programme even though previous studies conducted have shown the benefits of theatre performance towards the development of youth. However, there is a gap, as those studies did not include youth in Malaysia and no systematic study has been conducted in relations to Malaysian youth. Several questions have to be answered in exploring the potential of theatre as the vehicle for youth development in Malaysia. These questions include; to what level theatre helps youth in Malaysia in their identity development? Which of the selected characters of identity is most developed among the youth participating in theatre performance? Which elements in theatre have the greatest influence towards the