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The Significance of Leadership Ethics in Youth Voluntary Organization Development in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a brief discussion on the need of improving leadership ethics for youth voluntary organizations development, which referring to views and opinions expressed by scholars and researchers on youth leadership. For this reason, this paper also presents a conceptual description of several concepts pertaining to youth, leadership and youth voluntary organization in Sabah, Malaysia. Thus, this paper comprises of several subtopics, namely youth and its classification, youth voluntary organization, the leader and leadership, the leadership ethics, and the needs for improvement of leadership ethics among youth leaders. It is hoped that this preliminary discussion on the need of improving leadership ethics among the leaders of youth voluntary organization provides opportunity for national development that focuses on youth development.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature of the significance of leadership ethics in youth voluntary organization development in Malaysia, and particularly in Sabah.

1. Introduction

Essentially, 'youth' fall into the period of life from the beginning of puberty to the attainment of adulthood. This period is usually concomitant with problems as they struggle to fit themselves into society. The word 'problem' doesn't necessarily imply that youth is assumed to be a period in which storm and stress predominate; it can be a period marked by good health and high achievement. Nevertheless, difficult decisions and adjustments face by young people in today's society (Sony, 2009).

In this postmodern world, however, youth has always been regarded to be the nicest period of lives when young people can be carefree without the burden of responsibility. They, seemingly a free time of life which also may bring some specific problems. This period of human lifespan is also the period of where people do the most important

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decisions that can have fatal consequences for their future family and career. Whereas Venatus and Anges (2010) stated that young people in every society are the greatest natural resources. They are credible and effective partners when they are inclusive. This important role of youth in development has been recognized, especially because the youth of today are the nations' leader of tomorrow. It is in recognition of youth as credible leaders and valuable contributors that successive administrations.

Besides, Chigunta (2002) stated that the continuing debate on who is the 'youth' has not resolved the confusion surrounding the concept. Therefore, not surprising, the concept of youth has been understood and used differently by the NGOs and publics (Curtain, 2000). For example, in Africa, Chigunta (2002) stated that youth as a social group defined as those who in the age of 10 to 35 years. However, United Nations (2000) defined youth as those who aged between 15 to 25 years, while Commonwealth uses the category of 15 to 29 years as youth.

In Malaysia, youth refer to someone who is still young and made up of young men and women. According to Norhasni (2007), Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia (2006) also define youth as those aged between 15 to 40 years is based on three main reasons; in accordance with the definition that have been made by the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM), this group of age is considered to be mature and able to think positively on the youth activities, and most people in this country made up of people in this group of age.

Through this interpretation, Norhasni (2007) stated that the youth consist of three main categories namely teenage phase, pre-mature phase, and mature phase (mature). Moreover, Aidit and Husnizam (2005) also stated that the people in this age (youth) must be categorized into three categories due to the difference needs among them. Recognizing this, the following are three main categories of youth:

a. Teenage phase: On average, this group is still in school or still studying in the school. Among the few things that need to be emphasizes in this group is to educate them of good self-values, fostering self-esteem towards them as well as exposing them to the changing scenario and its impact on them. People in this phase often faces crisis of identity and teenagers who suffer identity crisis and conflict need to be guided through the specific program or activities. Moreover, teenage phase refers to those aged between 15 to 19 years.

b. Pre-mature phase: This group consists of students in higher education institutions and secondary school leavers. They come into the world is more independent of their parents or school rules. At this stage, they have emphasized the high morale and foster a healthy relationship when involves in social relations. They should be exposed to a variety of opportunity to improve themselves in areas they operate. Encouragement to learn experience is important towards them. In addition, pre-mature phase refers to those aged between 20 to 29 years which increasingly needed social awareness activities.

c. Mature phase: Usually, these people are married and more focused on strengthening the family income and educating children. They are more mature and have greater responsibilities in the family. People in this group need of enhancing the quality of life and strengthening the family institution. In term of age, this category refers to those ages between 30 to 40 years.

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Hence, it is now clear that the concept of 'youth' is referring to one who is young and made up of young men and women aged between 15 to 40 years. Youth is also categorized into three main categories namely teenage phase (15 to 19 years), pre-mature phase (20 to 29 years), and mature phase (30 to 40 years). Individuals who fall in this category of course are already capable of engaging in youth voluntary organizations activities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Youth Voluntary Organization

The process of modernizations of civil society has been one of the factors which make people around the world formed such voluntary organizations. It is a form of social entrepreneurs with a social mission and because of its mission it becomes not wealth creation. Many of the earliest voluntary organizations was the effort of ordinary citizens, often working through their religious or cultural institutions, that led to the establishment of orphanage, hospitals, and homes for the aged, as well as to the creation of health and welfare agencies that worked with families to provide much needed assistance.

The voluntary organization such as youth voluntary organization is normally playing an important role in providing help to the people needed. Its' also called charities as well as this organization established to address the needs of the poor or distressed and other social welfare issues. It defined as altruistic commitment by people who give their time and/or their expertise voluntarily and free of charge, in a formal context, for a given period which requires several practical arrangements such as the payment of subsistence and transport costs and social security coverage for the volunteer.

According to Kankainen (2009) the voluntary organizations are also having been seen as mediating factors between individuals and the states which draw volunteers to gather, therefore enabling them to further their interest, fulfill themselves and let their voices be heard. Voluntary organizations also function as filters, gathering the various interests of citizens and fitting them to the level of society (Kankainen, 2009).

Voluntary organizations especially youth voluntary organizations' service could be a powerful tool to achieve youth empowerment and youth participation and give young people the opportunity to actively contribute to achieve certain goals. Moreover, European Commission Youth (2010), McBride, Olate, and Johnson (2008), Bartlett and Bridges (1957) stated that the common goals of the youth voluntary organization are a person – centered development as well as human welfare: development of socially responsible citizen, development of self-independence, development of self-directed, improvement of self-reliant, and improvement of self-control. Specifically, in Malaysia, Siti Raba'ah (2005), and Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia (2006) also stated that the common goals of the youth voluntary organizations are to ensure that more youth become socially responsible citizens, self-independence, self-directed, self-reliant, and more self-controlled. Siti Raba'ah (2005), also stated that the voluntary organization may also increase people's self-determination and feeling of competence because intrinsic motivation involves people freely engaging in activities that they find interesting, that provide novelty, and optimal challenge. In turn, self-determination and feelings of competence influence subjective wellbeing positively.

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Most youth voluntary organizations organize volunteer service programs in various fields, focusing particularly on sports, education, health, and community development work. The voluntary organizations activities normally are funded by contributions from individuals, corporate bodies, and the government (Duguid, Slade & Schugurensky, 2006).

In this post-modern world however, voluntary organizations continuous to face challenges in increasing the number of trained personnel/staff or volunteers, identifying, and dedicating financial resources for preparedness and strengthening their contribution to the 'helping people' activities. This phenomenon (shortage of trained personnel/staff or volunteers, and financial resources) is continuous to be ongoing concern among the voluntary organization. This is one of the factors that make many governments of today, such as Malaysian government has emphasized volunteerism among youth in most national blueprints as well as the Eighth Malaysia Plan (Surjit, Sail, Abu Samah, Tajuddin & Lumayag, 2005a).

Thus, in Sabah, Malaysia, voluntary organizations (especially youth voluntary organizations) can be formal, informal, or ad hoc (Surjit, Sail, Abu Samah, Tajuddin & Lumayag, 2005b; Esa & Ationg, 2020a; Esa & Ationg, 2020b). Surjit, Sail, Abu Samah, Tajuddin & Lumayag (2005b) also stated that formal volunteering comes in the form of formal enlistment to an organized group or institution with a well-defined social structure, role, and function. Meanwhile, informal volunteering is engaging in voluntary action outside the domain of organized group or charitable organizations which is including extending help to an extended family or neighborhood. Youth voluntary organization in Sabah is normally an independent, non-profit organization formed to promote the spirit of volunteer service among youngster, and to provide opportunities for them to work as volunteers with communities in need at home and abroad. It is important to nete, however, that youth voluntary organization in Sabah, Malaysia generally a formal organization with a well-defined social structure, role and function. As Surjit, Sail, Abu Samah, Tajuddin & Lumayag (2005b) argue, a formal voluntary organization comes in the form of formal enlistment to an organized group or institution with a well-defined social structure, role and function. Moreover, a formal youth voluntary organization in Sabah also refers to the youth voluntary organization that is an independent, non-profit organization formed to promote the spirit of volunteer service among youngster, and to provide opportunities for them to work as volunteers with communities in need at home and abroad.

2.2. Improving Youth Voluntary Organizations in Sabah, Malaysia

If we were to ask the youths on what improvement they want from their youth voluntary organizations, you will hear a common answer: they need ethical leadership or even an effective leadership. They need a person or of course a youth, with leadership ethics to lead their own youth voluntary organizations and the ability to work well with other people and hence keep the youth voluntary organization moving forward. According to Renesch (2001) leadership (who upholding ethics) is needed by many people as the leadership is one of the most elusive keys to organizational success. While a number of organizations have successfully cracked the code, leveraging stellar leadership into outstanding performance, many continue to struggle. Adding to the confusion is the changing nature of leadership. Today's flatter, faster, more flexible organizations, facing intense competition in a global market, require more dynamic leadership. Those organizations that are most successful in developing their executives

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and senior managers carefully assess the performance and capabilities of these leaders and potential leaders, provide them extensive development and coaching, measure their progress, and then reward them. They also focus on enhancing the self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills of their leaders.

Leadership ethics and ethical decision making in organization is also necessarily based on the accountability to a range of stakeholder groups (Winston, 2007). Winston (2007) in his meta-analysis of research related to ethics education also found that the organizational with the most ethical track records would be the most successful organizations overall.

Specifically, Bass (1990), Haywood and Wygal (2009) cited that ethical leadership is one who is professional (loyal to the organization, perform selfless service, take personal responsibility), possess good character traits (honesty, competence, candor, commitment, integrity, courage, straightforwardness, imagination), know themselves well (strengths and weakness of their character, knowledge, and skills), has knowledge on human nature (human needs, emotions, and how people respond to stress), know their own job (proficient and be able to train others in their tasks), know their own organization (know where to go for help, its climate and culture, who the unofficial leaders are), provide direction (goal setting, problem solving, decision making, planning), implementing skill (communicating, coordinating, supervising, evaluating) and capable in motivating the followers (develop moral and esprit in the organization, train, coach, counsel).

Winston (2007) also has stated that the ethical leadership and ethical decision making in organizations are necessary based on the accountability to a range of stakeholder groups. Through his research Winston (2005) found that the organizations with the most ethical track records are also the most successful organizations overall. Thus, the complexity associated with ethical decision making is based on the competing motivations of its leaders, levels and types of competition, and individuals' tendency to overestimate their ability to make ethical decisions.

Brown and Trevino (2006) suggest that tomorrow's leaders must be able to work with diverse groups and to integrate ideas to solve a continuous flow of problem. This requires patience and perspectives, the exercise of judgment and wisdom. It also demands sensitivities to other cultures and highly developed communication skills. It requires personal values that integrate the ethical dimensions of decision-making with those of a more technical variety. The leaders also need to do their job with highly consideration on the ethics as there is a vast agreement that ethics is at the heart of a moral society and should be the vision in 21st century (Starratt, 2004; Beckner, 2004; Noddings, 2002).

Moreover, Kuye and Mafunisa (2003) stated that the performance of any organization should be directly related to the quality of its leadership. The point of contention is that ethical leadership will lead their institutions to greater heights of achievement, productivity and ultimately prosperity if they are effective leaders as well. Ethical leadership, then, included activities such as transmitting information to followers, formulating a mission, objectives, and plan, and explaining these to subordinates, giving orders and instructions, supervising work, taking steps to improve performance, disciplining workers/followers and dealing with conflict. If there is no such ethical leadership in any organization, then, all the activities as mentioned would not be

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achieved. Hence, in the youth voluntary organizations, leadership ethics is much needed to lead their own youth voluntary organizations and the ability to work well with other people and hence keep the youth voluntary organization moving forward.

In short, the leadership ethics is indeed needed in youth voluntary organizations because leadership ethics can be used as a tool to ensure youth voluntary organizations achieve their aims and encourage youth organizations to compete with other organizations. A leader who possesses greater heights of leadership ethics also would be able to make their followers do their best to ensure that the objectives are achieved which will later benefit their respective organizations (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Thus, through leadership ethics, the youth voluntary organization will be able to transform from even the status of non-achieved its common goals to a well-achieved it common goals.

Responding from this fact, it would be a crucial task to maximize the potential of youth leadership with high concentration on ethics. To maximize the potential among youth in this rapidly changing world, however, we must recognize the need for leadership ethics more than ever before. Developing leadership ethics in this post-modern era therefore is not an easy task and requires the development of leadership skills that refers to the effective leadership ability which normally did not learnt by most of the people in formal education.

The leadership qualities as well as leadership ethics must be developed to achieve the common goals of youth voluntary organization in this country, specifically in the state of Sabah. At least, a specific technique or a program must be produced to coach youth to be more concern on the so-called ethics. The goal that is to improve leadership ethics is to help youth pay attention to the intentions of managing the youth voluntary organizations effectively. Hence, the leadership ethics must be so important and can be used as a tool to achieve the youth voluntary organizations common goals. But why is it important to improve leadership ethics? To answer this question, understanding the concept of leader and leadership as well as leadership ethics immensely valuable. The following section present a discussion on the concept of leader and leadership, and leadership ethics.

2.3. The Concept of Leader and Leadership

Leadership is difficult in all eras, to be sure, but it seems that today's leaders face additional challenges (Van Wart, 2003). The challenges that make leadership more difficult are three main aspects namely contextual, organizational and individual (Mulford, 2007). The difficulty is enhanced as it is a composite of providing technical performance, internal direction to followers, and external organizational direction. Thus, the enhanced task of leader required them to be outstanding which it makes them either born or made. That is because a great man theory stated that leaders are essentially born, probably allowing for some significant early training as well. But some people assumed that leaders are made as it is the result of formal training (Van Wart, 2003; Esa, 2011).

Moreover, responding from this enhanced task of leader, many scholars such as Van Wart (2003), Hogan and Kaiser (2005), Ationg et al. (2020), Ationg (2001), Ationg et al. (2018), Ationg et al. (2021a), Ationg et al. (2021b), Ationg et al. (2021c), Ationg et al. (2021d), Esa et al. (2021a), Esa et al. (2021b), Esa (2020c) and Hornby (2008) has

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defined leader according to their own perspectives. Van Wart (2003) has defined the term leaders as a person that typically called upon to do and be all of these things – perform, develop followers, align their organizations, and foster the common good. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) stated that leader is refers to the people who is in charge of organizations and their units. Hornby (2008: 872) then defined leaders as a person who leads a group of people, especially the head of country, and an organization.

Through these definitions, the person who described as a leader must possesses a good leadership quality to lead or even to manage their organizations effectively. However, the term 'leadership' usually distinguishes leaders from power (Hogg, 2001; Chemers, 2001; Lord, Brown & Harvey, 2001). Therefore, it is one of the most important topics in the human sciences and historically one of the more poorly understood; it is important for two reasons. First, leadership solves the problem of how to organize collective effort; consequently, it is a key to organizational effectiveness. With good leadership, organizations thrive and prosper. When organizations succeed, the financial and psychological well-being of the incumbents is enhanced. Second and more important from moral perspective, bad leaders perpetrate terrible misery on those subject to their domain (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Besides, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) stated that the leadership is usually defined in terms of the people who are in charge of organizations and their units; by definition, such people are leaders. But reflect for a moment on the skills needed to successfully negotiate the status hierarchy of a large bureaucratic organization. The people who rise to the tops of large organizations are distinguished by hard work, intelligence, ambition, political skill, and luck but not necessarily by talent for leadership. In accordance, Hogan and Kaiser (2005: 169-180) suggested that the leadership should be defined in terms of the ability to build and maintain a group that performs well relative to its competition. It follows that leadership should be evaluated in terms of the performance of the group over time.

Yukl (2003) therefore, believes that the influence as the essence of leadership and the issue is not whether leaders will use power, but will they use it wisely and well. Hence, leadership refers to a process of influence that enlists and mobilizes the involvement of others in the attainment of collective goals; it is not a coercive process in which power is exercised over other (Hogg & Reid, 2001; Ibrahim et al., 2021).

According to Singla (2009), leadership is a process by which a leader can direct, guide, and influence the behavior and work of others towards accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. Leadership is the ability of a man to induce the subordinates to work with confidence and zeal. Leadership is the potential to influence behavior of others. It is also defined as the capacity to influence a group towards the realization of a goal. Thus, leaders are required to develop future visions, and to motivate the organizational members to want to achieve the visions. In short, Singla (2009) suggests that the definition of leadership must be "the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals".

Singla (2009) also stated that the characteristics of leadership are including: it is a inter-personal process in which a leader is into influencing and guiding followers towards attainment of goals; it denotes a few qualities to be present in a person which includes intelligence, maturity and personality; it is a group process that involves two or more

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people interacting with each other; a leader is involved in shaping and molding the behavior of the group towards accomplishment of organizational goals; and leadership is situation bound and there is no best style of leadership which it all depends upon tackling with the situations.

In short, the term leader is defined as a person that typically called upon to do and need to perform, develop followers, align their organizations, and foster the common well. The term leadership then defined as a process by which a leader can direct, guide, and influence the behavior and work of others towards accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. This suggest that leadership quality is vital in any organization. Despite that, however, the absence of ethical leadership ethics must be seen as the obstacle to such aspiration because it is also important to ensure the leaders of an organization being an ethical person.

2.4. The Concept of Leadership Ethics

The leaders must model ethical behaviors to create an ethical culture that helps to develop ethical behavior among the followers. It can be realized through applications of good management practice, motives, influence strategies and characters. Barnett and Vaicys (2000) reported that perceptions moderate ethical judgments and behavioral intentions, and it is important that the followers perceive an ethical work climate (management practice, leaders' motives, influence strategies and character) since it affects ethical judgments and behavioral intentions (Barnett & Vaicys, 2000).

It is therefore important that the followers perceive leaders as fair, encouraging, considerate, and supportive. This perception is enhanced or decreased by leader communication to their followers. The followers' perceptions of ethical behavior in leaders must be interpreted along with their interpretations of leadership communication of ethical attitudes to avoid negative consequences such of follower dissatisfaction (Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004).

This statement verified that the leadership ethics is important, and it must be defined properly to ensure the later research activity succeeds. The impact of a leader's moral lapses causes great harm to their constituents (Ciulla, 2004). Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes and Salvador (2009), Trevino, Brown and Hartman (2003), Trevino, Hartman and Brown (2000) stated that all forms of leadership (especially leadership ethic) include attributes such as integrity, trustworthiness, fairness, concern for others, and behaving ethically refers to as the moral person. These moral discourses are of course lay on the floor of a normative; it is captured in the language of right/wrong, good/bad, should/ought and good/evil.

Moreover, in this post-modern world, many philosophers have tried to answer the 'what is leadership ethics/' from a normative perspective which more focuses on how ethical leader's 'ought' to behave (Brown & Trevinno, 2006; Ciulla, 2004). Ethical leaders then would make ethics a leadership message that gets followers' attention by standing out as socially salient against organizational backdrop that is often ethically neutral at best (Trevino et al, 2003; Trevino et al, 2000). Leadership ethics is positively associated with leaders' consideration, interaction fairness, leaders' honesty, as well as the idealized influence dimension of transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2000). It also positively related to affective trust in the leader and negatively related to abusive supervision (Brown & Trevinno, 2006).

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The leadership ethics is also a form of authentic leaders which Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim (2005) stated that it refers to 'those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' value/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strength'. It also refers to those who are aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character (Avolio, Luthans & Walumbwa, 2004).

Hence, according to Taft (2000), leadership ethics refers mainly to the action that is to do the right thing in any given situation. Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) then stated that the leadership ethic is generally has the following trait or characteristics:

a. Dignity and respectful: The leaders' respects other and an ethical leader should not use his followers as a medium to achieve his personal goals. The leaders should respect every single follower's feeling, decision, and values. Respecting the followers implies listening effectively to them, being compassionate to them, as well as being liberal in hearing opposing viewpoints which means it implies treating the followers in a manner that authenticate their values and beliefs.

b. Serving others: The leader also serves others, and an ethical leader should place his follower's interests ahead of his interests. Every leader should be humane and act in a manner that is always fruitful for his followers.

c. Justice: The leader must be fair and just. In this case, an ethical leader must treat all his followers equally and there should be no personal bias. Wherever some followers are treated differently, the ground for differential treatment should be fair, clear, and built on morality.

d. Community building: The leader is needed to develop community and an ethical leader considers his own purpose as well as his followers' purpose, while making efforts to achieve the goals suitable to both. The leader is considerate to the community interests, and he does not overlook the followers' intentions. Moreover, the leader works harder for the community goals.

e. Honesty: leader is loyal and honest. Honesty is essential to be an ethical and effective leader. Honest leaders can be always relied upon and depended upon, and they always earn respect of their followers. An honest leader presents the fact and circumstances truly and completely, no matter how critical and harmful the fact may be. Thus, he does not misrepresent any fact.

Furthermore, Bass and Stedlemeier (1999), stated that the ethics of leadership rests upon three pillars: (1) the moral character of the leader; (2) the ethical legitimacy of the values embedded in the leaders' vision, articulation, and program which followers either embrace or reject; and (3) the morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue. Through these pillars, the leaders are needed to operate their organization fairly. Values that are based on equality and consideration of others rather than biases that may simply mask as leadership ethics must always dominate at every task. Discriminating against followers due to their color, gender, sexual orientation, age, or other personal factor is not only illegal, but also unethical. True leaders inspire and motivate all their followers to provide them with a sense of empowerment.

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Hence, leadership ethics, on the other hand, stress trying to do the right thing in any given situation, while acknowledging and learning from past mistakes. A leader who admits his or her mistakes and learns from them to avoid repeating these errors can make a competent leader who is compassionate yet consistent in managing ethics issues with followers. Leading by example is necessary to promote a teamwork environment of ethics. Unethical leadership may occur when the leaders act on emotion, rather than thinking situations through in accordance with the organization values and goals.

Thus, based on the given suggested definition of leadership ethics as according to the recent researcher, it is by now clear that leadership ethics which refers to the leader's action that is to do the right thing in any given situation generally vital for the attainment of organization's goals. The reason is that ethical leadership is positively associated with leaders' consideration, interaction fairness, leaders' honesty, as well as the idealized influence dimension of transactional leadership. Accordingly, it also be linked with good management practice, motives, and influence strategies. This suggest that there is an opportunity for improving youth voluntary organization due to the presence of ethical leadership, and therefore improving leadership ethics in vital.

3. Conclusion

This study contributes to the existing literature of the significance of leadership ethics in youth voluntary organization development in Malaysia, and particularly in Sabah. Specifically, is presents a discussion on the existing literature on the need of improving leadership ethics for youth voluntary organizations development, which referring to views and opinions expressed by scholars and researchers on youth leadership. It also discussed about what exactly is the concept of youth, leadership and youth voluntary organization in Sabah, Malaysia based on views and opinions expressed by scholars and researchers on youth leadership. Accordingly, it shows that leadership ethics which refers to the leader's action that is to do the right thing in any given situation generally vital for the attainment of youth voluntary organization's goals. For this reason, it is argued that there is an opportunity for improving youth voluntary organization due to the presence of ethical leadership, and therefore improving leadership ethics in vital.

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Conflict of Interests

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