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A Study on Quality of Life and Satisfaction Level with Physical Facilities among Rural Communities in Malaysia

Shahrir Mohammad Zakey[1], Mohd Mahzan Awang[2], Ruzairie Ab. Rashid[3], Asmah binti Mohd Yusoff[4], Nur Anis Fithrah Ahmad Rumaini[5], Arieff Abdullah Abdul Mahaimin[6], Rosidah Roslee[7], Muhammad Kamil Kharazzi Roslam[8], Amran Abdullah[1]

[1]South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR), [2]Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia, [3]South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR), [4&8]Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA), Ministry of Rural Development, [5]Ministry of Rural Development, Malaysia, [6]Ministry of Rural Development, Malaysia, [7]The Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA)

Corresponding Authors Email: mahzan@ukm.edu.my

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Abstract

This study is to determine rural residents' satisfaction with their quality of life in one of the regional development in Malaysia namely South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR). In this study, regional development refers to a community's basic amenities and population income that are considered to be indicators in measuring community's quality of life. This study used a survey research design where a set of questionnaire was developed as a research instrument to collect data from rural community in KESEDAR. A number of 2449 respondents were involved in this study from four KESEDAR subregions that were districts of Gua Musang (n = 1007), Kuala Krai (n = 600), Jeli (n = 551), and Tanah Merah (n = 291). The collected data was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Overall results suggested that the average monthly household income in all four regions is between MYR1500 and MYR3000. This implied that their wages are within the federal poverty line's acceptable range. Additionally, it was found that the residents' access to amenities was extremely limited. These suggested that in order to ensure the rural community received better benefits, the government's current rural community growth plans needed to be improved. As a result, it is proposed that focus should be placed on a comprehensive and effective rural development plan that incorporates components of income streams and core infrastructure.

Keywords: Rural Community, Income, Standard of Living, Poverty, Quality of Life, Basic Facilities

Introduction

South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR) is a Regional Development Board established on 1st May 1978 under the South Kelantan Development Act 1978 (Act 203). KESEDAR's establishment intends to reconstruct the community in order to reduce poverty by balancing the population between South and North Kelantan. Almost 50% of South Kelantan is mountains, with a slope of more than 25°, while only 10% of the region has a slope of less than 15°. However, around 20% of the entire region can be used to advance the agricultural industry. At the beginning of the 1980s, Kelantan was one of Malaysia's poorest states. When compared to other states in Malaysia, it had a low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rate. For instance, GDP in Kelantan during that period was approximately MYR1,740.00 and barely 46% of the country's average of MYR3,758.00. This situation may have a strong tie with the local and domestic social economic where the majority of the population in the area involved in the agricultural activities and industries.

Additionally, in order to manage development across the regions, the Federal Government established KESEDAR in a view of the importance of development in the South Kelantan region. KESEDAR is the fourth regional development authority established in 1978 after the establishment of the Southeast Pahang Development Authority (DARA-1971), the Southeast Johor Development Authority (KEJORA-1972) and the Central Terengganu Development Authority (KETENGAH-1973). Numerous activities are being developed under the Human Capital Initiative to raise the standard of living among KESEDAR's community. However, there are population-related limitations that affect how much human capital can be developed at once, making it as a challenge which needs to be addressed appropriately. The KESEDAR Region's population's quality of life is also affected due to lack of employment possibilities and poor income levels.

Additionally, there is a significant gap between the rural and urban populations due to inadequate and insufficient basic infrastructure facilities. Therefore, by developing and trying to implement a comprehensive policy which creates more chances for acceptable employment and a proportionate wage rate, the quality of life of the people in the KESEDAR can still be improved. Also, attractive work and income options must be provided, as well as adequate access to basic amenities to meet the demands of the rural population. Due to the discrepancy in the region's development which caused by changes in the global economy that also have an impact on the development process, further research on the quality of rural life is crucial.

Quality of Life in Rural Communities

In theory, the degree of development of one nation can be used to evaluate the standard of living of its people. A nation will be able to contribute more to society if it emphasises the importance of the progress. Generally, quality of life refers to aspects that include self-improvement, a healthy lifestyle, basic facilities and freedom to obtain knowledge, a standard of living that exceeds the individual's basic needs and meets psychological demands in achieving a level of social well-being. Quality of life also refers to the level of development of a person's priorities, social development and physical development that support the

experience of individuals and society (Rokicka, 2014; Grusec, 2011; Pacione, 2003). Rokicka (2014) reported that, to assess the level of quality of life depends on the feelings of the individual and the community itself, which include happiness, anxiety, sadness, fear, excitement and feelings related to the state of experience and preferences. Felce and Perry (1995) identified four main domains to achieve quality of life namely physical well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being and spiritual well-being.

Meanwhile, according to Pacione (2003), a person's life quality can be evaluated based on their awareness of the advancements made in both their personal and societal well-being. The previous study also revealed that the concept of quality of life is determined by their ideal lives as well as their understanding of their needs and level of satisfaction (Rokicka, 2014; Pacione, 2003; Diener & Suh, 1997). According to Rokicka (2014), the enhancement of a person's and society's quality of life is seen as an increase in self-development, an improvement in lifestyle, and enjoyment of the values of freedom to advance knowledge as well as enjoyment of a high standard of living to achieve a level of social well-being in society. The class-based differences between high social elite culture and low culture, popular culture, or low-class folk culture, which are distinguished by stratified access to cultural models, are another example of a hierarchy in culture (Barzilai, 2003).

A study of the difference in the quality of life of the population based on demographic characteristics in a small settlement center in Perak carried out by Saleh et al. (2020) found that there was no significant difference in the quality of life in terms of social and environmental aspects based on gender. Meanwhile there were no significant differences for all three variables investigated in their study based on respondents' location. However, the study demonstrated that there were significant differences with regards to quality of life based on ethnicity, academic background and location. Overall, it can be concluded that locations, ethnicity and education background play a vital role to determine the quality of life among rural residents.

The past study reported that the average monthly household income based on ethnicities in Malaysia 2013 was varies (Abdul Razid, 2013) as follows ; Orang Asli = MYR666.00, Chinese = MYR3456.00, Indian = MYR2702.00, Bumiputera = MYR1984.00, Others = MYR1371.00. A study carried out by UNICEF (2018) on 966 respondents in Malaysia found that 34% of them earn less than MYR2000/month and 7% live below the PGK (MYR940), while 77% of households have no savings. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2019) reported that the median income in Malaysia is (MYR1296), the urban median salary is (MYR1356) and the rural median salary is (MYR840).

The indicators of quality of life can be divided into several social factors, such as access to healthcare, social care, education or employment, as well as economy and average income (Diener and Suh, 1997). A study of suburban communities in Europe carried out by Vaishar, Vidovicova and Figueiredo (2018) indicated that numerous factors affect quality of life measurement, especially individual's educational level has been found to be the most significant one. This is due to the fact that the rural population typically has lower levels of education than the urban population (Schafft, 2016). Education is the foundation of a happiness in as well as assisting in the eradication of poverty.

The past study revealed that the majority of communities in the Gua Musang district were 50 years of age or older and it represents 80% of communities in KESEDAR (Hussin, 2012). As they grew older, the majority of communities made the decision to either hand over control of their farms to their children or lease them to others. A study carried out by Roben Well and Iman (2019) found that Relocation of residents, whether domestically or globally, has an effect on the social, economic, and environmental conditions of those concerned. For instance, community resettlement has resulted in the loss of both tangible and intangible Inventoriess, including homes, property, income sources, cultural landmarks, social networks, and connections, as well as cultural identity (Asian Development Bank, 1998). This situation caused the lives of the participants involved to be disrupted after they moved to a new settlement area. Therefore, in order to determine the impact of a resettlement and further reduce any adverse effects on the participants, it is crucial to examine the implementation of a population resettlement area in line with the current global trend that emphasizes sustainable development.

In general, effectively developed rural communities will reduce poverty rates. The idea of sustainable rural development emphasizes that current growth should not affect the ability of future generations to meet their requirements (WCED, 1987). As a result, this concept was formed in 2015 as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which stresses 17 major sustainable development targets. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach was then introduced as a method for sustainable development (SLA). One organisation that frequently employs this strategy as a tool to examine sustainable development is the Department for International Development (DFID). This approach is used to identify, plan and evaluate new initiatives such as projects and programs, re-evaluate existing activities, and for research (Ashely & Carney, 1999). This strategy also emphasizes empowering the poor to create their own chances, facilitating their access to resources, and creating supportive institutional and policy environments in order to assist alleviating poverty (Haidar, 2009).

Research Aims

This study aims to identify the quality of life among rural residents in KESEDAR based on their incomes and their basic facilities satisfaction.

Research Methodology

This study used a survey research design to determine the resident's quality of life and their satisfaction. A set of questionnaire was built to gain statistical data from 2,449 respondents that representing 68,729 families from KESEDAR. There are four (4) regions of KESEDAR namely Districts of Gua Musang, Jeli, Kuala Krai, and Tanah Merah. A total of 2481 samples were gathered for this study and it is beyond the minimum numbers needed for samples as recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sampling arrangement for this study utilized a stratified random sampling where all the samples were taken from four district of Gua Musang, Jeli, Kuala Krai, and Tanah Merah. Data collected was descriptively analyzed, focusing on frequencies and percentage. All respondents involved in this study were adults where they were voluntarily participated.

Respondents Profile

A total of 1,007 respondents from Gua Musang had participated in this study. In terms of age breakdown, the respondents in Gua Musang : aged 25-35 which are 296 people (29.4%), 260 people aged 36-45 (25.8%), 181 people aged 46-55 (18.0%) and 56-65 years old as many as 168 people (16.7%), 66-75 years old , 80 people (13.3%) and 76 years old , 22 people (18.9%). For Kuala Krai , the respondents involved were 600 which aged between 25-35 , 40 people (6.7%), 105 people aged 36-45 (17.5%), 160 people aged 46-55 (26.7%) and 56-65 years old as many as 170 people (28.3%), aged 66 - 75 years old ,91 people (15.1%) and 76 years old , 34 people (5.7%).

Meanwhile, 551 respondents involved were from Jeli district. In terms of age breakdown, the respondents aged between 25-35 , 74 people (13.4%), 99 people aged 36-45 (13.9%), 145 aged between 46-55 (26.3%) and 56-65 years old as many as 141 people (25.6%), age 66 - 75 years old , 68 people (12.3%) and 76 years old , 24 people (4.3%). Finally, in Tanah Merah, the respondents involved were 291. Those aged 25-35 , 22 people (7.56%), 45 people aged 36-45 (15.4%), 104 people aged 46-55 (35.7%) and 56-65 years old , 72 people (24.7%), aged 66 - 75 years old , 40 people (13.7%) and 76 years old , 8 people (2.7%). In terms of gender breakdown, a total of 1655 people (67.6%) were male and 794 (32.4%) were female.

Findings and Discussions

Quality of Life Based on Household Income

The findings of the study showed that 3.7% heads of households have an income of more than MYR5000 in the district of Gua Musang. 96.3% of households, have an income of less than MYR5,000. This gap is quite significant because there are strata of population placement that can be linked to economic activities and sources of household income. The findings of this study are quite different from the previous studies carried out by Harun, Awang and Man (2016) who examined the quality of life and education level of households in the suburbs of Malaysia - found that the education and life quality are two factors that affect one another. Based on data gathered, it is fair to state that the quality of household life is objectively reflected from the level of education, the amount of income earned, savings, the use of educational goods and services are also among the factors in improving the quality of household life. The quality of life has been found to be associated with l individual's education level. Highly educated households are able to obtain good jobs with decent wages and are more likely to be able to have better life and social services.

The findings from this study are also in line with the past study of Jamil and Mat (2014) who discovered that poverty affects a person's style and quality of life in many ways. It is going beyond just providing for a family's basic requirements. The completeness of a household's lifestyle, including home, clothing, and degree of health, can be impacted by income. The rate of total income will also have an impact on how the individual thinks and makes efforts to improve himself or herself in the future.

Results of this study also found that there is an income gap between indigenous households and other residents in the district of Gua Musang and Jeli. The majority of respondents reported earning less than MYR1,000 is n= 375 (68.1%). The higher income was reported by communities in the district of Kuala Krai that is between MYR1,001 to MYR2,000 (n=553, 92.2%). Only five respondents from the district of Kuala Krai stated that they earned

more than MYR8,001/month and two respondents from the district of Tanah Merah earned MYR5000/month. It is important to highlight that, in Malaysia, the households that is less than MYR4,850 is considered to be high risk groups where they supposed to be helped by the government. The government had labelled this group to be in B40 groups. It is significant to state here that the majority of respondents (97.5%) from this study reported that they earned less that MYR4,850 which is automatically under the range of B40 groups.

In the district of Gua Musang, the typical household size decreased from 5.03, as reported in 2005, to 4.36. The size recorded in all districts are also smaller compared to the size of households in the state of Kelantan in 2005. A migration of the second and third generations of residents from Gua Musang to other cities, regions, and states for getting better employment or attending schools may be the major factors for the declination in the average household size.

Results of this study also revealed that the average household size in the Jeli community is 4.24. This is smaller than the 5.07-person average household size in Jeli from 2005. (Average household size Kelantan, 2005). Based on the current finding, the district of Kuala Krai has an average household size of 4.19, which is less than the 4.91 average household size of Kuala Krai in 2005. (Average household size Kelantan, 2005). Results from the study also revealed that there was 3.82 households on average in the district of Tanah Merah, decreasing from 5.09 in 2005 (see Table 4).

Satisfaction Levels of Basic Facilities

Official statistic shows that there is an increase in tap water supply (for drinking) from 69.1% (year 2019) to 98.6% (year 2020), while for supply electricity there was a slight decrease from 100% (year 2019) to 99.0% (year 2020) in the district of Gua Musang. Meanwhile, for sanitation facilities, 98.3% of Gua Musang households have used safe and clean methods to dispose of waste or human excrement. For community in the district of Jeli, the percentage of residents who have electricity is around 99.8%. Meanwhile, 96.8% of Jeli residents use tap water. For the community of the district of Kuala Krai, the percentage of electricity was 99.8%, 98% had tap water. For the community from the district of Tanah Merah, the percentage of residents who had access to electricity was 99.6 % while the level of access to tap water supply was recorded at only 51.2% at that time.

Quality of Life and Inventories Ownership

Table 4 shows the basic goods statistics owned by the residents studied: electricity, radio, refrigerator, television, fixed telephone, mobile telephone, bicycle, motorcycle/scooter, car, truck, Wi-Fi, television, air conditioning, water filter, air filter, CCTV cameras and security alarms.

Results from this study revealed that the majority of the residents in Gua Musang owned a mobile phone (96.2%). Compared to the national level data (Census 2010), only three types of Inventories ownership among residents in Gua Musang are below the national percentage, that are motorcycles, landline telephones and air conditioning.

Inventories ownership among Jeli community can be divided into several categories. The number and percentage of the following categories are: radio (n=98, 17.8%), refrigerator (n=519, 94.2%), television (n=515, 93.5%), landline telephone (n=13, 2.4%), mobile phone (n=532, 96.6%), bicycle (n=162, 29.4%), motorcycle/scooter (n=487, 88.4%), car (n=375, 68.1%), truck (n=11, 1.9%), Wifi (n=23, 4.2%), television (n=465, 84.4%), air conditioning (n=34, 6.2%), water filters (n=161, 29.2%), and air filters (n=4, 0.8%).

The community of Kuala Krai owned various types of facilities. Results show that 199 respondents had radios (33.1%), refrigerators (n=586, 97.7%), televisions (n=566, 94.3%), landline telephones (n=16, 2.9%), mobile phones (n=581, 96.8%), bicycles (n=188, 31.3%), motorcycles (n=547, 91.2%), cars (n=428, 71.3%), trucks (n=8, 1.3%), Wifi (n=19, 3.2%), television (n=402, 67%), air conditioning (n=41, 6.8%), water filters (n=205, 34.1%), and air filters (n=1, 0.2%).

In Tanah Merah, breakdown of facilities available for residents are as follow: radio (n=146, 24.3%), refrigerator (n=281, 46.8%), television (n=269, 44.8%), fixed telephone (n=13, 2.2%), mobile phones (n=280, 46.7%), bicycles (n=83, 13.8%), motorcycles (n=268, 44.7%), cars (n=227, 46.1%), Trucks (n=10, 1.7%), Wifi (n=8, 1.3 %), television (n=125, 20.8%), air conditioning (n=27, 4.5%), water filters (n=73, 12.2%), air filters (n=5, 0.8%), and alarms security (n=5, 0.8%).

These findings discovered that households suffer basic communication deprivation, such as not owning a landline phone or mobile phone, through the standard of living dimension. The development of communication technologies in rural areas is crucial. Children are capable of learning easily through information and communication technology, according to a study by (Kaffash et al., 2010). Children's educational achievement is found to rise considerably when they have a computer at home. Unfortunately, some children appear to be falling behind in the advancement of information and communication technology because they have lack access to a personal computer, sufficient electric supply and phone lines.

Conclusions

It is clear that the majority of residents and KESEDAR community had a moderate quality of life. Most of them had various inventories to support their life. It might be significant to highlight the importance of holistic socio-economic structural plan a fundamental plan to enhance community life well-being. Any new government projects in the future are supposed to be taken into account as long as it in line with the current findings ,in order to ensure its relevancy. Although there is little difference between the accomplishments of the four districts, more focus is required to enhance the working on environment, particularly in Gua Musang and Kuala Krai, as well as the improvement better life in all KESEDAR communities.

Appreciation

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