

The Quality of Life among Youth Living Near to Muar River and Pahang River

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the quality of life or sustained changes in community and social systems. To know the quality of life, a measurement tool was used to assess the balance of national development and the social systems of the community. Various aspects are often considered in determining the QOL of a country or society, including education, health, safety, housing, environment and working environment. To achieve a better quality of life and satisfaction the government has set several of rural development transformation and evolution strategies. This study is a quantitative research in nature. Hopefully this study can help the authorities to identify the needs of the river community to achieve a better quality of life in accordance with the national well-being policy.

Keywords: Youth, Quality of Life, Youth Development, River Community

Introduction

Malaysia is a country who is started from an agriculture and commodity based in low-income economy and then the economy rapidly growth and successfully achieve the middle-income economy. This result has improved the Malaysian quality of life. Now the government is aiming to become a high-income nation by 2020 with both inclusive and sustainable. The development of a nation is measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Kalsom & Norashikin,2006). The Department of Statistics Malaysia reported that the GDP at national level in 2013 have increased from RM31,920 to RM32,984.

Malaysia Development Programs

Since independence, the government has implemented various development programs to improve the quality of life of the rural community. Provision of basic facilities, social amenities, education and health become a major focus for government to increase income and reduce poverty. The evolution of rural development started with the establishment of

Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and followed by the establishment of Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA). It became a catalyst for the development and management of land and rural area in agriculture aspects.

Then in 1965 Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) was established to help farmers to market their products. The following years Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) was established for developing, encouraging, facilitating and fostering the economic and social development in the federation, particularly in rural areas. However to address the problem of idle land, the government has set up Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA) to help the residents to improve their living standards.

In the New Economic Policy (NEP) 1970-1990 has emphasize two main objectives; eradicate poverty irrespective of race and restructuring of society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. Among the measures undertaken was to established Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) in 1973 and Community Development Department (KEMAS) in 1977. RISDA has established to promote smallholder and conducting rubber cultivation. While KEMAS is to mobilize community participation in development programs in collaboration with Jawatankuasa Kemajuan & Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK).

To achieve a high-income nation by 2020, the government has set the National Development Policy (NDP) which ran from 1990-2000. The objective of the policy is for national unity through the aggressive improvement of economic status and the quality of life for all Malaysian such as access to land, training, public facilities and physical capital. Besides, to increase the QOL of rural areas especially for community development the government has launched the new Philosophy and Strategy for Rural Development in 1994 which is supervised by Ministry of Rural and Regional Development. Later in 1996 the Gerakan Desa Wawasan (GDW) has established to increase the empowerment of communities through awareness, changes attitudes and the establishment of capability.

River Community, Youth and Quality of Life

The river is an important environmental element to humans and has a close relationship with the river. This is because according to Haliza (2007), the river serves as a means of transport and communication, source of water supply for domestic and agricultural as well as a source of protein to humans. The various functions of the river in human life have made the river as a very important asset. In addition, there are still many small cities and towns situated on the banks or estuary of a river (Andaya & Andaya, 1992).

However, according to Sulong et.al (2005), the use of the river is now confined and limited to only transport routes as a result of industrial and commercial activities. River quality is also deteriorating due to erosion, sedimentation and pollution. As a result, it has been disrupted the relationship between human beings and the river as the river is now no longer can be used for bathing, washing, fishing and recreation. In this regard, the government has allocated a high amount of costs in an effort to restore the quality of the river as described in 8th Malaysian Plan (8th MP) and 9th Malaysian Plan (9th MP).

To achieve a better quality of life and satisfaction the government has set two stages of rural development transformation and evolution strategies. The first stage was during 1957-1994

where two policies developed which were the Pre New Economic Policy and New Economic Policy. The second stage way during 1994-2020 where two policies were also developed which were the National Development Policy and National Vision Policy. The impact of these two stages of development created a better quality of life among the rural community. This is as recorded in Malaysian economic report of 2010. This report shows that the quality of life for Malaysian had increased for every year from year 1999 to 2008.

In addition, the river community is a special segment of the rural population that has not been thoroughly studied as an important group. Currently, the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia has carried out several projects for cleaning up and beautifying rivers in Malaysia. Although the government has been championing efforts to keep rivers clean and environmentally sustainable but little is known about the current and past impact of rivers onto the quality of life for those living nearby the rivers.

The youths were great in today's society. According to the National Youth Councils, youth categories as the population aged between 15 and 40 years. Recently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia has improved the youth policy whereby in 2018, a new policy on youth age will be implemented (15 to 30 years). This new age limit is in line with the Commonwealth and international level criteria to assess the achievements of youth. The rationales of youth age limit are; to ensure the continuity of the country's future leadership, reduce the generation among youth, expedite the youth maturity process, reduce the risky behaviors among youth, stabilize the youth self-identity, strengthening the youth development process, determining a more systematic approach towards the adult youth transition, and benefiting the digital technology.

The youth are the most important and has a high potential especially in developing countries in terms of fighting spirit, mind, creativity and good personality. In the Malaysian Youth Index conducted by IPPBM (2010), summed up the well-being and quality of life recorded by youth is 68.7. It is based on the eight domains; Personal Development, Social Relations, Identity, Health, Self-potential, Penetrance Media, Leisure and Deviant Behavior.

Methodology

This study is a quantitative research design. The main purpose of this study was to determine the factors associated with quality of life among river communities along Pahang and Muar rivers. This study was employed the convenience sampling to gather the data and information from the respondents. The selected independent variables are gender, level of education, income per month, period of staying at the village, the distance to the nearest city, distance to the nearest river and the number of family members, while the dependent variable of this study is the quality of life of river communities. Besides, this study is used the SPSS to discover the demographic profile, level of the quality of life, the differences in dimensions of QOL, the relationship between IV's and DV's, and the factors associated with the QOL among river communities along Pahang and Muar rivers.

All of the respondents were selected in three areas which are Pekan, Bahau and Muar. The nearest area to the river will be selected. These three areas were chosen because Muar is located on an estuary of Muar river, Pekan is located on an estuary of Pahang river and Bahau where the Pahang river and the Muar river were nearly connected. For the questionnaire, a

total of 169 respondents were selected. Respondents selected for this study were those who lived and conduct businesses along the area of these rivers. In data collection, data for the study was gathered using questionnaires. The questionnaires will be designed based on the objectives stated. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents based on the specific area determined.

The instrument was developed based on the literature review and past studies. The protocol for FGD and in-depth interview was developed based on the data needed to strengthen the instrument. A research instrument for the questionnaire was built based on the research objectives. An instrument to gather demographic data of the respondents was first developed. The next part of the instrument was on measuring the quality of life. In this section there are seven aspects that were measured in determining the quality of life of the respondents. These 7 aspects are home condition, physical environment, safety in the areas, social involvement and relationship, education, financial and job security and infrastructure facilities.

Table 1:
The Dimension of the Quality of life

| Quality of Life Aspects | Total Questions |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Home condition | 11 |
| Physical environment | 7 |
| Safety in the areas | 7 |
| Social involvement and relationship | 9 |
| Education | 5 |
| Financial and job security | 7 |
| Infrastructure facilities | 5 |

Findings and Discussion

The total number of respondents involved in this study was 169 people. Half of the respondents (86) are male (50.9%) and the balance of the respondents are women (83) (49.1%). In terms of education, the majority of them (47.3%) were in SPM/SPMV/MCE, followed by who possessed PMR/SRP/LCE (20.7%) and (11.2%) possessed primary school. 10.1% of them possessed STPM/Diploma, while 6.5% possessed skills certificates, 2.4% possessed degree/master/PhD holders and 1.8% of them were never been to school. In overall, education for river community is at low level and it is similar to the rural population. According Zalika (2009), education in rural areas was at a low level due to several factors, namely lack of awareness of parents, family poverty, attitudes, lack of teaching aids, infrastructure, and significant income disparities population.

Table 2:
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| Variable | Frequency (n=169) | Percentage | Mean | SD |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------|------|----|
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 86 | 50.9 | | |
| Female | 83 | 49.1 | | |
| Level of education | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|----|------|---------|---------|
| Never been to school | 3 | 1.8 | | |
| Primary School | 19 | 11.2 | | |
| PMR/SRP/LCE | 35 | 20.7 | | |
| SPM/SPMV/MCE | 80 | 47.3 | | |
| Skills certificates | 11 | 6.5 | | |
| STPM/Diploma | 17 | 10.1 | | |
| Degree/Master/PhD | 4 | 2.4 | | |
| Income per month | | | 1605.64 | 1441.03 |
| <RM500 | 25 | 14.8 | | |
| RM501-RM1000 | 51 | 30.2 | | |
| RM1001-RM1500 | 28 | 16.6 | | |
| RM1501-RM2500 | 47 | 27.8 | | |
| >RM2,500 | 18 | 10.7 | | |
| Period of staying at the village (years) | | | 25.59 | 11.65 |
| <25 | 70 | 41.4 | | |
| 25-50 | 99 | 58.6 | | |
| Distance to the nearest city (km) | | | 12.75 | 11.49 |
| <5 | 49 | 29.0 | | |
| 6-10 | 57 | 33.7 | | |
| >10 | 63 | 37.3 | | |
| Distance to the nearest river (meter) | | | 0.87 | 0.66 |
| <250 | 41 | 24.3 | | |
| 250-500 | 45 | 26.6 | | |
| 501-999 | 45 | 26.6 | | |
| 1000-2000 | 38 | 22.5 | | |
| Number of family members | | | 2.45 | 0.87 |
| 1-2 | 16 | 9.5 | | |
| 3-5 | 87 | 51.5 | | |
| 6-7 | 39 | 23.1 | | |
| >7 | 27 | 16.0 | | |

Based on the results presented in Table 2 the mean score for income per month was RM 1,605.64 and the majority of the respondents (30.2%) earned between RM 501 to RM 1,000 a month. Then, followed by those who earned (27.8%) between RM 1,501 to RM 2,500 and (11.6%) earned between RM 1,001 to RM 1,500. Youth who earned \leq RM 500 income per month are (14.8%) and only (10.7%) of youth earned more than RM 2,501. The range shows that they were still with average income level.

In table 2 shows that most of the respondents stayed at the village between 25 to 50 years (58.6%) and those who stay less than 25 years (41.4%). The majority of the respondents (87 people) had between 3 to 5 numbers of family members. 39 respondents had 6 to 7 family members, followed by respondent who had more than 7 family members (27 people) and (16 people) had 1 to 2 numbers of family members.

According to the Table 2, 49 respondents stayed less 5 km from the nearest city. Then, 63 respondents more than 11 km to the nearest city, and 57 respondents had distance between

6 to 10 km to the nearest city. 26.6% of the respondent stayed between 251 to 500 meters from the river and another 26.6% stayed between 501 to 999 meters from the river. Followed by 41 people who stayed less than 250 meters from river and only 38 of the respondents stayed between 1 km to 2 km from the river.

Table 3:
The overall QOL

| Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean | SD |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|------|------|
| | | | 3.55 | 0.39 |
| Low (1.00-2.33) | 0 | 0.0 | | |
| Moderate (2.34-3.67) | 98 | 58.0 | | |
| High (3.68-5.00) | 71 | 42.0 | | |

Table 3 shows the overall QOL among respondents. The value was grouped into three categories which were low (1.00-2.33); moderate (2.34-3.67) and high (3.68-5.00). From the table it can be seen that the overall mean score for the youth river community was (M=3.55) and (SD=0.39) by which it can be concluded that the respondents had a moderate level of QOL.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The summary of research findings consists of the result of the demographic profile of respondents and the overall level quality of life of the respondents, based on the results, the youth river community living along the Pahang river and the Muar river had a moderate level of quality of life. Based on several aspects, when the requirements are met means the quality of life of a society is bound to be increasing. However, different places faced different needs to be fulfilled to meet a better quality of life. Thus, a study such as this can help the authorities to identify the needs of the river community to achieve a better quality of life in accordance with the national well-being policy. Based on the results, the government and local agencies need to cooperate and work together in playing an important role to improve policies and increase monitoring to ensure quality of life of river communities remain secured, especially in the management, control, coordination and strengthening of the development of physical, social and economic areas along the river.

Besides, there are many activities that need to upgrade by making the river as a recreation center. As such, it can provide new income opportunities to the residents along the rivers especially among youth. In addition, annual events that involve the participation of all people, especially the younger generation with external agencies such as institutions of higher learning expose them to the circumstances in the university. There is a need to increase the motivation of this generation to succeed and thereby to improve the quality of life and their families. Courses and skills training can be tailored to provide space and opportunity for people to improve personal productivity that can generate better career opportunities for those who can be creative enough to use the rivers to generate beneficial activities.

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