

Social Support and Social Participation among Urban Community in Malaysia

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i6/4246>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i6/4246

Published Date: 03 June 2018

Abstract

Social participation in community is important in improving the wellbeing of life in city. The elements of social participation in this study relates to knowledge and intellectual, social concerns, sports and recreation, environmental sustainability which are important in encouraging local communities to conduct various activities that can lead to wellbeing of life. This survey study utilized questionnaire as the instrument for this study which involved a total of 2502 samples from various ethnicities that were randomly selected from 6 municipalities in Selangor state in Malaysia. The pilot study for all items in the whole construct was at high level of reliability with the Cronbach Alpha value between 0.803 and 0.946. The findings reveal that family support and local community support were at moderate levels. This suggests that families and communities in the area provide encouragement to participate in activities towards improving wellbeing of life in city. Nevertheless, peer support and social media support are only at moderate level where peers and social media-based activities are still not fully utilized in developing a wellbeing community. This aspect should be addressed by the local authorities in improving the quality of life in the city.

Keywords: Social Support, Family, Peers, Local Community, Social Media And Social Participation Of Urban Community

Introduction

The population of people living in urban areas in Malaysia have increased year by year due to the urbanization process that allows more job opportunities and better quality of life. Urbanization is a dynamic moderation for social and economic capabilities from rural to urban areas. Presently, almost half of the world's population live in urban areas in which 64% of developing countries 'population will be urbanized by 2050 (Krefis et.al, 2018). In the era of rapid urbanization, the concept of wellbeing has become one of the major priorities as highlighted by the government and authorities. Urbanization process that occurs in Malaysia is taken care under the responsibility of local government and municipal council. The main function of local authorities in Malaysia is to control the development of land and buildings within their respective administrative areas, providing sanitary and cleaning services such as

collecting rubbish, washing drains and mowing grass, setting up public clinics and dispensaries by setting payment for treatment, and regulate public health, provide public housing, build and maintain recreational facilities such as public parks, playgrounds, swimming pools and gyms, manage markets and stalls, maintain and repair public roads, construct public sewerage and build and maintain trenches and waterways (Ranjit, 2000).

In urban area, social inclusion that revolves among community members may promote to increase wellbeing in the society itself. Studies show that receiving social contacts from family members, friends and relatives as well as spending time with them are all relevant indicator that have important impacts on subjective wellbeing ((Masi, Chen, Hawkey, & Cacioppo, 2011; McDowell, 2006; Sirgy, 2012). People living urban are reported to have less social participation as compared to those who are residing in rural community areas (Forrest & Yip, 2007). Strong community ties are the prominent factor in establishing a better life in the respective areas of living.

The theory used in this study is based on Ecological System (Bronfrenbrenner, 1985) which refers to five types of environments that affect life community beginning with family ecosystems, peers, schools, communities and interconnected organizations (mesosystem) whose relationship between interdependence is built into coverage microsystem extensively in context macrosistem when it includes ethnic variables, age, gender and so on. What is certain, this theory states that human development needs environmental supports that are formed in the ecological system. Another theory applied in this study is Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 1995) that elaborates on the importance of social interaction and inclusion in order to unify members of society and community that can create a more wellbeing state of life within the respective subjects. The social connectedness and individual engagement have positive relationship towards a healthy, longevity and well-balanced life particularly among urban residents.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to identify factors of social support towards social participation among urban community. Social support refers to family, peers, local community and social media supports. Meanwhile, social participation relates knowledge and intellectual, social concerns, sports and recreation, environmental sustainability

Research Methodology

This survey study utilizes questionnaire to identify the influence of social support towards social participation among urban community. The questionnaire uses 5 likert scale point which consists of 24 items for social support and 20 items for social participation. The results of pilot study showed that all items in the questionnaire have high reliability level with the Cronbach Alpha value between 0.70 - 0.90. A total of 2502 samples were randomly stratified from 6 municipals in Selangor states namely Ampang Jaya Municipal Council, Subang Jaya Municipal Council, Petaling Jaya Municipal Council, Klang Municipal Council, Kajang Municipal Council and Sepang Municipal Council.

Table 1
Likert Scale Level of Agreement

Response	Scale
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neither agree or disagree	3
Agree	4
Strongly agree	5

Source: Vagians (2006)

Findings and Discussion Level of Social Support

Table 2
Level of Social Support for Aspect of Family Support

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
My family supports me to stay in this area	3.89	0.98	Moderately-High
My family always support me to participate in local community activities	3.81	0.85	Moderately-High
I live in this area because it is near to my family	3.88	0.87	Moderately-High
My family supports me to interact with multi-ethnic community in the neighbourhood area	3.67	0.99	Moderately-High
My family supports me to join charity activities and volunteerism in local community	3.90	0.84	Moderately-High
My family advise me to be careful when be good to unknown neighbours	2.20	0.85	Moderately-Low
Overall Mean	3.56	0.51	Moderately-High

The result shows that there is a lack of encouragement in terms of giving advise on being good to anonymous people. This illustrates that individualism among the local community is prominent and should not take place in a neighbourhood area that aims for a wellbeing life. This study is in line with Malek (2005) where it is found that the urban community in Putrajaya still have less interaction with their neighbours because they were more occupied with their work. This is due to inadequacy of activities that promote relationship between neighbours and time defeciency in spending time together through formal education.

Table 3

Level of Social Support for Aspect of Peer Support

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
I choose to live here because many of friends stay here	3.95	0.95	Moderately-High
My friends support me to participate in social community activities	2.03	0.65	Moderately-Low
Friends in this area always support us to lead a wellbeing life	2.03	0.72	Moderately-Low
It is easy for me to contact my friends to manage daily errands	3.65	0.98	Moderately-High
I gain a lot of new multi-ethnic Friends throughout my stay here	1.99	0.68	Low
When I need friends, they are always there for me to talk to	3.68	1.00	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	2.89	0.34	Moderately-Low

Based on Table 3 above, the aspect of peer support that has lowest mean score is the item on gaining a lot of new friends from other ethnicities and less support to get involved in local community activities. The result shows that majority of the community prefer to holding activities within their circle of ethnicities. This study provides additional support to Najamuddin Bachora (2014) which found that Malay, Chinese and Indians have the tendency to carry out activities based on their ethnic groups. In similar note, Amir (2004) also stated that the differences of culture and religions were the factors that urge the local community to join activities based on their ethnicities.

Table 4

Level of Social Support for Aspect of Community Support

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
There are residents associations and NGOs in this residential area	4.04	0.77	High
The residents associations and NGOs are actively conducting activities together	3.59	0.95	Moderately-High
Community members in this residential area always concern about the residents	3.56	1.00	Moderately-High
We plan a lot of activities together	3.58	0.99	Moderately-High
The community in this area always build good rapport with the authorities to improve their activities	3.55	1.00	Moderately-High
The local community always cooperate in preserving the cleanliness of residential area	3.74	0.94	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	3.68	0.68	Moderately-High

Table 4 illustrates that the social support for local community in Municipal Councils in Selangor, Malaysia is at moderate level. This is because of local community activities conducted by the resident associations and NGOs are actively done in the residential areas. This finding is in line with Dagvadorj, Byamba & Ishikawa (2018). (2018) which stated that activities in local community particularly in urban areas may help in developing sense of responsibility and apprehension towards nature. Through social activities, the unity among residents whom are too attached with their work can be improved.

Table 5

Level of Social Support for Aspect of Social Media

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
We have Whatsapp and Telegram groups to strengthen our relationship and facilitate communications	3.81	0.99	Moderately-High
I upload pictures of activities in this residential area	2.06	0.70	Moderately-Low
I always give beneficial information to the community members via social medial such as Facebook and Instagram	2.07	0.71	Moderately-Low
Friends in media social support me to be involved in local community activities	2.05	0.71	Moderately-Low
Websites or Blogs for the local community are prepared and always being updated	2.09	0.70	Moderately-Low
Lec displays are often used to notify the community members about the activities run	2.04	0.73	Moderately-Low
Overall Mean	2.35	0.41	Moderately-Low

Table 5 demonstrates that the overall result for social support from the aspect of social media is at moderately-low level. Indeed, it shows that the local communities barely have social activities through social media approaches such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Blog and many more.

These mediums should be utilized by the local community in order to create a more positive environment and connection within the members. In the area of Municipal Councils in Selangor, Malaysia, free wifi facilities are provided for the local community to use it as an opportunity to be more active in any social activities run by the resident associations or NGOs. Hence, the Municipal Councils in Selangor need to cater for a wider scope of social media approaches to increase the awareness among community members. This finding differ with a study conducted by Ayat Ayman, Hassan, & Zeyad (2016) where it is found that technology advancement has facilitates the local community to interact with each other and enable them to run social activities more effectively and overcome time constraint faced by some of the working residents.

Level of Social Participation

Table 6

Level of Social Participation for Aspect of Knowledge and Intellectual

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
Involved with intellectual activities related to formal or non-formal education	2.59	1.18	Moderately-Low
I often share various educational sources to improve the community knowledge in this residential area	2.82	1.10	Moderately-Low
I am involved with activities to enhance the quality of education for the children in this residential area	2.74	1.13	Moderately-Low
I often use the reading space facilities or libraries provided	3.38	1.08	Moderately-High
I often involve in numerous intellectual activities in the residential area	3.42	1.09	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	2.99	0.67	Moderately-Low

Table 6 shows that the overall level for social participation for aspect of knowledge and intellectual is at moderately-low level. The involvement of residents of Municipal Councils in Sleangor, Malaysia in intellectual activities especially in formal or non-formal educational activities are still inadequate. It is also proven that they have poor participation in programs for improving the quality of education for their children. This is due to their commitments for work and other priorities. This result contradicts with a study by Haryati (2006) where it is found that continuous education learning in the community either formal or in-formal can build a knowledgable community that work together to build a more prosperous life.

Table 7

Level of Social Participation for Aspect of Social Concerns

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
I always give advise to local community that are involved in unhealthy social norms	3.50	1.14	Moderately-High
I am concern about the problems faced by the local community	3.48	0.98	Moderately-High
I often greet my neighbours	3.49	1.04	Moderately-High
During free time, I often pay a visit to neighbours' houses regardless of their backgrounds	3.48	1.08	Moderately-High
I voluntarily lodge report on any security failure to the authorities	3.46	1.07	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	3.48	0.81	Moderately-High

Table 7 above shows that the level of social participation in terms of social concern is at moderately-high level. The local community has high concern for the problems faced by the members and often greet their neighbours as well as paying a visit to their neighbours. This

indicates that the level of concern within the local community is very high and vital enough to develop a wellbeing life in the respective urban communities in Municipal Councils of Selangor, Malaysia. This finding is in line with McDowell (2006) which stated that social concern is of more important than physical development in shaping a wellbeing life for a community.

Table 8

Level of Social Participation for Aspect of Sports and Recreation

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
I often go jogging and do physical activities with friends in the community	3.56	1.11	Moderately-High
I always take good care on the physical facilities in the recreational areas	3.45	0.98	Moderately-High
I often involved in sports and recreational activities organised in this area	3.45	1.03	Moderately-High
I promote any sports and recreational activities to encourage more participation from the local residents	3.49	1.05	Moderately-High
I always bring along my family members to the recreational area to do activities together	3.52	1.09	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	3.49	0.80	Moderately-High

Table 8 shows the social participation for sports and recreation in the local community of Municipal Councils of Selangor, Malaysia is at moderately-high level. It is shown that the local community has high involvement in physical activities with their friends and families as well as taking good care of the physical facilities provided by the Muncipal Councils. From this positive community participation through sports activities, it can develop a better social inclusion and interaction between the local members. This finding supports Saffuan, Ariffin & Amin (2013) that it is notable that socialization may take place via physical and sports activities in the recreational parks that can generate the quality of life among the residents.

Table 9

Level of Social Participation for Aspect of Environmental Preservation Activities

Statement	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
I always take good care of the cleanliness to ensure the environment preservation	3.56	1.15	Moderately-High
I separate the recyclable materials according to the categories	3.61	1.01	Moderately-High
I make sure the rubbish is placed in the garbage disposal provided by the Municipal Council	3.75	1.01	Moderately-High
I save electricity and water to ensure environmental sustainability	3.74	0.99	Moderately-High
I do not throw rubbish anywhere	3.80	1.01	Moderately-High
Overall Mean	3.69	0.79	Moderately-High

Table 9 shows that the local community activities on environmental sustainability related to maintaining cleanliness, disposing of rubbish regularly, using electricity and water wisely to ensure the wellbeing of the environment and the residents are at moderately- high levels. This shows that most of the local community members in the municipalities in Selangor have a good awareness in preserving the environment. This is also because they are heavily influenced by their environmental culture where these aspects are always being addressed by local authorities and communities. This study is in line with the study ... which found that the community has a huge role in determining wellbeing through environmental sustainability in urban areas.

Contribution, Implication and Suggestion

This study has also provided value added to the Ecological System Theory (Bronfrenbrenner, 1985) in which another aspect of environmental view is also included to identify the influences of social environmental support namely social media. In this study, it is proven that social media support has effects on individual behavior and community engagement as it is an effective means of communication to notify and promote any activities or programs held by the municipalities in Selangor, Malaysian. This study has also reinforced the Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 1993) where social participation and community-based activities are the factors that contributes to the wellbeing of the urban community. This suggests that more participation in social activities will enhance socialism and tolerance towards creating a wellbeing life, especially in urban areas.

The findings show the importance of social support towards social participation among urban community of municipalities in Selangor, Malaysia. The social inclusion and involvement is mainly influenced by the encouragement from the families, peers, strong relationship with the local communities and also wise usage of the social media. Positive social inclusion and participation may develop good relationship among neighbours in the communities and improve the tendency of knowing each other more closely. Thus, it may lead to a more wellbeing environment for the urban residents to live in. hence, the municipalities in Selangor may promote activities and programs that bring together the people in the communities to ensure that every urban resident have the opportunity to participate and engage more in the society context.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be summarized that the factors of social support and social participation play dominant roles in improving the wellbeing of life among urban residents particularly among municipalities in Selangor, Malaysia. The authorities must have special plans to improve the social participation among the residents through various activities which involves the collaboration between non-government organizations (NGOs). Through social support and participation in various activities, it may strengthen the relationship among the residents in which most of the urban residents seem to be occupied with work and not able to participate more in social activities. Apart from that, the activities need to be well-suited with different culture and ethnic backgrounds among the residents. In future, it is hoped that all the programs and activities conducted by the municipalities in this study can be set as an exemplary for other cities in developed countries.

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