

Urban Village Population in Malaysia: What Really Determines Social Engagement?

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i9/4596>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i9/4596

Published Date: 15 October 2018

Abstract

The city is a habitat of focus by people who are seeking a desirable quality of life. The influence of rapid urban development has actually had a direct effect on the urban village population, which has adapted to the ever-complex urban development environment. This study argued that the urban village population's ability to enjoy good-quality social life would manifest itself in a strong social engagement among the population. This study found that although the majority of the urban village population were Malays, the multi-ethnic composition that exists in the surrounding urban village areas had formed a close and tight relationship. The findings showed that the urban village respondents representing three different urban levels such as Kangar (town), Alor Setar (city) and George Town (city) had a balanced perceptual value regarding social involvement. Meanwhile, the analysis related to the perception of the respondents from all three cities showed the existence of a significant relationship at $p < 0.05$,

as well as the weighted score in percentage form for the respondent's social involvement indicators according to cities with a high standard of living.

Keywords: Urbanisation, Urban Village, Social Engagement, Development, Quality Of Life

Introduction

The majority of Asian cities have experienced a change over of their physical and socio-economic landscapes due to the extreme rate of urbanization. Most East Asian nations had experienced a 3 percent urbanization rate, while a majority of the major cities there had a 2.4 percent land expansion rate per annum. This progress is clearly noticed in the exodus of historically important urban villages from their original locations. Hence, although contemporary high-rise properties have replaced traditional villages in innumerable locations due to the demand for modern properties, it has not satisfactorily satiated the needs and lifestyles of the existing inhabitants of these villages. The urban village in Malaysia refers to settlement areas within a town that possess village values. There are several types of villages found in towns such as the traditional village, planned village, new village, fishing village and indigenous village (National Urbanisation Policy, 2006).

Thus, from a theoretical aspect, the "urban village" population is part of the urban population based on the existence of the population in an urban environment. Most of the quality of life assessments of the urban village population are frequently assessed as part of the urban population (Awang et al., 2008), which eventually had puts the urban village population's quality of life standards at par with the other urban populations. The results show that the urban village population's quality of life had decreased tremendously and is frequently portrayed as a society isolated within the city, especially in terms of municipal and health services (Li & Li, 2011; Yan & Zenou, 2011).

The urban population's quality of social life could exist in various forms and not only focus on materialistic aspects such as the standard of living, standard of knowledge and physical possessions but it also involves other aspects such as social infrastructure facilities, freedom of movement (safety guarantee), a cordial social relationship and recreation opportunities (Salleh, 2008; Michalos & Robinson, 2011; Schalock, 2008). Awang (2007) also elaborated on the urban access component through the urban population's social involvement indicator, which is in the midst of achieving a desirable quality of life.

Foo (2000) found that the importance of social relations based on neighbourly relations, local social organizations and cultural factors to be part of the important elements in a population's quality of life assessment process in Singapore. Meanwhile, Cummins (2005) argued about the safety aspect as a basic indicator when elaborating on the population's level of well being in an environment. He also stated that the safety indicator was one of the main indicators that reflect the well being of the entire population. Whereas, Stradling et al. (2007); Yanliu & Meulder (2012) as well as Ye et al. (2012) agreed that the urban village population's social relations is among the important components when considering any form of development in the urban environment.

Malkina-Pykh and Pykh (2008) stated that the community involvement indicator had collective characteristics. (e.g., the strength of social relations in the neighbourhood, the frequency of jointly carrying out activities as well as the role of local organizations are

activities that build the population's social relations in a collective manner). Yuting et al. (2010) assumed that the safety indicator and urban village population's social relations shared a strong relationship in most urban villages in China such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Meanwhile, the transportation and communication aspects contribute to the strength of the safety and social relations of the urban village population in several urban village areas in China.

In line with the arguments by Cummins (2000; 2005); Malkina-Pykh and Pykh (2008); Awang et al. (2008; 2009) and Yuting et al. (2010) as well as several other researchers who emphasised that social involvement is one of the basic indicators when assessing the population's quality of social life and its collective characteristics, this study is interested in empirically elaborating on that indicator when assessing the urban village population's ability to achieve a desirable quality of life. The social involvement indicator suits the urban village population very well due to its position in the urban environment besides clearly portraying the capability and social readiness of the urban village population in the urban environment.

The study begins by exploring relevant literature on the issues and challenges of the urban village population in Malaysia. The discussion on the findings of this study aims to argue that strong social engagement among the urban village population depends on their ability to enjoy good-quality social life.

Issues and Challenges of the Urban Village Population in Malaysia

The main theme of this research is the capability of the urban village population to achieve a good quality of life, when facing the pressures of an ever-challenging urban development scene, through the population's social involvement. The rapid state of urban development today has a direct effect on the urban village population's quality of life in order for it to continue competing in a complex urban environment. From 2000-2009, the urban population's growth rate had increased by 2.2%, compared to the rural population, which experienced a 1.6% growth for the same period. For the first decade, the country had experienced a rapid flow of urbanization, which focused on Peninsula Malaysia. As of 2000, the population in Peninsula Malaysia was 18.5 million, from a total population of 23.3 million. The urban population was 12.1 million or 65.4%. In 2010, the urban population had increased to 71%. The population of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya had achieved a 100% level of urbanization, while Pulau Pinang and Selangor had a high urbanization level of 90.8% and 91.4% respectively (Malaysia, 2010; Malaysia, 2011b). This trend clearly shows that the urban population had increased from year to year, which had a direct effect on the urban village population.

In addition, 71% of the population in this country comprises the urban population and the urbanization process is set to continue. Hence, urban living would become an important element in Malaysian civilization. The question is how the urban village population will face life in an urban environment that is always expanding, is dynamic and challenging. One example is Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur, which is among several urban villages situated in the city centre. The Kampung Baru environment is frequently portrayed as being underdeveloped with narrow roads, congested housing with squatters and lacking in infrastructure although it is situated near the Kuala Lumpur City Hall Headquarters. This situation has prompted several interested parties (government, local authorities, developers

and investors) to draw re-development plans for this area. However, until today the re-development of Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur has frequently become a hot and sensitive issue.

Although the urban village environment is frequently pictured as an area isolated within a city (Yuting et al., 2010; Yan & Zenou, 2011), the urban village population is still able to live in that environment. In some countries (e.g., China, Korea and Vietnam), the urban village areas are under the city's administration but usually do not receive any rightful municipal facilities. The urban village areas are seen as a settlement that is not managed well, isolated and backward (Li & Li, 2011; Nguyen & Leaf, 1996; Seong-Kyu; & Xie, 2005). Yan & Zenou (2011) did a study on an urban village population in Shenzhen, China and found that the urban village environment had forced the population to haphazardly adapt themselves to urban life. Hence, there were no signs that the urban village population had made efforts to leave the area. This situation shows that the urban village population's quality of life could have fulfilled the population's wants and needs as well as gives them a reason not to migrate out of their urban village.

According to Wirth's (1938) urbanism theory, the urban environment has exposed its population to a lifestyle known as the urban lifestyle. This lifestyle is seen as a threat to the fortitude of mutual relationships, especially the local culture. It also forms the preferred relationship based on its position, weak kinship relations, loss of neighbourliness, deteriorating familial relations and weak fundamentals of traditional social unity. This occurs because the urban lifestyle does not provide the opportunity for more open social life activities compared to the objective of living in an urban environment. The lifestyle exists because of the influence of a social neighbourhood environment comprising various cultures and backgrounds. Consequently, discriminatory actions, prejudice and forfeiture of rights of the dominant members (new residents) compared to the host community (local residents) had occurred. Hence, how far does the urbanism theory influence or is experienced by the urban village population in Malaysia.

The space and time aspects had put pressure on the municipality surrounding the urban village areas, so much so that the areas were surrounded by planned and coordinated development (Hussain, et al. 2011). The urban village area frequently receives negative criticism and views from the surrounding community, local authorities and developers (Li & Li, 2011; Xie, 2005). This development had invited several suggestions to structure all urban village areas such as introducing the urban redevelopment concept and urban regeneration (Jung & Hae, 2011; Biddulph, 2011; Seong-Kyu, 2004; Yan & Zenou, 2011). According to the researchers, both these concepts are able to improve as well as maximise space in the city, which directly increases the urban village population's overall quality of life. Hence, what happened to the re-development plan for Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur is that it failed to attract the resident's confidence. One of the factors was the resident's lack of confidence in the developer who offered a property valuation that was lower than the actual value. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall estimated that the value of the land could be higher than RM20 billion if the residents had fully accepted the development concept.

Different urban surroundings also influence the resident's ability to achieve a good quality of life, either at the individual or community levels or even at the overall urban surrounding.

Presently, most of the assessments regarding the quality of life indicators are developed in order to represent that of individuals, the population and the community in a big scale. These assessments are comprehensive as it covers an area (assessing the individual's quality of life at the work place or institution based on gender, age and ethnic background) (Chun et al., 2011; Ruta et al., 2011), a city (assessing the urban population's quality of life by combining the types of living place, location and environment) (Awang et al., 2008; Massam, 2002; Turksever & Atalik, 2001) or a territory (assessing the quality of life of a community in a rural area, urban fringes, urban centre and former urban area) (Lim et al., 1999; Sirgy, 2011) until it becomes a country (assessing the population's quality of life in a developed country, developing country or an under-developed country) (Rahman et al., 2011). The assessment of the quality of life indicators was done due to the influence and opportunities that were created from man's main environment, which is the physical, social and economic environment. Hence, this study found that the assessment was not capable of solving issues pertinent to man's overall quality of life.

The capability level and the assessment of the quality of life is elastic in nature, continuous and has an own value judgement and capability for each individual (Ruta et al., 2007; Diener & Suh, 1997; Sen, 2002; Sirgy, 2011). Hence, it is not fair for the researchers to assess a community's quality of life by merely assessing the indicators, which could be unsuitable for an area of study. This would give a wrong picture about the capability and actual status of a community's quality of life in any one area. Experience, satisfaction and happiness of a community would provide the actual value of their quality of life based on the level of achievement that fulfils the needs and wants of that community (Cummins, 2000; Dissart & Deller, 2000; Massam, 2002; Turksever & Atalik, 2001).

A high quality of life assessment score is still not able to portray a community's actual quality of life in a certain area. Moreover, the quality of life concept is closely related to its surroundings (Awang et al., 2008; Narayana, 2009). Thus, from a conceptual aspect, a comfortable living surrounding would have its own quality of life values for the community living in that area although that quality of life could be far lower than that of another area (Ruta et al., 2007; Narayana, 2009; Sen, 2002). Hence, surely there must be a particular desirable quality of life that does not permit the residents from leaving that area. Thus, how far does the strength of individual, social and environmental characters that form the resident's capability in that area allow them to continue living there, such as the comforts of the local culture, practices and traditions (Shah, 2004). Lastly, how could it influence the rate of migration, rate of influx of illegal immigrants, daily activities of residents and formation of local community associations?

From an ecological perspective, the urban village population is part of the urban population. The urban village population is always facing urban environmental change from the physical, social and economic aspects. This change had forced the urban village population to adapt to the environment (Yan & Zenou, 2011; Yuting et al., 2010). Hence, how far would the urban village population be a part of the urban population based on municipality services, infrastructure facilities and good communication, employment opportunities, the ability to grab economic opportunities, education and health levels, safety guarantees, social involvement, housing, employment as well as natural environments? Thus, it is good to

empirically elaborate on the urban village population's ability to maintain the quality of life in order to continue living in an urban environment via social involvement.

Urban Influence on the Social Involvement of the Urban Population

The argument frequently raised in the urbanisation theory has opened up room for debate intended to find a solution to urban social life, culture and community relations. Louis Wirth (1938), who is a sociologist, had developed this theory and had immensely contributed to the field of urban sociology. He was the pioneer of the social theory about urban space, which is found in his classic article entitled "Urbanism as a way of life" published by the American Journal of Sociology in 1938. The focus of his argument was related to social change, which affected Jewish immigrants in several cities in America that incidentally led towards an urban life.

Louis Wirth (1938) elaborated on his argument by saying that urbanism had formed a social organization that endangered the population's cultural fabric by creating a special relationship based on the status, weak kinship ties, deteriorating familial ties, loss of neighbourliness and weakened the basics of traditional social unity. He further argued that urbanization affects the strength of family and communal unity, which eventually affects the urban rate of birth. According to him, urban life does not promote early marriage; hence, the comfort of solitary life in the city would lead to isolation and social interactions would decrease. Hence, social involvement in a community neighbourhood is something that is isolated.

Thus, this study argues that the premise emphasised in the urbanism theory must be expanded in terms of the context of influence and opportunities in the urban environment for the original community that lives and resides in the urban environment, which is the urban village population. The influence and opportunities that exist in the urban environment has made it possible to build individual, social and environmental characteristics belonging to the original population in the environment (urban village population). Besides that, urban development has a direct effect on the urban village population's quality of life.

This study agrees with the arguments adduced by Abdul Rahman (2011) that Louis Wirth's views are only pertinent to urban social culture in aspects such as individualism, indifference and the need for formal social controls. Hence, the role of humans as a capable and active agent that reforms relationships and social organizations in order to fulfil the aims of social life based on religious values, culture and traditions held previously, should not be neglected. This is because efforts to form a community and the existence of a strong community, although in an urban society, and efforts to build that community benefits the socio-cultural element that originates from a traditional society. This study also views the role of the urban village population as an active agency that is capable of consolidating relations, the organization and social involvement in the urban village environment in order to fulfil social life based on religious, cultural and traditional values held previously. These efforts had formed the urban village population's community that would continue to be relevant in the urban environment until today.

Louis Wirth saw the city as a specific settlement characterised by a rather large population that is non-homogenous, composed of various backgrounds and has a permanent settlement

with its own lifestyle. His argument had led to a new approach when defining a city, which is not only bound solely by physical definitions such as the size of the population and population density. Abdul Rahman (2011) agreed with this argument by stating that the definition of a city should be more precise and not bound solely by physical borders. However, the focus of the theory should be expanded to the existing community in the city, which is the urban village within the city. This could show how long the urban village population is able to be a part of the changing urban environment, as a means or the end, which would enable them to handle the problems of life in the city.

Louis Wirth did not deny that the city was the product of growth and expansion that occurred in the course of history and not something that emerged suddenly. He saw the municipality from a positive aspect through which the population could improve life towards one that is more modern, planned, systematic and with principles. The municipality affords infrastructure facilities that facilitate and could be appreciated by all those in the area. The municipality opens avenues and opportunities for the urban population to assess their life and eventually could help them to open up more avenues for improvement. The city could be free and tolerant, encourage progress as well as scientific and technological creations; moreover, the history of civilization could be written based on the progress achieved by these cities. Hence, this study needs to look into the arguments in this theory that are related to the urban population's ability to form or improve the three characteristics mentioned earlier in order to fulfil the urban population's conditions of life in a stable urban ecosystem.

Research Methodology

This research used a quantitative approach. Approximately 509 heads of households from among the urban village population were chosen as respondents. The urban village population is also part of the urban population that lives in the village area surrounded or cordoned by an urban development environment. The focus area of this research was the urban village area (traditional villages or villages that existed before its surroundings became a city), which is situated within the borders of three main cities in northern Malaysia and recognised as the capital of these states such as Kangar (town) in Perlis, Alor Setar (city) in Kedah and George Town (city) in Pulau Pinang. The locations focused in the research were 21 traditional urban villages (excluding planned villages, re-settlement areas, temporary settlements and new villages) found around Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town and within the city's borders.

Since the position of the houses in the study area were scattered and centred, serial code numbers were given to each house in the study area according to the villages in the same town or city. The serial code numbers allowed the use of the random numbering method as well as ensured that each head of the household in the urban village area had the same percentage to be chosen as a respondent. According to Neuman (2007) and Md. Nor (2009), the use of the random numbering method avoids the element of bias in a research and is able to more accurately portray a situation or phenomenon.

Weighted Score and Min

In order to portray the potential of social involvement, this study had used the weighted index and mean analysis technique. The weighted score and mean for each urban village resident's social involvement was presented according to the percentage scale so that it could be easily

explained and understood. According to Awang (2006), this technique is one the easiest techniques in the mathematic model. Hence, this study presumes that using the weighted score and mean technique would give a better picture of the urban village population's social involvement potential. The weighted score calculations are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Weighted value} &= \text{Number of scoring scale items} \\ \text{Weighted min score} &= \frac{\text{Total number of respondent's scoring scale}}{\text{Total respondents}} \\ \text{Weighted total} &= \text{Total number of scoring scales per item} \\ \text{Weighted score (mean)} &= \frac{\text{Total weight}}{\text{Number of items}} \\ \text{Minimum weighted score} &= 1 \\ \text{Maximum weighted score} &= \text{Maximum value of the weighted score (mean)} \\ \text{Score Percentage} &= \frac{\text{Weighted Score (mean)}}{\text{Maximum Weighted Score}} \times 100 \end{aligned}$$

Determining the Continuum

Determining the continuum (intervals with class or scale) of the social involvement's strength is done based on the lowest percentage score to the highest (ascending order) or the lowest variation value to the highest (ascending order). Actually, various stages exist along the continuum. As for research regarding the quality of life, determining the continuum is usually used as a benchmark for the population's quality of life in an area. For instance, Awang (2006) had used three (3) continuum levels such as a high quality of life (74% - 100%), a moderate quality of life (47% - 73%) and a low quality of life (20% - 46%). He also outlined the lowest value of the continuum as 20%. Hence, to obtain a clear and accurate picture about the urban village population's capability to achieve a desirable quality of life, this study would use six (6) intervals of class (Table 1).

The score percentage was used to portray the population's level of social involvement through the population's strength of its social character. The percentage value is calculated through the maximum score in the item scale (maximum weighted score percentage). The method used to obtain the range of the capability levels for a very high quality of life, high quality of life, moderately high quality of life, moderately low quality of life, low quality of life and a very low quality of life are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Number of continuums} &= 6 \\ \text{Minimum weighted score value} &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Maximum weighted score = 100%
percentage

There is no need to measure the maximum score percentage because the maximum percentage value is 100%. To obtain the range between the continuums for the level of capability of a very high quality of life, high quality of life, moderately high quality of life, moderately low quality of life, low quality of life and a very low quality of life, the percentage value for the maximum weighted score was divided into 6 continuums. Thus,

Determining the = $\frac{100\%}{6}$
Continuum

$$= 16.6\%$$

(Then the class is determined as shown in Table 1 below)

Table 1
Intervals of the urban village population's capability levels

Capability Level	Score (%)	Summary of the Capability Levels
Very High Quality of Life	83.1 – 100.0	A very strong and good character, a very high level of satisfaction towards the quality of life indicators found in the character
High Quality of Life	66.5 – 83.0	A strong and good character as well as a high level of satisfaction towards the quality of life indicators found in the character
Moderately High Quality of Life	49.9 – 66.4	Moderately strong and almost good character as well as a moderately high level of satisfaction towards the quality of life indicators found in the character
Moderately low quality of life	33.3 – 49.8	Moderately low and less than good character as well as a low level of satisfaction towards the quality of life indicators found in the character
Low quality of life	16.7 – 33.2	Low level and not a good character as well as a low level of satisfaction towards the quality of life indicators found in the character
Very low quality of life	1.00 – 16.6	Low level strength of character as well as not satisfied with the quality of life indicators found in the character

Source: Adapted from Cummins et al. (2003) & Awang (2006)

Findings

The research findings portrayed the analysis results of the urban village population's social involvement indicators that involved the respondent's (from Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town) perceptual assessment of social involvement, analysis of the respondents perception as well as the weighted score, in a percentage scale, pertaining to the respondent's social involvement indicators according to each city.

Respondent's Assessment of Social Involvement

The social involvement aspect is one the important indicators in the quality of life assessment process. An effective social involvement would provide a clear picture about the strength of the urban village population's social character to adapt to an urban environment that is constantly changing. According to Mohd Yusof et al. (2011), the steadfastness and strength of the urban village population in Kampung Berjaya and Kampung Mempelam was manifested in the frequency of implementing joint activities and involvement in association related activities at the village level. Both these situations reflect strength. He also observed that familial relations and the multi-ethnicity that existed among the urban village population had also encouraged joint activities. Meanwhile, Mohd Shaharudin (2011, 2012) observed that the active role played by the chairperson of the Village Working Committee (JKKK) in Kampung Berjaya and Mempelam had encouraged greater social involvement among the population. Hence, this study had observed that the three (3) assessment aspects pertaining to the urban village respondent's social involvement in Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town was important. The three aspects were namely assessing the strength of neighbourly relations, assessing the seriousness in conducting joint activities and assessing the role of the urban village organization's structure. A statistical analysis of the assessment by respondent's from Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town was intended to observe the relations of the assessment that existed between the respondents from the three cities.

Strength of Neighbourly Relations is the Population's Priority

A majority of the respondents had a strong and intimate neighbourly spirit. This study found that 89.6% of the urban village respondents admitted that their neighbourly relations in the urban village environment were strong and steadfast. The majority of respondents who stated that the neighbourly relations in their village were strong and steadfast came from Kangar (91.9%). This was followed by respondents from Alor Setar (89.5%) and George Town (87.1%). The majority of respondents in the urban village neighbourhood had kinship relations with each other, besides being neighbours with other ethnic groups for so long.

Neighbourliness and family relations are the population's priority. The study found that the respondents had made a balanced assessment, in which they said that neighbourly relations were more cordial compared to family relations. 51.6% of respondents from Kangar said that neighbourly relations were more cordial compared to family relations. Meanwhile, respondents from George Town gave a balanced assessment about the strength of their neighbourly and family relations with 50% agreeing and 50% not agreeing. In Alor Setar, 44.4% respondents stated that neighbourly relations were more cordial compared to family relations. The Chi square test found that there was a significant relationship between the assessments of respondents from the three cities pertaining to neighbourly relations being more cordial compared to family relations at a level of $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.035$) and a value of $\chi^2 = 13.538$. The analysis showed that different urban environments influenced the

respondent’s assessment regarding the strength of neighbourly and family relations. These assessments were actually found to be balanced. The majority of respondents from the same village had familial relations and lived in the same neighbourhood.

Table 2

Relations between the perception of the urban village population from Kangar (town), Alor Setar (city) and George Town (city) and transportation

Num.	Perceptual Assessment by the Urban Village Population	Kangar Town, Perlis (%)				Alor Setar City, George Town City, Pulau Pinang (%)				Chi Square Test (x ²)					
		STS	TS	S	SS	STS	TS	S	SS	STS	TS	S	SS	Value x ²	Sig.
i															
Assessment of the strength of neighbourly relations															
1	Has a strong and intimate neighbourly relations	0.5	7.5	61.3	30.6	0.7	9.8	54.9	34.6	1.8	11.2	55.9	31.2	None**	
2	Neighbourly relations are more cordial than family relations	11.3	37.1	41.4	10.2	8.5	47.1	39.2	5.2	17.6	32.4	42.9	7.1	13.538	0.035*
ii															
Assessment of the freedom and willingness to carry out joint activities															
3	The urban village population is active in carrying	3.8	32.8	47.3	16.1	2.0	40.5	50.3	7.2	5.3	34.7	50.6	9.4	10.836	0.094

	out joint activities														
4	The village residents were never barred from political activities or forming associations	4.8	3.2	68.3	23.7	2.6	3.9	65.4	28.1	5.3	9.4	64.1	21.2	10.567	0.103

continue...

...continued

ii Assessment of the role played by the urban village’s organizational structure

5	This village’s organizational structure is important	11.8	32.8	48.4	7.0	15.0	48.4	32.0	4.6	13.5	36.5	45.3	4.7	13.207	0.040*
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TD- Totally Disagree; D- Disagree; A- Agree; SA- Strongly Agree;

*Significance p<0.05

**The Chi Square Test could not be carried out because the frequency of expectations value was less <5 in the contingency table cell

Most of the activities in the urban village were jointly implemented

The majority of respondents had a high level of freedom and willingness to carry out any form of joint activity. The findings show that 63.4% of the respondents in Kangar frequently carried out joint activities such as communal feasts and local community programs. This was followed by respondents from George Town and Alor Setar with 60% and 57.5% respectively. The Chi square test found no significant relations between the assessments of the respondents from Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town pertaining to the activeness in carrying out joint activities with p<0.05 (p=0.094) and the value $\chi^2=10.836$. The findings of this analysis show that different urban environments did not influence the assessment by respondents from the

three cities. Respondents from the three cities had a high level of freedom and willingness to carry out joint activities.

Majority of respondents were free to be active in any kind of activity relations to associations and politics. Table 1 shows that more than 85% of respondents from the three cities gave a high assessment on the freedom to be active in associations and politics. The Chi square tests showed that there were no significant relations regarding the respondents' (from the three cities) assessment of the freedom to be active in associations and politics at a level $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.103$) and value of $\chi^2 = 10.567$. The analysis also showed that the respondent's assessment of the freedom to form associations and practice politics was not influenced by different urban environments. The overall respondent's assessment of the freedom to form associations and practice politics was seen as balanced

The Urban Village Organizational Structure is important in unifying the urban village community

The village's organizational structure plays the role of an intermediary between members of the urban village population. A village chieftain, who was also the chairperson of the Village Area Committee (JKKK), headed the organizational structure in every urban village area in Kangar and George Town. In the urban village area around Alor Setar town, it was headed by the chairperson of MKK or JKKK. The ruling state government appointed all the posts. Table 2 shows that some respondents in Kangar and George Town agreed that the organizational structure in the urban village area were important to the urban village population by 55.4% and 50% respectively. Meanwhile, Alor Setar had the least respondents (36.6%) who agreed that the role of organizational structure was important and could help the population. The statistical Chi square test found that there was a significant relationship between the respondents from Kangar, Alor Setar and George Town and the importance of the village's organizational structure at a level of $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.040$) and a value of $\chi^2 = 13.207$. This analysis shows that different urban village environments influence the respondent's assessment of the importance of organizational structure. The findings show that the respondent's evaluation of the importance of the village's organizational structure in Kangar and George Town was more balanced compared to the evaluation by respondents in Alor Setar.

Weighted Score for the Urban Village Population's Social Involvement

The social involvement weighted score gives the actual picture of the assessment regarding the urban village population's level of social involvement consisting of three assessments, namely the assessment on the strength of neighbourly relations, frequency of joint activities and the importance of the urban village organization. Table 3 shows that overall; the urban village population's social involvement was associated with a high quality of life (73.8%). The urban village respondents in Kangar (town) had the highest level of social involvement (74.5%), followed by respondents in Alor Setar (73.5%) and George Town (72.8%). The weighted score percentage shows that the urban village population's social involvement in the three cities was associated with a high quality of life.

Table 3

Weighted score for the sub-indicators of social involvement and percentage of the overall score

Bil	Sub-Indicators of Social Involvement	Weighted	Weighted Score (Min)			
			Overall	Kangar	Alor Setar	George Town
1*	Family relations creates different groups in the community	4.00	2.81	2.77	2.86	2.79
2	Neighbourly relations are more cordial than family relations	4.00	2.44	2.51	2.41	2.39
3	You possess a high level of neighbourliness	4.00	3.14	3.16	3.22	3.05
4	A serious intent to know your neighbours	4.00	3.24	3.27	3.24	3.20
5	Neighbourly relations are a priority	4.00	3.22	3.22	3.26	3.18
6	Neighbourly and family relations are of equal importance	4.00	3.34	3.32	3.33	3.37
7	The practice of communal activities and feasts are frequently held	4.00	3.09	3.05	3.16	3.06
8	Frequently attend community programs	4.00	2.92	3.00	2.97	2.79
9	Frequently visit neighbours	4.00	3.05	3.10	3.03	3.02
10	Good neighbourly relations makes it comfortable to live here	4.00	3.23	3.24	3.28	3.16
11	Association activities are active here	4.00	2.73	2.81	2.61	2.76
12	The village headman frequently visits the village	4.00	2.30	2.51	2.09	2.26
13	The role of the village headman/ JKKP/ MKK are very active	4.00	2.78	2.86	2.66	2.81
14	Villages have never been barred from taking part in politics	4.00	3.10	3.11	3.19	3.01
15	The village headman/ JKKP/MKK are always available	4.00	2.86	2.91	2.77	2.90
16	The village headman/ JKKP/MKK are available for discussions	4.00	2.87	2.90	2.86	2.85

Total Weight	64.00	47.12	47.74	46.96	46.60
Weighted score (Mean)	4.00	2.95	2.98	2.94	2.91
Weighted score Mean	1.00				
Minimum					
Weighted score Mean	4.00				
Maximum					
Score percentage	100%	73.8%	74.5%	73.5%	72.8%

*sub-indicators that have been “transformed” and re-coded in line with the given score

Discussion and Conclusion

The cohesive and strong relations that exist among the urban village respondents was supported by strong neighbourly relations as well as the freedom and willingness to initiate joint activities as well as the role played by the organizational structure around the urban village area. The cohesiveness and strength had manifested itself in the effectiveness of the respondent's social involvement function in the urban village environment as well as the ability to exist and absorb the pressures created by development around them. The weighted score indicator pertaining to the urban village respondent's social involvement showed a high level of quality of life with a difference in the score of around 0.7%-1.7%.

The analysis showed that the urban social environment could be summarised into two situations, namely the social situation (socio-economic status, political influence and religious beliefs) and social relations (attitude, community involvement and relational behaviour) (Julio Videras et al. 2012; Kawachi et al. 1999). This means that every decision made by the urban population would fall within the context of the population's social environment. Influence and social environmental opportunities in the city could explain the existence and capability of the relations between the urban population and the behaviour, which then influences beliefs, values and the choices available for the urban population. Social structures are formed from the relationship between humans; moreover, all individuals are capable and free to change the social structure because the influence of the social environment in the city is wide and open.

Many studies agreed that the new paradigm in the urban social environment emphasised on understanding the meaning of 'subjective', 'emotions' and 'symbolic', which are related to where the population resides in the city and has more personal characteristics when building a specific landscape. The urban social environment also refers to a place that is more than its geographical definition, with its physical characteristics and capabilities that can change its dynamic context in a social interaction. According to Sirgy (2011), Lim et al. (2009) and Azahan Awang et al. (2008), the urban social environment is frequently used as predictor when ascertaining a community's quality of life. Predicting the quality of life could be done by specific observations (or objectively) or through the population's perception based on satisfaction and experience (or subjectively). All this encompasses elements that involve the socio-economic status, political influence, religious or spiritual beliefs etc.

A perfect urban social environment would encourage the formation of an appreciated and confident social relationship (Julio Videras et al.2012; Mohd Yusof et al. 2011; Sheau 2006). In line with the analysis above, it clearly shows that a strong and confident social relationship would be able to form its own capabilities and strength in a community because

a human community that is outstanding and united is always associated with norms such as mutual trust and helping one another. Good social relations exist through contributions from each member in a community via joint activities such as communal feasts, communal social work as well as programs jointly participated by all members of the community. Interaction between urban social environments is complex and could only be observed through the housing affordability concept. A good and quality prone urban social environment is very important in enabling the urban community to live well and prosperously. This would indirectly form a social model with good qualities.

Hence, this study presumes that the urban social environment's influence on the urban population's life helps form a social modal concept, which actually originated from the social sciences field. The social modal concept influences and affects the norms and attitudes related to the urban population's behaviour. This concept also helps form the psychosocial mechanism that enhances self-respect, while the social network helps to increase the access to other aspects such as health care as well as security measures or alleviate the crime rate, especially in cities. In line with the definition of the social modal, which is interaction and relations between individuals or group of individuals that produce mutual benefits; some researchers have defined the social model as a source of morality or psychology such as beliefs. This belief generally is valued based on age, place of birth, education and economic pressures present in a city.

Acknowledgement

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support from Ministry of Higher Education for the funding received under FRGS 203/PSOSIAL/6711549.

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