

The Family Well-being Index of Malay Palm Oil Smallholder's in Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper examines the relations in Malay Palm Oil Smallholder's perceptions, knowledge, and adaptation in family well-being. An assessment of the livelihood impacts of oil palm development, including well-being, is needed to shed light on the apparent contradiction between these reports and the evident enthusiasm of farmers to join the oil palm craze thereby informing future expansion. This study assessed the impact of oil palm development on the family well-being of rural farmers in Malaysia. The previous family planning programs in oil palm smallholder's study in Kelantan have been mainly focused on Malay oil palm smallholders and social landscape. This research is focusing on the various factors that enhancing family well-being among the communities based on the elementary research that has been done in Kelantan Malaysia. Through this study, it was found that the Family Well-Being Index (Parents) recorded was 7.62 out of a maximum score of 10. From the seven domains that have been identified, the Family and Religion/Spirituality domain recorded the highest score of 8.67. This domain was followed by Family and Community (8.35), Family Relationships (8.01), Family Safety (7.60), Family Health (7.23), Housing and Environment (7.05) and Family Economy (6.4). The study has also shown that the farmers have progressively acknowledged the importance of health aspect, however many are still hesitate to accept the various type of family well-being indicators suggested in a modern way. Thus, the outcomes of this research give multiple suggestions on the effort to increase the social knowledge towards the current and potential trends in family well-being through the National Population Policy.

Keywords: *Analysis, Demography, Enhancing, Family Well-Being, Oil Palm Smallholders, Social Landscape*

Introduction

In general, during the past few decades, the oil palm has become one of the most rapidly expanding equatorial crops in the world, the total cultivated area now accounting for nearly one-tenth of the world's permanent cropland (Feintrenie & Levang, 2010; Awang et al. 2016). In the other hand, in recent years, the oil palm sector has witnessed a period of historically high prices with buoyant global demand and high levels of production driven largely by economic development in major Asian countries such as India and China (Murphy 2014; Azima et al. 2016; Begum et al. 2018). We present information from the assessment of the perceptions, knowledge, and practices in enhancing family well-being outcomes of oil palm smallholders at Kelantan Malaysia. Family size decisions in the context of oil palm smallholder's communities are made predominantly on the basis of financial capital, therefore, we focus this livelihood assessment on family well-being. We recognize that other important issues relating to livelihood security include health, family planning practices and the background of environmental goods and services. We assess the positive impacts of factors behind these divergent outcomes and generate policy recommendations for moving towards more socially sustainable oil palm family development within Malaysia.

In the past few decades, Malaysia has and is still undergoing a process of rapid social and economic development. This is a result of policies implemented by the government such as the New Development Policy (1991-2000) (Malaysia, 2001), National Vision Policy (2001-2010) (Malaysia National Vision Policy 2015) and Government Transformation Program (2010-2020) (Malaysia, 2015) which all aim to transform Malaysia into a developed and competitive country. However, the processes have imposed increased demands on the family institution because of the responsibilities and the challenges faced by the family itself. Given the importance of family well-being to the future of the country, a scientific study needs to be conducted to measure the level of well-being of families in Malaysia. Measuring family well-being is crucial as it can indirectly measure the impact of the implementation of national social and economic development policies on families and the extent to which the implemented policies and programs are successful or otherwise. Hence, this study has identified suitable indicators that can provide information about the well-being of families in Malaysia. Subsequently, based on the identified indicators, a Family Well-Being Index (FWI) was developed to measure the current well-being of the family as well as to be used in policy formulation, planning for implementation of future research, the development of new programs and services, and expansion of the existing programs (LPPKN, 2015).

Background of Malaysian Oil Palm Smallholders in Peninsular Malaysia

The production of palm oil has long been associated with activities resulted in a massive reduction of primary forest cover between 1975 and 1995, from 2.8 million ha to 300,000 ha, and a corresponding increase in degraded forest, which reached 2.5 million ha (Awang Ali Bema et al. 2011). On the positive side, oil palm cultivation is said to have played a significant role in poverty alleviation among smallholders and the rural population in Malaysia (Ariff & Tengku Mohd Ariff, 2011). This was attributed to the higher returns from oil palm compared to other agricultural products for organized oil palm smallholders, mainly in Peninsular Malaysia (Dompok, 2010; Ariff & Tengku Mohd Ariff, 2011; Vivien et al. 2016). However, independent smallholders, who represented about 13% of the area under oil palm in 2010

(confined largely to the states of Johor, Perak, Sabah and Selangor), are perceived to be inefficient and unproductive (Rahman et al. 2008), 'producing barely half the national average' yield (Lyndon et al. 2015).

Description of Malaysian Oil Palm Board (MPOB) in brief

Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) is a key government agency responsible for providing services in the national oil palm industry. The key role played by MPOB is to promote and develop national objectives, policies, and priorities for the well-being of the Malaysian palm oil industry. MPOB obtained its main fund from payments of the processes that are imposed on the industry for every tone of oil palm and oil palm kernel produced [11].

Research Methodology

Given the difficulty of defining individual well-being, defining (and measuring) family well-being is even more complex. One approach is simply to assume that family well-being is the sum of its parts. That is if each individual in a family displays or reports positive well-being, the well-being of the family would be considered high. In this approach, the unit of analysis is really the individual, and conclusions about the family are drawn based on data from or about individuals and their experiences. The measurement strategies would be the same as those used to measure individual well-being.

A second approach is to assume that the family is more than the sum of its parts-that family well-being is something different than simply the aggregation of data about individuals. In this approach, there could be multiple units of observation or analysis including individual members, dyadic relationships, and the family as a whole. Just as when assessing the well-being of individuals, there can be both internally- and externally-defined criteria for family well-being, all guided by implicit or explicitly stated values (Dompok 2010; Rosniza Aznie et al. 2016).

The sampling frame for this study is based on the National Household Sampling Frame (NHSF), which consists of Enumeration Blocks used from field survey. The study used a convenient sampling design to select the characteristics of samples were not in line with the distribution ratio by strata, that is, by Malay oil palm smallholder's population only. Selected respondents were interviewed (questionnaires) face to face. The number of households that were selected in this study was 200. The criteria for respondents selected to be interviewed for each household is a husband or wife. In this case, the quantitative approach has been used as the main data collection method. A total of 200 Malay community smallholders of the Kelantan Malaysia were selected as a unit of analysis. The non-probability sampling technique consists of sampling has been chosen. The sample size is achieved through the continued support of the measure or criterion of the data saturation. Data were collected through the questionnaires during a period of six months by focusing on the forms of assistance provided or distributed by MPOB and the types of resulted empowerment when they act as the participants in programs organized by MPOB in the form of material or non-material.

Measuring perceptions, knowledge, and adaptation in family well-being.

Important to understand the individual's in the different contexts of the family, community, and society. These contexts are related and interdependent. Hence, the mutual influences of these contexts can expand or limit the well-being of a family. The study showed that additional domains such as culture, spirituality, and recreation are able to provide an indication of the level of well-being. Based on the literature review of family well-being

domains and indicators, family well-being is multidimensional incorporates family relationships, family economy, family health, family safety, family and community, family and religion/spirituality, and housing and environment (Dompok 2010; Rosniza Aznie et al. 2016).

Descriptive analyses were performed to describe the respondent characteristics and the variables of the study. Since the various Likert scale formats used different measurements, the scores obtained were normalized to a 10-point scale using the MinMax method [Dompok 2010; Rosniza Aznie et al. 2016; OECD 2008]. The objective was to standardize the analysis and interpretation of the data. Next, to obtain the Family Well-being Index, the average score for all seven domains were calculated. Domain scores were obtained by averaging the scores of all indicators available in a certain domain. The Family Well-being Index uses a score of 10 as the maximum score. The higher the score obtained, the better the level of family well-being in the area. The formulae for calculation of indicator scores, domain scores, and the Family Well-being Index is in Figure 1.

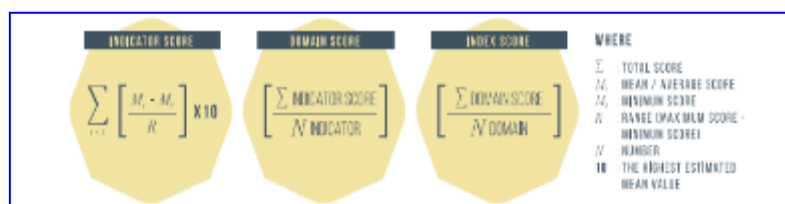


Fig. 1: Family Well-Being Index (FWI) Calculation Formula

Source: [9]

Results and Discussion

Family Well-Being Index (Parents) Family Well-Being Index (Parents) recorded was 7.62 out of a maximum score of 10. Of the seven domains that have been identified, the Family and Religion/Spirituality domain recorded the highest score of 8.67. This domain was followed by Family and Community (8.35), Family Relationships (8.01), Family Safety (7.60), Family Health (7.23), Housing and Environment (7.05) and Family Economy (6.4).

Family health domain

The Family Health domain consisted of three indicators consisting of family health practice, family health level, and stress management. The overall score for the Family Health domain was 7.23. Family health practice indicators indicate that respondents make farming activities as their main daily activities. However, the age factor causes a lack of health problems that threaten the daily life. Couples are very active in informal business activities such as selling foods, vegetables and also selling garments purchased from outside the city. Whereas in the context of stress management, the dependence of the child is very high that affects the continuity of responsibilities and financial support.

Family safety domain

The Family Safety domain consisted of three indicators; emergency response knowledge, safety at home and family safety. The overall score for the Family Safety domain was 7.60. In terms of the ability of the security subject to a variety of activities. Although local communities often help each other, there are also factors that affect family safety. Among them are thefts and also the invasion.

Family and community domain

The Family and Community domain consisted of three indicators; community cooperation, community relationship and community involvement. The overall score for the Family and Community domain was 8.35. The peasant community intimacy at the study site is very high. Every activity related to marriage, death, and feast is held in mutual cooperation. The relationship of mutual help and the neighborhood as a family institution has made the respondents seem to be in one large family. They always know about the development of members in the living area. Recognize incoming and outgoing people and also provide assistance as needed.

Family and Religion/Spirituality Domain

The Family and Religion/Spirituality domain comprised of two indicators; the role of religion and spiritual practice. The overall score for the Family and Religion/Spirituality domain was 8.67. Religion is a key source of strength. The Malay community in the study area, as a whole, is an adherent of the Islamic religion who always adheres to its pillars and principles. The strength of the family is seen as a result of the religious power of a community. People with religious values assess the family as a trust that needs to be maintained until the end of life.

Housing and Environment Domain

The Housing and Environment domain comprised of two indicators; basic amenities and pollution levels. The overall score for the Housing and Environment domain was 7.05. Based on observations, the size of the houses in the study area increased according to the income of the farmers. Most houses are made of bricks and also a mixture of wood in some parts. However, the construction of bricks is the cheapest cost and is expected to be the choice of many farmers.

Family Challenges

In the face of modernization and meeting the current demands of life, there is no doubt that the family institution in Malaysia will be facing a myriad of challenges. This study found that majority of families stated that the challenges they faced were erratic weather (74.5%), followed by high living cost (88.6%), financial problems (62.3%), youth not interested in oil palm industries (61.0%) and health problems (43.2%). These five items are among the most demanding challenges faced by families in oil palm smallholder's addition to other challenges. Understanding of Family Well-Being. This study found that five main understandings of 'family well-being' in this country were peace and happiness (72.0%), stable economy (61.1%), comfortable dwellings (56.9%), love (56.5%) and close family ties (53.2%).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, this study has successfully identified seven key domains which are Family Relationships, Family Economy, Family Health, Family Safety, Family and Community, Family and Religion/Spirituality, and Housing and Environment and each domain are scored based on 24 identified indicators. A family is a key to the strength of the state. When a family institution is strong, it will directly affect the strengths of other things such as the economy, as well as empower existing families. Although the study area is seen as a small part in the development of an area. Well, a good family development model can be studied from a small group of oil palm smallholder communities. This is because they have been together since the opening of the area up to the last three generations. The ability of the first generation to

sustain the cultivation of up to the third generation has experienced many obstacles, especially in the form of motivation for young people. Third-generation dependency on family finances is a torture especially when they are not interested in pursuing existing activities and selecting modern jobs in the services or professional sectors. The survival and capabilities of family well-being are closely linked to the relationship of each individual in a family. Therefore, it is proposed that there be various skills development and knowledge to the third generation so that they can continue their existing efforts either directly or indirectly.

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