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Editors:

Nor Asmat Ismail

Abdul Rais Abdul Latiff

Maslina Mohammed Shaed

Noor Alyani Nor Azazi

Siti Rahyla Rahmat

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The Efficacy of Blended Learning in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills amongst Engineering Graduates

Lim Cheow Nee^{a*}, Elisha Nasruddin^b

^aGraduate School of Business, USM, Malaysia
Email: eenmil@gmail.com

^bGraduate School of Business, USM, Malaysia

Abstract

Framed within the context of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025, which emphasized Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as essential employability skills, this paper examined whether blended learning (BL), as a constructivist pedagogical student-centered approach, can promote HOTS amongst engineering degree students of three private higher educational institutions. To investigate the efficacy of BL in promoting HOTS, this qualitative research carried out semi-structured interviews and surveys amongst 20 key stakeholders: the graduates and the faculty members of the Engineering degree programme, as well as the employers. Employers found it problematic recruiting graduates mainly because of the graduates' lack of competency in skills such as communication, problem solving and critical thinking. Thematic analysis for the research identified three core skills being reported by the BL curriculum graduates as being important – critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. A key implication of this research is that an introduction of a small component of BL curriculum, yet integrated with HOTS could provide the necessary needed holistic learning experiences, and consequently, improve the graduates' employability skills.

Keywords: Blended learning; Student-centered; Constructivism; Private higher educational institutions; Higher order thinking skills.

1. Introduction

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013 – 2025 outlined the need to focus more on HOTS as Malaysian students are lacking in HOTS. MEB's, Galbreath's (1999, pp. 14-22) and Larsson's (2017, pp. 32-42) views of HOTS being essential employability skills have been echoed by many employers who complained about graduates' lack of employability skills such as critical thinking and problem solving skills, which are part of HOTS. Framed within the context of the MEB, which emphasized HOTS as essential employability skills, this paper examined whether blended learning (BL), as a constructivist pedagogical student-centered approach, can promote HOTS amongst engineering degree students of three private higher educational institutions because the issue of graduate unemployment in Malaysia have been frequently linked to the lack of these skills. To investigate the efficacy of BL in promoting HOTS, this qualitative research carried out semi-structured interviews and surveys amongst 20 key stakeholders: the graduates and the faculty members of the Engineering degree programme, as well as the employers.

HOTS is an important component in 21st Century skills which is typically divided into 4 clusters of major skills – creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making (Greenstein, 2012; Kay, 2009, pp. 41-45). However, the Khazanah Research Institute. (2017) and Verma et al. (2018, pp. 121-137) mentioned that Malaysian graduates have employment issues because they lacked critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills. The World Bank (2014, p.24) found th at the participating companies in the study felt that Malaysian graduates

lack communication skills (81%), lack creative/critical thinking skills (56%) and lack problem solving skills (49%). Scott (2015, p.2) asserted that traditional teaching approaches which rely heavily on memorization, cannot promote learners' critical thinking skills, therefore there must be a re-think of 21st Century pedagogical approaches.

There is limited research on how BL as a constructivist, student-centered instructional approach can help to promote HOTS, thus there is a research gap in this aspect. Using the concept of constructivism in BL to promote HOTS as part of employability skills, this study addressed a literature gap by linking BL and HOTS, thus contributing to scholarly literature on the efficacy of BL in promoting HOTS. This constructivist approach in BL is of significance because of the active student participation, which in turn leads to the development of HOTS as well as employability skills. This active learning in BL can also encourage students' motivation and improve learning performance. Burt (2004, pp. 39-53) confirmed that active learning can improve student performance and motivation as well as enhance HOTS. Law, Geng, and Li (2019, pp. 1-12) emphasized that it is critical for course developers to take into consideration how to motivate students throughout the course so as to effectively achieve the required learning outcomes.

2. Blended Learning (BL)

Basically, BL is a teaching-learning process involving the combination of Face-to-Face (F2F) and online components. Anthony et al. (2020, pp. 1-48) conceptualized BL as in Figure 1.

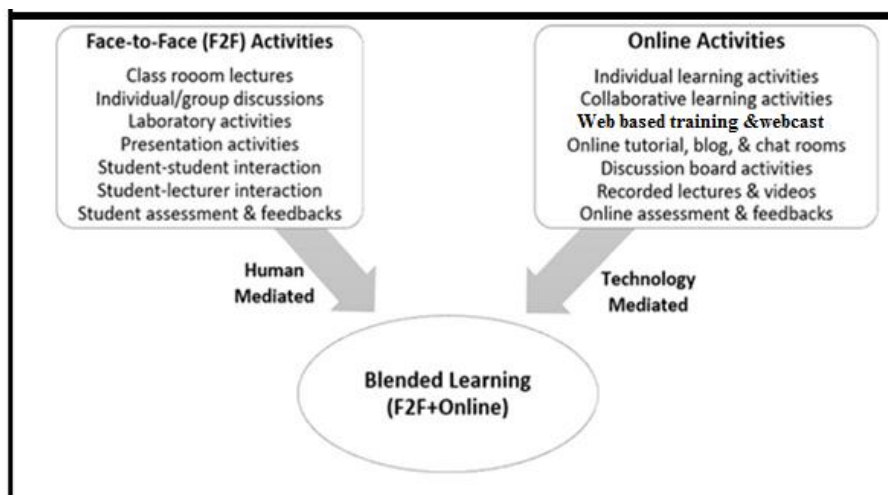


Figure 1: Key Aspects of Blended Learning (Anthony et al., 2020)

Poon (2014, pp. 154-175) viewed BL as an instructional model with a paradigm shift towards a more student-centered approach whereby students are active learners instead of passive learners. According to Chan et al. (2016, pp. 74-78), BL can benefit students because BL facilitates and encourages collaborations and discussions with their peers and instructors while allowing students to increase their interactions and communication skills. Giraldo-Garcia, Roy, and Alotebi (2015, pp. 32-35) stated that the BL environment is suited for the development of critical thinking skills because BL enables students to construct knowledge. Studies by researchers (Horn & Staker, 2017, pp. 169-187; Powell et al., 2015, pp. 1-20; Vander Ark, 2018, pp. 1-7) have shown that BL can be an effective pedagogical learning approach because students are able to experience technology-enabled learning activities without having to miss out on the social interaction and the instructor-support provided in a F2F classroom environment. However, Gharacheh et al. (2016, pp. 1126-1149) emphasized that the design for BL should not be merely about adding online components to F2F components just for the sake of using technology but instead the combination

of both F2F and online components in BL should be focusing on what online components or F2F components cannot achieve separately on its own so as to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Bleffert-Schmidt (2011, pp. 12-38) stressed that key aspects of defining BL should be focused on the planned, pedagogical value of the combination of both the F2F and online components.

3. Blended Learning, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Constructivism

Gharacheh et al. (2016, pp. 1126-1149) mentioned that BL can help to promote the learning process because of its underlying constructivist principles and its student-centered active learning pedagogy. The constructivist approach to learning is based on learners being able to construct their own knowledge and meaning through their own experiences and this ties in with BL because BL is supposed to be a student-centered instructional approach. Snowman, McCown, and Biehler (2012) suggested that constructivism enables the construction of knowledge for meaningful learning. Hasanah and Malik (2020, pp. 1295-1306) stated that BL can significantly improve students' problem solving skills, critical thinking skills and communication skills. Vu (2015) asserted that a carefully planned integration of the F2F components with constructivist online components in BL can facilitate active learning. John and Thomas (2018, pp. 41-51) proposed that students learn better when they are able to construct their own perceived understanding of reality. Nagappan (2002, pp. 1-28) rationalized that because constructivism focuses on students' role in the meaning making process, this active role by the students can ensure the effective internalization of HOTS. Tandoh, Flis, and Blankson (2014, pp. 18-27) stressed that studies have shown that BL can effectively assist in equipping students with 21st Century skills for the workplace.

4. Research Method

The researcher applied an inductive qualitative approach in gathering information to determine whether BL has the efficacy to promote HOTS. Based on this research objective of investigating the efficacy of BL to promote HOTS, this qualitative research used purposive sampling to carry out semi-structured interviews and surveys amongst 20 key stakeholders: 9 graduates of BL Engineering degree programme from 3 private higher educational institutions (G1-G9), 4 academics of BL engineering courses (AC1-AC4) and 7 employers who have hired engineering graduates (ES1-ES7). A thematic analysis was carried out for the virtual interviews while the survey responses were compiled based on different thematic aspects. No software was used for the thematic analysis because of the relatively small sample for the interviews. Instead, the interview transcripts were manually checked line by line and keywords as well as common responses were then identified. Questions for both the interviews and surveys were generally open-ended questions so as to allow more flexibility for respondents to answer the questions. The list of skills discussed in this study were mainly selected based on essential employability skills identified by engineering bodies such as Engineering Accreditation Council (EAC)/Board of Engineers, Malaysia (BEM) and industry operators.

5. Findings and Discussion

Major findings from this study included: (1) the engineering graduate interviewees confirmed they learnt skills such as critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills through the assigned learning activities (2) the academics felt that BL stimulated students' critical thinking because the F2F and online components complemented each other, e.g. viewing a simulated online experiment and carrying out the actual experiment. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews with the nine graduates were used to identify themes. The themes were based on the narration by each graduate. Four main themes were identified :-

Theme 1- HOTS/Employability skills learnt/ improved while studying at HEI.

All the 9 engineering graduates confirmed that they learnt/improved on communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, collaborative/teamwork skills, decision making skills in their BL curriculum via the learning activities. Three graduates felt that their HEI equipped them with interpersonal and leadership skills while eight graduates agreed that their HEI equipped them with computing skills.

Theme 2- How students learnt/improved on HOTS/employability skills while studying at HEI.

The 9 graduates indicated they learnt these skills through learning activities such as projects, assignments, online videos/quizzes/postings and laboratory sessions. Graduates' responses on how the BL courses helped promote HOTS/employability skills included:-

G3 → "help students build up their logical thinking skills and problem solving skills via smaller face-to-face tutorial sessions and via assignments"

G5 → "lab work required critical thinking skills and problem solving skills because lab work usually required students to find the solution via their experiments"

G9 → "I think learn critical thinking, problem solving, communication, decision making, interpersonal, computing, teamwork in university. Usually learn these skills because of assignments and projects."

Theme 3- HOTS/Employability skills needed during job interviews.

All 9 engineering graduates said communications skills were very important during job interviews while some felt that interpersonal skills were also quite important for interviews.

G2 → "communication skills and interpersonal skills play a very significant role during job interviews."

G3 → "when answering questions during the interviews, one needs to be able clearly communicate the answers in such a way so as to convince the interviewers to hire the interviewee"

Theme 4- HOTS/Employability skills needed at workplace.

The 9 graduates felt that nearly all the skills discussed in the interviews (i.e. communications, interpersonal, computing, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, collaborative, decision making skills) were needed at workplaces once they were hired. Most of the engineering graduates emphasized that due to the job specifications for engineers, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills were very essential as engineers' job functions focus a lot on problem solving. Responses from graduates on skills needed for interviews and workplaces included:-

G3 → "critical thinking skills and decision making skills usually go hand-in-hand because you need to evaluate the possible solutions to problems arising and then to decide on which remedial action would help solve the current problem"

G5 → "need critical thinking skills to be able to trace the source of the problem and to come up with possible solutions for the problem at hand"

The 4 academic participants confirmed that their BL courses had equipped their students with employability skills as their ex-students had no complaints about getting hired after graduating. According to the academic participants, their students

AC2 → "are equipped with enough employability skills when they graduate from their BL courses"

AC3 → “...would have picked up some basic employability skills in the process of completing the given tasks/assignments.”

The 4 academic participants confirmed that the BL activities had been effective in helping their students learn employability skills. The academics emphasized that laboratory sessions need to be a F2F session because engineering students must have hands-on experience for technical experiments. However, the academics had no objections to using online components to complement the F2F laboratory sessions. The academics stressed that it was important to have the F2F and online components complement each other whenever possible in order to achieve a better learning outcome. Responses from the academics included:-

AC1 → “there are times when F2F sessions are essential and there are times when the online components are essential as preliminary preparation or as reinforcements for the F2F sessions”.

AC3 → “the online and F2F components complement each other and enabled learning activities to be more varied”.

AC4 → “The simulated online experiment session help students think more critically when doing the actual experiment if the outcome derived is not the same as the earlier simulated outcome”.

AC4 → “students need to have hands-on experiences to perform the actual testing with the equipment while the online component can help to simulate and predict the outcome before the actual experiment”.

AC2 → “posting videos online before the actual lab session to guide students and also to help students visualise the actual experiment

The 7 employer participants felt the graduates lacked competency in communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills. Employers’ responses for graduate recruitment included:

ES1 → “it can be problematic recruiting the right people for the relevant jobs in terms of hiring those with the correct skillset”

ES6 → “it is hard to find a perfect match on the needed skill set”.

Although both the graduates and the employers agreed that the core skills (critical thinking, problem solving, decision making) are important skills (Figure 2), the employers seemed to find these skills lacking among the graduates (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Ranking of skills and competency level

6. Conclusion

Three core skills were identified as important skills - critical thinking, decision making, problem solving. The complementary instructional design of F2F and online components in BL managed to stimulate critical thinking amongst these graduates. A key implication of this research is that this research has provided new knowledge on the efficacy of BL in promoting HOTS: an introduction of a small component of BL curriculum, yet integrated with HOTS could provide the necessary needed holistic learning experiences, and consequently, improve students' employability skills. However, in order to provide students with such beneficial holistic experiences as what was done by the academic participants in this study, it is essential that HEIs try to ensure the pedagogical value of their BL curriculum such as having the F2F and online components complement each other whenever possible. As mentioned by Bleffert-Schmidt (2011, pp. 12-38), the key aspects of defining BL should be focused on the planned, pedagogical value of the combination of both the F2F and online components.

A well designed BL curriculum can provide the necessary social interaction while allowing students to effectively reap the benefits of the combined online components, which in turn can contribute towards achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Caird and Roy (2019, pp. 1-12) suggested that BL has the potential to achieve the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal - SDG 4 ("*Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.*") because the online components of BL provide more options for an inclusive education as the spatial barriers have been removed to allow students a wider access to learning opportunities. As mentioned by Chen (2022, pp.1-15), education for sustainable development is an essential aspect of quality education and is deemed to be a lifelong learning process.

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Social constructionism of COVID-19 vaccine discussion on social media: A concept paper

Nur Ayuni Mohd Jenol¹, Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil¹

¹School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Correspondence: Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil (email: *hafeezapazil@usm.my*)

Abstract

Vaccine is one of the various contents that is widely discussed and presented across all social media platforms. Due to the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has manifested the never-ending debate on the topic of immunisation as a social space embedded with opportunities for free and equal participation. Thus, it is critical to understand how narratives about the COVID-19 vaccine are shaped and generated on social media. Social construction is proposed as a framework to understand this phenomenon. This paper aims to review relevant research that are conducted within the framework of social construction on public health discussions. Based on this theoretical perspective, vaccine practices whether rejection, acceptance or hesitation should not be interpreted solely as a behavioural outcome or health illiteracy. The way society perceives vaccines is constructed within the context of social interaction with others, rather than being inherent or objectively given. It is more appropriate to consider it as a constructed decision-making process. Despite the fact that the majority of the studies reviewed acknowledged the impact of social media on vaccination beliefs and uptake, this paper revealed a lack of focus on social media interactions. It is also uncommon to come across local research that focuses on those who create and promote the narratives. Consequently, this paper advocates for a better sociological understanding of social media influencers (SMIs), who have a significant influence on public health discussions on social media, particularly in Malaysia.

Keywords: Social construction; COVID-19 vaccine; social media

1. Introduction

People today are no longer acquiring knowledge merely from traditions and their community but also through media exposure, specifically, social media. Through online interactions, they also learn and acquire health-related beliefs, values, dispositions, and identities. Social media is a powerfully yet threatening tool for the global population. As people increasingly turn to online communities for information, they are becoming active participants in the decision-making process, for example, concerning their health. Furthermore, social media has a reputation to provide anyone with a platform to create and curate unfiltered content while reaching a mass audience. This democratizes the ability to share knowledge and experiences from voices of various niche interests ranging from health professionals to laypeople, but there are risks (Leader et al., 2020). Medical knowledge that was previously restricted and exclusive to medical professionals is now accessible to anyone (Keelan *et al.*, 2010).

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly has manifested the never-ending debate of the topic of immunization both academically and in public discourse. Moreover, the proliferation of false and misleading information regarding vaccines through social media has also given a new urgency. Living in a pandemic and digitally mediated society, it is appropriate and timely to delve deeper into the online ideas, norms, and values that influence people's health preferences and behaviour, particularly in vaccination. There is also a need in literature to provide a new understanding of human behaviour concerning vaccine practices. Although sociology is not the origin of health studies, the manner of society handles vaccination as a health practice reflects

as well as reinforces the major institutions and values of the society (Stacey & Homans, 1978). In addition, vaccine acceptance, hesitancy, and rejection also vary between the countries as well as within the societies.

Based on this premise, this paper intends to explore the social construction underpinnings Malaysian society's vaccine beliefs and uptake on social media. The way they perceive vaccines is constructed within the framework of social interaction with others and not inherently, innately, or objectively given. Vaccine practices should not be interpreted as merely a behavioural outcome. It is more appropriate to consider it as a constructed decision-making process (MacDonald *et al.*, 2015). By reviewing relevant studies, this concept paper aims to understand the social construction approach in sociological research of public health discussion especially concerning COVID-19 vaccines on social media.

2. Methods

The data collection process will be divided into two phases according to two research methods: content analysis and in-depth interview, respectively. Upon receiving approval from the Universiti Sains Malaysia Ethics Committee, the researcher will begin phase one of the data collection, which will involve collecting data from Twitter using content analysis. Twitter was chosen because the platform focuses on keywords and allows posting to a wider audience compared to other platforms (Raghupathi *et al.*, 2020). Besides that, Twitter also provides an application programming interface (API) that enables researchers to stream public tweets from the platform in real-time and display the basic metrics about the topic of interest. Thus, it helps when conducting a content analysis by determining the presence of certain words or concepts within tweets posted on Twitter related to COVID-19 vaccination and the discussion among Malaysian users.

Following the completion of the data extraction from Twitter, the researcher will move on to the second phase of data collection. The second phase describes the process of advertising the study, recruiting participants, conducting in-depth interviews, and transcribing. A total of 10 Twitter users will be chosen to participate in an in-depth interview in order to gain a deeper understanding of users' experiences and perceptions towards vaccination. In addition, by doing so, the researcher will be able to investigate whether the discussion by SMIs on Twitter led to offline behaviours toward users' vaccine practices. The interviews will take place online using web conferencing software, and each session will last approximately one to one and a half hours.

The researcher will quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of the vaccine discussion on Twitter, then make inferences about the messages and their influence on users' offline behaviour. Thematic analysis, which is a method of analysing qualitative data will be utilized for both instruments to identify, analyse, and interpret the patterns and interior hidden themes in the data (Guest *et al.*, 2012). It is also useful for outlining key features of a data set because it drives the researcher to deal with data in a well-structured manner, likely to result in a clear and organised final report. There are many different ways to approach thematic analysis. One of them is the Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide which offers a clear and usable procedure. Hence, it is considered the most influential approach for doing thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis in this research will follow the six steps as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1) familiarisation with the data 2) coding 3) generating themes 4) reviewing 5) defining and naming themes and 6) writing and linking the findings to the sociological insights based on previous studies.

3. Social construction

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman coined the phrase social construction in their book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Their work on the nature of knowledge and its role in the formation of reality and social life has had a particular impact on Sociology of social construction (Lupton, 2003). They claim that humans and their social environments are in a dialectical interaction where one creates the other (Figure 1). Although the material and social worlds are experienced by most individuals as objective and pre-existing realities, Berger and Luckmann (1966) pointed out that these realities encompass the reproduction of meaning and knowledge via social interaction and socialisation, and they rely on shared definitions. They emphasize that because of the continually constructed nature of reality, its meanings are precarious and subject to change.

They were inspired by the works of Mead (1934) that took construction into Sociology with a theory of self-consciousness that originates from social interaction. In his development of Symbolic Interactionism, Mead proposes that individuals construct and negotiate their identities through their daily social interactions. Individuals create and learn knowledge by participating in these social activities. There are conveyed, understood, and reproduced in families, groups, and communities (Kalok *et al.*, 2020). In other words, reality is a cultural product and formed by people’s interactions with one another and their environments (Attwell *et al.*, 2018). While social construction does not downplay the influence of inherited traits, it focuses on the social influences on communal and individual life (Capurro *et al.*, 2018). In line with that, social construction of health information or such as vaccination is also associated with individuals’ unique social environment.

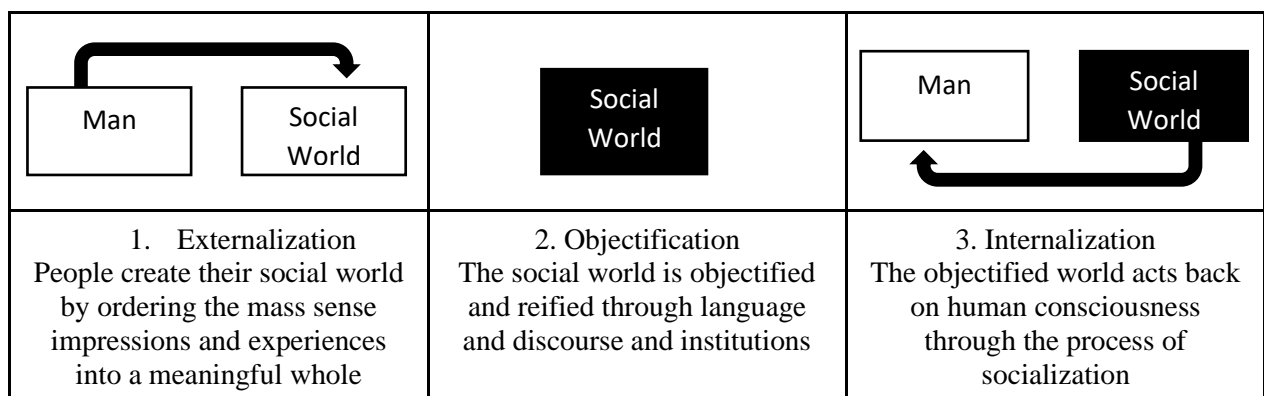


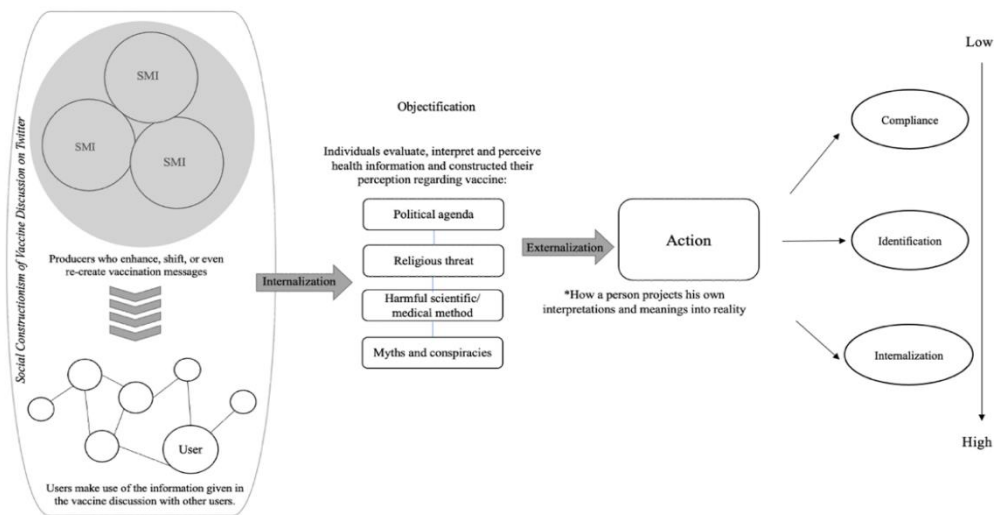
Figure 1: The social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966)

In Sociology, discourse is viewed as a form of mode of representation and it refers to patterns of thinking, making sense, discussing or writing about, and visually portraying phenomenon including the human body, illness, disease, and death (Keller, 2005). Over the last few decades, researchers from the medical sciences to the social sciences have recognised how health and bodily concerns such as asthma, cancer, disability, alcoholism, obesity, mental illness, and survival are products of social construct (Poikolainen, 1982; Busfield, 1988; Bauman, 1992; Rich *et al.*, 2000; Liachowitz, 2010; Nolan, 2017; Brawley, 2021). Vaccination is no exception and as according to Attwell *et al.* (2018), scholars already have a good understanding that society distrusts the expert systems that design and deliver vaccines; some may see vaccines as an unwelcome and unnatural intrusion into a ‘natural body’ that they believe is unnecessary or unbeneficial. One of the most well-known COVID-19 vaccine conspiracy stories that has spread on social media is about the 5G network, which suggests that the vaccine is an attempt by US corporate entities to plug a nanotech microchip that enable people to be dominated (Olagoke,

2021). Studies show that the vaccination behaviours of an individual's social networks are a predictor of one's behaviours. In other words, it is clear that an individual's milieu matters to the decisions they make. The social construction of reality around vaccines and how it is perceived by an individual ultimately affect one's decision to vaccinate or otherwise.

Such discourses about vaccines may be said to be textual or expressed in texts like in social media. Through these discourses, it is possible to obtain meaning and context embedded in particular social, historical, and political settings. The term text is used here to refer to verbal interactions, visual images, physical action and practises, rather than simply a product of writing like in social media. According to Giddens (1991), contemporary societies exhibit the decline in tradition and the growing of reflexivity in all domains of society from formal institutions at the macro-level to self-identity and interpersonal intimacy at the micro-level. This represents a new stage of enlightenment that demands new knowledge and autonomy. The goal is to eliminate absolute values that command individual allegiance. Thus, contemporary society is described as a society that values diversity and heterogeneity. Besides that, modernity also brought with it a greater awareness of risk, vulnerability, and insecurity. Vaccination-related doubts and reservations, therefore, stem from this process of reconstructing values and knowledge (Siu *et al.*, 2019). This proves that vaccine practices is a highly dynamic and heterogeneous phenomena that varies and evolves over time and space, depending on context, geographic, and demographic variables. (Rosselli *et al.*, 2016).

4. Conceptual framework



Social constructionism is seen as the best approach to describe how social interactions resulted narratives on a particular topic and eventually influence individual's behaviour. The adapted framework from Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality aids in guiding research inquiries to examine the vaccine discussion on Twitter among Malaysian users or social media influencers (SMIs). The model demonstrates that knowledge about vaccination, for example, is constructed through several sociological processes – externalization, reification, and internalization (Clair, 2008). Furthermore, the modified framework also incorporates Kelman's (1958) social influence theory to determine how interaction with SMIs leads to society's attitude or action towards vaccination. Social influence theory explains how a person's attitude or evaluative orientation toward an idea emerges as a result of social interactions. This theory also helps to characterize the impact of social influence that brings attitudes or actions to different levels (Archetti, 2012).

Social construction focuses on the creation of multiple meanings (Zhao, 2020). The multiplicity of meanings then created perceptions that attached to vaccination because of the co-existence of numerous social actors. As a result, it is constructed collectively by a diverse range of social exchange actors, including one's network or "followings/followers" on social media. Social media users interacting in a social system form, constructing ideas or mental representations of each other's behaviour over time. These notions ultimately become accustomed into the actors' reciprocal roles in relation to each other (Galbin, 2015). Particularly, SMIs as actors that possess resources (followers, likes, retweets, engagements) on social media are seen as a reliable and immediate source of information on vaccination. Their newsworthiness, star quality, and intense parasocial relationships with some individuals have allowed them to be prominently featured on the network. They become producers who enhance, shift, or even re-create vaccination messages to fit their limited and biased understanding (Zhao, 2020). To some extent, the messages include conspiracy theories (Martinez-Berman et al., 2020), religious threat (Ahmed et al., 2018), political agenda, pseudoscience beliefs, and unsafe medical methods (Wong et al., 2020). Other individuals evaluate, interpret and perceive health information from those messages they receive through the discussion. Because social reality is constructed based on people's experiences and interpretations, there are numerous possible social constructions of the world from various social actors.

Vaccine discussion on Twitter eventually facilitating circumstances where the public and interaction spaces are becoming progressively synonymous, but also ever more conflicting (Wohn & Bowe, 2014). This is called externalization means how a person projects his interpretations and meanings into reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). As previously stated, different people interpret and perceive health information differently, which influences their health behaviours. Hoffman & Tan (2015) suggests that there are people they refer to as acceptors, who completely accept social norms, and reliers, who adhere to the norms of their social networks. Lastly, there are also searchers that independently seek whatever information they need. For acceptors, influencers shape social norms that are internalized and acted upon. To summarise, people's perceptions of reality will change as a result of their social networks, and everyone will assume that the information generated by their social network is the most accurate or reflects reality. However, at the macro level, it can be seen as an "ever-diverging cacophony of socially constructed realities" (Wohn & Bowe, 2014, p. 261).

Most individuals in Malaysian society still rely largely on the legacy media for timely and reliable information about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases, particularly during the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, it is important to understand to what extent the impact of online discussion or interaction of these social media influencers regarding vaccines in local communities in Malaysia affecting vaccine perception and decision-making.

5. Conclusion

This study has outlined how narratives about the vaccine are shaped and generated through the perspectives of social construction. Vaccine among other health concerns is indeed a socially constructed, acquired, and reinforced phenomenon. It is a highly dynamic and heterogeneous phenomenon, as it differs and changes over space and time, depending on the context as well as geographic and demographic variables. For instances, in some high-income countries such as France, there is a relatively high rejection of vaccination and the country has been observed with the least confidence in vaccine safety (Wilson *et al.*, 2020). In Muslim majority countries like Malaysia, people have abstained to use certain vaccines raising concerns about its halal status and safety (Bukhari *et al.*, 2020). Nordin (2020) argued that in Malaysia, Malays, especially those in rural areas, are the majority that is particularly hesitant toward the vaccines.

Besides that, social media as the core social space in contemporary society in which social interactions take place has increasingly being used to obtain information on health issues. It provides a platform to nurture society's health-related preferences, interests, and tastes including vaccine practices. This also leads to the emergence of the internet as a source of the divergent information and significantly, the proliferation of false and misleading information regarding vaccines through social media. Vaccine discourse on social sites has been explored for its content, reach, and effectiveness; even so, study on those who produce and endorse the messages is still uncommon. It should be worrying how there are people who believe people on social media despite their background are more credible than medical experts (Caulfield & Fahy, 2016). People like SMIs not only have established their profiles online but also assembled followers who value their ideas, opinions, and perspectives. They are endowed with a certain amount of social capital. The position that they have in their social network grants them legitimacy and credibility to mobilize society's decisions and behaviours (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, this study suggests a deeper understanding of the sociological underpinnings behind the phenomenon of SMIs and its influence on society's social discourse and decision-making.

6. References

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The Effects of Covid-19 on Social Connectedness among Third Culture Kids: A Conceptual Paper

Nur Farah Wani Mohd Nasir, Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil, and Nur Fatima Wahida Mohd Nasir
Universiti Sains Malaysia

**Corresponding author: Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil (email: hafeezapazil@usm.my)*

Abstract

Ever since the global pandemic, Covid-19 emerged, governments all around the world have attempted to slow the spread of this disease by promoting social isolation and social distancing. Although physical separation does curtail the spread of the virus, the practice of social distancing has also limited people's in-person social interactions and has narrowed their sense of social connectedness. To Third Culture Kids (TCK), social connectedness is more than just a means of social relationship or social networking. It is a motivating factor for survival, and a way to reduce feelings of social anxiety through the sense of social belonging. This paper, discusses how Covid-19 may affect TCK social connectedness with their own home communities and the need for more research exploration in the subject area.

Keywords: Covid-19, Third Culture Kids (TCK), social connectedness, social isolation

1. Introduction

In this time of globalization, international relations are considered vital for nations to strive in various industries. With increasing offers of international trade and affairs, there is also an increasing need for some families to transition to other countries, allowing them to learn new cultures, languages, and experiences, especially among their children. Thus, when expatriate children spend substantial parts of their life away from their parent's native language and culture, they are known as Third Culture Kids (TCK). Although the word "*kids*" is used for this term, these individuals refer to both children and adults as well (Melles & Schwartz, 2013).

According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009) TCK are individuals raised in a culture other than their parents' or the culture of their nationality, and lived in different environments for a significantly large part of their child development years. Findings from various research reveals the process of growing up within multiple environments often affects TCK developmental growth in terms of personal identity, values, attitude, characteristics, lifestyle and way of thinking (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Lyttle, Barker & Cornwell, 2011; Selmer & Luring, 2014). Moore and Barker (2012) claim situations of moving between different cultures before one could fully develop their own personal and cultural identity cause many TCK to experience identity crisis, cultural value confusions, political confusions, difficulties of understanding local colloquial language, questions of belonging, culture shock, marginality, and difficulties in establishing social connectedness among their own home communities.

Literatures on TCK focuses prominently on aspects of emotional and psychological development among people who transit internationally (Cottrell & Useem, 1994; Adams, 2014). Research in this area include ample studies emphasizing on cultural adaptation and transitional effects towards TCK values, relationships, characteristics, education, career, religion and social connectedness with their local communities (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Moore & Barker, 2011; Adams, 2014; Lily, 2014; Hisano, 2015; Long, 2016). Due to the current pandemic however, not much research has addressed issues on the effects of Covid-19 on TCK sense of social belonging and social connectedness. Therefore, this paper discusses the concept of

social connectedness and its significance among TCK. Social connectedness is then discussed in the context of TCK struggle and dilemma during the Covid-19 pandemic, verifying the need for more research exploration in the subject area.

2. Literature Review

Third Culture Kids (TCK)

The Third Culture term was invented by Dr. Ruth Useem and Dr. John Useem as they conducted research in India during the 1950s (Carroll, 2019). Third Culture is the shared commonality among individuals that are living in an international mobile way of life overseas (Useem & Useem, 1963; Useem, 1973; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009), TCK experience frequent relocation processes to various host cultures around the world. This is an important part of TCK lives as it includes multicultural upbringing. However, as TCK grow older, they usually become disassociated from their own home country's culture (Moore & Barker, 2012). According to researchers Sorti (1997) and Byttner (2012), TCK often go through four main stages of re-entry when returning back to their home countries. This includes leave-taking and departure, honeymoon, reverse culture shock, and readjustment. Although some TCK may react differently, most TCK usually forget the realization of adjusting to their local communities and often think of the process as a vacation (Byttner, 2012). Eventually, this surreal period ends once the TCK realize that they are no longer a visitor, therefore must deal with the contrasting culture as real conditions of their life (Mizuno, 2012).

Henceforth, issues of cultural adaptation to new environments are commonly identified among TCK all over the world as many past studies have stressed the intensity of TCK adjustment in adapting to their own native countries upon returning home, especially among Asian TCK (Hoersting, 2010; Moore & Barker, 2012; Adam, 2014; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Long; 2016). According to Mizuno (2012), the process of returning home, has caused many TCK to go through a series of frustrations and even depression. Nevertheless, TCK eventually enter the reverse culture shock phase as they begin to address problems of the language barrier, customs, dress code, and worldview perspectives (Callahan, 2010). To survive within their own home community, TCK have no choice but to develop an ability of cultural adaptation. Hence, when TCK can blend in and finally feel comfortable, only then are they able to live like others (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Third Culture Kids & Social Connectedness

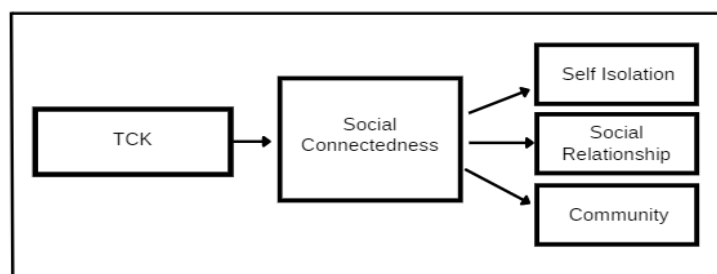
Literature on TCK show there are arguable debates on the advantages against disadvantages of being a TCK. Bonebright (2010) claim individuals having early exposure to cross-cultural experiences provide a positive impact on society. This notion is also agreed by Sheard (2008) who found that TCK are more tolerant of different cultures compared to common people because they are used to quickly adapting and understanding ways to behave appropriately in new environments. Despite the positive impact, researchers have also concluded that the immense challenge of being a TCK brings more harm than good, especially in terms of social belonging and social connectedness. Hoersting (2010) highlight that most TCK find themselves lost in the sense of "home" which indirectly comes with the lost sense of belonging, commitment, and attachment to a new culture, especially their own home culture. This condition is referred as "cultural homelessness" or "culturally rootless" and has eventually corrupted numerous TCK self-esteem, psychological perceptions, and problems of attachments and relationships because of their lack of knowledge on their own home nations, culture, and language practices (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Hoersting, 2010).

According to Bell-Villada, Sichel, Eidse, and Orr (2011), children require three basic needs which are sense of belonging, recognition, and connection with people. Connectedness with people is defined as the degree to which an individual or a group of people are socially close, interrelated, or share common resources (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Hence, when children are forced to experience various challenging environments where they must culturally adjust from time to time, this eventually causes them to lose connection with people and their attachments with certain communities during their prime development years of growth (Pollock and Ven Reken, 2009). This, however, would often lead to the lack of social connectedness and social reticence among TCK with peers and other people when they repatriate.

Regarding social connectedness, studies in the field have also mentioned TCK problems in making friends. Lijadi and Schalkwyk (2014) claim, many adult TCK experience unsuccessful friendships that could build deep and meaningful relationships. Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) found that female TCK are more hesitant in developing new relationships and have less emotional effects due to their focus on adjusting and adapting to new environments. A study from Melles and Schwartz (2013) reveals that American TCK reported significantly higher levels of prejudice on the Cognitive Subscale of the QDI and the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO) as compared to non-American TCK based on the levels of exposure from various cultures, numbers of years spent abroad and the number of countries they lived in.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) explained TCK have issues in developing long-lasting friendship due to frequent change of schools during their developing years, in which prevents them from connecting with others and investing more time and effort in their social relationships. In order to avoid the regular sense of loss, TCK keep a certain amount of distance between themselves and potential friends (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001) and also only reveal certain information about themselves to reserve their true characteristics and personalities to others (Carroll, 2019). This leads to Rude’s (2009) debate, when friendship lacks value towards one another, it creates an imbalanced circumstance which then results in an unsuccessful relationship.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Based on the conceptual framework above, the study highlights TCK experiences which are frequent relocation, issues of adjustment and adaptation, as well a lack of sense of belonging in their surrounding environment after returning home. The experience they endure is linked to their difficulty in practicing or achieving social connectedness. According to Frieling, Peach, and Cording (2018), sources of social connectedness involve having relationships among family, friends, association, colleagues, peers, teachers, and neighbors, which all consists of the three main components of social connectedness which are socializing, social support, and sense of belonging. Thus, social connectedness can be gained by having social relationships among family and friends as well as the community surrounding the individual.

However, TCK face difficulties connecting with others because of the coping mechanism they developed while growing up, to overcome emotions of grief and loss of friendships when having

to adjust to various places due to their high mobility lifestyle. As a result, many of them become apathetic in their emotions and less invested in social relationships, causing them to face problems in social connectedness and belongingness with other people. This includes their social relationship among family and friends as well as the community. Choi and Luke (2011) claim, TCK who lack friendship and social connectedness with others often cause them to experience feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. In addition to the pandemic, the conceptual framework emphasizes on self-isolation as an additional factor to their difficulty in gaining social connectedness from other people. These negative feelings that TCK struggle with, are assumed to become more intense during the Covid-19 pandemic due to new laws and new norms of social isolation and social distancing from everyone.

The Effects of Covid-19 On Social Connectedness

According to The World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus or Covid-19 is a new disease that was discovered in the province of Wuhan, China in 2019 (Elengoe, 2020). By 2020, reports on the spread of the virus have reported reaching countries like the United States of America, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Iran, UK, Turkey, Belgium, and many Asian countries as well (Liu, Kuo, & Shih, 2020; Shah, Safri, Thevadas, Noordin, Rahman, Sekawi, Ideris, & Sultan 2020; Hashim, Adman, Hashim, Mohd Radi, & Kwan, 2021). To date, the Covid-19 pandemic is regarded as the most infectious disease outbreak to have hit the world ever since the Spanish Flu in 1918 which killed a number of 34 thousand people back then (Liu, Kuo, & Shih, 2020).

With ongoing death rates, the virus has profoundly affected human lives in many ways. One of the most impactful effects that have changed people's lives is the importance of social distancing and social isolation. These standard precautions were first set by WHO as a strict guideline in curbing the rising number of infections (World Health Organization, 2021). Besides that, preventive measures also include regular wash of hands either with soap or sanitizer, wearing masks and gloves, coughing into disposable tissues or flexed elbow, avoiding unnecessary travel, and the avoidance of handshaking with other people (Elengoe, 2020). In order to further implement this new guideline by WHO, governments around the world have attempted to slow down the spread of the disease by enforcing lockdowns and promoting social isolation and social distancing (Mohler, Bertozzi, Carter, Short, Sledge, Tita, Uchida, & Brantingham, 2020; Newbold, Finnoff, Thunstrom, Ashworth, & Shogren, 2020; Pratt & Frost, 2020). According to Connell (2020) research shows that this new norm, however, has led to the creation of a social disaster among communities. Findings from Banarjee and Rai (2020), state that social isolation has caused people to experience chronic loneliness and that if prolonged, may have detrimental effects on physical and mental well-being.

Furthermore, studies have also shown that self-isolation and having limited social contacts could also lead to psychological problems, extreme fear, and confusion (Conway, Woodard, Zubrod, 2020; Ercetin, Potas, Acikalm, Sarinc Ulasli, Cevik, Gorgulu, Gungor, Celik, Erkocak, Neyisci, Esen, & Oz, 2020; Mckibbin & Fernando, 2020; Wang, Pan, Wan, Tan, Xu, Ho, & Ho, 2020; Elengoe, 2020). According to Fegert, Vitello, Plener, and Clement (2020), the increase in separation from families and social contacts leads to a higher risk of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal behaviors due to the lack of intimacy and social connectedness. Intimacy in this sense is vital as it comes from feelings of trust and acceptance in relationships (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2014). Hence, when social isolation is enforced, levels of intimacy and companionship may also be affected because of the infrequent close interaction with people (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2014). According to the researchers, interaction through social media does not have the same sense and level of intimacy compared to face-to-face interactions. In fact, studies have shown that due to the increase in social media interactions, people were found to experience even higher levels of

anxiety and depression and have also caused relationships to deteriorate (Hammad & Alqarni, 2021).

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this concept paper consist of previous literature review on subjects pertaining to TCK and social connectedness. Previous literature review includes from online and offline material such as article, journals, and books. The references are based on online databases such as Google Scholar and Academia. Moreover, references are taken from journals and chapters from a book. Hence, the limitations from this concept paper could be due to the limited resources from databases as the search results are excluded from Economic, Education, and Science studies related to TCK experiences impact towards their social connectedness during Covid-19. The experiences of TCK social connectedness during the pandemic is not restricted to Malaysians, but also take into consideration of TCK throughout the world as well.

4. Conclusion

This concept paper has overall outlined the issues that TCK commonly experience, especially when trying to adapt to their own home communities to achieve a sense of belonging and social connectedness. The lack of social connectedness is then related to issues of social isolation and social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, based on the logical grounds presented in this paper, it can be concluded that although literature shows that there is a major research gap in the effects of TCK sense of social connectedness during Covid-19, the issue is prominent to be researched in order to explore more about the truth behind these grounds.

Based on the literature of TCK, social connectedness, and Covid-19 reveals the probability that in addition to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression and extreme fear during Covid-19, TCK may face even greater challenges and difficulties as social connectedness is perceived as a vital element of their survival and well-being. The lack of opportunity to establish deep and meaningful relationships during Covid-19 is also believed to expose TCK to their common vulnerabilities, which are their social reticence, insecurities, and a fear of abandonment. Nevertheless, in order to validate these assumptions, research must be conducted to find out more about their problems in achieving social connectedness during these difficult times.

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Impoliteness Comments of Malaysian Netizen in Facebook Posting: A Review

Surina Mohamad Shafi^{a*}, Hamed Mohd Adnan^b, Siti Ezaleila Mustafa^c

^aDepartment of Media and Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: aal70049@siswa.um.edu.my

^bProfessor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^cSenior Lecturer, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

This review paper identified and discussed the impoliteness words netizens in social media, notably Facebook. All faiths teach their followers to treat others with respect. Even though it is merely in the form of text, it still represents a human personality, particularly a powerful individual in society like a politician. In a society faced with the Covid-19 epidemic and new norms, the usage of social media as a source of information and a platform for citizens to express their thoughts and dissatisfaction is increasing. The Malaysian government's decision in dealing with the epidemic has elicited a slew of reactions and outrage from the general people. This research identified the most common incivility and abusive terms used by Facebook users, as well as the topics that spark the most public controversy on social media. The text extracted from Facebook material is analyzed using the content analysis approach. The significant findings concluded that the use of impolite words is on the rise in response to current events such as the implementation of Movement Control Orders (MCO), standard operating procedures (SOP), quarantine, vaccines, and the closure of the industrial and educational sectors, all of which triggered public debate on social media.

Keywords: Facebook; Hate Speech; Impoliteness; Social Media.

1. Introduction

At the present time, communication is evolving at a fast pace to keep up with the speed of voice, supported by people's ability to freely express their views and opinions on social media. When it comes to sharing their opinions on social media, people frequently disregard ethics and regulations. In many countries, the use of offensive language in online spaces has increased, and it has become a topic of public debate and scientific research (Keipi, Näsi, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2017), particularly in response to racialized or ethnicity responses that are occurring all over the world in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak (Keipi, Näsi, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2017). Impoliteness, according to Culpeper (1996, 2008), comprised the use of taboo words such as curse, abusive or insulting phrases, or profane language, as well as the use of derogatory terms or labels against others. Impoliteness also refers to a broader concept of communication norm violations

that is often referred to as "studies on incivility" in digital communication research. As for politeness, it has been linked to theories on communication and conversational social norms, such as conversational maxims (Grice, 1975), face-saving concepts (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1989), and conversational-contract theories (Fraser, 1990).

Impoliteness is a term used to denote a breach of communication standards. These standards can be created within a society, a culture, or within elements of a society, such as a socioeconomic class, environment, or group. In this meaning, the impropriety connected with, for example, aggressive, hostile, or insulting statements exposed to persons or other parties directly or indirectly. Name-calling, filthy phrases, and provocation are all forms of disrespectful statements (Papacharissi, 2004; Seely, 2017).

Impoliteness is more spontaneous, unintentional, and widely regretted than incivility, according to some scholars (e.g., Papacharissi, 2004; Rowe, 2015). Messages that contain at least one instance of impoliteness, such as a swear word, are classed as impolite in numerous studies. Impoliteness is defined as "communicative behaviors that attract negative evaluations in context and course," according to Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory. It encompasses a negative attitude toward particular actions that exist in specific circumstances and can result in emotional consequences, where offence is the root of all unpleasant feelings such as being wounded, offended, ashamed, annoyed, frustrated, humiliated, frightened, or threatened (Culpeper, 2011).

Many elements can exacerbate the offensiveness of rude behavior, one of which is intentionality, whether or not one believes the action is purposeful. Offensive verbal acts are viewed as more harmful, nasty, and immoral when they are judged purposeful, according to social communication studies (Leary et al. 1998; Vangelisti & Young 2000).

Impoliteness and incivility are propagated mostly through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The increasing number of impoliteness phenomena occurring in society through social media, which, if not controlled, could lead to intolerant, aggressive, and hateful behaviours toward others, resulting in social conflicts in Malaysia's multicultural society, especially in the era of pandemic Covid-19, which saw many netizens express their dissatisfaction in social media, further resulting in the occurrence of state life disintegration.

In contrast to hate speech, it is perpetrated by individuals or organisations from a wide range of backgrounds, including politicians, government officials, and community leaders, as well as ordinary people from all walks of life. Hate speech does not always have the same meaning or intensity, and it varies depending on the amount of harm it poses to people and society. Hate speech can come in loud, medium, or soft forms, depending on how dangerous it is (Neshkovska & Trajkova, 2017).

2. Literature Review

When the world awoke on December 31st, 2019, to a new wave of disease named Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO), which later became a pandemic and was first discovered in Wuhan, Hubei province of China, and is believed to be caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus, there was a lot of impoliteness of language dictated among the related communications on social media. As a result, the targeted group or people may be stigmatized and subjected to violence.

This study investigated various data on Covid-19 related material communicated on Facebook

using Austin's models of Speech Act and Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory, respectively, to estimate the amount of toxicity of language usage. Using a content analysis technique, this study attempted to fill this gap.

2.1 Impoliteness

Most of the prior study focused on the amount, intensity, and direction of impoliteness in online conversation, according to the researchers. Impoliteness in user comments on social media sites like Facebook has been examined in previous research. In line with the rising number of Covid-19 cases, content analysis studies investigate impoliteness in user comments throughout time periods of one year (Esau, 2021).

Most studies of manual content analysis measure impoliteness at the message level, such as in user comments. The amount of impoliteness for a complete discussion thread or online platform might be measured or estimated at a higher level of analysis. Impoliteness can be measured at a lower level of analysis, such as utterances, sentences, or words, which are the most common levels of analysis in automated content analyses (Park *et al.*, 2021).

3. Tables and Figures

Table 1 shows previous content analysis studies and measures of impoliteness among scholars between 2018 and 2021. From the analysis, the construct of impoliteness has been categorized to three major category which is incivility, flaming and hate speech. As for the variables, among the most frequently used are name calling, profanity and insulting words.

Table 1: Previous content analysis studies and measures of impoliteness

Example study	Construct	Variables
(Oz, Zheng and Chen, 2018)	Impoliteness (included in incivility)	name-calling
		profanity
		capital letters
(Limgam, 2019)	Impoliteness (included flaming)	name calling
		insult
		criticism
		sarcasm
		speculation
		defamation
		religious attack
		threaten
(MacAvaney <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Impoliteness (included hate speech)	hate
		offensive
		racism
		insulting
(Pratama, 2019)	Impoliteness (included in incivility)	bald on record impoliteness
		positive
		negative
		sarcasm or mock politeness

		withhold politeness
(Modha <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Impoliteness (included flaming)	flames
		profanity
		abusive/hostile
		extremism
		radical content
(Agwuocha, 2020)	Impoliteness (included hate speech)	taboo words
		name calling
(Paasch-Colberg <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Impoliteness (included hate speech)	negative stereotyping
		dehumanization
		violence and killing
(Castaño-Pulgarín <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Impoliteness (included hate speech)	religious hate speech
		racism
		political hate
		gendered hate
		terrorism
		hate expressions

4. Method of Data Collection

Content analysis studies investigate impoliteness in user comments focusing on periods between 2 months and 1 year. Researchers used a content analysis method to figure out what users were saying on different sites and how incivility, impoliteness, and deliberative characteristics differed.

Current topics such as the implementations of Movement Control Orders (MCO), standard operating procedures (SOP), quarantine, immunizations, and the closure of the industrial and educational sectors were among the categories, each of which received at least 100 responses and were studied thematically.

5. Result and Discussion

Another wave of disease has erupted via social media, as the Covid-19 epidemic is already in reality among previously existing health, economic, and political harsh realities. This new wave of sickness is manifested in the form of toxic comments, which are jeopardizing the present international peace. In response to a series of 'infodemics' and misinterpretations of the possible origin and handling of the growing cases of Covid-19, language competency has been misused. People literally embodied Austin's theory of "how to accomplish things with words" in their reactions and responses to Covid-19-related concerns.

In order to engage with their fans and followers, most politicians and celebrities utilize Facebook Live. In many cases, however, some internet users responding to their posts with abusive, offensive, sarcastic, or covertly aggressive comments. Any Facebook user who posts about a contentious issue risk being blacklisted. Most users of social media will not enjoy abusive or offensive content being accessible on their timeline when their profile is visited, according to Modha *et al.*, (2020) in their research on detecting impoliteness terms.

The findings provide some preliminary evidence that people may behave differently as a result of Facebook's features. According to these studies, individuals on Facebook are more uncivil and

unpleasant, and less deliberative with strangers, and people may feel more de-individualized on Facebook, a site where people tend to communicate with friends (Bonds-Raacke and Raacke, 2010; Chen, 2015; Christofides et al., 2009).

Finally, the researcher wants to emphasize the flexibility of the approach by referring to several impoliteness definitions in the literature: It may be adapted to meet specific research objectives and to make different or broader impoliteness definitions practical for content analysis, such as definitions of 'impoliteness' that include racial insults but omit negative stereotypes.

The significant findings concluded that the use of impolite words is on the rise in response to recent events such as the implementation of Movement Control Orders (MCO), standard operating procedures (SOP), quarantine, vaccines, and the closure of the industrial and educational sectors, all of which triggered public debate on social media. The content-related viewpoint of approach may also be coupled to other views on impoliteness by combining it with surveys or experiments to give further insights, for example, into the interplay between text characteristics and their perception by different population groups.

6. Conclusion

Impoliteness, such as profanity, insults, and shouting in all capital letters, and incivility, such as threats against the government or people, were shown to have a significant but weak relationship with each other in Papacharissi's (2004) research.

The development of stereotypes and worsening harm is a result of the usage of online media and social networks. Hate crimes, offline aggressions, discrimination, racist views, democratic repercussions, exacerbation of gendered violence, and other factors, among others, all have an impact on victims' coexistence and mental health.

This research also adds to the practical enrichment of impoliteness data for interested parties such as the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and Cyber Security Malaysia.

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A Qualitative Study on Instagram and Fundraising on Indonesia Start-up Social Enterprise: The case of @id.Volunteer

Wardatul Hayat Adnan*
Centre of Postgraduate Studies,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
*wardatul@uitm.edu.my

Nadya Souisa Realtya
Center of Tropical Medicine,
Universitas Gadjah Mada,
Research and Management Building,
Mlati, Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
suisanadya@gmail.com

Abstract

A social company in Indonesia that is just getting off the ground is looking for investment via social media. Instagram on of the social media platform that has recently been used as a marketing tool to maximise revenues while also maximising societal advantages. Evaluating the success rate of one marketing tool, images on Instagram have been found to be a strong form of marketing communication. Images communication professionals provides a vivid tool for delivering an important and engaging information. The present study aims to study offers a qualitative research to evaluate how an Indonesian start-up social company may use Instagram to target fundraising. The foundation of visual framing theory was used to analyse picture characteristics, functions, advertising appeals, and creative message segments in Instagram. Findings of the presents study, strongly suggests that Instagram be regarded as a marketing tool for businesses, particularly for social enterprises, because Instagram allows marketers to create engaging and customised content through creativity and innovation.

Keyword(s): *Instagram, social media, social enterprise, fundraising, Indonesia*

1. Introduction

In comparison to the rise of other social networks, Instagram has received relatively less attention (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáez-Sánchez, 2017). When Instagram turned four years old in 2014, an early assessment of the quality of its image posts and the sorts of users surfaced has been re-evaluated (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014). Since then, according to a review of the literature, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the expansion of Instagram throughout the world, with a skewed focus on functional and user implications, Instagram users have been drawn in through advertising from travel, culinary, fashion, and entertainment companies. Instagram used to disseminate information and promote marketing efforts (Soedarsono, Mohamad, Adamu & Pradita, 2020; Virtanen, Björk, & Sjöström, 2017). Hence, the digital marketing approach is evolving with time and growth of mass marketing are now traced to national periodicals such as televisions and radios. Direct marketing, such as telemarketing, direct e-mail, and catalogues, was used in the second phase. Users or consumers now have greater influence over how they distribute marketing of items or services provided by marketers. As a result, it is critical to change the marketing idea as well as other components such as brand value, segmentation, targeting, communication, content, views, information hierarchy, publisher and advertiser roles, and, of course, payments. Study on "sexy-online self-presentations and teenagers' sexual attitude and

behaviour," justify the relation between Instagram used among youngsters. It also proven on Instagram's general impact towards youth's body image enjoyment (Ahadzadeh, Pahlevan Sharif, & Ong, 2017). In 2017, a number of studies were published that looked into why brands are drawn to Instagram such as Carah & Shaul (2016), how and why brands engage with consumers on the mobile application, Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáez-Sánchez (2017), and characteristics among Instagram users, including the brand used (Arajo, Corrêa, da Silva, Prates, & Meira, 2014). Yet, there are still a lack of studies that review on Instagram use to promote and advertise company specifically in Indonesia, its products and services. Robert Davin Jenkins studied factual investigations till 2018 in order to develop a multi-faceted, systematic technique to evaluate and to examine the substance of companies' visual creative messaging on Instagram. In addition, he examined image features, image functions, the construction of Taylor's six-segment message strategy wheel (Taylor, 1999; Jenkins, 2018; Golan & Zaidner, 2008). The application of six segment message strategy on Instagram has been widely used among researchers (Rietveld, van Dolen, Mazloom & Worrying, 2020; Renner, 2020). Due to Instagram's rapid growing in popularity, this tool has becoming one of the popular tools in one marketing strategy. The engagement is not quantified in terms of "likes" and "comments," only but Instagram insight was introduced in 2018 to provide a broader measurement for brands to analyse user interaction.

2. Literature Review

Prihantoro & Wijaya (2021) in his study on one of the start-up enterprise namely @kitabisacom explains on how the crowdfunding sites works. It displays a message in the form of text, images, audio, video to improved attention mob. Similarly in the present study @id.volunteer through Instagram platform. Instagram posting content is influenced by the reputation of the initiator, the popularity of the project, the quality of project content, and the credibility of the organization (Ho, Chiu, Mansumittrchai, Yuan, Zhao & Zou, 2021; Vlad, 2020) Particularly for brands and businesses who utilise Instagram to promote and advertise their products and services in gaining fundrising (Alam, 2020). The previous research looked at how social media sites like Twitter and Facebook may help new entrepreneurs reach their goals, such as sharing knowledge, presenting high-quality visual material, connecting with people, and investing money to sponsor advertising and postings (Dziadkiewicz, 2015). With the expansion of social media, the platform has grown more comprehensive, and many users profit from it not only for personal accounts but also for business. As a result, this research is the first to use a multi-faceted systematic method to dissect and evaluate the content and character of start-up social companies' visual creative messages on Instagram. Additionally, this study modified earlier research discovered by Jenkins (2018) that applies Taylor's six-segment messaging strategy wheel (1999) to businesses' Instagram postings, which is one of the most complete models in advertising. In the context of social companies on social media, this study examines the compatibility of current literature. A social company in Indonesia dubbed @id.volunteer has a start-up Instagram account that is used to analyse @id.volunteer participation in volunteer teaching initiatives and sells sandals with @id.volunteer brand. It is expected to fundraise for social and educational causes. According to Gasparin et. al. (2021) support organisation in a process of creating value by providing products and services, designing new organisations, and gathering resources in various ways in order to discover and exploit possibilities to create social value by fulfilling social needs. In Indonesia, @id.volunteer began as a start-up in 2018 and is still going strong at present, with a foundation in the power of social media, particularly Instagram, it was the first marketing strategy applied by @id.volunteer and significant improvement can be seen internally and externally through it societal impact. This research then narrows its emphasis to an explanation of Instagram, followed by a detailed evaluation of pictures as a strong communication tool. A deeper grasp of how social entrepreneurship compresses complicated communication tactics into bite-sized postings that communicate a clear and linked message is also required. Many organisation applying Instagram

as a tool of its marketing strategy (Sánta, Baša, & Machová, 2020; Soedarsono, Mohamad, Adamu, & Pradita, 2020). This is to ensure its success rate in delivering an organisation promotion or events. Visual framing theory was utilised to examine as a fundamental idea for image control and alteration in order to quantify this. Framing is a fantastic method to give context to your image and assist the audience gain a better perspective of the situation, as well as a valuable tool for directing attention (Bock, 2020). Furthermore, the scopes of many existing studies are confined to start-up social enterprises utilising Instagram to gain user engagement and raise funds through campaign events, particularly in developed nations such as Indonesia. The success rate of using the framing on Instagram has proven in monitoring the participants and engagement on social media (Radojevic, Nguyen, Bajec, & Ferrá, 2020). Due to this, the present study aims to monitor on the application on social enterprise @id.Volunteer, Indonesia.

This research focuses on the most important parts of a picture, with the premise that photos framed on Instagram will help support it. Entman's concept of visual framing theory is to gain a better grasp of the consequences of controlling the inclusion, exclusion, or emphasis using the best framework possible (Jenkins, 2018). Image features stand as an element that focuses on some salient elements in an image to understand better the message delivered to be garnered (Jenkins, 2018). In the previous study by Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati (2014), clarified the most salient image features are the most common in images posted on Instagram. Furthermore, image features also proven as a factor that contribute towards public participation on Instagram (Troise, & Camilleri, 2021; Rotter, 2021). Meanwhile image function also known as the brand image that connected between one non-profit organisation towards public (Suh, Hoang & Hijal-Moghrabi, 2021). The visibility of one brand does matter in ensuring high numbers of participation among publics specifically in the idea of fundraising This has proven by previous studies extensively (McCosker et. al, 2020; Walske, Foster, & Tyson, 2021).

Viral advertising appeals defined as “unpaid peer-to-peer communication to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others” (Winterberg, 2020; Lance & Golam, 2006). To better understand how companies, particularly social enterprise start-ups, use photos to advertise their services and goods on Instagram, this study defines advertising appeals and deems them key aspects in Instagram's brand images. Ronald Taylor introduced his six-segment strategy wheel, his model “is more comprehensive than any currently published in the literature, and it is able to subsume” (Burns, 2021; Taylor; 1999). Taylor's model will be useful in this situation as important aspects to incorporate into the brand's Instagram creative messaging strategy. Visual framing theory is supported by picture characteristics, image functions, advertising appeals, and Taylor's six-segment message strategy wheel to gain a deeper understanding of image posts on Instagram (Jenkins, 2018). Jenkins' prior study used four variables that connect to high and low levels of involvement via like and commenting. Figure 1, shows the conceptual framework of the present study on factors lead towards numbers of Instagram Insight and the amount of fundraising participation.

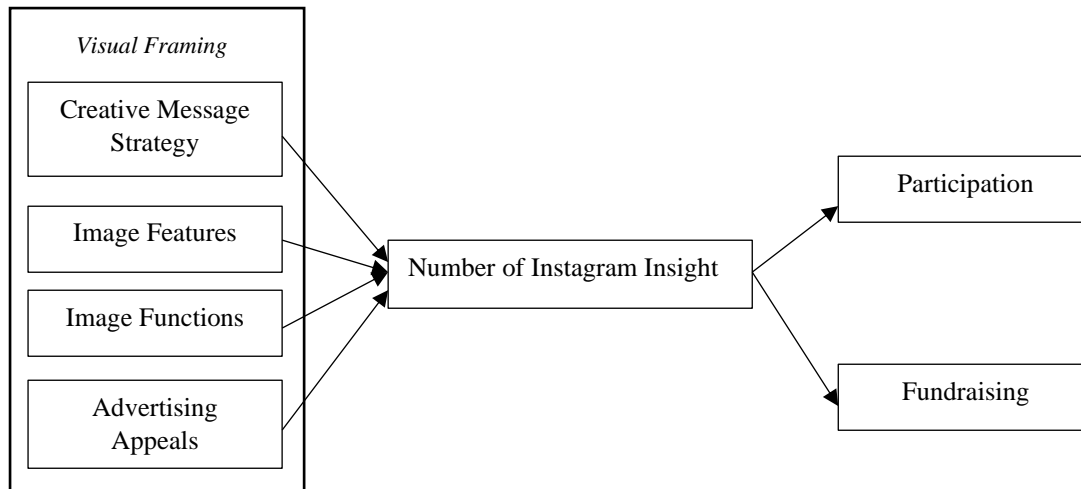


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

The present study employed qualitative method to further observe thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and the belief of the mass society. Hence, method of content analysis was employed to identify and categorize the elements of visual composition based on the framework in figure 1. List of factors listed are 1) image features, 2) image functions, 3) advertising appeals, 4) creative message strategy of visual composition and message conveyance of Instagram posts shared by start-up social enterprise named *@id.volunteer*. Coding sheet was developed to further analyse the content posts during selected events on *@id.volunteer* Instagram posts. Coding starts with six campaigns events held by *@id.volunteer* within six months: from August 2019 to January 2020. And every image posted will guide to analyse Instagram insights in respect of “likes”, “impressions”, “reach”, “shares”, “saves”, and “follows”. The number of participants for fundraising will be used to determine the success of the image post. The population from which the samples for this study were taken, on the other hand, is made up of the following photographic reports of campaign events: (a) Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #1, (b) Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #2, (c) Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #3, (d) Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #4, (e) Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #5, (f) Travel & Teach Jogja.

Table 1: Coding

Code / Figure	The Meaning
A1	Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #1
A2	Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #2
A3	Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #3
A4	Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #4
A5	Berbagi Mimpi Teman Tuli x Dengar #5
B1,B2,B3	Travel & Teach Jogja

For the purposes of the present study, content analysis was used to analyse the data collected from Instagram accounts of *@id.volunteer*. According to Moore & McCabe (2005), content analysis is the type of research by which the data collected are divided into themes and sub-themes, in order to be comparable. Content analysis has the benefit of assisting in the reduction and simplification of data while also generating results that can be assessed using quantitative approaches. Furthermore, content analysis helps researchers to arrange the qualitative data obtained in a way that meets the study's objectives.

4. Findings & Discussions

Through content analysis made based on the four elements highlighted earlier. Table 2 is the summary of results found on the monitoring of engagement for each events coded in table 1.

Table 2: Analysis of general findings

Name of Event	Image Elements	Engagement	Number of Participants	Amount of Fundraising
A1	Social, Multiple People, Text, Calls-to- action	Likes, Impressions, Saves, Follows	14	IDR 2,100,000
A2	Social, Text, Multiple people, Informing	-	16	IDR 2,400,000
A3	Social, Text, Graphic, Informing	Shares	19	IDR 2,850,000
A4	Text, Graphic, Social, Informing	Shares	18	IDR 2,700,000
A5	Social, Text, Graphic, Informing	Shares	21	IDR 3,150,000
B1	Social, Text, Graphic, Location, Multiple People, and Object	Reach	15	IDR 41,250,000
B2	Social, Text, Graphic, Location, Multiple People, and Object	Likes, Reach, Impressions, Saves, Follows	15	IDR 41,250,000
B3	Social, Text, Graphic, Location, Multiple People, and Object	Likes, Reach, Impressions, Saves, Follows	15	IDR 41,250,000

Table 2 analysis results found using the code sheet developed based on the framework constructed in identify research objectives of the present study. The present study aims to identify the availability of factors (image features, image functions, viral advertising appeals, and creative message strategy) and its engagement through Instagram insight and fundraising collected Instagram platform. The results demonstrate that each picture post uses distinct components to send a message that affects the user's participation in the campaign activities. Certain aspects of picture post were unquestionably widespread, according findings obtained. Text was the most often used picture element in the table, compared to features such as numerous people, locations, text, graphics, and objects (s). In terms of text and picture functions, the most prominent functions were informative and call-to-action. The social message segment is a creative message approach that was used in eight picture postings. Due to @id.volunteer's concentration on children's education, this study discovered just one advertising appeal: children; consequently, all picture posts pertain to children's appeals. According to the findings, the account's practical use components might lead to a high level of Instagram insight engagement. Instagram Insights also bring impact to the amount of fundraising collected each campaign events. The table shows that the high amount of fundraising is B1-B3 and the lowest amount of fundraising is A1. Mixing the elements *text + graphic + object + multiple people + informing + call-to-action + children + social* can build powerful image post for strategic communications goals on Instagram in order to achieve the high engagement of Instagram insight and profitably get users attention and care to fundraise.

4.1 Image Features

This was a qualitative study that was exploratory, contextual, and descriptive. To reach the study's goals, the researchers used visual framing theory with a multi-faceted systematic technique to analyse visual composition in @id.volunteer's Instagram image posts. This study focuses on a few key components in the image in order to better comprehend the message sent by the start-up social enterprise's Instagram image post. To analyse image features in this study used ten key categories (*Object(s), Location, Multiple People, Single Person, Text, Activity, Graphics, Food, Fashion, and Pet*). Text is the most commonly used key, appearing in eight image posts (table 4.3.1). This is because @id.volunteer gave specifics of information such as the date of the event, the location, and the registration costs in the image posts. As a result, visitors are able to focus on the material fast. This was followed by *multiple people* and *object* categories which present as a feature in the content to represent the campaign event visually, for example, first event *Berbagi mimpi teman tuli x dengar*, the event is for people to learn sign language with deaf children, therefore, id.volunteer put children and other people is having a conversation for seeking attention of users. Another key that has been used is *location* category which used in B1 (travel and teach Jogja). *id.volunteer* used an image of Borobudur Temples to visual the word of "Jogja". However, refer to previous research done by Jenkins (2018), *object(s)* were present in a number of the top post for start-ups using Instagram.

4.2 Image Functions

McNely (2012) conducted a study about brands' images use Instagram as a sharing platform and described six image functions (orienting, humanizing, interacting, place-making, showcasing, and crowdsourcing). The findings show among four image functions, *informing* and *call-to-action* are the most prevalent or salient functions for start-up social enterprise on Instagram. Based on the image post that represents *informing* function, *id.volunteer* tends to provide information about the campaign events. Compared to the previous study identified by Jenkins (2018), *informing* was identified often used as a conjunction in the start-up. The second function is *call-to-action* as a

shared image function used by *id.volunteer* in the way of explicating solicitation of a response from the user, in the form of specified actions ("register now" or "limited seat").

4.3 Advertising Appeals

This study only prescribes five appeals (*humor, animals, children, sexuality, and violence*) as essential elements in start-up social enterprise Instagram in order to understand appealing images visually to promote the campaign events on Instagram. Surprisingly, the finding show that only *children* appeal present in image post of *id.volunteer's* Instagram as all campaign events posted on Instagram is related to children's purpose. They post an image with children's emotions to deliver a message to the users to participate while other advertising appeals are not applied as not suitable for a social enterprise context.

4.4 Creative Message Strategy

The finding of the existence of creative message segments is quite surprising. Social segment is used by *id.volunteer* to target consumer's emotional needs to gain social approval or engage within a collective setting among eight posts shared with six months on each different campaign event. *id.volunteer* as start-up social enterprise create the appropriate social situation within the image post that motives the users and therefore transform what they get from the fundraising event transform into the appropriate emotion such as noticing, sociable, love or affection. social segment forces users to think about how the users must participate in the events for fundraising purposes. The approach of this study is different from the previous study, where products, services, and brand are their approach. Despite this fact, this study focuses on the campaign event for fundraising as the target approaches.

4.5 Engagement

The high number of engagement posts, concerning *likes, reaches, impressions, saves, shares, and follows*, incorporated the *call-to-action* and *informing* image functions paired with a social message segment. *Text, graphic, and multiple people* of image features, these combinations are robust features in almost all of the image posts of *@id.volunteer's* Instagram. Secondly, children appeared as frequent advertising appeals that assist other visual components to generate high engagement on Instagram insight, while accounting for just 37.5% of the entire sample. Object and location are picture characteristics that help image posts achieve high Instagram insight engagement.

Two additional key findings back up the notion that start-up social enterprises are largely text or information-based. First, frequency data indicated that informing and call-to-action were the most common picture functions among the four options. The relationship between text, graphic, multiple people, informing, call-to-action, and social was indeed a common combination that helped *@id.volunteer's* image post achieve high engagement on Instagram insight in terms of likes, reaches, impressions, follows, shares, and saves, according to the analysis.

4.6 Instagram insight and fundraising obtained

The most number of participants are on the event namely (*berbagi mimpi teman tuli x dengar #5*) it takes the fourth place in four posts that received high levels of reach engagement. On other sides, the lowest participants take over the top four posts of high engagement of likes, impressions, saves, follows, and shares. The campaign event on (*berbagi mimpi teman tuli x dengar #1*), which was the first new campaign event from *id.volunteer* within six months from August until January 2020. The conclusion is perplexing because the number of engagements is unrelated to the number of

participants or the amount of money raised. Despite the in-depth analysis of the image posts shows A1, the first post of a new fundraising campaign that the excitement of users to post or share on Instagram is influencing to achieve engagement is the first post of a new campaign for fundraising that the excitement of users to post or share on Instagram is influencing to achieve engagement. As a result, A1 event has access to a considerable amount of Instagram data. The researcher discovered an intriguing and one-of-a-kind aspect of the image post of travel and teaching in Jogja. That image post earned high engagement of likes, impressions, reaches, saves, and follows except shares. This campaign events are the last low number of participants. Event *B1-B3* utilized a unique feature called promote a post from Instagram. Promote a post help business account to be approachable among users on Instagram. The owner's Instagram account must pay to Instagram to advertise the post for a public that out of followers of the account itself. *@id.volunteer* ruined a promote a post for *travel & teach Jogja* during that time, and it resulted in a great number of Instagram insight in respect of *impressions, reaches, likes, saves, follows, and shares*. Unfortunately, *shares* terms are not shown in Instagram insight by reason of the method of sharing a post is different from the usual post.

Fundrising, however shows that event A1 - A5 are the identical campaign events that have continuously within six months with the same fees of registration. On the other side, B1-B3 is a unique campaign event that cost more expensive fees for registration, and the fundraising successfully achieved more than forty million rupiahs. Thus, if comparing each other about the amount of fundraising, A5 gains the highest amount of fundraising collected that correlate with the high engagement of *shares* on Instagram insight.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Finally, photographs portray communication experts as a strong instrument for conveying appealing and convincing information, but their reach is ultimately limited. Instagram is one of several social media networks that serves as an image-centric and image-driven platform for businesses and brands to promote or advertise. Instagram may be found to be extremely useful for a start-up social company to share not only information but also to draw user attention and concern about current social issues. This study strongly suggests that Instagram be regarded as a marketing tool for businesses, particularly for social enterprises, because Instagram allows marketers to create engaging and customised content through creativity and innovation. The degree of interaction is the most essential indicator for gauging Instagram's progress. Other users' likes, comments, and follow-up might be viewed as engagement. Nonetheless, Instagram insight is available to cover a broader range of interaction metrics, such as reach, impressions, saves, shares, and followers. The goal of the Instagram insight function is to increase engagement. To do so, a business or social enterprise must not only understand the Instagram environment, but also discover the most successful ways to connect with people. This study discovered that some characteristics of picture posts were certainly prevalent by using a content analysis to deconstruct eight image posts gathered from the Instagram accounts of a start-up social company named *@id.volunteer* throughout 2019. Although diverse combinations of these elements were recognised, text was the most noticeable picture aspect when compared to features such as many persons, locations, text, graphics, and object(s). The most prevalent image functions and social of the most recent message segment, according to this survey, were informative and call-to-action. However, this investigation discovered just one advertising appeal: children, because to *@id.volunteer's* concentration on children's education; consequently, all picture postings are related to children's appeals. However, impressions, reach, follow, and share are the terms to measure the impactful image post. Besides, this study also found new equipment of Instagram that is helpful for advertising purposes. That is *promote a post*. New equipment bring significant

progress for *@id.volunteer* to promote image post and get broader users, but *@id.volunteer* ought to pay to Instagram, then Instagram will monitor the image post to other users. In summary revealed that mixing the elements *text + graphic + object + multiple people + informing + call-to-action + children + social* and using *promote a post*, start-up social enterprise has a unique opportunity to not only build what the kind of powerful image post for strategic communications goals on Instagram, but also to achieve the high engagement of Instagram insight and profitably get users attention and care to fundraise for those social goals.

Future study might look at the function, features, advertising appeals, and creative messaging techniques for another characteristic listed before. The delicate phenomena of Instagram video offer another avenue for future investigation. Videos are growing more popular on the app, and future study will focus on how and whether start-ups and companies use this medium to advertise themselves and their products or services. Finally, the concentration of this analysis on organic photos is a strength of this work that presents itself as a future research possibility. Future researchers also able to consider on brands promotion on Instagram to broadcast sponsored advertising to their target consumers specifically for non-profit organisation.

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Digital documentation of Kendi for heritage preservation via photogrammetry technology: governing digital societies in Malaysia

Siti Zuliana Salleh^a, Muhammad Zuhdi Ahmad^a, Geneviève Gamache^b and A.R.

Bushroa^{a,*}

^a Centre of Advanced Manufacturing and Material Processing (AMMP), Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^b Visual Arts Program, Office of the Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Email: bushroa@um.edu.my

Abstract

The idea to protect and preserve cultural heritage via digitization technology has been growing rapidly due to the emergence of technology particularly in computer and image processing analysis. This topic becomes a global issue that led to various approaches in digitizing cultural heritage. In Malaysia, the Museum of Asian Art, Universiti Malaya has the largest Kendi collection in the world. However, limited information regarding Kendi has been collected and shared globally. This situation becomes rampant especially during the Covid-19 pandemic since many public places are closed including museums. Hence, this research aims to document the Kendi digitally as a part of the digital dissemination goal. Complete guidelines and frameworks in digitizing Kendi via photogrammetry are presented in this paper. The 3D model is reconstructed using Meshroom software where the input of 2D images is acquired using a digital camera. Finally, the 3D model of Kendi is edited for a realistic model in Blender software. The framework used in this research is easy to follow and the reconstructed 3D model is high-quality which is suitable for further applications. This research also highlighted several hindrances and limitations as additional guidance for digital curators and amateur consideration in digitizing cultural heritage.

Keywords: digital documentation, photogrammetry, Kendi, heritage preservation.

1. Introduction

A museum is a facility that houses extensive collections, exhibits, research, education, and dissemination of human history as well as cultural heritage (Wang et al., 2021). In Malaysia, there are 131 museums runs by various administrations (Abdul Aziz et al., 2020). The presence of a museum is important in sharing the cultural properties of a group or community regardless of a country's history and its information with the public, locals, and outsiders (Tham et al., 2020). Nowadays, museum resource management is focusing on the development towards sustainable cultural heritage which also can bring benefits for the economic sector (Ser, 2020). One of the ways is the creation of digital cultural heritage, which can disseminate information while also attracting users to interact and immerse themselves in virtual environment (Loaiza Carvajal et al., 2020).

The growing approaches of digitization technology indicate it has a role in protecting and preserving cultural heritage (Cao et al., 2018). Several museums, including the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum, Art Gallery and the Terengganu State Virtual Museum, have used digitization technologies to digitize their collections. In Malaysia, the current digital level is the creation of a virtual 360-degree tour to experience the galleries. Meanwhile, museums in Italy, America, and France, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have advanced their digitization applications to

the next level. This application is beneficial with the current Covid-19 pandemic which restricts many physical social interactions such as exhibitions for knowledge and information sharing (Schwarz et al., 2020). Besides that, this pandemic crisis has also negatively affected funding resources from stakeholders and the government (Sigala, 2020). Hence, the digital structural transformation should be alternative way to restore the fundings.

Although the digitization applications have been started in Malaysia, still only a few applications have been reported. This reflects a lack of exposure to digitization technology among museum and related institution staff. Currently, cultural heritage digitization via 3D model reconstruction provides a variety of digital cultural heritage applications. Pang et al. (2014) used 3D scanning to digitize the Mah Meri tribe for physical reproduction. However, due to the 3D scanner costs up to MYR 100K, this method necessitates a large budget. According to the literature, the introduction of image-based 3D reconstruction methods via photogrammetry technology from uncalibrated 2D photographic images helps amateurs in creating the 3D models effectively (Rahaman and Champion, 2019). The advancement and low cost of hardware and image processing software have made 3D reconstruction procedures easier (de Paolis et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, museum institutions particularly in Malaysia face a wall when it comes to digital development. The lack of guidelines and framework, in particular, makes it difficult for novice users to generate 3D reconstruction models. Hence, the aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive guideline and framework with highlights such barriers in digitizing, significant findings, and also future outlook in Malaysia. This study also aims to promote Kendi, an ancient vessel held by the Museum of Asian Art at Universiti Malaya, through digitization technology. This research output will be Malaysia's first digital Kendi model reconstruction, which contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural heritage.

2. Methodology

2.1 Selected artifact Kendi sample

In this research, an important Sawakhalok ware Kendi from Thailand from the 15th century was selected from the Museum of Asian Art, Universiti Malaya (Khoo and Rooney, 1991). This Kendi is decorated with a black underglaze of vegetal tendrils and leaves. This Kendi has a flattened globular body, a narrow neck, mammiform spout, and a carved ring on the foot. The special and interesting features of this Kendi are the metal nipple at the spout and the metal flange at the neck.

2.2 Preparation for digitization via photogrammetry technology

The preparation starts with the image acquisition process. At first, the digital camera NIKON D1500 was selected for image acquisition. The main goal of this step is to acquire sharp enough 2D images without motion blur and depth blur. The level of details or accuracy of 3D models depends on this acquire image step (Chiabrande et al., 2019). Hence, the settings for the camera such as the shutter speed should be sufficiently fast to avoid motion blur, high *f-number* to reduce the aperture for a large depth of field, and reducing the ISO speed (ie camera sensor's sensitivity to light) to minimize the noise. The settings of camera NIKON D1500 used in this research are F-stop with f/13, exposure time at 1/400 sec, and ISO speed of ISO-500. The camera specifications are determined after undergoing several preliminary tests to obtain good quality of 2D photographic Kendi images. The 2D images are saved in the .JPG file format.

The second step is the selection of hardware and software for image processing. The selection of hardware such as random-access memory (RAM), central processing unit (CPU), and storage of computers are dependable on the selected image processing software. In this research, the aim is

to utilize structure to motion (SfM) and free-and-open-source software (FOSS) available in reconstructing the 3D model of Kendi. For instance, Meshlab, Regard3D, Visual SfM, and COLMAP are FOSS while commercial software such as Agisoft’s Metashape and RealityCapture are SfM-based software that are commonly used (Rahaman and Champion, 2019). Previously in our preliminary research, Mohd Fazidi (2020) digitized a 15th century Ming Dynasty Kendi using Meshlab and Blender, but his result showed that the reconstructed 3D model is highly defective (Mohd Fazidi, 2020). Hence, among the available FOSS, Meshroom and Blender are selected because both software has good combinations that enabling the creation of a realistic 3D model according to the literature (Kumar Karmacharya et al., 2019). These two softwares are semi-automatic softwares where default settings could be selected. Furthermore, moderate computer performance required to generate the 3D model is useful for amateur users. The main requirements to run Meshroom are NVIDIA CUDA, that enables graphics processing unit (GPU) with the minimum ram of 8GB. For faster reconstruction time, supportive hardware such CPU of i7/Ryzen 7 or better, 32GB+ ram, HDD/SSD 20GB+ and NVIDIA GTX1070+ are recommended. In this research, due to the budget constraint, Acer nitro 5 that executes Windows 10 with Intel(R) Core (TM) i5-7300HQ CPU @ 2.50GHz, 8GB ram is used. Hence, it is expected that slower image processing will be experienced since lower CPU capability is utilized.

2.3 Proposed digitization workflow via photogrammetry technology

A general flowchart to create a 3D reconstruction model based on Meshroom and Blender is illustrated in Figure 1. The flowchart represents these two FOSS that is basically Structure from Motion (SfM)-based 3D reconstruction software where six main steps are required to produce the 3D reconstruction models (Rahaman and Champion, 2019). **Step 1** to **Step 5** can be done using Meshroom and lastly, **Step 6** in Blender.

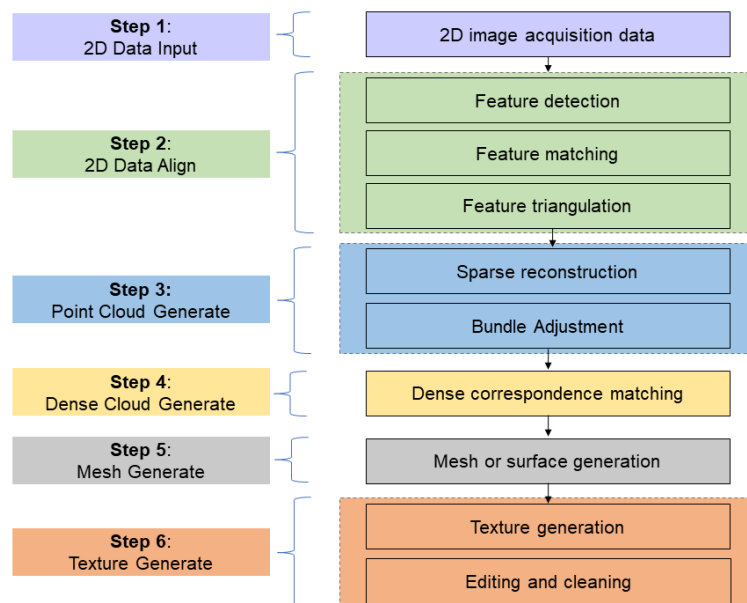


Figure 1: Structure from Motion (SfM) flowchart for 3D reconstruction model with its respective brief description.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 3D reconstruction model results

Visualization of acquiring 3D model will be elaborated Figure 2. The total 2D photographic images of Kendi acquired are 242 images which are sufficient to generate good model. Some of them are shown in Figure 2 (a). In previous Figure 1, ‘**Step 1**: 2D data input’, the 2D images data input is added, and a simple graphic user interface (GUI) of Meshroom showed the status of the

images. The green signal on each photo indicates that the photos are good enough to be the input for image processing in Meshroom software. Corrections in contrast and brightness are necessary if the object's color is dissimilar to each other (Barszcz et al., 2021).

After 2D images are loaded in Meshroom, the angle and position of the camera in one loop are obtained as shown in Figure 2 (b). In previous Figure 1, 'Step 2: 2D data align' can identify the quality of the 3D reconstruction model where a complete image is considered taken when all positions of the camera are detected. Based on Figure 2 (b), it can be assumed that sufficient and overlap images are acquired to proceed with the image alignment. From these uncalibrated images, Meshroom determined the geometric properties for comparison in order to detect feature and reference points or matching pixels across the collection of the 2D photographic images before feature triangulation is started.

Subsequently, in 'Step 3: Point Cloud Generate', the sparse point cloud is formed as shown in Figure 2 (c). After that, the dense cloud generation of 'Step 4: Dense Cloud Generate' can be easily formed. This can be saved as a dense cloud file format such as .ply or .pcd. For 'Step 5: Mesh Generate', the mesh or surface is generated before the texture generation in 'Step 6: Texture Generate' using the Meshroom. Figure 2 (d) and (e) represents the output 3D model reconstruction which takes a few hours to complete. At this stage, as can be observed, there are still some noises around the 3D Kendi model.

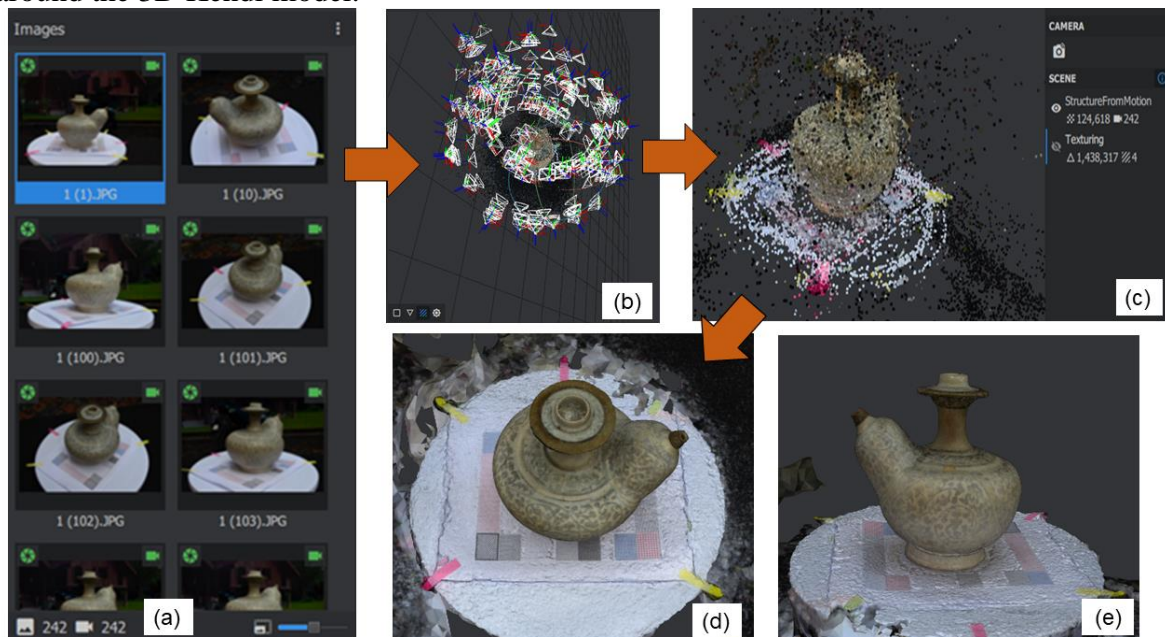


Figure 2: Visualization of proposed workflow for digitization of Kendi in Meshroom (Step 1 – 5)

To complete the procedure of acquiring a 3D model, the untextured model with noise is imported to the Blender in .obj file format. The straightforward GUI of Blender easily assists the amateur user to use the editing mode to clean up the vertices of noise as shown in Figure 3 (a-d). After that, the texturing process on a cleaned 3D model can result in a realistic model as shown in Figure 3 (f). Texturing process can also be supported with additional editing such as adding lighting to the model.

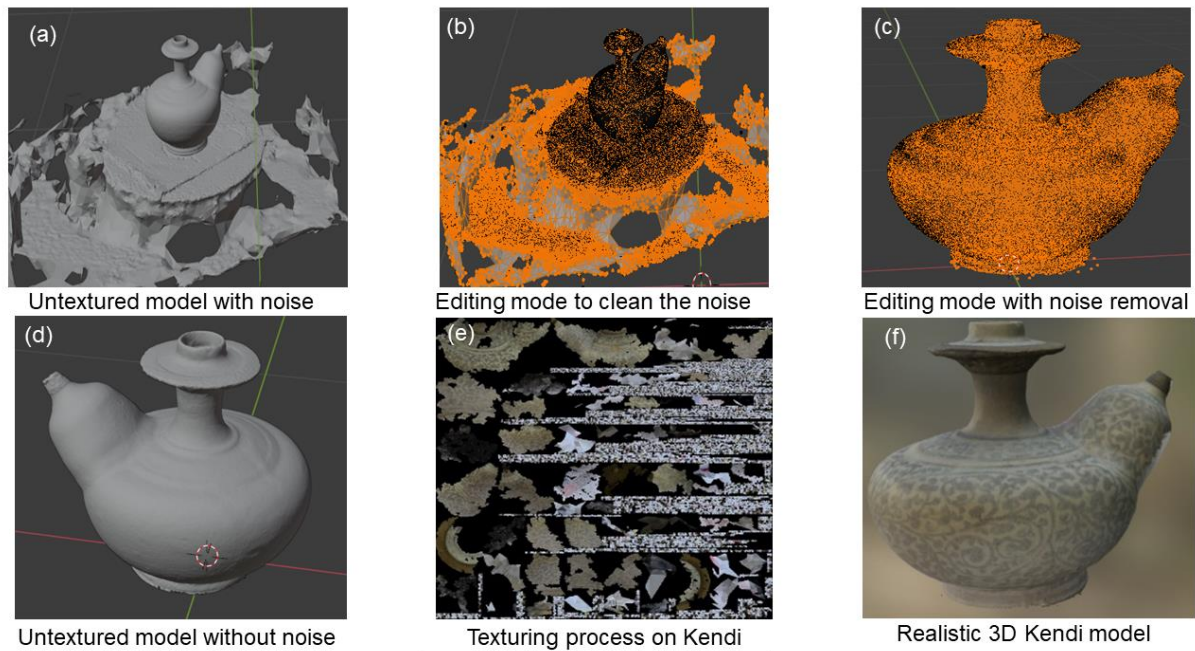


Figure 3: Editing processes in Blender

Figure 4 (a-b) shows the final realistic 3D reconstructed Kendi model of the current Thailand Sawakhalok Kendi compared with the previous work done by Mohd Fazidi (2020) on digitizing the 15th century Ming Dynasty Kendi from China, Figure 4 (c-d). The final 3D model of Thailand Sawakhalok Kendi (Figure 4 (b)) is clean and the quality with its physical Kendi is comparable. However, the 15th century Ming Dynasty Kendi as reconstructed by Meshlab software and textured in Blender showed defects particularly at the inlet and outlet spout areas which are visually shown in Figure 4 (d). The defective model is related to the insufficient high-quality 2D images due to inconsistent background color, unclear ground reference, and also the camera settings (Mohd Fazidi, 2020). This indicates that the utilization of FOSS is able to produce a high-quality 3D model, but proper preparations started with the image acquisition as explained in this research must be followed. Thus, this paper can encourage amateurs from museum institutions, particularly from Malaysia to digitize their cultural heritage collection with more confidence. Besides, the high-quality 3D models have numerous applications in the virtual world that can increase the research in archaeological and historical research (Sapirstein, 2018).

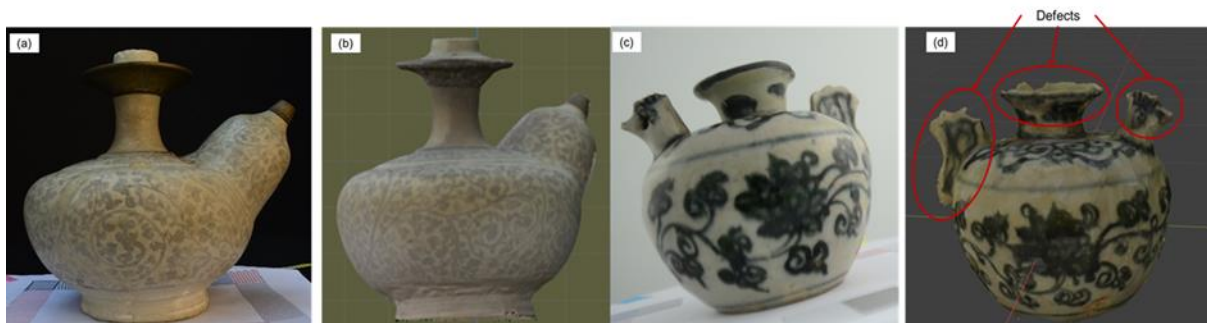


Figure 4: A comparison between the physical image (a and c) of Sawakhalok ware Kendi and 15th century of Ming Dynasty Kendi, respectively with the reconstructed 3D model (b and d) of Sawakhalok ware Kendi and 15th century of Ming Dynasty Kendi (Mohd Fazidi, 2020), respectively

3.2 Limitation and challenge in digitizing the Kendi

The guideline and frameworks reported in this research are limited to relatively small and portable artifacts. A high-performance computer or laptop should be used when more 2D photographic

images are required. This is again to avoid long-processing periods and to prevent a computer from crash due to low memory management.

The abovementioned guideline and framework are dedicated to the digitization process. However, in order to create a sustainable cultural heritage, additional guidelines are required. For instance, data management. This is about managing the recording datasets with a cloud-based information system. It is to ensure that the data is useful for a short-term accessibility and for a long-term preservability. Besides, data management must be able to retain the digitization project in order to attract fundable resources.

The other limitation and challenges are the integration creativity use and reuse of the digital representations of cultural heritage as social acceptance as well as engagement. These are important for the sustainability of heritage. For instance, the digital cultural heritage must be valued (Di Pietro et al., 2018) by including communities being part of heritage projects (Caust and Vecco, 2017), increase its use and visualization in everyday experiences (Lupo, 2007), and also enhancing its economic value (Awang et al., 2013). The integration uses and reuse of 3D model of Kendi in gaming, movie or drama productions, virtual and augmented reality might be able to attract a wide audience, but the policy and copyright issues including the viability of digital technologies when it comes to the experience of heritage (Reilly, 2015) might be imposing problems to overcome. Therefore, continuous research with specific collections, contexts, and audiences is necessary to establish specific experiences for the valorization of heritage through digitization to be assessed.

Furthermore, data distribution and fruition of the digitization project must be considered where it must be aligned with the project objectives. An effective strategy must be able to bring profit and create a sustainable digitization strategy that can support the resilience of museum institutions. Besides that, a successful strategy can fulfill museum's roles as educational institutions via digital platforms.

3.3 Outlook of digital documentation during and post Covid-19 situation

This research shows that the flowchart is easy to follow but the workability of the realistic 3D model reconstruction must strictly follow the abovementioned guidelines. The workable flow in digitizing artifacts can be used further for collecting information purposes. The comparison with various digital artifacts globally can identify and determine the imitate and original artifacts. This can be done by integrating artificial intelligence which can automatically classify the artifacts accurately (Salma and Eskak, 2020). Furthermore, the combination of the collected digital data with material characterizations can identify the provenance of artifacts. The dissemination of up-to-date information of artifacts is a strategic way to sustain the presence of museums. Besides, sharing in terms of information and knowledge of cultural heritage in the digital world continues to be more preferable with the ongoing Covid-19 situation. A concerted effort with adequate contextualization on digital documentation in cultural heritage can be a meaningful, and lifelong learning method during and post Covid-19 situation. The current 360° functions in the e-museum must be updated with a full view from all angles as applied in virtual and augmented reality applications. Further development in digital documentation literally can be a prerequisite preparation for any pandemic in the future. The benefit of this digitization transformation also can be skills that can lead to job flexibility and employment mobility.

4. Conclusion

The digitization process of Kendi, an ancient vessel is presented in this research. This research outlined the important guidelines and framework for digital heritage. The finding from this research indicates that FOSS can be used to digitize cultural heritage. The easy procedure and low-cost equipment are expected to encourage amateur users in digitizing cultural heritage. This new direction in digital dissemination conceptual development is inevitably needed as the new trend of a solution to tightly bound within society in Malaysia. The challenges in this research are the requirements of high-performance computer equipped with RAM, GPU and large storage capacity. Without these elements, long time is required to digitize the kendi during the image processing procedure. The elaboration is limited to the basic 3D model reconstruction only. In order to create full virtual environments, further intensive guidelines are required. A current National Act Policy 2005, needs to be revised to support the digitization of Malaysia cultural heritage to be in the same par with the international standard. With the current Covid-19 pandemic, the integrated cultural heritage with technology is witnessing more functional and beneficial for society, and the economy in the nearest future. Hence, the utilization of digitization technology should be one of the main parts in museum to digitize their collections.

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The Effects Of An Online Brief Mindfulness Activities Training On The Psychological Functioning Of Medical Officers: A Pilot Study

Evelyn Ngui Ailing^a, Azizah Othman^{b*}, Azidah Abdul Kadir^c, Fadzlin Ahmadon^d, Loh Ken Joey^e

^aUniversiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia

^bUniversiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia
Email: azeedah@usm.my

^cUniversiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia

^dUniversiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

^eUniversiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia

Abstract

Empirical evidence suggest that psychological interventions can be successfully delivered online. Medical officers are under high levels of stress as the main frontliners managing the COVID-19 pandemic alongside their day-to-day roles, family obligations, and research work. This study aimed to examine whether a brief mindfulness activities training for medical officers improve outcomes for depression, anxiety, stress and mindfulness. A randomized, controlled trial (RCT) was conducted at Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia where participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups of (1) low frequency intervention group (daily session over a week), (2) medium frequency intervention group (daily session over two weeks), (3) high frequency intervention group (daily session over three weeks) or (4) the control group. Intervention was conducted via a Google Classroom platform, with mindfulness materials such as Mindful Breathing, Mindful Exploration, and Mindful Eating uploaded weekly. Automated daily reminders were provided to reduce attrition rates. Outcome measures included the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS). Of the 22 participants, an increase in mindfulness, as measured by the MAAS, was found in the intervention group ($p = 0.002$). There was also a reduction in depression levels ($p = 0.01$) as measured by the DASS-21. The increase in mindfulness was observed in the low frequency and high frequency group, while the reduction of depression levels could not be observed between frequency groups. Participants self-reported increased relaxation and stress reduction. This study provides insights into the feasibility and acceptability of an online, brief mindfulness activities training for medical officers. Findings will inform the future design and implementation of larger studies.

Keywords: online mindfulness interventions; medical officers; frequency; mindfulness; psychological wellbeing

1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) remains to show no signs of stopping, and as of 6th March 2021, registered more than 110 million cases with the death toll exceeding 2 million (World Health Organization, 2021). In Malaysia alone, more than 310 thousand cases have been confirmed from the latest wave since October 2020 (World Health Organization, 2021). Preliminary literature depicts a worrying trend of increased workload, physical exhaustion, isolation, stigmatization, trauma, and a high risk of stress or burnout amongst medical officers (Buselli et al., 2021). The paper alluded that the situation was contributed by a lack of information available about the virus, high transmission rates, fears of exposing family

members to the virus, and emotional strain from conveying to surviving family members the death of COVID-19 cases. As such, the prevalence for common mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were three to five times higher in medical officers compared to those who are unaffected by the pandemic (Cénat et al., 2021). Precautionary measures taken to manage the pandemic has deemed that psychological interventions or support for this population had to be conducted without physical contact, were flexible in nature, and brief to accommodate medical officers' other commitments. Studies show promise for mindfulness interventions for clinical and non-clinical populations for psychological improvements and wellbeing (Linardon, 2019), particularly in areas of depression and anxiety (Goldberg, et al., 2018; Goyal, et al., 2014; Khoury, et al., 2013). This paper presents the implementation of a brief mindfulness activities training delivered via an online platform to improve the wellbeing of medical officers in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a plethora of research evidencing enhanced mindfulness and improved psychological outcomes from brief mindfulness interventions or training. Firstly, there is a lack of studies investigating the effects of mindfulness interventions or training delivered via an online platform in Malaysia. Additionally, limited findings are available on the association between therapeutic dose and study effects. Lastly, the distress from the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to be explored amongst the medical officers. Designing an intervention program that is feasible, convenient, acceptable, and efficient for frontliners can provide a strong impact that translates into better management of the international pandemic crisis.

This study aims to investigate the effect of mindfulness activities training conducted via online platform on psychological functioning of medical officers. Specifically, research questions are: (RQ1) Is it feasible to deliver a mindfulness activities training on an online platform? (RQ2) What are the differences in the effects of mindfulness activities training on the participants' level of depression, anxiety, stress, and mindfulness before and after the training? (RQ3) What are the differences in the effects of the mindfulness activities training when they are performed at different frequencies and length of period?

2. Literature Review

As the efficacy of mindfulness became prominent through multiple studies over the years, the application of the concept gained popularity for the management of physical and psychological issues. Although it may be argued that humanistic approaches such as the Rogerian therapy (Rogers, 1961) and existential therapy (Perls & Perls, 1973) consisted of present-oriented components promoting fullness in life, mindfulness-centered approaches were not practiced until the late 1990s. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are largely represented by Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, or MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) which indirectly contributed to the development of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, or MBCT (Segal et al., 2002). Such interventions train individuals to focus on internal experiences such as emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations, and subsequently observe them with a nonjudgmental manner without the intention to resist or change them. By building upon conceptualizations of the mindfulness concepts by earlier advocates (Baer et al., 2004; Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1995), MBIs result in improved psychological wellbeing such as reduced affective states, modified biological reactions to stress, were comparable or better than alternate treatment therapies, and maintained beneficial effects at follow-up periods (Blanck et al., 2018; Goldberg et al., 2018; Goyal et al., 2014; Gu et al., 2015; Lindsay, Young, et al., 2018; Taren et al., 2015).

Medical officers are extensively understood to face challenges in the form of academic challenges and workplace training that extends up to 5 or 6 years. The demands have resulted in a high prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among medical officers in Malaysia especially during their medical training (Yusoff et al., 2013) and a distress prevalence that doubled in their postgraduate studies (Yusoff & Rahim, 2010). The Malaysian Medical Council Code of Professional Conduct 2019 highlights the value of self-care to provide services of the highest standards in the Physician's Pledge (Malaysian Medical Council, 2019). However, in the midst of such education and career challenges medical officers may prefer to spend their limited time for priorities perceived to be more pressing. A plethora of literature is emerging that unilaterally suggests that medical officers are increasingly stressed with reduced psychological wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic (Abdulah & Musa, 2020; Elbay et al., 2020; Linzer et al., 2021; Priede et al., 2021). This was contributed by increased working hours, high exposure to COVID-19 suspected or diagnosed patients, poor support or supervision, and perceived incompetence (Abdulah & Musa, 2020; Elbay et al., 2020; Linzer et al., 2021). As a result, higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders, and somatic symptoms were reported amongst the population with varying numbers of reported positive COVID-19 cases in their countries (Arafa et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

Studies implementing mindfulness interventions for medical officers or students observed reduced levels of distress, depression, and anxiety despite minor inconsistencies (Daya & Hearn, 2018). Mindfulness was perceived as an intervention to improve coping skills for stress and demands in medical school while increasing self-care activities (Greeson, et al., 2015). Additionally, Chmielewski et al. (2021) postulated that mindfulness could also contribute to better patient care in routine work through greater creativity in their diagnosis and treatment. This is likely as dispositional mindfulness and self-care was associated with lower levels of distress (Slonim, et al., 2015), leading to greater clarity in evidence-based treatment and patient-centered care (Croskerry, 2018; Malinowski & Lim, 2015).

Psychotherapeutic interventions are increasingly being conducted online simultaneously with the rapid development of information technologies, with positive responses to online mindfulness activities. Wahbeh, Svalina, & Oken (2014) corroboratively found that respondents preferred online mindfulness interventions over face-to-face sessions. Several advantages of this delivery include convenience, cost-efficiency, accessible for hard-to-reach communities, availability (time-efficiency), and the lack of necessity for guidance from a professional (Jayawardene, Lohrmann, Erbe, & Torabi, 2017; McDonald, Eccles, Fallahkhair, & Critchley, 2020; Spijkerman, Pots, & Bohlmeijer, 2016).

The available literature identified to apply online mindfulness interventions had varying intervention periods. Most of the studies maintained less than an 8-week period for active intervention (Cavanagh, et al., 2013; Dowd, et al., 2015; Krusche, Cyhlarova, & Williams, 2013; O'Driscoll, Byrne, Lambert, & Sahn, 2019). This was perceived as an apt length of delivering MBIs to medical officers as high levels of attrition may result when asked to commit to an 8-week MBI such as the MBSR program. Meta-analyses by Howarth, Smith, Perkins-Porras, and Ussher (2019) and Schumer, Lindsay, and Creswell (2018) explained that brief mindfulness training had positive effects on stress, mindfulness and negative affectivity and could be designed for a heterogeneous group of users. Moore et al. (2020) observed positive outcomes from a 4-week online mindfulness training program with maintained effects upon follow-up. This was consistent with Yusoff's meta-analysis (2014)

finding that interventions for medical students had increasing beneficial effects before a period of 8 weeks.

3. Methods

A randomized, controlled trial was conducted over the period of six months at the Health Campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia. The Health Campus is located at Kubang Kerian, Kelantan at the northern part of Peninsula Malaysia. The study involved testing the feasibility and effects of selected mindfulness activities training via an online platform on mindfulness, depression, anxiety, and stress of medical officers. The sample size was 22 participants, recruited through a convenience sampling method. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the 4 groups of (1) low frequency intervention group (daily sessions over a week), (2) medium frequency intervention group (daily sessions over two weeks), (3) high frequency intervention group (daily sessions over three weeks) or (4) the control group. Participants were accessed pre-intervention (Time 1) and post-intervention (Time 2). As such, the independent variables were: time (2 levels) and condition (4 levels). The dependent variables of this study were: mindfulness, depression, anxiety, and stress.

All medical officers who were currently posted at Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia, who were able and willing to join the online platform were enrolled into the study. Those who did not pass the screening measurements (with scores below 4 or exceeding 20 in the PHQ-9) were excluded from the study ($n = 35$). 9 declined to participate, and 3 participants withdrew during the course of the intervention due to personal reasons. A total of 22 participants joined the study (15 in the intervention groups, 7 in the control group). Most were in their early thirties ($n = 22$), with more females ($n = 16, 72.7\%$) compared to males in all groups. The sample was predominantly of the Malay race ($n = 17, 77.3\%$), Muslim religion ($n = 17, 77.3\%$), and of the Family Medicine program specialization ($n = 7, 31.8\%$). In terms of psychological wellbeing at pre-intervention levels, the MAAS score was evenly distributed while the DASS-21 indicated depression, anxiety, and stress levels across mild to severe ranges.

Mindfulness was measured by the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003), a 15-item self-report scale to measure level of attention and awareness to the present moment experience which are considered to be foundations of mindfulness. It has a polytomous response format on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“almost always”) to 6 (“almost never”). The total scores will be summed and averaged to give an overall score ranging from 1 to 6. Higher averaged scores reflected higher dispositional mindfulness. In the present study, the internal consistency was excellent across pre-intervention ($\alpha = .95$) and post-intervention ($\alpha = .94$).

Psychological states were measured by the 21-item Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) to screen for symptoms of depression, anxiety, and/or stress that provides indication of stress-related outcomes. This scale has a strong correlation with General Health Questionnaires (GHQ) scale. Each item has a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (“does not apply to me”) to 3 (“applies to me very much or most of the time”). Each subscale’s score is the doubled sum of its seven items. Greater scores, measured separately, indicate higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. In the present study, the DASS-21 scores obtained showed good internal consistency at pre-intervention ($\alpha = .85$) and post-intervention ($\alpha = .81$).

Five mindfulness exercises were selected in this research: deep breathing and grounding,

mindful breathing, mindful exploration, mindful eating, and mindful walking. The scripts and audio-recordings were produced using simple English instructions and limited within 10 minutes in accordance with intentions to make the interventions compatible with a busy daily schedule. The materials were validated by a local mindfulness study conducted on medical students (Loh, 2020). The program structure can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Structure of the intervention program.

Week	Content
1	Introduction to weekly structure Activity 1: Deep Breathing & Grounding Activity 2: Mindful Breathing Activity 3: Mindful Exploration Complete Mindful Logbook
2	Introduction to weekly structure Activity 1: Deep Breathing & Grounding Activity 2: Mindful Breathing Activity 3: Mindful Eating Complete Mindful Logbook
3	Introduction to weekly structure Activity 1: Deep Breathing & Grounding Activity 2: Mindful Breathing Activity 3: Mindful Walking Complete Mindful Logbook

Data collected was entered and analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS), version 27.0, Mac OS version. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequency, mean, percentage of the data, and demographic information. The comparison of normally distributed continuous variables between the intervention and control groups was performed using independent samples t-test. A P-value of less than 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. MANOVA was adopted to test the association among between-group variables and outcome measures

4. Results

There was a pattern of significant reduction in depression, $t(18) = 2.87, p = .01$, with a large effect size of $d = .66$ following the mindfulness intervention across all conditions. The results are presented in Table 2. However, when further tests were conducted using MANOVA, the data did not achieve significance when observing among the low, medium, and high intervention groups. In response to RQ2, depression was significantly reduced following the online mindfulness activities training

Table 2: Paired t-test statistics of primary outcome analyses across time (intervention and control groups).

Outcome	Mean Difference	SE	95% Confidence Interval		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Effect Size (<i>d</i>)
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
Mindfulness	-.40	.26	-.96	.16	-1.51	18	.15	-.35
Depression	4.21	1.46	1.13	7.29	2.87	18	.01*	.66
Anxiety	1.79	1.29	-.92	4.49	1.39	18	.18	.32
Stress	2.84	1.77	-.87	6.55	1.61	18	.13	.37

Note. SE=Standard Error of Mean

*Statistical significance was compared using Bonferroni-corrected alpha value of 0.0125

When compared between intervention and control groups, results from the MANOVA in Table 3 indicated that there were significant differences after preliminary assumption testing. Statistically significant differences were noted between the three intervention groups and the control group on the mindfulness variable at post-intervention level, $F(3, 15) = 8.30, p = .002$; Wilks' Lambda = .34; partial eta squared = .62. This was compared using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .0125. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that both the low and high intervention groups reported significantly higher levels of mindfulness respectively at the post-intervention time in comparison with the control group (low: $M = 4.12$ to 5.00 ; high: $M = 3.95$ to 4.96). In response to RQ3, mindfulness levels were significantly higher in as little as 7-days' intervention.

Table 3: MANOVA results for mindfulness (MAAS) across group (low, medium, high intervention; control) and time (pre, post).

Time	Group	Mean	95% Confidence Interval		df	F	p ²	Partial Eta Squared
		(SE)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
Pre	Low	4.12 (.50)	3.05	5.19	3	.49	.70	.09
	Medium	3.22 (.65)	1.85	4.60				
	High	3.95 (.50)	2.88	5.01				
	Control	4.09 (.46)	3.12	5.06				
Post	Low	5.00* (.29)	4.39	5.61	3	8.30	.002*	.63
	Medium	3.11 (.37)	2.33	3.90				
	High	4.96* (.29)	4.35	.57				
	Control	3.83 (.26)	3.27	4.39				

Note. SE=Standard Error of Mean

²Statistical Significance was compared using Bonferroni-corrected alpha value of .0125

Contrary to the expectation, scores for anxiety and stress did not achieve significance despite indicating a general pattern of improvement in scores across groups.

Bivariate Spearman's rank correlations were conducted between pre- and post-intervention scores of mindfulness, depression, anxiety, and stress using the MAAS and DASS-21 scores (Table 4). At the post-intervention time, several significant, strong relationships were found in the intervention groups. There were strong, negative correlations between mindfulness and depression ($r = -.50$) and between mindfulness and stress ($r = -.68$). High levels of mindfulness were associated with lower levels of depression and stress. Anxiety also strongly correlated with depression ($r = .60$) as well as stress ($r = .48$).

Table 4: Correlations between post-intervention scores of each outcome variables.

Scale	1	2	3	4
1. Mindfulness	-	-.502*	-.428	-.684**
2. Depression		-	.603**	.394
3. Anxiety			-	.477*
4. Stress				-

Note. Spearman's rank correlation coefficients for outcome variables.

* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

5. Discussion

The pilot study examined the effects of online mindfulness activities training on the effects of mindfulness, depression, anxiety, and stress among medical officers. The findings from this study suggested that in response to RQ1, significant results could be attained from the online delivery of mindfulness activities training. Our main findings revealed that there was a significant main effect of the intervention on depression across pre- and post-intervention timelines. Another finding was that there was a pattern of increased mindfulness scores from pre- to post-intervention across all intervention groups (low, medium and high). This increase was only statistically significant in the low and high intervention groups (1-week and 3-weeks intervention), with a large effect size. Further correlational analyses indicated that higher levels of mindfulness were associated with lower levels of depression and stress following the intervention, suggesting that the increase in mindfulness promoted psychological wellbeing through a reduction in depression and stress levels.

This study aimed to identify improvements in psychological wellbeing (depression, anxiety, stress, and mindfulness) through the online mindfulness activities training (RQ2). Our first finding was that the online mindful activity training program significantly increased levels of mindfulness in the intervention group, but not the control group. This finding was in line with previous studies that investigated the effects of mindfulness-based interventions (Coster et al., 2020; Goldberg et al., 2018; Goyal et al., 2014; Gu et al., 2015), which showed improvements in levels of mindfulness from small to moderate effects. When mindfulness interventions are administered in an online setting, consistent results are also observed (Dimidjian et al., 2014; El Morr et al., 2020; Farris et al., 2021; Krusche et al., 2013; Santesteban-Echarri et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021) with observed sustained effects that increased over the follow-up period, up to a six months. For healthcare workers that includes medical officers, positive outcomes were also noted through the increase in mindfulness from pre- to post-intervention (Gaspar et al., 2021; Romcevich et al., 2018; Spinelli et al., 2019).

One interesting observation was that levels of depression were significantly reduced across all groups with a large effect size in both the intervention and control group. This suggests that other factors may be at play during the intervention period that may have impacted the medical officers. Two reasons may account for this phenomenon in the control group. Firstly, the intervention period coincided with the end of the Movement Control Order (MCO) that was imposed by the Malaysian government, from 11th January 2021 to 5th March 2021. Additionally, the reduction of daily reported COVID-19 positive cases following the MCO (Sunita et al., 2021) would also translate to reduced workload, reduced fears of contamination of the infectious disease, and improved overall psychological wellbeing. This suggested that the medical officers in the sample were subjected to history effects beyond the control of this study.

At post-intervention, significant, strong relationships were found between mindfulness and depression, as well as mindfulness and stress. This suggests that higher levels of mindfulness mitigated the psychological distress from depression and stress among medical officers. This finding was consistent with a large number of studies observing that as mindfulness levels increased, psychological wellbeing improved among participants (Coster et al., 2020; Daya & Hearn, 2018; Jayawardene et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of mindfulness as a pathway leading to positive outcome effects such as the reduction of depressive symptoms and psychological distress. As mindfulness was found to be significantly higher following the

intervention, depression and stress is postulated to have improved. Similar to Gu et. al.'s study (2015), the usage of mindfulness to increase the insight of and disengagement from negative thinking regarding depressive symptoms may have improved overall psychological states among the medical officers.

In response to RQ3, this study strived to explore the effects of the length of mindfulness interventions as called by previous literature (Barrett & Stewart, 2021; Creswell et al., 2019; Howarth et al., 2019; Linardon & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2020). Our findings were that there was a significant increase of mindfulness amongst the one-week (low intervention) and three-week (high-intervention) intervention groups. This suggests that mindfulness activities training, when applied in small doses daily, may observe significant improvement in as little as one week. This finding was consistent with previous studies that found significant improvements following brief mindfulness interventions that ranged from one session to four weeks (Barrett & Stewart, 2021; Howarth et al., 2019; Kemper, 2017; Kemper & Yun, 2015; Romceovich et al., 2018; Schumer et al., 2018). It corroborates overwhelming evidence that mindfulness effects can be observed through daily practices from 5 to 10 minutes daily. This finding is meaningful for medical officers who may find it difficult to find longer periods of free time for the practice of mindful activities.

Contrary to expectations, this study did not find that the mindfulness activities training had any significant effect on anxiety and stress. Despite significant improvements in depression, no differences were found among the intervention groups. This suggests that although mindfulness significantly increased, depressive symptoms were only alleviated following 3-weeks of intervention period while anxiety and stress levels remained the same. This differed from previous studies identifying positive implications from brief mindfulness interventions in as little as one session (Bloom-Foster & Mehl-Madrona, 2020; Shuai et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Instead, our findings support observations in studies that found immediate but no lasting effects from brief mindfulness interventions onto psychological distress variables (Dowd et al., 2015; Farris et al., 2021; Pheh et al., 2020; Schumer et al., 2018). Therefore, it is argued that state mindfulness may increase following brief, online mindfulness training activities, but prolonged mindfulness training is the key to sustained psychological benefits in affective states such as depression, anxiety, and stress.

The Monitoring and Acceptance Theory (MAT) by Lindsay and Creswell (2017) explained this phenomenon through dismantling studies on the process of acceptance. According to the authors, mindfulness training could improve attention monitoring skills rapidly after the practice, whereas acceptance was only cultivated subsequently through prolonged practice (Lindsay et al., 2018; Lindsay & Creswell, 2017, 2019). When interventions were compared between monitoring only and monitoring with acceptance skills, positive affect was only observed in the latter group (Lindsay et al., 2018). As acceptance was the key core component that improved negative affective states and boosted positive outcomes, it plays a crucial role in mindfulness interventions. The current study observed improved attention monitoring skills as evidenced through the significant increase in mindfulness, but the lack of improvement in psychological wellbeing suggests that acceptance skills may require a longer period of intervention and practice to produce beneficial outcomes.

The current study does have limitations. Firstly, participants were only recruited from one setting (Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia) of which the results may not be generalized to other populations. Secondly, the use of MAAS to measure mindfulness limited the extrapolation of the acceptance component. Lastly, the study did not measure the durability of effects observed post-intervention.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, our pilot study demonstrates that an online mindfulness activities training may serve as an effective intervention package in terms of time, cost, and convenience with beneficial effects on the levels of mindfulness and depression in medical officers at HUSM during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, this study produced preliminary evidence that a one-week mindfulness intervention was adequate to induce improved levels of mindfulness in medical officers, while three-weeks of the intervention could lead to reduced depression levels. The overall positive feedback indicated that the online mindfulness activities training was acceptable by the medical officers. As such, this program may be implemented both as a preventive intervention as well as a treatment option for medical officers with psychological distress essential for hospitals during the pandemic to be equipped with simple and adaptive coping skills.

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HOMOSOCIALITY AND BROMANCE IN MALE FRIENDSHIP:

A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

Julia Abyana Binti Aziya^{a*}, Nur Hafeeza Binti Ahmad Pazil^b

^aUniversiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: juliaabyanaa@gmail.com

^bUniversiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

Male friendships have been generally portrayed as lacking in intimacy, especially in the ability to share emotions and self-expression, as manhood would not allow men to be vulnerable in the presence of other men. This paper aimed to explore and review the representation of homosocial bonding, which is homosociality and bromance in male friendship. The concept of homosociality has been widely used in male friendship studies, which acts as a mechanism in maintaining hegemonic masculinity. Homosociality can be defined as same-sex relationships that are not of a romantic or sexual nature, such as friendship. Meanwhile, bromance, which is slang and the portmanteau of brother romance, has been deeply situated and is a form of a close homosocial, is used to address the idea of male intimacy that results from the homosocial desire that is not romantic or sexual. This trusting nature of bromances provides men, especially the young ones, with a new social space for emotional disclosure outside traditional heterosexual relationships. Thus, this conceptual paper will explore and discuss more on the concept of homosociality and bromance as well as its impact on the intimacy of male friendship.

Keywords: male friendship, intimacy, homosociality, bromance

1. Introduction

It is generally assumed that men are less intimate and less interested in self-disclosing to others compared to women. This assumption is likely due to the ideal form of intimacy, which is based on a feminine definition as masculinity is not only a performance to be recognised as a male but also acts as a performance to remind others that he is not feminine (Migliaccio, 2010). As a result, men have been culturally compelled to engage in openly heterosexual behaviours while avoiding those that would feminise them. However, the degree to which the masculinity meanings persons hold for themselves parallel to hegemonic masculinity meanings, on the other hand, varies over time and from person to person (Bird, 1976). Thus, this paper will view the concept of homosociality which acts as a method to maintain the hegemonic masculinity between males, and how bromance, a form of homosocial intimacy, has been slowly normalised in society.

1.1 Male friendship

Male friendships are mainly believed to be more instrumental friendships focusing on shared activities and interests. Their friendships are primarily defined by their willingness to do things for others and the availability of substantial assistance (Watson, 2012) rather than female friendships that are believed to be more expressive and self-disclosing. Based on the study by Migliaccio (2009) in the United States, states that masculine friendship expectations are demonstrated by avoiding expressive interactions with friends and engaging in more physical activities and interests. He claims that males are less likely than females to self-disclose and discuss personal issues with close friends, openly express their feelings and problems that could reveal their flaws, show affection to same-

gender friends, and highlight the reciprocity of friendship. According to Banks and Hansford (2000), men's same-sex friendships are less intimate and supportive due to several factors, which are a) lack of parental models for friendship, b) emotional restraint, c) homophobia, d) masculine self-identity, e) competitive strivings, and f) role conflicts. They highlighted masculine self-identity in male friendship, and homophobia has made male friendship less supportive, although it is claimed to be intimate. These stereotypical beliefs and boundaries have largely affected the intimacy of male friendships as it existed to avoid the norm violation in males. It is critical to recognise that these cultural norms have left a generation of heterosexual men with a life of non-intimate relationships and friendships that may never reach the level of intimacy they should be entitled to (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). However, these cultural norms and gender role ideology do not fully represent what males do in their friendships, as Migliaccio (2009) argues.

A study by Walker (1994) has found that some men share feelings, which varies according to social class. She reported that working-class women and men are more likely to be active in various social networks. Thus, they are likely spending more time talking and sharing their life events with their friends, which leads to more personal discussions and intimacy. Moreover, genuine intimacy involves a deep mutual knowledge of understanding that is necessary to generate sympathy or respect, known as self-disclosure, which is mainly tricky, especially in male friendship (Strikwerda et al. 1992). They highlighted that when all the elements such as trust, self-knowledge, positive feelings, mutual relations combine, then self-revelatory disclosures will form. Although the study of friendship has been conducted in many areas, the study of male friendship based on the sociological perspectives on how intimacy practices relate to one's self-disclosure is not that broad and remains unclear. Thus, it is crucial to focus and explore male friendship on a deeper scale from the sociological view and concepts.

1.2 Homosociality

In general, homosocial is as social interaction within the same sex. Meanwhile, in sociology, homosociality pertaining to homosocial is described as same-sex relationships that are not sexual or romantic (Lipman-Blumen, 1976; Sedgwick, 1985; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014) such as mentorship, friendship, and others. The homosociality concept is frequently used to sustain the hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy as homosociality promotes intelligible contrast between non-hegemonic masculinities and hegemonic masculinities by the segregation of social groups (Bird, 1996). Bird emphasised that there are three shared meanings sustained via male homosociality: competition, emotional detachment, and sexual objectification of women. Nevertheless, this common application of the concept, which refers to how men, through their relationships with other men, defend and preserve patriarchy through the shared meanings, tends to reduce homosociality solely to a heteronormative and tiered term, used to demonstrate how heterosexual men connect and protect their privileges and positions (Haywood et al., 2018).

Conversely, in the study by Sedgwick (1985), instead of using the homosociality concept to analyse the social bonds and power relations in men, she used this concept in a more complex view for discussing the connection between different forms of desire and intimate relationships between men. Sedgwick's "male homosocial desire" referred to all male bonds, and to explain the structure of men's connection with other men, she analysed the intricate relations between homosociality, homosexuality, and homophobia. She said separating these three categories was difficult since "erotic" was defined by the "unpredictable, ever-changing variety of local circumstances." She used the sociological neologism "homosocial" to discern it from "homosexual" and to refer to a type of male bonding that is frequently accompanied by fear or hatred of homosexuality as the past study by Lewis (1978) stated that getting too close, especially in physical closure between men has unfortunately seen not 'normal'. They will likely be labelled as gay with restrictions and taboos

against touching males except for the firm public handshake (Strikwerda & May 1992). Sedgwick argues that the male homosocial and homosexual bonds have been interfered with and gradually turned into a discontinuous relationship rather than female homosocial and homosexual bonds. Hence, Sedgwick's "male homosocial desire" has become a theoretical underpinning in gender and masculinity study for what later becomes normalised in popular culture and discourse known as bromance.

According to Haywood et al. (2018), female homosociality is portrayed differently than male homosociality because female homosociality is more tolerated by society, allowing them to express mutual compassion and emotion. This can also be seen through the comparison of male friendships and female friendships in the United States as there is a dearth of emotional development and expression in males' friendship as well as lack of intimacy or even complete absence of intimacy, which contradicts to female friendships (Strikwerda & May 1992). Hence, a more dynamic view on the concept of homosociality by Hammarén and Johansson (2014) distinguishes between the vertical/hierarchical and horizontal homosociality. Although there are no clear boundaries between these two concepts, they analyse them separately to emphasise the different aspects and effects. They focused on horizontal homosociality rather than hierarchical homosociality as hierarchical homosociality is more on maintaining and defending the hegemony through strengthening the power and forming close bonds between men and women. On the other hand, horizontal homosociality is more on men-relations based on their intimacy and emotional closeness in their friendship. The intimacy practices in males are closely related to self-disclosure and emphasise that intimate bonding is based on characteristics of one another, which is vital in building quality and satisfying friendship (Strikwerda & May, 1992). Additionally, Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) indicated that the social construction of masculinity had influenced intimacy as manhood would not allow men to be vulnerable in the presence of other men. Vulnerability related to appearing "weak," which seemed threatening for fear of how other men would discount the experience and hurts the development of intimacy, which resulted in a distant friendship.

The concept of homosociality has also been integrated into the lack of intimacy in male friendship and is channelled through alternative social relations such as competition and activities. The study that Thomas Thurnell-Read has conducted (2012) on the importance of premarital stag tour, which acts as a homosocial bonding ritual, involves celebrating a man before he gets married and with his friends, has shown a possible pattern of changes in the male friendship. Through the observation with the different stag groups, the male participants make time and space to socialise and do things such as consuming alcohol and eating together at local restaurants as an effort to connect, maintain and develop their friendship bonds. Instead of adhering to the gender expectations, establishing accepted forms of masculinity, and feeling of competitiveness, these participants aimed for group cohesion, togetherness, and intimacy. Although the participants commonly refer their stag tour experience significance to their masculinity constructions, they also showed their compassion through the act of buying drinks and hugs, which redefined the concept of masculinity that is more sensitive and intimate. Thus, according to Bird (1996), this raises a question on how can we discuss the male homosocial relationships in terms of intimacy, gender equality, and non-homophobia without ignoring the potential advances of maleness? This is where the concept of close homosocial, which is bromance comes.

1.2 Bromance

The bromance concept is similar to the concept of horizontal homosociality proposed by Hammarén and Johansson (2014). Bromance, a combination of brother and romance, is a term that has recently been coined to describe close and intimate nonsexual and homosocial relationships (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014; Hamad, 2020). Bromance is also defined as forming bonds through emotional

disclosure and supporting each other in ways that only women were once described as doing and defying the social stigma (Robinson et al., 2019). According to Chen (2012), bromances have three general aspects: they are only for men, they are asexual, and they are places where men can share intimacy, love, and affection. In the article written by Elliot (2007), the term "bromance" was coined for the first time in the mid-1990s by Dave Carnie, editor of the Big Brother skateboard magazine, to describe the relationship between skateboarders who spent much time together. Becker (2014) has stated that bromance is a way of talking and thinking about male friendships that aid in the production of specific ways of feeling and experiencing homosocial intimacy and masculinity. Bromances are also claimed to be a male-to-male equivalent of closer than "just friends", which comprises physical comfort and interaction as well as a more profound connection (Poost, 2018). She emphasised that true bromance forms a bond between two people whose relationship allows them to be open in a way that men's gender performance usually prevents men from doing. Notably, "bromance" is often portrayed more in media rather than being discussed in academic studies. In the mid-2000s, the media widespread on the concept of bromance has been widely recognised and began its cultural normalisation, especially in the US popular films and television shows where the audiences able to connect with the concept due to how often bromances happen in reality (Hamad, 2020).

A strong bromance that involves male friendships and nonsexual masculine intimacies brings the show to life, making the laughs even funnier and the sad moments even more heart-breaking, which helps make the show have more impact (Wilkinson, 2019). These films and shows also serve as a reference point for young men when defining bromance and its work (Robinson et al., 2019). One of the great American sitcoms such as "Friends" depicts an intense bromance in the characters of Chandler and Joey, who are the ultimate best friends that would go to great lengths for one another and are always there for one another no matter what. In the review of the contemporary sub-genre of bromance in some of the romantic comedy's films and television shows (Alberti, 2013), the author observed the confused homosocial/homoerotic relationships between straight males within the dramatic changes of social and sexual equality between men and women, which leads to the generic exploration of "other types of relationships" that are not defined by the usual definitions of the heteronormative romantic comedy. Some of the romantic comedies reviewed like *Knocked Up* (2007), *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* (2005) as well as two related bromance movies– *I Love You, Man* by John Hamburg (2009) and *Superbad* Greg Mottola (2007) have set as examples of commercially successful bromances that epitomise tensions and experiments concerning the evolution of masculinity in the romantic comedy.

Furthermore, bromance is also known as popular culture in several Asian countries, including South Korea. Surprisingly, Koreans have notably higher rates of self-disclosure when compared to Americans as they feel like it is crucial to establish a more intimate friendship (Alexis, 2013). As we can see, the Korean-pop male groups portray bromance by showing their delightful friendship to the public, which is favoured by their fans. Taking the example in the latest study by (Fauzi & Nugraha, 2020) on the bromance interaction analysis of the Korean-pop group called Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS), had shown close interaction between members such as hugs and feeding each other through their variety show "BTS RUN!". They highlighted the main characteristics in bromance, which include shared interest, physical closeness, and emotional intimacy, which also been mentioned by Strikwerda and May (1992) as one cannot be an intimate friend without reciprocity of intimacy from another. Shared interest is one of the main aspects of bromance, as it would work well if the parties involved had shared the same interest and personalities. Moreover, according to Karbo (2006), some physical expressions used by men, such as razzing and backslapping, can be interpreted as expressions of affection. Also, having the emotional intimacy and physical closeness that have resulted in openly expressing genuine affections they felt to each other can be defined through the emergence of this bromance phenomenon. Chen (2012) stated that bromances allow some men to have intimate friendships. However, they also exclude those who do not fit into the bromance's

regulatory scheme, which on the other hand, defy masculinities theory. Thus, it is clear that the concept of bromance has challenged traditional heterosexual relationship beliefs and hegemonic masculinity.

Through in-depth interviews, recent research by Robinson et al. (2019) with 30 male university students in the United Kingdom claimed that bromances have a significant cultural impact. Their study on heterosexual undergraduate men has been made by comparing their experiences between bromance to their romantic relationships. Bromance or close homosocial relationship differs from the traditional heterosexual relationships, which provided these young men new social freedom concerning shared interest, emotional intimacy, and nonsexual physical intimacy with each other. Their research has shown contrasting results from the past research where these young men defy the taboo of emotional sentimentality, develop intimacy, and maintain deep emotional friendships. These men can freely show their "love" for their bromance(s), describing intimate examples of emotionality and physical intimacy in their friendships. The research also highlighted a significant difference between bromance and romance: the sexual desire felt with their romance but not bromance. They also found that most men prefer to discuss personal matters with bromance rather than romance. Personal matters such as the men's health issues, interests, anxieties, and others are more comfortable to share within bromance as they have no boundaries, disclose without being judged and be more truthful. This research has shown a significant cultural shift in the structure of masculinity and allows to supersede traditional masculinity through more physical and emotional behaviours.

1.4 Implications of homosociality and bromance in male friendships

As time passed, we can see that the friendship in males has evolved and dramatically changed, especially between young men as they can speak openly and embrace the complex and advanced level of emotionality in same-sex friendships, which contrasted to the friendship study in the past that claimed male friendship is less supportive due to the masculine self-identity and homophobia (Banks and Hansford, 2000). Moreover, the growing acceptance of the term "bromance" in popular culture reflects a growing recognition that young men can have more diverse and homosocial masculine identities, making friendships more intimate (Robinson et al., 2019) as masculinity is not fixed, stable, or constant (Sargent, 2013). Furthermore, new research suggests that young men's same-sex relationships are becoming more emotionally subtle and intimate due to a shift in masculine socialisation processes (Anderson 2014; Emslie et al. 2007). By implying both emotional and physical attachment, bromance defies all social norms and expectations for male friendship (Poost, 2018). Today, we can see the increased dependence on homosocial intimacy as men are more open to having close and intimate relationships with their friends.

2. Conclusion

Collectively, this conceptual paper outlined and discussed the concept of homosociality and bromance as well as its impact on male friendship intimacy. A more dynamic view of homosociality has been developed by distinguishing between vertical and horizontal homosociality practice for deeper understanding. This paper also highlights the intimacy in close male friendship as bromances imply a level of intimacy that blurs the lines between sexual and nonsexual relationships. Although there has been recent research on the emergence of bromances and how they relate to homosociality (Anderson 2014; Chen 2011; Hammarén and Johansson 2014), there are no systematic examinations of its conceptualisation behavioural requirements or limitations are known. Instead, its cultural meanings have been mapped through popular comedy films and television shows. Thus, more future studies, especially on bromance, need to be explored and discussed academically.

The findings from the past research support the view that declining homophobia and its internalisation have positively affected men's expressiveness and intimacy. The social freedoms that the horizontal homosociality and bromance are undoubtedly good for fostering a more expressive and emotional male culture that is more in line with how women interact with each other. Furthermore, the evolution and conceptualisation of horizontal homosociality and bromance perhaps point to change, transition, and thus restructure hegemony, with tendencies toward eventual transformations of intimacy, gender, and power relations. However, as Hammarén and Johansson (2014) stated, their study only scratches the surface of potential and partial redefinitions of hegemony, including those often associated with the middle class, and that in-depth exploration is needed.

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The Moderating Effect of Brand Awareness towards Social Media Advertising Effectiveness in Purchase Intention of Youth in Sarawak

Tan Tze Horng^{a*}, Chong Kim Mee^b, , Ting Kier Siang^a

tzehorng.tan@riamtec.edu.my

^aRiam Institute of Technology, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia.

^bSegi University, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract

This research investigated the moderating effect of brand awareness towards the social media advertising effectiveness in purchase intention of youth in Sarawak. The independent variables of social media advertising effectiveness included were advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity, and celebrity endorsers. The dependent variable under this research was purchase intention while the moderator was brand awareness. 150 respondents with age 35 years old or younger were collected through the distribution of questionnaires in Google Form in Sarawak. IBM SPSS and SEM SmartPLS software were used to analyse and generate the findings. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between one of the independent variables (interactivity) and the moderating effect of brand awareness towards social media advertising effectiveness (interactivity and celebrity endorsers) in purchase intention of youth in Sarawak. It also suggested that the brand awareness had a significant effect on purchase intention of youth in Sarawak . The findings, limitations of study, implications of findings and recommendations for future research were discussed.

Keywords: Social media; Brand awareness; Advertising effectiveness; Purchase intention

1.0 Introduction

A study from Olano (2021), reveals that in Southeast Asia, Malaysia is the leading country with 84% internet penetration or 27.43 million people using the internet. As a result of the Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed in 2020, internet usage in Malaysia this has further accelerated. In 2020, Malaysians reportedly spent 9 hours 17 minutes surfing the internet on average every day which is 17% more than in 2019 and 69% of Malaysians use the internet on a regular basis on social media (Digital Business Lab, 2021). According to Müller (2022), more than 67% of the internet users belonged to age group ranged from 20 to 40 years old. In addition, by 2025, the e-commerce market is estimated to achieve MYR46.6 billion as the market size has tripled since 2015 due to the aggressive use of the internet (Olano, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative for business to adopt digital strategies to cater the youth customers' needs and to provide better experiences for the customers. As such, it is crucial for brands to understand the market and their customers' online behaviour in order to survive and succeed. The social media advertising effectiveness is vital to the success to the online business.

2.0 Problem Statement

With the traditional advertising mediums like newspaper and television are highly competitive and do not help companies or advertisers connect with their customers, advertisers today have turned to the social media platforms (Munachoonga, Kamwale, Moyo and Sakthive, 2021). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses, employees, and consumers were forced to work indoors as a result of the lockdown imposed by the government in 2020 (Zhang, Gerlowsk and Acs, 2022). As businesses are forced to shut down, they may shift to online selling, particularly social media as it is the easiest and low-cost method to reach a large number of potential customers (Sajane and Gaikwad, 2022). Nonetheless, problem occurs when marketers are not aware of the brand awareness influence on purchase intention when they plan to use social media as mean of promotion. As previous studies have mostly focused on identifying the influence of social media advertising on attitudes towards advertising and purchase intention (Amriel, 2018; Disastra, Hanifa, Wulandari and Sastika, 2018; Shareef, Mukerji, Alryalat, Wright and Dwivedi, 2018; Arora and Agarwal, 2019; Belanche, Cenjor and Pérez-Rueda, 2019), the researcher intends to solve this problem by not only studying the relationship between social media advertising effectiveness factors and purchase intention among youth in Sarawak but also the moderating effect of brand awareness on advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity, and celebrity endorsers in purchase intention.

3.0 Research Objectives

RO1: To explore whether brand awareness moderate the relationship between social media advertising effectiveness and purchase intention among youth in Sarawak.

RO2: To identify the relationship between social media advertising effectiveness and purchase intention among youth in Sarawak.

RO3: To investigate the relationship between the brand awareness and social media advertising effectiveness among youth in Sarawak.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Youth and Social Media

The term youth can be best defined as a period of transition of an individual from dependence on childhood into an independence of adulthood (United Nation, 2022). Based on article written by Yunus and Landau (2019), it was stated that the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2019 was passed down by the *dewan rakyat* stating that the definition of youth for Malaysia was lowered from 40 years of age to 35 years of age with the current amended age group for youth in Malaysia being 15 years of age to 35 years of age. According to Dash and Dash (2019), it was stated that with the advancement in technology, it has contributed to the rise in new media access and also usage, particularly the youth age group. In Malaysia, the youth age ranging from 13 to 34 years old were found to make up 80.3% in social media users (Ismail, Ahmad, Noor and Saw, 2019).

4.2 Social Media Advertising

Social media is a platform that can be defined as online applications platforms and socialising media which emphasises on facilitating interactions, collaborations and the sharing of contents between

individuals (Dabbous and Barakat, 2020). Rahman (2018) defined social media advertising as a term where all forms of advertising whether it is explicit like banner advertising and commercial videos or implicit like fan pages or firm related pages which are delivered through social networking sites. As stated by McCarthy (2017), advertisers in today's world are integrating social media into their marketing strategies in order to drive digital engagements in the social media platform. Social media advertising can provide customers with several benefits such as experience sharing between customers and efficient and effective information search (Patino, Pitta, and Quinones, 2012).

4.3 Hypothesis Development

i) Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as the probability of an individual intending to purchase a particular product (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). Purchase intention is where the final step of all marketing activities leads to whether a customer has the intention or interest to buy the product (Nurhandayani, Syarief and Najib, 2019). In a related research, Sumarwan (2017) stated that a consumer attitude of expression of like or dislike on the product usually affects the belief, behavior and the purchase intention of the consumer. Purchase intention also can be explained as a customer's personal conscious plan or even their own intention to make the effort to buy a particular product (Tran and Nguyen, 2020).

ii) Advertising Credibility and Purchase Intention

The term advertising credibility is explained as the trustworthiness and honesty of any given content in an advertisement that is then perceived by consumers (Hamouda, 2018). Credibility comes in a form of message credibility which is an important aspect for the construct level of framing for purchase intention (Jager and Weber, 2020). Message credibility plays an important role in creating or increasing purchase behaviour of customers (Jager and Weber, 2020). Customers will develop perceived credibility of the message or information which can be defined as an individual's personal judgement on the contents of the communication (Appelman and Sundar, 2016). The contents or information in the advertisement are usually reliable and trustworthy as comments on the social connections are shared in the contents (Chu and Kim, 2011).

H1: Advertising credibility has a significant effect on purchase intention.

H5: Brand awareness moderates the relationship between advertising credibility and purchase intention.

ii) Perceived Relevance and Purchase Intention

Relevance can be defined as how or the degree of which a consumer or individual perceives an object in a way that it is important or essential in achieving or receiving personal goals, objectives and even values (Alalwan, 2018). With the use of the social media platforms, marketers and advertisers will gain the ability in customising and tailoring the messages and contents values based purely on customer's personal preferences (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Based on multiple research done, the customer will most likely remain loyal and fully satisfied when they receive or achieve a sufficient level of personalisation or customisation (Ball, Coelho, and Vilares 2006; Laroche, Habibi and Richard, 2013 and Liang, Chen, Du, Turban and Li 2012). Based on a research done by Alalwan (2018), it was shown that there is a positive relationship between perceived relevance and purchase intention in social media advertising.

H2: Perceived relevance has a significant effect on purchase intention.

H6: Brand awareness moderates the relationship between perceived relevance and purchase intention.

iv) Interactivity and Purchase Intention

The term interactivity is defined as how or a degree in which users of specific mediums are able to affect the forms or contents of mediated environments and according to some research, interactivity may impact the personal experiences of any individual (Nakevska, Sanden, Funk, Hu and Rauterberg, 2017). Under this research where social media is present, the term of interactivity is considered a crucial and important element in the online world or social media platforms as interactivity feature plays an important role as it will widen the views of any persons' perception (Alalwan, 2018). According to Alalwan (2018), there is a positive influence between interactivity and purchase intention in social media advertising. A research done by Sook, Cheng, Kah, Jia and Yoke (2020), further supports that interactivity has a positive impact on the customers purchase intentions. Thus, under this research, the researcher hypothesizes there will be a significant effect between social media advertising effectiveness interactivity and purchase intention of youth in Sarawak.

H3: Interactivity has a significant effect on purchase intention.

H7: Brand awareness moderates the relationship between interactivity and purchase intention.

v) Celebrity Endorsements and Purchase Intention

Celebrities are individuals that rely on public image, public recognition or reception and utilize these reception or public images on behalf of goods and products by appearing with the products or goods in an advertisement (Hussain, Melewar, Priporas, Foroudi and Dennis, 2020). Under this research, social media influencers are celebrities in the social media platforms as they became famous based on their social media presence compared to traditional celebrities who are famous in films or music productions (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2016). In a research done by Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu (2019), it was stated that these new types of celebrities from social media are able to create a stronger connection with consumers as consumers perceive them as being more authentic.

H4: Celebrity endorsers have a significant effect on purchase intention.

H8: Brand awareness moderates the relationship between celebrity endorsers and purchase intention.

vi) Brand Awareness as a Moderating Effect

Brand awareness can be explained as the ability or capability of an individual to recall or recognise certain brands throughout their lifetime (Bae, Jung, Moorhouse, Suh and Kwon, 2020). In a related research, Navarro, Díaz and Rico (2019) had stated that customers who had a positive brand interaction on the social media platform will usually lead to an intention or willingness to purchase a product. It was further explained that branding credibility is one of the most important aspects out of all brand characteristics as it is the main predictor in influencing a consumer's choice (Consuegra, Faraoni, Diaz and Ranfagni, 2018).

H9: Brand awareness has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Based on the above literature review, a research framework is shown in Figure 1.0.

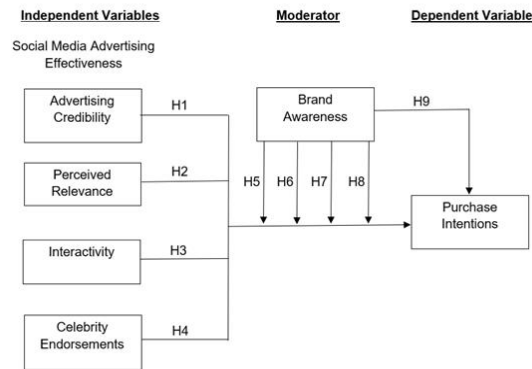


Figure 1.0: Research Framework

5.0 Research Methodology

5.1 Sampling

A quantitative method will be used in collecting and analysing the data collected. The reason for using quantitative methods is because it is appropriate when collecting quantifiable measures in both variables and inferences from samples of a selected population (Andre, Daniel and Fernando, 2017). As youth is the largest user group on social media, the respondents are chosen from the age group between 15 years old to 35 years old in Malaysia (Müller, 2022). Based on the GPower software, a total sample size of 89 was obtained from 9 predictors. Thus, the researcher set 150 as the total sample size to represent the total population under this research to increase the accuracy and consistency of the results in data collection.

5.2 Reliability and Validity

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used in assessing the reliability, discriminant validity and convergent validity of the scales. According to Brown and Moore (2013), the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) provides the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the theoretical construct. In research, when the outer loading given is greater or equal to 0.50, the researcher can accept the loading item and if the value of the loading item is below 0.50, the researcher can choose to retain or remove the loading items (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper and Ringle, 2012). According to Hair, Gabriel and Petel (2014), when the loading value given is equal or greater than the value of 0.708, then it proves that the factor will be able to explain at least 50 percent of the factor's variance. The Composite Reliability (CR) is known as the composite reliability and under this research, is applied for different measurements of the internal consistency reliability with values greater than 0.6 being acceptable in exploratory research, value between 0.7 to 0.9 being satisfactory for research and value greater than 0.9 being all the indicators are measuring at the same circumstance. The minimum value for the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.5 and it is used in measuring the variance of indicator (Hair et al., 2014). According to a research done by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the value of Average Variance Extracted should be greater than 0.5 in order to achieve sufficient convergent validity.

6.0 Findings

6.1 Assessment of the measurement model

In this study all constructs are modeled as reflective constructs. For the reflective model, the measurement is assessed in terms of scale reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Scale reliability is assessed using Composite Reliability. For the Composite Reliability (CR), all the items are accepted as the value falls between 0.70 to 0.90. Under the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), all items are accepted, except brand awareness towards advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity, and celebrity endorser with the value of 0.417, 0.478, 0.435 and 0.479 which are all lesser than the value of 0.50. According to research done by Komiak and Benbasat (2006), it was stated that the value of both Convergent Reliability (CR) and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should achieve the specific value to reach convergent validity. If the value of Convergent Reliability (CR) is given below 0.80, then there will be a slack of reliability. Thus, the value for Convergent Reliability (CR) must be greater 0.80 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value should be greater than 0.5. The overall value for CR and AVE was able to achieve the requirement for value between 0.70 to 0.90 for Composite Reliability (CR) and the value greater than 0.50 for Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Under this research, the highest Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value among variables is perceived relevance with a value of 0.751, followed by celebrity endorsers with a value 0.734, purchase intentions with a value of 0.680, interactivity with a value of 0.679, brand awareness with a value of 0.676, advertising credibility with a value 0.629 and the moderating effect of brand awareness on advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity and celebrity endorsers which are the variables that do not meet the requirements with the value of 0.417, 0.478, 0.435 and 0.479 thus, it is not accepted in this research. For Composite Reliability (CR), all of the loading items has met the requirement with the value of 0.910 for advertising credibility, 0.947 for perceived relevance, 0.925 for interactivity, 0.943 for celebrity endorsers, 0.927 for purchase intentions, 0.926 for brand awareness and 0.962, 0.970, 0.963, 0.970 for the moderating effect of brand awareness on advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity and celebrity endorsers. The researcher had performed the reliability test to test and validate the reliability of all the variables in this research. According to a research done by Cronbach (1971), it was stated that Cronbach Alpha reliability is commonly used in measuring the data's internal consistency and that a high value in terms of Cronbach's Alpha value of the construct will indicate data reliability estimated base on the observed indicators of the inter-correlation. According to Santos (1999), the value for the Cronbach Alpha must be greater than the value of 0.70 to be accepted in a research. The advertising credibility has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.880, perceived relevance with a value of 0.933, interactivity with a value of 0.901, celebrity endorsers with a value of 0.927, purchase intentions with a value of 0.905, brand awareness with a value of 0.904, followed by the moderating effect of brand awareness towards advertising credibility, perceived relevance, interactivity, and celebrity endorsers with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.960, 0.968, 0.960 and 0.969. R^2 which includes the average variance accounted, t-value, the exogenous - endogenous relationship and the regression weight is used in a research for examining the hypothesis tested (O'Cass, 2002). According to Falk and Miller (1992), the value of R^2 can be categorised into 0.75 (substantial), 0.5 (moderate) and 0.25 (weak) to be acceptable and according to a research done by Komiak and Benbasat (2006), the t-value's value should be greater than or equal to 1.645 (one-tailed) and 1.960 (two-tailed) to be significant in a research.

6.2 Assessment of the structural model

After satisfying the measurement model for the reflective constructs, the structural model is assessed in terms of strength, direction, and significance of the hypothesized relationship in the conceptual

framework. In sum, the five predictors collectively explain 87% ($R^2=0.871$) of the variance for purchase intention. The findings are shown in Table 1.0 below.

Hypothesis	Relationship	P-Value	StdError	T-Value	Decision
H1	Advertising credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Accepted
H2	Perceived relevance has a positive effect on purchase intention.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Accepted
H3	Celebrity endorsers has a positive effect on purchase intention.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Accepted
H4	Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Accepted
H5	Brand awareness moderates the relationship between advertising credibility and purchase intention.	0.861	0.067	0.175	Rejected
H6	Brand awareness moderates the relationship between perceived relevance and purchase intention.	0.144	0.097	1.462	Rejected
H7	Brand awareness moderates the relationship between interactivity and purchase intention.	0.040	0.088	2.058	Accepted
H8	Brand awareness moderates the relationship between celebrity endorsers and purchase intention.	0.040	0.078	2.064	Accepted
H9	Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Accepted

Table 1.0: Bootstrapping for Hypothesis Testing

7.0 Conclusions

Based on the results from hypothesis findings in Table 1.0, it was discovered that brand awareness plays an important role as the moderator in social media advertising effectiveness towards purchase intention of youth in Sarawak. Based on hypothesis 9, H9, it shows that brand awareness without the independent variable of social media advertising effectiveness, will have a significant effect on purchase intention of youth in Sarawak. This result is more apparent in hypothesis 8, H8, where it stated that brand awareness has a significant effect towards celebrity endorsers in purchase intention among youth in Sarawak. It was shown that without the moderating effect of brand awareness in hypothesis 4, H4, celebrity endorsers were not a factor in the purchase intention of youth in Sarawak in social media advertising. Brand awareness was also shown to have a significant and positive effect on interactivity towards the purchase intention of youth in Sarawak. Other than that, the findings and discussion under this research reveal that interactivity within social media advertising was the only factor that could influence the purchase intention of youth in Sarawak whereby other factors such as advertising credibility, perceived relevance and celebrity endorsers were not factors that could influence the purchase intentions of youth in Sarawak.

7.1 Implications of Findings

This research findings contradicted with other research done by scholars whereby variables such as advertising credibility, perceived relevance and celebrity endorsers were tested to have a positive and significant influence towards purchase intentions in terms of different context such as geographical location and targeted age group of samples. In general, the findings contribute to the studies in social media advertising and digital marketing. It provides a deeper understanding and insight in of digital marketing which may prove to be beneficial for marketers, business and firms involved in the advertising activities.

7.2 Limitations of Research

Throughout this research, the data and results were able to provide a new understanding and insights in the social media advertising effectiveness towards the purchase intention among youth in Sarawak.

However, there are limited scholar research in supporting the research hypothesis results involving variables namely advertising credibility, perceived relevance and celebrity endorsers under the context of purchase intentions of youth. Another limitation is on the geographical location of this research. As stated, this research was done in the Sarawak region of Malaysia which only covered cities such as Miri, Bintulu, Sibul and Kuching. The data were collected through the use of non-probability sampling method which caused a limitation in terms of accurate finding collection as sample bias could occur.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned in the limitations, some recommendations for future research is to continue on this research topic as there are limited scholar research for the moderating effect of brand awareness towards the social media advertising effectiveness in purchase intention among the youth. It could provide additional insight or understanding under this research topic. Future research could also explore different age groups which may lead to different findings.

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Manga* as Educational Tool for Sociology: A Comparison of a Japanese *Manga* and a Malaysian *Manga

Rachel CHAN Suet Kay^{a,*}

^aInstitute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), National University of Malaysia (UKM)

Email: rachelchansuetkay@ukm.edu.my

Abstract

During the global pandemic and its ensuing lockdown in many parts of the world, the issue of online learning and physical and social distancing has become a paramount issue. How will dramaturgical depictions of social realities be sustained during such an unnatural time of social isolation? In the case of the social sciences, especially sociology in particular, the problem of teaching and learning revolves around the inability to express sociological issues through historical portrayals, given the absence of in-person participation in class which enables role play and other forms of dramatic expressions. From the grassroots perspective, there is perhaps an unintentional tool of education, whether it is taken from the layperson or academic perspective, that can be both useful as information and entertainment. The existence of fan communities of discourse around this cultural product also enables online interaction. This cultural product is none other than *manga*, a form of Japanese comics. This paper takes the case study of two *mangas*, one originating from Japan and the other a Malaysian one, to illustrate their ability to depict dramaturgical issues of sociological concern expressively. The method used is a comparative content analysis of both *mangas*. It is found that both the Japanese example, Moriarty the Patriot, and the local example, Kepahitan Tersembunyi, contain sociological discourse which has been tailored for a public level of understanding.

Keywords: *Manga*; Online learning; Sociological discourse; Dramaturgy; Fandom.

1. Introduction

Manga is a form of Japanese comics that function as both entertainment and informational tool. *Manga* originated from Japan in a form known as *ukiyo-e*, woodblock prints, or "pictures of the floating world" (Brenner, 2007; in Chan, 2018). Today, it has evolved into a recognisable form known as Japanese Visual Language (JVL) (Cohn, 2008; in Chan, 2018). Its characteristics include a unique drawing style, in which characters are depicted with large expressive eyes, zoomed-in perspectives of characters' facial expressions, and in panels which sometimes appear to consist of "broken windows", with textual vocalization of sounds, and footnotes by the *manga* artist, artists' comments about their creative process, character poster inserts, and *omakes* (extra "out-of-character" humorous content) among other characteristics. *Manga* genres are categorised based on the age and gender of its target readers, for example, *shonen manga* (for teenage boys), *shojo manga* (for teenage girls), *josei manga* (for women), and *seinen manga* (for men), to name a few examples (Wong, 2006; in Chan, 2018).

Some popular examples of *manga* known internationally are Doraemon, Sailormoon, Naruto, Pokemon, and Dragonball. *Manga*, like comics, are generally viewed as entertainment material. It is usually published in serialized form in dedicated *manga* magazines, and subsequently if successful enough, it is then compiled into volumes. It is also often adapted into anime, which is the animated form of *manga*. These could be series-based in episodes, and/or even a full-length movie. Depending on how well-received it is, it may enjoy worldwide recognition, resulting sometimes in an empire of merchandise, such as toys, plushies, or collectibles. Fans also play a part in the dissemination of

manga's popularity worldwide, by engaging in creating fan fiction or fan art, and even fan videos (or fan cams). The fandom generates discourse around the *manga*'s narrative and depictions of social realities, which include both light-hearted and serious discussions.



Figure 1: Examples of popular international and Malaysian *manga* with images sourced from Wikipedia, which I used in my online lecture (including Moriarty the Patriot and *Kepahitan Tersembunyi*).

2. *Manga*'s potential for dramaturgical analysis

Manga's potential as an educational platform has also been proven by the amount of educational *manga* which exist, such as guides on learning mathematics, statistics, and the sciences. However, what is yet to be explored is whether *manga* can also function as a tool in elucidating sociological discourse, or topics relevant to the social sciences, which may be more abstract to describe. Particularly in the context of classroom education, whether face-to-face or online, it is believed that *manga* has the potential to act as dramaturgical stage for social analysis.

Sociology is the study of human interaction in social groups and communities, with a focus on stratification and inequality. One aspect of sociological education is the need for explaining historical epochs in detail to students. This may not be done lightly, as words themselves do not convey the full experience of living in a different historical era. An educator may turn to supplementary material to enhance the learning experience. These may include YouTube videos, novels, comics, or even games such as role-playing ones. The purpose is to enable students to experientially understand historical events of significance, such as the First Industrial Revolution and the living conditions of the proletariat in 19th century England. This is a crucial topic in the sociological canon and is necessary to explain to students in order for them to develop a deeper understanding of classical sociological theory, across time, space, and geography. Studies by scholars such as Yamato (2014) and Iwabuchi (1998) suggest that transnational media texts of Japanese popular culture may be potential materials for reflecting and discussing the "individual proximity" in people, social issues, or phenomenon (rather than "essential culture" which is linked to the national/ethnic origin) (Chan, 2018). Hence, the potential of *manga* as a platform in depicting these social realities, replete with characters that students can identify with, serve to engage them in the learning process, making the

experience more than just a textbook one.

Dramaturgical analysis is a theoretical framework by sociologist Erving Goffman, who viewed social life as a stage where all actors play their parts. This is a useful framework for viewing the narrative aspect of *manga* and its associated animation, anime. *Manga* is particularly suited to expressing concepts that are somewhat abstract and philosophical, which words alone may fail to deliver. This makes it suitable as a kinesthetic learning platform. A question which may be asked is whether *manga* contains social critique. While *manga* scholar Berndt (2016) attested that commercial *manga* lacks social critique, luminaries in the field of *manga* themselves appear to assert that certain *manga* do, as evidenced from *manga* artists, or *mangaka*, such as the celebrated Osamu Tezuka, who occasionally portrayed the darkness of post-war Japan (Knighton, 2013); and Fujio F. Fujiko who paid homage to Tezuka through Doraemon (Fusanosuke, 2013). Drawing from this, this paper acknowledges that certain *mangas* can indeed be taken as a serious form of discourse, especially if read critically.

3. Selection of a Japanese *Manga* and a Malaysian *Manga*

The consumption of Japanese *manga* among Malaysian readers has been incremental in the past decade (Roslina Mamat, Yamato Eriko, Sanimah Hussin, & Farah Tajuddin, 2012). In Malaysia, the benefits of using comics or graphic novels as educational platforms have also been documented as of late (Chan, 2018). Thus, this paper compares two examples of *manga*, one from Japan, and another from Malaysia. This should provide useful detail on the underlying abilities of both *mangas* of different national origin in acting as an educational tool. The method used is a content analysis and a critical reading of the source material, according to a list of sociological themes. For the Japanese *manga*, it is still ongoing in both serialised form and volume-based book form (since August 2016), as well as in anime form. Currently, the anime has concluded the run of its first season (October 2020 to December 2020), and the second season is beginning in April 2021. It is broadcast officially on YouTube, under Muse Malaysia's channel, and is available to view for free. As for the Malaysian example, the *manga* was published as a standalone full-length graphic novel in 2016. Thus, to compare both equally, I delimit the timeframe for the Japanese *manga* by accessing its YouTube anime version, cutting off my point of analysis at the end of Season 1 (although I am still following Season 2); and for the Malaysian *manga*, as it is a standalone graphic novel, I limit my analysis to this one volume.

As outlined above, I made my choice of *manga* based on the individual *manga*'s suitability as critical discourse, based on criteria such as accuracy of social reality (no magical realms); culturally odorless-ness (a theory by Iwabuchi (1998) that points out most *manga* have characters which do not resemble any particular ethnic or national origin, i.e., having European appearances but Japanese names); and historically accurate to a reasonable extent. The Japanese *manga* of choice is Yuukoku no Moriarty, or Moriarty the Patriot. The *manga* revolves around social class discrimination in 19th century Britain, and is described as:

"In the late 19th century, Great Britain rules over a quarter of the world. Nobles sit in their fancy homes in comfort and luxury, while the working-class slaves away at their jobs. When young Albert James Moriarty's upper-class family adopts two lower-class orphans, the cruelty the boys experience at his family's hands cements Albert's hatred of the nobility he was born into." (Viz.com)

Moriarty the Patriot's narrative derives from the Sherlock Holmes series by Arthur Conan Doyle, and is a retelling of the origin story of Holmes' antagonist, Professor Moriarty. It is written by Ryōsuke Takeuchi and illustrated by Hikaru Miyoshi, and was serialised in Jump Square magazine

beginning Aug 2016 and was adapted into anime starting Oct 2020. This *manga* is a creative medium of broadcasting social critique, as it uses a sociological analysis of inequality, focusing on social class from a Marxian perspective. Professor William James Moriarty is portrayed as a young mathematics genius teaching at a well-known university (as per common interpretation of Doyle’s novels), but is also running a secret underground criminal network with his two brothers (also named James Moriarty as per the Doyle canon) Colonel Albert James Moriarty and Louis James Moriarty. They are scions of an aristocratic family who aim to overturn the existing social order which they view as oppressing the commoners. In this incarnation, William James Moriarty and Louis James Moriarty are actually adopted orphans who were abused by the Moriarty family matriarch, patriarch, and second son, but together with oldest son Albert, the three “escape” their immediate reality through enforced social change. Subsequently, William becomes a “criminal consultant” to advise oppressed individuals on how to change their circumstances, often through violent means. It should be said that readers should also employ critical reading skills, as with any form of media, as there are elements which may be criminal or revolutionary. Suffice to say any dangerous stunts anywhere should not be tried at home.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian *manga* of choice is called *Kepahitan Tersembunyi* (Malay to English translation: Hidden Pain) by *mangaka* Dreamerz and Leoz (2016), published under Gempak Starz (Chan, 2018). This graphic novel is part of a series called *Citra Kasih* (Images of Love), published by Kadokawa Gempak Starz, Malaysia’s premier *manga* publisher, in December 2016. The *manga* is written in Bahasa Malaysia, Malaysia’s official language. It is conceptualised by Dreamerz and Leoz and authored by Leoz. The editorial board of this comic consists of a multiethnic and multilingual team. The book length is about 150 pages and sells in major Malaysian bookstores, newsstands, as well as online on the publisher’s online store for RM 12 (about USD 3) in West Malaysia and RM 15 (about USD 4) in East Malaysia. I purchased it from my local chain bookstore where it was classified under the *Manga* section (Chan, 2018). The blurb of this book provides this synopsis, which I translated from Bahasa Malaysia into English:

“Joel is often bullied by his seniors. This fact is known to the prefects, but they turn a blind eye because they do not want to get involved. Joel’s patience finally wears thin. He refuses to be bullied anymore and wishes to become stronger. To prove his strength, he starts with...”.

This particular *manga* novel reaches beyond a culturally odorless environment into a recognizable Malaysian landscape, for example through the depiction of Malaysian school uniforms. Similar to the Japanese *manga* above, the Malaysian *manga* also features some delinquent behaviour which readers should assess critically and not try at home. Ideally, both *mangas* are best suited for a viewership of 18 and above, preferably undergraduate age.

4. Thematic Analysis of Sociological Themes/Concepts in Both *Manga*

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of a Japanese *Manga* and a Malaysian *Manga*

Sociological Concepts/Themes	Moriarty the Patriot	Kepahitan Tersembunyi
Ethnicity	The <i>manga</i> is set in 19 th century Britain and thus features an ethnically homogeneous cast of European characters, with appearances that match.	The main character, Joel Lee, is a schoolboy who likes reading and collecting comics, and is a bully victim. He has a Chinese surname and an English first name, a common occurrence among Malaysian Chinese for a variety of reasons, for example, to ease pronunciation by non-Chinese speakers. His father runs a Chinese “wantan mee”

		noodle stall which appears to be part of the informal economy, pegging him to the working class. The stall has a signboard with Chinese letters. His father dresses in a typical middle-aged Chinese stall holder style (Pagoda T-shirt, similar to a tank top) (Chan, 2018).
Social Class	This <i>manga</i> focuses almost exclusively on the nobility in Britain during the first Industrial Revolution and their treatment of commoners which is depicted as often being negative, discriminatory, and abusive. However, not all commoners are depicted as blanket good guys and neither are all aristocrats made to be cruel – that is to say there are a reasonable number of exceptions.	Inequality is a recurring theme. The bullies make fun of Joel for having only RM 20 (equivalent to roughly USD 5) in his wallet. Joel’s wallet is empty after the bullies leave him. Joel’s father runs a Chinese “wantan mee” noodle stall which implies that he is of a low-income category. Joel’s home is small and shabby with necessities (Chan, 2018).
Family & Relationships	The main family in question is an aristocratic one, the House of Moriarty, with three brothers consisting of an Earl (or Count) who has two adopted orphan brothers, and their extended “crime network”. Alternately, the nemesis of the protagonist Moriarty is also portrayed, that is Sherlock Holmes, his housemate Dr. John Watson, and their landlady Ms. Hudson (as well as Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s elder brother). The families in question are not biological nor nuclear families but have a non-kinship-based structure.	Joel lives with his father, Mr. Lee, a “wantan mee” noodle seller, and his mute younger adopted brother, Pico. Joel’s mother passed away from heart disease. Pico was adopted as he was the son of a family friend who is of Japanese ethnicity. He is rendered mute due to the trauma of witnessing his parents’ death in a house fire. Pico adores Joel, but Joel views Pico as a nuisance. Joel and Mr. Lee take notice of Pico’s talent in drawing fan art of their favourite <i>manga</i> (which surpasses Joel’s ability) (Chan, 2018).
Gender	Gender is a social construct that is adhered to largely, though as with most Japanese <i>manga</i> and anime, there is an apparent lack of hegemonic masculinity. Though most of the characters are male, they range across the spectrum from traditionally hypermasculine (Colonel Moran), traditional-instrumentally masculine (Mycroft Holmes), middle-range masculine with a bohemian edge (Sherlock Holmes) to expressive or <i>bishonen</i> (William James Moriarty). There is also a female-to-male gender-bender who is disguising their true identity. As for the few female gender-conforming characters, Ms. Hudson is portrayed as an independent and instrumental young woman who is in charge.	Unlike stereotypical representations of “damsels in distress”, the main female character, Wendy who is also Joel’s love interest, is portrayed as his saviour. She is the one who champions his cause when he feels let down by the authority figures in his life (e.g., his father, the prefects, the school teacher). Wendy is brave enough to stand up to the bullies and later, to Joel when he starts bullying others. Wendy wears a girls’ uniform but is depicted as having short androgynous hair which she still keeps when she is an adult. She outs the bullies to the teacher, who at first does not believe her as the bullies are star student athletes (Chan, 2018).
Power	The central dimension of power examined in this <i>manga</i> is that of social class and estate. The Moriarty	Joel, the main character is a bully victim. School prefects exist but they are afraid to interfere because they might be

	<p>brothers believe in aspiring towards equality, though they aim to achieve it by illegal means, in a fashion akin to Robin Hood by vigilantist social justice.</p>	<p>targeted too. The bullies come from upper-class families and are star students in sports. The class teacher is a typical authoritarian figure who orders his students to sit down as the class is about to start. He also does not appear to care for or to investigate the reasons for Joel wearing sportswear instead of his school uniform and not bringing his textbooks to school (they were taken by the bullies). Instead, Joel is punished to stand outside the classroom. He also believes and reinforces stereotypes that star students do not bully anyone. This is quashed by Wendy. Joel feels let down by the authority figures in his life (e.g. his father, the schoolteacher, the prefects). Joel is toying with the idea of “survival of the fittest” as he is bullied (Chan, 2018).</p>
Moral Values	<p>As this <i>manga</i> acknowledges from the very beginning itself, it is a tale of a well-known fictional antagonist of the Sherlock Holmes series by Arthur Conan Doyle, which is Professor William James Moriarty (name slightly adapted by the <i>manga</i>). He is a known “Napoleon of Crime” and in this incarnation is known as the “Lord of Crime”. Thus, moral values are not the main or direct concern here, though by elimination and critical reading, the <i>manga</i> appeals to one’s sense of social justice.</p>	<p>Wendy is often the voice of reason to Joel. Wendy gives Joel RM 10 when she sees him now oppressing others for money. At the climax of the story, Joel’s bullies (who were beaten up by him) seek revenge. They corner him in an abandoned house when he is trying to burn old mementos (after Wendy appears to dump him for bullying others). A fire starts. Pico, who saw his brother stuck in the burning building, eventually overcomes his inability to speak (as he became mute after seeing his parents die in a fire). Pico saves Joel’s life by screaming for help (Chan, 2018).</p>
“Japanese-ness”	<p>Characters are sometimes depicted as having hybrid features, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. William James Moriarty eats omelette rice which appears to be a dish more common in Japan than in 19th century Britain. 2. There are bonus features or <i>omake</i>, which depicted William James Moriarty as liking Stargazy Pie, a Cornwall delicacy in Britain, but with sardines embedded in a strawberry cake. 3. Linguistic-wise, in this <i>manga</i> Japanese honorifics are used to address characters. 	<p>There are many tributes to Japanese <i>manga</i> within the comic. A Doraemon coin box is clearly shown in one panel. Joel and Pico love a certain <i>manga</i> about mecha, and this <i>manga</i> is excerpted. Joel and Pico also play video games. The bullies bully Joel because he reads the <i>manga</i>, but they seize the <i>manga</i> and read them too. Pico is of Japanese ethnicity. He is also very gifted at drawing <i>manga</i>. At the end of the story, he has become a <i>manga</i> artist based in Tokyo. Towards the end, Joel is a schoolteacher. He and his colleagues openly enjoy <i>manga</i>. He encourages a student who wants to become a <i>manga</i> artist. His female colleague, who is implied to be his girlfriend also displays an interest in <i>manga</i> (Chan, 2018).</p>
Relevance to social issues	<p>Social class stratification is persistent even in contemporary society.</p>	<p>School bullying (and in general) is persistent even in contemporary society.</p>

3. Discussion and Conclusion

From the table above, it is apparent that both *mangas* which were selected based on the aforementioned criteria, namely: 1. *accuracy of social reality (no magical realms)*; 2. *culturally odorless-ness (Iwabuchi, 1998)*; and 3. *historically accurate to a reasonable extent*; possess significant sociological elucidation embedded within their plotlines. These include the abovementioned common themes within sociological literature, including but not limited to: ethnicity, social class, family and relationships, gender, power, moral values, and relevance to social issues. This offers readers informal exposure to these sociological concepts and themes, from a heutagogical or autodidactic perspective (self-learning). Thus, the objective of enhancing one's understanding of abstract concepts can be developed, regardless of whether the reader is a formal student of sociology or a layperson. The latter too may be encouraged to become a formal student of sociology, through the very same means. In addition, this platform opens up discourse into the cultural similarities and differences between Japan and Malaysia, and can also involve cultures from more than just these two countries. It is thus a promising platform to create reflexive dramaturgical understanding, allowing viewers to imagine the social actors in their respective social contexts.

In conclusion, this paper has outlined two examples of *manga*, one Japanese and the other Malaysian, as potential supplementary tools for education. The author intends to continue further research on more *manga* titles to identify and create a database that can be useful for both online and face-to-face classroom education.

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Relative study on digital finance and technological innovation in China

Yu Jingwei

School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: jingweiyu@student.usm.my

Abstract

The study attempts to explore the relationships between digital finance development and technological innovation, evidence from China by employing a panel data of 31 provinces and cities in China from 2011 to 2019. The study shows that a long-run co-integration relationship between digital finance and technological innovation. And from the perspective of the three subdivisions of digital finance, the coverage breadth and usage depth of digital finance are the main factors motivating technological innovation, while the digitization level of digital finance does not significantly affect innovation output. There exists bidirectional causality between usage depth of digital finance and technological innovation, digitization level of finance and technological innovation. The findings of this article can not only enrich the literature on financial functions and technological innovation, but also have practical significance for Chinese government to formulate digital financial policies and regulatory plans, continuing to promote innovation-driven development strategies, and realizing the vision of socialist modernization.

Keywords: Digital finance; Technological innovation; Econometrics; China development.

1. Introduction

China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CICT) released a report recently that China's digital economy reached 36.2 trillion Yuan in 2020, ranking second in the world. Especially under the impact of COVID-19 and the global economic downturn, China's digital economy still maintains a high growth rate of 9.7% in 2020, which becomes a key driving force for stable economic growth. Due to the impact of COVID-19, many enterprises are facing great financial pressure and cash flow crises. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), due to their smaller scale and single business layout, are even less able to resist risks. The traditional financial services subject to their own limitations, cannot effectively meet the financing needs of enterprises and relieve their capital pressure. Under such circumstances, the development of digital finance can make up for the shortcomings of traditional finance, help alleviate corporate financing difficulties, provide financial support for innovative activities, increase investment in innovative research and development, and improve the level of regional technological innovation. Relying on digital technologies such as cloud computing, big data, and block chain, digital finance can effectively reduce the information asymmetry between the supply and demand of funds, thus effectively reduce transaction costs and improve the efficiency of capital use by screening valuable projects beforehand and conducting dynamic supervision afterwards. Meanwhile, digital finance also simplifies loan approval procedures, expands the scope and target of financial services, and provides important support for corporate technological innovation activities.

The research's objective is to explore the relationships between digital finance development and technological innovation in China, by the unit root test, co-integration test, vector auto-regression (VAR) and Granger casualty analysis based on the panel data of 31 provinces and cities in China from 2011 to 2019. Most of the previous literature pays special attention to the impact of traditional financial methods such as capital markets and commercial banks on technological innovation, while little research has been conducted on the impact of digital finance on technological innovation. To

fill this gap in the literature, the study focuses on the effect of digital financial development on regional innovation, aiming to verify the possible paths for digital finance to influence regional innovation, thus making an important contribution to the literature in the field of financial functions. This research also has practical significance. The conclusions of this research will not only help the government better make regional financial policies but also formulate more efficient financial supervision programs.

Following this introduction, the rest of the essay is structured into 5 sections. Section 2 contains the literature review while Section 3 presents the methodology used in this study. The empirical results are reported in Section 4, whereas Section 5 contains policy recommendations.

2. Literature review

Digital finance in developed countries originated in the 1990s. The establishment of E-Trade Company in 1992 marked the birth of the first online securities company in the United States. SFNB, established in 1995, was the first online bank in the United States. In 1997, the first online insurance company was established. While the next year, the first online payment tool Paypal was born. Compared with Western developed countries, China's digital finance started late, but it has developed rapidly. In December 2004, China's first online payment platform (Alipay) officially operated. But it was only used as a payment secured transaction platform for online shopping. It had few financial service functions. It was not until 2011 that Alipay obtained the first domestic "Payment License" issued by the Central Bank of China. In 2013, China's first Internet insurance company "Zhongan" was established. In 2014, China's first online bank "WeBank" was established. Since then, China's digital finance has begun to take off.

Because of the short development history of China's digital finance, early literature mainly used theoretical analysis to explore the causes, development, risk identification and supervision of digital finance in China. Xie Ping (2014) pointed out that China's traditional financial system is less developed. The inefficiency of the traditional financial system led to the inadequate competition of commercial banks, insufficient supply of rural finance, and interest rate controlling which suppresses investment and wealth management needs. Li Jizun (2015) found that the insufficiency of traditional financial supply had greatly restricted the development of corporate innovation activities, but promoted digital finance on the other hand. Huang Yiping and Tao Kunyu (2019) conducted a research of the development of China's digital financial industry, and found that the three important driving forces for the rapid growth of digital finance in China were the shortage of traditional financial services, the lack of severe financial supervision, and the rapid development of digital technology.

In 2016, a special research group from the Institute of Digital Finance at Peking University and Ant Group, published the Peking University Digital Financial Inclusion Index of China (PKU-DFIIC). This index has given the vague concept of digital finance a concrete quantitative indicator. Since then, empirical studies on digital finance based on this set of public data have sprung up. Liang Bang and Zhang Jianhua (2019) conducted an empirical test on listed companies. Their study found that the level of technological innovation of a company is affected by digital finance due to differences in corporate governance, ownership types, and economic regions. Tang Song (2020) found that there were structural differences in the impact of digital finance on corporate innovation, which could effectively solve the problems of ownership discrimination. Sun Jiguo et al. (2020) tested the impact of digital finance on corporate innovation based on the implementation of inclusive finance policies, and found a positive correlation. Xie Xueyan and Zhu Xiaoyang (2021) examined the impact of digital finance on technological innovation of NEEQ companies. They found improving corporate profitability, and improving the effectiveness of fiscal innovation incentive policies were the main

channels for digital finance to promote corporate innovation. Yang Jun, Xiao Mingyue and Lu Pin (2021) found that digital finance significantly promoted the technological innovation of SMEs, and its promotion effect was more prominent in smaller firms. Expanding the coverage of digital finance could promote technological innovation of SMEs more than tapping the depth of digital finance. Wu Qingtian and Zhu Yingxiao (2021) based on data analysis of listed companies, found that digital finance significantly promoted corporate innovation, and that it was the depth of digital finance rather than the breadth of coverage that played a catalytic role. There were differences in the effect of digital finance on technological innovation in different industries.

In the existing literature, most empirical studies focus on the level of SMEs, and seldom consider this issue from the perspective of provinces and cities. In addition, the majority of the research focuses on the influence of overall digital financial development indicators on corporate innovation, with few studies focusing on the subdivision indicators of digital financial development and its possible structural impact. To fill the gap in literature, this article will examine the relationship between digital finance and innovation at the provincial levels; in the selection of indicators, this article will focus on the impact of sub-indexes of the development of digital finance to reveal possible structural differences behind it.

3. Methodology

To estimate the relationship between digital finance and innovation in China, this study collects panel data of 31 provinces and cities in China from 2011 to 2019. Variables include the numbers of patents (PAT) which is collected from China Science and Technology Statistical Yearbook, coverage breadth of digital finance (FB), usage depth of digital finance (FD), and finance digitization level (DG) which is collected from Institute of Digital Finance at Peking University and Ant Group.

Table 1: Description of the data

Variables	Abbr.	Description of the data
the numbers of patents	PAT	Number of authorized invention patents in China's 31 provinces and cities
coverage breadth of digital finance	FB	The proportion of Alipay users who tie their bank accounts and the number of Alipay accounts per 10,000 persons
usage depth of digital finance	FD	It includes sub-indexes like payment, credit, insurance, credit, investment, and money funds
finance digitization level	DG	It evaluates the degree of digitalization of Internet finance from the aspects of credit, mobile, inexpensive, and convenience

The study tries to construct a model to test how digital finance in China affects the innovation level. The model is as follows:

$$PAT = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FB + \beta_2 FD + \beta_3 DG + S \quad (1)$$

Where β_0 denotes the intercept; β_1, β_2 and β_3 are the coefficients; S denotes the error. The descriptive statistical analysis of the raw data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The descriptive statistic for variables

	PAT	FB	FD	DG
Mean	91274	182.25	197.02	278.40
Median	44060	189.28	189.78	313.57
Maximum	807700	384.66	439.91	462.23

Minimum	170	1.96	6.76	7.58
Std. Dev.	130727.1000	90.4738	91.4559	117.6727
Skewness	2.793768	-0.165398	0.068217	-0.729129
Kurtosis	11.881240	2.151163	2.365758	2.444309
Jarque-Bera	1279.876000	9.648174	4.892699	28.310440
Probability	0.000000	0.008034	0.086609	0.000001

Source: Author's Computation using E-views 10

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Unit root test

Before applying co-integration test, we need to meet a pre-condition. The study employed LLC, ADF-Fisher and PP-Fisher methods to estimate unit root. We can see test results from table 3 that at level, the data is non-stationary. However, all the variables are integrated at the first difference.

Table 3: Unit root test

	PAT	FB	FD	DG
Level				
Levin, Lin & Chu t*	7.47381	10.33340	6.00418	2.98370
ADF - Fisher Chi-square	7.43442	2.74033	7.43800	14.47520
PP - Fisher Chi-square	0.62931	3.03763	2.20137	4.61812
First difference				
Levin, Lin & Chu t*	-6.00416***	-14.9876***	-15.8152***	-21.6109***
ADF - Fisher Chi-square	108.7320***	218.3000***	228.1890***	313.2030***
PP - Fisher Chi-square	164.5800***	551.9520***	414.3070***	465.9460***
Notes: The null hypothesis is a unit root for all the tests. Probabilities for Fisher tests are computed using an asymptotic Chi-square distribution. All other tests assume asymptotic normality. *Statistical significance at 10% level. **Statistical significance at 5% level. ***Statistical significance at 1% level.				

Source: Author's Computation using E-views 10

4.2 Co-integration analysis

In order to verify whether there is a long-term equilibrium relationship between China's technological innovation (PAT) and digital finance development (FB, FD and DG), a co-integration test is needed. The study adopted Pedroni residual cointegration test and Kao residual cointegration test. The results of co-integration test show that at a significance level of 5%, a co-integration relationship between technological innovation and digital financial development indicators exists, indicating that China's technological innovation has a long-term co-integration relationship with the FB, FD and DG.

Table 4: Co-integration test

Cointegration Test	Null Hypothesis	Methods	t-Statistic	Prob.
Kao Residual Test	$H_0: p = 1$	ADF	-3.955275	0.0000
Pedroni Residual Cointegration Test	$H_0: p = 1$ $H_1: (p_i < p) < 1$	Panel v-Statistic	5.98829	0.0000
		Panel rho-Statistic	5.04226	1.0000
		Panel PP-Statistic	-1.781294	0.0374
		Panel ADF-Statistic	-1.656897	0.0488

	H ₀ : $\rho = 1$ H ₁ : ($\rho_i < \rho$) < 1	Group rho-Statistic	6.853785	1.0000
		Group PP-Statistic	-10.01453	0.0000
		Group ADF-Statistic	-3.731566	0.0001

Source: Author's Computation using E-views 10

4.3 Model regression analysis

Because the panel data is two-dimensional, if the model is not set correctly, it will cause greater deviations in the parameter estimation results. So we use F-test and Hausman test to judge whether the data adopts a fixed-effect model or a random-effect model. The results are listed in the below tables.

Table 5: Hausman test

Null Hypothesis: The model is a random effects model			
Test Summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Chi-Sq. d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section random	30.09364	3	0.0000

Table 6: F-Test

	PAT	
	Fix Effects Model	Random Effects Model
C	7.659552***	7.423781***
	(67.94104)	(8.239907)
FB	0.282249***	0.214097*
	(5.795932)	(1.755760)
FD	0.341844***	0.473209**
	(5.304819)	(2.531525)
DG	-0.05884*	-0.076857*
	(-1.949497)	(-1.952135)
R²	0.978411	0.654789
Adjusted R²	0.975503	0.651023
Observations	279	279
F-statistic	336.4654***	173.8716***
	[0.0000]	[0.0000]

The t-statistics are given in parenthesis. The p-values are given in brackets.
 *Statistical significance at 10% level.
 **Statistical significance at 5% level.
 ***Statistical significance at 1% level.

Source: Author's Computation using E-views 10

The F-test shows that at a significance level of 1%, the F value is greater than the critical value, so the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that it is more reasonable to establish an individual fixed-effects model for regression. After selecting the basic type of the panel data model, the model is further subjected to Hausman test to make a choice between the fixed effect model and the random effect model. It can be seen from the test results in table 5 that the Hausman test statistic is 30.09364, and the P value is 0.0000 which is less than 0.01. Therefore, the Hausman test results indicate that the null hypothesis of the random effects regression model should be rejected. That is, a fixed effects regression model should be established.

Table 6 illustrates that at the significance level of 1%, FB (t = 5.795932, p = 0.000 < 0.01, coefficient value = 0.28 > 0) has a significant positive impact on innovation. Besides, FD (t = 5.304819, p = 0.000 < 0.01, coefficient value = 0.34 > 0) also has a significant positive impact on innovation. However, DG (t = -1.949497, p = 0.0524 > 0.01, coefficient value = -0.05884 < 0) has no significant

impact on innovation. From the perspective of the three sub-indicators of digital finance, FB and FD are the main factors that motivate enterprises to innovate, while DG does not significantly affect the innovation output of enterprises.

4.4 Granger-causality analysis

The Granger causality test is performed to find the direction of causality between digital finance development and technological innovation. It helps to determine whether the relationships are unidirectional or bidirectional between the variables.

Table 7: Granger-causality relationship

Null Hypothesis	Obs	F-Statistic	Prob.
FB does not Granger Cause PAT	155	3.19877	0.0149
PAT does not Granger Cause FB		2.27383	0.0641
FD does not Granger Cause PAT	155	4.81204	0.0011
PAT does not Granger Cause FD		4.08965	0.0036
DG does not Granger Cause PAT	155	4.61116	0.0016
PAT does not Granger Cause DG		4.58597	0.0016

Source: Author’s Computation using E-views 10

Evidence from Table 7 shows that, at 5% significance level, the null hypothesis of “FB does not Granger Cause PAT” is rejected. At 1% significance level, the null hypothesis of “FD does not Granger Cause PAT”, “PAT does not Granger Cause FD”, “DG does not Granger Cause PAT” and “PAT does not Granger Cause DG” is rejected. It shows that there exists a unidirectional causality running from FB to PAT and bidirectional causality between FD and PAT, DG and PAT.

This study attempts to explore the relationship between digital finance development and technological innovation by employing panel data of 31 provinces and cities in China from 2011 to 2019. The study employed cointegration test to estimate the long-run equilibrium relationship between study variables. After the F-test and Hausman test, the study chose fix-effects model for the regression analysis. The study further employed the Granger-causality test to estimate the direction of causality.

Evidence from the study indicated a long-run equilibrium relationship running from FB, FD and DG to PAT in China. Based on the fix-effects model, it indicated that a 1% increase in FB will increase PAT by 0.28% and a 1% increase in FD will increase PAT by 0.34%. However, DG has no significant effect on PAT. There was evidence of a unidirectional causality from FB to PAT. And there exists bidirectional causality between FD and PAT, DG and PAT.

5. Policy recommendations

Research on the impact of digital finance on innovation is of great significance both in terms of academic value and policy formulation. The research conclusions of this article provide the following policy recommendations for Chinese government to better develop its digital finance reform:

- (1) Given that the development of digital finance contributes to the improvement of the level of innovation, it is necessary to vigorously develop digital finance in China. It is possible to actively implement digital financial projects through policy support, school-enterprise cooperation, etc., and strengthen the construction of digital financial infrastructure, so as to better solve the corporate financing problems and enable them to have more abundant funds for R&D activities.

- (2) In view of the indicators of the digital finance, the coverage breadth and the usage depth of the digital finance have a greater impact on technological innovation, so the government should consciously increase the coverage of digital finance, strengthen the depth of usage, and improve digital finance in payment, credit, insurance, etc. The function of digital finance can make up for the inadequacy of traditional finance to serve SMEs and underdeveloped regions, and can better play its role in promoting entrepreneurship and improving regional development imbalances.

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Women's Empowerment and Activism through Digital Film Storytelling at the Freedom Film Festival

Jia Liu^a, Nor Hafizah Selamat^{b*}

^a Women's Studies Center in Science, Engineering and Technology,
Istanbul Technical University

^b School of Social Sciences, USM

*corresponding author

Email: hafiz@usm.my

Abstract

The generation of young activists increasingly employs documentary films and videos to highlight their activism, particularly in this age of mobile short video. The objective of this paper is to describe how the Freedom Film Festival, a Malaysian human rights-focused film festival, has facilitated women filmmakers to produce and distribute their films independently. Since its establishment, the Freedom Film Festival has screened and funded a variety of movies about marginalized groups, as well as providing a vital platform for young indigenous filmmakers to use film to promote human rights. This study shows how Sabahan women filmmakers are taking control of their own narratives and storytelling practices, and their digital film activism has been supported by Freedom Film Festival. By using a gender lens and theory of empowerment as the framework of analysis, two Sabahan women filmmakers and their documentaries were examined. The findings revealed that an independent production approach and do-it-yourself spirit are beneficial in enhancing women's self-awareness and self-expression. It also draws attention to the role of voice and agency, and demonstrates how women filmmakers exercise strategic forms of agency to amplify their individual and collective voices through the independent filmmaking process.

Keywords

women independent filmmakers, women's empowerment, digital film storytelling, gender analysis, Freedom Film Festival

1. Introduction

Women's studies is not only about women. It is also about comprehending the social institutions and ideological schemata that support men's dominance over women throughout the world's other mutually inflicting regimes of power, such as those of class and race (Pollock, 2015). Pollock goes on to say that images, both in visual culture and in broader societal experiences, are crucial in the construction of sexual difference. The phrase 'coming to voice' has increasingly supplanted the expression 'the personal is political' in the field of gender studies since the 1970s. 'Voice' refers to the collective quest for self-definition and self-determination, which aligns with women's empowerment (Harel and Daphna-Tekoah, 2016; Collins, 1998). Individuals who were previously disempowered can not only enhance their ability to control resources, set agendas, and make decisions by speaking up, but they can also collectively empower their communities by demonstrating alternative ways of 'being and doing'. Film is an important contemporary form of art and the visual feature of film imparts to it a universal power of communication and expression. Kinson (2003) argues that filmmaking facilitates a way of sharing and understanding the multiple ways in which creative work shapes a sense of self-esteem and purpose for those who partake, but

who also perhaps find it difficult (initially) to articulate such benefits. Brylla and Kramer (2018) point out that documentaries have a greater potential than fiction films to impact our attitudes towards and interaction with the world, helping construct our social, cultural and individual identities. Documentaries as social practice are particularly appealing to women filmmakers. Women directed 34.5 percent of documentaries presented at Sundance in the last decade, compared to only 16.9 percent of US narrative films (Makinen, 2013). Yu and Lebow (2020) argue that documentary practice provides a means to express women's eagerness to fight for social change.

Malaysian independent filmmaking has been on the rise since the 2000s, in part due to the increased access to digital technologies. Women filmmakers and activists, many of whom work for gender equality and minority rights, have taken advantage of the growing availability of digital technology such as camera-equipped mobile phones, low-cost digital cameras, and social media to further their goals. Women's growing active participation in independent film and documentary production poses interesting problems about interpretation, portrayal, and empowerment, both on and off camera. In comparison to mainstream national cinema (Malay cinema) and the state, independent filmmaking in Malaysia has the potential to be an alternative and viable arena for creative and political expression, according to Khoo (2008). Since its establishment in 2003, the Freedom Film Festival (FFF) has screened and funded a variety of documentaries on indigenous and minority-rights issues, as well as providing a platform for independent filmmakers who take up such causes, with the support of Pusat KOMAS, a Malaysian human rights NGO. This paper sets out to discuss the role of Freedom Film Festival in facilitating women filmmakers to independently produce and distribute their films. By using a gender lens and theory of women's empowerment as the framework of analysis, this study analyzes how women filmmakers have found their voices through the process of independent documentary filmmaking. Research methods including qualitative in-depth interviews and a narrative approach are employed in this paper. Interviews were carried out with Anna Har, Director of Freedom Film Festival and two Sabahan women filmmakers, Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Role of Freedom Film Festival (FFF)

Pusat KOMAS, a human rights non-governmental organization, has been enabling indigenous peoples, the urban poor, workers, and civil society organizations to campaign for human rights in Malaysia since 1993 (KOMAS website, 2016). The first Freedom Film Festival (FFF) was established by KOMAS in 2003 to promote human rights through social films. Over 40 Malaysian human rights documentaries were produced with the help of the local Freedom Film Festival in 2016. The festival screens around 30 international and local documentaries each year, with a total audience of over 10,000 people (FFF website, 2016). Freedom Film Festival has closely partnered with indigenous people and supported raising awareness of indigenous human rights in Sarawak and Sabah. KOMAS and FFF have been continuously harassed and censored by police. Many films supported and screened by KOMAS and FFF are censored. In July 2021, the office of FFF was raided by police over the release of the short, animated film *Chili Powder and Thinner* (2021) about police brutality. Anna Har and cartoonist Amin Landak were summoned for an investigation (Alhadjri, 2021). Facing such pressure and harassment, FFF has adopted creative solutions to conduct their activism. It partners with a number of organizations such as WITNESS to develop and strengthen solidarity through social media and community engagement. Participating films must be made in either Bahasa Malaysia or subtitled in the national language in order to better communicate with local audiences during cinema screenings. Following each film screening, there will be a discussion. FFF has provided not only a venue for screenings, but also financing options for activist filmmakers. It has established a fund to encourage independent documentary filmmakers with film grants of up to 15,000 MYR. "...it is crucial to have women's voices," Anna Har said of promoting female

filmmakers. “...it makes a difference just giving women opportunities and encouraging them to speak up.” FFF has screened and supported a variety of documentaries about indigenous and minority groups, as well as providing a platform for Sabahan women, including Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah.

2.2 Theorizing Women’s Empowerment

There is a growing body of research on how access to resources can empower women by increasing their economic and political agency (Duflo, 2012; Hanmer and Klugman, 2016) as well as reducing domestic violence and improving self-worth (Kabeer, 2014). Agency can be used in a variety of ways. As a result, there is a crucial distinction to be made between increasing ‘efficiency’ of agency and, on the other hand, ‘transformative’ agency. While the former concerns one’s ability to carry out one’s assigned tasks and obligations, the latter concerns one’s ability to question, reinterpret, and maybe change these roles and responsibilities (Kabeer, 2005). Kabeer (2008a) connects agency to the concept of choice, drawing on Amartya Sen’s (1985) concept of human ‘capabilities’ - the resources and abilities that enable people to attain the range of preferred ways of being and doing feasible in a given community. She defines power as the ability to make decisions, but not all types of decision-making can be taken as evidence of power or empowerment. As a result, empowerment refers to the expansion of individuals who have previously been denied the opportunity to make strategic decisions (Kabeer, 2008b).

Kabeer’s definition of empowerment is a three-dimensional model that includes resources, agency, and achievement. The methods through which decisions are made and implemented are referred to as agency (Kabeer, 2005). Sen’s concept of ‘functionings’, which refers to all conceivable ways of ‘being and doing’ valued by people in a given context, and of ‘functioning accomplishments’, which refers to the specific ways of being and doing realized by different persons, is emphasized by Kabeer. According to Kabeer, the concept of empowerment is inextricably linked to the state of disempowerment and refers to the procedures by which persons who have been denied the ability to make choices gain that ability. This disempowerment view is particularly valuable in discussing the empowerment of women independent filmmakers, who have been historically overlooked, ignored, unacknowledged and denied. Women independent filmmakers who undertake their activism through documentary filmmaking are particularly marginalized by market forces and censorship by government institutions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach to investigate how women filmmakers have found their voices through the process of independent documentary filmmaking. The qualitative data was collected through a semi-structured interview and a narrative approach was employed for data analysis. The qualitative inquiry used in this study allows the researcher to get close to the Malaysian independent filmmaking community and to see the world through the eyes of independent filmmakers, as well as to document the social interactions among these filmmakers.

3.2 Data collection

The data of this paper was based primarily on 12 (twelve) months of fieldwork in Kuala Lumpur which the researcher carried out from January to December 2016. The researcher conducted interviews with 3 (three) prominent filmmakers in Malaysia which is 1 (one) Director of the Freedom Film Festival and 2 (two) Sabahan women filmmakers. Interview questions were semi-structured, drawing on a set of prepared questions but also tailored to the respondents and often modified in

practice. The interviews focused on respondents' life and background, their goal and expression, as well as their access and use of resources and their filmmaking process. Respondents were also asked about their views on gender gaps in filmmaking and how gender, religion and ethnicity shape their views as a filmmaker. The considerations and questions around the experiences and challenges of women independent filmmakers, pointed this research to the direction of reflecting on the theory of power and empowerment, and concept of expression.

3.3 Data Analysis

In-depth interviews were recorded for the entire conversation and were later transcribed. This study used a narrative approach for data analysis. Narrative analysis is used by researchers to understand how respondents create stories and narratives based on their own personal experiences. This is to capture the women filmmakers' voices in the process of independent documentary filmmaking. In narrative analysis, this suggests there is a second layer of interpretation. First, the respondents use narrative to interpret their own life. The researcher then interprets the narrative's construction.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Nadira Ilana - Sabah Story-teller

Big stories, small towns: Bongkud-Namaus (2016) is a participatory community filmmaking project. Bongkud Village is an ethnic Dusun Christian village in Sabah that is relatively unknown to west Malaysians. The community's primary language is a Dusun dialect from Ranau. For a year, Nadira Ilana did a film residency in Kampung Bongkud and its sister town, Kampung Namaus. Ilana took a DIY (Do-it-yourself) method to filming, involving village residents directly in the production. Ilana planned workshops and training to teach residents how to film and photograph with a camera, as well as how to use digital technology to convey a story. Ilana and the residents made 14 short documentaries and three photo series that were premiered at the end of the filmmaker's residency. The project was finally screened at FFF 2016. The *Big stories, small towns: Bongkud-Namaus* initiative is notable in terms of promoting and empowering village residents to participate in mobile digital filmmaking and the creative production process, as well as taking ownership of Dusun narratives on their own. "...By taking the time to get to know the villagers and involving them directly in the shooting process, we've made an extra effort not to objectify them, as has been the norm of depicting indigenous people in cinema and television by most outsiders," Ilana explained. "I want people to understand how complicated and sophisticated country life can be, just like city life."

Ilana's activism began with the FFF's call for film submissions in 2012. "I suffered cultural shock when I returned back to Kuala Lumpur; how Borneo has been cut off from the rest of the world," she said. "The majority of Malaysians are aware of May 13, but few are aware of what occurred in Sabah. We need a place to tell a true indigenous story." Ilana began her research into the 1985 Sabah election, which culminated in riots in Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, and Sandakan. Ilana submitted her film project to FFF in 2012, and was awarded a grant of 6,000 MYR to make her documentary. *The Silent Riot* (2012) subsequently went on to become the first East Malaysian film to win Freedom Film Festival's Justin Louis Award as 2013's Most Outstanding Human Rights Documentary. Collaborating with several independent filmmakers from Sabah and Sarawak and adopting historical documentary filmmaking techniques, Ilana obtained and made use of archival footage - still images and news clips from libraries and various sources to show explosions and protests in 1985. She also conducted additional interviews with politicians and witnesses to offer supplemental opinions. From there, Ilana has continued to strive for a more inclusive cultural representation of Borneo-Malaysians in the national narrative through her films.

4.2 Vilashini Somiah - Documenting Statelessness

Nadira Ilana's fellow Sabahan filmmaker, Vilashini Somiah, highlights concern for marginalized stateless people in Sabah through her crowdfunded documentary, *Di Ambang: Stateless in Sabah* (2014). As a child, she was inspired to produce the documentary after observing stateless children roaming the streets of Kota Kinabalu. "...I used to live in Sabah when I was much younger," she said. "...It's fascinating because they're all over, but no one wants to discuss them." Then, in 2012, Vilashini Somiah and two filmmaker friends began working on the documentary. Authorities interrogated the team and herself multiple times while making the film. "...a lot has to do with the national statistics we disclose every year; it reveals the demographics for each state," she remarked as to what motivates her to engage in activism through filming the documentary. "...every year, each state will see an influx of Malays, Chinese, Indians, foreigners, and refugees, but when it comes to undocumented people, the number is always zero. I believe that if I can use film to talk about problems that you don't want to discuss, you won't have to; you may not like it, you may be uncomfortable, you may be excited, I don't know what happens after that, that's OK, but you'll have reason to say something and discuss; this is just my goal."

Di Ambang follows the lives of undocumented Filipino migrant families living in the Malaysian state of Sabah. Fleeing conflict in the southern Philippines, thousands have migrated across to Malaysia. Following two families through their day-to-day lives, the documentary explores statelessness and the consequences it has on the generations of people living unrecognized by any country. "...what if you were born a criminal?" Vilashini Somiah wondered. "...in Malaysia, not having a document is considered a crime." Adopting a DIY approach, the team of three filled all the roles needed to make the film. Somiah took on roles of director, scriptwriter and researcher. Eventually, the documentary premiered at FFF 2014 and subsequently traveled to several international film festivals. Through their film activity, feminist filmmakers Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah hope to expose and document indigenous people and vulnerable communities. Freedom Film Festival has played a significant role in promoting diversity and inclusion by offering women independent filmmakers and activists such as Ilana and Somiah with an alternative platform to showcase their works and connect to a community of supportive audience members.

4.3 Discussion

Voice, or the act of speaking out, is often identified in gender, feminist and development literature as one of the key conditions that demonstrates women's empowerment (Parpart, 2013). Women's participation in independent filmmaking, in particular the taking on of key roles such as that of a director or producer in turn allows women to make their own decisions and encourages them to seek out challenges and solutions to those issues, which then will increase their sense of agency. Both Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah emphasized that their aim in the documentary film process was to give voice to undocumented and underrepresented marginal groups. Their films specifically critique the discourses of decolonization at the level of interpersonal relationships and attempt to provide participants with new tools for socio-cultural reconstruction through the development of a shared collective voice and knowledge. Ilana's *Big stories* project involved the community of a village taking control of their own expression and Dusun narratives by using digital film storytelling techniques. Similarly, Somiah spent more than one year building rapport with undocumented Bajau and Sulu ethnic groups in Sabah, and followed two families to reinterpret their day-to-day lives. By documenting the daily life experiences of undocumented stateless people, Somiah gave voice to a previously unspoken and invisible issue through digital filmmaking.

Only films certified by Malaysia's National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) are eligible for filming permits, allowing filmmakers to "officially" shoot scenes (Dorall, 2020). In actuality, independent filmmakers rarely seek such permits; instead, they shoot scenes and capture footage using a DIY guerrilla strategy. When film subjects are sensitive to authorities, documentary filmmakers frequently shoot under the radar. Authorities intervened in the shooting of Vilashini

Somiah's *Di Ambang*. The team was cautioned, and the footage from their cameras was screened. Somiah and the team were able to engage in a DIY mentality by taking an independent approach, and as a result, they are more self-empowered to solve challenges on their own while also turning to communities for additional help. Women independent filmmakers begin to discover their feeling of agency and transformation through the independent production process. Somiah noted that as an independent director, she felt more empowered since she did not have to "become a male". In reality, as a female director, she had more options and choices. "...*I assumed I had to be a man to direct [this] film,*" she explained. "...*however, there are numerous advantages to being a woman. They don't want a male until a woman is present, such as when filming a washing scene or a newborn scene. I'm thinking of convincing another woman to trust me because it's easier and less taboo.*"

Due to their choice of being independent, Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah have embraced the DIY ethic, self-producing, publishing and distributing their independent documentaries that touch on social injustice and human rights issues. Adopting an independent filmmaking approach has also shaped the film financing modes undertaken by both Somiah and Ilana. Because of the nature of their films, conventional funding models such as government grants, business sponsorships and bank loans were not considered. Instead, Somiah turned to online crowdfunding, where a group of people pool their money together through the Internet to support causes they believe in. Ilana, on the other hand, received monetary support in the form of a grant from Freedom Film Festival. Ilana and Somiah were both able to gain access to alternative financial resources by following a DIY ethic, allowing them to be free of the controls and limitations of the market-based economy, as well as state actors who may not agree with the voice of their films and their overall expressed messages. Freedom Film Festival offered both of these women filmmakers with an alternative platform to showcase their documentaries, and highlight their valuable voices. As Anna Har puts it, "...*it is important to have women's voices.*"

Kabeer (2008b) distinguishes empowerment through a three-dimensional paradigm that includes resources, agency and accomplishments. These are seen to be closely related since each one builds on and adds to the others. She contrasts between ordinary agency and more significant kinds of agency that reflect strategic life choices, as well as between forms of agency that perpetuate the status quo and those that strive to question, challenge, and perhaps overturn the status quo (Gammage et al., 2016). In this sense, by utilizing the independent production method, Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah were each able to increase their exercise of voice and decision-making agency in spite of challenges and obstacles they both faced. Both of the women filmmakers this study has introduced are committed to documenting injustices and promoting alternative narratives through their documentaries. Nadira Ilana advocates that indigenous stories should be told by indigenous filmmakers, and especially by indigenous women filmmakers. Vilashini Somiah is committed to her cause and continues in raising awareness about the issues. Her overarching purpose in producing her independent documentary was to raise awareness about the issue of stateless people in Sabah, which she hoped would encourage the government to find a constructive solution. By speaking out and giving voice to their concerns, both Ilana and Somiah have not only improved their own ability to make decisions, but also collectively empowered communities through adoption of alternative ways of 'being and doing'. The examples of these two Sabahan women as independent filmmakers are consistent with the literature that consciousness, voice and action are thus all facets of agency and encompass both the individual and collective exercise of agency (Gammage et al., 2016). Their experiences seem to be in line with Kabeer's concept of empowerment, which refers to those who have been denied the ability to make strategic decisions expanding their ability to do so (Kabeer, 2008b).

5. Conclusion

This paper introduces how the Freedom Film Festival has come to occupy a pivotal role in facilitating women filmmakers to independently produce and distribute films that pursue activist themes. It discusses and illustrates how Sabahan women use documentary films and videos to conduct their activism and to promote human rights. From the perspective of empowerment, an independent production approach and do-it-yourself spirit are beneficial in enhancing women's self-awareness and self-expression. This paper draws attention to the role of voice and agency, and demonstrates how women filmmakers exercise strategic forms of agency to amplify their individual and collective voices through the independent filmmaking process. In line with empowerment theory explored in this paper, the two women filmmakers introduced have shown a strong sense of agency and demonstrated their awareness of challenges, transforming and overcoming gendered structures of constraints. Freedom Film Festival's platform has provided an opportunity to showcase a diversity of voices, with specific attention paid to issues of indigeneity and decolonization. Both Nadira Ilana and Vilashini Somiah captured the opportunity to connect in solidarity with the Freedom Film Festival community, to exercise their voices and take control of their own Sabahan narratives.

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Investigating Meaning in Life among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: a Qualitative Analysis

Intan HM Hashim^{a*}
Norzarina Mohd Zaharim^a
Premalatha Karupiah^a
Nor Hafizah Selamat^a
Khoo Suet Leng^a
Syazwani Drani^a
Nur Atikah Mohamed Hussin^a
^aSchool of Social Sciences^a
Universiti Sains Malaysia

Wan Asna Wan Mohd Nor@ Wan Zakaria^b
^bSchool of Distance Education
Universiti Sains Malaysia

*Corresponding author's e-mail: hashimah@usm.my

Abstract

Meaning in life is a key concept in eudemonic well-being. Meaning in life has been associated with stronger resilience and better well-being and health outcomes. Less studies have been conducted in the context of Malaysia and using qualitative approach. To address these gaps, this paper analyzed responses of 1116 emerging adults in Malaysia to open-ended questions related to meaning in life. Adopting Steger's dual conceptualization of the construct, the questions were used to examine the presence, content and search of meaning in life. A majority of participants reported presence of meaning in life. Preliminary findings on the content of meaning in life indicate aspects of interpersonal relationships, achievement, spiritual and service. A large proportion of participants reported as still searching for meaning in life. This analysis shed some lights into how emerging adults in Malaysia conceptualized and viewed their meaning in life. This study provides deeper investigation about meaning in life in the context of Malaysia. It adds to better understanding about the content of meaning in life across wider range of samples and contributes to body of knowledge on meaning in life and eudemonic well-being.

Keywords: Meaning in life, emerging adults, eudemonic well-being

1. Introduction

Meaning in life refers to the presence and effort to search for purpose in life and has been associated with better health and psychological well-being (Lyke, 2017; King & Hicks, 2009; Steger et.al, 2006). Previous research has suggested that meaning in life can protect adolescents from health risk behaviours including drug use, drinking, and sedative use (Brassai, Pik & Steger, 2011). In a study on meaning in life among leukaemia patients in Korea, self-esteem, existential well-being and social support from family and friends were predictive of meaning in life and accounted for 68% of total variance (Hong & Park, 2015). Meaning in life as fostered by support from family and friends and self-esteem can be an important resource that not only protects young people from risky behaviours,

but also buffers them during crises. It can be considered as the key concept that indicate the well-being of an individual.

Emerging adults can be viewed as an important phase in life when meaning in life is formed and developed. Meaning in life has been seen as an important developmental indicator together with other constructs including identity, relationships and goals (Steger, Oishi & Kashdan, 2009). Steger, Oishi & Kashdan explored meaning in life across four different age groups: emerging adults, young adults, middle-age adults and older adults and found that the search for meaning is highest in the youngest group but the presence of meaning is highest among oldest group (2009). While the relationship between the presence of meaning in life and well-being are consistent across different stages of life, people who search for meanings in the later stage of their life reported lower level of well-being. From the above discussion, two things are clear. Firstly, meaning in life is an important indicator of well-being and developmental functioning and that the presence of meaning is lowest among people who are younger.

However, can the same pattern be observed in Malaysia? Culture can play a key role in how people form their meaning in life. In a study on American and Japanese young adults, Americans reported greater presence of meaning while Japanese reported greater search of meaning. Search for meaning appears to operate differently in that it is negatively associated with presence for meaning and well-being for Americans, but vice versa in Japanese sample (Steger, Kawabata, Shimai, & Otake, 2008). This study is part of the effort to extend the studies on meaning in life across different samples and cultures. While we are not conducting any cross-culture comparisons, this study still contributes to a better understanding about meaning in life across a wider cultural context.

Malaysia is diverse in terms of the ethnic and race, religion and language used (Howell, Chong, Howell & Schwabe, 2012). Malaysia, arguably, provides an ideal opportunity to study culturally-constructed and culturally-dependent variables within a single location. Yet, limited research has focus on Malaysia. This study further explores meaning in life by focusing on a relatively understudied population such as Malaysia. This is an important endeavour in order to fully understand meaning in life among emerging adults across different and diverse cultural contexts.

Kok, Goh and Chan (2015) examined the perceptions of a meaningful life among Malaysian youth and found that they have the tendency to associate meaningful life with the ability to pursue a happy life, relationships with significant others and the ability to achieve personal goals. In their study, they employed 270 participants between the age of 15 to 24 years old from Peninsular Malaysia. It will be interesting to discover whether similar patterns in content of meaning in life can be observed in this study. In this study, bigger sample (1116) is employed to capture a wider range of responses.

Meaning in life often refers to the presence of and the effort to search for meaning and purpose in life (Steger et.al, 2006). This definition implies the two major elements of the construct; the presence and the search for meaning. Presence of meaning is characterized by the perceptions of one's life as meaningful while searching for meaning is associated with an active discovery to seek a sense of meaning in one's life (Steger et.al, 2006). A person with high level of meaning in life often tries to find the meaning in his or her life by continuously questioning and discovering purpose in life. The answers to the question on the meaning in life relates to the understanding of one's goals and achieving directedness and intentionality (Ryff & Singer, 1989).

A lot of studies in meaning in life has taken the quantitative approach (Czekierda, Banik, Park & Luszczynska (2017). While these studies contributed a lot to the understanding about meaning in life, they did not offer a complete story. It is important to understand narratives associated with meaning in life This study is looking at meaning in life in a qualitative way by analysing responses to open-ended questions on meaning in life. It analysed responses of 1116 emerging adults in

Malaysia to open-ended questions related to meaning in life. Adopting Steger's conceptualization of the construct, the questions were used to examine the existence, content and presence of meaning in life.

Earlier studies mainly employed Western samples (Lyke, 2017; King & Hicks, 2009; Steger et.al, 2006). It is important for more studies in this area to focus on samples other than Westerns. This paper contributes to more understanding about meaning in life in the context of emerging adults in Malaysia. It addresses the gap of qualitative understanding about the construct in non-Western samples.

2. Methodology

Participants

Participants were 1116 emerging adults in Malaysia. They responded to open-ended questions related to meaning in life. From 1116, 890 (79.7% are females). Mean of age is 22.3 (SD 2.19) years. While the majority were students (93.7 %), there were participants who were working. A large proportion were ethnic Malay (54.7 %) and ethnic Chinese (34.7 %),) but there were representatives from other ethnic groups in Malaysia (e.g. ethnic Indians, ethnic from Sabah and Sarawak and others).

Measures

The analysis is looking at two aspects:

The demographic section contained questions on age, gender, ethnicity and religion, previous academic achievement, and parental education and income.

Meaning in life

1. Do you feel your life is meaningful?
2. What is the meaning of your life?
3. Are you still searching for meaning in life?

Open ended responses to the three questions were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a method of analysis employed to quantify the occurrence of certain words, phrases, subjects or concepts in open-ended texts (Elo et.al, 2014). In this study, responses to three open-ended questions on meaning in life were analysed to identify the patterns. Frequency tables of these responses were generated using SPSS. Verbatim is provided to illustrate the analysis further.

3. Results

Do you feel your life is meaningful?

A large proportion (more than 65 %) of the respondents reported having meaning in life. Many just gave a short answer of "yes". Some gave a longer answer of explaining the reason to their response of having meaningful life. For example:

Ya sebab saya dikelilingi oleh orang yang saya sayang (Yes, because I am surrounded by people I love). (Female, 23).

I feel that is quite meaningful when I got short term and long term aim, so I need to always find an aim to achieve. (Female, 23).

My life feels meaningful when I am around the people who makes me happy like friends and families or when I am doing the things that I love. It doesn't feel meaningful all the time obviously but those are the times when I feel like my life is the most meaningful. (Female, 23).

For those who did not say their life is meaningful, the answers are not straight “No”. Instead most gave less definite answer:

Maybe sometime. (Female ,23)

Not sure. (Female, 22)

Not too meaningful. Always have predicaments (Male, 21)

50-50. (Female, 22)

What is the meaning of your life?

The second question focuses on what is the meaning of their life. They can be categorized into several domains including relationships, achievement, service to others and spiritual. Below are some examples of the responses:

Can stay happily with the people [I] loved. (Female, 22) – Relationships

To achieve the short and long term aims like travelling, own a property. (Female, 24), Achievement.

Help others [and] family (Female, 22), Service.

Makna kehidupan saya adalah melakukan sesuatu yang diredaai oleh Allah. My meaning life is to do something that is approved by Allah. (Female, 21)- Spiritual

Are you still searching for meaning in life?

Majority (98 %) answered that they are still searching for meaning in life. Below are some of the responses:

I [am] still searching for many ways to make my family happy. That’s all. (Female, 22)

Yes, still seeking the answer to do what I need to do to live a happy life ahead. (Male, 21)

Yes, I still work hard in order to achieve my lifetime target (Male, 22).

The search for meaning is often associated with unfinished tasks of searching for ways to find happiness for themselves and their family and achieve goals.

4. Discussion

This analysis shed some lights into how emerging adults conceptualized and viewed their meaning in life in the context of multicultural Malaysia and using qualitative approach. While a large proportion of respondents (more than 65%) reported that they have meaning in life, there are still many not having meaning in life. This is somewhat consistent with Steger, Oishi & Kashdan (2009)’s findings that suggest the presence of meaning is lowest among the youngest group (2009).

Meaning in life is associated with domains salient to emerging adults which include interpersonal relationships and achievement. What is important is also spiritual and service. This is related to the study by Kok, Goh and Chan (2015) on the perceptions of a meaningful life among Malaysian youth.

In their study, meaningful life is associated with the ability to pursue a happy life, relationships with significant others and the ability to achieve personal goals. Spiritual and service are two emerging themes found in this study. A majority of our participants were university students and these may reflect their life experience in which both aspects/domains may be more emphasised.

Almost all respondents reported still searching for meaning in life. This is indeed consistent with the findings by Steger, Oishi & Kashdan who found the search for meaning is highest in the youngest group (2009).

The above findings have several implications. While it provides evidence for the dual dimension of meaning in life i.e. the presence and search for meaning, it also provides more information related to the content of meaning in life. This study highlights the need to closely examine the content of meaning in life which may be influenced hugely by culture. What is interesting is that Malaysian emerging adults are still searching for meaning in life. It is important to provide guidance and assistance to young people who are still searching for meaning in life. Positive psychology intervention that is based on meaning may be an option to help children build their meaning in life. Relevant programs and activities can be designed and conducted to assist children in developing their sense of purpose in life. Educational policy in Malaysia that emphasises on holistic development of children provides the right backdrop for such programmes.

While the study aimed to capture the experience of emerging adults, most of the participants were university students. This represents a limitation of this study and findings should be treated with caution. Future studies should aim to capture broader range of emerging adults' experience including those not attending universities.

This study provides more understanding related to presence and search for meaning in life in the context of Malaysian emerging adults. It also provides more information related to the content of meaning in life. Clearly, more studies are needed to further understand this issue.

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Persahabatan Akrab: Meneroka Makna Keakraban dalam Persahabatan Berlainan Jantina

Noraida Aziz^a, Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil^{b,*}

^{a b} Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: hafeezapazil@usm.my

Abstrak

Hubungan persahabatan merupakan salah satu hubungan interpersonal yang sangat penting dalam kehidupan seseorang. Persahabatan akrab mempunyai pelbagai makna bergantung kepada pendapat setiap individu. Antara permasalahan yang mendorong kepada penulisan ini ialah tidak ada kajian yang benar-benar memahami dan mencari makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina secara spesifik dan jelas. Oleh itu, tujuan utama penulisan artikel ini adalah untuk meneroka dan menjelaskan makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina berdasarkan kepada perspektif gender dan agama dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu yang beragama Islam. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif menerusi kaedah temu bual mendalam yang telah dijalankan secara atas talian. Informan kajian yang terlibat adalah tujuh orang pelajar Universiti Sains Malaysia berumur antara 19 hingga 25 tahun yang merupakan etnik Melayu dan beragama Islam. Dapatan yang dibincangkan dalam artikel ini menekankan kepada persamaan makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina dengan persahabatan akrab yang lain namun berbeza dari beberapa perspektif. Perbezaan tersebut adalah berdasarkan pada batas pergaulan, emosi dan sensitiviti, rahsia dan kepercayaan serta persaingan. Malah, hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina bukan hanya sebuah hubungan yang bersifat platonik iaitu tanpa emosi dan tarikan seksual tetapi juga melibatkan hubungan romantik. Artikel ini memberi pemahaman terhadap amalan persahabatan akrab dan intimasi khususnya dalam hubungan persahabatan berlainan jantina dan mencadangkan kajian yang lebih mendalam terhadap aspek tersebut.

Kata Kunci: persahabatan akrab, makna, persahabatan berlainan jantina, hubungan platonik, amalan intimasi

1. Pengenalan

Ahli falsafah Yunani iaitu Aristotle menjelaskan bahawa perkataan persahabatan berasal daripada perkataan Greek iaitu *philia* (Pahl, 2007). Persahabatan akrab merupakan hubungan yang terjalin secara sukarela dan bersifat peribadi (Jerrome, 1984) dan dianggap sebagai sebagai hubungan yang tidak diinstitusikan kerana kewujudan hubungan ini merupakan inisiatif peribadi dan peluang sosial (O'Connor, 1987). Persahabatan akrab juga merujuk pada sebuah perhubungan sosial yang melibatkan kecenderungan peribadi seseorang untuk berkongsi kasih sayang, mencipta nilai dan norma serta panduan untuk mendasari perhubungan tersebut yang boleh dianggap sebagai sebuah hubungan yang intim (Eve, 2016).

Hubungan persahabatan bukan dilihat berdasarkan kriteria seperti ikatan darah dan kekeluargaan serta hubungan dalam perkahwinan (Allan, 1977). Sebaliknya, persahabatan adalah hubungan yang dekat dengan seseorang secara emosi, seseorang yang paling dipercayai dan menyenangkan, serta seseorang yang dirasakan paling dikenali dan telah dikenali dalam tempoh masa yang lama (Spencer dan Pahl, 2006). Makna dan pengkategorian persahabatan yang spesifik sukar dilakukan kerana bergantung pada definisi yang diberikan oleh pengkaji terdahulu. Menerusi artikel ini, pengkaji mengupas makna persahabatan akrab secara khususnya terhadap persahabatan berlainan jantina

yang didapati berbeza berbanding kajian yang terdahulu. Artikel ini mempunyai kepentingan yang tersendiri kepada masyarakat terutamanya dalam membantu mereka dalam memahami makna sebenar persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina dalam perspektif gender serta agama Islam. Hubungan persahabatan mempunyai pelbagai makna bergantung kepada definisi serta pandangan setiap individu (Lenton dan Webber 2006). Makna persahabatan akrab mempunyai tafsiran yang berbeza berdasarkan kepada gender dan agama. Keakraban mengubah makna dalam hubungan persahabatan berlainan jantina. Perkara-perkara tersebut jelas memperlihatkan bahawa tidak ada kajian yang betul-betul meneroka makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina dalam perspektif gender dan agama terutamanya agama Islam. Oleh itu kajian ini adalah penting untuk mengisi kelompangan yang ada terutamanya dalam meneroka makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina. Unit analisis bagi kajian ini ialah individu yang mempunyai sahabat akrab berlainan jantina yang beragama Islam.

2. Sorotan Karya

Hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina mendapat kedudukan yang sangat unik dalam masyarakat. Monsour (2002a) berhujah bahawa individu yang terlibat dalam hubungan persahabatan akrab ini dilihat lebih menghargai perubahan perspektif, interaksi dan kehadiran persahabatan berlainan jantina berbanding dengan persahabatan sama jantina. Meneliti hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina memerlukan definisi asas dan pemeriksaan konsep persahabatan (Turner, 2016). Sahabat ialah individu yang menjadi peneman, pemberi sokongan, dan menerima semua ciri yang membantu dalam perkembangan identiti dan meningkatkan kualiti pengalaman dalam kehidupan (Baumgarte, 2002). Kasih sayang dan sokongan dalam hubungan persahabatan terbukti berbeza mengikut jenis persahabatan, iaitu dalam hubungan persahabatan sama jantina dan hubungan persahabatan berbeza jantina. Menurut Bell (1981) persahabatan sama jantina antara perempuan bersifat ekspresif dan dilihat lebih intim berbanding persahabatan sama jantina antara lelaki yang lebih bersifat instrumental dan kurang intim.

O'meara (1998) telah mengenal pasti empat cabaran utama dalam hubungan persahabatan berlainan jantina iaitu cabaran dalam (1) menentukan jenis ikatan emosional yang dialami dalam hubungan, (2) berhadapan dengan isu seksualiti, (3) berhadapan dengan isu ketidaksamaan gender dalam hubungan, dan (4) cabaran untuk menunjukkan hubungan tersebut secara terbuka. Hubungan antara lelaki dan perempuan sering dikaitkan dengan hubungan seksualiti dan romantik sehingga menjadi kekangan untuk masyarakat menjalinkan hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina (Hill, 2009). Kajian oleh Kaplan (2007) mendapati bahawa 58 peratus daripada informan kajiannya mempunyai tahap yang rendah terhadap tarikan seksual dalam hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina. Manakala, Sapadin (1998) menerusi kajiannya terhadap 150 orang lelaki dan perempuan berkerjaya mendapati bahawa orang perempuan tidak cenderung terhadap ketegangan seksual, sebaliknya orang lelaki menjadikan tarikan seksual sebagai faktor utama mereka menjalinkan hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina. Cabaran dalam hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina yang dinyatakan dalam kajian-kajian terdahulu ini menguatkan lagi keperluan untuk pengkaji menjalinkan kajian ini.

3. Metodologi Kajian

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang dikembangkan dalam sains sosial untuk mengkaji fenomena sosial dan budaya dalam kajian ini. Dua kaedah pensampelan bukan kebarangkalian digunakan untuk menentukan informan yang dipilih bagi mewakili populasi kajian. Kaedah pensampelan yang digunakan ialah pensampelan bertujuan dan pensampelan bola salji (*snowball sampling*). Kaedah pensampelan bertujuan ialah satu kaedah yang menetapkan kriteria tertentu dalam mencari informan yang boleh dan bersedia memberikan maklumat berdasarkan pengetahuan dan pengalaman (Sheppard, 2006). Informan kajian perlu menepati kriteria berikut:

1. Umur antara 19 hingga 25 tahun
2. Warganegara Malaysia
3. Etnik Melayu dan beragama Islam
4. Pelajar Universiti Sains Malaysia
5. Mempunyai sahabat yang berlainan jantina sekurang-kurangnya seorang

Pengkaji juga menggunakan kaedah pensampelan bola salji untuk mencari informan kajian. Informan sedia ada memperkenalkan informan berpotensi kepada pengkaji menerusi kaedah ini. Seramai tujuh orang informan dipilih dalam kajian ini. Kekangan menjalankan kajian dalam tempoh Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan dan talian internet yang tidak stabil menyukarkan pengkaji untuk mendapatkan informan. Pengkaji menggunakan kaedah temu bual mendalam untuk mendapatkan data dan maklumat daripada informan kajian. Dalam kajian ini, temu bual dijalankan secara atas talian iaitu melalui aplikasi Webex dan Whatsapp. Temu bual yang dijalankan mengambil masa sekitar satu jam hingga satu jam setengah bagi setiap informan. Temu bual yang dijalankan direkodkan dengan persetujuan informan. Pengkaji menggunakan kaedah analisis naratif untuk menganalisis data kajian. Pengkaji menggunakan rakaman yang telah direkodkan sebagai instrumen penting untuk memastikan analisis data dapat dilakukan secara terperinci.

4. Hasil Kajian dan Perbincangan

Artikel ini menjelaskan bahawa persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina merupakan persahabatan yang mempunyai banyak aspek yang sama dengan jenis persahabatan yang lain terutamanya persahabatan akrab sama jantina. Berdasarkan temu bual bersama informan kajian, walaupun secara umumnya makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina tidak jauh berbeza dengan makna persahabatan yang lain, terdapat juga beberapa perkara yang menunjukkan kelainan bagi hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina. Antaranya adalah dari segi batas pergaulan, emosi dan sensitiviti, rahsia dan kepercayaan serta persaingan.

4.1 Batas Pergaulan

Batas pergaulan merupakan aspek yang sangat penting dalam melihat perbezaan antara persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina dan persahabatan sama jantina. Pengkaji mendapati bahawa dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina, batas pergaulan menjadi salah satu halangan untuk informan menjadi lebih akrab secara fizikal bersama sahabat mereka. Hal ini berbeza dengan pergaulan informan dengan sahabat sama jantina apabila mereka mempunyai ruang untuk menjadi lebih akrab secara fizikal.

***IKA:** Perbezaan yang sangat ketara dalam persahabatan akrab saya dengan sahabat lelaki dan perempuan ialah batas pergaulan. Bersahabat dengan lelaki memerlukan saya untuk menjaga batas pergaulan termasuk aurat, percakapan dan tingkah laku. Sebaliknya dengan sahabat akrab perempuan, saya bebas untuk bergaul tanpa batasan yang menjadi penghalang antara kami. Contohnya apabila bergurau kami boleh bersentuhan dan ketika berkongsi masalah melibatkan emosi kami masih boleh berpelukan antara satu sama lain. Perkara-perkara tersebut memang tidak dibenarkan dalam pergaulan antara saya dengan sahabat lelaki.*

Penjelasan Ika membuktikan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang ketara dalam aspek pergaulan antara sahabat akrab berlainan jantina dengan sahabat akrab sama jantina. Menurut Ika, batas pergaulan dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina juga meliputi batas aurat dan percakapan. Kebanyakan informan juga beranggapan bahawa batas dalam pergaulan antara lelaki dengan perempuan sebagai panduan penting dalam persahabatan melibatkan jantina yang berbeza. Penjelasan ini dapat disokong oleh Manaf et al. (2014) yang membincangkan tentang agama Islam meletakkan garis panduan yang

penting dalam pergaulan antara lelaki dengan perempuan yang tidak mempunyai ikatan kekeluargaan atau ikatan perkahwinan supaya tidak berlakunya pergaulan yang bebas. Walaupun kesemua informan cakna tentang batas pergaulan ini, mereka tidak pula menjadikan perkara tersebut sebagai alasan untuk tidak menjalinkan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina.

4.2 Emosi dan Sensitiviti

Hasil kajian turut mendapati bahawa perasaan selesa (Monsour, 2002b) dan gembira (Greco et al. 2018) merupakan salah satu ciri yang mendorong seseorang individu untuk kekal dalam ikatan persahabatan. Pengkaji telah mengenal pasti stereotaip dalam kalangan informan yang menyatakan bahawa sikap sesetengah rakan perempuan yang terlalu mengikut emosi, sensitif dan mudah terasa menjadi antara penyebab yang mendorong informan perempuan lebih selesa untuk menjalinkan persahabatan akrab dengan lelaki berbanding persahabatan akrab sama jantina. Namun begitu, melalui kajian ini pengkaji juga menyedari bahawa mempunyai sahabat yang sensitif terhadap sesuatu perkara sebenarnya mempunyai impak yang positif kepada hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina terutamanya kepada golongan lelaki. Menurut Rawlins (2000), hubungan persahabatan merupakan hubungan yang mudah rapuh disebabkan persahabatan merupakan ikatan yang terbentuk secara sukarela. Beliau menjelaskan bahawa persahabatan merupakan ikatan yang tidak mempunyai mekanisme undang-undang yang boleh mengikat seseorang untuk terus bersama seperti ikatan perkahwinan. Oleh itu, pengaruh emosi dan sensitiviti juga mampu untuk mendatangkan keselesaan dan kegembiraan yang membuatkan seseorang itu terus bertahan dalam ikatan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina.

ALIA: Saya lebih selesa untuk bersahabat dengan lelaki sebab golongan lelaki mereka tidak terlalu mengikut emosi dan tidak mudah terasa berbeza dengan perempuan yang selalu mengikut perasaan. Apabila bersama sahabat akrab perempuan banyak perkara yang membuatkan saya merasakan hubungan kami terbatas semuanya disebabkan oleh sikap perempuan yang terlalu mengikut emosi dan sensitif. Saya memang tidak akan menegur atau membetulkan kesilapan yang dibuat oleh sahabat akrab perempuan saya apabila saya merasakan perkara tersebut salah tetapi kalau dengan sahabat lelaki saya akan menegur dan memberi nasihat kepada mereka secara terus.

Alia menyatakan bahawa perbezaan emosi dan sensitiviti diantara lelaki dengan perempuan menyebabkan dia lebih gemar untuk berkawan dengan lelaki termasuklah sahabat akrabnya, Aiman. Menurut Alia, sikap perempuan yang terlalu mengikut emosi dan mudah terasa membuatkan dia sukar untuk memahami dan berkomunikasi dengan baik apabila bersama mereka. Alia juga menjelaskan bahawa dia tidak akan membetulkan kesilapan atau menegur kesalahan yang dibuat oleh sahabat akrab perempuannya kerana perkara tersebut akan menyebabkan hubungan mereka menjadi semakin renggang. Stereotaip gender ini turut dinyatakan oleh informan-informan lain dalam kajian ini mengenai perempuan yang dilihat sebagai sensitif dan mudah terasa membuatkan mereka lebih selesa untuk mendiamkan diri berbanding memberitahu perkara yang sebenar kepada sahabat mereka supaya tidak menimbulkan salah faham antara satu sama lain.

4.3 Rahsia dan Kepercayaan

Pengkaji mendapati bahawa rahsia merupakan maklumat sosial yang sangat berharga bagi setiap individu. Rahsia dan kisah peribadi merupakan perkara yang tidak sesuai untuk diceritakan kepada sembarangan orang. Oleh itu, perkongsian rahsia sangat berkait rapat dengan ciri pemilihan sahabat akrab (DeScioli dan Kurzban, 2009). Hal ini turut dikongsikan oleh Chelune et al. (1984) bagi memastikan pendengar merahsiakan perkara yang dikongsikan, seseorang individu itu biasanya akan

selektif dalam memilih orang yang mereka percaya untuk berkongsi cerita. Mereka turut menyatakan bahawa sahabat akrab merupakan antara individu yang terpilih untuk seseorang berkongsi cerita dan meluahkan perasaan yang dianggap terlalu peribadi. Berdasarkan temu bual yang dijalankan, terdapat informan yang menjelaskan bahawa aspek kerahsiaan merupakan salah satu aspek yang membezakan sahabat akrab berlainan jantina dengan persahabatan akrab yang lain terutamanya persahabatan akrab sama jantina. Zaim salah seorang informan lelaki menjelaskan bahawa dia lebih percayakan sahabat akrab perempuan untuk berkongsi rahsia serta matlamat hidup.

***ZAIM:** Kami selalu meluangkan banyak masa bersama dari situ sedikit demi sedikit kami mula berani untuk berkongsi cerita atau rahsia peribadi masing-masing. Saya berpendapat bahawa sahabat perempuan lebih pandai menjaga rahsia berbanding sahabat lelaki. Contohnya, katakan hari ini saya menceritakan kepada sahabat lelaki saya tentang orang saya minat, keesokan hari pasti kawan-kawan saya yang lain juga mengetahui tentang perkara tersebut termasuk orang yang saya minat itu sendiri.*

Menurut Zaim, dia mempercayai sahabat akrab perempuan berbanding sahabat akrab lelaki untuk berkongsi atau bercerita perkara yang dianggap terlalu peribadi baginya. Sikap lelaki yang suka mengusik dan bergurau menyebabkan dia tidak terbuka untuk berkongsi perkara yang melibatkan emosi dan perasaan. Hal ini disebabkan oleh beliau tidak mahu perkara yang dianggap serius dijadikan sebagai lawak dan jenaka oleh mereka. Zaim mengakui bahawa dia boleh bergantung dan mempercayai sahabat lelakinya apabila melibatkan perkara-perkara yang penting seperti untuk meminta bantuan kewangan dan bantuan-bantuan fizikal yang lain tetapi bukan untuk berkongsi rahsia peribadi. Zaim juga menyatakan bahawa faktor kurangnya perkongsian perkara yang melibatkan emosi dan kerahsiaan merupakan salah satu sebab tahap keintiman dalam persahabatan lelaki adalah lebih rendah berbanding tahap keintiman dalam persahabatan sama jantina antara perempuan. Bank dan Hansford (2000) turut memperoleh dapatan yang sama daripada informan lelaki dalam kajian mereka iaitu dalam persahabatan akrab sama jantina individu lelaki mempunyai keintiman rendah kerana mereka kurang berkongsi perkara yang berkaitan dengan emosi sesama mereka.

4.4 Persaingan

Seterusnya, dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa seseorang individu itu akan bertahan dalam sesebuah persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina sekiranya mereka mampu mendapat faedah dan manfaat yang jauh lebih baik daripada hubungan sosial yang lain termasuk persahabatan sama jantina. Persaingan merupakan aspek yang dikenal pasti boleh mendatangkan kesan yang positif dan juga kesan yang negatif dalam kehidupan seseorang bergantung kepada penerimaan mereka terhadap persaingan tersebut. Oleh itu, kurangnya persaingan dari sudut yang negatif menjadi alasan salah seorang daripada informan kajian iaitu Ika lebih gemar memilih untuk menjalinkan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina berbanding persahabatan sama jantina.

***IKA:** Persaingan dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina akan meningkatkan motivasi diri saya tetapi persaingan dengan sahabat perempuan akan menyebabkan masing-masing bersikap mementingkan diri sehingga pada akhirnya boleh menyebabkan hubungan persahabatan kami musnah.*

Hasil kajian ini dapat disokong oleh kajian Hibbard dan Buhrmester (2010) yang merumuskan bahawa perempuan mengalami tekanan yang tinggi ketika menghadapi persaingan dengan sahabat akrab sama jantina. Hal ini berbeza pula dengan lelaki yang menganggap persaingan sebagai perkara yang menyeronokkan. Massey dan Parker (2018) turut menjelaskan bahawa persaingan dalam

persahabatan akrab antara perempuan dengan perempuan mendatangkan lebih banyak kesan yang negatif berbanding impak yang positif. Menurut Ika persaingan dalam persahabatan akrab antara perempuan akan menjadi lebih negatif apabila salah seorang mendapat keputusan yang cemerlang. Keadaan tersebut akan mendorong wujudnya perasaan cemburu dan sikap tidak berpuas hati di antara satu sama lain. Persaingan dan perasaan cemburu ini seterusnya akan menimbulkan kesan yang negatif terhadap corak persahabatan terutamanya persahabatan akrab sama jantina. Beberapa orang pengkaji juga berpendapat bahawa persaingan tidak sesuai dalam persahabatan kerana ia cenderung merosakkan sesebuah hubungan (Massey dan Parker, 2018).

4.5 Kategori Sahabat Akrab Berlainan Jantina

Pengkaji mendapati bahawa hubungan persahabatan akrab dalam kajian ini terbahagi kepada dua kategori iaitu persahabatan yang platonik serta persahabatan yang melibatkan hubungan romantik. Hasil kajian ini adalah berbeza dengan kajian barat seperti kajian oleh Connolly et al. (1999) cuba untuk memisahkan hubungan yang platonik dengan hubungan romantik daripada hubungan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina.

4.6 Hubungan Platonik

Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina mampu untuk dikekalkan sebagai hubungan yang platonik. Persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina memberikan nilai tambah kepada persahabatan sama jantina dan hubungan berpasangan yang lain terutama dalam aspek akademik dan kehidupan seharian. Hal ini demikian kerana jangkaan yang diberikan oleh informan kajian terhadap persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina adalah sama dengan jangkaan yang diberikan kepada sahabat akrab sama jantina. Pengkaji turut menemukan beberapa cabaran dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina seperti yang diketengahkan oleh O'Meara (1989). Antara cabaran-cabaran tersebut adalah peluang, seksualiti, keterikatan emosi, ketidaksamaan gender dan cara mereka mempersempah persahabatan mereka di hadapan umum. Seorang informan iaitu Aina menjelaskan bahawa dia mempunyai perasaan romantik terhadap sahabat akrab lelakinya tetapi dia membuat keputusan untuk mengabaikan perasaan tersebut kerana dia risau perasaan tersebut akan membuatkan persahabatan mereka bermasalah.

AINA: Saya pernah bertekad untuk tidak mempunyai perasaan yang lebih daripada sahabat apabila bersahabat dengan lelaki tetapi perhatian dan cara layanan yang diberikan membuatkan saya selesa dan sukar menolak perasaan itu untuk, muncul. Sejajurnya saya pernah mempunyai perasaan yang lebih daripada sahabat terhadap dia. Saya sedar perasaan tersebut tidak sepatutnya muncul dalam persahabatan kami. Oleh itu, saya memilih untuk tidak meluahkan perasaan tersebut kepadanya. Saya lebih sanggup mengetepikan perasaan tersebut berbanding kehilangan sahabat akrab lelaki seperti dia.

Penjelasan Aina membuktikan bahawa walaupun dia cuba untuk mengekalkan persahabatan mereka sekadar sahabat akrab tanpa melibatkan perasaan romantik namun perasaan tersebut tetap muncul di dalam hatinya. Gillespie et al. (2015) berpendapat bahawa tarikan seksual sukar untuk dielakkan dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina. Walaupun ramai rakan-rakan perempuan Aina yang mendesaknya untuk meluahkan perasaan tersebut terhadap sahabat lelakinya itu, dia memilih untuk terus kekal sebagai sahabat berbanding menjalinkan hubungan romantik. Aina juga merasakan bahawa walaupun mereka bersahabat akrab namun perasaan yang sama tidak semestinya wujud dalam diri sahabat lelakinya itu. Oleh itu, Aina memilih untuk mengekalkan persahabatan mereka sebagai hubungan yang platonik kerana dia amat menghargai hubungan persahabatan akrab berbeza jantinaananya itu dan menganggap persahabatan itu lebih bermakna daripada hubungan yang lain.

Berdasarkan dapatan ini, pengkaji dapat membuat kesimpulan bahawa walaupun seseorang itu cuba untuk memisahkan persahabatan dan hubungan romantik, namun perasaan romantik dan tekanan seksual itu boleh wujud dalam persahabatan akrab berbeza jantina. Individu seperti Aina memperlihatkan bahawa terdapat individu yang sanggup berkorban untuk melindungi persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina yang sedia ada.

4.7 Hubungan Romantik

Beberapa kajian terdahulu (Fehr 1996; Lenton dan Webber 2006) telah memberikan definisi persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina sebagai persahabatan yang bersifat bebas daripada hubungan romantik. Walau bagaimanapun, hal ini adalah sangat berbeza dengan dapatan yang ditemukan dalam kajian ini. Definisi persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina tidak semestinya sebuah persahabatan yang platonik kerana terdapat juga individu yang menganggap teman istimewa mereka juga sebagai sahabat akrab. Hasil kajian ini menyokong kajian Aukett et al., (1988) yang menjelaskan bahawa kegagalan pengkaji terdahulu memberikan makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina disebabkan oleh sebilangan peserta kajian yang menganggap teman istimewa mereka sebagai sahabat akrab. Zaim merupakan salah seorang informan tersebut.

***ZAIM:** Teman wanita saya ialah sahabat akrab saya sejak saya belajar di Universiti Sains Malaysia. Apabila bersama dengannya, saya rasa dia melengkapkan semua perkara sama seperti apa yang keluarga dan sahabat lelaki saya mampu berikan kepada saya.*

Menurut Zaim, dia menganggap pasangan romantiknya sebagai sahabat akrab kerana teman istimewanya memainkan peranan yang sama seperti keluarga dan sahabat akrab yang lain iaitu sebagai sumber sokongan dan tempat berkongsi cerita. Pengkaji mendapati bahawa keselesaan dan persefahaman yang tinggi antara satu sama lain juga membuatkan Zaim dan teman istimewanya merasakan bahawa mereka tidak memerlukan individu lain yang berlainan jantina untuk berfungsi sebagai sahabat akrab dalam kehidupan masing-masing. Jeske (2019) turut menyatakan perkara yang sama iaitu keselesaan merupakan salah satu kriteria penting dalam persahabatan akrab.

5. Rumusan

Kesimpulannya, berdasarkan kepada objektif kajian iaitu untuk meneroka makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina, hasil kajian mendapati makna persahabatan akrab berbeza jantina daripada persahabatan-persahabatan yang lain berdasarkan kepada aspek seperti batas pergaulan, emosi dan sensitiviti, rahsia dan kepercayaan serta persaingan. Aspek-aspek berikut mampu memenuhi jangkaan seseorang terhadap sahabat sehingga mendorong mereka untuk menjalinkan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina (Hall, 2015). Terdapat beberapa hasil kajian yang penting dan perlu diberikan perhatian dalam meneroka makna persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina iaitu kategori persahabatan itu sendiri. Kajian terdahulu sering membincangkan tentang persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina sebagai satu hubungan yang tidak bersifat romantik (Cingoz, 2003) . Namun, artikel ini telah mengenal pasti bahawa setiap individu mempunyai kebebasan untuk meletakkan makna persahabatan akrab ini sama ada dalam kategori hubungan yang platonik mahupun hubungan yang romantik. Oleh itu, kajian ini menekankan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina bukan hanya terdiri daripada hubungan platonik malah melibatkan hubungan romantik. Kajian ini telah membantu pembinaan makna persahabatan dan konsep keakraban dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina melalui konteks gender dan agama. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa perbezaan makna dalam persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina telah membawa kepada konsep persahabatan berbeza

terutamanya dalam konteks amalan intimasi. Artikel ini dijangkakan dapat membantu pengkaji yang akan datang untuk memfokuskan kepada kajian yang melibatkan persahabatan akrab berlainan jantina berdasarkan kepada aspek agama dan latar belakang budaya yang berbeza terutamanya di Malaysia.

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The Path of Social Worker Participation in the Protection of Vulnerable Children in China: Empowerment Perspective

Chunmei Huang^{1,2}, Paramjit Singh Jamir Singh¹ and Azlinda Azman¹

¹Social Work Programme, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia.

²Department of Law and Public Administration, Yibin University, 644000 Yibin, China

Abstract

This study analyzes the concept, value basis, levels and aspects, and empowerment model. Furthermore, it points to the current difficulties faced by protecting vulnerable children. Firstly, the rule of law dilemma; fragmentation of laws and regulations. Secondly, the dilemma of the policy system. The problem orientation and unsatisfactory policy cannot meet the practical needs of protecting vulnerable children. Thirdly, the Social power involved in child protection is limited; the service is insufficient. Thus, this article examines a social work intervention method based on individual active empowerment and external power promotion. At the individual level, promote children's protection awareness. It focuses on the interpersonal level and the services provided by families, schools, and teachers at the interpersonal level. At the environmental level, it focuses on strengthening the child protection mechanism, system construction, improving the service capacity of social workers, and building a child-friendly community.

Keywords: Empowerment; Social work; protection of vulnerable children

1. Introduction

There are some violations of children's rights, such as violence, child labor, trafficking, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation/cutting, and child marriage. Millions of children worldwide experience the worst kinds of rights violations. Millions more children, not yet victims, are inadequately protected against them. UNICEF uses the term 'child protection' to refer to the prevention and response to violence, exploitation, and abuse in all contexts (UNICEF, 2015). The 2030 sustainable development goal adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 clearly states that all forms of violence against children will be eliminated by 2030. It is not hard to see that the world is committed to protecting vulnerable children.

In China, the first normative document that officially mentioned the term "vulnerable children" was the "*china children's development program (2001-2010)*" issued by the State Council in May 2001. In the file, it is stated that the general goal of "optimizing the environment for children's growth and providing special protection for the children in need (China, 2001) . The term "vulnerable children" was formally established in a regulatory document which "opinions of the state council on strengthening the protection of vulnerable children" issued by the State Council on June 13, 2016. It is the first time that the concept of vulnerable children has been authoritatively defined at the national level. The Chinese government began to implement a living allowance system for orphans in 2010, which initiated the rapid development of China's child welfare. Therefore, 2010 is the first year of child welfare in China. On May 6, 2013, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the "*notice of the ministry of civil affairs on the implementation of the pilot work for the social protection of minors,*" which decided to select 20 pilot areas across the country to conduct the pilot work for the social protection of minors. On July 31, 2014, a decision was made to actively add 72 pilot areas nationwide to promote minors' social protection. Accompanying this series of policies and measures, the protection of minors in China has reached a new level.

The "notice of the general office of the state council on establishing a leading group for the protection of minors of the state council" was issued In April 2021. The notice proposes that implementing the "law of the people's republic of china on the protection of minors" and other laws and regulations strengthen the overall planning, coordination, supervision, and guidance of minors' protection further to protect the physical and mental health of minors. Furthermore, to maintain youths' legal rights and interests, the State Council decided to establish a leading group to protect minors under the State Council as the State Council's deliberative and coordinating agency. These measurements reflect the emphasis on protecting minors at the national level.

The revised draft of the "*law of the people's republic of china on the protection of minors*" was reviewed and passed On October 17, 2020. For the first time, social workers were included in the law, and their involvement in protecting minors was specified in the government and judicial protection provisions. The revised draft of the "*law of the people's republic of china on the prevention of juvenile delinquency*" was deliberated and passed on December 26, 2020. In this document, social workers were also included in the law for the first time and were mentioned five times. The above two laws are of milestone significance for the social work of protecting minors. Social work should give full play professional advantages and protect children in difficulties under professional theories.

As a concept introduced by the west country, empowerment has been widely used in social work academia, which is used to research social work services for disadvantaged groups such as children and the elderly. The concept, hypothesis, and empowerment framework are consistent with social work's value viewpoint and analytical perspective. It can be seen from previous research results that research related to empowerment showed an upward trend since 2010. Empowerment has a profound impact on disadvantaged groups. Given that, this article analyzes the intervention path of social work from the perspective of empowerment to promote children's protection. This article will combine individual active empowerment and external power promotion to find three possible levels.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The core concepts and assumptions of empowerment theory

The "empowerment" theory is constructed by power, powerlessness, and disempowerment concepts. Power is the core concept of empowerment. "power" is an individual's awakening to self-consciousness and the realization of oppression. Only through this perceived empowerment process can we see more opportunities for choice. In order to promote the transformation of the individual or the surrounding environment, the individual can finally escape the process and results of oppression and the original community life and develop in the direction of changing society (Lee, 1994).

The value foundation of empowerment is rich in connotation, including the following five assumptions: (1) Because individuals have experienced a deep and comprehensive sense of powerlessness, they are unable to communicate with the environment and realize themselves; (2) There are direct and indirect power barriers around individuals that prevent them from participating in society and politics and realizing themselves; (3) Power can increase and derive more personal and interpersonal power through social interaction; (4) The client should be regarded as competent and valuable individuals; (5) Social workers should establish a partnership with the client (Weaver, 1982).

Generally, Tong (2018) believes that if an individual or a group lacks the power or ability to obtain the required resources and falls into a state of powerlessness, they will be in trouble. In order to

change this status quo, it is necessary to redistribute the power, and empowerment is the fundamental way to achieve this goal. Individuals, groups, or organizations exert control and influence over others, organizations, and society through their abilities and resources. Individuals who lack this kind of power, that is, their ability and resources, are powerless (Liu, 2010). Ning (2013) believes that empowerment is tapping the potential ability. According to the empowerment theory, individuals should be viewed as capable and valuable. It is stated that everyone cannot lack power. Others do not give personal power, which must continuously increase through social interaction. Empowerment theory aims to help clients gain the motivation to control their living space and development.

Consequently, this method can reduce oppression in social situations. Chen (2003) believes that the core of empowerment is to provide resources and cultivate knowledge and abilities, which turn the weak with passive personal abilities into active strong so that their ability to control their lives will be improved. The author, combined with the existing reference literature, elaborated on the connotation of empowerment: Empowerment means empowering and increasing power and tapping the potential.

2.2 Levels and aspects of empowerment

There are two ways regarding the levels of empowerment, including three divisions and four divisions. The three divisions mainly involve the individual, interpersonal and political, individual, organization, and community levels. Some scholars (Gutierrez, 1990, 1995; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991) believe that empowerment involves three levels: personal, interpersonal, and political (Gutierrez, 1990, 1995; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991, Wang, 2007). Other scholars (Zimmerman, 1990; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995) believe that empowerment involves three levels: individuals, organizations, and communities. (Zimmerman, 1990; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; as cited in Wang, 2007). Fan (2004) holds a similar view and believes that the empowerment practices of the disadvantaged groups in China are divided into three levels: individual, interpersonal relationship, and social participation. Wang (2007) stated that the four empowerment perspectives are mainly divided into four levels: personal, interpersonal, micro-environment and organization, and macro-environment or social politics.

Regarding the aspect of empowerment, Some scholars believe there are three aspects. Huang and Li (1996) believe that empowerment has three aspects: facing the disadvantaged group itself; facing the social power relationship of the disadvantaged group; facing the overall society and the disadvantaged group's new world outlook and values (Huang & Li, 1996, as cited in Fu, 2020). Huang (2005) believes that empowerment includes the grasp of power, the struggle for rights, and the protection of rights and interests (Huang, 2005, as cited in Wang, 2007) .

2.3 Model of empowerment

Related scholars have also researched the model of empowerment. The empowerment model of disadvantaged groups is divided into two primary models: individual active empowerment and external power promotion. The "individual initiative model" emphasizes the decisive role of individuals in the process of increasing power, which assumes that power exists in the case owner, Not outside the case owner (Zhang, 2001); Increasing power is not to "empower" the case owner, but to tap or stimulate the potential of the case owner (Chen, 2003). The "external force promotion model" emphasizes the external force in increasing power. It advocates that the subject of vulnerable groups should be activated through external forces. The continuous circulation and construction of the interaction between the object and the subject should be used to continuously increase rights

(Fan, 2004). By changing their social environment and increasing their possibilities so that their abilities and skills can be fully cultivated, they can gain more control over the resources and means of their own life (Staples, 2016, as cited in Fu, 2020). From a practical perspective, "social workers are mainly empowered from three levels: (1) for the individual level, making the client feels that he or she is capable of influencing or solving problems; (2) for the interpersonal level, which refers to helping individuals obtain experience that cooperates with others to facilitate solutions problem; (3) for the environmental level, improve social system or structure about the client" (Ning, 2013).

3. The dilemma of vulnerable children protection

Following investigation and analysis, it is determined that children living under challenging circumstances face significant psychological, behavioral, and interpersonal communication difficulties. Their overall resistance is low, influenced by internal and external protective factors (Li, 2020). Children's predicaments in distress mainly include life difficulties, learning and education difficulties, psychological and interpersonal difficulties. The main reasons that cause troubled children to fall into trouble are the loss of family functions, the imperfection of the national system, the lack of support and specialization of social organizations, and the individual's physical defects (Mo & Feng, 2019). Faced with these realities, China's government and related entities have made some efforts to improve the living conditions of vulnerable children, but there are still numerous difficulties.

The following aspects exemplify the plight of vulnerable children:

3.1 Firstly, the rule of law dilemma; fragmentation of laws and regulations.

Yao (2019) points out that there are currently six significant problems in protecting: difficult to find, difficult to report, challenging to intervene, challenging to interact, challenging to supervise, challenging to hold accountable. In China, special protection for vulnerable children is insufficient, especially for minors in trouble due to sexual assaults and other criminal acts. The shortages include the following: the related laws and regulations are scattered, comprehensive evaluation systems are lacking, rescue agencies and staff are insufficient, the supporting mechanism is not perfect and other issues. Zhong and Chen (2014) pointed out that the protection of children in difficulty, especially unattended children in China, have problems such as system negligence, lack of early warning, and improper rescue methods. The institutional reasons are the weak enforcement of the legal system, the difficulty of transferring guardianship, and the backward assistance methods. Xiao (2014) also believes that current legislation on children's policies in China is decentralized. Relevant laws and regulations on child protection still show fragmented features, lacking "clear and operable welfare policies that can target all children." Traditional Chinese family view is the cultural reason for this status quo.

Wu (2014) found that the legislation on protecting children's rights is relatively fragmented. The existing protection of children's rights and the child welfare law cannot form a complete system and lacks effective convergence with other laws. Some scholars believe that although domestic violence, including child abuse, is a crime, the lack of a unified judicial interpretation and implementation rules for these crimes has become an obstacle to timely and effective intervention and prevention. Usually, it will be dealt with by the relevant department only if it causes serious consequences. In the case of minor injuries to children, even if the victims report the case, they are rarely accepted. There is currently no specific crime of child abuse in *Criminal Law*. The "Opinions on Establishing a Compulsory Reporting System for Cases of Minor Violations" will be issued in 2020. However, Tang (2020) believes that the mandatory reporting system still has many shortcomings in terms of incomplete report subjects, incomplete report content, and unclear report time limit.

3.2 Secondly, the dilemma of the policy system; the problem orientation and unsatisfactory policy cannot meet the practical needs of the protection of vulnerable children.

China's child welfare undertakings have certain limitations. The primary manifestation is that the design of the child welfare system still adopts the traditional "problem-oriented" welfare strategy. That is, focusing on the rescue strategy after children become troubled children; the design of the child welfare system "Emphasize children and despise families"; Subjects providing child welfare are limited, and the way of supplying welfare is single (Man & Wang, 2016).

Zhang (2017) believes that the top-level design of China's welfare presents a tendency of institutional fragmentation, which is mainly reflected in the unification of the welfare provision, the simplification of welfare provision content, and the simplification and limitation of welfare delivery methods. Li (2019) stated that there are the following problems in the protection policies for vulnerable children: at the policy formulation level, the legal provisions of the report are ambiguous, lack of support for the original family and foster families, the barriers to entry for identifying the categories of children in difficulties are too high, and the policies lack cohesion; at the policy implementation level, some community workers misreported or under-reported the condition of children in difficulties. Children in difficulties did not participate in the needs assessment. In addition to the lack of practicality and low frequency of policy evaluation training content, Individual government departments did not implement policies in place; at the policy evaluation level, The independence of the third-party policy evaluation system is insufficient, and the public participation rate in the policy evaluation is low.

3.3 Thirdly, the Social power involved in child protection is limited, and the service is insufficient.

Social organizations have advantages in protecting vulnerable children, but structural dilemmas exist. Social organizations have the advantages of demand-oriented services, the advantages of action, and the organizational advantages of diversified participation in precision universities. However, there are also problems that social organizations do not have high autonomy in protecting vulnerable children, rely too much on the government, have excessive responsibilities but insufficient capabilities, and lack specialized social organizations (Xu & Tao, 2020). Huang and Peng (2018) proposed two protection practices for children in difficult situations: the project and embedded systems. They analyzed that the project-based child protection practice in distressed children can integrate the resources of relevant child protection departments to provide services for vulnerable children. However, it will be affected by the effectiveness and risk of the project-based service periodicity project. The embedded protection of children in trouble can fully use the existing administrative service organization system to provide for children in trouble. However, it will be affected by the shortcomings of the administrative system, and it is not easy to achieve the expected service effect.

There is a lack of social workers, professional competence, and the public's low awareness of social workers. As of the end of 2020, the total number of talents engaged in social work in China has reached 1.5 million, and the number of certified social workers has exceeded 660,000, far from reaching the goal of the 2020 social work talent development plan. The services for children with difficulties in urban and rural areas are unbalanced and different.

The child director has an identity dilemma and lacks working ability. The policy of Children's Director Policy was implemented in China in 2019. Children directors are typically village (neighborhood) committee members, college student village officials, or professional social workers. Child directors are vital in protecting children in difficulties because they are the last mile to protect children. Their identity, professional service capabilities, and talent protection all affect the development of the protection of children in difficulties. However, the diversity of policy subjects and the multiple roles of child directors lead to ambiguity; the lack of professional knowledge and service skills leads to the lack of child directors' ability; the lack of policy funding and incentive mechanisms leads to the lack of child director guarantee (Huang, 2020).

4. The social work service intervention countermeasures: empowerment perspective.

The author feels that the individual active empowerment model and external force promotion model should be combined to protect vulnerable children. The individual level of internal empowerment, that is, focuses on children themselves. External empowerment focuses on the interpersonal level and the environmental level.

4.1 Individual-level, Focus on the children themselves.

The protection of children in need includes two parts, one is injury prevention, and the other is injury response. In terms of injury prevention, social workers can use community activities to popularize and pass on child protection-related knowledge and enhance children's self-protection awareness. Help them avoid injury and know how to respond if it is violated. In China, some domestic social service organizations, such as girl protection organizations, local Care Service Centers, and other organizations, specialize in providing girls services to prevent sexual assault and promote children's self-protection. by this way, social organizations can do an excellent job in prevention. In terms of injury response, social workers should work with the children in need with an equal and accepting attitude under the guidance of the social worker's professional values, provide protective services, link resources, and protect their legitimate rights and interests. To prevent it from being harmed again. Thirdly, in terms of protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable children, social workers can participate in the discovery, reporting, evaluation, review, rescue, and supervision of vulnerable children. This way, Vulnerable children can receive direct professional services from relevant departments such as civil affairs.

4.2 Interpersonal level, focus on child's home, school, teacher.

Firstly, from the family aspect, Improve family guardianship capabilities and strengthen guardianship of children with difficulties. Family guardianship is the foundation, and the related law also gives the family guardianship responsibility. Zhao et al. (2018) have proposed family-centered protection strategies for vulnerable children. It can be seen that the family plays an essential role in it. Secondly, elementary and middle schools can incorporate child protection courses into the school education system. In this regard, we can learn from the South Australian curriculum. The "Safety" child protection curriculum has the dual goals of enhancing children's self-protection ability and consolidating the social consensus on child protection.

The child protection curriculum designs related courses according to different student grades. The course focuses on systematicity, development suitability, life, and operability, which has multiple guarantees from the government, schools, and teachers in implementing the course. Thirdly, it develops school social work. Social work's values, scientific knowledge, and methods can compensate for the lack of "great moral education" in today's schools (Xu, 2012). the teachers could play an essential role in providing school children with reliable and objective information about the CPS (child protection services) (Viset et al., 2022). Some scholars have proposed the socialization of teachers and the "teaching of social workers." Schools can set up some social service courses to improve the resilience of children with difficulties so that teachers can learn relevant theoretical knowledge and use them in their daily dealings with students. At the same time, professional social workers come into the classroom regularly to understand the situation of children in difficulties and improve work efficiency (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Due to increased interaction time with students, teachers can intuitively understand and observe children's learning and living conditions when they encounter difficulties. Socialization of teachers in the school system to provide relatively formal education will aid in disseminating child protection knowledge in schools.

4.3 At the environmental level, it is essential that build a good ecosystem.

4.3.1 Strengthen child protection mechanisms and system guarantees. In 2019, China established the Child Welfare Department, and each province and municipality has set up child welfare offices accordingly. In 2019, China established a child welfare department and provincial and municipal child welfare offices. Since then, child welfare work has advanced to a new level. However, the guardianship system is not sound due to the discovery reporting mechanism. The lack of a risk assessment mechanism makes it impossible to immediately remove children in crisis or potentially dangerous situations. Furthermore, the linkage mechanism between relevant departments is not perfect, making it difficult for children in difficulties to be placed later (Bo, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to establish a multi-party linkage mechanism, a funding guarantee mechanism, a risk assessment mechanism for children in difficulties, and a service assessment mechanism for children in difficulties in terms of system guarantee. It is also necessary to complete the establishment of national, provincial, municipal, district (city), and county minor protection coordination mechanisms from top to bottom, refine and clarify the work responsibilities of each member unit, and clarify the lead unit and responsible unit.

4.3.2 Follow the mandatory reporting system. In May 2020, China promulgated the "opinions on establishing a compulsory reporting system for violations of minors (Trial)," which pointed out that schools, communities, social workers, and child practitioners all have relevant reporting responsibilities. The mandatory reporting system needs to be better understood in social work. Social workers discover that children have been subjected to, or are suspected of having been subjected to, illegal infringement or are in danger of being subjected to such infringement. They must perform their mandatory reporting obligations and report to public security organs on time. Furthermore, social workers should promote publicity of the compulsory reporting system in community education and youth social services so that more people understand the critical reporting system, clarify the reporting responsibility, and carry out the compulsory reporting responsibility.

4.3.3 Improve the capacity of child service providers and build child-friendly communities.

Improve the children's director's professional capacity. The most basic level of child welfare workers is the community-based child director. Thus, it is crucial that by providing them with training to assist them in improving their service capabilities. Besides, strengthen the professional capabilities of service providers in social service agencies who work with vulnerable children. It is necessary to strengthen the management of service institutions and employees. Select professional social workers with solid ability and excellent quality as a service provider. The services provided include preventive, development, and protection services to troubled children and families.

Moreover, building child-friendly communities create a good community environment for children's survival, development, and growth. Encourage children and families to take part in the development of child-friendly communities. Prosecute the establishment of a Children's Council. Encourage community children to participate in social affairs in the community and help them improve their participation skills. These are viable options.

5. Conclusion

Faced with the various difficulties of protecting vulnerable children, we should regard empowerment as a guide to improving the plight of vulnerable children. Due to the particularity of vulnerable children, the empowerment of vulnerable children is different from the empowerment of adults. In practice, maximizing children's interests should always be the principle. Pay attention to the essential guardianship of the family, strengthen national guardianship, and absorb social forces to jointly build

a solid protective barrier for the protection of children in difficulties. In specific practical scenarios, social work agencies and social workers should provide services based on the protection needs of children in difficulties.

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A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON MATERNITY EXPERIENCES FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN THE MALAYSIAN WORKPLACE

Nor Hafizah Selamat¹, Intan Hashimah Mohd Hashim,^{1*} Noraida Endut², Shariffah Suraya Syed Jamaludin¹, Sharifah Zahhura Syed Abdullah, Nurul, Suziana Mat Yasin¹, Nurul Jannah Ambak, Faiz Fansuri, Farah Syazwani Hayrol Aziz

¹School of Social Sciences, USM

²Unit for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA), USM

*corresponding author
Email: idaman@usm.my

Abstract

Although a substantial majority of Malaysian women in the workforce are of reproductive age, many of them still face maternity issues at some point throughout their careers. In Malaysia, there have been reports of job discrimination based on pregnancy but this subject has not been further explored. Thus, the aim of this paper is to explore the maternity experiences including pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal and postnatal care, and support received as experienced by female employees in Malaysia. Using a case study of a public institution of higher education as a workplace site, the paper is based on two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with female academic and administrative staff who were pregnant or had given birth during their employment period. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The main findings revealed that although women feel that their employer gives adequate maternity leave, they are sometimes required to “double up” their work output in anticipation of the leave. Supportive families and employers will produce more efficient and successful employees. It shows that reasonable adjustments in terms of maternity policies at the workplace including allowing sufficient time in postnatal appointments, offering a clear explanation of maternity issues at the workplace, and provision of lactation room are considered good maternity practices. These practices are important in hindering potential discrimination and fulfilling the good maternity protection practices to ensure employees have the ability to enjoy the right to work.

Keywords

Maternity experiences, maternity protection, women and work, gender, public universities

1. Introduction

Pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, which the legislation prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity. The act of discrimination includes treating a woman less favourably because she is breastfeeding, as well as instances of unlawful discrimination that could include a female employee being dismissed or made redundant. Besides that, a refused promotion; denying the right to return to the same job or having some of her responsibilities taken away because of pregnancy or maternity leave could also be a part of the discrimination act at the office (Adams et al, 2016). Since a substantial majority of Malaysian women in the workforce are of reproductive age, they may face maternity discrimination at some point throughout their careers. The age range of 25-29 years old is currently the largest age group of women in the Malaysian labour force. (Department of Statistics, 2015). In Malaysia, more than 60%

of women in the age ranges of 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, and 45-49 are employed (ibid.). Almost 62 percent of Malaysian workers are married, indicating a significant likelihood of engagement in child-bearing and child-rearing at some point in their marriage life.

As a result of their condition, working women experiencing pregnancy and related maternity conditions may encounter health challenges, as well as other difficulties and disadvantages at work. There have been a few cases of pregnancy-related workplace discrimination in Malaysia, such as the case of Beatrice Fernandez v Malaysia Airlines and Anor. Beatrice's position with the airlines was terminated after she refused to resign when she became pregnant. Beatrice filed a lawsuit against the airlines, alleging that a clause in the collective agreement was discriminatory and violated Article 8 of Malaysia's Federal Constitution. Beatrice's appeal was dismissed by the Federal Court. The second case is Noorfadilla Ahmad Saikin who sued the government in 2010 after Hulu Langat district education officers cancelled her appointment as a temporary teacher in 2009 after learning of her pregnancy. In 2011, the High Court awarded her RM300,000 in damages but the compensation was reduced by 90% after the government filed an appeal. While Malaysian society claims to encourage family life and nation-building, of which the maternal experience is a big part, the judgments in these two cases show that there is a lack of awareness of the necessity for and extent of the State and society's involvement in supporting the two items.

It is important to study and examine the challenges women faced throughout their maternity experiences, particularly in the context of sustaining their livelihood and economic activities, in order to provide the best maternity protection in regard to this issue. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to present a discussion of women employees' maternity experiences in Malaysia by examining the kind of maternity protection they experienced at work and whether workplace norms and practices are conducive or sufficient to provide protection for women during pregnancy.

2. Literature Review

The state or quality of being a mother is referred to as maternity. In many countries, maternity protection in the workplace focuses on benefits provided by employers to female employees in relation to giving birth processes. As a result, maternity protection usually entails the granting of maternity leave shortly after or soon before giving birth, as well as the continuation of a full or partial wage or stipend during the maternity leave period. Since its first Maternity Protection Convention in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has gradually expanded the scope of its definition of maternity protection. As a result, the ILO has included other items in its efforts to address these concerns, such as protection from dismissal on the basis of pregnancy or maternity, health protection at work during pregnancy, paternity and parental leave, and breastfeeding facilitation. In Malaysia, employment is governed by statutory rules (including subsidiary legislation) and employment contracts in general. According to Section 37 of the Employment Law Act of 1955, every female employee is entitled to a minimum of 60 days of maternity leave for each pregnancy. Female employees in the public sector are entitled to 300 days of maternity leave over the course of their careers, with each pregnancy requiring 60-90 days of leave (Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 14 Tahun 2010). A female employee is entitled to a maternity allowance while on maternity leave, as long as she meets certain criteria. It should be noted that if a female employee has five or more surviving children at the time of her current pregnancy, she is no longer eligible to maternity leave. Furthermore, employers in Malaysia are not required by law to give medical benefits related to maternity leave. Many employers, on the other hand, do so in the form of a hospital fee allowance at the time of delivery. Since 1995, Malaysia has been a signatory to the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Article 11 (1) of CEDAW states that states must take necessary steps to eliminate discrimination against women in the workplace by ensuring, among other things, the protection of workers' rights to health and safety, including the protection of women's reproductive functions. This includes prohibition of

dismissal on the ground of pregnancy, provision of paid maternity leave, promotion of the development of child-care facilities and provision of special protection for pregnant women in types of work that may be harmful to them.

In Malaysia, there have only been a few research on maternity protection in the past. Jashpal Kaur Bhatt's thesis from 2014 is perhaps the most recent and comprehensive research of maternity protection in Malaysia. The thesis explores the legal protection of pregnancy and maternity in Malaysia's private sector. She argues that the existing method to protection, which she believes not very effective, is insufficient in accommodating women who are pregnant. The existing rules and regulations, as well as the actions that go along with them, fall short of international labour norms and human rights principles. She suggests that the government should enhance its involvement in providing protection for female employees by amending the law to provide more comprehensive benefits for them. Other scholarly work in this field does not particularly address maternity protection issue, but it may be of great interest to maternity context. Geetha Subramaniam completed a thesis in 2011 about the benefits of flexible working arrangements for women. Her research indicates, among other things, that workplace flexibility may help working women achieve a better work-life balance, particularly among married women with young children (also see Geetha and Doris, 2010). This is important in the context of women's postpartum problems, which fall under the umbrella of maternity protection. Noraini Mohd Noor and Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin (n.d.) wrote on work, family, and women's welfare in Malaysia, and examined the disparities between the reality for women in achieving work-life balance and the policies available in Malaysia. Women's work-life balance must always take into account their reproductive responsibility. Thus, the aim of this paper is to explore the maternity experiences including pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal and postnatal care, and support received as experienced by female employees in Malaysia.

3. Theoretical Framework

By using the social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976) and sense of entitlement, this study will explore the experiences of workers with family responsibilities on maternity protection issues. This theory is proposed based on the fact that when employees perceive themselves to be fairly and considerately treated by employers who value their contributions (via work-life balance policies and family-supportive organizational culture), they will be more satisfied and therefore more likely to reciprocate through a commitment to the organization and productivity (Baker, 2008; Adams, 2005; Adams, 2016; Callender, 1997; Corell, 2007). The recent systematic review by Stumbitz et. al (2018), revealed that knowledge about gendering and embodiment during return to work and breastfeeding is also very limited. There is an urgent need for research to move beyond the 'malestream' of predominantly quantitative surveys and engage in the complex and embodied transition from pregnancy to maternity leave and then paid work. By also using the gender perspective as the main lens to analyse the experiences, the outcome of this study will enable researchers to critically analyse the challenges and the good practices of maternity protection in Malaysia

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling method

This study is part of a bigger project where the study population also includes employees and employers in public, private and statutory bodies in four (4) states: Penang, Perak, Perlis and Kedah. However, for this study only 2 Focus Groups will be selected for the analysis of this paper. The 2 groups consist of 10 employees from a public institution of higher education in the northern area.

Using a case study of a public institution of higher education as a workplace site, the FGDs were conducted with female academics and administrative staff who were pregnant or had given birth during her employment period. The academic group is between the ages of 29- 47 years while the administrative is between the ages of 27- 36 years. The participants were recruited by contacting the Head of Departments, to nominate voluntary potential candidate based on the inclusion criteria stated. Prior to the interview, the respondents were briefed on consent form to ensure their confidentiality were protected. Due to Covid19 pandemic, both FGDs were conducted online

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

	Name	Age	Position
1.	Ain	48	Admin
2.	Sarah	31	Academic
3.	Azizah	38	Admin
4.	Fazia	27	Admin
5.	Rozana	36	Admin
6.	Nurul	29	Academic
7.	Zaharah	47	Academic
8.	Zainab	35	Academic
9.	Siti	33	Admin
10.	Putri	29	Admin

4.2 Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded for the entire conversation and were later transcribed. This study used a data analysis methodology based on thematic analysis. The transcriptions were read and re-read, before a coding frame was constructed and the data coded to identify potential themes. A qualitative interpretive approach was taken, and thematic analysis was conducted with continuous consultation between researchers.

5. Finding and Discussion

Ten female employees participated in two focus group discussion conducted online. No follow-up interviews were carried out. Three principal themes of maternity experiences were identified from interview data. These included job advancement and the decision of getting pregnant, pre and post natal check-up experiences and spouse and employer’s support.

5.2 Maternity Experiences

5.2.1 Job Advancement and Decision of Getting Pregnant

A work environment that determines women's access and opportunities based on their maternal status could put them in a tough and unfair position. Participants in this study reported that they had been discriminated against when they thought their access to and prospects for progress had been limited. Although the majority of the participants felt that their employer have given them adequate maternity leave, they were ‘forced’ to “double up” their work output in anticipation of the maternity leave. Ain, 48-year old who works as a Librarian shared that in her department, there were cases where their supervisor was comparing her experience of pregnancy with other employee’s pregnancies and this according to her made her feel being unfairly treated in the office. Ain explained that a policy should be in place because each head of the department has their own opinion and regulations. She shared a situation when she was trying to explain her allergic reaction when she was pregnant, her superior replied sarcastically by saying, “... *I was also pregnant [before]*”, an indication to assume that all women were going through the same pregnancy experience. She said

sometimes when she shared her allergies with the doctor, I was told that it was just a ‘psychological issue’ and refused to provide a medical certificate because the doctor still think that she could do the work.

This kind of pregnancy experience at work may influence the women’s decision in getting pregnant again in the future. It has been suggested that a woman's decision to become pregnant is frequently influenced by her spouse or partner, as well as her own social circumstances (John, 2021). According to the interview, some participants discuss their decision to become pregnant, particularly when they believe it will jeopardise their potential to grow in their livelihood activity. The participants stated that they may choose to postpone their pregnancy or that they may continue with the pregnancy despite their dissatisfaction with the losses they must face as a result of their profession.

5.2.2 Pre and Post Natal Check-up Experiences

Flexible work practices were found to be associated with better treatment of pregnant workers in the workplace (Callender et al, 1997; La Valle et al, 2008). It is found that women in firms without flexible working arrangements were more likely to have experienced problems with their employer concerning their pregnancy and maternity leave. The provision of flexible working options is likely to indicate that the employer is aware of the competing demand facing employees outside of work and may also suggest a greater concern for employees’ welfare more generally. The requirement for expecting mother to go for prenatal care check ups is a condition that is often disregarded by laws and policies throughout the prenatal period. These check ups are required on a regular basis, usually monthly. Academic and administrative employees at a university have very diverse experiences when it comes to check ups activities. There are no rigid guidelines at the university about taking time off for maternity check-ups at the hospitals. Sarah, a young female academic who has been working for more than 5 years, claimed that changing her classes and research work would allow her to make more independent decisions about coming to check-ups. However, this would need her working longer hours on that specific day.

However, for Siti, Putri and Azizah, their working hours as administrative staff are more structured and thus taking time off requires negotiations with their superiors. Azizah explained that the rule of thumb appears to be that if a medical check-up exceeds two hours, they would be strongly advised to apply for a half-day annual leave. However, the majority of the participants share experiences where check-ups would normally take up half or more of their working day, especially if they went for check-ups in public hospitals. Therefore, Sarah, a young female academic, said she would rather go to a private hospital due to time constraints even if she could have gone to a public hospital for free. As an administrative staff who has to clock in for work, Fazia, a mother of two young children realized that negotiations with head of department are the key. As part of the negotiations, Fazia would prepare herself for the check-up by finishing as much of the taskss required by her superior before leaving for the appointment. She said, “...*if my boss needs anything while I am at the hospital, [he] would text me or call me directly, no problem*”. Another participant, Rozana, an admin officer, preferred a private hospital as she could go in the evening and only ask permission from her boss to leave the office one hour before the appointment time.

5.2.3 Spouse and Employer’s Support

All of the participants strongly agree with the fact that a spouse’s support and understanding during their pregnancy phase can reduce their stress significantly and increase their well-being. Several participants indicated that their husbands would help in doing the house chores, taking care of the kids, and sending and fetching the kids at the daycare centres or school whenever their wives have to work overtime or outstation. In fact, participants indicated that support from husbands as the head of the family is expected during pregnancy. The participants also indicated that having supportive

and understanding colleagues or co-workers and supervisors will give a positive maternity experience at work. Nurul who supervised staff in a chemical laboratory was aware of this situation. She claimed that she understand and would give full support to her pregnant staff who expressed concern to have to work with chemicals material. She said, “... *so far, we do not have a policy that says if she is pregnant, she needs to be reshuffled, but more to use discretion. Often if a female staff comes to me saying she has allergies, I would use discretion and find a male staff to temporarily replace her work. We can't reshuffle because it is quite difficult here because all laboratories use chemicals.*

All the participants were happy to receive full support from their families during their pregnancy. Several participants indicated how good and supportive surroundings from colleagues and friends are vital to easing their pregnancy process. Zainab and Zaharah, narrated how supportive husbands were important for their careers, especially during their pregnancies. As an academic and researcher, both admitted the challenges in taking care of children and the household without their husbands' help especially when they have extra work at home. Zaharah said that “*so far my husband is understanding. He helps with housework. He mops the floor, vacuum, and take out the trash. Whenever I have to focus on my work, he will put our children to bed if I have to reply client's messages*”. Her husband would fetch the kids from the nursery when she is needed to work overtime. However, Zainab still feels that having access to a lactation room or onsite nursery at work place would be the best maternity support that she is yet to be provided by her employer.

6. Conclusion and Research Implications

The discussion above described the maternity experiences among the employees in the higher learning institution. Employees may be able to negotiate their maternity needs and entitlements in certain organisational structures and work arrangements. This is usually done in a more casual manner. In the lack of a more comprehensive legal framework on maternity in the larger context, the participants' discussions yielded a few ideas. Employers can help employees enhance their well-being by providing time off for maternity medical check-ups, breastfeeding spaces, and on-site childcare facilities in various contexts of maternity experiences. The data also reveal that employees who have supportive family and employers are more productive and successful.

This study explores the maternity experiences from the social exchange theory and sense of entitlement. Based on these theories, when employees perceive themselves to be fairly and considerately treated by employers who value their contributions (via work - life balance policies and family-supportive organizational culture), they will be more satisfied and therefore more likely to reciprocate through a commitment to the organization and productivity. This study has shown this strong link. The implementation of family-friendly policies becomes an important step in hindering potential pregnancy discrimination in workplace and this study will help the government in providing the best practices of maternity protection at the workplace and finally will ensure employees have the ability to enjoy the right to work.

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CABARAN PEKERJA WANITA SEKTOR SWASTA TERHADAP CUTI BERSALIN DI PULAU PINANG

Nurul Syuhada Mat Jais

Mahathir Yahaya Ph.D

Pusat Pengajian Sains Kemasyarakatan

Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstrak

Cuti bersalin yang berkualiti dan mencukupi mempengaruhi kesejahteraan pekerja wanita dan bayi. Cuti bersalin juga merupakan hak pekerja wanita yang menjadi tanggungjawab pihak berkepentingan seperti kerajaan dan majikan untuk memenuhi dan melindungi fungsi materniti golongan ini. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk menganalisis cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pekerja wanita sektor swasta berkenaan cuti bersalin 90 hari. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif yang melibatkan temu bual secara mendalam terhadap sepuluh orang pekerja wanita sektor swasta di Pulau Pinang. Penyelidikan ini mengaplikasikan teknik persampelan bertujuan dan persampelan bola salji. Hal ini kerana penyelidik ini hanya memberi fokus kepada informan yang mempunyai ciri-ciri tertentu dalam memberi sumbangan terhadap penyelidikan yang dilakukan. Hasil kajian mendapati cabaran pekerja wanita sektor swasta melibatkan masalah berkenaan gaji iaitu tidak menerima gaji semasa tempoh cuti bersalin dan kesukaran kenaikan gaji, masalah berkaitan kerjaya iaitu meliputi jawatan sedia ada di tarik semula dan kurang promosi kerjaya dan masalah rakan sekerja.

Kata kunci: cuti bersalin, pekerja wanita, sektor swasta

Abstract

Quality and sufficient maternity leave affects the well-being of female workers and infants. Maternity leave is also a right of female workers which is the responsibility of stakeholders such as the government and employers to fulfill and protect the maternity function of this group. The objective of this research was to analyze the challenges faced by female workers in the private sector regarding 90 days' maternity leave. This research used a qualitative method that involves in-depth interviews with ten private sector female workers in Penang. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling techniques were applied in this study. This is because researcher only focus on informants who have certain characteristics in contributing to the research conducted. The results of the study found that the challenges of female workers in the private sector involve problems with salaries that is not receiving salaries during maternity leave and difficulty in salary increases, career-related problems that include existing positions being withdrawn and lack of career promotion and lastly was colleagues problems.

Keywords: maternity leave, female workers, private sector

1. Pengenalan

Pada tahun 1994, Persidangan Antarabangsa Penduduk dan Pembangunan (ICPD) telah mendefinisikan bahawa kesihatan reproduktif merupakan gabungan antara kesejahteraan fizikal, mental dan sosial yang berhubungkait dengan peranan dan perubahan semula jadi sistem pembiakan (United Nations, 2017). Seiring dengan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan (SDG) yang ketiga iaitu kesihatan dan kesejahteraan yang baik di bawah sasaran 3.7 telah menekankan agar akses perkhidmatan penjagaan kesihatan seksual dan reproduktif dapat dicapai secara holistik yang meliputi perancangan keluarga, informasi dan pendidikan, dan integrasi kesihatan reproduktif ke dalam pelan dan agenda kebangsaan (Fang, 2020). Matlamat yang telah digariskan di bawah sasaran SDG ini dilihat penting untuk direalisasikan bagi memastikan Malaysia tidak ketinggalan dalam mengutamakan hak kesihatan reproduktif wanita demi kemajuan negara pada masa hadapan.

Sememangnya tidak dapat dipertikaikan negara menerima kesan yang besar daripada sumbangan wanita dalam sektor ekonomi khususnya pekerjaan (Zainuddin & Aboo Talib, 2018). Kerajaan juga telah menunjukkan usaha untuk memperkasakan golongan wanita dalam sektor pekerjaan seperti menggalakkan ruang yang lebih bersesuaian kepada wanita agar pembangunan negara dapat dikembangkan dengan sumbangan mereka (Zainuddin & Aboo Talib, 2018). Namun, terdapat juga pekerja wanita yang berhenti kerja kerana tidak mampu membahagikan tugas kerja dengan rumah (Ahmad & Abdul Ghani, 2016). Keadaan ini berlaku disebabkan ekspektasi organisasi yang tinggi, cuti bersalin yang tidak berkualiti dan peranan baru yang perlu digalas oleh wanita sebagai seorang ibu menyebabkan mereka terpaksa memilih untuk meninggalkan dunia pekerjaan. Oleh itu, cuti bersalin yang lebih baik dapat meningkatkan penglibatan wanita untuk menyertai tenaga buruh (Fallon, Mazar dan Swiss, 2017) dan menyeimbangkan tanggungjawab ibu terhadap kerjaya dan keluarga (Machado & Neto, 2016). Hal ini kerana, cuti bersalin yang berkualiti memberi impak yang besar terhadap kesihatan ibu dan bayi sekaligus menyokong ibu untuk melaksanakan peranan sebagai seorang pekerja yang cergas dan produktif.

2. Isu Cuti Bersalin di Malaysia

Kehamilan di tempat kerja dan pertikaian kehamilan menjurus kepada elemen cuti bersalin, faedah bersalin dan keperluan perlindungan aspek pemecatan ketika hamil dan bersalin (Baht, 2010). Pertikaian tersebut jelas menunjukkan bahawa isu ini bukan sekadar masalah gender yang hanya melibatkan pekerja wanita (Bhatt, 2010). Namun lebih besar daripada itu kerana ia mempunyai hubungan yang saling berkait antara negara, majikan dan melibatkan unit paling asas iaitu keluarga (Bhatt, 2010). Berikutan cadangan penambahan tempoh cuti bersalin daripada 60 hari kepada 90 hari oleh kerajaan terdahulu pada pembentangan Belanjawan 2020 telah mewujudkan beberapa isu dan menimbulkan reaksi daripada pelbagai pihak. Antaranya telah timbul pandangan negatif daripada segolongan majikan sektor swasta yang menyatakan bahawa cuti bersalin 90 hari merupakan satu tempoh yang panjang dan kemungkinan amat sukar bagi majikan memberi peluang kepada pekerja wanita untuk jawatan yang lebih baik (Astro Awani, 2019). Situasi ini akan menyebabkan sesetengah majikan mungkin menetapkan pilihan yang lebih menguntungkan organisasi seperti merekrut pekerja yang boleh mengurangkan kos dan bebanan yang perlu ditampung.

Cuti bersalin berbayar adalah satu bentuk pampasan, namun pekerja wanita yang menjalankan peranan sebagai seorang ibu tidak terlepas daripada ancaman diskriminasi (Bhatt, 2010). Berdasarkan Bhatt (2010), meskipun pekerja wanita memperoleh hak bagi cuti bersalin berbayar, malangnya mereka tetap perlu berhadapan dengan pelbagai masalah setelah kembali daripada cuti

bersalin. Antaranya adalah berkaitan dengan perubahan fungsi pekerjaan disebabkan penyusunan semula, arahan untuk berpindah ke lokasi pekerjaan lain atau melibatkan penurunan pangkat (Bhatt, 2010). Sepatutnya diskriminasi seperti ini tidak wujud daripada mana-mana pihak khususnya pihak majikan. Hal ini kerana ia merupakan hak pekerja wanita yang telah termaktub dalam perlembagaan kebangsaan iaitu *ILO*. Berkenaan cuti rehat yang berkaitan dengan bersalin, Konvensyen No 183 memperuntukkan keselamatan pekerjaan, melarang pemecatan semasa kehamilan, cuti bersalin dan tempoh setelah kembali bekerja dan memberi hak untuk kembali bekerja dalam pekerjaan yang sama atau pekerjaan yang setara dengan bayaran yang sama (Art. 8) (*ILO*, 2007). Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk meneroka cabaran pekerja wanita sektor swasta dalam menghadapi cuti bersalin di bawah polisi yang sedia ada agar pihak yang bertanggungjawab dalam meminda polisi dapat melakukan penambahbaikan dan seterusnya memastikan tidak berlaku penindasan terhadap pekerja wanita sektor swasta yang hamil dan bersalin

3. Kaedah Penyelidikan

Kaedah kajian yang digunakan oleh penyelidik merupakan kaedah berbentuk kualitatif. Berdasarkan kajian ini, populasi yang dipilih terdiri daripada pekerja wanita sektor swasta yang telah berkahwin dan mempunyai pengalaman bersalin di Pulau Pinang. Hal ini kerana Pulau Pinang merupakan negeri perindustrian dengan adanya zon perdagangan bebas yang menggalakkan sektor perkilangan seterusnya menyediakan banyak peluang pekerjaan kepada masyarakat. Berdasarkan Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (2019), kadar penyertaan tenaga buruh seramai 67.7% iaitu 79.5% daripadanya mewakili lelaki dan 55.9% merupakan wanita.

Dalam kajian ini penyelidik telah menggunakan persampelan bertujuan (*purposive sampling*) dan persampelan bola salji (*snowball sampling*). Persampelan bertujuan memberi fokus kepada informan yang mempunyai ciri-ciri tertentu yang dapat menyumbang dalam kajian (Etikan, 2016). Persampelan bertujuan ini dipilih kerana informan yang di temu bual bukan sahaja dalam kalangan pekerja wanita sektor swasta yang telah berkahwin, tetapi informan mestilah pernah mempunyai pengalaman cuti bersalin. Persampelan bola salji adalah kaedah persampelan mudah dan diterapkan apabila sukar untuk mengakses subjek dengan ciri sasaran (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017). Melalui kajian ini, penyelidik telah memperoleh informan dengan cara menghubungi rakan-rakan di negeri Pulau Pinang yang mempunyai kenalan dan memenuhi kriteria yang ditetapkan oleh penyelidik. Kaedah ini digunakan kerana situasi pandemik Coronavirus 2019 di seluruh dunia. Hal ini menyebabkan kutipan data sukar dilakukan secara langsung dan penyelidik telah mengutip data secara atas talian dengan menggunakan gadget seperti telefon bimbit bagi menghubungi informan. Seramai sepuluh orang pekerja wanita yang telah berkahwin dan mempunyai pengalaman bersalin telah dipilih untuk menjadi sampel dalam kajian ini.

Berdasarkan kajian yang telah dijalankan, penyelidik telah memilih untuk menggunakan jenis temu bual separa berstruktur. Penyelidik sering menggunakan temu bual separa berstruktur ketika ingin mengetahui suatu topik dengan lebih mendalam dan mendapatkan hasil jawapan daripada informan secara menyeluruh (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Dalam kajian ini juga, penyelidik telah menggunakan kaedah analisis bertema yang diperkenalkan oleh Braun dan Clarke.

4. Hasil dan Perbincangan

Masalah Berkenaan Gaji

Tidak Menerima Gaji Semasa Tempoh Cuti Bersalin

Kutipan data menunjukkan masih terdapat pekerja wanita tidak menerima gaji atau elaun ketika tempoh cuti bersalin iaitu melibatkan dua orang informan.

“Sepatutnya cuti ni kan boleh cuti bersalin dapat income... tapi saya cuti tanpa gaji.”

Informan Dua

“...saya ambik 1 bulan tambahan cuti bersalin dan 1 bulan tambahan cuti bersalin tu takda gaji.”

Informan Enam

Hasil kajian ini dilihat signifikan dengan kajian McDougall (2013) iaitu terdapat cetusan luaran yang melibatkan kebimbangan mengenai kewangan disebabkan organisasi yang kurang menyokong dan pengurusan cuti bersalin yang lemah. Permasalahan akan timbul sekiranya pekerja wanita memperoleh cuti bersalin tidak berbayar, lebih-lebih lagi dengan mempunyai bayi yang baru dilahirkan meningkatkan tuntutan terhadap kewangan (Joshi, 2013). Pendapatan semasa tempoh cuti bersalin merupakan satu keperluan kepada ibu dan keluarganya memandangkan pelbagai peranan yang perlu digalas dan wujudnya perbelanjaan tambahan dengan adanya ahli keluarga baru.

Wanita yang mempunyai anak berhadapan dengan keadaan kekurangan akses terhadap sumber-sumber material dan faedah psikososial daripada pekerjaan yang dibayar sehingga boleh mengakibatkan kemerosotan terhadap kesihatan dan kesejahteraan mereka (Aiken et al., 2015). Perkara ini berlaku kerana ibu yang selama ini bekerja untuk menyokong keluarga secara tiba-tiba kehilangan pendapatan sehingga menyebabkan mereka tidak mampu memenuhi tuntutan keperluan bayi yang baru dilahirkan. Melalui Chih-Hui dan Lin (2017), dalam satu sistem, setiap sub sistem saling bergantung antara satu sama lain dan kefungisian satu sub sistem akan terjejas sekiranya ia tidak mendapat sokongan daripada sub sistem yang lain. Berdasarkan perspektif teori sistem ini dapat dilihat ibu yang mengalami kemerosotan terhadap kefungisian mereka turut menjejaskan kesejahteraan bayi dan keluarga.

Kesukaran Kenaikan Gaji

Berdasarkan temu bual yang dijalankan, terdapat seorang daripada sepuluh informan menyatakan kesukaran kenaikan gaji merupakan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pekerja wanita sektor swasta berkenaan cuti bersalin 90 hari.

“...then kenaikan gaji pun payah nak dapat even dah kerja bertahun-tahun...”

Informan Dua

Kajian ini signifikan dengan kajian Davis, Neathey, Regan dan Willison (2005), iaitu informan dalam kajiannya menyatakan bahawa gajinya tidak meningkat seperti pekerja lain walaupun mereka melakukan skop tugas yang sama. Isu seperti ini menyebabkan masa hadapan pekerja wanita yang mempunyai potensi untuk hamil dan bersalin sekadar berada pada tahap yang sama dan tidak berkembang meskipun bilangan ahli keluarganya meningkat. Cabaran yang wujud ini menyebabkan

mereka terpaksa berhadapan dengan tekanan sehingga boleh mencetuskan isu lain seperti masalah emosi, masalah keluarga dan sebagainya.

Hewitt, Strazdins dan Martins (2017) telah berhujah bahawa pendapatan merupakan aspek penting bagi kesihatan dan membantu keluarga untuk mendapatkan material penting bagi menyokong kesejahteraan terutamanya bagi golongan yang kurang berkemampuan (Strazdins, Welsh, Korda, Broom & Paolucci, 2016). Kesukaran kenaikan gaji bukan sahaja memberi cabaran kepada pekerja wanita, tetapi ia melibatkan ahli keluarga yang lain. Walaupun lelaki merupakan ketua keluarga, namun perlu difikirkan kembali kos sara hidup yang semakin meruncing memerlukan perbelanjaan tambahan untuk menyara keluarga menyebabkan wanita perlu mengambil sebahagian tanggungjawab lelaki untuk memastikan keluarga mereka berfungsi dengan baik.

Masalah Berkaitan Kerjaya

Jawatan Sedia Ada Ditarik Semula

Melalui kutipan data yang diperoleh, seorang informan kajian ini memberi kenyataan bahawa selepas kembali bekerja daripada cuti bersalin jawatan sedia ada sebelum ini ditarik semula.

“...kalau kat sini kalau nak masuk kerja kena jadi macam mula-mula kita dapat kerja... basic rendah... and apa yang kita dapat elaun ke jawatan apa-apa sebelum ni kena tarik balik laa... emmm maksudnya kena kerja lama sikit and lepas dari tempoh yang ditetapkan baru dapat bonus dan lain-lain tu...”

Informan Dua

Data yang diperoleh dilihat signifikan dengan kajian Mcleish et al. (2016), iaitu setelah tamat cuti bersalin, kebanyakan pekerja wanita kembali kepada pekerjaan yang sama. Namun, enam peratus pekerja wanita dalam kajiannya menyatakan terdapat perubahan peranan yang digalas oleh mereka sebelum cuti bersalin. Situasi ini seiring dengan tindak balas daripada informan kajian ini iaitu informan terpaksa berhadapan dengan pelucutan jawatan asal kepada jawatan yang lebih rendah.

Umum mengetahui bahawa, pekerja wanita mempunyai peranan yang pelbagai iaitu sebagai pekerja yang perlu dilindungi haknya dan peranan sebagai seorang ibu dalam sebuah keluarga yang harus mendapat perlindungan dari segi sistem pembiakan atau reproduktif (Tinuk Istiarti, 2012). Namun, sekiranya hak-hak dan keperluan pekerja wanita ini tidak dipenuhi akan menyebabkan berlakunya konflik pelbagai peranan. Konflik pelbagai peranan mendefinisikan bahawa manusia atau individu yang memegang pelbagai peranan dan subjek atau orang sekeliling mempunyai harapan atau jangkaan terhadap individu tersebut (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Dalam situasi ini, majikan merupakan ketua sesebuah organisasi sepatutnya memberi peluang kepada ibu-ibu untuk menunjukkan bahawa mereka mampu menggalas tanggungjawab yang diamanahkan sebelum ini dengan baik. Jika peluang tersebut tidak diberikan bagaimana cara ibu-ibu untuk membuktikan bahawa mereka mampu melaksanakan tugas secara profesional tanpa menggabungkan tanggungjawab keluarga dengan kerja? Ibu-ibu akan mencapai keseimbangan antara kerja dan keluarga sekiranya organisasi pekerjaan menyokong kehamilan mereka (Mcleish et al., 2016).

Kurang Promosi Kerjaya

Kajian menunjukkan bahawa tiga orang informan menyatakan kurang promosi kerjaya adalah cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pekerja wanita sektor swasta berkenaan cuti bersalin 90 hari.

“Emm berkaitan promosi kerjaya atau naik pangkat tu semua memang susahlah...”

Informan Tiga

“...to be honest, company ni memang susah nak bagi promotion...”

Informan Empat

“Memang tak ada promosi apa-apa.”

Informan Lima

Data yang diperoleh signifikan dengan kajian McDougall (2013), iaitu terdapat pekerja wanita dalam kajiannya yang memberi maklum balas bahawa cuti bersalin bermaksud prospek kenaikan pangkat yang hilang. Kajian lepas ini menggambarkan bahawa wanita yang terlibat dengan cuti bersalin berkemungkinan akan kehilangan promosi berkaitan peningkatan hierarki dalam organisasi, latihan dan kursus dalam pekerjaan mereka. Perkara sedemikian berlaku disebabkan majikan yang mempunyai tanggapan bahawa pekerja wanita hamil dan bersalin kurang mampu melakukan tugas dengan baik berbanding pekerja lain disebabkan perubahan fizikal dan komitmen mereka yang semakin bertambah dengan kelahiran bayi baru.

Secara umum, masyarakat meletakkan satu anggapan bahawa lelaki perlu diberi keutamaan bagi memenuhi sektor pekerjaan dan diberi peluang yang lebih baik berbanding wanita berkaitan kenaikan pangkat. Hal ini kerana lelaki merupakan tonggak utama bagi memenuhi keperluan dan kehendak keluarga dan wanita hanya sistem sokongan kepada lelaki. Berdasarkan kajian Bobbitt-Zeher (2007), dalam memilih pekerjaan atau kerjaya, lelaki lebih cenderung merasakan ia adalah penting untuk menghasilkan pendapatan yang lebih banyak berbanding wanita. Bersesuaian dengan ekspektasi masyarakat berkenaan peluang untuk menjadi pemimpin lelaki bersifat tegas dan dominan terhadap pekerjaan atau kerjayanya. Berbeza pula dengan wanita yang hanya cenderung merasakan peluang untuk menyokong dan membantu orang lain berdasarkan pekerjaannya. Harapan yang ditetapkan oleh masyarakat ini secara tidak langsung menyumbang kepada ketidaksamarataan gender.

Masalah Rakan Sekerja

Berdasarkan kajian yang telah dijalankan, terdapat tiga orang informan menyatakan bahawa mereka mendapat maklum balas negatif daripada rakan sekerja mengenai kehamilan dan bersalin.

“...tapi ada rakan sekerja risaulah sebab kan skop tugas tu lain-lain... jadi nak ambil alih tugas tu jadi banyak kerja...”

Informan Dua

“...mula-mula tu depa ada risau jugak...”

“...cuma tulah... adalah masalah dengan mulut orang kata kot belakang.”

Informan Tiga

“...haa mereka risau jugak sebab banyak kerja under saya and semua on going punya task.”

Informan Enam

Mcleish et al. (2016), dalam kajiannya menyatakan terdapat daripada pekerja wanita dalam kajiannya memberi tindak balas bahawa sekurang-kurangnya satu pengalaman negatif atau kemungkinan menjadi diskriminasi telah dialami oleh mereka semasa hamil, cuti bersalin atau semasa mereka kembali kepada pekerjaan. Perkara ini bukan sahaja memberi impak buruk kepada pekerja wanita, namun turut memberi kesan kepada bayi yang baru dilahirkan. Penyelidikan ini tidak menunding jari kepada organisasi pekerjaan atau rakan sekerja tersebut secara keseluruhannya. Hal ini kerana, syarikat kecil dan sederhana menghadapi pelbagai kekangan bagi memperoleh pekerja gantian sementara pekerja wanita tersebut cuti bersalin. Berdasarkan Kitching dan Blackburn (2014), merekrut pekerja gantian sukar untuk dilakukan, sama ada disebabkan kepakaran atau organisasi tersebut merupakan organisasi kecil, atau mereka sedang berhadapan dengan kemerosotan dan tidak mampu membayar pekerja gantian.

Cuti bersalin selama tempoh 60 hari sahaja sudah memberi gambaran negatif, apatah lagi jika pekerja wanita memperoleh tambahan cuti selama tempoh 90 hari. Sudah tentu pelbagai impak negatif yang terpaksa dihadapi oleh pekerja wanita pada masa akan datang. Hideg, Krstic, Trau dan Zarina (2018) telah berhujah dalam kajiannya, cuti bersalin yang lebih lama memberi masalah kepada kerajaan, majikan dan masyarakat secara umumnya. Perkembangan setiap sistem dipengaruhi oleh makrosistem yang berfungsi sebagai lensa mengenai keadaan masa depan (Ettedal & Mahoney, 2017). Berdasarkan kajian ini, dasar sosial negara misalnya berkaitan pengubalan Akta Kerja 1955 di Bahagian IX merupakan makrosistem yang mempengaruhi kehidupan pekerja wanita pada masa akan datang berkenaan penambahan cuti bersalin. Hal ini kerana, setiap dasar sosial yang diwujudkan memainkan peranan penting bagi kesejahteraan dan kualiti hidup yang lebih bermakna. Oleh itu, setiap perubahan terhadap penambahan cuti bersalin perlulah diatur secara efektif bagi mengelak kesan negatif dan seterusnya dapat membantu perkembangan wanita dan kerjayanya.

5. Implikasi Kajian

Penyelidikan ini dilakukan adalah berdasarkan tuntutan keperluan yang perlu dipenuhi bagi memastikan kesejahteraan ibu dan bayi dapat dicapai pada tahap optimum. Berdasarkan Morgenroth dan Heilman (2017), ibu yang mempunyai kerjaya sering berhadapan dengan masalah apabila cuba mengimbangkan antara tanggungjawab terhadap kerjaya dan keluarga. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini

mendapati penambahan tempoh cuti bersalin mampu meningkatkan kapasiti wanita sebagai pekerja dan seorang ibu dalam memastikan keperluan diri dan anak terlaksana secara efektif dan efisien.

Cadangan penambahan tempoh cuti bersalin 90 hari telah menarik perhatian majikan sektor swasta yang merasakan pekerja wanita akan memberi kerugian besar kepada organisasi. Perlu diketahui, peningkatan tempoh cuti bersalin sebenarnya memberi impak yang baik terhadap perkembangan dan pembangunan sektor swasta. Buktinya, ia mampu meningkatkan pengekalan pekerja wanita dalam organisasi sekaligus meningkatkan kesejahteraan, produktiviti kerja dan prestasi (Unicef, 2020). Waktu rehat yang mencukupi akan memberi kesan yang baik kepada kesihatan fizikal dan mental pekerja wanita yang melahirkan bayi. Secara tidak langsung ia akan menyumbang kepada pelaksanaan tugas yang lebih lancar seterusnya meningkatkan produktiviti dan keuntungan kepada organisasi.

Berdasarkan data statistik suku tahun kedua, jumlah kelahiran bayi telah menunjukkan angka penurunan iaitu 1.7 peratus pada tahun 2019 berbanding pada tahun 2018 dan kesinambungannya menunjukkan kadar kesuburan berada pada tahap yang lebih rendah yang akan membawa kesan buruk kepada penduduk Malaysia pada masa hadapan (Berita Harian, 2019). Cuti bersalin yang berkualiti dan mencukupi merupakan antara strategi yang dapat memperbaiki semula kadar kelahiran penduduk Malaysia. Hal ini penting kerana, negara akan mengalami ketidakseimbangan penduduk sekiranya angka kelahiran terus merosot dan impaknya adalah *dependency burden* dalam golongan warga tua (Berita Harian, 2019).

6. Kesimpulan

Pada keseluruhannya, penyelidikan ini hanya menumpukan kutipan data di Pulau Pinang oleh kerana negeri ini merupakan kawasan perindustrian yang memberi tumpuan terhadap sektor swasta. Oleh itu, penyelidik berharap agar penyelidik masa hadapan akan melakukan skop penyelidikan yang lebih luas dengan melibatkan negeri-negeri lain di Malaysia. Selain itu, penyelidikan ini hanya memberi fokus kepada pekerja wanita sektor swasta. Penyelidik mencadangkan agar penyelidik masa hadapan turut memberi tumpuan terhadap majikan dan rakan sekerja sektor swasta untuk mengimbangi kajian yang telah dilakukan oleh penyelidik. Penyelidik juga berharap kajian perbandingan antara cuti bersalin 60 hari dan 90 hari dapat dilakukan oleh penyelidik akan datang. Kajian perbandingan ini akan dapat melihat keberkesanan penambahan tempoh cuti bersalin 90 hari dan kekurangan jika ada perlu ditambah baik dari semasa ke semasa. Jika terlaksana kajian seperti ini akan memberi kesan yang lebih baik kepada perkembangan sektor swasta pada masa akan datang.

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Perceived cultural tolerance in Malaysia: A focus on Penang multicultural communities

Mitshel Lino*, Intan Hashimah Mohd Hashim, Paramjit Singh Jamir Singh

School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Penang - Malaysia.

*Email: mitshel.mitshel@gmail.com

Abstract

Taking a positive psychology perspective, this paper presents a pilot study on cultural tolerance values and practices within multicultural residential communities in Penang, Malaysia, as perceived by local Penangites. Participants were (n=3) Penangites from the grassroots level- an ethnic Chinese, ethnic Indian, and ethnic Malay. Participants were mainly females (2/66.7%). Participants answered a list of semi-structured qualitative questions through face-to-face interviews, describing the cultural tolerance values and practices of people in their community. Participants reported that most people in their community were generally tolerant through preferring heterogeneity, being mindful, and being respectful. This study provides preliminary insights into how local Penangites perceived other people's cultural tolerance values and practices in their local communities towards different cultures.

Keywords: Cultural Tolerance; Positive Psychology; Multicultural Communities in Malaysia.

1. Introduction

Malaysia comprises a multicultural population with diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, customs living closely (The National Department for Culture and Arts (JKKN) 2018). Harmonious intercultural interaction and unity have become integral parts of the national agenda, which sparked the establishment of the Department of National Unity and Integration (DNUI) under the Prime Minister Office (Department of National Unity and Integration 2019). The DNUI is responsible for maintaining ethnic relations in Malaysia and organizing activities to build social cohesion through a top-down approach (Khairi and Mior Jamaluddin 2017).

Such a top-down approach is necessary for a multicultural society such as Malaysia, whereby the ethnic boundaries and meaning of ethnicity are flexible (Hirschman 1987). People of diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures regularly mingle and interact together in different aspects of life (Embong 2002; Ibrahim 2007). To ensure sustainability and well-roundedness, a bottom-up approach is also needed. From the bottom-up perspective, how would people at local communities tolerate people from diverse cultural backgrounds? Examining cultural tolerance values from the grassroots level is important towards a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of multicultural communities in Malaysia.

2. Malaysian Local Communities and Literature

At the grassroots level, neighborhood watch or *Rukun Tetangga* (RT) was established by the DNUI to encourage unity and harmony among the residents of local communities (Ahmad Farouk and Abu Bakar 2007; Khairi and Mior Jamaluddin 2017). The RT is responsible for neighborliness (Ahmad Sabri and Mohammad 2016), direct interaction, cooperation, and trust-building among residents (Ahmad Farouk and Abu Bakar 2007). Studies on RT from Northern states in Malaysia found that racism among younger generations and disrespect towards other religions were common threats to peace and harmony (Khairi and Mior Jamaluddin 2017). RT often played a mediator and negotiator role in resolving conflicts within communities. Limited RT studies were conducted (Ahmad Farouk

and Abu Bakar 2007; Ahmad Sabri and Mohammad 2016; Khairi and Mior Jamaluddin 2017), with perspective largely from the RT key players and limited direct account from the residents. Hence, a more direct account of cultural tolerance from the residents is needed, which was examined in the present study.

3. Positive Psychology

The underlying framework for cultural tolerance in the present study is positive psychology. Positive psychology was defined as ‘the scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive’ (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). It was reintroduced by Martin Seligman to provide a more balanced and well-rounded perspective to the problem-oriented approach of traditional psychology (Lopez and Gallagher 2009; Snyder, Lopez, and Pedrotti 2011). Tolerance is one aspect of positive psychology that focuses on individual positions within a community. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000)

Many positive psychologists have been taking an essentialist perspective of human behavior and insufficient considerations for variations in racial and ethnic backgrounds. (Kubokawa and Ottaway 2009; Chang, Downey, Hirsch, and Lin 2016). Hence, one of the criticisms in positive psychology is the lack culture-specific definition of strengths. For an instance, Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) examined that many values were founded on ethnocentric ideals and individualistic perspectives. This may not necessarily be prevalent in a collectivist culture such as Malaysia. Thus, the current study aims to bridge such a gap by exploring perceived cultural tolerance values in collectivist Malaysian culture.

As the cultural tolerance concept is new in positive psychology, we borrow the definition from social psychology, as acknowledging differences, displaying a positive attitude towards out-groups, such as avoiding prejudice and enduring disagreement or prejudice (Verkuyten, 2010). The present study operationally defines it as one’s agreement to allow people from varying ethnic and religious backgrounds to practice their cultures.

4. Literature Review

The following research literature on tolerance covers various perspectives. There were not many studies found from a positive psychology perspective whereby tolerance is a part of strengths in Malaysian diverse communities.

Husin, Malek and Abdul Gapor (2012) conducted a quantitative study on cultural and religious tolerance in urban housing in four different states of Malaysia. A sample of 122 out of 400 respondents was from urban housing in Penang. They found 76% of the overall respondents interacted with their neighbors. In terms of cultural and religious acceptance, almost 50% preferred ethnically homogeneous communities, 36% did not mind the ethnicity of their neighbors, and 14% did not prefer to live with the same ethnic group.

Mohd Nizah, Ahmad, Jawan, Samsu and Gill (2017) conducted a qualitative study on ethnic tolerance in Penang. They found the overall level of ethnic tolerance among the respondents was high. However, they also found that ethnic Chinese level of ethnic tolerance is higher than the Indian and the Malays. They concluded that the majority is less tolerant compared to the minority ethnic groups.

From both studies, the overall level of cultural and religious tolerance was average to high in urban areas in Penang. Although there were both positive and negative findings in the first study, it

indicated a balanced finding of cultural tolerance from the grassroots level in residential communities. Similarly, the present study intended to explore the cultural tolerance values and practices from a balanced perspective of cultural tolerance.

5. Research Question

The present study aims to address the following research question: What are the community cultural tolerance values and practices in Malaysian communities as perceived by the participants?

6. Methodology

The present pilot study was conducted before the real study to test the efficacy of the interview protocol. It employed a qualitative method, particularly face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview questions. Three interviews were conducted in Penang, Malaysia. The three participants were urban dwellers, comprising of an ethnic Chinese (Buddhist), an ethnic Malay (Muslim), and an ethnic Indian (Hindu). They were two female and one male participants, 40 years old and above, who lived in various housing types in multicultural residential communities in Penang and from different levels of Socioeconomic Statuses (SES). The duration of their residency ranges from 12 to 25 years. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

The interviews were conducted in a private space whereby only the first author and the interviewee were present. The participants were briefed on the research, provided the opportunity to ask questions, and given the informed consent forms to sign before the interview. Audio recording and interviews were only performed upon participants' consent. Participants answered a list of semi-structured interview questions that lasted about an hour. The present study protocol has been approved by the JEPeM USM (The Human Ethics Research Committee). The data were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method. The author initially formed a categorization matrix based on the operational definition of cultural tolerance, highlighted texts from the transcripts that fit the categories, classified and analyzed the categories and sub-categories before finally arriving at the themes.

The following includes the list of semi-structured interview questions:

Community's cultural tolerance

1. To what extent do people in your community agree to allow others from different religions/ ethnicities to practice their own culture? Please rate from 1 (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree). Explain your choice.

Communal values & practices of cultural tolerance

2. What are the cultural tolerance values and practices of people in your community? Eg: give example when you tolerate/ did not tolerate people of different cultures
3. From your understanding, to what extent do different cultures/ ethnicities/ religions affect the decision-making of people in your community? Eg: Choosing friends and workplace?
4. From your understanding, what does your community ideally prefer? Homogeneous or heterogeneous?
5. How do people (of different cultures) in your community react to your cultural practice? Do you think they understand and allow your cultural practice?

6. To what extent do people in your community agree to allow others from different religions/ ethnicities to practice their own culture? Please rate from 1 (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree). Explain your choice.

7. Results

The following indicates the themes and sample transcripts from the participants.

1. Heterogeneous community

All participants reported that they lived in heterogenous residential communities with various cultural backgrounds. They perceived that the people in their communities were agreeable towards the existence of others from different cultural backgrounds.

“Here (in my residential community), (the) majority is Chinese.”(M3, F, 50, Malay, Islam)

“The Malay and Indian neighbors in the same housing complex”(C1, F, 46, Chinese, Buddhism)

“Ok, if you ask my community, they have no problem with multi-racial (community).”(I2, 54, M, Indian, Hinduism)

2. Cultural freedom in community

All participants perceived that people in their communities allowed others from different cultural backgrounds to practice their cultural activities freely without any complaint.

“Nobody complains. You see, the very fact you only know when they complain, you’ll know whether they tolerant or not.” (I2, 54, M, Indian, Hinduism)

“The cultural thing. It’s interesting. They will look forward to this kind of lion dance. Maybe like a firecracker and all that” (I2, 54, M, Indian, Hinduism)

“They can bear with azan (Islamic call for prayers) every day. I’m sure sometimes not everyone likes azan (because) it can be noisy. Sometimes, people get disturbed when they want to sleep but they cannot do much because that is the way it is.” (M3, F, 50, Malay, Islam)

“Everybody has his/her own culture and way of living. They only perform their cultural activities once in a while so I don’t mind.” (C1, F, 46, Chinese, Buddhism)

3. Mindful community

This theme refers to other people in participants’ community being considerate or mindful towards others during cultural, ethnic, or religious activities, so as not to disturb others.

Participant C1 observed that others in her community were mindful to end the activities before 11 pm to avoid disturbing the surrounding neighbors.

“We will end our celebration early before 11 pm so as not to disturb our neighbors.” (C1, F, 46, Chinese, Buddhism)

4. Respectful community

This theme refers to others in the participants’ communities respecting different cultural backgrounds and activities.

Participant M3’s neighbors may not understand her cultural practice but they will allow that as a sign of respect.

“Respect your neighbors’ privacy... Even in taman, even if you want to do wedding, you have to inform your neighbors.” (M3, F, 50, Malay, Islam)

5. Maintaining individuality in community

This theme refers to others from different cultural backgrounds in participants' communities who minded their own business.

Participant C1 observed that people in her community rarely interact with each other due to busy schedules. *"We greet each other when we meet. We don't really interact much with each other. Because they are working and rarely staying at home."* (C1, F, 46, Chinese, Buddhism)

6. Homogeneity preference still exists in communities

This theme refers to others in participants' communities who preferred to live in communities that comprise people from similar cultural backgrounds.

"They prefer people of the same ethnicity (ethnic Chinese)." (C1, F, 46, Chinese, Buddhism)

7. Not everyone is understanding and helpful in communities

This theme refers to others in participants' communities who were neither understanding nor helpful towards people from different cultural backgrounds.

Participant I2 perceived that people generally were looking at the different cultures at a superficial level; for example, not everyone is willing to take the trouble to understand the different religious teaching.

"I notice that generally other communities, generally they just look at it superficially. They don't want to understand. They don't take the trouble to know." (I2, 54, M, Indian, Hinduism)

8. Language barrier in community intercultural understanding

This theme refers to others in participants' communities preferring to socialize with those who speak a similar language with them. This situation is particularly applicable to those with whom they perceived to be the members of their in-group.

Participant I2 observed that language is a pertinent characteristic of culture. Hence, he perceived others felt more comfortable and manageable to socialize with those who share similar culture and spoken language.

"Because language has the characteristics of the culture itself. It is interconnected. Therefore, language is important apart from religious things and stuff. They feel it's comfortable, easier to manage." (I2, 54, M, Indian, Hinduism)

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the participants in the present study perceived that the people in their communities preferred heterogeneous communities. Living in such diverse communities, participants observed that others displayed cultural tolerance values through allowing cultural freedom in the community. Cultural freedom is an important aspect of multicultural communities that allows people to coexist harmoniously. However, people practiced cultural freedom thoughtfully. They remained respectful and maintained sensibility through mindful behaviors. They were careful not to infringe on others' rights to prevent a conflict of interest when performing cultural celebrations and activities. This is important to those who lived in condominium units with shared common areas, corridors, or walls. They were often susceptible to noise, crowds, limited parking space, littering of common corridors, and others, particularly during cultural and religious celebrations. Various cultural celebrations and religious rituals are an intrinsic part of many Penangites' lives for many generations (Hodges, McColl, Neely and Spencer 2013); thus, having the freedom to practice them with a certain degree of sensibility is essential to long-term harmonious living.

On the other hand, a participant also observed that some preferred to maintain individuality in communities due to various reasons, such as limited time to socialize with their neighbors due to hectic schedules. Such preference was not necessarily attributed to cultural differences. A participant reported that others in her community prefer homogeneity, whereby people still maintain the perception of in-group similarity and out-

group differences due to different ethnicity and religious backgrounds. There were also instances whereby not everyone is understanding and helpful. For an instance, a participant observed that some people in his community were not open to others' cultural values. Language barrier in intercultural understanding in the community was also reported as a challenge to cultural tolerance and socialization among multicultural people in the community. As mentioned by the participant, language is an important aspect of culture; hence, a similar spoken language often signifies perceived shared culture, background, ethnicity, and others. As such, it often further reinforces the gap between in-group similarity among people who speak a similar language and out-group difference among people who speak different languages.

The present study provided a much-needed finding on cultural tolerance values from the grassroots communities' perspective. Unlike Mohd Nizah, et al. (2007), there was no indication that the majority ethnic group participant was more tolerant than the other ethnic groups in the present study. Similar to Husin, et al. (2012), the present study also presented a fairly balanced view of cultural tolerance values and practices, with four positive and four neutral to negative cultural tolerance themes derived from the participants' responses.

In conclusion, cultural tolerance is one of the values of positive psychology. It is also a strength among the multicultural urban dwellers in Penang and the multicultural society like Malaysia. Aside from the top-down policy and approach to promote harmony in diversity, the present study exemplifies that overall, many residential communities in Penang from the grassroots level do exercise a certain degree of cultural tolerance values and practices living in multicultural communities.

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Examining decisions aperture between affordability, social inclusiveness and non-human attributes in local residential property market using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)

Hendrik Lamsali^{*a}, Halim Mad Lazim^b, Wan Nadzri Osman^c, Mohamed Najib Salleh^d, Rosman Iteng^e

^{a,b,c,d,e}School of Technology Management and Logistics, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

^{*a}hendrik@uum.edu.my

Abstract

Many expected that affordability and financial factors to play pivotal role in homebuyers' purchasing decisions. Other factors such as social inclusiveness and non-human attributes (location, structural and the developer) are also deemed to be important. Nevertheless, empirical evidence and relevant findings remain inconclusive. Property overhangs in low-to-medium cost housing are also still palpable. Hence, the aim of the study is to identify homebuyers' priority when purchasing a new residential property. The prioritization is based on residential property attributes namely socio-cultural, locational, structural, financial and developers' criteria. The study employs the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) method. Pairwise comparison analysis is carried out to determine buyers' prioritization. A total of 102 respondents participated in this study. The findings generally show that the most prioritized criteria are the financial factors, followed by locational and socio-cultural factors. The analysis of the overall sub-criteria however ranks safety as the highest priority followed by the property's sales price, physical structure of the property and warranty offered by the developer. The findings suggest that developers should segmentize the market based on the abovementioned priorities. More importantly, the segmentation must be based on the 3W criteria – social inclusiveness (*who*), non-human decisions (*where*) and affordability (*when*). Moving forward, this study can be extended from buyers to developers' perspectives. A study on preferences and priorities should also be conducted based on market segment, type of the property and by state. Nonetheless, this study is still beneficial to both regulators and property developers, whereby generic guidelines and unique selling propositions can still be drawn up. Findings of the study are also very relevant to stakeholders who are keen to focus on young and first-time homebuyers.

Keywords: Residential property, social inclusiveness, ranking, housing, affordability

1. Overview

Property overhang has been one of the pressing issues in Malaysia local housing market. Almost two thirds of the total homes that developers launched remained unsold, comprising 90,491 units at the end of 2016 including of those completed, under construction, and not constructed (Thanaraju et al. 2019). According to Tobi et al. (2020), a report by Bank Negara Malaysia in 2017 stated that there was an increase in activities in the housing market and this increase was accompanied by an increase in unsold housing properties, most of which were priced more than RM250,000. According to the National Property Information Centre (NAPIC), there were a total of 29,227 overhang residential units in Malaysia as at the first half of 2018, valued at RM17.24bil. In 2018, The Housing and Local Government Ministry recorded a property overhang of RM22.5 billion worth in unsold houses nationwide, with 73% of the statistic comprises affordable houses priced at

RM250,000 and below. According to Ab Rahim et al (2019), despite the launches of more affordable housings, report shows that overhang in affordable housing is still in worrying state. According to Rachmawati et al (2019), customers are becoming more selective towards making the purchasing decisions based on attributes such as quality, price, location, promotion and corporate image. The aim of the study is to investigate homebuyers' decisions making criteria when purchasing new residential property considering three major attributes (affordability, social inclusiveness, and non-human factors). The gap between developers' preference and homebuyers' priority is evident and this has resulted in unsold properties. It was also highlighted by Ab Rahim et al (2019) that property overhang was still substantial in the affordable housing market. Hence, ones need to understand homebuyers' priority over purchasing decisions criteria in order to minimize the abovementioned gaps. Prioritization ranking is essential to enhance developers' understanding over which main and sub-criteria is more critical to the buyers. This study focuses on homebuyers in northern region and the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The remaining part of this paper is organized as follows. The next section elaborates on factors influencing home ownership, followed by research methodology, findings and managerial implications.

2. Factors influencing home ownership

There have been interesting debates about the relative importance of housing preferential factors. This study contributes to extant literature by developing an understanding of the housing attributes, as defined by locational, financial, structural, developer and socio-cultural attributes, which contribute to home owning preferences among homebuyers in the Malaysian context. The first three (locational, structural and developer) are the non-human attributes, while financial attribute represented affordability factor. Social inclusiveness is depicted by the socio-cultural attribute. The five *main factors* are as follows:

2.1 Locational

Locational factors refer to accessibility and proximity to local amenities, such as schools, markets, shopping malls, public transport facilities, offices or business areas and major highways. According to Aliyu et al. (2013), location is the most important feature that defines residential property value. Adegoke (2014) specified that locations of all types of residential properties, mainly depend on its accessibility to places of interest. For buyers who are looking for personal investment, higher rental value will affect the buying decision (Oloke et al. 2013). San (2016) indicated that a property in a good location will have a higher value and will give higher financial return. Sean and Hong (2014) stated that distance is a factor that affects the decision-making of property buyers, such as distance to workplace, schools, shops, places for worship and central business districts. Therefore, these criteria are divided into the following locational sub-criteria: *proximity to educational institutions, workplace and business facilities, access to public transport, access to major highways and proximity to religious and community places.*

2.2 Structural

Hofman et al. (2013) stated that structural attributes include physical outlook and conditions, functionality, characteristics and quality of the property. It also refers to the physical design of a house, such as type of property, number of rooms, interior design, parking space as well as built-up area. Moghimi and Jusan (2015) identified that the quality of the property can be determined by the age of the property. Thus, it is one of the important considerations in the purchasing decision. According to San (2016), the number of rooms and bathrooms in a residential property are considered important in the decision to buy a particular house. The built-up area of high-rise residences is usually smaller than detached houses and semi-detached houses (Hofman 2013). Thus, the sub-criteria are *exterior design, interior design, size of the property and type of property.*

2.3 Developer

The *developer* criterion refers to the perception of homebuyers towards property developers over certain attributes such as image and reputation. In the Malaysian setting, a developer's brand name and image are regarded as important considerations by homebuyers as highlighted by a survey conducted by Cheng and Cheok (2008). The results of the survey show that property purchasers are brand conscious where property developers are concerned. Cheng and Cheok (2008) concluded that the developer's image or reputation has a strong influence on house purchase intention. Hence, the sub-criteria for *developer* are as follows: *reputation, perceived quality of products, perceived after-sales services, warranty, and non-financial incentives, such as gifts.*

2.4 Socio-cultural

Social and cultural factors refer to the social inclusiveness of the neighborhood, types of communities, religious facilities, age groups, status and safety. Jayantha and Ming (2016) highlighted that neighbourhood involves interactions among communities, attractive view and environment, a friendly place for gathering and mutual support. Chapman and Lombard (2006) stated that the neighborhood environment, such as cleanliness and level of pollution and rate of crime, are important factors in the purchasing decision. Nasar and Manoj (2015) said that the rate of crime in Malaysia is on the increase, and thus, the extent of security in the neighbourhood is very important. Buyers are willing to purchase a residential property at a higher price if it is located in a guarded neighbourhood (San, 2016). Homebuyers may also purchase a guarded residential property with the desire for differentiation and social status (Tan 2016). Therefore, the sub-criteria are *type of neighborhood, safety, social status/prestige and demographic profile.*

2.5 Financial

The financial factor can be defined as the financial health of an individual such as income level and loan commitment, and is one of the important factors in the decision to purchase a residential property (Jamil 2015). Financial factors that are related to homebuyers are special discounted sales price, specific interest rates and loan facilities of the bank. According to Sean and Hong (2014), a loan involves the commitment of the house buyer, the developer and the bank. Li and Chiang (2014) stated that the period for repayment, interest rate, ability to make monthly payments and mortgage, are included under financial factors. Li and Chiang (2014) agreed that affordability is the main consideration in terms of decision to buy a residential property. Jayantha and Ming (2016) showed that income level has a positive impact on property affordability as buyers could cover initial payment and mortgage repayment. The sub-criteria financial factors are: *loan facilities, interest rate, sales price and other specific monetary promotions.*

3. Methodology

The research employed one of the Multi-Criteria Decisions Making (MCDM) methods, namely the Analytical Hierarchy Process or AHP. A pairwise comparison analysis using an AHP-type questionnaire was carried out to determine homebuyers' priority. By using the AHP method, researchers could identify homebuyers' latest purchasing priorities. The AHP is a structured technique for organizing and analyzing complex decisions, based on mathematics and psychology. It was developed by Thomas L. Saaty in the 1970s and has been extensively studied and refined since then. Rather than prescribing a "correct" decision, the AHP helps decision-makers to find one that best suits their goal and in their understanding of the problem (Saaty, 1990).

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is often adopted in survey-based research activities and the number of participants involved in AHP studies ranges from few experts to hundreds of interviewed people. In general, a marginal error of 5% and an alpha level of .05 is acceptable for most research. In previous study conducted by Melillo and Pecchia (2016) in which the focus was to identify the appropriate sample size for an AHP method, the result showed that the sample size needed to achieve a margin error of 5% with an alpha level of 0.05 varied according to the expected weights from 19 to more than 400 subjects. Smaller sample sizes were required in case of equally important alternative (e.g. with expected weight of 0.333 for all the three alternative the required sample size is 19. For this research, the expected weight for all alternative are equally important and therefore 19 minimum responses are needed. For this research, 102 valid responses were collected using convenience sampling approach. Due to the complexity of a pairwise questionnaire, each respondent was explained and guided. Northern region (Kedah and Perlis) and Klang Valley (Selangor and Kuala Lumpur) had been chosen to distinguish urban and rural (non-urban) housing market segmentations. Respondents were asked to compare between each pair of the main criteria as well as between sub-criteria using a 9-point measurement scale based on level of importance (Saaty, 2008). The questionnaire was developed based on primary and secondary data. The latter is based on the abovementioned variables identified in previous studies related to consumers' purchasing preferences for residential property, both locally and abroad. The former is based on interviews with selected respondents.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic analysis shows that from the total of 102 respondents, most of them are between the age of 21 to 40 years old. Female consisted of two-thirds of the respondents. Malay make up more than 80% of the respondents. Slightly less than half of the respondents are married. Academically, almost all of the respondents are well educated with at least 40% of them has master's degree. Almost 40% of the respondents are still seeking for jobs and some still studying full time. Two-thirds of the respondents earn less than RM5,000 per month while less than 15% of them earn at least RM10,000 monthly. The abovementioned findings indicate that most of the respondents are young female homebuyers with relatively less purchasing power. Some of them are still looking to purchase their first house. Ethnicity and religion may also affect respondents' purchasing decisions especially in less urban area as an overwhelmingly more than 80% of them are Malay and Muslim. In terms of geographical location, half of the respondents resides in Kedah and Perlis (northern region) while almost 35% lives in Klang Valley (major cities). Kedah and Perlis are considered small states and less urban as compared to the Klang Valley where the cost of living and property prices are much higher. Types of residential property in Klang Valley are also more varied from low cost flats to high end property compared to Kedah and Perlis where most of the property are landed and cheaper. The data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Synthetization of the judgments was then executed in order to generate a set of overall priorities for the hierarchy. This was done by computing the normalized matrix, followed by developing the preference vector, determining the overall score for each decision alternative and ranking the decision alternatives. Finally, consistency of the judgments was determined by identifying the degree of its consistency. The results depicted the prioritization result for the main criteria and the consistency index/ratio as illustrated in **Table 1**. Five main criteria were evaluated: (1) *Locational*, (2) *Structural*, (3) *Social*, (4) *Financial*, and (5) *Developer* criteria. The result shows that financial criteria are the highest ranked factor (0.444), followed by locational (0.158), social (0.154), structural (0.127) and developer (0.117). Overall, this indicates that financial factors, such as the sales price of the property, loan interest, availability of loan and other financial incentives, are highly preferred and prioritized by potential buyers. Locational factors are ranked second on the buyers' priority list. Factors, such as proximity to workplace and religious facilities as well as access to public transport and major highways, are deemed important by the buyers. The third most prioritized criteria are the social factors, such as safety and demographic profile of the neighbourhood. The structural and developer criteria are the two least prioritized criteria by potential homebuyers. The findings also show good consistency ratio of 0.0408, which is less than the required 0.10. This indicates that

respondents understand the questionnaire and are consistent in their answers. The consistency ratio is important to indicate the reliability of the responses.

Table 1 : Main Criteria

MAIN CRITERIA									
	Location	Structural	Social	Financial	Developer		Total	CI	Rank
Location	0.14	0.29	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.79	0.158	5.240036315	2
Structural	0.06	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.19	0.63	0.127	5.077035652	4
Social	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.19	0.77	0.154	5.187532564	3
Financial	0.51	0.38	0.51	0.45	0.37	2.22	0.444	5.224513112	1
Developer	0.14	0.08	0.10	0.15	0.12	0.59	0.117	5.185603389	5
	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		CI	0.045736052	
							RI	1.12	
							C RATIO	0.04083576	

The overall ranking has 22 sub-criteria, as highlighted in *Table 2*, of which the top and bottom five are identified based on the respective total weight. Overall, safety (security level of the residential area) is ranked number one, followed by the sales price, size and type of the property and warranty offered by the developer. The bottom five are exterior design of the property ranked as the lowest prioritized factor, followed by reputation of the developer, proximity to educational institutions, availability of loan facility and type of neighbourhood. The findings for the bottom five are a bit surprising when one considers exterior design, distance to the nearest educational institution, such as schools and availability of loan facility, as the least prioritized criteria. The results also indicate that buyers do not care too much for developers' reputation. Social status or prestige that may come from buying property in certain upmarket residential areas is also not highly prioritized.

Table 2 : Overall rank for all sub-criteria

Criteria	Rank	Notes
safety/security level of the residential area	1	Top 5
sales price of the property	2	
size of the property	3	
type of the property	4	
warranty offered by the developer	5	
perceived quality of the products (property)	6	
location close to the workplace	7	
location close to the religious/community facility	8	
other specific monetary promotions/incentives	9	
attractive interest rates	10	

Demographic profiles of the neighbourhood	11	
Location close to public transport	12	
Easy access to the highway	13	
After sales services by the developer	14	
Non-financial incentives offered by the developer	15	
Interior design of the property	16	
Social status/prestige reflected by the area	17	
Type of neighbourhood	18	Bottom 5
Availability of loan facilities	19	
Location close to educational institutions	20	
Reputation of the developer	21	
Exterior design of the property	22	

5. Managerial Implications and Concluding remarks

Selling houses has not been easy for developers especially with the current pandemic. The outbreak of the Covid19 brings uncertainty and more challenges to the local property market. With less disposable income homebuyers become more selective as well as ‘constrained’. Even before the outbreak local housing market has seen property overhang. In line with this issue, the study aims to identify important buying factors and homebuyer’s prioritisation when purchasing a house. In doing so, interviews, pairwise comparison survey and the AHP approach had been employed. The study determines the main and sub-criteria of homebuyer’s purchasing attributes and ranks them according to priority. The findings show that financial attribute is ranked the highest by the respondents, followed by locational and socio-cultural factors. Overall, safety is the most prioritised criteria followed by sales price, size and type of property, and warranty offered by the developer. On the other hand, the least prioritized criteria are exterior design of the property, followed by reputation of the developer and distance to the nearest educational institution. Financial (the main criterion) and safety (the sub-criterion) are the two most prioritized factors of which are foreseeable when one looks at the demographic profile of the respondents. That is also why property sales prices is ranked among the highest in the overall sub-criteria category. Females comprise 68 percent of the total respondents. These respondents also represent young families, where safety or security level of the residential area is imperative for their young family. Results for the main criteria are also in line to findings from other previous studies (Sean and Hong, 2014; Rachmawati et al., 2019; Thanaraju et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the sub-criteria may need further investigation. Whilst prioritisation of safety and sales price of the property are not surprising due to the age group and income bracket of the respondents, the locational sub-criteria are not deemed as the top five prioritized factors. Instead, structural factors of size and type of the residential property are ranked third and fourth places respectively followed by warranty offered by the developer. This scenario may be valid to first-time homebuyers with relatively limited disposable income and lack of investment drive. Half of the respondents are from smaller cities, for which buying residential property for investment purposes may not be as important as those from bigger cities, where location is an important value proposition. The priority of first-time homebuyers with young family are also more on the safety, affordability (sales prices) and comfort (size and type of the property). Even warranty offered by the developer is deemed important possibly because of the risk-averse mentality of first-time homebuyers, who never have had prior purchasing experience. How did these findings affect developers’ decisions? The findings indicate different priorities for the homebuyers based on certain demographic profiles. Homebuyers residing in the Klang Valley (big cities with higher cost of living) choose locational factors as the most important purchasing criteria, whereas those from the smaller cities where the cost of living is generally lower emphasized more on financial factors and structural of the house. This locational decision is in line with findings from previous studies by San (2016) and, Sean and Hong (2014). The findings may also be correlated to whether the purchase is for own usage or for investment purposes. The latter indicates that locational factors is the most important criteria as it determines the property resale and rental values, particularly in the big cities. The former prioritised more on safety and the structural

factors of the property. Most of the respondents are young with limited disposable income, hence prioritization is critical as affordability of high-end property or property with a perfect blend of all desirable factors is almost out of reach. Consequently, young homebuyers with young family, regardless of the location, or type of residence, ranks safety and sales price of the property at the very top. Lack of experience among first-time homebuyers and the risk of purchasing defective property may also be the reason why warranties offered by the developer were ranked among the top five factors.

The findings suggest that developers should segmentize the market based on the abovementioned priorities. More importantly, the segmentation must be based on the 3W criteria – social inclusiveness (*who*), non-human decisions (*where*) and affordability (*when*). The “*who*” factor refers to knowing who your buyer is. Young buyers with limited disposable income and new careers, prioritize more on the financial factor (sales price), safety and warranty (risk averse). Older buyers and those who have more purchasing power will look into the locational factor and investment opportunities. The “*where*” factor points to buyers’ residential area. Urban buyers residing in big cities may prioritize locational factor higher than those from smaller cities which prioritize financial factors more. The “*when*” factor refers to the time factor, i.e., when the purchase should be made. Investment purchases are mostly made by those with more disposable income and who are in the later stage of their careers. Likewise, size and type of the residential property are seen as important criteria by those who have just started a family and with affordability issues. The abovementioned conundrum of housing attributes and preferential qualities is also highlighted by Rachmawati et al., (2019) with the exceptions of property developers’ preferences.

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Media Frame Analysis of COVID-19 News in Malaysia

Dayang Nurul Ezzanisha Abang Jugah and Nurulaini Abu Shamsi

Department of Science and Technology Studies, Faculty of Science, University Malaya, Malaysia

Email: ainishamsi@um.edu.my

Abstract

During a health crisis, the news media does not only responsible to report the current situation, but it also plays essential roles in disseminating information, raising awareness, and communicating initiatives and interventions. Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Malaysia, the coverage of related issues to COVID-19 has increased tremendously in our local news media. As news coverage heavily influences the audience's response to navigate this crisis, it is crucial to investigate how Malaysian media framed stories related to COVID-19. This study employed content analysis to determine the frequency of the COVID-19 news between February to May 2020 (the second wave phase of the pandemic in Malaysia) in online local news, the News Strait Times. This study also identified the frame used in presenting the COVID-19 issue. A total of 631 articles were identified and using systematic random sampling, 189 articles were further selected for frame analysis. The result shows that the local news media often use attribution of responsibility and human interest frames. In contrast, morality, economic consequences, and conflict frames received less attention during the second wave phase. The results indicate that the Malaysian media emphasise government duty and public responsibility in managing this pandemic crisis.

Keywords: Media framing, frame analysis, COVID-19, pandemic

1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was first reported in Wuhan, China. The virus caused an outbreak that led to a lockdown of Wuhan on 23rd January 2020. Since it was around the Chinese New year Festival, the virus spread out of China due to mass migration (Nor & Zulcafli, 2020). On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency, and on 11th March 2020, it was declared a global pandemic. To date, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected global health with the infection rate and death toll have been substantial; as of 20th August 2021, there were at least 200 million people had been infected, and a total of 4.3 million deaths due to the virus (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). The impact of this pandemic extends beyond public health. The health care system is further burdened due to delays in surgical care, the well-being of the health care workers, the limited availability of medical devices (Scopelliti et al., 2021). As some countries adopted mobility restrictions, many industries were severely affected, and people's daily lives were significantly changed.

Ever since the pandemic began, the media has been one of the primary sources of information to the public. In such health crisis communication, the media must play a role in spreading information, creating awareness about health and diseases, and communicating health initiatives and interventions (Lee & Basnyat, 2013). Apart from these roles, the news media also plays a significant role in influencing and shaping public perceptions through framing (de Vreese, 2005). Therefore, considering the importance of changes in perception and behaviour during this pandemic, it is critical to assess the types of frames used in presenting COVID-19 issues. Understanding the framing of the mass media on COVID-19 issues can infer the public perception and their behaviour in preventing

the disease. Subsequently, by analysing the frames in the media, improvements can be proposed for better health communication strategies.

2. Literature Review

Malaysia reported the first case of COVID-19 on 25th January 2020, when tourists from China were found positive, thus marking the first wave of the pandemic in the country (Elengoe, 2020). Overall, the first wave recorded twenty-two cases, and it ended on 16th February 2020. Malaysia was free from the outbreak for 11 days, from the middle until the end of February 2020 (Abdullah, 2020). Unfortunately, when a case was recorded on 27th February 2020, followed by several clusters identified (UDA cluster, Seri Petaling Tabligh cluster, Immigration Prisoner Depot cluster), the second wave of COVID-19 began (Md Shah et al., 2020). The second wave is considered to end only when one case is reported (Abdullah, 2020). From 1st July to 6th September 2020, the number of cases was less than 40 before increasing to 62 cases on 7th September 2020. The number of cases keeps increasing, indicating the onset of the third wave, which began on 20th September 2020 (Abdullah, 2020).

In health crisis communication, the media has to play its role in disseminating information, creating awareness about health and diseases, and communicating health initiatives and interventions (Lee & Basnyat, 2013). The information provided by the media, such as the pandemic situation, the risk of the disease, the symptoms, the prevention from the sickness, may form a perception of risk and consequently influence the public's response (Sandell et al., 2013). In the case of COVID-19, these responses refer to people starting to follow the government's order to stay at home, practise social distancing, wash hands frequently, and use face masks in social interaction (Pedrosa et al., 2020). One theory that explains how media influence audiences' attitudes and behaviours is framing theory (Bigman, 2014; Chang, 2012; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Coleman et al., 2011; Sandell et al.

The framing was introduced in the sociology field, which explains how individuals process and interpret different information using their primary framework based on their experiences (Goffman, 1974). To date, framing has been one of the most prevalent theories studied in the communication field (Weaver, 2007). One of the most cited definitions of framing is Entman's, which refers to framing as selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient while excluding or repressing other aspects (Entman, 1993). Entman noted that a frame might constitute multiple elements of an issue, including its definition, causes, moral appraisal of the situation and suggested treatment. De Vreese (2005) extends the concept by discussing framing as a dynamic communicative process that involves frame-building and frame-setting. Frame-building refers to the emergence of media frames, while the interplay between media frames and audience predisposition is known as frame-setting. Research in frame-setting primarily focuses on examining the effects of media frames on audience interpretation of issues and events (de Vreese, 2005). Therefore, studying the frames used in the media can provide inferences of the audience's perceptions and responses on the selected issues.

Studies showed that media either used inductive or deductive framing analysis such as generic frames of conflict developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in health communication, especially regarding pandemic outbreaks. Studies of media coverage on Influenza A (H1N1) using inductive approaches identified a list of frames used such as fear, panic, severity, safety, human interest, responsibility, scientific information, self-efficacy, uncertainty, and policies (Gadekar et al., 2014; Sandell et al., 2013). In contrast, studies that used inductive generic frames of conflict on H1N1 news focused on these frames, attribution of responsibility, human interest, economic consequences, morality and crisis (Lee & Paik, 2017; Liu & Kim, 2011; Peng Kee et al., 2010).

In the study of pandemic COVID-19 frames, several latest research around the globe used the generic frames of conflict (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Kleut & Šinković, 2020; Ogbodo et al., 2020; Rodelo, 2021; Rosique-Cedillo & Crisóstomo-Flores, 2022). One of the advantages of having studies using these generic frames of conflict is that comparison can be made between studies. Based on these studies, most media across any region mainly apply responsibility attribution as the main frame (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Cho & Wang, 2021; Kleut & Šinković, 2020; Rodelo, 2021). Another dominant frame used in presenting COVID-19 stories is human interest (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Kleut & Šinković, 2020; Rosique-Cedillo & Crisóstomo-Flores, 2022). By identifying the frames used in presenting COVID-19 stories in the media, recommendations and improvements on communication strategies in the media and the government can be proposed. In Malaysia, a study has examined the framing of COVID-19 in the media. However, this study is oriented toward language research; therefore, it could not be compared with other studies that used generic conflict frames. For that, this study aims to determine the dominant frame used in presenting COVID-19 news articles in Malaysia using the generic frames of conflicts. In addition to that, this study also aims to determine the trend of COVID-19 coverage over time.

3. Methods and Analysis

The News Straits Times, a prominent local English-language online news, was selected for this study. Relevant news articles were identified on the website (<https://www.nst.com.my/>) using the search function. The search includes keywords of coronavirus and COVID-19 to identify the articles in the archive. The articles must follow these inclusion criteria: 1) Malaysian context, 2) health-related and preventive measures to curb COVID-19. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, preventive measure refers to ways to prevent or slow down virus transmission. In this study, preventive measures include the news on social distancing, wearing a face mask, disinfection process, travel banning, and washing hands frequently.

The timeframe of this study is between 27th February and 3rd May 2020, the second wave of the pandemic in Malaysia. This study employed a day-to-day sampling, representing all days within the timeline. The period was chosen due to the significant increase in cases from late February until early April, and the decrease in the number of cases in mid-April before the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) was announced on 4th May 2020. The keyword search resulted in a total of 631 news articles. Due to time constraints, only 30% of the total news articles have been selected (189 news articles) for frame analysis. This sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique; each news at each week has an equal chance of being selected.

3. Data Analysis

This study employed content analysis to study the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic issue in Malaysian online news. Content analysis is a systematically and objectively technique used to describe the content of communication and draw inferences from the content (Ogbodo et al., 2020). A quantitative analysis is performed on this sample to obtain the frequencies of articles on COVID-19 over time. This study also analysed the frame used in COVID-19 Malaysian news, using a deductive frame analysis approach. Using Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), this method used the predefining of specific frames as content analytic variables to justify which frames appeared in the news. Five generic frame measurements were adopted in this study to determine these frames: attribution of responsibility frame, human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, and economic consequences frame. The unit of analysis in this study is the text of the news article. A series of questions were used to measure which frame is used in the article (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). A coding scheme of 'yes' or 'no' was applied for the questions that corresponded with the unit of analysis. If the answer for a particular question was a 'yes', it was with a '1' point and '0'

point for a 'no'. A scale is constructed for the five generic frames by averaging the points on the questions placed under the factor that the frames were predefined.

4. Results

A total of 631 articles relating to COVID-19 were identified between 27th February 2020 and 3rd May 2020 in one of Malaysian leading online news, the News Strait Times. Initially, the coverage was relatively low during the first and second week, with less than 40 articles per week. The trend of COVID-19 news coverage began to surge significantly in the third and fourth week of this period, with 99 and 97 articles, respectively. The trend began to drop in the following weeks and plateau for the next three weeks, between 73 to 71 articles per week (Figure 1). Interestingly, there was a slight increase at week eight (82 articles) followed by a significant drop in the final weeks of the second-wave phase.

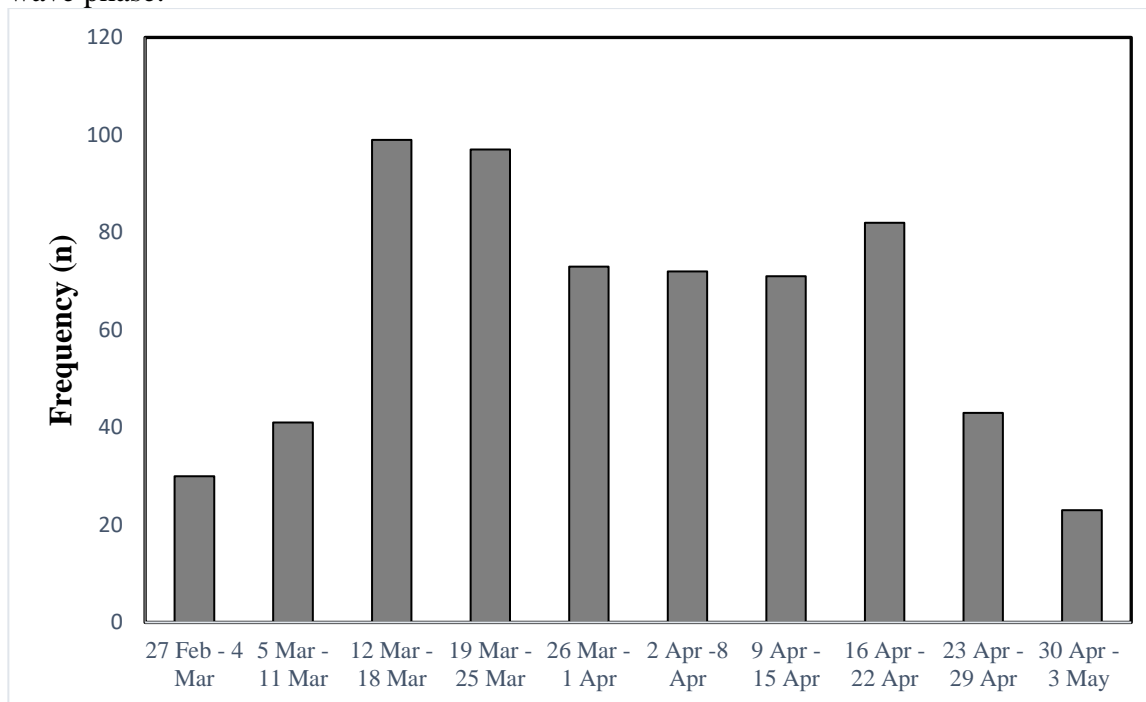


Figure 1: Trend of COVID-19 news frequency in the New Straits Times during Second Wave of Pandemic in Malaysia

Overall, the attribution of responsibility was the dominant frame used in the sample, 68.8% (Figure 2). This high percentage indicates that the New Straits Times emphasised reporting COVID-19 news on the responsibility of individuals, groups, and government. The second most applied frame covering COVID-19 news was human interest, 25.9%. This result showed that the news outlets highlight the emotional angle to the audience. Other frames such as morality and economic consequences were only used less than 3% in the news articles compared to the attribution of responsibility and human interest frames. The New Straits Times cover COVID-19 issues less from the perspective of economics, religions, and moral as these frames presented around 2% of the total COVID-19 articles. Less than 1% of COVID-19 issues were covered using the conflict frame, indicating that this news outlet did not emphasise COVID-19 issues on disagreements between parties, individuals, and groups.

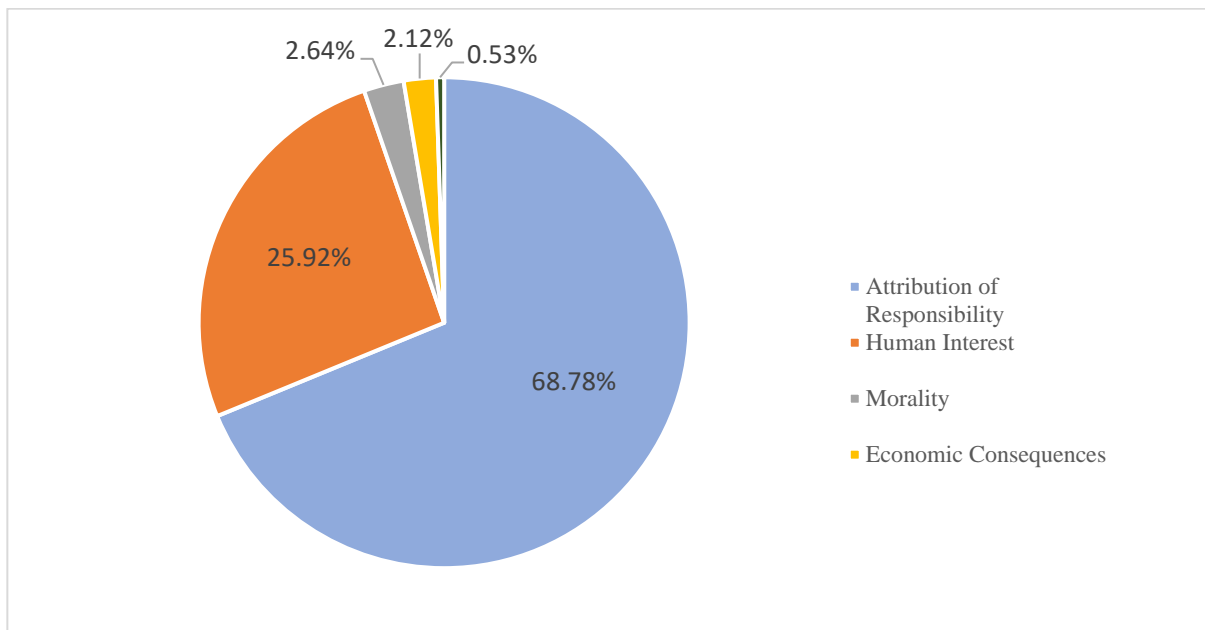


Figure 2: Percentage of the frames represented in the New Straits Times

5. Discussion

This study aims to examine the trend of online news coverage on COVID-19 issues in the New Straits Times during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also determines the dominant frames utilised in the COVID-19 news. Overall, the attribution of responsibility is the most common frame used by this online news, followed by human interest, morality, economic consequences, and conflict. The initial trend of COVID-19 news articles published in this news outlet parallels the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and the number of deaths due to COVID-19 in Malaysia in the first four weeks of second-wave (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2021). At the beginning of the second wave, cases are 68, while the death reported is 0. The coverage of COVID-19 is also relatively low at the beginning of the second wave. During this second-wave phase, the highest recorded cases and deaths were between the third and fourth, 1163 cases and 30 deaths, respectively. The coverage of COVID-19 was also the highest during these periods. As the number of daily cases decreased steadily, the study showed a plateau in the coverage of COVID-19 cases. The lowest coverage is during the final week, yet the cases were 413 and 5 reported COVID-19 deaths. This showed that although the trend of COVID-19 news coverage initially reflected the actual data of confirmed cases in Malaysia, there is a mismatch between the final week coverage with the numbers of cases.

The frame analysis found that the New Straits Times often applied the attribution of responsibility frames in comparison to other frames. This finding indicates that the news outlet showed a high degree of responsibility to the government and Malaysian people for its solution and action regarding the COVID-19 issue. The duty by the government in handling this outbreak can be seen in the implementation of MCO and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and informing the public with the latest update of COVID-19 issues through the daily press conference. This finding is parallel to most of the COVID-19 framing analysis studies (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Cho & Wang, 2021; Kleut & Šinković, 2020; Rodelo, 2021). In comparison to a study by Sandell et al. (2013), although the media often used this type of frame for H1N1 news coverage, this frame was used to attribute the government's responsibility while highlighting the government's incompetency in addressing the issues. Nonetheless, the study showed a similar finding with this current research, emphasising the public to protect themselves during the pandemic.

The second most used frame in reporting COVID-19 stories is human interest. This finding supports the similar finding of previous studies that showed that human interest is essential in covering COVID-19 news (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Kleut & Šinković, 2020; Ogbodo et al., 2020; Rosique-Cedillo & Crisóstomo-Flores, 2022). This frame is used to depict the impact of COVID-19 on humans. Media approach the stories through the lenses of those who have recovered or family members who lost their family due to the disease. This frame also reports stories of COVID-19 on the psychological impact of the pandemic due to the lockdown. For example, people lose their jobs, unable to provide for their families resulting in anxieties, stress, and anxiety. In short, human interest is frequently employed to capture human example and emotional aspects for the audience, eliciting empathy.

The morality frame highlighted the issue concerning God, religious beliefs, or moral prescriptions. Not many studies analyse this frame for health issues. However, a previous study showed that the global media news outlets, such as New York Times, CNN, People's Daily, BBC and Daily Mail, applied this frame on COVID-19 issues, contributing about 5% (Ogbodo et al., 2020). When comparing the current study to Ogbodo et al. (2020), it is found that both studies indicated that the media used the morality frame to show the change in the pattern of the religious and spiritual practices during the pandemic. Both studies showed how the public was advised not to perform their prayer in the house of worship in line with the prevention measures of social distancing.

The economic consequences frame was not a significant frame used when presenting the issues of COVID-19. The news by the New Straits Times mentioned less on the financial losses for the government or group of people during the second wave. However, the news mainly mentioned the costs of supplying medical devices to the healthcare services and one-off cash assistance to help affected families during the pandemic. Other studies also found that economic consequences came as number three in the list of the generic frames (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020; Rosique-Cedillo & Crisóstomo-Flores, 2022). However, compared to the previous study that analyses the news frames used by Al-Jazeera, BBC, and CNN, those media have employed the economic consequences frame to the loss of economic expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mutua & Ong'ong'a, 2020).

The conflict was another frame that was not emphasised in the New Straits Times. Even though the pandemic became a health crisis worldwide, the COVID-19 news did not highlight any conflict or disagreement between individuals, groups, and government during the second wave of the pandemic in Malaysia. Nonetheless, a previous study showed that global media organisations used this frame, 5% of COVID-19 news (Ogbodo et al., 2020). The news that utilised this frame showed political and economic conflicts between countries and within countries.

6. Conclusion

Although this is not the first study to examine the framing of COVID-19 news in Malaysia, it is the first to use the generic frames introduced by Semetko & Valkenburgh (2000). The study's findings on the coverage of COVID-19 news trends indicate that the media has played a crucial role in providing information to the public during this critical time of the pandemic. Further, the identified dominant frames in this study may infer the effects of the framing on the audience (Kim et al., 2014). The findings suggest that Malaysian news media has highlighted the responsibility of the Malaysian authority and the public as an essential solution to COVID-19 issues. This finding also implies that individuals, groups such as NGOs, and the government should work together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This study also showed that using a human interest frame is essential to make the issues relatable.

Although the number of cases decreased towards the end of the second phase, Malaysia went through

other third and fourth pandemic waves. Therefore, it is essential to examine the coverage of COVID-19 news in Malaysian media during these other phases. In addition, since the sample of this study only came from one news outlet, this study could not be an accurate representation of Malaysian media in covering COVID-19 news. Therefore, future studies should include other Malaysian news outlets that use other languages. As this study only focuses on the content of the news media, further research can also explore the production of the news media by studying the practices of journalists in constructing COVID-19 news. A study on the reception of COVID-19 news could examine the effect of the COVID-19 news frames on the newsreaders and how the frames influence the cognitive and behavioural change in preventing COVID-19.

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The Perception on Gender Role among Employees in Selected Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions

Nur Saadah Hamisan@Khair^{a*}, Khadijah Muda^b, Suraya Sintang^c, Farah Umaina Najwa Ismail^d

^aUniversiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: saadahkhair@usim.edu.my

^bUniversiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: khadijahmuda@usim.edu.my

^cUniversiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia
Email: suraya@ums.edu.my

^dUniversiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: farahnajwa5418@gmail.com

Abstract

Society has the tendency to differentiate roles and responsibilities based on gender. The woman is normally responsible for managing domestic duties, while the man is given the primary role as the head of family and a financial supporter. This separation of gender roles has been practiced for many decades in many countries including Malaysia. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the perception of employees in selected higher educational institutions in Malaysia on the gender role by their demographic profile. The online survey was conducted in evaluating three aspects of gender role which are family responsibility, education, and employment. There were 473 employees who participated in this study, including academicians and non-academicians from the selected higher educational institutions in Malaysia. The results showed that their perceptions regarding gender role in family responsibility and employment were found to have a significant association with their gender, simultaneously, their religious practice also has a significant contribution to their perceptions on the aspect of employment.

Keywords: Gender role, Men, Women, Higher Education, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The term ‘gender’ was first used since the early 1950s by John Money in his work on human intersexuality. He used the concept of ‘gender role’ to refer to an aspect of individuals’ subjective identity (Cortez, Gaudenzi & Maksud, 2019). In understanding the role of gender, the term ‘gender’ should be distinguished its meaning from the concept of sex. Although gender has similarity with the biological division of sex into male and female, it involves the division and social valuation of masculinity and femininity (Blackstone, 2003).

According to Eagly (1987), gender role theory refer to “men and women are prescribed distinct sets of gender role–congruent behavioral norms. These normative prescriptions should carry over to influence interactions such that men’s and women’s influence tactic use, and the effectiveness thereof should depend, in part, on the alignment between the gender of the actor and the nature of the influence tactic”. The role concept thus facilitated a theory of gender that analyzes not only the proximal determinants of male and female behavior, but also the more distal influences of culture and social structure that contribute to variability in this behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

In Asian country like Malaysia, responsibilities in private and public sphere are prescribed by gender roles (Abdullah, Noor, & Wok, 2008). Usually, women have role and responsibility in managing household chores and taking care of the children, while men have primary role as a head of family and a financial supporter. This belief has been practiced for many generations, but it started to change gradually where women performed men's job and vice versa. While both men and women are fighting to balance between work and family, the traditional perception of gender role is still continuously occurred among the Malaysian community (Hirschman, 2016).

According to the World Economic Forum, 2019, the Global Gender Gap index score for Malaysia in 2020 was 0.677, with a score of 1 being absolute parity and a score of 0 being absolute imparity. Malaysia ranked extremely low (104 of the 153 countries) in the Global Gender Gap Index based on statistical data on male and female gaps in economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Malaysia also has the one of the biggest gender gaps in South-east Asia. Nonetheless, gender equality in Malaysia is still higher than other Asian countries such as China and Japan.

As the multi-religious and multi-racial country, Malaysia's population in 2020 is estimated at 32.7 million as compared to 32.5 million in 2019 with an annual growth rate of 0.4 per cent. The country has the proportion of 61.3 percent of Muslim, while other religions embraced were Buddhism (19.8%), Christianity (9.2%) and Hinduism (6.3%) Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religions 1.3%, other 0.4%, none 0.8%, unspecified 1% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). Although Islam is the official religion, other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony. However, concerning gender role, Islam is often being misunderstood of promoting bias against gender, particularly on women. This misunderstanding continuously happens until today even though many efforts have been done to solve this issue.

Regarding to gender role, religion might be a factor in perceiving the context of gender role between men and women (Zaidi et al, 2009), but ethnicity also plays role in influencing how they perform their position and responsibility (Joseph, 2006). Therefore, by looking at the Malaysian context, this study aims to identify the perception of Malaysian from different religious and ethnical background on the gender role specifically in three aspects which are family responsibility, education, and employment.

2. Literature Review

Research on women in Malaysia has been published since 1980s from various fields which conducted either by academician, researcher or women activist (A. Abdullah, 2012). Then, gender issue in Malaysia is not new but has been given many attention particularly after Beijing Declaration in 1995. The focus on gender issues can be found not only in scholarly discourses, but also mainstreamed since the 8th Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) until the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). Besides, one of the goals as an initiative from United Nations (UN) in the implementation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also has emphasized its fifth goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (United Nation, 2015). Each country - including Malaysia – will pursue these goals differently because SDG has benefits in approaching local flexibility respectively (Morton, Pencheon, & Squires, 2017).

In order to achieve gender equality, most of the previous studies conducted has focus to deal with women's issues which varied from women's role in marriage and family (Barmania & Aljunid, 2017; Hirschman, 2016); cases involving women in domestic violence (Abdullahi, Binti, Cusairi, Faizaz, & Abdullah, 2018; Awang & Hariharan, 2011; Foley, 2003; Shuib et al., 2016) and sexual

harassment (Ali Mohamed, 2015; Halili Hassan & Lee Zing, 2015; M. N. Ismail, Lee, & Chan, 2007; Mallow, 2013); women's right in education (L. Ismail, 2015; Schleimer, 2016; Yusof, Alias, & Habil, 2012); women's opportunity in employment (Amin, 2004; Amin & Alam, 2008; Zainuddin & Khalid, 2018) and leadership (Almaki, Silong, Idris, & Abd. Wahat, 2016; Merican & Ghani, 2017; Syed Ismail & Abdul Ghani, 2009); as well as women's responsibility in religious practice (Frisk, 2009; Hochel, 2013; Tong & Turner, 2008).

The relation between gender and religion also have been extensively discussed previously. In the nineteenth century, Western feminists was among the first criticized that religion has a role in consolidating gender difference and inequality from many different contexts: from early Christianity and Judaism (e.g. Kraemer and D'Angelo, 1990; Elm, 1994), through the medieval period (e.g. Bynum, 1987, 1991), to early modern (e.g. Davidoff and Hall, 2002) and industrial society (e.g. Ginzberg, 1990; Brown, 2000; Summers, 2000). Thus, the importance move among religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) has contributed to consolidate identity around a defense of 'traditional' roles for men and women which involve male head-ship and female domesticity (Woodhead, 2012), which proves the relations between religion and gender.

In Malaysia, religion has strong relation with the ethnic and cultural identity which also has influenced the role of gender in family institution and society. For instance, the role of Malay women was defined by their economical background whether they come from the elites or the peasants, because the latter involved in food and subsistence production compared to the elite or aristocratic women. However, Karim (1987) argues that it was unclear whether non-cultural economic and development concepts were able to evaluate the Malay women's position in society, because religion and other factors which closely associated with the Malay culture were also given important consideration.

In managing family institution, it has been practiced that the Malay women are primarily responsible for reproductive and household activities. Meanwhile, the Chinese and Indian women were originally migrants and most of them employed in various sectors as encouraged by British to balance sex ratio of their male counterparts and to enhance labor supply. Therefore, the Chinese women migrant workers were employed in the tin mines, estates and in the construction industry, while the Indian women migrants worked in the plantation estate sector (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2012). Nevertheless, Malaysian women nowadays were found in most of the employment sector regardless of their religion and ethnicity, but women are still expected to have responsibility for the family and to maintain the traditional perception of a woman. Unfortunately, bias and unequal treatment towards women was perceived as normal and had never been questioned culturally and religiously until today.

Therefore, the present study aims to identify the perception on the concept of gender role by demographic profile of employees in selected higher educational institutions in Malaysia, which focused on three aspects which are family responsibility, education, and employment. It aims to analyze whether gender and their religious practices have influence on one's perception on gender role in performing the responsibility in family, seeking education, and contributing as an employer.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted quantitatively through self-developed questionnaire as a research instrument. In this instrument, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with particular statement using a five-point Likert scale, with (1) indicating strongly disagree and (5) indicating strongly agree. The questionnaire is divided into four (4) sections as below:

Table 1: Sections in the Questionnaire

Section	Description
Section A	Socio-Demographic Profile
Section B	Gender Role in Family Responsibility
Section C	Gender Role in Education
Section D	Gender Role in Employment

3.1 Participants

In total, 473 employees from selected higher educational institutions in Malaysia participated in this study. 24.9% from UiTM, 23.3% from UKM, 18.6% from UPM, 17.5% from UMS, and 15.6% from UNIMAS. These universities were selected based on cluster random selection from all higher educational institutions in Malaysia. The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 69 years. The respondents consisted of 39.1% male workers (n = 185) and 60.9% female workers (n = 288). In addition, the sample comprised employees from different races: 77% Malay, 3.8% Chinese, 2.1% Indian, 16.5% Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak, and 0.6% other than these races. It is important to identify that the respondents' highest academic qualification was the PhD degree.

3.2 Data Analysis

The collected data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and statistical inferential. Statistical Inferential analyses were accomplished using T-test and ANOVA. It was found that the data reliability (Cronbach alpha) for the three sections of gender role in family responsibility, education and employment were .736, .626, and .640, respectively. As the reliability for these factors were larger than .60, thus, it indicated that the items have a good reliability. Initially, the reliability for Section C was below than .60, however, after removing a weak item (item C6: I have interest in the educational field due to my gender), the reliability improved to .626. Similarly, a weak item in Section D was removed (item D8: I prefer to work with a machine-filled environment). Therefore, both weak items were excluded for further analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on the data collected, this study attempts to analyze the respondents' perceptions regarding gender role whether their perception have significant association with their gender and religious practice.

4.1 Gender differences in understanding gender role

There are only two options to identify the gender of each respondent in the questionnaire whether they are male or female. It can be found that majority of the respondents were 60.9% female employees (n = 288) and 39.1% male employees (n = 185) from different higher educational institutions in Malaysia. From the data collected, 47.4% respondents are from academician (n = 224) and 52.6% respondents are from non-academics (n = 249) which consists of administration staff, medical staff, science officer, engineer, driver and others.

One of the research objectives is to evaluate whether their gender has significant contribution in their perceptions regarding gender role. In term of family responsibility, there is no significant difference (t = 0.919, df = 471, p > .05) between male (M=35.87, SD = 5.64, n = 185) and female (M=35.34, SD = 6.35, n = 288) in family responsibility (see Table 3).

Table 3: Gender differences in Family responsibility

Gender (n)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	T value (t)	Significant (p)
Male (185)	35.87	5.64	0.919	.0358
Female (288)	35.34	6.35		

It shows that both male and female perceive that both genders have equal responsibility in taking care of the children, helping house chores, and respecting each other's role. Although it has been practiced over generations that responsibilities at home were frequently separated by gender, new norms have been built that, men also have the ability to manage housework and stay at home, while women were working outside home. Men were no longer the sole breadwinner, and women were no longer staying in the kitchen for the whole day. With the progress of globalization, both men and women shared their responsibility in order to maintain the happiness of their family.

In term of education, there is no significant difference ($t = -1.526$, $df = 471$, $p > .05$) between male ($M=40.59$, $SD = 3.89$, $n = 185$) and female ($M=41.18$, $SD = 4.25$, $n = 288$) in education (see Table 4).

Table 4: Gender differences in Education

Gender (n)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	T value (t)	Significant (p)
Male (185)	40.59	3.89	-1.526	.128
Female (288)	41.18	4.25		

Undeniably, this finding has proven that achievement of women has surpassed men in the educational attainment as in the Malaysian Gender Gap Index (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020) because there is a trend that female are more successful academically and contributed bigger enrolment in public institutions of higher learning compared to male (L. Ismail, 2015; Jelas & Dahan, 2010). Malaysia also has fully closed its gender gaps in primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment in educational sector, and has steady progress of gender gap in the politic as well as in women's share of estimated earned income (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Previously, there are also differences of specialization enrolled between male and female students. Females formed the majority in field of study like education, linguistic and social science, while male inclined into technical subjects such as engineering, mathematics and physics (L. Ismail, 2015). But today, these differences are almost not existed because gender does not influence their study interests anymore.

However, in term of employment, there is significant difference ($t = 2.690$, $df = 471$, $p < .05$) between male ($M=36.68$, $SD = 4.90$, $n = 185$) and female ($M=35.44$, $SD = 4.87$, $n = 288$) as shown in the Table 5. The significance existed might be due to the reason that there is a high challenge to be employed particularly among female compared to male due to several reasons such as to balance household and workload or to manage time efficiently between family and work.

Table 5: Gender differences in Employment

Gender (n)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	T value (t)	Significant (p)
Male (185)	36.68	4.90	2.690	.007
Female (288)	35.44	4.87		

As reported in 2019, the median monthly salaries and wages received by male employees was RM2,477 and female employees RM2,370, increased 5.8 per cent and 6.4 per cent respectively as compared to 2018 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). It shows that male employees received higher salary compared to female even though that women nowadays working in many fields as many as men. The latest report found that the mean monthly salaries and wages for male employees increased by 4.1 per cent to RM3,304 and female employees increased by 5.0 per cent to RM3,108

as compared to the previous year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020), but it still indicates that there is difference and unequal pay between male and female employees. However, majority of employment sectors in Malaysia determine the salaries and wages based on the employees' educational background as well as their experiences compared to their gender.

4.2 Religious Practice in Understanding the Gender Role

From the survey conducted, there are diversity of respondents from their religious background. Majority of them were Muslims, and the rest comes from many different religions as shown in Table 6. Their level of religious practices is also varied from one another regardless of their religions. Most of the respondents which are 71.2% practiced religion moderately (n=337), 24.1% practiced religion in high level, and only 4.7% practiced religion in low level.

Table 6: Religious background of the respondents and their level of religious practices

Question	Answer	Frequency (%)
Religion	Islam	425 (89.9)
	Buddhism	6 (1.3)
	Hinduism	6 (1.3)
	Christianity	29 (6.1)
	Sikhism	1 (0.2)
	Taoism/Confucianism	2 (0.4)
	Other	4 (0.8)
Level of Religious practices	Low	22 (4.7)
	Moderate	337 (71.2)
	High	114 (24.1)

Because of there is relation between gender and religion as mentioned previously, this study attempts to evaluate whether their level of religious practice has significant contribution in their perceptions regarding gender role. The survey found that the results of ANOVA test showed that the value of F (df = 2, 470, p> .05) = 1.969 was insignificant. It shows that low, medium, and high religious practices do not influence their responsibilities in the family (see Table 7). This finding helps to acknowledge that both men and women agree to equally share their responsibilities at home with their family members regardless of their religious practice.

Table 7: Religious practice differences in family responsibility

Family responsibility		Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean ²	F value (F)	Significant (p)
Religious practice	Between groups	124.96	2	62.478	1.696	.185
	Within groups	17316.13	470	36.843		

Similarly, the results from the test show that the value of F (df = 2, 470, p> .05) = 2.241 was insignificant because their level of religious practices do not influence their perceptions on gender role in the aspect of education (see Table 8). Although there are some religions clearly encourage to seek education, this factor has no impact in determining their interests in learning, choosing their field study, or pursuing higher education. Nevertheless, male and female have their own freedom to be educated regardless of their religions and level of religious practices.

Table 8: Religious practice differences in Education

Education		Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean ²	F value (F)	Significant (p)
Religious practice	Between groups	75.662	2	37.831	2.241	.108
	Within groups	7935.120	470	16.883		

In addition to that, this study found that there is significance in the level of religious practice and the perception on gender role in the aspect of employment. The result of ANOVA test shows that the value of F (df = 2, 470, p <.05) = 3.898 was significant (see Table 9). It clearly shows that low, medium, and high religious practices might influence one's perception on career matters. There are also differences between religious practice groups for low, medium and high practice. The mean score for moderate religious practice (35.57) was lower than the mean score for high religious practice (37.04) and the role of gender on career.

Table 9: Religious practices differences in Employment

Employment		Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean ²	F value (F)	Significant (p)
Religious practice	Between groups	186.180	2	93.090	3.898	.021
	Within groups	11223.925	470	23.881		

Due to the significance found in the relation between the level of religious practice and the respondents' perception on gender role in the employment aspect, it can be concluded that religion as well as the level of religious practice might be an important factor in determining one's perception. Therefore, from the survey conducted, the results showed that the perceptions of the respondents regarding gender role in the employment sector were found to have significant association with their gender and religious practice, but there is no significant found in both education and family responsibility.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, Malaysia is a country with multi religious and ethnic society that populated by 16.8 million of males and 15.9 million females (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). However, this difference of number should not be a factor in discriminating any gender, for both male and female need to complement each other and to respect each role and responsibility. The role of gender is determined by various factors, but it should not prevent both from protecting each other in order to ensure the sustainability and well-being of the society.

As discussed previously, this study found that there are many different factors of having various understandings towards the gender and its role which become the main reason of conducting this study. The survey was conducted via online to evaluate respondents' perceptions on gender roles in three aspects: family responsibility, education, and employment. In fact, there are many additional aspects that can be evaluated to analyze their perceptions on gender, but that will be discussed further in future research.

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AUTHENTICITY TOWARDS HOMESTAY PROGRAMME EXPERIENCES IN PULAU AMAN

Farah Syazwani Hayrol Aziz¹ and Nor Hafizah Selamat²

¹Unit for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA), USM

²School of Social Sciences, USM

*corresponding author

Email: hafiz@usm.my

Abstract

Studies on Malaysian homestay programme have been quite established, however, only a few focuses on tourist's perceptions of authenticity. Authenticity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and to understand authenticity is to determine what is perceived to be authentic. Thus, the objective of this paper is to explore how 'authentic experience' are constructed by homestay programme operators and how tourists perceive authenticity on Pulau Aman Homestay. Using narrative analysis, this study also aims to examine the stages of authentic experience that occur before, during, and after tourists arrive on the island. In-depth interviews with 5 Homestay Operators and 2 Focus Groups Discussion with 10 domestic and international tourists that have experienced homestay programme were conducted. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The main findings revealed that many of the tourists' activities have been showcased and staged to present the "authentic lives" of the local people. Interestingly, the perception of authenticity between domestic and international tourists are different. Generally, international tourists perceived the 'staging activities' as very authentic while the domestic tourists have mixed views about their 'authentic experience' as some of them grew up in a similar village environment. However, experiencing 'seafood culinary' and the new-found intimate host-guest intimate bonds with the local people seems to be the most authentic experience for domestic tourists. It is proven that the success of homestay programme on the island could be achieved through the creation of authentic experiences. However, this can only be done if locals are empowered and are genuinely allowed to steer the development of local tourism to ensure the sustainability of local homestay programme.

Keywords

Authenticity, Host-Guest Relations, Tourism, Homestay Programme, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The Malaysian Ministry of Tourism started the homestay tourism programme in 1988 as a way to diversify tourism offerings by providing travellers with alternate lodging options (Hamzah, 2007). The homestay programme has been seen as a possible alternative tourism offering for attracting international visitors. The complex dynamics of the homestay experience, in which host and guest identity politics, venue setting, and space all play a key role in shaping the experience (Mura et al, 2015). Apart from its reputation as a shopping paradise, tourists flock to Malaysia to learn about the country's culture and way of life. This has prompted the Malaysian Homestay Association to establish a homestay tourism programme in partnership with the Malaysian Tourism Board. (Kayat, 2010). Scholars have argued how authenticity plays an important part in the tourist's overall experience (Cahyadi, 2015; Bryan and Long, 1996).

This study investigates how homestay operators create the authentic experiences, as well as how visitors experience and perceive authenticity. The discussion on authentic experiences of Pulau Aman Homestay Program was derived from in-depth interviews, focus groups discussion, as well as

the non-participant observation done during the field work duration. The discussion will be divided into three sections: pre-arrival and arrival; during the visit; and finally, departure. The next discussion will go into greater detail about how homestay operators on the island communicate with tourists who visit their community on a daily basis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Malaysian Homestay Program

A Malaysian homestay programme gives tourists the opportunity to stay with a chosen family, interact and experience the daily life of their homestay family and learn the culture and lifestyle of the rural community in Malaysia. It focuses more on lifestyle and experience, including cultural and economic activities. Homestay tourism program will usually produce a “tourist returned” because of the close bonds of friendship with their foster family, thus, enables them to return to Malaysia (Abas et al., 2022; Kayat, 2010). The homestay programme has been around since the 1970s, through the active involvement of local community, and it allows international tourists to stay in their homes with less budget compared to staying in hotels or resorts (Hamzah, 2008; Ibrahim and Razzaq, 2010). The homestay program's operators will show tourists the local traditions, allowing them to participate in local customs and traditions that is considered as “authentic” by the locals and by participating in the activities, tourists are expected to gain some “authentic experience” (Zulkefli et al., 2021). The program also focuses on lifestyle and experience, including cultural and economic activities practiced by local people. These programs lead to the commodification process involved in the selection of activities, as the local's product may have the opportunity of being commercialized and packaged as a tourism product due to its traditional and exotic culture (Cohen, 1988). These products, including crafts and souvenirs, local food, as well as traditional attires are not foreign to the homestay operators as they are also being practiced and used in their daily lives.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theories of authenticity

Tourism scholars have paid close attention to the issue of authenticity. Authenticity, according to Wang (1999), raises issues about how the 'Other' and the 'Past' are represented. Others have suggested that while the tourist industry in the current era promises an authentic experience, most of it is planned exclusively or modified to appear more appealing (MacCannell, 1973). This aspect of tourism consumption has not been fully explored especially in the context of Malaysian homestays program. By promoting a traditional and genuine ways of life, homestays in Malaysia promise tourists ‘authentic’ experiences that go beyond the mere provision of a type of accommodation (Zulkifli et al., 2021; The nexus between authenticity and homestays in Malaysia is highly reiterated by tourism promotional material (Mura, 2015). According to MacCannell (1973), Tourists are accepting with what is shown to them since they are unable to discern between fictitious and actual reality. In fact, the events that are described as authentic are authentic not because they occur spontaneously, but because they were reconstructed to meet the tourists’ desires and from their perspective. (Wang, 1999). As a result, the tourists' experiences are customised and re-enacted to meet their expectations. There are scholars who argued that the authenticity in terms of experience gained is received in accordance with the tourist’s acceptance of what is authentic, and it comes from the images and tourism products presented to them (Bruner, 1991; Silver, 1993). In contrast, Cohen (1995) argues that the travellers in the post-modern era disregard authenticity and origin of the attractions at the tourist destination, if they get the most enjoyment out of it. If tourism products have changed due to the commodification process in maintaining the characteristics that can give satisfaction to tourists, these products are considered authentic by tourists. The concept of authenticity is not that big an issue to tourists because of their experience gained and the activities carried out should be interesting and appealing to them to follow it. By using the theory of

authenticity by Ning Wang (1999) this study will look into the stages of authentic experience that tourists have before they arrive, during their stay, and after they leave the island. To truly understand the whole experience of Pulau Aman's tourism industry, gender lens will also be utilized to establish a comprehensive detail of how the women who are the main operator of homestay program of Pulau Aman in constructing activities that considers to be authentic for tourists. The process of creating an authentic experience started from the stage of pre-arrival of tourist at the homestay.

3.2 Gender and authenticity

Women homestay operators are the one who mostly involved in the construction of authentic experience. As noted by Silver (1993), tourists' authenticity is not necessarily determined by gaining a genuine appreciation for another culture but rather by verifying a marketed representation of it. In a study on gender and leadership, Liu et al (2015) drew on a concept of performativity to show that doing authenticity requires leaders to conform to gender norms. Similarly, this concept can be applied to the study on gender and tourism, in which it requires women homestay operators to conform to gender roles and responsibility. The women are the one responsible in domestic works but at the same time they must bear the burden of maintaining the homestay premises. By and large, the literature on gender and authenticity conceptualizes gender as something people have or are rather than something they do (Liu et al., 2015).

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Site

The study was carried out at Homestay Pulau Aman on the island of Penang. Boats can be taken to the village from Batu Kawan's jetty, which is about 45 minutes from Penang Island.. According to statistic given by the Chief Villagers, the whole population of Pulau Aman consists of 254 people; 117 men and 134 women. It has around 56 households in total. Even though the population is considerably small; the village do have a strong community-based organisation. The data was collected between March 2019 – September 2019.

4.1 Data collection and Sampling method

The study is initially carried out with the assistance of the Chief Village and establishing contact with the researcher's foster family on Pulau Aman. The gatekeepers have an important role in assisting the researcher's process in establishing rapport with the local villagers. The contacts with the residents of Pulau Aman began in March 2018. A list of 15 female Homestay Pulau Aman operators was compiled with the cooperation of the gatekeepers. The researcher made several visits and planned to interview as many homestay hosts as possible. The study finally managed to conduct in-depth interviews with 5 homestay operators and 2 (two) focus group discussions with local and international tourists, consists of 4 international tourists and 6 domestic tourists. The focus group discussions were conducted at one of the floating chalets. The tourists were approached directly while they were in the organised tour and the session took around one-hour to complete. The tourists were asked to share their expectations before their arrival and their experiences once they completed their tour. The list of respondents presented in a table below.

Table 1 Profile of Homestay Operators

	Name	Age	Homestay Operation
1.	Rohana	68	12
2.	Rokiah	47	6
3.	Nora	51	6
4.	Aminah	62	4
5.	Halimah	45	3

Table 2 Profile of Tourists

	Name	Age	Gender	Origin
1.	Azad	33	M	Kurdistan
2.	Savada	26	F	Cambodia
3.	Seffet	34	M	Turkey
4.	Simon	31	M	Germany
5.	Azmi	27	M	Perak
6.	Wong	27	M	Pahang
7.	Haja	28	M	Penang
8.	Syazalina	27	F	Perak
9.	Sally	35	F	Penang
10.	Goo	25	M	Melaka

4.2 Data Analysis

Interviews from in-depth and focus group discussion were recorded for the entire conversation and were later transcribed. This study used a data analysis methodology based on thematic analysis. Qualitative data analysis was done, consisted of several iterative stages. interviews were gathered and coded. Selective coding for specifically observed concepts and themes helped to further inform various categories and properties. During this process, relevant literature was consulted in response to the emerged themes and concepts for a more theoretically informed examination.

5. Results and Discussion

4.1 Activities and tours in Pulau Aman

Homestay operators in Pulau Aman is among the highest in Penang with 20 homestay operators and 23 rooms (MOTAC report, 2022). There is daily arrival of tourist to this village specially to experience the seafood galore at the Floating Restaurant. Visitors will buy ticket at Batu Kawan Jetty for return boat-fees. When tourists arrive on the island, they will be directed to walk along the pavement, which will lead them to various destinations. A clear signboard may also be seen from this vantage point. Visitors will walk through the village and witness various demonstration conducted by the local people including the activity of making drying fish process, exhibition of a collection of seashells by the villagers, the demonstration of kuih kapit making, having photographed near the oldest sukun tree in the village. In exchange, they wanted to try the locally dried fish, buy sukun chips, and order kuih kapit for their friends and families back home. Looking for lovely flowers grown within the house compound of local villagers is a thrilling experience for foreign tourists. One international tourist, Seffet from Turkey shared that he never had the opportunity to see all the beautiful flowers did not miss the opportunity to take photo of all the flowers. Seffet said there was no such flowers in his home country. For him, this experience was authentic as he could experience what it was like to be in a tropical country like Malaysia. Walking through the village pathway, the visitors would be able to see the oldest Sukun tree that was claimed to be planted by a notorious leader in the 1890's. From this trail, visitors used various senses and stimulating the visitors' attentiveness to authentic living in the village. Visitors would be able to have close interaction with the nature, and for this majority of respondents interviewed claimed that it gives them an ultimate experience of existential authenticity. According to Wang (1999), existential authenticity is an activity-based approach and refers to a state of Being in that place. Existential authenticity also focusing on emotions, sensations, relationships, and a sense of self (Rickly Boyd, 2013). Therefore, homestay program provides authentic experience through the connections between place and experience. In short, place matters in creating authentic experience particularly existential authenticity. After completing the village trail, visitors can also taste the handcrafted traditional love letter, known as Kuih Kapit, produced daily by Rohana, the sole producer on the island. Rohana has been selling the cookies for two decades, using an old recipe passed down from her late mother, hence the brand name "Warisan Bonda" or Mom's Heritage. Visitors can get a firsthand look at how

kuih kapit is made when Rohana provides a demonstration in front of her house compound every weekend. She said she prepared the cookies herself and sometime with the assistance of her daughter-in-law. To maintain the authenticity of the kuih kapit making, Rohana decided to use “traditional tools” that she said are hard to come by nowadays on the market. She stated that she has been using the tools for as long as she can remembers. The homestay operators who are women can be considered the local champion and the backbone of homestay programme in Pulau Aman. Rohana is one of them, actively organizing and constructing various activities in the village. This has been observed by Sally, Penangites traveller when she said, “...*despite being confined to their domestic roles, they seem taking the lead. They defy all stereotypes, and even though some of their spouses are fishermen, women take more responsibilities, such as organising and hosting homestays.*”

4.2 Authenticity from the perspective of homestay operators

Visitors and homestay operators on Pulau Aman are free to pursue their desire for authentic experiences. Another homestay operator, Halimah, said that in Pulau Aman, host and guest interaction is conducted naturally, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, or employment. Halimah says, “...*usually when they come here, they already have plan for activities. an activity. We will provide breakfast. At noon, when they come back from activities, we will serve lunch and have a chit chat.* Another homestay operators, Rokiah and Aminah shared that “*When I receive guests, I like to have a conversation with them. I love talking and sharing stories. Treat them nicely and keep updating if they need anything.* To receive visitors, various preparations must be made. Rohana gets the most help from the Dewan Kumpulan Perkembangan Wanita (KPW) members who are committed in welcoming the visitors. Nora, another homestay operator narrates, “...*we will make sure our home is cleaned and beautifully decorated. My husband assisted with the renovation of the room so that it would be ready for our visitors. I won't be thrilled if they [guests] complain.*” The homestay operators would take specific efforts to ensure that their premises are ready, such as remodelling the home and preparing delicious cuisine to provide to the guests. For the homestay operators, it is their responsibility to create and construct activities that is considered authentic from the tourist gaze and this is usually done by presenting “traditional elements” of local products, food, activities such as the demonstration of making kuih kapit with traditional utensils, producing locally produced cookies.

4.3 Authenticity from the perspective of tourists

Tourists who were interviewed expressed the experience of existential authenticity. Azmi, 27 years, visitor from Perak admitted having visited several homestays in other state but was amazed with his experience with the warm welcome of the local children when they share their excitement of finding a small snake and showed proudly to Azmi. The experience, according to Azmi, triggers his bodily feeling as he would be able to interact with the natural habitat around the island. He said, “...*this is my first time being in close contacts with animals in my lifetime. Not like other city boys, the locals here treat this as their hobbies. To play with animals like chickens, goose...they seem relaxed, while us will feel unease even to see them [the animals]*”. Simon, a German tourist, had no expectations for the trip but was pleasantly pleased by the village's magnificent environment. “...*I believe it's fairly authentic in a way, because I assumed we were on a show, and everything was like plan, and it was more like acting or something like that, but here we are free to discover ourselves. And I'm having a great time*”. he remarked. Wong, who hails from Pahang, has a different viewpoint. “...*the scenery is something you can't have in a city,*” he remarked. *As a result, it has a calming effect. This is a voyage to calm yourself, and I'm quite comfortable with it. However, I believe the organisers were attempting to highlight only the positive aspects of the event.* While Savada from Cambodia was surprised with the facilities provided on that small island and plan to come back with proper plan.

In terms of food experience, a tourist from Penang, Haja, 28 years old, experienced the freshness of seafood at the village restaurant. He said, "...we can order fresh prawns and asked the chef to cook fresh for him and it is free of charge. I came here because it is an addictive dish, and I just don't care about cholesterol at all". His experience illustrates the enthusiastic feelings he experienced at the local seafood restaurant that she frequently visited. A foreign tourist, Azad, a 33-year-old Kurdish tourist, was also interviewed about his culinary adventures. "...my dining experience is fantastic here because I adore the food," he said. *Although it was a bit spicy, I tried to enjoy it. I believe the nasi lemak is unique. Even though it was hot, the flavour was pleasant, and it was quite tasty. The meal is unique in that it comes in a variety of colours and is prepared in a variety of ways*". However, for Syazalina, who was born in Perak, the experience was nonetheless authentic when she commented, "... for me, the kind of cuisine that they offer us today is actually like my mom's cooking also. Fish curry, fried chicken, and simple vegetables To say that it is 'genuine' Malay culture is an understatement. It was enjoyable.

4.4 Discussion

From the discussion above, it is clear that the building of authentic experiences in Pulau Aman is particularly closely tied to Wang's concept of existential authenticity(1999) as evidenced by the excursions detailed above. The following discussion will provide some light on the residents of Pulau Aman's staging of authenticity, which is assisted by women homestay operators. In the aforementioned findings, the process of staging authenticity was similar to MacCannell's (1973) six-stage staging continuum, where the feeling of being "genuine" is fluid in between two extremes. . Stage 1: tourists frequently attempt to move beyond the front stage; Stage 2: front area that has been changed to resemble a back region; alterations are primarily "cosmetic," with only a few back region features implanted to create a "genuine ambiance." Stage 3: a front region that has been altered such that it appears to be a back region. Stage 4: the back region, which is open to tourists; Stage 5: the back region, which has been slightly adjusted and is only visited by tourists on rare occasions; and finally, Stage 6: the back region, which has been slightly altered and is only visited by tourists on rare occasions Stage 6: the ultimate backstage, a location rarely seen by tourists. Which of the stages a tourist will reach is largely determined by their motivation and interest.

Based on the analysis, it seems to be quite difficult to determine which stage the Pulau Aman homestay operators have opened to visitors. It all depends on the circumstances and the visitors' interest. Stages one and two were clearly the types of island tours that day-trippers took. They only observe a portion of the locals' daily routine, which has been "cosmetically painted" to resemble regular life on the island (MacCannell, 1973). Another aspect of activities, such as the demonstration of Kuih Kapit making and the presentation of a homestay room to guests, could be classified as stage three or four. Visitors who enter one of the villager's homes, on the other hand, fall into stage five or six, because they were there for a long time. The homestay operators offered these examples of activities and tours to visitors as an authentic experience. In exchange, visitors were allowed to experience Malay culture, even if it was not the most "authentic representation" of Malay culture as promoted in brochures or tourism flyers. The most significant consideration is one's physical well-being, which is regarded as a vital part of tourism (Rickly Boyd, 2013). As a result, releasing bodily feelings might be viewed as an act of reclaiming one's real self that is unconstrained by society standards and laws. Tourist experiences on Pulau Aman demonstrate how travellers voluntarily develop and fulfil bodily intense sentiments in a culturally diverse setting. The uniqueness of local activities will determine the success of homestay program. This has been highlighted by the work of Zulkefli et al (2021) who argues that three new dimension which include previous awards, entrepreneurship, and uniqueness of product and package design for homestay would be the main criteria for the future homestay business to be successful for a whole-of-community. The local champion as played by Rohana in constructing the 'authentic' tourist activities also become the significant point in this study. The local community's support has an impact on the arrival of tourists

and thus local champion such as Rohana should have a good relationship with the other homestay operators to ensure that the homestay programme to run and remain in the tourism industry for a longer period (Abas et al., 2022).

6. Conclusion and Research Implications

The discussion above described the perceived authentic experience by respondents who visited the homestay program in Pulau Aman. This study illuminates interpretations and meanings tourists attach to the authenticity of their experience in Pulau Aman; and specifically, the relationship that formed between the host and the guest, and between the staging authenticity and production of the attractions and activities of the local tourism destination. There is still much to learn about host-guest relations and their complexities within tourism from both business and social science perspectives. The body of literature specifically concerning perception of authenticity in the context of tourism is limited. Future research on concept of authenticity and how gender influences the production of authentic and great hospitality services to the tourists could also focus on using different authenticity approaches such as existential authenticity and postmodern authenticity to explore tourists' experiences further. It is proven that success of homestay programme on the island could be achieved through the creation of authentic experiences. However, this can only be done if locals are empowered and are genuinely allowed to steer the development of local tourism to ensure the sustainability of local homestay programme.

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Socially Isolated Child: A Case Study Analysis

Mohd Faiz Fansuri Mohd Affandy^a

Prof. Dr. Azlinda Azman^a

^a*School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

Email: faizfanz86@gmail.com

Abstract

Social isolation among children has been occurring in the past decade. However, not much is known regarding this phenomenon. Currently, it is not classified in any physical or mental health classification manual. Therefore, this article aims to understand the underlying factors of socially isolated children. A case study analysis was conducted on three (3) critical cases of extreme child social isolation. Three (3) key themes were identified as the underlying factors including situational context; origin of condition; and proper documentation and legal issues; while two (2) themes were related to the effects of isolation which include behavioural difficulties and cognitive difficulties. This study provides a guide to understanding socially isolated children. Given the small number of studies and the methodological limitations of the evidence, longitudinal studies are needed to further explore and understand these socially isolated children.

Keywords: children, child social isolation, child psychology, social work with children, and child studies.

1. Introduction

Humans socialisation primarily depend on active interaction within the individuals' social environment. Humans are not merely biological organisms, but a social beings where their development is connected to social development (Canady, 1948). Childhood is shaped by their social environment. Child development and socialisation are influenced by the interaction and relationship that the individual experienced (Been & Garbarino, 1992). In this article, the authors attempt to understand socially isolated children based on child social isolation case studies. To achieve this, the authors will define beforehand '*what is a child?*' and '*what is social isolation?*'.

Child can be defined biologically, psychologically, sociologically and legally. Biologically, a child can be defined as an individual between the stage of birth and puberty, an infant (O'Toole, 2013; Rathus, 2013). Psychologically, the child can be defined via their behavioural and cognitive abilities. Sociologically, the child can be defined by their status in society, group or tribe (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Children can be defined by relationships in society such as kinship with family members (Hughes & Kroehler, 2009). Therefore, a child can be seen as sons and daughters in the family. The legislative definition of a child can differ from place to place both globally and locally. The globally recognized definition of a child provided by The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) under The United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child..." (unicef, 2017). In Malaysia, the definition of a child is similar to that of the CRC, as provided by the Child Act (Amendment) 2016 a child refers to "a person under the age of 18 years and in relation to criminal proceedings, means a person who has attained the age of criminal responsibility as prescribed in section 82 of the Penal Code" (p.15).

Social isolation is not clinically defined as a behavioural, social or emotional disorder. In general, some individuals spend a significant amount of time alone working, playing, writing and so forth. These individuals need and seek the time and space for distinctive purposive. However, there are

individuals with no choice in the matter of solitude caused by isolation or rejection from other members of their communities (Rubin, et al., 2009). Further defined, social isolation as exclusion or lacking social activities, local services, and resources (Mohanty, et al., 2016). The definition which focuses on participation in society was supported by Oxman-Martinez and Ye (2014), stating that social isolation refers to a lack of social group participation, feelings of disconnectedness from others and perceived peer discrimination such as being rejected by peers. Therefore, social interaction and social relationships are key components in defining social isolation. Miyazaki, et al., (2012), on the other hand, describes social isolation as neglect, a form of child abuse that includes mental stress leading to various mental and physical illnesses.

2. Methodology

The selection of three (3) case studies was conducted following the search terms of child social isolation, which include child social isolation and child isolation. Three (3) studies were identified to perform some understanding on the underlying factors of child social isolation.

3. Results

The three (3) case studies are summarised below.

Case Study 1

In November 1938, a six (6) and a half years old child was discovered as being illegitimate and isolated (Davis, 1947). The child's mother was a deaf-mute from the age of two (2) years old. Both the child and mother spent most of their time together in a dark room isolated from the rest of the family. McNeil, et al. (1984) stated little food was provided by pushing it to them under the locked door. Due to this, the child did not develop speech and would use gestures whenever communicating with the mother (Davis, 1947). The child was only able to make a croaking sound. The lack of sunshine and malnourishment caused the child to become rachitic mainly affecting the legs making it difficult to walk. The child's mother managed to escape and rescued the child with the help of authorities (McNeil, et al., 1984).

The child developed a fear and hostility towards other humans especially men. The child's behaviour was that of an infant, by the age of six (6), it reflected that of a six-month-old. The child's behaviour was more similar to deaf children's behaviour making it difficult to tell if the child was able to hear or not and eventually diagnosed as feeble-minded. The child scored terribly low on the Stanford-Binet scale nearing the zero mark which was 19 months old and on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, scored a 39 which represent two (2) and a half years old (Davis, 1947).

Case Study 2

In the early 1940s, a child was discovered isolated from society by the mother and grandfather for the majority of the child's childhood and upon rescue was found to be suffering physical, psychological and social impairments (Davis, 1947). The child was born in March 1932 and by the time authorities rescued, was already six (6) years old and extremely retarded with few human-like behaviours (Hughes & Kroehler, 2009). The child received little human care during the six (6) years of isolation. The child died two (2) years after rescue in 1942 by the age of 10 due to hemorrhagic jaundice (Davis, 1947).

The child was the second illegitimate child in the family and was disapproved by the child's grandfather. This caused the child to be sent away, shifting from home to home. Eventually, was taken back to the grandfather's house since no one would take the child in. Frightened by the grandfather's wrath, the family kept the child out of sight in an attic-like room on the second floor of the house (Davis, 1947). The child was given enough care to be kept alive, hardly ever moved from one position to another, filthy cloth and bed to sleep on and have little to no social interaction. Authorities found the child extremely emaciated and malnourished with skeleton-like legs and a bloated abdomen. The child was given cow's milk as the source of nourishment during the years of isolation (Davis, 1947).

Upon rescue, the child was again taken in and out of homes and eventually taken to a school for mentally challenged children (Davis, 1947). The child couldn't walk properly nor was able to speak and was unable to conduct behaviour that showed any sign of intelligence. The child had no sense of gesture, was not capable of self-feed, had no sense of hygiene and was so apathetic that it was difficult to tell whether the child could hear or not. The child was later diagnosed by a clinical psychologist reporting to have normal hearing and visual capabilities, able to climb stairs, language development was at the babbling stage, a score of Merrill-Palmer scale equivalent to the mental capacity of a 19-month-old and on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, the child scored an equivalent of a 23-month-old. It was concluded that the isolation period was the cause of developmental delay which prevented the child from normal and healthy development (Davis, 1947).

Case Study 3

One of the most popularized cases which have captured media attention would be that of Genie Wiley, a child who has spent the entire childhood isolated from society. Genie was the name given to the case file to protect the child's identity (Cherry, 2017). Genie was born in 1957 and by 20 months old, was locked away from human contact by the father. Genie's mother was partially blind and has an older brother (Small, 2018). At the age of three (3) months, was diagnosed with congenital hip dislocation and had to wear an extremely restricted splint from the age of four (4) to eleven months which made it difficult to walk. Researchers believed this led the father to think Genie was mentally retarded, but was proven otherwise. As a result, did not speak or listen to Genie, and he strongly discouraged his wife and son from doing the same which eventually led to the cause of Genie's isolation (Curtiss, 1977).

By 1970, after 13 years of mental and physical abuse, with little to no human contact, Genie had caught the attention of a social worker when the family sought out welfare services in Los Angeles. Noticing the frail Genie, authorities conducted an investigation revealing the child had spent the childhood years confined to a potty chair and crib with a chicken wire lid for hours in a room where the windows were covered by aluminium foil and provided food and water. Genie lived a life of deprivation, isolated from other humans, had little interaction with the family, and the only interaction was when the father barked and growled at Genie. Whenever Genie made noises, the father would beat Genie with a one-by-three-foot board (Cherry, 2017; Small, 2018). Upon examination Genie had suffered from malnourishment, weighing only 59 pounds (26.7kg), had a strange *bunny walk*, unable to straighten the limbs, always silent, incontinent, unable to chew and was unable to grasp the human language, only knew Genie's name and the word "sorry" (Cherry, 2017).

Hughes and Kroehler (2009) stated Genie spat continuously and whipping the spit and mucus onto herself. Also, Genie had revolting eating habits, took people's things, pulled on their clothes, invaded their space and the most inappropriate behaviour was masturbating continually. Sources say due to the child's silence and inability to use human language, it was difficult to examine the mental

and cognitive abilities but eventually, managed to be scored an equivalent of a one-year-old. Genie's language abilities increased, eventually managing to use three (3) words together in communicating, but was unable to fully understand grammatical and meaningful usage of language. This was due to the horrific abuse, malnourishment and no cognitive stimulant throughout childhood (Cherry, 2017).

4. Discussions

Based on the three (3) case studies, three (3) themes have been identified to understand factors that contribute to child social isolation which include situational context, the origin of condition and proper documentation and legal issues. Whereas, two (2) themes highlighted the impact of being isolated which include, behavioural difficulties and cognitive difficulties. Discussion on the said themes is further elaborated in the following.

4.1 Situational Context

Isolation is one of the main identification of socially isolated children. This was found in case study 1 where the child was unwanted and brought shame to the family and thus was isolated by the family. In case study 2, the child was the second illegitimate child in the family and was disapproved by the child's grandfather. The child was isolated due to this status. As for case study 3, misunderstanding of the child's condition has led the father to regard the child as mentally retarded and isolated the child from the family and social environment.

Based on these case studies, shame is the common factor that causes isolation. Shame refers to the sense of being seen in a painfully diminished sense (Martin, 1994). When this feeling regulates a family unit, its members project a healthy image to others even though the family is dysfunctional as a means to hide their shame. Family rules and attitudes become encoded in each family member and shame is portrayed through abandonment and rejection. This type of dysfunctional family system can lead to generations of dysfunctional families, abusers and addicts (Bradshaw, 1999). As the source of the family's shame, these children become the scapegoat in the family and serve as the funnel for the unexpressed anger. As a result, they are isolated from society.

4.2 Origin of condition

According to the biopsychosocial model; there are biological, psychological and social assessments to a medical problem matching them to the diagnostic construct using pattern recognition of clinical features (Samei Huda, 2019). It was found in all three case studies that the origin of their condition is social in nature. Case study 1 reported that the child and mother spent most of their time together in a dark room isolated from the rest of the family, little food was provided to them by pushing it to them under the locked door. Due to this, the child did not develop speech and would use gestures whenever communicating with the mother. The child was only able to make a croaking sound. The lack of sunshine and malnourishment caused the child to become rachitic mainly affecting the legs making it difficult to walk. Case study 2, a child was discovered isolated from society by the mother and grandfather for the majority of the child's childhood and upon rescue was found to be suffering physical, psychological and social impairments. By the time authorities had rescued, was already six years old and extremely retarded with few human-like behaviours. The child received little human care during the six years of isolation. Case study 3, was born by a partially blind mother and by 20 months old, was locked away from human contact by the father. After 13 years of mental and physical abuse, with little to no human contact lead to the conditions suffered.

A similar condition to that of social isolation faced by children is an autism spectrum disorder. Both conditions have overlapping identifiers such as behavioural and social difficulties, mainly communication and interaction (APA, 2013). Socially isolated children also have difficulties in the

same areas such as the inability to eat properly and no language. These overlap, however, the distinctive identifier between these two conditions are their origins or nature of the condition. A plethora of literature has identified genetics, among others, as the leading cause of autism spectrum (Lord, et al., 2018). For the latter, it is due to social factors which cause social isolation in children.

4.3 Proper documentation and legal issues

A significant finding to the identification of socially isolated children is the absence of legal documentation. Case study 1 was illegitimate and isolated due to this matter. Case study 2 was a child discovered isolated from society by the family due to being the second illegitimate child in the family and not having any legal documentation. However, case study 3 did have some form of legal documentation. All case studies were reported to not have any form of legal documentation such as a birth certificate, or any form of identification documentation or passport. It was revealed that some of the case studies were products of unregistered marriages (without proper marital certificates) or out of wedlock pregnancy or teenage pregnancy that brought shame to the family. As a means to evade shame, families resulted in hiding these children from society cause them not to get proper documentation.

Shame-based families are dysfunctional that is increasing rigid and controlling leading to their members being alienated and distant from society. Furthermore, shame-based families like any other family abide by rules that regulate their behaviour. However, these families have a set of unhealthy rules that control its member such as don't talk about what happens in the family, don't feel, communicate indirectly with one another and don't trust anyone outside the family circle (Martin, 1994). Due to this, children in the case studies suffer greatly and as a result, do not receive proper documentation hence leading to legal issues such as obtaining assistance and utilising government resources.

4.4 Behavioural difficulties

Indicators of behavioural difficulties were also present in all case studies. For instance, in case study 1, the child did not develop speech and would use gestures whenever communicating, behaviour was that of an infant, by the age of six, it reflected that of a six-month-old. The child's behaviour was more similar to deaf children's behaviour making it difficult to tell if the child was able to hear or not and eventually diagnosed as feeble-minded. Whereas in case study 2, the child was extremely retarded with few human-like behaviours. The child couldn't walk properly nor was able to speak and was unable to conduct behaviour that showed any sign of intelligence. The child had no sense of gesture, was not capable of self-feed, and had no sense of hygiene. Case study 3, the child showcased a strange *bunny walk*, unable to straighten the arms and legs, always silent, incontinent, and unable to chew food. The subject spat continuously and whipping the spit and mucus onto herself. Furthermore, the subjects' eating habits were revolting, took people's things, pulled on their clothes, and invaded their space.

Learning theories such as social learning theory explain this delicate process. For behaviours to be learned, a process that involves; observation, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation is needed (Sharf, 2008). Furthermore, aggression is a natural response that children will exhibit as their brain and motor skills develop. Between the ages of one and two, most children begin to use aggression as a means of expressing frustration and achieving a goal. This set of behaviour continues to increase until 30 to 42 months and eventually declines when children develop the ability to

regulate their attention, emotions, control their impulses and use verbal interaction to resolve conflicts and express their needs (Tremblay, et al., 2012).

Children raised in isolation, due to the lack of exposure to external resources and stimuli for observation, modelling and motivational reinforcements, showcase limited and socially inappropriate behaviours. This is so because isolated children are left alone unattended with little human contact and a limited amount of time to experience observational learning. These children are not able to observe, attain, retain and reproduce behaviours and since most of the time they are left alone, the element of motivational reinforcement also doesn't occur making it difficult for the children to learn and produce new behaviour besides the innate behaviours they are born with. These innate behaviours are more intended for fulfilment purposes (Gould, 2014), such as hunger. Without the appropriate adaptation to the social environment, it causes these behaviours to be seen as socially inappropriate for example inappropriate eating habits, unhygienic, and unable to self-dress in the case of socially isolated children.

This explains three of the behavioural difficulties listed; inappropriate eating habits, unhygienic, unable to self-dress and aggression. However, for oversexualized, based on previous findings of socially isolated children, there was a case that reported an oversexualized child. According to Hughes and Kroehler (2009), Genie spat continuously and whipping the spit and mucus onto herself, had revolting eating habits, took people's things, pulled on their clothes, invaded their space and masturbated continually. In the current study, informants revealed that oversexualized behaviour was also a common theme in several of these children.

Children have a natural awareness of sexuality by birth with the capability of experiencing sexual stimulation and feeling the pleasure it can arouse (Gray, 1987). Children frequently self-stimulate, openly and freely masturbate unless reframed from by adults (Rippens & Baldwin, 1995). Therefore, healthy development of sexuality is a combination of appropriate sexual socialization with parents, family members, peers, schooling and media (Calderone, 1983; Tharinger, 1990).

In cases of socially isolated children, they experience limited to zero interactions with their social environment. Therefore, these children are free and can openly explore sexuality without restraints from their surroundings. Hence, leading to overly sexualized behaviour to develop.

4.5 Cognitive difficulties

Emotional and social withdrawal, no/ little or irregular language, and an overall cognitive delay were among the cognitive difficulties found in the data analysis. Case study 1, the child, by the age of six, was diagnosed as feeble-minded, scored terribly low on the Stanford-Binet scale nearing the zero mark which was 19 months old and on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, scored a 39 which represent two and a half years old. Case study 2, six years old upon rescue, displays symptoms of impaired language development at the babbling stage, a score of Merrill-Palmer scale equivalent to the mental capacity of a 19-month-old and on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, scored the equivalent of a 23-month-old. It was concluded that the isolation period was the cause of the developmental delay which prevented normal and healthy development. Case study 3 was unable to grasp the human language, only knew the child's name and the word "sorry". Due to the subjects' silence and inability to use human language, it was difficult to examine the mental and cognitive abilities but eventually, the subject scored an equivalent of a one-year-old.

Van Harmelen, et al. (2014) found that children suffering from emotional maltreatment and social exclusion led to negative self and other referential processing such as reduced self-esteem, sense of belonging, meaningful existence and control which proceeded into adulthood. Also, the severity of

childhood emotional maltreatment was positively associated with the increased dorsal medial prefrontal cortex, involvement in self and other referential processing, and social exclusion. It could be suggested that the more individuals experienced childhood emotional maltreatment, the more self and other processing is elicited by social exclusion in adulthood. In addition, negative self-referential thinking enhances cognitive vulnerability for the development of psychiatric disorders. Hence, findings from this study suggest that underlining emotional and behavioural difficulties faced by an adult may be caused by childhood emotional maltreatment.

The feeling of loneliness, as reported by the respondents, can result in psychological and physiological illnesses such as depression, cognitive delay, heart problems, and stroke. Studies have found that children suffering from loneliness have an increased risk of developing depression during adolescents and adulthood (Lords, et al., 2020). Loneliness is defined as perceived social isolation and the experience of being cut off from others. Furthermore, chronic loneliness refers to the experience of profound loneliness over long periods, despite changing circumstances (Russo, 2018). Loneliness, social isolation and living alone were found to be associated with a higher chance of early death (Steptoe, et al., 2013). In addition, people suffering from chronic loneliness are more likely than others to show dysfunctional social information processing, psychological problems and interpersonal maladjustments such as withdrawal. Furthermore, insufficient social connection due to loneliness, social isolation and poor quality relationship can lead to a major public health concern (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014).

5. Conclusion

Socially isolated children are not seen as a clinical condition that can be diagnosed. However, many reasons can place children in isolation from their social environment. Thus, difficulties faced by these children can further harm their development leading to difficulties in later adult years. It can be summarized that socially isolated children can be analysed from the situational context, the origin of condition, as well as documentation and legal issues. Whereas the effects of isolation of the children can be in the forms of behavioural difficulties and cognitive difficulties. Understanding the underlying factors and their effect can be the basis to understand the social isolation faced by many children. However, more research must be conducted to fully understand this growing phenomenon and further assist these children.

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COVID-19 IMPACTS, RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: CASE STUDY OF MALAYSIAN HOMESTAY PROGRAMMES

Nor Hafizah Selamat^a, Khoo Suet Leng^{a*}, Premalatha Karupiah^a
Zaireeni Azmi^b, Farah Syazwani Hayrol Aziz^b

^aSchool of Social Sciences, USM

^bCentre for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA), USM

*corresponding author
Email: slkhoo@usm.my

Abstract

The tourism and hospitality sector is one of the worst-hit due to Covid-19 and the Malaysian homestay programme is no exception. In reviving the industry post Covid-19, it is pertinent to examine how Malaysian homestay operators were affected and strived to be resilient as they braced themselves against Covid-19. Thus, this paper aims to explore the impacts of Covid-19 and the types of sustainability strategies adopted by homestay operators. By using a resilience-based framework, in-depth interviews with 8 homestay operators, 3 state tourism officials and 2 chairpersons of the local homestay tourism association were conducted. Findings revealed that Covid-19 has affected the homestay operators' livelihoods due to total loss of earnings when tourists stopped coming and bookings were cancelled. In order to stay afloat and be resilient, homestay operators resorted to re-visit their business models by developing 'a new norms of hospitality' and leveraging technology and social media to promote their businesses online. All these innovative strategies need to be done collectively and therefore leadership and the formation of strong human resources are essential. Diversifying and venturing into other businesses as second income generation provide a safety net in sustaining their livelihoods. It is suggested that the creation of new business models and pragmatic community tourism policies will essentially determine the homestay programme's chances of survival, particularly during crisis or disaster, by transforming it into a much more sustainable form.

Keywords

Community-based tourism, Covid-19 impacts, resilience, sustainability, homestay

1. Introduction

As a viable livelihood strategy, community-based tourism is viewed as a way to harness cultural resources in rural settings to provide and widen employment opportunities to rural citizenry, mainstream women in the workforce and also foster community development in the quest for inclusive and sustainable tourism (Khalid et al., 2019; Nair and Hamzah, 2015) Unfortunately, in late 2019, the global Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the tourism and hospitality sector when business activities came to a sudden halt as governments responded by closing international borders and ordered partial/full lockdowns. Besides job cut and loss in income, the hospitality sector is also required to adopt, adapt and get accustomed to a set of new standard operating procedures (SOPs) and recovery protocols as means to curtail the spread of Covid-19 virus.

Malaysia also witnessed the drastic drop of 83.4% tourist arrivals to merely 4,332,722 international tourist arrivals in 2020 compared to 26,100,784 in 2019. Malaysia's tourist receipts plummeted by 85.3% from RM86.14 billion (2019) to RM12.69 billion in 2020 and the average per capita expenditure has reduced 11.3% from RM3,300 (2019) to RM2,928 (2020) (Tourism Malaysia, 2021).

Amongst the key characteristics of a Malaysian homestay programme will entail warm hospitality by the host family where the guests are taken as part of their own family members where a foster family relationship is established. Guests live, eat and spend their leisure time under the same roof with their foster family. The new norms and SPOs will definitely challenge conventional homestay practices that are purportedly their appeals and selling points to attract visitors and challenge the Homestay programme's resilience and sustainability to brace the pandemic.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been a surge in research pertaining to the impacts of Covid-19 on tourism and hospitality generally (Persson-Fischer and Liu, 2021; Abbas, Mubeen, Iorember, Raza and Mamirkulova, 2021), post-Covid travel risk scenario and some Malaysian Covid studies (Azam Khan and Hashim, 2020; Karim, Haque, Anis and Ulfy, 2020). However, there is still a dearth of research that specifically investigates the impacts and resilience of Malaysian homestay entrepreneurs during pandemic. Hence, this study will fill this research gap with the aim to understand the impacts and the ways Malaysian homestay entrepreneurs are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic by examining their resilience and sustainability approaches. This study is significant given that their resilience, 'new norms approach' and new business models will then ensure the livelihoods and well-being of individual Homestay operators.

2. Literature Review

Community-based tourism is defined as a community development approach that enhances the ability of rural communities to plan and manage tourism resources whilst ensuring involvement of the local community (Hamzah, 2020; APEC, 2009). From an economics and social perspective, CBT is a poverty alleviation tool that can create employment opportunities, generating income, diversifying the local economy, conserving local/rural cultures, protecting the environment, mainstreaming gender in the workforce, to balance urban-rural socio-spatial inequalities, offering women opportunities for income-generation and entrepreneurship as well as providing educational, human resources development opportunities and capacity-building to the local community (Khalid et al., 2019; Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2017). Community-based tourism is not spared when the Covid-19 global pandemic raged across continents and local communities who depend on tourism are now struggling to maintain their livelihoods. In Bolivia, it has been reported that 80% of community-based tourism entrepreneurs have switched to other sectors to stay afloat and will most unlikely come back to community-based tourism anytime soon (Urrutia, 2021). However, in Thailand, the impacts of Covid-19 on community-based tourism are less pessimistic. The Director of Thailand's Community-based Tourism Development, revealed that the local community was not the most affected sector in Thailand's tourism value chain as they were asked to view tourism as a community development tool and thus perceive the sector as a secondary source of income. The need to view CBT as a second income source (instead of primary source) was also resonated by CBT scholars (Hamzah, 2020).

Homestay programmes in Malaysia mostly operate in rural settings and are extensively regulated by the government in terms of certification, training and monitoring. Unlike homestay initiatives in other South-East Asian countries, homestay programmes in Malaysia receives strong support from the government with a myriad of rural development agencies providing technical, training and financial assistance (Hamzah, 2020). The Malaysian government imposed the first Movement Control Order (MCO 1.0) on 18 March 2020. The road to recovery is slow as Malaysia was also imposed MCO 3.0 with a total lockdown period spanning from 1 – 14 June 2021. The government has only recently announced for the reopening of international borders on 1 April, 2022. Regardless of scale, nature and magnitude of the impacts of Covid-19, some forms of resilience and sustainability framework should be in place to brace community-based tourism against the lingering Covid-19 and also any forms of future shocks.

3. Resilience-based Theoretical Framework

Resilience is the ability of a system to withstand shocks and stresses whilst maintain function, structure, feedback capabilities and identity while business resilience, in turn, is related to the entity's capabilities to adapt to the changing environment and new circumstances to mitigate the effects of the shock (Supardi and Hadi, 2020). Based on Resilience Theory, Covid-19 can be viewed as a shock to the equilibrium of the global tourism system (Hamzah, 2020) and in recent tourism discourse, the resilience and sustainability of the sector has been the prime concern due to the pandemic (Assaf and Scuderi, 2020). In building resilience and ensuring sustainability of the tourism sector, a myriad of studies have emerged and suggested policy frameworks and recommendations to revive and reconstruct the industry to be stronger and resilient against future shocks (Sharma, Thomas and Paul, 2021; Brouder et al., 2020). The road to recovery post-Covid 19 may be long and 'a new regime of tourism' will emerge by harnessing on ICT to embrace Smart Tourism and also to enhance capacity building (Hamzah, 2020).

This study is based on the Resilience framework as proposed by Sharma et al., (2021). They suggested four prominent factors for building resilience in the industry which is government response, technology innovation, local belongingness, and consumer and employee confidence. For this study, the framework will be employed to analyse the strategy of homestay operators in building resilience in sustaining their homestay programme. Government response is important during crisis such as Covid19 and Sharma et. al (2021) proposes that government subsidies would be needed to support those affected by the crisis. In terms of technology innovation, it has been argued that disasters can help in speeding up changes in technology. During COVID-19, people started to take seriously the benefit of technology and there is a surge of public's trust in technology and the increased of readiness to use technology and their willingness to change their attitudes toward technology. Resilience can also be determined by the feeling of belongingness among locals as that will dictate for the revival of the tourism industry. Another factors of being resilience is to increase customer's confidence. The impact of COVID-19 can significantly influence customer's perception of tourism product and services. Therefore, the revival of the tourism industry will depend on boosting confidence in travelling and lessening the perception of risk involved. These four factors will be used to analyse how the homestay operators deal with the impact of Covid19 on their homestay businesses.

4. Methodology

This qualitative study will use in-depth interview as the instrument to explore deeply the respondent's perspectives, ideas and narratives by discovering hidden meaning issues related to their business operations, seeking clarity and in depth understanding of the issues discussed. 8 homestay operators, 3 homestay cluster's chairman and 1 MOTAC officer were interviewed (Table 1) and they were selected from three homestay clusters in the state of Penang, Kedah and Perak.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

	Name	Gender	Years of experience as homestay operator	Position
1.	Nabiha	Female	8	Homestay Operator
2.	Mahani	Female	8	Homestay Operator
3	Zulkifli	Male	8	Homestay Operator
4.	Saniah	Female	30	Homestay Operator
5.	Rashdan	Male	8	Homestay Operator
6.	Tahir	Male	8	Homestay Operator
7.	Sahidah	Female	8	Homestay Operator
8.	Zaharin	Male	10	Homestay Operator
9.	Lang	Male	30	Homestay Chairman
10.	Amir	Male	12	Homestay Chairman
11.	Meor	Male	7	Homestay Chairman
12.	Annuar	Male	2	MOTAC, Officer, Penang

Pilot study was conducted to test the interview questions and some amendments were made to enhance the validity of the questions. The respondents were recruited by contacting the chairman of Homestay clusters from these three states. Prior to the interview, the respondents were briefed on consent form to ensure their confidentiality were protected. The interviews were conducted online and in between MCOs when inter district was allowed, several face-to-face IDI was conducted. Most of the interview took between 40 mins to one and half hour. Interviews were recorded for the entire conversation and were later transcribed. The thematic analysis technique was used in analyzing the data involving sorting, categorizing and data coding.

5. Finding and Discussion

In exploring the experiences of Covid19 and resilience strategy of homestay operators, the discussion will be categorized based on the four main factors as emphasized by Sharma et al., (2021), which are: government response, technology innovation, local belongingness, and consumer and employee confidence.

5.1 Government Response

The tourism and hospitality industry as service sectors are among the major contributor in boosting economies of countries through the provision of employment opportunities (Fizza and Mohd Farid, 2021). It has been argued that continued government support during pandemic is critical to ensure the survival of tourism business sectors (Amran, 2020; Sharma, 2021). Describing the emotions during the first wave of Covid19, all the respondents were of the view that the Covid19 would only be a temporary situation. The bookings were cancelled and homestay operation was completely stopped. Most respondents were not sure of what to do and they were just waiting for the government instruction. The situation was getting worse when the government announced another phase of MCO 3.0 in June 2021. Sharing his first feeling when Covid19 hit home, Meor, the founder and Homestay Labu Kubong Cluster's Chairperson, he said, "... Homestay is all about being intimate, living and eating together. Covid19 won't allow that to happen. The SOP, social distancing will make homestay is impossible to be operating. That's it. We are done!". The other Chairman of Kg. Raga Homestay Clusters, Pak Lang, went further to state, "...it has been a year now and the cases have been drastically increased. How to start again? It's tough, [we] have to accept it. Nothing much can be done. They experienced total lost, zero income from homestay activities. So, some women operators just stay at home, others are focusing on other income generation activities".

The immediate effect of Covid19 was the booking cancellations. According to Pak Lang, after the announcement of total lockdown MCO 1.0 in March 2020, the Homestay Cluster of Kampung Raga loss of “committed” income for almost RM22,000. “Committed” income refers to the amount of money that has been promised by potential guests based on the bookings.

Saniah who has been in the business for nearly 30 years also experienced a sudden loss of income. She is a housewife and one of the pioneers of homestay business in the village. Since homestay stopped its operation, she has to depend fully on her husband income as chicken seller. Fatimah is one of the active and dedicated homestay operators in Kg. Raga. Her perseverance and dedication in serving guests can be seen through the way she decorates the house, the warm treatment and the variety of dishes served to provide an authentic homestay experience to her guests. Although, income is not the main motivation to participate in homestay business, she admitted that the income generated from homestay programme has enabled her to pay for her children tuition fees and other schooling expenses without having to depend on her husband income as wood seller. She could earn between RM 2000 – 3000 per month and at the same time making frozen currypuff. Since Covid19, her small business of frozen currypuff is now become the main income for the family. As for Sahidah and Mahani, homestay operators from Labu Kubong, used to received 40 – 60 tourists per week from different parts of the world including Europe, Japan, Korea and ASEAN countries. In order to sustain their livelihood, both decided to put more time in producing food products such as banana crisp, handicrafts and *bedak sejuk*.

In terms of government response, the Malaysian governments seem to have taken various efforts to cushion the blow of Covid19 on tourism industry. As of to date, the Malaysian Government has unveiled various Economic Stimulus Package including PRIHATIN package, additional PRIHATIN Package, National Economic Recovery Plan and Kita PRIHATIN Package worth RM20 billion, RM230 billion, RM10 billion, RM35 billion and RM10 billion respectively to weather the impact of COVID-19. Ministry of tourism also plan to revive the tourism and cultural sectors through the domestic tourism campaign, which began in June 2021 to face the post-movement control order (MCO). Despite the various assistance announced, most of the respondents claimed that the assistance is yet to be received. Meor, the Chairman for Homestay Cluster of Labu Kubong claimed that in 2020, Meor received a total homestay booking of between RM100,000 – 200,000 but all that was cancelled due to Covid19. Majority of the respondents agree that finding supplementary income is critical as they cannot banking largely upon “government stimulus packages and interventions” even to sustain their livelihood, not to mention to revive their homestay operations. According to Meor, utilizing KampungStay is the one way to move forward. In that village, the majority of homestay owners are also Kampungstay owners. The discussion shows that to be resilient is to have supplementary income as the government assistance may not be able to sustain homestay operators especially during this long period of shutdown of the business.

5.2 Technological Innovation

During the pandemic, promotions through social media have become the default working operations for many. In this study, the affected homestay operators are following this trend especially the younger generation. Nabiha, for example, the younger daughter of Meor who was only joined her father’s homestay business after her graduation in 2018, strongly believes the importance of social media. Unlike his father, she prefers to use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Whatsapp to have networking with her potential clients. Nabila said that technology such as mobile applications is important in business marketability. She also argues that participating in big exhibition is important but technology will bring her businesses to her customers without having to travel. After MCO 1.0, Nabiha said that she still received bookings from domestic guests as she kept

promoting her homestay through facebook and instagram. Most of the communication were done through mobile technology since all of her guests were mostly using mobile phone. In this case, the respondents are all agree that homestay businesses is very much supported by the mobile technology where interaction with the potential guests or former guests is becoming more critical. Recently, as an effort to revive domestic tourism and to help homestay operators that has been badly affected by Covid19, Tourism Malaysia has developed a digital KampungStay promotional packages.

5.3 Local belongingness

Community participation and local involvement are the main key factors in ensuring the success of community-based tourism such as homestay programme (Adam and Allarifi, 2021; Soh, 2014). The involvement of all parties in the successful economic agenda can be accomplished through social entrepreneurship. This social entrepreneurship elements have been practiced by these Pak Lang, Meor and Amir as the homestay cluster's chairman. In 2014, Meor narrated how he started the homestay program by inviting her fellow villagers who are interested in his ideas. He knew the potential of homestay programme for his community. He eventually managed to get 15 villagers who were interested to participate in the business. Once the 15 villagers got together, they decided it would be good to establish a committee and get registered with MOTAC so that they could go for special training. This sense of togetherness has created a sense of local belongingness that become the main backbone of their strength in embarking into the world of homestay business. For the course, they were brought to Kg. Lonek homestay, one of the famous homestays at the time. This experience had given them motivation to develop and mobilize the homestay programme in their own village. This sense of togetherness that helped them to face uncertainties in their businesses particularly during this pandemic.

5.4 Consumer and Employee Confidence

Covid19 has brought the confidence of safety to the lowest point (Hamzah, 2021). Based on interviews, majority of respondents believe that the main task to revive the local tourism is by increasing the level of confidence not only among tourists but also tourist agents, local and international. According to Annuar, post-Covid19, homestay guests would expect much higher standards of hygiene. Not only the guests, even respondents as homestay host would appreciate a high level of contactless services. In this case, the way the programme was previously arranged need to be restructured and digital communication should be the way. In order to survive, respondents seem to agree that they have to embrace new business models that enhance hygiene, promote social distancing while at the same time providing guests with a warmth and personalized experience. According to Meor, during the glory days, their homestay program has earned praise from tourists and tourist agents. One of the travel agents was Destination Asia, a famous travel agent that brings European tourists who are using the Eastern & Oriental Express services (train services that travels from Singapore- Bangkok- Thailand) to the village. Kuala Kangsar becomes the stopover station and tourists can stop by in Kuala Kangsar for 4 hours. The travel agents were satisfied and confident with the services provided by the homestay. Since then, various group of international tourists came and stayed at the homestay.

According to Annuar, getting the trust from homestay guests would be their biggest challenges post Covid-19 but he believes that restoring tourists' confidence is the key in reviving homestay industry.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The discussion above described the significant impact of Covid19 on the homestay programme. Operations and the challenges faced by the operators in dealing with the impact. Despite the lockdown imposed by the government, which suspended businesses and restricted all travelling,

homestay operators are seen to be resilient by exploring different strategies in sustaining their livelihood. In building resilience and ensuring sustainability of the homestay programme, several frameworks and recommendations as instructed by the tourism ministry and agencies are being developed to revive and reconstruct the industry to be stronger and resilient and to face the similar events in future. The four aspects of resilience discussed in this study show the step taken by the respondents in reviving their homestay businesses with the support from the local tourism agencies. However, for future planning, the homestay operator's community need to adopt a clear framework of health and safety standards, foster closer collaboration with various stakeholders as a bridge to build resilience in the community. The findings of this study echoed the recommendations of the Ministry of tourism to build a resilient industry by concentrating on safety and sustainability.

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Guided Imagery Relaxation Technique: Its Effect on Stress and Well-Being of Primary School Children in Kubang Kerian, Kelantan

Lim, C. W.^{a,b*}, Othman, A.^{b,c}, Hashim, H. A.^d

^aDepartment of Neurosciences, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Kubang Kerian, 16150 Kelantan, Malaysia

^bHospital USM, Kubang Kerian 16150 Kelantan, Malaysia
Email: limcw102@gmail.com

^cDepartment of Pediatrics, School of Medical Sciences, USM, Kubang Kerian, 16150 Kelantan, Malaysia

^dSchool of Health Sciences, USM, Kubang Kerian, 16150 Kelantan, Malaysia

Abstract

With the global pandemic of COVID-19 circling around the world population since the beginning of 2020, to learn effective coping with negative emotional and behavioural experiences is especially a concern to the children and adolescents, who face restrictions on their physical movement and to do virtual learning at home. Therefore, there is a crucial need to study the effect of mindfulness-based approach, guided imagery relaxation (GIR) technique on stress and well-being of the elementary school children.

A randomized controlled trial study, pretest-posttest with a waitlist control group was designed to examine the objective stated above. 34 Standard 5 students were randomly assigned to intervention ($n=17$) or waitlist-control ($n=17$) groups. The participants from intervention group were required to attend 4 consecutive weekly monitoring session and practise to the audio GIR technique on daily basis. The children and their caregivers successfully completed the Stress in Children (SiC) Questionnaire, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - Parent Reported (SDQ-PR) and tracking form across pre- and post- intervention time points.

Result from mixed-model ANOVA indicated that there was no significant difference observed between participants from treatment and waitlist-control groups across pre- and post-intervention time points. The insignificance of result could possibly be discussed from four different factors; implications and conclusion were highlighted at the end to gain insights about the result of present study and add up the mindfulness-based intervention-related experience to fill in the existing gap of knowledge.

Keywords: mindfulness-based interventions, guided imagery relaxation technique, stress, well-being, primary school children

1. Introduction

Emotional and behavioural problems are commonly found and affecting the children and adolescents in the contemporary society. They can be differentiated into two main categories: internalizing and externalizing problems. Internalizing problems usually refer to the maladaptive responses generated to cope with abundant stressful life conditions include depression and anxiety disorders. Whilst externalizing problems is defined as the dysfunctional behavioural problems, which comprise of oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder and aggressive, injurious behaviours (Abd Rahman et al. 2013). According to the

statistics done from the emerging evidence, emotional and behavioural problems had affected 10 to 20% of the children from all over the world, including 12.1% of Malaysian children's mental health (Gupta, Mongia & Garg 2017; Malaysian Healthcare Performance Unit 2017).

If the emotional and behavioural problems are left untreated, the quality of life and subjective well-being of children will be compromised and negatively influenced (DePasquale & Gunnar 2018; Idris 2017). This is vastly crucial to primary school children, especially those who age around eleven and twelve years old, are transitioning into adolescence in another one to two years as it is a period marked with simultaneous critical physical, psychological and social development (Sukor, Mohamad Aun & Zakaria 2019). Hence, an effective and socially appropriate coping strategy would be crucial to be introduced to the children in learning adaptive problem-solving behaviour and positive appraisals to deal with their negative affective and behavioural experiences, especially amidst the global pandemic of COVID-19 (Bothe, Grignon & Olness 2014; Perry-Parrish et al. 2016; Rabenu, Yaniv & Elizur 2017).

Among the mindfulness-based interventions available, emergence of guided imagery relaxation (GIR) technique and its effectiveness had soon become the central focus of many researchers in recent years (dos Santos Felix et al. 2019; Vagnoli et al. 2019). Although the current studies available on children were still rather scarce and limited in Malaysian context; however, there were already few studies revealing hopeful result of utilizing the GIR technique on clinical samples of children (Elias et al. 2015; Erwin & Robinson, 2016; Othman et al. 2013). Thus, it may be feasible to conduct a study to further extend the knowledge in examining the effect of GIR technique on stress and psychosocial well-being of children from Malaysian mainstream primary school settings.

2. Methodology

A non-blinded randomized controlled trial (RCT), pretest-posttest with a waitlist control group, was designed to recruit forty Standard 5 students from class 5 Al-Farabi and 5 Al- Biruni of a primary school in Kubang Kerian, Kelantan through convenience sampling. Children aged eleven years old, parent-consented, willing to participate in the study and able to understand basic Malay language were included. Parents involved were the main caregivers who stayed together with their children, had Internet connection facility to be accessible to the online link of the audio recording of GIR technique and to smoothen the communication within the researcher and children for online monitoring session in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Study and Data Collection Process

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia, State Educational Division, school, and USM Human Research Ethical Committee prior to recruiting participants. An online briefing session was conducted through Google Meet and was to provide the information regarding current study in detailed to the subjects involved. Other than getting their informed consent, the participants were also required to answer a survey battery for developing a baseline for pre-testing assessment: children to fill up the demographic questionnaire and SiC Questionnaire, while parents to fill up SDQ-PR. The survey battery to be answered for the post-intervention stage was the same as the pre-testing stage; the tracking forms given in the briefing session were to be collected back in the post- intervention stage. At intervention stage, the children in experimental group needed to practise alongside GIR technique audio on daily basis for four weeks; online monitoring sessions were conducted on weekly basis to check in their condition and adjust any malpractice. More details of the process could be referred to Figure 1 below.

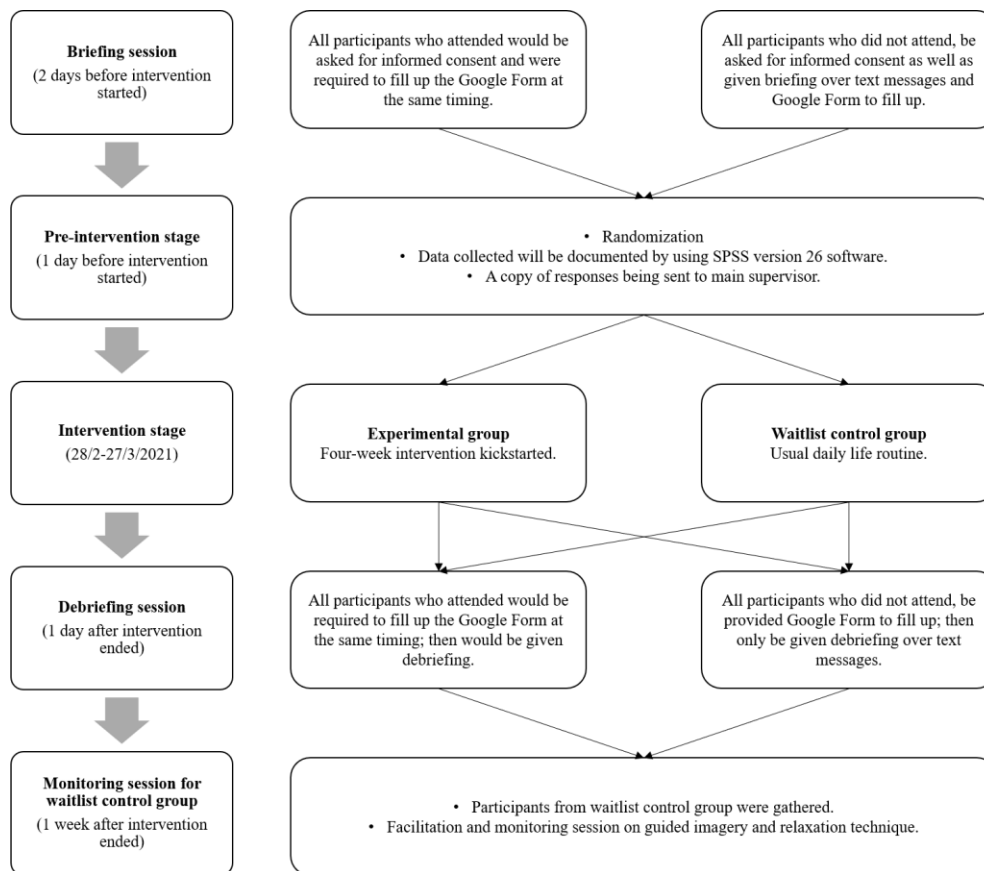


Figure 1: Study and data collection process from pre- to post-intervention.

2.2.1 Stress in Children Questionnaire (SiC Questionnaire)

SiC Questionnaire was developed by Osika, Friberg and Wahrborg to assess perceived stress in school children aged 9 to 11. There are 21 items which measured 3 factors: distress, lack of well-being and lack of social support. The respondents are required to rate on a 4-point scale: “0” for none, “1” for sometimes, “2” for almost always and “3” for always. Scoring is simply done by summing up all the points and divide by the number of items to get a mean score, with higher score indicating higher degree of perceived stress., The SiC Questionnaire had showed good internal consistency (ranged from $\alpha = .61$ to $.86$) and strong concurrent validity across studies (Caqueo-Úrizar , Urzúa & Osika 2014; Emmanouil et al. 2020).

SiC Questionnaire was not yet available in Malay-language adaptation, so a proper forward- and backward-translation process was carried out to translate the assessment into Malay language to be used for the target population. The pilot study conducted revealed that the translated instrument was valid and reliable to be used; necessary modifications were then done to accommodate the suitability of translated SiC Questionnaire to be used in the current study after the validation data analysis was completed (Geshina 2019). The new shortened 11- item revised SiC Questionnaire was validated by the factor analysis and able to display good internal consistency ($\alpha = .783$) for the use of present study.

2.2.2 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire-Parent Report (SDQ-PR)

SDQ-PR was developed by Goodman to assess the parent-rated psychosocial well-being of children aged 4 to 16 years. There are 25 items targeting on 5 domains: conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, peer problems and prosocial behaviour. The respondents need to rate on a 3-point scale: “0” for not true, “1” for somewhat true and “2” for certain true, with 5 items to be reverse-coded. The total scores are added from the first 4 domains, except

prosocial behaviour, with a lower score indicating higher degree of well-being. The original SDQ-PR reported satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .73$) and good convergent validity (Goodman 2001). Although SDQ-PR was predominantly used for assessing psychopathological symptoms and mental health difficulties faced by children and adolescents; however, the Malay version of SDQ-PR was found to be having good internal reliability and validity to be used in assessing children’s well-being (Stokes et al. 2014).

2.2.3 Emotional Feedback, Attendance and Tracking Form

After weekly online monitoring session to practise GIR technique with the participants, an activity of getting emotional feedback of respondents were carried out. The researcher prepared several cards containing emoticons which represented the emotions of “sad”, “just okay” and “happy”. As revealed by the emerging study, this way of presentation was seemed to be the best for eleven-year-old children’s understanding and to ensure that they could give relatively more accurate feedback regarding their experiences of practising the GIR technique with visual aids (Casas et al. 2013). The attendance of the children for weekly monitoring session had been recorded as well. Next, the tracking form also played an important role in assuring the participants to practise the GIR technique exercise on daily basis. The number of entries in the form could also allow the main researcher to track the frequency of GIR technique that had been practised by the participants for every week. Although the data regarding the children’s attendance and tracking form were to be reported; however, they were not being used as part of the descriptive or inferential analysis of the present study.

3. Result

In overall, the intervention group of students experienced an increase while the control group portrayed slight decrement for the mean scores of stress. As for the mean scores of well-being, increment could be observed for both treatment and control groups. To further investigate on the respective significant difference of stress and well-being for between-group of subjects across pre- and post-intervention, mixed-model ANOVA was performed on both variables. For stress, a 2 (Time)×2 (Group) mixed-model ANOVA revealed that the main effect of treatment group was not significant through $F(1, 32) = .358, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$. Besides, a non-significant relationship between Time × Group was also obtained through $F(1,$

$32) = .823, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$. As for well-being, the 2 (Time)× 2 (Group) mixed-model ANOVA revealed that the main effect of treatment group on well-being in general was not significant through $F(1, 32) = 1.853, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .055$. Moreover, a non-significant association between Time × Group was also demonstrated through $F(1, 32) = .199, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$. More details could be referred to Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of stress and well-being for treatment and control groups across the time of measurement.

Variable	Group	Time	Mean (SE)	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Stress	Intervention	Pre	1.150 (.059)	1.030	1.270
		Post	1.193 (.069)	1.051	1.334
	Control	Pre	1.150 (.059)	1.030	1.270
		Post	1.102 (.069)	0.960	1.243
Well-	Intervention	Pre	10.47 (1.141)	8.146	12.795

Being	Control	Post	11.12 (1.295)	8.481	13.755
		Pre	8.53 (1.141)	6.205	10.854
		Post	8.65 (1.295)	6.010	11.284

Table 2: Mixed ANOVA within and between subjects across time of measurement for stress and well-being.

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Stress	Intercept	89.679	1	89.679	913.643	.000	.966
	Group	.035	1	.035	.358	.554	.011
	Error	3.141	32	.098			
Well-Being	Intercept	6386.485	1	6386.485	143.085	.000	.817
	Group	82.721	1	82.721	1.853	.183	.055
	Error	1428.294	32	44.634			

3.1 Attendance and Tracking Form

Within the intervention group, 11 (64%) participants achieved a full attendance rate, which they attended all 4 online GIR monitoring sessions, briefing and debriefing session. 2 (11%) attended 3 sessions, 3 (17%) attended 2 sessions and 1 (5%) attended one session. Out of the 17 students in the active treatment group, 8 (47%) of them managed to complete the tracking form as well as practising to the given GIR technique in audio format for 5 to 10 minutes (played the audio once or twice) on daily basis. The remaining 9 (52%) children were not able to complete the tracking form and listen to the GIR technique audio on daily basis due to different unspecified reasons.

4. Discussion

As reflected, the overall result showed that the children in active treatment group of GIR were not able to experience significant changes in their stress and psychosocial well-being. The emergence of these unexpected result shall be discussed from different aspects as following.

4.1 Time Availability

Although the GIR technique was a mindfulness technique that spent merely around 5 to 10 minutes of practice daily, but the children were still having online class to attend daily in the morning and plenty of homework to be completed afterwards, not to mention to cope with the distress due to inactivity and lacking in physicality of a peer group for social interaction resulted by school closure (Larsen, Helland & Holt 2021). The children admitted that, either they did not have adequate time to be engaged in the GIR practice or they had forgotten about it (Carter 2006; Weigensberg et al. 2014). When the students were having time constraints and lack in motivation to practise the GIR technique on daily basis but needed to fulfill the requirement in joining the research study, this may merely in turn reduce their psychological well-being and cause a stress-inducing effect on them (Fish, Brimson & Lynch 2016).

4.2 Drop-Out and Adherence

It was not something uncommon as it was indeed difficult for the participation and retention of participants, even just for a comparatively short period of time. As shown in previous articles, GIR technique may not be an appropriate method for everyone who practised it

(Nilsson et al. 2015). When the drop-out and adherence rates appeared to be unsatisfactory, it was no surprise that the effectiveness of the virtual-monitored intervention decreased; subsequently resulted in a higher level of stress and lowered well-being (Lahtinen & Salmivalli 2020). Only the higher the adherence level of the participants to the GIR technique implemented may help to cope with their distress better and increase their sense of well-being; this happened because the high-adherent participants had become more mindful from their regular practice and would be more willing to engage in the intervention when they felt more competent (Cillessen et al. 2020; Forbes, Gutierrez & Johnson 2018).

4.3 Internet Accessibility and Connectivity

According to a written parliamentary reply released by the Minister of Education in July 2020, there were 36.9% of students in nationwide did not possess any devices which allowed them to follow online lessons or sessions. This evidenced that the children needed to share the same gadget to get connected to online learning with their siblings or even their parents. Even if the students could have accessibility to Internet with proper gadgets, there was no guaranteed stable Internet connection and the Internet bandwidth may vary due to poor infrastructure development, cost and geographical factors (Boldt et al. 2021; Zhai 2020). Problems such as slow connectivity or sudden lost connection in often arose in the online monitoring sessions, which resulting in frustration and increased distress within the participants, as well as lower their well-being for the inability to continue joining the session (Tamin & Mohamad 2020).

4.4 Physical vs. Virtual Contact

In current study, the delivery method of intervention implemented was digital delivery of guided self-help content, which the programme made use of slides, mindfulness audio and emotional feedback to deliver content and bridge interaction. Although virtual-based of mindfulness interventions were found to be effective in improving psychological well-being and reducing stress in past research studies; however, their effects tended to be relatively small and short-term when being identified (Bailey et al. 2018; Lyzwinski et al. 2018; Ma et al. 2018; Martin et al. 2020). They were, as yet, not equally effective as the face-to-face interventions, which required physical contact, in enhancing mental health (Spijkerman, Pots & Bohlmeijer 2016). In fact, the digital delivery may undermine the effectiveness of intervention and probability of enhancing the outcomes. This could possibly be attributed to the hardship of a trusted, positive therapeutic alliance to be developed was higher with the absence of practitioner physically in the daily practice (Fish, Brimson & Lynch 2016).

5. Implications and Conclusion

The current project could be the first local study that focuses on examining the effect of Malay version GIR technique on stress and well-being of primary school children over online-based delivery and supervision. After a four-week intervention process, the result showed that the active treatment group was not able to demonstrate significant difference in the level of stress and well-being, regardless of measurement for between-subject or within-subject across pre- and post-intervention time points. The unexpected result had been discussed from different possible contributing factors, under the great influence of COVID-19. The existence of this study could bring the increasing calls to explore the potential mental health problems and well-being of children to light more into the public's eye (Millar et al. 2020). Mindfulness-based approaches could still be continuously modified and strived to becoming a promising intervention modality for primary school children, although there is still a need for revision to be made onto the implementation and delivery of the Malay-translated GIR technique and Malay-translated SiC Questionnaire (Carsley, Khoury & Heath 2018).

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THE INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA ON MALAYSIAN YOUTH BEHAVIOUR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PANDEMIC COVID-19: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Nul Widaya Mohamed Nawi, Syed Agil Alsagoff, Mohd Nizam Osman, Zulhamri Abdullah

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia,

Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

nul_widaya@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose- This paper aims to provide an explanation the influence of new media on Malaysian Youth behaviour with special reference to pandemic Covid-19. In Malaysia, youth concerns continue to rise about the risk of excessive new media use among youths. This paper applies Media Dependency Theory to study the use of the new media and the phenomenon among youth in the use of new media gives implication to youths during this pandemic. Through the Media Dependency Theory lens, researcher can see the use of new media from a media perspective where the media plays a role in this society. This paper describes how youths dependence on new media during pandemics.

Design/methodology/approach – The researcher conduct focus group discussion for this paper. Focus group discussion is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive group around 4 groups with six (6) persons each group until get the saturation data. This small number of informants is to explore informants perspectives on a particular idea and situation.

Findings - The findings of this study identify new media dependency, namely impact of new media and the influence of new media that related to the Media Dependency Theory. In addition, the study highlights the potential for a positive relationship between the use of new media and youth.

Originality / value - This paper provides a comprehensive critical picture of the growing new media usage literature and information that offers the basis for a comprehensive assessment of new media usage contributions to youth in particular. It enhances relevant knowledge new media.

Keywords: Youth, New Media, Internet, Media Dependency

INTRODUCTION

The new media has created a single world culture nowadays. New media is a popular platform for youth to change information, share their ideas, thoughts, opinions, photos and videos using well-known websites and social messengers. Generally, users access new media with the help of technology while providing the right environment for youth of different age groups to interact and connect with each other, new media and messengers are effective tools for providing opportunities. However, new media has become a necessary and important tool for the Malaysian community, especially the youth in Malaysia. Besides, the new media is more popular with youth because its role in disseminating information without limits. Mohamed Fouad Matt Galli (2012) stated that the choice of youth differs from adults. This is because youths are more interested in reading newspapers, watching news, listening to news on the radio, etc. Unfortunately, youths

they use this method to identify social engagement.(Wook, Mohamed, Noor, Muda, & Zairon, 2019).

Youths with integrity should become a culture among younger generation nowadays as a future leader, the leadership should come with integrity besides maintaining strong moral values. The growth of new media plays a great role in Malaysia. Thus, it is imperative to recognize the main concerns arising from improvement of new media, which touches the society and help in understanding the concept of integrity among youths.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research problem in this paper lies in knowing the extent of the impact of the Malaysian youth’s dependence on new media on their behavior, because the dependence of individuals on the media meets a set of needs arising from social roles and individual behaviors, and that achieving impact on individuals who depend on a specific media outlet depends on resources information and the method provided by the media (Liu, 2019).The research problem also focuses on unstable and ambiguous attitudes of Malaysian youth towards social engagement, and that many studies predict that unstable and ambiguous attitudes in society lead to increased dependence of individuals on the media to obtain information to help them understand this ambiguity and meet their ambitions.

Digital identity is expected to become a major issue in the future as society balances between preserving online privacy and providing protection against fraud and online crimes.

THE KEY FINDINGS	INTERNET USERS
Internet Users Surveys 2020	88.7% of the population are Internet users in 2020 1.3% increase from 87.4% in 2018.

Source 1: Internet Users Survey 2020 (IUS 2020)

Based on a statistical report released by the Cyber Crime Investigation Division and Multimedia PDRM, a case of telecommunication fraud by online and SMS is the higher total of losses that also the number of youth that involve in this matter is highly increase.

**Statistic of Vitims’ MO
Year 2020**

	Total of IP	Total of Losses
Fake News	0	-
Personal Data Protection	12	RM 449,547.70
233 AKM (Social Medial)	48	RM 15,702.48
Telecommunication Fraud (Online/SMS)	5,998	RM 287,298,685.91
E-Financial Fraud	662	RM 25,635,220.69
419 Scam (Love Scam)	1,582	RM 58,335,797.29
E-Commerce (On-line Purchase)	5,847	RM 41,332,618.48
Intelectual Property (CD/VCD/DVD)	19	-
Pornographic Material (Sek 292 KK)	49	-
Total	14,205	RM 412,618,024.85

Source 2: Cyber Crime Investigation Division and Multimedia PDRM

DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data is obtained from the informant, data analysis for focus group and interview methods, the data obtained through video and MP4 recording has been converted into text transcription. Data analysis was performed as soon as the interview with the informant was completed performed. This allows for comparisons and notes between one group with other groups. Data were also analyzed using NVivo software to obtain accurate data. Besides, it is too make it easier to manage making or determining the themes in this study and maintain the confidentiality of the study informants then each informant in the focus group given labelling to facilitate the process of writing the results of the study. Table below is the focus group informant labelling.

Table 1: Focus Group Informant Labeling (KF)

Focus Group	Informant Number	Informant Labelling
1	6	KF1-KF6
2	6	KF7-KF12
3	6	KF13-KF18
4	6	KF19-KF24

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INFORMANTS' AWARENESS ON THE EXISTENCE OF LAWS AND ACTS CYBER

To live in a harmony and safe life, society generally needs a set of guideline to be part of their life. Law plays a crucial element to create a life with peace and without chaos. Higher authority of a country will set a guideline contained of rules and regulation for their society. Thus, in initiative to address the problem of Internet abuse and cyber crime, Malaysian government has gazette some laws and acts related to Internet abuse. For examples of Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, Sedition Act 1948, Penalty Code, Copyright Act 1987, Defamation Act 1957 and so on. So, Internet user need to aware of the existence of those laws to protect themselves by differentiating right and wrong action. In addition, by this knowledge is able to protect themselves from becoming any of cyber victims. Mohamad A'sim (2014) stated, not all problems can be solved by through law solely. Unless, society need o have awareness on the law to protect themselves from illegal act. Thus, the level of awareness among study informants becomes hot issues whether they are aware about the existence of cyber laws and acts in Malaysia. Unfortunately, the results showed that most of the study informants are unaware of the existence of those cyber law. Moreover, some f the informants use an unclear words whether it is yes or no shows that the informant is still skeptical and unsure of that answer given against the existence of cyber laws and acts.

Security Practices Against Cyber Bullying

In the past, most of bullying cases happened by physically in the real world. Unfortunately recently, with technological advances in the Internet, bullying also occurs in cyberspace, especially on social media. Nowadays, cyber bullying has becoming a trend among irresponsible Internet users (Che Hasniza & Mohd Yusri, 2014). The act of cyberbullying is not a healthy symptom as it can give a negative impact on the victim by mentally and emotions. In the context of cyberbullying in cyberspace, cyberbullying is usually difficult to be identified because the

identities of bullies are protected. Maslin Masrom & Nadia Jamal (2012) stated that cyber bullying is an act of harassment through technological device applications such as telephones, computers for the purpose of bullying, harassing, threatening and embarrassing of an individual. Furthermore, according to Brady (2010), cyberbullying also occurs by using email and social media for the purpose of evoking sense of unpleasant towards an individual.

To what extent of the study informants knew about cyberbullying cannot be evaluate by a correct definition. Informant stated that cyberbullying is an act of harassment, insult as well as spreading something that contains one's disgrace. Meanwhile, in informant's view the act of recording and disseminating child sex videos is also considered an act of cyber bullying. This is unacceptable because the act directly affecting the future and embarrassing the child during their growth phase. In addition, according to informants , cyber bullying mean of an act of disparaging or denouncing of an individual who shares information on a social media site. Apart from that, informants also expressed his view that cyber bullying is one of the act of disseminating or contagious video to be widespread. The act of disseminating a video can negatively impact the individual in the video by mentally and giving an embarrassment towards the individual. Furthermore, informant adding that cyberbullying is an act of intimidation over the Internet. Thus, based on the findings of the above study, it can be concluded that cyber bullying is an act of harassment, insulting, denouncing, spreading, belittling as well as threatening others by using the Internet to affects the psychology and feelings of an individual. This is proven through the statements of the following informants;

KF1:... interference in the Internet, disturbing individuals who use the Internet. For example, when someone insults other people's posts, spreads shame and so on.

KF4:... for me, it's like a child case, especially involved in a pedophilia case, record the child's sex video and spread it on social media. Sometimes there are sellers. It's a pity for the boys because the boys don't know much. Hurmm I think that's cyber bullying.

KF22:... examples of the misuse of pictures uploaded on the Internet by irresponsible individuals. Later, the person will feel ashamed because his picture was misused.

KF4:... a form of intimidation received through social media

The definition given by the informants of the study on the cyberbullying Is parallel with MCMC's (2012) definition of cyber bullying which is a way of using communication tools by sending bad messages; insulting, embarrassing and slander someone; make threats; sexual harassment as well as spreading images which can degrades an individual. Next, the informant's experience in cyberbullying showed that most of the study informants **never been a victim of cyber bullying**. For example, informant stated, he had never been a victim of cyberbullying because he is very careful when sharing something on social media. Furthermore, the KF8 informant also stated that he also forbid himself not to share any nonsense on his social media site. The main reason for the informant being careful not to share on their social media site due to maintaining privacy on social media. Thus, based on the answers given by the informants of the study, it was clear that the informants were very alert and careful when sharing something on a social media site. This is because the informant did not want to be criticized or criticized by others on social media. Thus, it will not open the opportunities to acts of cyberbullying. This can be seen through reality the following informants;

KF4: ... hurmm. Never hit again and usually I will be careful when sharing something near Facebook.

KF2: ... I have never been a victim of bullying.

KF2: ... never, because it's rare to say something near a social site. Don't post gossip.

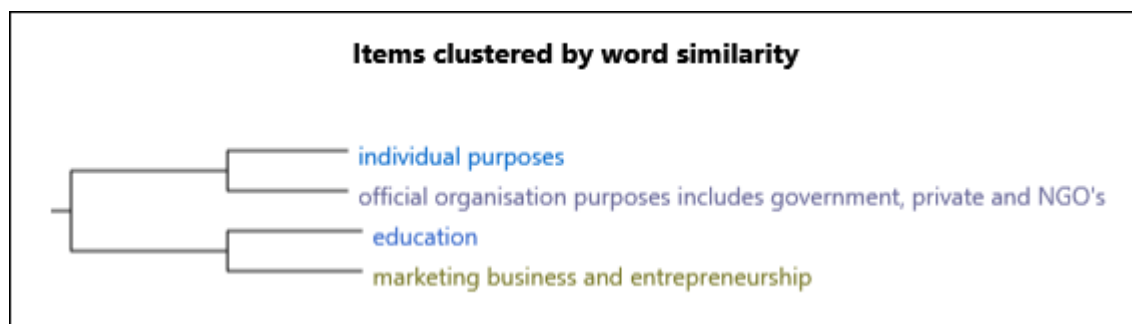
However, four informants had experience to be a victim of cyberbullying. For example, the KF2 informant told his experience when his picture was misused by irresponsible individual. Based on the statement of the KF2 informant, he once shared a piece of photo exposing her 'aurat' on her Facebook page. These cause her picture to be downloaded by Facebook followers and uploaded it to an immoral Facebook page. This caused her to feel embarrassed and take action by channeling a complaint through Facebook. It can be seen through the informant's statement;

KF2: ... this happened to me. My picture on Facebook, this one person he posted on a website that looks like it shouldn't. So, I didn't realize. One of my friends saw my picture on the Facebook page, so he informed me. So, it's like I went to Facebook and saw that there was a picture ... my picture looked like I could see that thing ... I felt like crying because I was ashamed of my coat ... then I continued to make a report near Facebook, then I saw that the picture was correct remove by Facebook, that's good.

In addition, informant shared his experiences where he had been criticized on the Facebook page when the informant voiced his opinion about the water crisis on campus. As a result of the criticism, he experiencing feelings of depression. Among the actions taken by him is to apologize on the Facebook page. It can be seen like following;

KF3: ... I was still studying for a degree, that time was near UMS, I used to print my Twitter screen, tweets must have been uploaded near Facebook. That time is near this group, the campus group. So this person seems to be dissatisfied, at that time it was a water crisis problem, so I told him I tweeted this thing saying that one day there will be no water, he wants to be noisy, he can go back to his coat. Means get out of Labuan. He printed the screen of the thing, he put it in the campus Facebook group, so it was like a discussion material. So, this person is a debater, so he seems dissatisfied, he remembers me as a student leader saying things like that but he doesn't check if I am a student leader or not. That thing went viral on a campus. Then my curses were spread near that group, it was really sad and depressed because we could read what people commented ... I apologize near that Facebook group.

Thus, based on the overall answers provide by study informants about the practice of security against cyberbullying, it can be concluded that the informants of the study still practicing poor practices in acts of cyberbullying. This matter because although there are most informants have never been victims but there are still some fo the informants experiencing cyberbullying and requires high awareness and practice.



MASS RESEARCH

TRANSITIONS IN POWER: THE ROLE OF YOUTH

Although youth have played a visible and prominent role in demonstrations and protests and have often been instrumental in bringing about changes in governance, the position of youth following political transition remains largely undefined. In part due the complexities involved in democracy

and institution building, there is often no mechanism for the meaningful inclusion of youth in the new and emerging political landscape. As such youth are often still not fully involved, represented or regularly consulted.

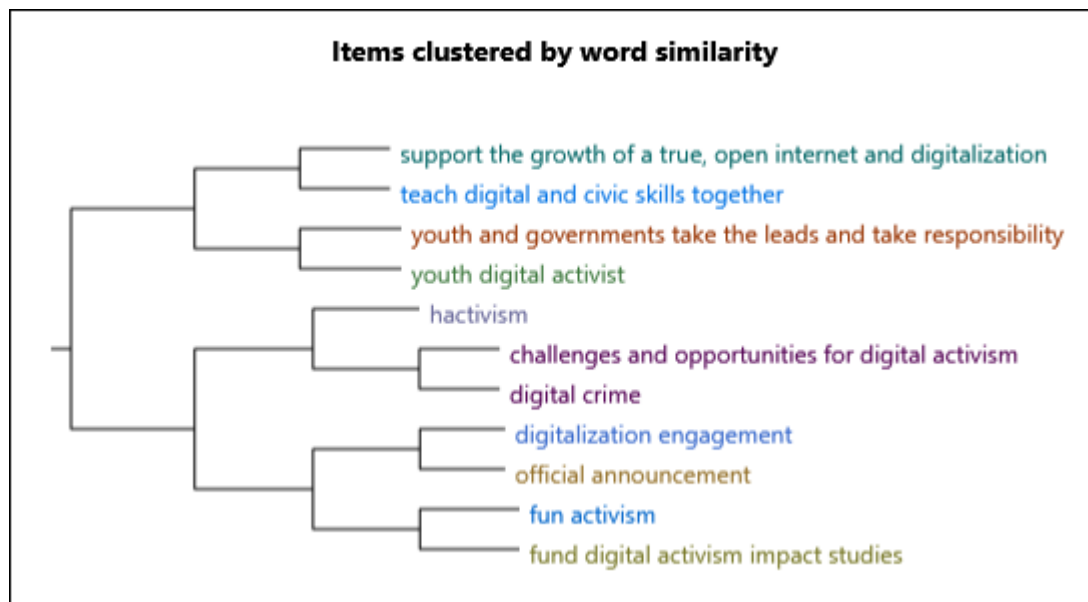
One important reason for their lack of political integration is that while youth are instrumental in breaking down existing structures, the same blocks and foundations are being used to rebuild those structures. What is needed in many cases is a whole new framework for political participation and governance that can bring about the type of political structures and processes that are genuinely responsive to and inclusive of youth.

Even the passive exclusion of youth from governance structures is not without consequences. There is evidence that failing to purposefully and meaningfully include youth in the building of new processes and institutions can lead to increased frustration and resentment among young political activists, destabilizing democratization and accelerating conflict dynamics

Finding a way to facilitate youth engagement through institutionalized processes while also integrating less traditional forms of political engagement is an emerging challenge for Governments and policymakers one which, if left unresolved, may threaten the stability and security of countries.

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE EFFECT OF NEW MEDIA ON MALAYSIAN YOUTH IN DIGITALIZATION ENGAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

There are always two sides of the same coin. Both negative and positive effects can be seen on social media towards Malaysian youth.



CONCLUSION

In this study paper reveals that new media is a very important communication tool. The fast-growing new media phenomenon is a burning issue among Malaysian youths as they are addicted. Parents must check their child's activities especially among their youth on a regular basis and do not give permission to spend their quality time in the new media without significant need. Internet

service providers and other authorities must take note of this matter in relation to the negative impact of new media on Malaysian youth. Awareness programs and training on the use of social networking websites must be organized at school as well as at the college or university level focusing on the negative effects of new media and the Internet. New media was developed primitively for communication and reciprocal action. Undoubtedly new media is an aspect of modern times that will help countless active users. The role of the new media is very important. The advantages of new media outweigh the disadvantages. Youth can be educated with the help of audio-visual aids, seminars, group discussions, debates, quizzes and so on play an important role in shaping youth ideas.

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The Contributions of 20th Century Muslim Malay Scholars toward the Emancipation of Malay Women

Nor Aniza Mad Azeri^a, Nur Saadah Hamisan@Khair^{b*}

^aUniversiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: anizaazeri@gmail.com

^bUniversiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: saadahkhair@usim.edu.my

Abstract

Until today, the centuries-old practice of writing is still an important medium for Muslim Malay scholars to disseminate knowledge. These scholars emphasized various issues in their writings, but not all focused on discussing women's issues, whether directly or indirectly. Therefore, this study aims to explore the contributions of Malay scholars, particularly how they highlighted the need for the emancipation of women in Malaya in the twentieth century. In this paper, the emancipation of women is defined as the liberation of women from illiteracy, conservatism, and any discrimination, but, per the scholars, within the principles of Islam. Using the qualitative method, this study applied content analysis of the scholars' writings to analyze their advocacy of women's rights. This study found that their contributions have massively empowered and supported women educationally, socially, politically, and economically, as strongly embedded in the societal practice of the Malays in the past and to this day.

Keywords: Emancipation, Malay Scholars, Malay Women, Malay Writings

1. Introduction

In the early twentieth century, traditional Malay society was primarily focused on liberating the country from imperialists. All levels of society fought for independence. However, women were still underrepresented in many areas at the time, so they were focusing their significant roles as wife and mother. The Malay community believed that women were better suited to staying at home and managing household chores. Moreover, women's movement and inclination towards socialisation were also restricted, particularly in the political sphere; the society was concerned that if their women were exposed to contemporary events, they might lose their oriental values.

Besides, Malay parents were more likely to send their sons to school rather than their daughters. This was because they believed that the sons would be the family leader and would shoulder significant obligations, and the sons also contributed much more to the family's economic well-being. In fact, mothers were more concerned with losing a household manager if they gave their daughters away.

Nonetheless, in the mid-twentieth century, some circumstances and the emergence of groups prompted the Malay community to recognise the importance of providing education and equal rights to women, as well as the need for women to participate in politics because they realized that women play an important role in a country's success. The Muslim Malay scholars were one of the movements that influenced women to break free from the Malay community's restrictive mentality. One of the approaches used was through writings, where they spread awareness through their writing to emancipate women from traditional power structures and to eliminate the discrimination against women within the principles of Islam.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the contributions of the Muslim Malays scholars, especially how they had highlighted the need for the emancipation of women in Malaya in the twentieth

century. Their contributions cover numerous aspects including education, economics, and politics. However, this study will discuss and analyze the contributions of the Muslim Malay scholars' writings towards issues concerning women's rights and empowerment educationally, politically, and economically.

2. Literature Review

Interestingly, the Muslim Malay scholars were influenced by Muslim reformists from the Middle East, particularly how they advocated for women's rights. For example, Syed Syekh Ahmad al-Hadi (1867-1934), one of the first Muslim Malay scholars who fought for women's emancipation (Hamisan@Khair, 2020), was also influenced by the prominent reformist from Egypt, Syekh Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905). The influence can be seen in his writings, particularly in *Al-Ikhwān*, a magazine that was published and printed between 1926 and 1931 (Noor, 2007) with the idea of supporting women's education and demanding the liberation of women from traditional power structures as well as empowering women in Malaya. The influence also can be seen through similar approach applied by Muslim Malay scholars to galvanize social change without abandoning Islamic principles.

Specifically on writing, this study found that there are numbers of Malay scholars in the 20th century which have significantly acknowledged the importance of women in most of the aspects related to religious teaching, education, social, politic, history, and many others. For instance, women issues were written through magazines in the early of the 20th century such as *Majalah Guru*, *Saudara*, *Kenchana*, *Bulan Melayu*, *Majalah Lembaga Melayu*, and many others. These magazines actually discussed many issues and concerns related to the Malay intellectually, culturally, politically, and many other topics, but issues concerning women got a special place among the authors – male and female – of these magazines.

Apart from magazines and newspapers, literary writing like novels also has significant role in expressing women's issues directly and indirectly. These novels included *Hikayat Faridah Hanom* (1925/26) by Syed Ahmad al-Hadi, *Iakah Salmah* (1928) by Ahmad Rashid Talu, *Mencari Isteri* (1929) by Muhammad Yusuf Ahmad, *Melor Kuala Lumpur* (1930) by Harun Aminurashid, *Melati Kota Bharu* (1941) by Abdul Khadir Adabi, *Korban Kesuciannya* (1949) by Keris Mas, *Ustazah* (1950) by Ahmad Lutfi, *Salina* (1961) by A. Samad Said, *Sayang Ustazah Sayang* (1968) by Salmi Manja, *Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan* (1975) by Ahmad Kotot, and many others. Most of these novels portrayed a female character with positive values and avoided stereotype perception that might oppressed women in a negative manner. It is vital to emphasize that these novels were written by male authors (Hamisan@Khair & Mad Azeri, 2021).

Discussion concerning women were also becoming more intense in the yellow book (*turath* book), especially in the 20th century. Martin van Bruinessen (1993) attempts to argue that different local cultures might influence the writing, and another issue raised was the authorship of these religious books was dominated by male scholars. This similar issue was also discussed by Riffat Hassan (1991) and Fatima Mernissi (1991) who both criticized male scholars in discriminating against women vis-à-vis religious texts from the Quran and Hadith.

However, Mohd Anuar Ramli (2010) found that majority of the Malay Muslim scholars on classical Islamic law have discussed the gender issues with more intimate towards women, and they had emphasized on the interaction of customary laws and traditions concerning the status of women. For instance, the concepts of matrimonial property were decided as the right of women in the classical Malay rule. It showed that these scholars applied a 'women-friendly' approach in Islamic teaching and promoted no discrimination against women. A similar issue was also

discussed in the *fiqh* writings compiled by Malay scholars such as Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani, Syeikh Arshad al-Banjari and Syeikh Ahmad Muhammad Zayn al-Fatani.

2. Methodology

This study is essentially a text-based analysis of written documents, all of which were selected from Muslim Malay scholars of the 20th century based on selected criteria. Among the sample selection criteria were a publication year from the 1900s to the 1960s (early 20th century); published in Jawi; and containing Quranic verses and hadiths that cover women's issues. Thus, five major writings became the main focus of this study.

The first is *Kitab Adab Perempuan* written by Ahmad bin Ya'qub (1891-1959). It was penned in 1926 in conjunction with the 53rd birthday of Sultan Ibrahim al-Mashhur ibn al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar al-Khalil, the second Sultan of Johor (Ya'qub, 2017). Haji Ahmad was exceptionally learned and experienced in the Johor State education system, so his writings were frequently used in the Johor Religious Department's syllabus. One of these writings is *Kitab Adab Perempuan*.

The second is *Kitab Alam Perempuan* written by Syed Syeikh Ahmad al-Hadi (1867-1934). Al-Hadi was known as the first to introduce the emancipation of women in Malaysia, both directly and indirectly. His purpose was none other than to stir the emancipation of Malay people, not only on gendered terms but also against colonialism (Alicia Izharuddin, 2013). He criticized the traditional practice that limited the freedom of women in seeking knowledge and blamed this state of affairs on males over the past generations who did not offer education to women (Hamisan@Khair, 2020).

The third is *Kitab Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* written by Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar (1854-1932). This figure often served as the main reference for the local community to solve religious issues. His writings include one of the complete Quranic interpretations in Malaya (Ibrahim, 2013) and consists of four volumes. He discussed the issues of women in his book in general, around certain issues of many different aspects such as *ibadat* (worship), *mu'amalat* (economic contract), *munakahat* (family Islamic law), *akhlak* (moralities and ethic) and others. Furthermore, in his book, he also applied gender justice in interpreting Quranic verses concerning women.

The fourth is *Bahr al-Madhi Sharh Mukhtasar Sahih al-Tirmidhi* written by Mohamed Idris bin Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989). His schooling was divided into two streams; traditional *pondok* and the al-Azhar educational system. The birth of this writing was inspired by his thought and approach to reform Malaya (Ahmad, 2011). The writing was composed as a commentary to the *Jami' al-Tirmidhi* and the only one of its kind to have been written in the Malay language (Mohd Zarif, 2019). He touched on gender justice when elaborating the Hadith concerning women issues in his book (Mohd Anuar Ramli, 2012).

The fifth is *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan* written by Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950). In 1911, the author was instrumental in establishing the first Malay Girls' School in Johor, and his works also primarily focused on women. Interestingly, the content of this book emphasizes that women's position is not different from men. It also stresses on women's rights in various aspects of life. The book attempts to elevate the dignity of women by recognizing that women also have the right to freedom of choice and to serve as man's companion. It also contains marriage-related matters, such as *nusyuz* and polygamy, discussed from various perspectives. Some Western figures are also quoted in the book to compare the history, rights, and the role of women in Western civilization to that of Islamic civilizations (Khair, 2019).

The data obtained from the selected documents and texts above will be analyzed using two methods: i) the inductive method, which is applied in analyzing data to prove the hypothesis based on specific information to general information. In particular, this study aims to examine the perceptions of Muslim Malay scholars in the 20th century on women's issues, and then formulate, in general, the study of Malay writings characterized by religion; and ii) the deductive method, which is used to analyze data to achieve proof from general information to specific information. In general, this study collected writings and published works of selected Malay scholars in the 20th century, and then extracted the theme of women in religious texts and focused on the issue of women's emancipation.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis conducted on selected Malay writings, it was found that the selected Muslim Malay scholars shared significant similarities in how they chose to empower women's rights, whether directly or indirectly. The Malay scholars' efforts to advocate and support the emancipation of women succeeded in empowering women in various aspects. In the Malay context, these writings contributed to the advancement of Malay women and have simultaneously positively impacted three important sectors: education, economics, and politics.

3.1 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Educational Sector

The idea of emancipation brought by the Muslim Malay scholars spread awareness to the community on how important it is that Malay women seek education. They played a crucial role in appealing for equal education for both male and female children, as they knew knowledge is a tool that can empower one's mind and, in turn, one's community. They called upon Malay parents to give women more opportunities to pursue education and advocate for their rights and free them from oppression. They also believed that Malays would develop successfully only if its women were equipped with the necessary knowledge and proper education. It is apparent that the Malay scholars' concept of education is not confined to men only; they also suggested women be armed with sound and proper education so they could carry out their duties successfully.

For example, the critical duty of a woman as a mother and home educator, as mentioned by the Malay scholars, requires her to be armed with the most fundamental knowledge, which is domestic science, and this branch includes sound management of the house and its finances. Women need to know mathematics to help them estimate the financial budget of their household and how to manage monthly expenses. The scholars believed that educated women could manage household affairs well. Therefore, their efforts helped increase the awareness among women in Malaya to seek knowledge (Idris & Mohd Noor, 2014). The crucial role that a mother plays in educating her children concurs with a view stated in *Kitab Adab Perempuan*—that the development of men's body and mind, especially when they are children, are associated with women, who are their first teachers (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: p. 39-40).

Women need education not only to manage home economics, but also to seek knowledge, so that they may become well-behaved women who can serve the nation and the country. Ahmad bin Ya'qub described that as for the consequences of girls not being educated in school, when they grow up, they will be unfortunate human beings, and might not have a chance to contribute to society (Ya'qub, 2017). Other scholars like Abdullah have stated that the obligation to provide education to girls is the same as that of providing education to boys, and girls should get exposure to various types of knowledge the same as boys (Abdul Rahman, 2017).

Therefore, at that time, many Malay scholars started setting up educational centers for the Malay community. For instance, Abdullah Abdul Rahman established a religious school in Muar in 1901, and also founded the first Malay Girls' School in Johor in 1911. Syed Syeikh Ahmad al-Hadi also built religious schools, namely Madrasah al-Hadi in Melaka in 1917 and Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiya in Penang in 1919. In 1928, 10 government schools were established in Johor (Mahani Musa, 2010). Women were taught mathematics, the English language, the Malay language, and many other subjects. They were also taught household skills in school such as the science of caring for small children, cooking classes, sewing classes, and more. Interestingly, the book *Kitab Adab Perempuan* written by Ahmad bin Ya'qub was used as the text for reading and reference in female religious schools in Johor, as mentioned in the introduction part of the recent version of the book that was re-published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2017.

In their writings, the Malay scholars also acknowledged the significant roles that Muslim women play in society, especially in early Islamic history. They maintained that the participation of women in obtaining education in fact was a strong part of Islamic history, as the Prophet and his successors always supported women to acquire knowledge. For example, Idris al-Marbawi, in his book *Bahr al-Madhi*, mentioned that Umm Salamah was an intelligent woman who always asked the Prophet about the problems that took place between women in Arabia, and the Prophet would always answer all her questions until she was praised as a clever woman (*Bahr al-Madhi*: v.22, p. 174). So, it follows that the fulfillment of woman's rights to receive education is a necessity for women to educate their children. A woman thus needs to learn various branches of knowledge at a deeper level so as to fully understand its many benefits. Such understanding would, in turn, help her to instill the love for knowledge in her children.

3.2 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Political Sector

The writings of Muslim Malays scholars also impacted the political sector, with more women in Malaya becoming involved in the country's political movements as a result. The Malay scholars believed that the progress of the country does not depend solely on men; women also have an important role to play in leadership and politics. Although there are some arguments on the issue of female leadership in Islam, a success story of a woman ruler, known as the Queen of Sheba, has been described in the Qur'an as 'a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne' (The Qur'an 27: 23).

This story was acknowledged by Idris al-Marbawi in his book *Bahr al-Madhi* and Haji Muhammad Said bin Umar in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, who stated that in Islam, there are important women figures who have performed their roles as a leader. In fact, they also emphasized that leadership is not solely the responsibility of men—every human being on this earth is a leader and every leader is responsible for what he leads (*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*: v.1: p. 14).

The permission given in Islam as well as examples from Islamic history on successful female leaders are among the factors that Malay women gained the courage to become involved in politics and to become leaders of the society. Among the Malay women who were actively involved in politics were Khatijah Sidek, Aishah Ghani, and Shamsiah Fakeh. These women figures are proof of the importance of women's emancipation and nationalism in fighting for Malaysia's Independence (Hasan, 2020). Their involvement in politics was also due to many other reasons, such as to improve the status of women in society, to establish religious classes, to increase unity and patriotism, and to oppose the proposed establishment of the Malayan Union (Hamidi & Mustafa, 2013).

3.3 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Economic Sector

From the selected writings, it was found that the Malay scholars had also encouraged women to participate in the economic sector. In Islam, the economy is also as important as other aspects in order for a person to survive and it is an area that develops the prosperity of the society. Although it is common that most of the economic resources in the family fall under the responsibility of men as the leader of the family, this does not mean that women have no right to be involved in the economic sector as well. Hence, some of the Malay scholars have highlighted the need for women to participate in the economy within the limits of their skills and ability, for Islamic history has recorded many Muslim women in the past who are also known to be great businesswomen.

Syed Syeikh al-Hadi in *Kitab Alam Perempuan* recognized Khadijah bint Khuwailid as a successful businesswoman and used her example to clarify that women are also entitled to carry out roles other than domestic ones. Besides, Abdullah ‘Abdul Rahman, in his book *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, emphasized that women have the right to own money and property, as Islam has prescribed dowry (*mahr*), inheritance, and financial transactions for women as in the Quran and Hadith. Therefore, women are allowed to generate income by participating in economic activities and business transactions. He said,

“Dan diberi dan diluluskan pada perempuan itu haqq berjual beli sewa menyewa; dan beri memberi dan bersedeqah dan lain-lainnya.” (*Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*: p. 56).

In the Malay context, many women have actively been involved in small businesses and crafts to earn a living alongside their husbands since the olden days. For example, women from Kelantan and Terengganu are actively engaged in the state economy— selling crop products, weaving, making marine products, and others (Seri et al., 2020).

Although the Muslim Malay scholars agree that women are allowed to go out to search for sustenance by helping the husband with the household economy, the women are also encouraged to keep to the Islamic social boundaries when dealing with males at the workplace. They were also advised to learn how to balance their responsibilities inside and outside the home. The wife’s cooperation in generating the household income could help the husband to improve and raise their overall standard of living, especially with the increased fees caused by children’s schooling, home debts, cars, and other expenses that need to be paid that demand the wife to go out to work to help ease the burden of the husband.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the emancipation of women can be defined as the liberation of women from any discrimination, illiteracy, conservatism, and traditional practices that have pegged women into one specific area mainly related to the private sphere. This idea of women’s emancipation among the Malay society was introduced by Muslim reformists who advocated for women’s rights because of the existing discriminations and gender biases. Due to the reformists’ influence, the Malay scholars also began emphasizing the idea of emancipation in their writings—directly and indirectly—by emphasizing that women should be given equal rights within Islamic principles, for discrimination also occurred in the Malay culture where women would be kept secluded and separated in the private sphere.

The Malay scholars also applied various approaches to advocate and promote justice for women’s rights in many of their writings, in order to raise awareness on the importance of women’s roles

in education, economy, and politics. Therefore, the five Malay scholars selected in this study managed to bring awareness to society about the emancipation of women. Each may have had a different approach in highlighting women's issues in their writings whether directly or indirectly, but their writings still impacted the social development of Malay women as well as their involvement in the educational, political, and economic sectors. Besides the five mentioned in this research, other Malay scholars who advocate for women's rights could still be undiscovered, hence, opening the doors to more research in the future.

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APPLICATION OF SYSTEM THEORY IN THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN VICTIMS

Masarah Mohamad Yusof^{a*}
Email:masarahmy@usm.my

^aSchool of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

The problem of domestic violence is one of the social issues that occur in Malaysia, and it is also experienced in other countries. Various definitions are given through past studies to illustrate the seriousness of this problem from multiple points of view of researchers. Most of the classification associates women as victims of male cruelty who are treated with various forms of abuse. The issue of violence experienced by these women needs to be explored to further enhance understanding towards shaping a more effective process in line with the needs of the victims. Thus, various theories in the theoretical framework play an important role in further enhancing the understanding of domestic violence. Therefore, this paper focuses on applying systems theory that social workers often adopt, especially in the intervention process at the assessment stage. The concept in this theory is very useful because it can help social workers understand various things, including the factors and effects that lead to the change of behaviour either in a positive or negative direction. As a result, key problems can be easily identified, and it helps social workers formulate action plans at the next level to improve the social functionality of this target group.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women Victims, System Theory

Introduction

Past studies have shown that violence in family institutions is closely linked to psychological and social problems involving changes in psychological function among victims and abusers (Tsirigotis, & Łuczak, 2018). Based on a previous study, it is estimated that one in three women in the world experiences violence against their partners, and it is also known as a public health issue and related to the violation of the human rights of women (Semahegn et al., 2019). Furthermore, most surveys found that men more commonly committed gender-based domestic violence against women (Myhill, 2017).

There are various definitions related to domestic violence that can be understood through multiple sources of past studies. According to Mariny et al. (2016), domestic violence is a form of internal family problems that are patterned abusive and coercive behaviours to negatively affect the victim. It involves various forms of abuse to different target groups, including children, the elderly, and married couples (Bryant Furlow, 2010). According to Lucena, Deininger, Coelho, Monteiro, Vianna, and Nascimento (2016), violence against women refers to behaviour based on gender violence to the point of causing suffering to female victims whether physically, sexually, and mentally. In addition, violence against women is also classified as intimate partner violence (IPV), including physical, sexual, psychological, or any combination of such negative actions against women (Bazargan-Hejazi, Medeiros,

Mohammadi, Lin & Dalal, 2013). Meanwhile, Masarah (2017) describes domestic violence related to gender dominance through various negative behaviours injustice for women, including married ones. Overall, the different definitions can indirectly describe the effects of suffering, either long-term or otherwise, especially in women victims of domestic violence.

Most women who are victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) show negative psychological effects, namely the formation of depression and anxiety globally (Chandan et al., 2020). As well as experiencing the symptoms of trauma due to the bitter experiences they have experienced (Buckner, Bearslee & Bassuk, 2004; Gorde et al., 2004). Worse, the violence in family institutions has a profound effect on female victims and involves psychosocial disorders, including children and adolescents' mental and emotional health in such an environment (Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). Thus, the results of previous studies have shown that the issue of domestic violence among women not only harms victims but also affects the existing environmental system. Therefore, using a theoretical framework is one of the effective ways to help understand this problem in more depth.

According to Norwood (2000), a theoretical framework is important to explain the relevance of various basic theoretical concepts concerning the problem being studied. This statement is also in line with Marican (2006) that appropriate theory can help researchers make it the basis of interpretation and analysis of data in a study conducted. It can help conclude from various information obtained in a study conducted by researchers. Therefore, systems theory was chosen to comprehensively parse and produce an effective social work intervention on the domestic violence problem. Some key concepts in systems theory can be applied in the assessment stage to understand the issues more clearly. In turn, it can help social workers prepare effective action plans to reduce these problematic issues more effectively.

Application of System Theory in the Issue of Domestic Violence Against Female Victims

System theory is derived from general system theory (Bertalanffy, 1950), and it is an extension of biological and sociological aspects that can influence behaviour and functionality (Bertalanffy, 1968; 1981). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2002) assume that a system is a set of organized elements that depend on each other to form a more comprehensive functionality. Furthermore, each part of the different elements in a system functions interdependently and interacts to complete the system as a whole (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2002). Thus, the theoretical assumptions of this system can help social workers understand the issue of domestic violence problems in depth from various perspectives. This theory can help social workers understand the factors that can help reduce the issue of domestic violence. For example, a previous study showed that social support network systems such as family and friends greatly helped victims decide to free themselves from continuing to be victims of violence (Brosi & Rolling, 2010). Social support systems are among the most important and needed resources for women experiencing domestic violence (Goodman, Dutton, Vankos & Weinfurt (2005; Goodman & Epstein, 2005). They are used to deal with and manage problems more effectively. (Taft, Resick, Panuzio, Vogt & Mechanic, 2007).

Moreover, systems refer to interdependent parts in this theory (Bertalanffy, 1968). He assumes that well-connected parts are capable of making an existing system function positively. However, in the event of a relationship disruption, the current system becomes unstructured and unorganized. Therefore, this theory is suitable for studying the suffering of domestic violence victims as a result of changes in abuser behaviour caused by certain contributing factors. The evidenced by several previous studies that show that as a system, female victims experience various forms of domestic abuse due to the dysfunction of the other system, which

is their partner who is found unemployed (Paranjape, Heron & Kaslow, 2006; Oyunbileg et al., 2009), drunk due to consumption alcohol (Stickley, Timofeeva & Sparen, 2008; Brecklin, 2002), poor education level of married couples (Salam, Alim & Noguchi, 2006), low income of couples (Bullock, Bloom, Davis, Kilburn, & Curry, 2006) and their couple which is abusers are exposed to the problem of abuse in the social-environmental system during childhood (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Md. Akhir, Alavi, Nen, Ibrahim, Mohamad & Hassan, 2012; Ehrensaft, Cohen, Brown, Smailes, Chen & Johnson, 2003; Caetano, Schafer, Clark, Cunradi & Raspberry, 2000). Thus, all the dysfunction of the husband, which is one of the systems in the family, has caused another system, the wife, to be treated cruelly, whether physical, sexual, social, emotional, and financial.

Based on systems theory, an individual is seen as a system or subsystem against other systems (Bertalanffy, 1968). This assumption can be applied by looking at the individual's perspective as a victim of violence as a system of emotional, physical, social, spiritual, biological, and cognitive subsystems in studies related to this issue. Disruption of one of the subsystems in the victim also affects the victim himself. For example, victims who experience various forms of abuse can have implications for their emotions, leading to changes towards the formation of positive or negative behaviours. Through the results of Hoff (1990) study, it can be understood that female victims decide to leave their partner due to fear of being killed by their partner, fear if they decide to commit suicide due to stress, victims feel worried about the safety of children- the child if it still survives, and the victim feels the partner is incapable of changing toward positive behaviour. Thus, it is understandable that every suffering experienced by female victims has affected their emotional subsystem holistically so that the victim can act boldly out of the violence experienced.

Theater (2010) also assumes that all systems have their boundaries, and these boundary differences can be detected through the level of a system involved, whether open or closed. Systems that adopt an open system are more receptive to change and development, while closed systems are more rigid and prevent outside influences from entering the existing system. The conceptual assumption of this theory can help social workers understand the cultural boundaries of a strict social system can contribute to domestic violence cases, especially among women. For example, societal cultures in African countries, including Nigeria, still hold the tradition of allowing the act of beating the wife as one form of discipline in family institutions (Ayotunde et al., 2014). Moreover, Borwankar, Diallo, and Sommerfelt (2008) emphasize the cultural boundaries of thought rigid nature in the Ghanaian system of society has triggered gender dominance that men are still considered to have absolute power and culture there accepts violent behaviour as one of the methods of resolving conflict in a relationship. Therefore, many people still adopt a form of marriage based on the husband's dominance over the wife (Abdullah, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Various social problems occur that can negatively impact the development and well-being of a country. Domestic violence among women is also not excluded to be given attention because it can threaten the living functioning of the target group and the surrounding ecological system. Thus, applying systems theory in a theoretical framework is seen as appropriate and important to help understand the various dimensions of factors and effects of this problem issue in more depth. As a result, the situational determination process in social work practical interventions can be done more effectively towards helping female victims improve social functioning.

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KONSUMERISME KE ATAS TELEFON PINTAR iPHONE SEBAGAI CERMINAN KEPADA IDENTITI PENGGUNA (CONSUMERISM OF IPHONE AS A REFLECTION TO USER IDENTITY)

Nur Aini Aiman Binti Zulkifli Airwan, Mohd Khairuddin Bin Mohad Sallehuddin*

Pusat Pengajian Sains Kemasyarakatan, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

m.khairuddin@usm.my

Abstrak

Perkembangan dan kemajuan teknologi pada masa kini telah membawa banyak perubahan kepada masyarakat masa kini terutamanya dalam konteks teknologi komunikasi dan maklumat. Kajian ini berkaitan bagaimana aktiviti konsumsi ke atas telefon pintar berjenama iPhone bukan lagi sekadar digunakan sebagai alat komunikasi untuk berinteraksi semata-mata, tetapi pada masa yang sama merupakan alat untuk mencerminkan identiti penggunanya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat apakah makna aktiviti konsumerisme ke atas telefon pintar iPhone dalam kalangan pelajar Sarjana Muda di Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian fenomenologi dan menggunakan teknik temubual secara mendalam ke atas sepuluh orang informan yang terdiri daripada pelajar Sarjana Muda di Universiti Sains Malaysia yang menggunakan telefon pintar berjenama Apple (iPhone). Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa makna aktiviti konsumerisme ke atas telefon pintar berjenama Apple adalah sebagai cerminan kepada identiti mereka yang ditonjolkan melalui pemilihan bentuk fesyen dan jenama ke atas komoditi tersebut. Aktiviti konsumerisme ke atas telefon pintar pada masa kini bukan lagi berdasarkan fungsi asasnya sebagai alat komunikasi bagi tujuan interaksi sosial, tetapi pada masa yang sama berfungsi sebagai komoditi untuk mencerminkan identiti seseorang pengguna.

Kata kunci: Konsumerisme, komodifikasi, komoditi, identiti dan interaksi sosial

Abstract

The constant development and advancement in the world of technology has proportional impact on the society especially in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This study is to identify and understand how iPhones are no longer used as just a communication tool to interact but also to reflect the identity of the users. This study aims to assimilate the reason behind the consumerism of iPhones among the undergraduate students in Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach and in-depth interview technique consisting of 10 chosen iPhone users among the undergraduate students in Universiti Sains Malaysia. The result portrays consumerism of iPhone is a reflection of their identity and it is highlighted through the selection of fashion forms and brands for the commodity. Nowadays, the consumerism of smartphones is not just based on its basic function as a communication tool for social interaction, but also to serve as a commodity to reflect the identity of the consumers.

Keywords: Consumerism, commodification, identity and social interaction

1. Pengenalan

Dalam era teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi kini yang semakin berkembang maju telah menyebabkan perhubungan dan pertukaran maklumat lebih cepat berbanding sebelum ini (Hassanzadeh & Rezaei, 2011). Telefon pintar merupakan peranti teknologi komunikasi mudah alih yang penting bagi setiap individu di dunia pada masa kini. Ia digunakan sebagai alat untuk melaksanakan pelbagai urusan seharian dan perkhidmatan serta untuk mengakses pelbagai maklumat berbanding telefon biasa/ telefon bimbit dan mempunyai ciri unik seperti internet, laman rangkaian sosial, permainan video, dan mesej (Jasni et al., 2020). Bahkan menurut Alfawareh dan Jusoh (2014) dan Al-Barashdi et al., (2015) menyatakan bahawa telefon pintar merupakan alat yang sofistikated, dinamik serta bersifat mudah alih yang memberi ruang kepada pengguna untuk mendapat akses maklumat tidak kira bila dan di mana. Kapasiti telefon pintar yang mampu beroperasi seperti komputer memberi banyak kemudahan kepada pengguna dan sekaligus meningkatkan tahap pemilikan telefon pintar serta cara dan tujuan penggunaannya (Lay-Yee et al., 2013).

Dalam konteks budaya konsumer, pembelian sesuatu komoditi itu bukan sekadar melambangkan kepuasan dalam aktiviti membeli, tetapi pada masa yang sama aktiviti membeli juga mampu menonjolkan kelas sosial, status dan identiti seseorang pengguna itu (Mohad Sallehuddin & Sukimi, 2018). Hal ini seperti yang dinyatakan oleh Featherstone (2007), iaitu, budaya konsumer dalam kalangan pengguna terkait dengan kepuasan seseorang hasil daripada penggunaan barangan, di mana barangan tersebut tidak hanya melambangkan kepuasan pengguna, tetapi pada masa yang sama turut melambangkan identiti dan kelas sosial pengguna itu. Dalam erti kata yang lain, perspektif ini melihat bagaimana seseorang pengguna itu menggunakan benda atau barang sebagai alat untuk mewujudkan perbezaan ikatan sosial, perbezaan identiti dan perbezaan status dalam masyarakat.

Oleh yang demikian, kertas kerja ini menunjukkan bahawa proses komodifikasi ke atas penggunaan dan pemilikan telefon pintar iPhone bukan lagi kerana fungsi asasnya, iaitu untuk berkomunikasi, tetapi pada masa yang sama juga sebagai alat untuk menunjukkan identiti diri seseorang pengguna terutamanya dalam kalangan pelajar Sarjana Muda di Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) yang menggunakan telefon pintar berjenama tersebut.

2. Sorotan Karya

Kajian berkaitan dengan penggunaan telefon pintar seringkali terkait dengan kesan ketagihan dalam penggunaannya. Hal ini dapat dilihat menerusi kajian-kajian yang dilakukan oleh para sarjana seperti Ithnain, Ghazali dan Jaafar, 2018; Akhouri dan Kehksha, 2016; Al-Barashdi; Darcin et al., 2016; dan Hatice et al., 2016. Kebanyakan hasil kajian tersebut menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan telefon pintar yang tidak dikawal akan menyebabkan ketagihan kepada penggunaannya dan pada masa yang sama akan memberi kesan kepada masalah kesihatan fizikal, mental dan psikososial seseorang pengguna. Bahkan kajian tinjauan yang dilakukan oleh Mohd Ali dan Tang (2020) bagi mengenalpasti penggunaan telefon pintar dan tahap nomofobia dalam kalangan murid berkeperluan khas di sekolah menengah. Nomofobi merupakan satu keadaan di mana individu akan berasa takut dan bimbang apabila telefon pintar tidak bersama mereka. Murid berkeperluan khas dengan nomofobia terdedah kepada pelbagai kesan negatif dari segi perkembangan kemahiran motor, pencapaian akademik mahupun sosial. Soal selidik telah ditadbir terhadap 285 orang murid dari empat buah sekolah menengah pendidikan khas yang mengalami sama ada masalah pembelajaran, kurang upaya pendengaran, kurang upaya

penglihatan, kurang upaya pertuturan atau kurang upaya fizikal. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan murid-murid sekolah menengah pendidikan khas mengalami tahap nomofobia yang sederhana. Wujud perbezaan yang signifikan antara jantina, dengan lelaki menunjukkan tahap nomofobia yang lebih tinggi namun tidak menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan bagi tahap nomofobia dari segi tempoh penggunaan telefon pintar. Kajian ini memberi implikasi kepada peranan guru, ibu bapa dan komuniti dalam mengawal penggunaan telefon pintar serta mengurangkan tahap nomofobia murid-murid berkeperluan khas melalui pelaksanaan program-program dan intervensi bagi menggalakkan perkembangan mereka ke arah yang lebih positif.

Dalam bidang konsumerisme, kajian yang berkaitan dengan pembelian dan penggunaan telefon pintar pula lebih menfokuskan kepada kesan sosial kepada penggunanya. Hal ini dapat dilihat menerusi kajian yang dilakukan oleh Wilska (2003) yang menyatakan bahawa terdapat perubahan tren dari segi gender ke atas penggunaan telefon pintar dalam kalangan remaja di Finland. Hasil kajian tersebut mendapati bahawa kepenggunaan telefon pintar dalam kalangan remaja di negara tersebut adalah disebabkan oleh 'gaya' dan 'tren' semasa penggunaan telefon pintar. Pengguna telefon dalam kalangan remaja tersebut juga disebabkan oleh 'ketagihan' untuk bergaya terutamanya dalam kalangan remaja wanita. Hasil kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa penggunaan teknologi baharu dalam bidang komunikasi yang sering dikaitkan dengan remaja lelaki kini telah dimonopoli oleh golongan remaja wanita. Selain itu kajian yang dilakukan oleh Downie dan Glazebrook (2007) di Australia ke atas 5,358 orang kanak-kanak yang memiliki telefon pintar sendiri mendapati bahawa 61% kanak-kanak tersebut sedaya upaya untuk mengikut perkembangan semasa telefon pintar mengikut rakan sebaya. Keadaan ini memperlihatkan bahawa walaupun mereka masih kanak-kanak tetapi mereka telah mengetahui cara untuk bergaya menggunakan telefon mereka. Bahkan 54% daripada kanak-kanak tersebut menyatakan bahawa mereka merancang untuk menaik taraf telefon pintar mereka mengikut tren semasa. Apa yang lebih mengejutkan adalah walaupun pemberian telefon pintar kepada kanak-kanak oleh ibu bapa mereka adalah atas faktor keselamatan, namun didapati bahawa pembelian dan pemberian telefon pintar oleh ibu bapa kanak-kanak tersebut terkait dengan status dan nilai estetika telefon yang dibeli. Keadaan ini menunjukkan bahawa persepsi terhadap telefon pintar lebih dominan sebagai gaya hidup, sedangkan aspek keperluan dan keinginan cenderung tidak terlalu penting (Chuzaimah et al., 2010). Hal ini memperlihatkan bahawa pembelian sesuatu barangan atau komoditi itu dan dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosio-demografi daaktiviti kepenggunaan ke atas sesuatu barang tidak terkait dengan penggunaan benda tersebut secara fizikal tetapi juga berkait dengan manfaatbenda tersebut sebagai pemberi ciri atau makna, misalnya siapa atau kelompok mana yang membeli dan menggunakan benda-benda tersebut. Bahkan penghasilan barang-barang simbolik yang diiklankan menerusi perantara budaya baharu juga bertujuan untuk menunjukkan status sosial seseorang pengguna. Keadaan ini dikenali sebagai simbolik kapital yang menunjukkan barang-barang yang dibeli dapat menunjukkan kelas sosial sehingga mampu menunjukkan asal usul seseorang serta kehidupannya.

Sementara itu kajian Kajian yang dilakukan oleh Guleria (2015) yang bertajuk "*A study of consumer preference for smartphone: A case of Solan Town of Himachal Pradesh*" mendapati bahawa terdapat pemilik telefon bimbit yang sedaya upaya berusaha untuk bertukar kepada penggunaan telefon pintar. Kajian ini telah melibatkan 80 orang informan yang pernah memiliki telefon bimbit dan telah bertukar kepada penggunaan telefon pintar. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa faktor utama yang menyebabkan informan tersebut bertukar dari penggunaan telefon bimbit kepada telefon pintar adalah disebabkan perubahan citarasa mereka. Perubahan citarasa ini ditakrifkan sebagai selera yang subjektif seseorang individu yang diukur berdasarkan utiliti. Selain citarasa, hasil kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa faktor tingkat teknologi telefon pintar yang lebih canggih dan menawarkan pelbagai aplikasi berbanding telefon bimbit juga

mempengaruhi citarasa tersebut. Selain itu, kajian yang dilakukan oleh Shabrin et al, (2017) dan Jamlus Nurauliani (2016) juga mendapati bahawa terdapat beberapa faktor tarikan yang menyebabkan Generasi-Y di Sarawak membuat keputusan untuk membeli telefon pintar, antaranya adalah; (1) jenama; (2) kemudahan aplikasi yang disediakan; (3) kebergantungan; (4) harga; (5) pengaruh sosial; (6) ciri produk; (7) ciri-ciri inovatif dan (7) keperluan sosial. Bagi Berger (2009) keadaan ini menunjukkan bahawa menerusi aktiviti konsumsi ke atas budaya material akan memberi pemahaman yang lebih berkesan terhadap sesebuah masyarakat yang mencipta dan mengguna serta membudayakannya (Berger, 2009).

3. Kaedah Kajian

Perbincangan makalah ini adalah berasaskan kepada kajian yang dilakukan ke atas 10 orang informan yang merupakan pelajar Sarjana Muda di Universiti Sains Malaysia dengan menggunakan pendekatan interpretif. Pemilihan 10 orang informan yang terdiri daripada pelajar Sarjana Muda di Universiti Sains Malaysia adalah kerana mengikut statistik yang dikeluarkan oleh Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (2018) mendapati bahawa pengguna telefon pintar terbesar di negara ini adalah pelajar sepenuh masa di Institut Pengajian Tinggi walaupun golongan ini tidak mempunyai pendapatan yang tetap seperti golongan pekerja. Oleh kerana kajian ini melibatkan pengaruh budaya konsumerisme dalam penggunaan telefon pintar iPhone, persampelan bertujuan telah dipilih kerana dipercayai dapat mewakili objektif dan dikenali sebagai persampelan penilaian. Kriteria pemilihan sampel atau informan adalah berdasarkan pemilikan dan penggunaan telefon pintar berjenama iPhone. Hal ini kerana, kriteria tersebut dapat menjawab hubungkait teori konsumerisme dengan pembentukan identiti seseorang pengguna. Data yang diperolehi adalah dalam bentuk audio (temu bual). Perkara pertama yang dilakukan adalah mentranskripkan semula temu bual tersebut ke dalam bentuk teks supaya dapat dianalisis dengan baik.

4. Hasil Kajian Dan Perbincangan

Setiap individu mempunyai citarasa yang tersendiri dalam membeli telefon pintar impian mereka. Citarasa setiap individu berbeza dengan citarasa individu lain dan terdapat pelbagai faktor yang mempengaruhi citarasa seseorang itu, sama ada dari segi harga (kemampuan), tren, kelebihan/ keistimewaan komoditi itu sendiri dan sebagainya. Dalam konteks kajian ini, didapati bahawa pembentukan identiti pengguna iPhone dapat dikaitkan dengan citarasa. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa citarasa majoriti informan memilih untuk menggunakan iPhone boleh dibahagikan kepada dua, iaitu; (1) fesyen; dan (2) penjenamaan (*branding*).

4.1. Fesyen

Fesyen adalah gaya berpakaian, tingkah laku yang menjadi kegemaran serta ikutan ramai dan berubah mengikut peredaran masa. Ia boleh mempengaruhi gaya hidup dalam kehidupan seseorang individu atau masyarakat. Fenomena fesyen masa kini memperlihatkan kepada masyarakat dengan kepelbagaian trend fesyen (Othmana et al., 2016). Dalam konteks kajian ini, hasil kajian mendapati bahawa pengaruh fesyen penggunaan telefon pintar berjenama iPhone dalam kalangan majoriti informan adalah berdasarkan kepada warna dan reka bentuk telefon pintar tersebut yang menawan dan mempunyai aura 'profesionalisme', 'elegan', 'kemas' dan 'bekerjaya' yang berbeza daripada telefon pintar jenama lain. Bahkan majoriti informan juga menyatakan bahawa kualiti reka bentuk iPhone tidak dapat ditandingi dengan jenama telefon pintar yang lain kerana meskipun ada yang meniru reka bentuk dan warna yang sama, namun bahan untuk membuat telefon tersebut adalah berbeza kerana penghasilan telefon pintar jenama

lain lebih kepada menggunakan bahan yang diperbuat daripada plastik. Warna turut menjadi tarikan kepada informan untuk membeli iPhone kerana mereka menyatakan bahawa model iPhone kadang kala ada yang dikeluarkan dengan warna yang edisi terhad seperti iPhone 6 Red yang mempunyai warna merah mati (*matte red*).

Berdasarkan kenyataan majoriti informan tersebut menunjukkan bahawa mereka mengikuti fesyen semasa penggunaan telefon pintar. Fesyen biasanya diberikan 'nilai' yang ditanamkan oleh golongan kapitalis bagi memastikan komoditi yang dihasilkan oleh mereka dapat dijual kepada pengguna. Jelasnya pembangunan dan modenisasi telah menjana dan memperhebatkan aktiviti kapitalistik melalui tingkah laku atau budaya konsumer yang padanya disertakan idea-idea dan nilai-nilai yang mempengaruhi fesyen sesebuah telefon pintar dan 'apa' yang ada pada sesuatu fesyen telefon pintar itu. Tersirat dalam budaya konsumsi adalah suatu citarasa dan tingkah laku mengikut sesuatu fesyen dalam pembelian sesuatu jenama telefon pintar. Bahkan mengikut Ismail (2003) menyatakan bahawa corak konsumsi dianggap sebagai lambang hubungan dan tanggungjawab individu untuk memenuhinya sebagai simbol status dan identiti. Identiti penting untuk menonjolkan siapa sebenarnya diri seseorang. Bahkan kebanyakan pengguna sesuatu komoditi mengutamakan sesuatu yang bersifat *standard*, dan mempunyai gaya tersendiri atau *trendy* untuk menunjukkan kedudukan dan siapa mereka dalam masyarakat. Bahkan menurut Ismail (2003) lagi, apabila seseorang pengguna itu peka tentang trend semasa sesuatu penggunaan komoditi atau perkhidmatan tertentu, mereka juga sanggup membelanjakan sebahagian wang mereka untuk mengikuti perkembangan fesyen semasa dan memenuhi citarasa dan keinginan untuk bertindak kreatif. Hasil kajian ini juga masih selari dengan kenyataan Douglas dan Isherwood (1980), iaitu penghasilan barang-barang simbolik bertujuan untuk menunjukkan identiti seseorang pengguna. Keadaan ini dikenali sebagai simbolik kapital yang menunjukkan barang-barang yang dibeli dapat menunjukkan identiti dan kelas sosial sehingga mampu menunjukkan asal usul seseorang serta kehidupannya.

Selain itu, fesyen telefon pintar iPhone yang minimalistik dan *simple* juga telah menyebabkan majoriti informan telah meletakkan nilai simbolik kapital ke atas penggunaan telefon pintar berjenama iPhone sesuai dengan sasaran pemasaran oleh syarikat pengeluar telefon pintar tersebut, iaitu Apple. Umumnya, kita tahu dan sedari bahawa pengguna telefon iPhone adalah disasarkan kepada golongan pekerja profesional atau pekerja berkolar putih. Justeru itu, wujud satu tanggapan kepada majoriti informan tersebut bahawa imej yang dibawa oleh pengguna iPhone adalah mereka yang bekerja dalam bidang profesional serta berketrampilan. Memandangkan ramai pengguna iPhone adalah daripada pekerja kolar putih, secara tidak langsung wujudnya satu tanggapan kolektif yang meletakkan 'standard' pengguna iPhone sebagai mereka yang berjaya dan mempunyai pendapatan yang tinggi.

4.2. Jenama

Seterusnya, imej dan identiti jenama yang dibawa oleh jenama Apple hakikatnya turut mempengaruhi pandangan yang diberikan oleh pengguna kepada jenama lain seperti Huawei dan Samsung. Mengikut Sammut-Bonnici (2015), definisi jenama bukan sahaja logo dan nama yang mewakili sesebuah komoditi yang dikeluarkan, namun ia turut melibatkan reputasi komoditi tersebut.

Dalam kajian ini mendapati bahawa imej dan identiti jenama turut mempengaruhi pemilihan telefon pintar iPhone dalam kalangan majoriti informan. Majoriti informan menyatakan bahawa terdapat perbezaan antara iPhone dengan telefon pintar jenama lain dari segi fungsi dan reaksi yang diterima oleh pengguna daripada orang sekeliling. Majoriti informan turut menyatakan bahawa fungsi iPhone adalah lebih laju, memudahkan pengguna, mempunyai kamera yang lebih

canggih, sistem pengoperasian yang lebih baik dan tahan lebih lama. Perkara ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan ciri-ciri telefon pintar yang diinginkan terdapat pada model iPhone manakala jenama lain turut mempunyai kekuatan mereka sendiri tetapi tidak setanding dengan teknologi yang dikeluarkan oleh gajet jenama Apple ini.

Umumnya dalam konteks konteks pasaran pula, pengguna mengenali barangan melalui label ataupun jenama yang mewakili sesuatu barangan, perkhidmatan atau organisasi. Hal ini menunjukkan betapa pentingnya jenama sebagai faktor yang terlibat dalam proses pemilihan yang bertitik tolak daripada kepercayaan dan sikap pengguna. Dari aspek psikologi, pengguna amat menitikberatkan kepuasan mereka dari segi pemilihan barangan (Darley, Blankson & Luethge, 2010). Semasa proses membuat keputusan pembelian barangan dan perkhidmatan, terdapat banyak faktor yang akan mempengaruhi pengguna. Proses pemilihan adalah salah satu tatacara dalam melakukan aktiviti pembelian dengan membandingkan sesuatu dengan sesuatu yang lain untuk membuat keputusan (Lendo, 2013). Dalam hal ini, iPhone mempunyai reputasi telefon pintar yang lebih baik berbanding telefon pintar yang dikeluarkan oleh pengeluar yang lain. Perkara ini sekaligus menjadikan iPhone sebagai sebuah komoditi yang terkenal di pasaran dan berbeza dan unik berbanding jenama lain. Kenyataan majoriti informan tersebut menunjukkan bahawa pemilikan jenama telefon pintar berjenama iPhone (Apple) secara tidak langsung memberikan satu kepuasan dalam pemilikan dan penggunaan telefon pintar tersebut atas faktor jenama dan kelebihan-kelebihan lain yang dimilikinya berbanding telefon pintar berjenama lain.

Kepuasan ke atas sesuatu produk atau komoditi mempunyai dimensi sosiopsikologikal yang memperlihatkan pembinaan peribadi dan identiti sosial seseorang konsumer. Corak konsumsi dianggap sebagai lambang hubungan dan tanggungjawab individu untuk memenuhinya sebagai simbol status dan identiti (Gell 1986). Identiti memperlihatkan diri mereka yang sebenar. Identiti penting untuk menonjolkan 'siapa sebenarnya diri seseorang'. Antara cara-cara yang membolehkan diri seseorang 'dikenali' dan 'diketahui sifat-sifatnya' adalah melalui cara berpakaian dan apa yang digunakan, bertutur, muzik yang digemari dan sebagainya. Melaluinya juga orang ramai dianggap dapat mengetahui apa sebenarnya yang diinginkan oleh seseorang. Jelas bahawa identiti boleh bersifat dibina (*constructivist*) dan dinamik. Ia dapat dikaitkan dengan faktor-faktor seperti, hubungan, kuasa, kelas, gender dan tahap pendidikan. Identiti adalah suatu yang dicipta atau dibentuk dan dikembangkan (Ismail 2003).

5. Rumusan

Secara tuntasnya, hasil kajian mendapati bahawa melalui pemilikan dan penggunaan iPhone, majoriti informan sebenarnya ingin menonjolkan dan membentuk identiti mereka sebagai '*iPhone user*' yang mempunyai 'kelas' yang tersendiri dalam kalangan pengguna telefon pintar yang lain menerusi pemilihan fesyen dan jenama. Dalam konteks konsumerisme citarasa dapat mengelaskan kedudukan seseorang. Pilihan barangan dan gaya hidup dapat membezakan dan mengklasifikasikan pilihan citarasa seseorang. Citarasa, pilihan barangan dan gaya hidup juga berkaitan dengan pekerjaan dan kelas sosial. Bahkan satu faktor penting yang mempengaruhi penggunaan barangan dalam masyarakat kapitalis pada hari ini adalah pengeluaran barang-barang yang baru merujuk kepada perjuangan untuk mendapatkan kedudukan yang baik melalui komoditi yang digunakan. Oleh yang demikian, walau apapun bentuk industri budaya yang dihasilkan, ianya merujuk kepada perbentangan gaya hidup dan ekspresi identiti seseorang. Dalam erti kata yang lain, penggunaan telefon pintar berjenama iPhone dalam kalangan informan adalah untuk menunjukkan gaya hidup dan cerminan identiti mereka.

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Transport Infrastructure on Trade and Economic Growth in Nigeria: A Causality analysis

Yusuf Bala Zaria^a,
yusufbalazaria90@student.usm.my

Nor Asmat Ismail^b
norasmal@usm.my

School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstract

The research investigates transport infrastructure, Trade on economic growth in Nigeria. It employs the Autoregressive distributive lag model (ARDLM). The model captures the short-run and long-run relationship between Trade and transport infrastructure on economic growth from 1980-to 2019 (40 years). The cointegration result showed that the vectors have a short-run and long-run relationship, which is positive between Trade and air transport infrastructure except for port and Road that are negative on economic growth. Granger causality portrayed a positive and significant unidirectional relationship with Nigeria's economic growth using lag 2. Trade and transport infrastructure-led economic growth hypotheses, clearing the reality that the country's transport infrastructure needs a complete overhaul to make the sector more efficient. The government must pool more of the available resources in transport infrastructure for Trade and services to thrive on the policy front. Trade and transport infrastructures are essential determinants and contributors to the country's economic growth.

Keywords: trade, transport infrastructure, economic growth, cointegration, causality

1. Introduction

One basic fact about economic growth is the ability through which nations (developed, underdeveloped and emerging) are considered low-income, middle-income and high-income. Economic growth means economic change and transport infrastructure, further explained by Palei (2015) and Vanlaer et al., (2021) that it constituted macroeconomic, institution, environment, market size, technological readiness, education, and so forth. In addition, the global transport infrastructure is a crucial concern for government, business and society at large because, in the event of transport infrastructure disruption, failure or shutdown, the consequences on daily life would be unimaginable. Noting a considerable decline in the transport infrastructure in Africa as a result of dwindling economic investment due to lower GDP (Hlotywa & Ndaguba, 2017). Nigerian transport or infrastructure development have been a topical issue and pointed out by many studies as crucial components for economic development (Babatunde, 2018; Barker, 2005; Gujba et al.,

2013). Transportation or infrastructural development of a nation is centered on the overall activities to be delivered and improved as efficient, effective, affordable, reliable, accessible and safe for the citizens and economic growth (Agbigbe, 2016; Olaniyi, 2018). Moreover, Ahmad et al. (2015) clarify the issue of infrastructure and Trade. It alerts comparative advantage of production, reduces production cost, and increases price competition of the product or transportation on local and national exportation. Economic growth becomes a source for understanding what can improve human capital and improve living standards. According to this research, the country's transport infrastructure stimulates and generates Trade, commercial services, and economic growth at 88.64%. The literature also informed and demonstrated how findings have pointed out policies and benefits in promoting sustainable transport services. Despite that, this study uses transport infrastructure as the background that presents the effects of Trade and transport infrastructure on economic growth in Nigeria. No study covers trade and transport infrastructure in Nigeria. Therefore, this study intends to project economic growth due to the country's high population and landmass assumed to be a sign for developmental growth. Nevertheless, these features observed in the study are crucial to fill the literature gap for current insufficient research in Nigeria and the impact of Trade, transport infrastructure and economic growth over 39 years (1981-2019). They were using Autoregressive Distributed Lag and Granger causality models to prove the impact of the relationship.

1.1 Transport Infrastructure, Trade and Economic Growth in Nigeria

Transport infrastructure aims to meet greater demand that persistently improves people's movement. Moving goods and services from one place to another is essential (Atiase et al. 2019; Oyesiku et al., 2020; L. Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, transport infrastructure investment can contribute to resource distribution through commercial means. The Nigerian government is effortlessly addressing transport infrastructure that falls under the broader goals of the Economic Recovery Growth Plan 2017-2020. It is the priority and hope for the government to stimulate economic growth by improving transport services. Besides, this study will look at transportation infrastructure services into three stages because of the economic effects on domestic, international, commerce and trading services. Categorically, transport infrastructure will be into three services: Trade, air, port and Road supporting commercial services. Transport infrastructure is a promoter for economic growth in developing and developed countries. Several studies have explored transport infrastructure impact on various economic changes. However, this study takes transport infrastructure with commercial activities as in Trade and services.

1.2 Impact of Transport Infrastructure on Economic Growth

The impact of transport infrastructure on economic growth when Alam et al., (2020) Ran a causality to estimate the relationship between transport infrastructure and economic development in Pakistan from 1971-2017 and reported long-run causality. Besides, Ladan, (2012); Chukwuemeka et al., (2013) and Dimnwobi et al., (2017) opined that air transport as infrastructure contributes to Nigeria's economic growth. As a factor that enables land uses by carriers to promote regional mobility trips for various purposes like Trade and commercial services (Augustus O. Atubi, 2010).

Batool et al, (2020) conducted a study in Pakistan to measure public and private transport infrastructure versus monetary capital on economic growth. The study reported Granger Causality between infrastructures to GDP between 1975-2010. Muvawala et al., (2020) study the impact of transport infrastructure in Uganda from 1985-to 2015. The ARDL result revealed that investment in transportation infrastructure significantly affects economic growth. But, negative in Nigeria (Dimnwobi et al., 2017) and China (Ke et al., 2020).

1.3 Theoretical Debates on Transport Infrastructure and Economic Growth

Transport infrastructure as an interventional mechanism for improving economic growth, primarily through the movement of people, trading and services safety. Liu et al. (2020) agreed that investment in transport infrastructure fosters regional development in China because strategic plans connect provinces and cities on ports. Another study in Nigeria supported that; the transportation sector in its entirety is supporting global Trade through job creation, tourism and economic growth. Therefore, improving the transport sector will influence the environment economically in Nigeria. Even Alam et al., (2020) agreed that a perfect relationship between transport infrastructure and economic development affects more opportunities in a country. Magazzino et al, (2020), while investigating a relationship, however, on the relationship between transport infrastructures and economic growth, proved that for lack of infrastructural maintenance affects the entire sector, and the chances for economic benefit would become slim. Based on these theoretical debates, the study adopts the Solow model that described economic growth assuming that what brought about change is a steady equilibrium of demand and supply. Besides, the growth rate is the product of investment equal to planned savings. Therefore, the theory in this study represents Cobb-Douglas production function (Solow, 1956) and not comparative advantage since it is single country research as suggested by the literature.

2. Data Specification

In this study, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is used as annual per cent growth to measure economic growth. It considered using trade-in service as a percentage of gross domestic product by export value in the trade and growth literature (Ghazouani et al. 2020). Airways infrastructure represents the travel and services percentage of commercial export services (balance of payment). In contrast, the use of Port infrastructure to measure transport services percentage of export (balance of payment) and Road transport services in the country. The study selected those variables based on a review of previous studies or works of literature, including (Alam et al., 2020; Muvawala et al., 2020; Olaniyi, 2018; Van De Vijver et al., 2014; C. Wang et al., 2021) in Nigeria. The data are available and extracted from the world development indicators database (WDI, 2021). Figure 1 in the graph presents trends of the variables.

Variables

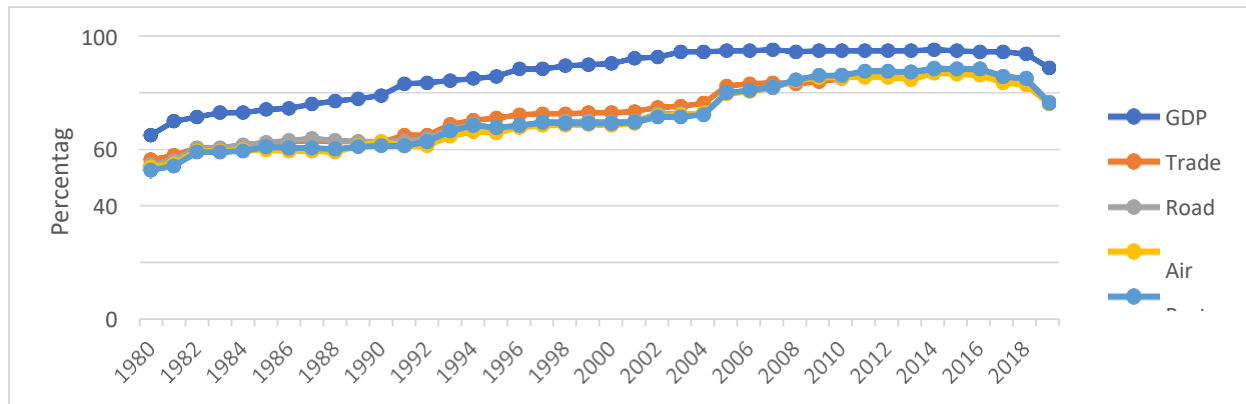


Figure 1. Trends in GDP, trade, Air and Port in Nigeria

2.1 Model Specification

Meanwhile, after the literature review in trade and transport economics, it is conclusive to drive the model and examine the relationship between economic growth on trade and transport infrastructure on ARDL model,

$$\Delta GDP_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta Trade_t + \beta_2 \Delta Air_t + \beta_3 \Delta Port_t + \beta_4 \Delta Road_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

Sign of t represents time which ε presents an error term in due time. While as GDP is used to indicate GDP per capita, it is considered a proxy for annual economic growth. More so, the study used trade to demonstrate the value of goods and services provided for both transits domestic and international. Air, Port, and Road represent the balance of payment to both mean the significant contribution of commercial services domestic and nationals on infrastructure. The study is expecting positive signs of β_0 , β_1 , β_2 , β_3 and β_4 because an increase in the level of transport infrastructure will improve the effect of trade and enhance economic activity with higher per capita GDP.

2.2 Estimation Approach

The study understands that much literature on econometric methods, as earlier explained, used time series data for the analysis. Therefore, this study will still apply the same method to evaluate the dynamics of long-run and short-run directions (Alam et al., 2020; Muvawala et al., 2020; Olaniyi, 2018). The autoregressive distributed lag model (ARDL) establishes trade impact on transport infrastructure and economic growth. The vast advantages that the ARDL model has over other methods determine this study to use it in finding Cointegration related to Engle and Granger, Pesaran and Shin, (1999). Finding cointegration would be essential to ensure that all

variables are integrated in the same order. If it becomes mixed order, the variables are I(0) or I(1) to display valid results. It needs all variables to be endogenous to calculate the short-run and long-run. The estimation should be in linear form to capture a small sample size. Therefore, the study moves ahead to use Augmented Dickey–fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) unit root technique after confirming integrated order of I(2). Therefore, the unit root test will estimate the null hypothesis as against the alternative hypothesis of stationarity.

2.3 Cointegration Analysis

The equation below is the accurate formula representation of ARDL as:

$$\Delta GDP_i = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_1 \Delta Trade_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^n \beta_2 \Delta Air_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^n \beta_3 \Delta Port_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^n \beta_4 \Delta Road_{t-1} + \varphi_1 \Delta GDP_{i-1} + \varphi_2 \Delta Trade_{i-1} + \varphi_3 \Delta Air_{i-1} + \varphi_4 \Delta Port_{i-1} + \varphi_5 \Delta Road_{i-1} + \mu_i \quad (2)$$

A sign like this Δ represents the first difference; while β_0 at all, the term denotes the drift component, μ_t which means residual white noise or error term. Nevertheless, as earlier defined, the relationship will evaluate economic growth (GDP), trade and transport infrastructure (air, port and Road). The variable of GDP as a function of trade and transport infrastructure in equation (2) denotes examining long-run and short-run interactions or interrelationship. It looks at the error correction dynamics with the summation signs. While φ from the following, the line represents the equation of the long-run relationships. On getting the maximum lag length for each variable, especially on the technique for estimating ARDL, the study used $(P + 1)^k$ to mean the number of regressions. Moreover, P and K represented several variables in the equation and maximum number of lags. Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (SBC) used for the appropriate lag selections.

For the estimation of short-run relationships based on the results of cointegration, then error correction model is as follows to ascertain the lag disturbance to long-run:

$$\Delta GDP_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{t=1}^n \beta_1 \Delta GDP_{t-1} + \sum_{t=0}^n \beta_2 Trade_{t-1} + \sum_{t=0}^n \beta_3 Air_{t-1} + \sum_{t=0}^n \beta_4 Port_{t-1}$$

$$+ \sum_{t-0} \beta_4 Road_{t-1} + \lambda ECT_{t-1} \quad (3)$$

As the symbol appears, it means λ a coefficient to measure the speed of adjustment (significant, positive, insignificant, negative) of ECT_{t-1} . The ECM test under diagnostic estimation would be the serial correlation. Normality and heteroscedasticity to make sure it robustly validates the model. The null hypothesis is that all the coefficients in the given model are stabilized and cannot reject. The plots are statistically within the critical bounds for example, a 5% significance level.

2.4 Granger Causality

The relationship between trade, transport infrastructure and economic growth use in this study derives from this model: $GDP_t = (Trade_t, Air_t, Port_t, Road_t)$ transport infrastructure denoting Air and Port transportation (Johansen Soren, 2016). Below is the granger causality equation 4 (A and B)

$$\Delta GDP_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{t-1}^n \beta_1 \Delta Trade_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_2 \Delta Air_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_3 \Delta Port_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_4 \Delta Road_{t-1} + \mu_t \quad (4a)$$

$$\Delta Trade_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_1 \Delta GDP_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_2 \Delta Air_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_3 \Delta Port_{t-1} + \sum_{t-0}^n \beta_4 \Delta Road_{t-1} + \mu_t \quad (4b)$$

Where α_{11} and α_{21} are constants for two equations it can test for cointegration among, $GDP_t, Trade_t, Air_t, Port_t$ and $Road_t$ using the bounds test approach for Eq. (4a) and (4b) above

3. Result and Discussion

In table 2 it will present the results obtained while estimating the unit root test by applying ADF and PP test that, GDP, Trade, Air, Port and Road. The non-logged variables result as tested revealed that all two tests have agreed for the variables to be stationary in their first data difference by 1% critical level. Besides, when variables are integrated of I(1) or I(2) it allows cointegration tests to be carried out. Table 1;

Table 1
Unit root test

Variables	ADF Test		PP test statistics	
	Intercept	Trend and Intercept	Intercept	Trend and Intercept
Level				
GDP	-3.986423***	0.526668*	-3.774498***	1.038338*
Trade	-1.852423*	1.287377*	-1.767828*	0.850963*
Air	-1.685453*	0.284142*	-1.618064*	-0.379537*
Port	-1.801622*	0.219893*	-1.724452*	-0.616714*
Road	-1.814448*	0.034792*	-1.746148*	-0.714712*
First Difference				
GDP	-3.903040***	-5.857573***	-4.082164***	-5.857573***
Trade	-2.939796***	-3.360546***	-3.041156***	-3.565962***
Air	-3.966088***	-4.272793***	-4.146401***	-4.514993***
Port	-3.451668***	-3.768345***	-3.656799***	-4.073671***
Road	-3.739392***	-4.054231***	-3.999340***	-4.405834***

Source:
Compiled by

author

*** Significant at 1% level.

**Significant at 5% level.

* Significant at 10% level.

The result extracted above proved that all variables are stationary at the first difference, including level on GDP, reporting the move for this study to estimate ARDL (Bound).

3.1 ARDL Long run and Cointegration

Determining the variable short-run relationship to correct the short-run and long-run disturbance from equation 2 allowed this study to conduct an ARDL test to suggest the short-run relationship between trade, transport infrastructure and economic growth. Thus, employed two approaches to compare the critical values and F-statistics. The adjusted R-square explained a minimum variation of 2%, meaning that the model fitted by 98%. However, the Durbin-Watson revealed free serial correlation and efficient f-statistic. Secondly, the short-run showed that, when GDP increases by

1%, Trade will increase by 2.39%, Air transportation will increase by 1.34%, Port and Road transportations will decrease by 2.23% and 0.79%, respectively.

Table 2

ARDL long run (Bound) F-test for cointegration

Model	F-statistics	conclusion
GDP=Trade,Air,Port,Road	6.3086***	cointegration
Critical bound value (upper and lower)	1(0)	1(1)
Significance	2.2	3.09
10%	2.56	3.49
5%	3.29	4.37
1%		
Long-run coefficients using ARDL		
CoIntEq (-1)	Coefficients -0.1927	Prob. 0.0000***

Source: Researchers computation

*** Significant at 1% level

** Significant at 5% level

*Significant at 10% level

In the first instance, the long-run relationship for the bound test entails a long-run relationship between GDP, Trade and transport infrastructure. The critical bound value estimation indicated significance at a 1% level. More so, the coefficient was negative, and the significant p-value speed of adjustment towards long-run equilibrium is 0.1927% within a period. t-statistic was - 6.630029 and significant coefficient. Secondly, it means a long-run positive, negative and significant relationship between Trade, transport infrastructure and GDP growth, as the theory suggested constant returns to scale, consistent with the model. The economic growth view validates the hypothesis that trade and transport infrastructure enhances economic growth. Lastly, the implication is that an increase in Trade improves transport infrastructure to economic growth.

3.2 Granger Causality Results

The findings in his study confirm that after the Granger causality test, there is a unidirectional relationship meaning the Trade does Granger cause economic growth. Table 3 below presents the Granger causality test while choosing lag two, which proved a unidirectional relationship based on causality between Trade and transport infrastructure on economic growth at 1% significance level.

Table 3
Granger causality model results

Direction of causality	P-value	Lags	Decision	Outcome
Trade < GDP	0.04***	2	Does not reject null hypothesis	lnTrade does cause lnGDP

Source: Compiled by authors

*** Significant at 1% level

** Significant at 5% level

*Significant at 10% level

4. Diagnostic Test Results

Table 4 below shows that the ARDLM rhymes with the diagnostic test results, in which analysis indicates that the model is fit. Because in the model, there is no presence of autocorrelation and neither detected heteroscedasticity. Nevertheless, the detection or company of normality is slightly distributed errors. Based on that, these results are positive and according to (Pesaran and Shin, 1999; Solow, 1956). As examined in table 4, the residuals are generally not distributed, but other tests proved the model is fit. In particular, heteroscedasticity and correlation meet the requirement for model fitness.

Table 4
Diagnostic results

Test	H ₀	test statistic	P	Conclusion
Jerque-Bera	Presence of residual disturbance	160.47	0.00	Normally distributed errors
VEC residual serial correlation LM tests	No trace of serial correlation in the residuals	9.64	0.00	Autocorrelation not detected
VEC residual heteroskedasticity tests	Homoscedastic is okay	30.69	0.00	undetected

Source: Compiled by author

VEC, LM, heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation tests

Conclusion and policy implications

This study establishes an equilibrium relationship between transport infrastructure and economic

growth for Nigeria within 38 years from 1980 to 2019. There is a causality running from Trade to economic growth when trade and transport infrastructure are involved. A dynamic ARDL is employed while examining the causal relationship between dependent and independent variables. Lag selection criteria also suggested lag two used in the estimation. Thus, it revealed a long-run and short-run relationship between Trade, transport infrastructure and economic growth. Therefore, ARDL and Granger causality was estimated to explain both short-run and long-run interaction between the variables. The long-run equation indicated all the signs in the model as significant because it observed the classical linear regression model's assumption by improving on other literary works. Diagnostic tests thoroughly examined and proved the model's validity at a 5% significance level. This study reaffirms an established relationship between trade investments and transport infrastructure on economic growth supported by Granger causality for bidirectional relationship. It contributes to the body of knowledge based on the other studies, and an empirical review suggested that Nigeria's transport infrastructure investment would enhance trade development. In short, the Nigerian government needs to put all hands on deck and invest more heavily in transport infrastructure for Trade to flourish better since more evidence is gathered from this study that Trade in commercial services (transport infrastructure) is an essential contributor to the economy. It considers public spending on infrastructure to benefit both the people and the government at large on the economy in future. However, this result from Nigeria might not suit or be compatible with other countries due to differences in time or period. It is suggestive that, in advance, more studies will concentrate on the government policies on the transport infrastructure and economic growth.

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Islamic water auctioning market in Sultanate of Oman: Operation and institutional arrangements of three *aflaj* case study

Mr. Al-Marshoudi, Ahmed S.^a, Dr. Jasni Sulong

Islamic School, School of Humanities
University Sain Malaysia, 11800 Pulau Penang
Email: almarshoudi4@gmail.com^a

Abstract

Aflaj (singular *falaj*) institutional arrangements/traditional knowledge and its inherited management hierarchy, based on Muslim jurist view, provided a continuous adaptation to the harsh of the arid region and owns property from which the income necessary for its continued survival can be collected. Empirical water prices information based on Islamic ascending water auction have been investigated and examined using three case studies of the *aflaj* systems in northern Oman. The primary objective is to evaluate and document the procedure used in determining these prices. The finding clearly identified two main elements; first, there is a complete day, out of the overall flow circulation set aside for income generation. The primary purpose is to generate revenues for minor and major system maintenance. Second, the auctioning items are represented and based upon a unique time interval unit which strongly influenced upon water supply flow.

Key words: ascending auction, scarcity, water allocation, water rights

1. Introduction

Water market theoretically can provide several positive economical as well as social benefits. For example, Bitran et al., (2014) indicated the fact that water market increase and improve economic efficiency through: 1) expansion of more efficient new water users 2) the adoption of water conserving technologies and 3) the elimination of unnecessary or non-cost-effective uses. This is normally achieved by the allocation of resources to their highest valued use through voluntary exchange and the generation of information about relative scarcity and demand (Bitran et al., 2014). Because of this many countries worldwide developed a water market to solve the ever rising of the water demand for irrigation purposes. For instance, a water market in different forms exist in United States, Australia, Spain, chide, India and other (Petterini, 2018). However, U.S and Australia are probably the well documented. For instance, in Australia, where surface water is becoming a scarce resource, water markets through the use of water entitlements and allocations have been proposed and implemented since the mid-1980s (Randall, 1981, Bjornlund, 2003 , Wheeler et al., 2008). An initial idea of a water market stated in the 1850s over the California State (the American west) when the river fractions were allotted by the miners by allocation mechanism of first use (Petterini, 2018).

Despite of all these economic benefits and improvements, many commentators think to establish a water market require a careful conceptual analytical framework. This is attribute to the fact that on one hand we are dealing with a complex social commodity and on the other

hand require to have a deep understanding of the physical characteristic of the water flow. As far as the former is concerned, it must be analysed within inter-disciplinary sphere; economics and law (Cole and Grossman, 2002, Dales, 1968) to solve the social problem, while the physical feature of the water must be assumed to be represented by the natural flowing of the stream/rivers. For example, in the past Milliman (1965) and Young (1986) indicated that it is difficult to establish a clear property rights to water because water is a fleeting resource which exists partly as a store and partly as a flow. Other research relates with this fluctuating factor is the fact that difficulty of measuring the level of use via a measurable unit. For example, Dales (1968) argued that certain characteristics of a natural water system is mobile and being so large which create special problems in ownership (what he termed the “divisibility of the asset”), as in water the asset-unit is very large. He then contrasted this problem with land, as the asset-unit is very small – just a few square yards, by this the asset can be held by a large number of individual owners.

With this in context, continuous regulatory measures to solve the ever rises of water scarcity from different perspectives. Some scholars proposed to establish what is known as laboratory experiment to examine the applicability of establishing a water market (Easter et al., 1999) . Grafton et al (2016) suggested two main strategies to be followed: 1) effective institutional arrangements 2) effective allocation mechanism among competing users. Other suggested to introducing what they called cross-countries experiences which can minimise the risk and cost involved, with the aim to create a knowledge base by which allows other countries to learn and adapt them with minimum transaction costs and uncertainty (Saleth and Dinar, 2004). In this paper the operational mechanism of the ascending auction water market in Oman is explained. This is conducted using the historical aflaj knowledge which is based on Islamic water law and customary (urf) arrangements. We examined three of the most popular aflaj in the three main village in northern part of Oman.

2. The aflaj system and the water rights development

Several regions over the northern part of the country rely heavily upon a single community-owned *falaj* for irrigating their date gardens and other annual crops (Abdel Rahmnn and Omezzine, 1996). Historically, the single community-owned falaj/village characterized by a legal boundary which includes things like walls¹, channels, bridges, building and gardens; also, this referred as *amwal*/ public wealth. In addition, these is another local term known as *harm* (literally means prohibited area) of the village. This recently has been regulated and recognized by the present government to not allow any land alteration within *aflaj*-shared community (Zekri and Al-Marshudi, 2008a). These elements created a more permanently administered villages which suited the development of property rights since millenniums (Stanger, 1985, Zekri and Al-Marshudi, 2008b) . These have been, and still remain under the management of the community through the use of traditional Muslim law and local customary rules (Caponera, 1973, Al-Marshudi, 2007).

¹ Wilkinson (1977) used the local term ‘*sawadir al-bilad*’, which literally means the ‘village boundary’.

In the literatures, different terms have been used. Certain researchers used the concept traditional knowledge to refer to the Muslim community water law (Nash and Agius, 2011, Remmington, 2018). In addition, several definitions and how such knowledge transmitted were provided. In general, a traditional knowledge have been viewed from different perspective: For example, Lauceano (2001) view as to provide unitary understanding of a system with respect to aspects concerning ecological, socio-economic and cultural environment. This is achieved by placing two elements: practical instrumental and normative knowledge. Mershen (2010) pointed out that traditional knowledge reproduced through two main instruments; oral histories and oral traditions by which transmit community law, beliefs, cultural values and agricultural practices. For example, Remmington (2018) defined aflaj traditional knowledge as the foundation of aflaj water management by which reproduces the rules and norms of governance of these traditional systems” (Page. 136). She thinks that the aflaj tradition knowledge able to mediate two types of institutions: 1) the formularized institution (administrative and financial organization) 2) informal institution (form of social capital). Moreover, aflaj traditional knowledge/ institutional arrangements roots itself within the Mershen (2010) tradition of oral transmission of knowledge, indicated above (Remmington, 2018) and hence, roles within the aflaj management hierarchy are inherited and knowledge is passed generationally (Sutton, 1984). We think the primary purpose of such knowledge is the adaptation over the harsh environment in this arid region. For example, in the past Sutton (1984) used the concept institution when describing such knowledge: stated;” ...by tradition the *falaj* institution owns property from which the income necessary for its continued survival comes” (P. 9).

3. Study Site and methodology

Our study areas are in the city of *Nizwa*, *Izki* and *Burkat al-Mouz*, the oldest villages in Oman, located in the Northern interior (*Al-Dhahiluya* region) part of the country. Three *aflaj* system (namely *daris* (in *Nizwa* city) *al-malki* (in *Izki*) and *al-khatmeen* (in the district of *Burkat al-Mouz*) were selected². (Figure 1). According to the aflaj inventory report (Ministry of National Economy, 2008) these three aflaj have the highest cultivated area as well as annual water supply among the most popular aflaj in Oman (see table 1), with a total area of 3,234,172 at a percentage of 46 and annual water supply of 8,874,479 at a percentage of 47.

² All of these aflaj were included on the UNESCO heritage list in the year 2006 (MRMWM, 2008))

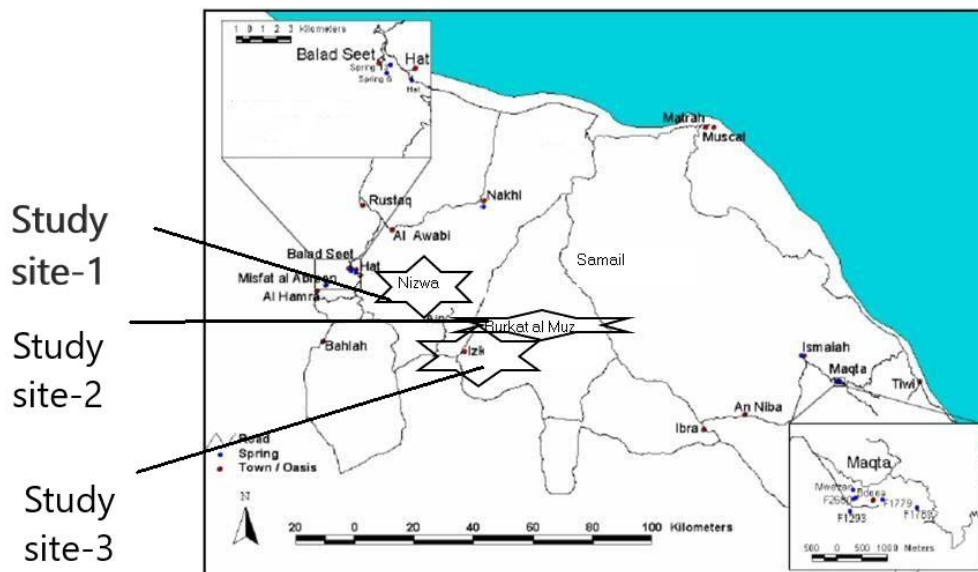


Figure 1: the study map location in northern of Oman.

Study-site-1: *falaj daris* located in Nizwa at coordinate of N22 58:60.00 E57 31:60.00). Study-site-2 *falaj Malki* located in Izki at coordinate of N22 43:60.00 E57 46:00.00. Study-site-3: *falaj al-khatmeen* in the district of *Burkat al-Mouz* N22 55 :60 E57 40 :00.00.

While Oman has almost two distinct topographic areas; the mountainous zone areas, (altitude of 200-300 m) and the coastal plain areas (descending to the sea level) (Megdiche-Kharrat et al., 2017), the mountainous zone area where most of the water for irrigation have been collected and obtained (Stanger, 1985) . *Al-Dhahiluya* (Interior) region most notable aflaj are of the daudi type by which this study selected aflaj. Although *falaj daris*³ and *al-malki* irrigate larger areas than *al-khatmeen*, powerful water flow normally associated with *al-khatmeen* falaj. This is attributed to the fact that its mother-well was constructed at the site of the Wadi Maiden, which spring from the foothill of Jabel Akhdar (green mountain) and it usually flows over a semi-circle to the falaj tunnels (MRMWR, 2008).

³ In fact, this falaj is considered as the largest *falaj* in Oman irrigating an area of 1,715,502 square meters and supply an annual water of 8,874,479 cubic meter (see Table 1).

Table 1: cultivated area and annual water supply for selected *aflaj*

Falaj name /inventory number	WILAYAT (district)	Total cultivated area	Annual water supply (m ³)
Daris (F0500)	NIZWA	1,715,502	4,682,410
AL Mayasser (F1446)	AR RUSTAQ	1,133,698	2,752,647
AL Malki (F0606)	IZKI	815,522	2,220,380
AL Khatmeen (F3071)	Burkat-al-mouz	703,148	1,971,689
AL Hamra (F0201)	AL HAMRA	740,170	3,133,350
AL Mihaydith (F1714)	SAMAIL	284,117	784,058
Abu Tha'alab (F1406)	AR RUSTAQ	265,287	642,180
As Samdi (F0592)	SAMAIL	779,021	2,148,408
Ayn Al-Kasfah (F2750)	AR RUSTAQ	589,315	352,150
AL Jaylah	SUR	10,034	26,215

Source: MRMW (2000) & MAF (2004)

Using a case study approach, the study used primary as well as secondary sources of information. The primary sources included the *aflaj* committee members (ACM) (*wakeels*, *areefs*, auctioneers, recorders and *aflaj* historical expertise) and individual farmers. One of the key private members is the wakeel, who in principle is assigned to each falaj. A list of their contact numbers and names is normally available for each district's mayor (governor), locally known as *walis*. A complete set of questions was formulated for each wakeel covering the main topic concerning the classification of falaj property rights; in particular, how much falaj rights were devoted toward common rights, private and quasi- rights. They were also asked whether there was an auctioning water market and how often is operated and where. It was found that *falaj wakeel* (administrative agents) and recorders for the traditional water auction markets keep hand-written books, locally referred to as *dftar*. Copies of several of these were obtained for the sample in a time-series format.

4. Result

4.1 Water rights distribution

The field survey identified two types of water rights: private rights and public rights. These fall under the islamic water right classification based upon social Muslim -community setting; that must include legal issues concerning inheritance, trade, and rent. For example, the private water rights identified being owned by individual with an official court recognition where can be sold, inherited and rented (through tradition mortgage basis; see (Abdel Rahmnn and Omezzine, 1996). The public rights then sub-divided into three main categories; *wqaf* (endowment), *bayt-al-mal* (state) and the *flaj*-renting right (falaj common rights). These are only owned by organization. Table 2 summarizes the two identified rights of the three studied aflaj in Norther Oman. Although the public rights constitute the majority (54%), spread over three different types: bayt-al-mal (23%), waqf (19%) and falaj-renting right (11%).

Table 2: water rights distribution for the studied *aflaj* sample.

Falaj name	Private rights (%)	Public rights (%)			Auctioning-market
		bayt-al-mal	Waqf	falaj-renting right	
Daris	25	24	39	12	exits
Al-Malki	74	0	15	11	exits
Al-Khatmeen	39	46	4	11	none
Average	46	23	19	11	

Another significant finding is the existence of ascending auctioning mechanism, based on Islamic jurist point of view, in the purpose to generate income for system maintenance. According to Table 2 unlike *falaj daris* and *al-malki*, by which co-exit a weekly auctioning water market, *falaj al-khatmeen* in the district of *burkat-al-Moz* historically was developed with no weekly auctioning market. This is interesting finding and can be interpreted being in line with the pattern of flow fluctuation with each falaj. First, since Oman located at latitude of four seasons, summer usually start from the month May/June and July when temperature extremely reach at an average of 45 C°. This influence greatly plants water requirement and as a result farmers tend to seek extra water through the auctioning water market. Second, since we are dealing with renewable resource like water, fluctuate dramatically as increase through precipitation and decrease through usage withdraw (forming a fluctuating pattern). However, the situation with regard to *al-khatmeen falaj* is completely different. Whenever a transaction takes place with respect to the *al-khatmeen* renting-rights, prices normally determined based upon an annual contractual agreement. On other words, the entry and exist of the water renters should not be conducted through the bidding auction process but only once the existing renters clearly declared to release the holding number of the common rights then it is the responsibility of the administrative agent to search for new renters and so on. In summary, such restriction on handling the income of these renting-rights can be interpreted being in line with the demand-supply theory in the sense that they are trying here to make to maintain the demand and as a result to avoid market failure because bidding prices through auctioning process require a high fluctuating flow pattern as with case of other *aflaj*: *darsi* and *al-malki*.

4.2 Operational mechanism of the ascending water auction

During the time of the main survey in July 2018 we found two weekly auction water market conducted in two different villages. The first is in the wilayat/city of Nizwa, the regional capital of the Ad Dakiliyah governorate and approximately 180 km away from Oman's capital at around 600 m altitude (Megdiche Kharrat et al., 2016). The second is conducted in the wilayat/town of Izki the ancient town of the Izdi tribe. This market normally conducted near the governor's building; usually on Friday noon (a resting day in Oman). The revealed information indicated that the auctioning procedure in determining prices is unique and conducted as follows: the auctioneer will start the bidding by drawing the attention of the potential buyers/renter to obtain an initial bidding price. He then tries to obtain an increase increment from the other potential buyers till reaching into only two competing buyers; one of whom must buy the item. Once the deal is made and a farmer accepts the bid for one of more of the above-mentioned time-shared interval of the common water rights, it is the responsibility of the auctioneer to ensure buyers provide cash-delivery to the wakil at the spots. In addition,

the *areef* and recorder record the name of the time-share interval, buyer name and the price to again ensure the buyer/farmer receive their rented water on time. Table 4 and 5 shows the hourly winter and summer auctioned average prices (day and night) for the two studied aflaj from 2010 to 2015. In Table 4, hourly summer, and winter average prices for *falaj daris* and in Table 5 hourly summer and winter average prices for *falaj al-malki*.

As mentioned previously, water rental prices are determined on time-share basis Zekri et al. (2014) argued that within the community the water is divided into time shares called ‘*ather*’. They pointed out that an *athars* entitle the owner to thirty minutes of water. The second component is the fact that these normally auctioned through an ascending bidding process. In each round there are (n) buyers competing for (i) item, to reach for the (i) value/price. In other word, in every round, n of buyers competes to buy (i) unit of specified commodity, in this case is the water rented/sold over time-shared interval. The buyers are completely unaware of the value. The selling of the i, $i=1,2,3,\dots,n$, represent the water demand for the i =commodity.

Table 3: *falaj daris* collected average summer and winter auction prices (US\$)

Auctioning items	Time interval	2010		2012		2013	
		Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
Auwal Al-Lail (1st night)	3	2.56	11.82	a.p	a.p	7.72	35.00
Thahwy Al-lail (2nd night)	3	2.49	12.32	a.p	a.p	6.15	20.00
Qayami Al-Lail (mid night)	3	2.69	14.86	a.p	a.p	5.70	20.00
Aakhir Al-Lail (last night)	3	2.64	15.02	a.p	a.p	4.90	20.00
Average		2.59	13.51	123.14	67.38	6.12	23.75
Auwal Al-nhair (1st of the day)	3	2.91	14.76	a.p	a.p	5.50	20.00
Thahwy Al-nhair (2nd of the day)	3	3.35	30.52	a.p	a.p	5.70	26.00
Qayami Al-nhair (noon)	3	3.48	15.04	a.p	a.p	6.51	20.00
Aakhir Al-Lail (last of the day)	3	4.38	16.90	a.p	a.p	6.90	18.00
Average		3.53	19.31	123.14	67.38	6.15	21.00

Table 3 demonstrate the collected information from the *falaj daris dfter* (recorder) book. These summarise the average summer and winter average auctioning prices for defined auctioned item; here the auctioning item is the time-share interval (distinguished from day to night re-scheduling). Zekei et al, (2014) pointed out the use a multi-unit ascending bid auction; they mean by a multi-unit is the auctioning items is done sequentially. However, they were mistaken by showing such sequencing using the first *athar* is auctioned, then the second, etc. until the last *athar* is auctioned. It is the period of time-share interval actually auctioned in sequentially order. Therefore, the whole assigned rented day is sub-divided into equal parts, daytime and night. Then each time-interval portion (locally known as *baddah*) sub-divided into four equal quarter which each hold a flow equivalent of 3 hours; referred as *rub'a*. With each of these quanta of time (*rub'a*) attached a well-known name in accordance with the movement of time whether for the daytime or night. For instance, the daytime was sub-divided into four well-known names: starting from dawn (at beginning of the day five o'clock of the morning) passing through noon and commencing just before sun set.

These can be illustrated as follows: during the auctioning process, they usually begin with the first time-share interval referred as:

auwal al-nhair mean (1st of the day) item (i) of (n)

‘2nd item’ and so on....

Finally, the auctioning process end with last item of the night-time share-interval as follow:

aakhir al-lail (end of night) item (i) of (n)

In case for the *falaj al-malki*, like *daris*, time share-interval sub-divided into two equal parts, day and night, but differ in the sense that *rub'a* is no longer applied instead each time quantum sub-divided into eight smaller time interval each hold 1.5 hour. These are forming the auctioning items.

Table 4: *falaj al-malki* winter and summer average auctioned prices (US\$)

Auction item	Time interval (hr)	2010		2011		2013	
		Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
Rafan_three	1.5	1.41	4.14	2.00	3.64	3.36	11.76
Rafan_quarter	1.5	1.26	3.45	1.60	3.38	3.40	11.68
Rafan_ninth	1.5	1.21	4.08	1.83	3.54	3.26	11.94
mid of the day (noon)	1.5	1.21	4.41	1.74	3.68	3.12	12.02
Rawah_three	1.5	1.28	4.74	2.01	3.44	4.28	12.16
from day quarter	1.5	1.17	4.50	1.91	3.44	4.10	11.30
from day three'	1.5	1.25	4.46	1.84	3.34	4.24	11.66
sun set	1.5	1.29	4.34	1.88	3.42	3.10	13.52
Average		1.26	4.26	1.85	3.49	3.61	12.01
Kalyan_three	1.5	1.30	4.64	1.13	2.86	2.92	11.68
Kalyan_quarter	1.5	0.75	3.49	1.00	2.42	2.18	11.28
Kalyan_ninth	1.5	0.83	3.20	1.01	2.24	2.18	11.00
mid night	1.5	0.81	4.03	1.59	3.20	3.32	10.00
from the night ninth	1.5	0.64	3.58	1.12	2.82	2.24	8.80
from the night quarter	1.5	0.55	3.51	1.12	1.90	2.16	7.32
from the night three	1.5	0.64	3.36	1.00	3.04	2.28	8.32
Average		0.79	3.69	1.14	2.64	2.47	9.77

Table 4 summarized the collected information of the summer and winter average auctioning prices for defined auctioned-item of the *falaj al-malki*. By far, the whole assigned rented day is sub-divided into equal parts, daytime and night. Then each time-interval portion (locally known as *baddah*) sub-divided into smaller quantum of time, each hold approximately a time-share interval of 1.5 (h). For example, for the daytime, the time-share interval *rafan-three* indicate the starting of the day (from dawn at five o'clock of the morning) passing through noon mid-day and end just before sun set (sunset).

In practice, the auctioning process begin with the first time-share interval referred as:

rafan-three: mean (1st of the day) item (i) of (n) 1 @P_w=3.36 P_s= 11.76

The auctioning process end with last item of the night-time-share interval as follow:

from the night three (end of night) item (i) of (n) @ $P_w=2.28$ $P_s=8.32$

Where P_w = bidding price during winter 2013

P_s = bidding price during summer, 2013

From these data, two key factors can be identified as influencing prices through auctioning process (1) summer and winter period (2) period of drought. In Oman, as an arid region, experiences periods of drought and extremely hot summer temperatures that create a very high-water demand. As a result, create a high competition over the auctioning process especially during summer period and also during the period of drought. This is attributed to the fact that farmers are willing to pay higher prices to obtain extra water in order to maintain reasonable crop productivity. This is clearly indicated by the increasing trend of average summer prices compared with average winter prices. For example, average auction price was 2.47 US \$ which increase to 9.77 US\$, a rise by approximately 74 percent in the year 2013.

5. Discussion

In the past, and since the system considered of the major contributor to the whole community social structure, previous states political structure along with Muslim legal scholars were involved in setting the *aflaj* institutional arrangements within the Omani legal context. The primary purpose of these combined efforts was how to create some knowledge for survival in this arid environment. First, despite the fact that auctioning prices sometime reduced dramatically, revenue collected sufficient to meet falaj expanses (Zekri et al., 2014). This to say that these aflaj have been operated for centuries through such procedure of raising revenue. Second, in Oman, water demand must be adjusted at a level to maintain a competing prices. This requires having a thorough understanding of the flow of each falaj circumstance as falaj water supply flow pattern normally developed naturally through precipitation. Third, part of the knowledge significantly concerned/responsible with water rights operation/management. For example, despite the fact that all the public rights belong and administrated through different defined organizational bodies, the role of the wakil/administrative agent highly respect in operating these rights. This is conducted through the above-mentioned knowledge using first what is known as the customary law and the second the community belief. Al-marshudi (2007) argued that the tribal communities (as in most Omani villages) are highly respected by customary law and the religious implication of the statues of the wakil. He defined the role of the wakil with such legal respect stated ‘...wakil, who takes responsibility for and exercises authority over the affairs of absent individuals. In other word, all water right holders give full authority to the wakil in trading, solving conflicts, and making decisions on emergency matters. Finally, the ascending water auctioning in Oman have been developed in a way that water rights ownership and associated allocated mechanism through a well-defined rule; there is no room for the first priority to claim. 1) the common right overall flow must be owned and administrated by the falaj ‘s management committee. 2) these rights are not measured in terms of diversion, or the amount consumed, it is based on time-share interval. (Here a whole day is assigned for *falaj*).

6. Conclusion

In the three most ancient cities in Northern Oman (Nizwa, Izki and *Burkat al-Mouz*), an Omani auction water market, based upon Islamic point of view, have been developed. The primary incentive of this market is of two folded objectives: 1) determine the price of the assigned 24-hour circulation of the falaj renting right. 2) To generate income for the system maintenance. An investigation of this market revealed several important principles. First, there are many buyers/farmers whom competing in seeking extra water. All these buyers are creating a competing economic environment within the community boundary. Second, the operation of the market has been developed upon a well-developed institutional arrangement. In fact, the study clearly identified that the currently operated institution arrangement differ among the indicated *aflaj*, as historically were developed in accordance with the flow characteristic within the watercourse. For example, it has been found an auctioning water market coexist for *daris* and *malki falaj* and no auctioning water market exist for the *khatmeen falaj*.

However, and even though the tradition knowledge/institutional arrangements still considered as crucial element on operation of the aflaj water rights, it remains one important issues of concern; that the knowledge of the tradition (indigenous) with regard to many past governmental historical codes of conduct still hold within the old generation. One of the most determinant factors about this tradition-knowledge is the extent to be passed to the new generation. We observed through this survey and our previous local contacts is the fact that most *aflaj* administrative agents are ageing and hence they sooner or later will leave. It is urgently required for the new generation: first, to be educated and grass this knowledge. Second, to be placed on the field where they can practice what they have understood.

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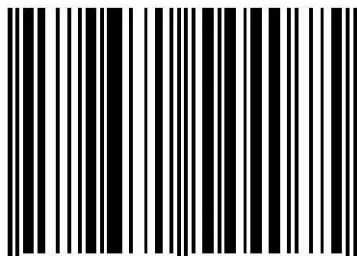


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