

The Impingement Factors of Quality of Life Among Community Who Reside Near to the Rivers

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Abstract: The main attempt of this study is to identify the factors that impinge the quality of life among community who reside near to Tembeling, Pahang and Muar Rivers. This is a quantitative study where a developed questionnaire was used to collect the data. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents in 4 places which is Kg. Jorak (Johore), Kg. Bantal (Pahang), Kg. Gintong (Pahang) and Kg. Langkap (Negeri Sembilan). Although, there is a number of factors that can impinge the quality of life, however within the scope of this study, it focuses on 5 factors that have the potential to influence the quality of life to this community, namely; age, income, period of staying, distance to the nearest river and distance to the nearest city. Analyses performed have confirmed that factors of level of education and areas have significant difference with quality of life while factor of income was detected to have significant relationship with quality of life. A number of discussions have been placed and it is hope that such discussion could assist the relevant parties in constructing concrete strategies to further, uplift the quality of life of the community particularly those who reside near to the river.

Key words: Quality of life, community near the river, sustainable community, Muar River, Pahang

INTRODUCTION

A better quality of life is an important feature for Malaysia and it is in line with the objective of being a developed nation by the year 2020 (EPU, 2011). In order to identify the level of Malaysian quality of life, a number of studies have been conducted and the most prominent study is the one conducted by Economic Planning Unit Malaysia (EPU) the Malaysian Quality of Life Index (MQLI). In the recent MQLI in 2011, there were 11 components of quality of life included. These 11 elements were focused and intended to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and the development of socioeconomic programme of the Malaysian people from the year 2000 until 2010.

Although, the government has come out with their own measurement on the community quality of life, such measurement focuses on general public which resulted in less studies been conducted with regard to QOL of specific groups such as the river community. There are various potential factors that might impinge the QOL of river communities, nevertheless to date there has been a little understanding on such issue which drive the present study to its main objective which is to identify the

impingement factors for QOL of the river community. To have this study is vital as it is expected to provide fresh information on QOL of specific community such as river community while at the same time form a foundation for more future studies to be conducted germane to QOL of the river community.

Tembeling, Pahang and Muar Rivers: Tembeling River is one of the sources of Pahang River. Tembeling River is originated from Mount Tahan in Pahang. In this day, Tembeling River is still used by the locals, especially in remote villages such as Bantal village and Mat Dalin village as their main transportation route. The Pahang River is the longest river in Peninsular Malaysia about 435 km, Pahang River drains an area of 29,300 km² of which 27,000 km² lies within Pahang (about 75% of the State) and 2300 km² is located in Negeri Sembilan. The unique part about Pahang River is it flows throughout of 3 States which are Pahang, Johor and Negeri Sembilan. Pahang River and Muar River are nearly connected at a place called Jambu Lapan in Jempol, Negeri Sembilan. Both rivers are only separated by the distance of 300 m. The significant roles played by the Pahang and Muar Rivers in enhancing the community socio-economic

cannot be denied. Previously both rivers are used by traders especially from Malacca as the main route to the east coast areas. In addition, the same route was used by the legendary Malay warriors-Hang Tuah to bring back Princess Tun Teja back to Malacca while the Siamese army relied on Muar River to attack Malacca. In this modern days, both rivers are still used by the local communities in conducting their socio-economic activities particularly 1 related to transportation and recreation activities (Samah *et al.*, 2011).

Factors impinging quality of life: Socio-demographic factor is one of the common factors that are confirmed to have influence on community QOL. Consistently, question relating to who have better quality of life-younger generation or the older generation? Is always raised. The traditional generation is the oldest generation in this community, since there were a lot of local indigenous tribes that still sitting in this area. The great depression and war among other events have influenced the members of this generation and also having a sense of obligation, they have been described as being conservative and disciplined (Niemic, 2000). They have been described as needing respect and as preferring to make decision based on what researched in the past (Kersten, 2002). In the different perspective, the youngster wants to be held in esteem and want to be listened. They also do not expect deference.

Education achievement has been admitted as one of the important contributors for QOL. Having a better education achievement is always related to chances of getting a great salary which then can lead towards a better QOL (Fernandez and Rogerson, 1998) while those who are exposed to knowledge and skills are also related to a better QOL as they always find alternative for the survival of their livelihood (Ross and Van Willigen, 1997).

Income is 1 of the important factors for uplifting the quality of life. As people with lower financial ability is always looked as those with lower QOL things are seen in different way with those who have financial power as it is seen as a great influence on a better QOL (Diener and Diener, 1995). Diener and Diener added wealth is significantly correlated with greater a quality of life and accentuated on the ability of wealthier nation to provide a better access towards a better QOL for their people.

Geographical factors have been proven as one of the impinging factors for QOL-those who stayed in the remote areas and far away from the city are expected to have lower QOL (Yassin *et al.*, 2011; Berry *et al.*, 2008; Dolan *et al.*, 2006; Litcher and Jensen, 2002). A majority of people in rural areas are always related to lower income

earnings, this is due in part to the higher levels of unemployment, underemployment and lower wages that are found in rural area (Berry *et al.*, 2008; Dolan *et al.*, 2006; Litcher and Jensen, 2002). Furthermore, rural poor are usually neglected causing rural poverty to be imperceptible.

Gender is another potential impingement factor. Lehman *et al.* (1992) in their study has looked onto interaction between age and gender and managed to informed that women in the age range of 36-45 expressed significantly less satisfaction towards QOL than men. However, several previous studies have proven on a better QOL possessed by women particularly with regard to their social relationship. Women are able to find a place for themselves in society more easily than men and easily remain within the border of conventional feminine roles (Bachrach, 1984; Busfield, 1982; Farina, 1981; Segal and Everett-Dille, 1980; Test *et al.*, 1990). In addition to this, regarding to the living conditions, women also had a well objective (Test *et al.*, 1990; Wattie and Kedward, 1985).

The next impingement factor that may lead to a better QOL among specific group such as river community is the distance to the nearest river. There is a mixture opinion with regard to the impact of this factor to the QOL of the community. In one aspect, community who live near to the river are benefiting the abundance of natural resources available and of course-the great scenery while the emergence of tourism industry at the river will benefit their socio-economic aspects (Samah *et al.*, 2011; Yassin *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, for those who have stayed near the rivers for a long time have chance to have better communication with the river. Due for the sitting prolonged to the area, they already knew what are the best practises to preserve it what to avoid, how to face the threats that may distract the environment and have prepare the best tools and methods to the teach the upcoming generation (Samah *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, people who stayed far away from the river are said to be less vulnerable towards natural disaster such as flood or man-made disaster such as river pollution (Yassin *et al.*, 2011; Samah *et al.*, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology comprises of quantitative approaches. A total of 240 respondents were obtained from a simple random sampling process. The respondents were gained from 4 villages along the Pahang and Muar River, namely; Jorak, Bantal, Gintong and Langkap villages. At each village, 60 respondents were selected. A total of 7 aspects of quality of life have been asked to the

respondents which are home condition, physical environment, safety at the areas, social involvement and relationship, education, financial and job security and infrastructure facilities. A 5 Likert-like scale was used, ranging from very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, moderately satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied. SPSS was employed where descriptive analyses such as mean, frequency, percentage and standard deviation were used to describe the general data. Inferential analyses such as Independent t-test and ANOVA were used to seek difference that might occur between the independent and dependent variable. Additionally, Pearson product-moment correlation is used to analyse any possible relationship between quality of life and selected independent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 showed socio-demographic data of the respondents. From the 240 respondents, there were 54.2% of male respondents and 63.8% were married. Other than that it can be clearly seen that the highest percentage age among the respondent is age >41 years old (44.6%). A total of 179 (74.6%) respondents were recorded come from the Malay races and 59 (24.6%) respondents were aborigine. From the education achievement, average of the respondents (40.4%) was going to the secondary school and only 11.3% were never been to school. Nearly, a quarter of the respondents (22.6%) who researched related to the agriculture based and one-fifth of the respondents (20.1%) are housewives or unemployed. About 36.7% of the respondents earned between RM501-RM1000 a month while 31.4% of the respondents earned between <RM500 per month. From the data, a total of 19.2% of the respondents have stayed in the village <10 years and only 11.7% have stayed between 31-40 years. Slightly more than two fifth of the respondents (43.8%) stayed between 11-20 km to the nearest city and 31.7% of the respondents are lived near to the river which is between 201-500 m near to the river bank.

Comparison between QOL and selected independent variables: ANOVA was applied to further investigate the comparison on the selected independent variables. For the factors of education, 4 groups of level of education were studied to determine the significance difference at $p < 0.05$. As a result, based on the F-value (4, 240) = 6.001, $p < 0.05$, there was significant difference that occurred between the 4 groups studied. Further, analysis using post-hoc test has confirmed that there was significant difference between those with tertiary level and

Table 1: Demographic factors (N = 240)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Gender				
Male	130	54.20		
Female	110	45.80		
Age (years)			39.70	16.60
15-24	55	22.90		
25-40	78	32.50		
>41	107	44.60		
Races				
Malay	179	74.60		
Aborigine	59	24.60		
Chinese	2	0.80		
Education achievement				
Never been to school	27	11.30		
Primary school	85	35.40		
Secondary school	97	40.40		
Tertiary level	31	12.90		
Occupation				
Government sector	26	11.10		
Self-employed	50	21.40		
Housewife/unemployed	47	20.10		
Retiree	10	4.30		
Agriculture related	53	22.60		
Student	14	6.00		
Private sector	21	9.00		
Businessman	9	3.80		
Others	4	1.70		
Income (RM) (N = 188)				
<500	59	31.40	1,118.45	984.99
501-1000	69	36.70		
1001-1500	60	31.90		
Period of staying (years)			31.51	20.49
<10	46	19.20		
11-20	41	17.10		
21-30	43	17.90		
31-40	28	11.70		
41-50	29	12.10		
Distance to the nearest city (from their house)			29.17	24.22
<10 km	49	20.40		
11-20 km	105	43.80		
>21 km	86	35.80		
Distance to river (from their house) (m)			841.00	906.00
<200	56	23.30		
201-500	76	31.70		
501-1000	66	27.50		
>1000	42	17.50		
Status				
Single	74	30.80		
Married	153	63.80		
Divorced	13	5.40		

secondary school level of education with those who never been to school. Such finding is not surprising, as the education is the key to one's position in the stratification system, it shapes the likelihood of being employed and the qualities of the job a person can get and income. Ross and Van Willigen (1997) have confirmed on ability of educated person to gain human capital in learning institution and these skills, knowledge and abilities help a person get a better job. Additionally, drawing on Fernandez and Rogerson (1998), individuals with low levels of education are associated with lower incomes which then affect their quality of life.

Table 2: Comparison on QOL using ANOVA

Variables	N	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Level of education					
Never been to school	28	3.34	0.383	6.001	0.001
Primary school	84	3.63	0.404		
Secondary school	97	3.71	0.323		
Tertiary level	31	3.69	0.522		
Areas					
Jorak	60	3.76	0.556	5.531	0.0001
Bantal	60	3.52	0.414		
Gintong	60	3.73	0.372		
Langkap	60	3.53	0.385		

Table 3: Comparison on QOL using t-test

Factor	n	Mean score	SD	t	p-value
Gender					
Male	130	3.65	0.422	0.598	0.550
Female	110	3.62	0.432		

In term of the areas, there were 4 groups studied. Based on the ANOVA performed, it can be concluded that with F-value (4, 240) = 5.531, $p < 0.05$, there was significant difference that occur in the factor of areas. There is probability that respondent who lived in Jorak Village do have a better quality of life based on the highest mean score recorded ($M = 3.76$). Further, analysis using post-hoc test has confirmed to us that there is significant difference that occur in QOL between respondents who lived in Jorak Village and respondents who lived in Bantal and Langkap Villages. To have such scenario might be led by geographical factors of these 3 areas. Compared to Jorak village which is located near to the industrial zone of Bukit Pasir in Muar, Johor and equipped with adequate number of basic and infrastructure facilities, both Bantal and Langkap Villages are located at the remote areas of National Park in Kuala Tembeling and Pelangai Forest Reserved area at Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan. Such geographical characteristics have resulted in difficulties to construct more infrastructure facilities which clearly can degrade their quality of life (Table 2).

Regarding the factor of gender, result gained have proven that male have the highest mean score ($M = 3.65$). The data reveals $t(240) = 0.598$, $p = 0.0001$ and concluded that there is no significant difference between the 2 group studied and such results is contradicting findings of Lehman *et al.* (1992), Bachrach (1984), Busfield (1982), Farina (1981), Segal and Everett-Dille (1980), Test *et al.* (1990), Test *et al.* (1990) and Wattie and Kedward (1985). These studied showed that gender had little influence on subjective perception of quality of life (Table 3).

Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to reveal any relationship that might occur between QOL and selected independent variables (Table 4). For this purpose, 5 selected independent variables, namely;

Table 4: Relationship with QOL

Variables	r	p-value
Age	0.046	0.4790
Income	0.279	0.0001
Period of staying	-0.047	0.4660
Distance to the nearest city	-0.121	0.0620
Distance to the nearest river	-0.089	0.1690

age (years), income, period of staying in the village (years), distance to the nearest city and distance to the nearest river were selected. Based on the analysis performed, it can be seen that one out of 5 selected independent variable, namely; income was found to have a significant and low relationship at $p < 0.05$ with QOL.

CONCLUSION

The rationale used to justify this study highlight the importance of considering the level of irregularity and the importance of conditions of various aspects of life and living conditions evaluated. There are many notions that impinge the factors of quality of life among community who reside near to the rivers. Under the radar of this study, factor of income was significantly correlated with QOL and this is in line with study done by Diener and Diener (1995). Other than that from the ANOVA test, it is proven that the level of education is one of the impingement factors to further improve river community QOL. Better education achievement might enhance and strengthen job security among the community. The opportunity to gain better income and get promoted is also related to the level of education.

Factor of areas has also seen as one of the potential contributors for the respondents. Post hoc analysis done have confirmed that respondents in Jorak have significant difference with respondents in Langkap and Bantal which confirmed on the influential power of geographical factor on river community QOL. Although, factor of gender is always emerged as the cause for QOL, especially for women (Lehman *et al.*, 1992; Bachrach, 1984; Busfield, 1982; Farina, 1981; Segal and Everett-Dille, 1980; Test *et al.*, 1990; Wattie and Kedward, 1985), however within the scope of this study, an equal level of QOL between male and female was detected.

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