JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

http://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jes

THE SOCIAL RESILIENCE OF URBAN POVERTY TOWARD QUALITY OF LIFE IN KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

Urban poverty in Malaysia has become a more prominent problem that is increasingly risking the quality of life. Meanwhile, resilience plays a very vital role in poor urban communities. Poverty will hinder sustainable development and a better quality of life. Improving the quality of life has always been the focus of the Malaysian government. Recent years have seen attempts to address this need for more community resilience research that investigates the impacts of poverty. Thus, examining a community's resilience to poverty will produce communities that are resilient to urban pressures and challenges to improve their quality of life. This study aims to evaluate the social resilience of urban poverty toward quality of life in Kuala Lumpur. This study showed that higher resilience in poor communities can be justified by determining social resilience, such as participation in the community, decision-making and community trust. This study used quantitative methods for data collection. The questionnaire was administered using a sample of 400 respondents from urban poor households in Kuala Lumpur. Descriptive and correlation regression analysis was in this study. The findings of this study showed that the relationship between social resilience, participation in the community of the urban poor in Kuala Lumpur, and quality of life is significant.

Keywords: urban poor, social resilience, low-income households.

INTRODUCTION

The mainstream sees the development of national progress as an asset to human well-being. Malaysia, a developing country, encourages migration to cities from rural to urban areas in the hope of building a better life and considering cities as a place to get jobs. Now, more than half of the population and economic activities are concentrated in urban areas, the majority of people in Malaysia are urban dwellers. This is proven by the Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM] (2020) that urban population growth increased from 70.9 percent in 2010 to 75. percent in 2020. Cities are areas of population concentration as well as areas of rapid economic activity such as industry, manufacturing, business and services. Additionally, cities play an important role in national development and contribute to socio-economic growth. This will directly increase the urbanization process and there is no denying that the urbanisation process is a good step in increasing the development of the country. The excessive and rapid presence of people in the city will have a negative impact on the limited resources, the quality of education, the quality of housing, and the urban poor. Various efforts have been made by the government to eradicate poverty. More pleasingly, Malaysia has achieved remarkable success in its poverty alleviation efforts. This can be proven when the absolute poverty rate at the national level decreased from 49.3 percent in 1970 to 0.4 percent in 2016 (DOSM, 2020). However, there is still a poverty group in urban localities of 3.8 percent and in rural areas of 12.4 percent in 2019 (DOSM, 2020). Although the urban poverty rate is lower than the rural poverty rate, poverty still exists in urban areas.

The measurement of poverty by a specific income threshold is quantitative and convenient, but not necessarily sufficient. However, it is not enough to measure poverty because poverty is multidimensional and the issues are more complex (Zainal et al., 2012). Measurement of income and consumption does not capture the qualitative dimensions of poverty such as social inclusion,

lack of comfort, health, and personal security (Zainal et al., 2012). The urban poor are associated with overcrowded, low-quality housing, a lack of clean water supply, and the risk of being attacked by social diseases because, in terms of social impact, urban poverty is more significant due to a different ecosystem of life. Urban poverty differs from rural poverty in economic, environmental, social, and political contexts that make their lives insecure (Diehl, 2020). This is because the measurement used is different in rural and urban areas, for example, the price of goods and the cost of living. The financial need to continue life in the urban area is more challenging than in the rural area due to limited resources, and everything needs money.

Urban poverty is becoming more evident, especially in cities like Kuala Lumpur and Johor Baharu. Jayasooria (2016) stated that Kuala Lumpur and Selangor are the top two states with the highest cost of living. With the rising prices of goods and the city's cost of living, the poor urban community worked hard to survive. More than the income of the urban poor is needed to cover the family's monthly expenses. much of the total income is used to pay loans, rent, home needs, utilities, and the children's education to the extent that they do not have savings. However, in the context of urban poverty, quality of life is an important dimension to see how satisfied people are with their lives. The lack of income in big cities forces households to do several jobs to meet daily needs and risks lowering the quality of life. For example, some individuals who live in the city have to do two jobs: being a Lazada product delivery in the morning and working to grab food in the evening. For example, the quality of life of an engineer may be different from the quality of life of a teacher.

Therefore, it is a question of how the urban poor community can survive the pressure of life that is increasingly squeezing their lives due to poverty to achieve an excellent quality of life. So, one of the ways to overcome poverty and improve the quality of life is to improve resilience (Mayberry et al., 2009) which is the social resilience of urban poor communities. However, there are still few

studies on poverty resilience. Studies in Malaysia show the concept of community resilience against disasters such as floods, draught, and haze but not poverty (Mohamad et al., 2019; Muhamad et al., 2019; Chong et al., 2018). The studies did not link resilience to poverty or vulnerability.

Based on the facts and arguments above, this study aims to examine the relationship between social resilience and the quality of life of the urban poor in Kuala Lumpur. This study will explore non-financial aspects of poverty by understanding the poor and involving the people experiencing poverty themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poverty

Poverty is the inability to achieve a minimum standard of living (World Bank, 1990). According to The United Globally, poverty is measured from an economic point of view, i.e., individuals around the world who live with an income less than US$1.90 a day are categorised as extreme poverty based on the poverty line (World Bank, 2015). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1998) also explains poverty as a person's inability to expand choices and opportunities in life, and a lack of participation in society. Poverty also shows the inability to contribute to success in society. This means that a person does not have enough food and clothing, does not have access to schools or clinics, does not have land to produce food or work for a living, and does not have access to credit. Poverty can be further defined as a lack of money and a lack of proactive resources in obtaining a sustainable life. They are forced to live with hunger, malnutrition, limited access to education, and a lack of involvement in decision making. To conclude, poverty refers to a situation of lack of resources as mentioned in previous definitions that

hinders the development of any country duly to part of the population being economically marginalised.

In Malaysia, poverty is described as economic or income poverty and is determined using Poverty Line Income (PLI) to distinguish between poor and non-poor households (Siwar et al., 2016). The poverty that is often mentioned in Malaysia is absolute poverty. If the household's monthly income is less than PLI, then this household is considered poor. However, the percentage of poor households in the total number of households in Malaysia is referred to as the incidence of poverty. In short, these two concepts have different political and social implications based on different measurement aims and goals. For example, the concept of absolute poverty is related to the concept of basic needs, while relative poverty refers to the distribution of income. Therefore, the concept of relative poverty can further explain the socio-economic condition of society, that is economic and social inequality in society compared to the concept of absolute poverty.

Social Resilience

Social resilience is one of the factors that affect community resilience (Mayberry et al., 2009). Te Lintelo et al., (2017) stated that social relationships are an essential element in overcoming poverty. Social assets are relationships between communities based on trust in the community (Mayberry et al., 2009).

A study by McCrae et al., (2015) in Australia showed that local communities play a key role in responding to any change and improving community well-being. This study shows that it has introduced indicators of community resilience such as decision making and community trust, community spirit and unity (community relations), as well as trust in industry decision makers.

This study also shows that decision makers and community trust are important components for the well-being and resilience of the community. He has introduced indicators of community resilience such as decision making and community trust, community spirit and unity (community relations)as well as trust in industry decision makers.

Besides, the study by Siwar et al., (2016) found that in Malaysia, the participation of the public or social assets is very important to guarantee the community's quality of life. The problem of poverty can be overcome with the help of community participation to ensure the quality of life of the urban poor. This study emphasises the importance of economic resources such as job opportunities, good transport systems, and strong finances. Furthermore, sustainable development also plays an important role for the urban poor to ensure that basic needs can be met, including the provision of affordable housing, safe roads,and increasing self-potential through education, information, public participation, health, and good jobs.

Then, Papadaki and Kalogeraki (2017) proposed the impact of the financial crisis on the lives of the unemployed and poor. This study shows an increasing trend in social support. Social support is an important component of building community resilience. The provision of social support to those in need is provided through the mobilization of social movement organizations, and specific associations. Among the social support activities provided are food preparation, health care, clothing preparation, providing basic goods, improving living conditions, and financial support.
To conclude, the social resilience aspects that focus on this paper are participation in the community, decision making, and community trust.

Quality of Life

Quality of life is defined as personal progress, a healthy lifestyle, access to and freedom to seek knowledge, achieving a quality of life that exceeds the basic and psychological needs of individuals, achieving a level of social well-being in line with national aspirations (Economic Planning Unit, 2011). The improvement in the quality of life shows an increase in the quality of life that can be measured by various economic and social indicators (Youssef and Baba, 2017). There are various factors that affect a person's quality of life according to their personal choices (Rosli et al., 2018; Hassan et al., 2017).

City or urban is the center of human settlement, urbanisation and the formation of the urban environment, as well as the importance of indicators and components of quality of life. Different areas will have different levels of satisfaction, so indicators of community quality of life will also vary according to space. This study looked at quality of life with the question: "How satisfied are you with your life overall?". Therefore, this study emphasises the level of satisfaction of an individual or household with their environment according to their experiences. Quality of life shows the relationship between people and their daily urban environment (Siwar et al., 2016).

Resilience and Quality of Life

Peter's (2019) study of urban resilience and quality of life in America shows that increasing poverty and disparity in income make a place increasingly vulnerable and affect the quality of life and external relations. Resilient residents tend to see their quality of life as higher by having more social assets. Although the population is decreasing, viable cities are growing in social and economic aspects.

Walton's (2014) study on community resilience and well-being with 400 respondents in Queensland, Australia, in four major cities, namely Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles and Tara, shows that social factors and community well-being facilities are the main contributors to community well-being as a whole. Community well-being contributes to future resilience and well-being. The model used in this study shows the actions of community well-being and community resilience, as different structures. Furthermore, well-being, resilience and future well-being are significant.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used primary data from the questionnaires. Primary data refers to direct information which is information, obtained directly from respondents. Questionnaires are used to study attitudes and opinions about a matter. The target respondents in this study involve the urban poor community in Kuala Lumpur, which is the community living in the People Housing Programme (PPR) area. The selection of the city of Kuala Lumpur as the scope of the study is because a total of 25.5% of the Malaysian population lives in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (DOSM, 2019), in addition to more than half of the B40 households living in the urban area, which is 56% of the 2.7 million households compared to 44% in the rural area.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. Part A consists of seven questions about the respondent's profile, which include age, ethnicity, marital status, education level, income, household size and home ownership status. Part B consists of eight questions on social resilience. The variables are Participation in the community, decision-making, and Community Trust. Part C consists of 14 questions on the quality of Life.

The method of analysis included descriptive statistics on social resilience and quality of life variables. A correlation regression was conducted to explore the relationship between social resilience and quality of life.

Study Limitation

The scope of research chosen for this study is in the city of Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur is a state located on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. This study involves low-income respondents who live in Kuala Lumpur, or, in other words, are in the urban poor category. Meanwhile, this study has a limitation in that it only involves respondents who live in the People Housing Programme (PPR) in Kuala Lumpur.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Test

Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha of relevant ordinal variables (items with scales) used in the study. The values were above 0.7, showing an acceptable level of internal consistency. A total of 8 items with scales were selected for social resilience and 4 items for quality of life.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Social resilience		
Participation in the Community	0.814	3
Decision Making and Community Trust	0.702	3
Quality of Life	0.730	14

Demographic Profile

Table 2-summarises the demographic profile of the respondents. The majority of respondents were over 61 years of aged, which is 36.5 percent of all respondents because most of the PPR was founded over 60 years of age. 52.3 percent of the respondents were Malays, 28 percent were Chinese, and 19.5 percent were Indians. Marital status shows 10.8 percent were single, 71.8 percent were married and 18 percent were others, which are widows, widowers and divorced. The education level showed that slightly more than half of the respondents had completed secondary school, and 35.3 percent had only completed primary school. As for household income, 51 percent of the respondents earned RM1,001 to RM2,500 per month, and the majority (67 percent) of the respondents' households were 3 to 6 households. 87.5 percent rent from PBT, and only 11.5 percent buy their home.

Table 2
Demographic profile respondent

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
10 - 20	6	1.5
21 - 30	25	6.3
31 - 40	41	10.3
41 – 50	77	19.3
51 - 60	105	26.3
61 and above	146	36.5
Ethnicity		
Malays	209	52.3
Chinese	112	28.0
Indians	79	19.8
Marital Status		
Single	43	10.8
Married	285	71.3
Others (Widow/Widower/Divorced)	72	18.0
Education Level		
Primary school	141	35.3
Secondary school	219	54.8
Diploma	24	6.0
Degree	6	1.5
Master and above	0	0.0
Others	10	2.5
Income		
< RM500	36	9.0

RM501 – RM1,000	86	21.5
RM1,001- RM2,500	204	51.0
RM2,501 - RM4,000	57	14.3
RM4,001 - RM5,500	12	3.0
RM5,501 - RM7,000	5	1.3
> RM7,001	0	0.0
Household Size		
1-2	93	23.3
3-6	268	67.0
7-10	38	9.5
> 11	1	0.3
Home Ownership Status		
Riding	1	0.3
Buy	46	11.5
Renting (PBT)	350	87.5
Renting (from individuals)	3	0.8
Help from NGOs (eg: Baitul Jannati)	0	0.0

Source: Authors' computation based on survey data.

Correlation Analysis between Social Resilience and Quality of Life

The findings of this study have shown the model's impact on social resilience and quality of life. The result shows that the social resilience indicators were found to have a positive and significant relationship with community resilience. Social resilience indicators; participation in the community shows a moderately positive linear relation with community resilience by 0.450 while indicator decision making and community trust show weak positive linear relation with a correlation coefficient value under 0.3. The results of the correlation test were shown in Table 4.

Table 3
Result of the correlation analysis between social resilience and quality of life

	Participation in the community	Decision making	Quality of life
Participation in the community	1		
Decision making and community trust	.450**	1	
Quality of life	.275**	.505**	1

**p < .01

Table 4
Model summary and coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.561	.181		14.023	.000
Participation in the community	.326	.035	.434	8.117	.000
Decision making and community trust	.075	.038	.085	1.671	.094
Quality of life					
R Square = 0.223					

This analysis can be explained by the following equation:

$Y = \alpha + \beta x1$

Y = Quality of life

α = constant

β = regression coefficient

x1=Participation in the community

Quality of life = 2.561 + (0.350) Participation in community

CONCLUSION

Recent years have seen attempts to address this dearth of research on community resilience that investigates the impacts of poverty. This paper has provided empirical evidence on the influence of social resilience on quality of life amongst the urban poor community. This study involves, the urban poor in Kuala Lumpur, which is the community living in the People Housing Program area. The finding shows that community participation is significantly correlated between social resilience and quality of life in Kuala Lumpur. For future research, researchers should include more urban areas such as Johor Bahru and Georgetown, to investigate the resilience of the urban poor, as well as the design and best practises of urban poverty reduction programmes and policies to

improve the resilience and enhance the quality of life. I hope this paper will help policymakers and governance improve the current policies and enhance the quality of life of the urban poor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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