

Island Communities: Level of Quality of Life, Settlements and Housing in Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu, Malaysia

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Abstract: Enhancing the Quality of Life (QoL) of citizens is an agenda that must be prioritized by the local government. Inhabited island communities in this country especially in Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu require more attention from the government. This study aims to examine the level of objective quality of life on the studied island. It also focuses on the settlements and residential areas of the community. Survey findings indicate that the level of objective quality of life of the population under study is at a medium level. From one aspect, the survey shows that the community here lives in highly crowded settlements. The houses in this community were in a poor state in comparison to the mainland community. Pulau Perhentian clearly needs a better settlement management system. Immediate action from the government is necessary in order to provide the community in Pulau Perhentian with a better quality of life.

Key word: Objective quality of life island community, settlements and housing, pulau perhentian, Island, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The UNESCO Report (1977) defines quality of life as the fulfillment of human needs as a whole; the satisfaction of an inclusive set of human needs. Dube formulated that the quality of life is an inclusive concept which covers all aspects of living including material satisfaction of vital needs as well as more transcendental aspects of life such as personal development, Self-Realization and a healthy eco-system. Michalos (1982) and Dube classify the quality of life in two dimensions, the objective (actual) and subjective (perception or impression).

Dube further describes the scope of objective quality of life that includes food, beverages, water facilities, shelter, clothing, health facilities, public transport and education. On the other hand, subjective quality of life includes the satisfaction of happiness that is felt and shown by a person or society as a result of the objective quality of life that were obtained and enjoyed by them. It is essential to satisfy the objective part first even though it is necessary not to overlook the importance of the subjective part. According to Dube, it is very difficult to measure the subjective perception of the quality of life.

In conclusion, the quality of life must be viewed not only from the external aspect such as high monthly income or the number of houses owned but it also

involves the satisfaction that results from one's internal feelings. There are many cases that show even though a person has a high income they may have a low subjective quality of life due to the fact that they never feel satisfied enough with what they have. Bestuzher-Landa asserted that quality of life should be understood as an evaluation of the gratification that people derive from the degree to which their material and mental needs are actually satisfied.

Veenhoven (1998) also asserted that the objective quality-of-life is the degree to which living conditions meet-observable criteria of a good life such as income security for everybody, safety in the street, good health care, education, etc., In this context, the prefix objective refers to the way of measurement. Measurement is based on explicit criteria of success that can be implied by impartial outsiders.

From the Islamic perspective, the degree of the quality of life that should be owned by individuals is that at least he can fulfill the needs of himself and his family in terms of food and drink, clothing for the winter and summer as well as a safe place to call home. Imam Nawawi considers the quality of life which should be fulfilled by any person to be the preparation of food and drink, clothes, shelters and others that are deemed necessary without excess or shortage for him and those

who are under his obligations. This also includes education and health (Yusuf, 1980). Efforts to eradicate poverty. Efforts to eradicate poverty and improve people's quality of life under the New Economic Policy (1970-1990) are continued by the government under the National Development Policy (NDP). NDP was included in the Second Outline Perspective Plan (RRJP2) covering the period of 1991-2000.

The 2001-2010 third outline perspective plan (RRJP3) is the second phase in the country's effort of realizing Vision 2020 which started in 1991. RRJP3 will continue to concentrate efforts to eradicate poverty among small groups of poor citizens in all regions, especially in rural areas and among marginalized communities who do not enjoy the benefits of development such as indigenous people and other Bumiputera in Sabah and Sarawak. According to the RRJP3 report, efforts will also be concentrated to eradicate urban poverty, especially for those who live in the suburban areas.

As one of the long-term measures to eradicate poverty and reduce income inequality, education will remain a key tool for improving individual position in the society.

Besides education, the provision of health services and social facilities also become significant long-term measures to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life. The needs of the poor can be met with the implementation of these services. Also planned within RRJP3, emphasis will be given to improve the quality life for the elderly and disabled (The third outline perspective plan 2001-2010).

Quality of life for all Malaysians is expected to continue to increase within the RRJP3 period with an increase in per capita income of >5% a year due to the rapid economic growth. Given that the poverty rate would decline to a very low level, greater emphasis could be given in the effort to increase the household income, especially in the lower 30% group. Substantial investments in the preparation and distribution of facilities and social services such as education, healthcare and housing will contribute to the increase of quality of life.

Quality of education will be enhanced through efforts in improving the quality of education and training which is expected to accelerate human resources development. Generally, the socio-economic policies that were introduced by the government after the 1990's reveal positive changes with the government's determination to reduce poverty and quality of life in this country. This is proven with the introduction of the Malaysia's quality of life index (IKHM) that was introduced in 1999.

A comprehensive or holistic approach to quality of life still acts as discussions and study materials for researchers at foreign institutions in collaboration with other agencies or related departments. One among many is 'A Guide to Doing Quality of Life Studies by Adrian Jones'. Research done by the Center of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom had identified suitable domains, indicators and quality of life indices by taking the example measurement approach used by several developed countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

This research also focused on the housing aspect since it is one of the important indicators of the quality of life. Much research has been done worldwide concerning the quality of life. One example is a research conducted in Singapore by Kau Eh Heng and Wang Siew Hooi.

This research indicates that a majority of Singaporeans were satisfied with their quality of life standards. They are also optimistic regarding their future quality of life and expect that it will further increase. Demographic variables that have been studied are insignificant statistically and failed to give any effect to the quality of life.

Variables such as sex, marital status, age, education, home, social status and income also did not play any important role in a majority of the respondents quality of life benchmark. Among 13 of the domains that have been discussed, only two domains were meaningful to them; health and a happy family. About 81% of the respondents were satisfied with their family life. The research survey indicates that a majority of Singaporeans had the belief that their country would provide them with a conducive environment in order for them to achieve a better quality of life.

Azizah (1987) analyses the quality of life for several poor communities in Kuala Lumpur. This research was done with an objective in mind to study the clean water supply provided to the of these communities in Kuala Lumpur and how the usage of this supply would affect the community socially, physically and environmentally. The research shows that their main clean water supply comes from a huge water pipe installed by the Kuala Lumpur City Council (DBKL). Residents in the vicinity had to install their own long plastic hoses to the main supply in order for them to get clean water supply to their homes.

The difficulty and struggle to obtain clean water often lead to intense arguments among the communities. Others resulted to obtaining their water supply from alternative sources such as nearby rivers, abandoned-mine-lakes and rainfall. The research showed that although sometimes these alternative sources were likely

to be polluted, there were few cases of sickness within the community with the exception of post flooding cases. About 75% of the respondents did not suffer from any illness within a month before the study was conducted in their area. Another factor is the variety of toilets in the community; personal, shared (one toilet for eight families), drains, rivers or small streams that had a small hut built above it and usually close to the residential population. This situation, it is feared, will affect the cleanliness and health of the communities.

Zulkifli *et al.* (1987) studied the quality of life of Malaysians in her research on urban poverty where she suggested that this matter is often neglected by the government upon setting up a new policy. The study was conducted to view aspects of the quality of life in the city by using several indicators such as physical health, nutritional status and August 24, 2010 also from a socio-psychological perspective.

It is clearly evident that socio-psychological factors have an impact on physical health. There are three steps that have been suggested to improve the quality of life of the poor in the city which are adequate housing, better health facilities and to add community participation on governing a new policy.

To further increase the quality of housing facilities, access to adequate housing, affordable to be owned or rented is a social goal that is required for the country's development. Better housing meets the key aspect of basic human needs since access to an adequate and better shelter often leads to a better physical, psychological, social and economic welfare of an individual. Home and shelter is a basic requirement for everyone.

The need for a better shelter and household is also everyone's perfect dream. The feeling of satisfaction is often heard when people get their perfect home or shelter. Past studies conducted in the United States revealed that owners of semi-detached homes were more satisfied with their lives compared to those who lived in a more crowded settlement. Studies also showed that one's satisfaction towards his home is closely related to the satisfaction of his overall quality of life (Eastman, 1978; Peck and Stewart, 1985).

Studies were also conducted concerning the quality of life in Africa, in places such as Ghana (Fiadzo *et al.*, 2001). The study of housing quality which is associated with the quality of life is a result of rapid urbanization growth, low-income status and inadequate funding for housing developments that caused a significant decrease in the level of quality of life in African countries. Ghana Statistical Service Report for the year 1995 and 1996 indicates that over 60% of residents in Ghana did not

receive electrical power, 40% still lived in clay shelter homes and virtually everyone did not receive a proper sewage system. The study reflects the poor quality of life that is happening in most African countries (Fiadzo *et al.*, 2001). In general, this study aims to examine the level of objective quality of life of the population in Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu.

The study will also focus on the settlement and housing of the community on the island. In particular, this study is made to assess the objective quality of life of the population in general and also according to the respondent's background. It also reviews settlement types on the island especially in Pulau Perhentian Kecil.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of this study is in the form of a survey and is based on the qualitative method. Apart from the census forms and interviews, observations were also made while in the field. Entries were made from filed observations and unstructured interviews that were conducted.

In addition, the level of objective quality of life was analyzed based on the questions put to respondents via questionnaires that included items related to the quality of life indicators used in this study, namely income, expenditure, ownership, savings, health and housing. Household income was used as the income indicator for analysis.

Household income in the context of this study is the total income of a family whether it is solely the income of the husband or any extra income that comes from the spouse and any of the children that were used for household expenditures. Expenses are calculated from the total expenditure used for kitchen goods and other household goods.

Ownership of household and non-household items was included in the questionnaires. The amount of these items owned by respondents was calculated.

Savings were calculated from the amount of money saved by the respondents out of their income. Health indicators were taken into account by looking at the frequency of respondents' consultation with a doctor due to chronic diseases such as heart disease, tuberculosis, asthma, lung problems and others. The assumption is made that the more regularly any respondent consults a doctor, the more serious is his disease and the lower his objective quality of life. Housing indicators were measured from home ownership status of respondents on the islands under study. Owning a house on these islands indicates a good quality of life. Pulau Perhentian has been chosen as the area under study. The purposive-

sampling method has been adopted in this study. Based on the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia for the year 2000, the study population was over 1,274 people with 277 household heads (Population Census for the Year 2000: Department of Statistics Malaysia). The population of Pulau Perhentian in 2009 was 1,328 with 250 inhabited homes (information obtained from the Chairman of Village Development and Security Pulau Perhentian, Mr. Zulkipli Ismail).

In short, Pulau Perhentian is one of the two inhabited islands in the state of Terengganu, famous for its natural beauty. It is located approximately 10.8 nautical miles (20 km) to the northeast of Kuala Besut and is under the administration of the Besut District Council (MDB). The island is divided into two main islands, namely Pulau Perhentian Kecil and Pulau Perhentian Besar as well as several other smaller islands, most notably Pulau Rawa and Pulau Susu Dara. The overall area of Pulau Perhentian is 1392.1 ha² where Pulau Perhentian Kecil is 524.8 ha² and Pulau Perhentian Besar is 867.3 ha². Government-owned land on this island is approximately 857.6 ha² while the other 534.6 ha² belong to the general population on the island.

The island has a large sandy beach shoreline even though the island is entirely covered by big cliffs and hilly areas. Pulau Perhentian Kecil is mainly inhabited by villagers and the main settlement is Kampung Pasir Hantu which occupies roughly 10 ha. Pulau Perhentian Besar is fully developed for the tourism industry. It takes about 5 min by speedboat or 10 min by fishing boat to travel from Pulau Perhentian Kecil to Pulau Perhentian Besar. Development at Pulau Perhentian is more focused on tourism rather than on improving the quality of life of its residents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of objective quality of life for pulau perhentian residents:

The level of QoL of the island populations are analysed based on the objective QoL in Pulau Perhentian and the objective QoL according to respondents background. Early feedback which describes the low QoL in Pulau Perhentian is misleading. Descriptive analysis shows that part of the residents here had achieved medium QoL standards. Table 1 shows that a majority of the residents here are enjoying a medium level of QoL. As mentioned previously, an early qualitative assumption was made that more than half of the population of Pulau Perhentian belongs to the low QoL group. However that assumption was wrong. Only 12 heads of household or 9.9% are in the low-level, 88 heads of household or 72.7% are in the medium level while 21

heads of household or 17.4% are at the high level. Analysis indicates that several other indicators such as expenditures, savings and ownership assist the QoL of the island communities in the medium level. The early assumption that there are many poor residents at the lower level of QoL was based on only one indicator which was housing and shelter which was already unsatisfactory on Pulau Perhentian.

Objective quality of life based on the respondents background in pulau perhentian:

Analysis of Table 2 shows both sexes dominate the medium level objective QoL group. However, women who are at low levels are relatively high with the percentage of 13.6% compared to only 8.3% among male respondents. Similarly, the percentage of high-level women is at 16.2%, which is lower than the percentage of men on the island of study with 17.9%. This reflects a lower level of women respondents objective QoL compared to the male respondents on the island.

Analysis of objective QoL based on respondent's age have shown a medium QoL level is still ahead for all age groups. However, what is quite interesting in this analysis is the lower the age of the respondents, the higher level of objective QoL they have. For low QoL level, respondents who are in the category above 45 years

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to objective quality of life in pulau perhentian

Quality of life	Total	Percentage
Low	12	9.9
Medium	88	72.7
High	21	17.4
Total	121	100.0

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the objective quality of life based on the respondents background in pulau perhentian

Background	Quality of life		
	Low	Medium	High
Sex			
Male	8.3	73.8	17.9
Female	13.6	70.2	16.2
Age (year)			
<30	5.9	52.9	41.2
31-45	7.5	75.5	17.0
>46	13.7	76.4	9.9
Education			
Educated	5.4	74.2	20.4
Non educated	25.0	67.8	7.2
Employment			
Employed	4.4	75.0	20.6
Non employed	27.6	65.5	6.9
Marriage			
Married	9.3	71.1	19.6
Not married	12.5	79.2	8.3
Residential status			
Local	12.2	70.7	17.1
Immigrant	5.1	76.9	18.0

old are ahead with 13.7 %. Analysis by educational level indicates that all the categories are still in the moderate level of objective QoL in Pulau Perhentian.

Respondents with higher education achieve better objective QoL that is in the medium to high level compared to those who received inadequate education. 25% of the respondents received little or no education at all. Respondents who are employed also show a better level of objective QoL compared to those who do not researchers or are unemployed.

The number of unemployed respondents in Pulau Perhentian that achieved medium QoL is quite high, at 65.5%. The assumption is made that these respondents might already have a home and adequate savings even though they are not employed. Analysis of the level of QoL for respondents both married and single showed a medium level. Objective QoL for immigrant residents is better in comparison to the local residents of Pulau Perhentian.

Settlements: Settlements in Pulau Perhentian are divided into two categories. The first category is linear settlements and the other is scattered settlement. Linear settlements are mainly formed on Pulau Perhentian Besar. Owners built their chalets and guesthouses along the shoreline. This is to give tenants or tourists easy access to the beach.

On Pulau Perhentian Kecil however, especially in the villages, scattered settlements are adopted. This type of settlement usually resides near foothills. In 2002, the residents received 'Hak Milik Tatatur Penempatan Semula Penduduk and at the same time 106 people also received a residential site permanent grant by the state government.

Application made to the Besut District Land Office to obtain an area of two acres of land to be used for new settlements was on hold until 2009 waiting approval from the Department of Environment.

Housing: Overcrowding is the main problem here. Until the year 2009, there was not a single effort done to build new settlements due to a land shortage. The population will continue to reside in existing settlements such as Kampung Pasir Hantu. This is because Kampung Pasir Hantu has been through a restructuring program. The settlement is 9.97 ha in size and originally contained 184 houses. Lack of controlled development and population contributes to the overcrowding problem here.

Because of the problem, some people built their houses on government land with the hope that they would be given permanent grants in the future. The acute problem of a house shortage in Pulau Perhentian has

caused several families to live in the same house. Usually, house sharing involves homeless married couple that eventually had to live in their parent's home.

The poor quality of houses resulted in a crowded situation and an unsatisfactory level of cleanliness. To overcome these problems, the Terengganu State Government has planned several housing projects on Pulau Perhentian in its effort to provide a balanced spiritual and material development. It is expected that upon completion of these planned housing projects, the settlements would become more beautiful and neatly organized. Within a few years, crowded settlements on Pulau Perhentian would cease to exist anymore.

However, up until 2009, the state government is yet to uphold their promise. Close observation shows the population on the island is increasing and illegal settlements on government land are on the rise. Expansion or renovation of houses also did not help much in reducing the overcrowding problems.

The original PPRT (PPRT is a development programme for the hardcore poor) houses that were provided to the locals were built on 40x40 ft. of land. What happened today is that most of the original houses have been modified to accommodate the increasing number of occupants. This situation has caused homes in the settlements to become very crowded while also generating a bad living environment. The residents here are still waiting for the promises made by the state government in the 1990's that is to provide them with adequate housing. Due to the unstructured arrangement of houses in these settlements, yearly flooding is a common thing that is happening there.

Most of the houses in these areas were usually modified to increase the number of rooms, thus accommodating more occupants. Researcher took the opportunity to stay in one of the local residents house that belongs to Mr. Mat Ali and Mrs. Zaharah Bt. Salleh. This home is shared with their two other children with families, Mr. Mohd Rusdi and Mrs. Sharipah. Their house was modified with an additional three small rooms. The original house that was sold to them with the price of RM 25,000 had one room, one bathroom, a kitchen space and a small living room. According to Mrs. Zaharah, sometimes she is forced to sleep on the balcony due to the limited space.

The female family members use the available bathroom while the male members were forced to take their shower outside the kitchen area. According to Mr. Mat Ali, other families on the island have to do the same thing if they have many family members. The situation becomes worse when people who do not have land to expand their houses had to dig the bottom area of their

Table 3: Residency status of respondents

Status	Total	Percentage
Own house	88	72.7
Squatting	16	13.2
Rented	3	02.5
Government quarters	14	11.6
Total	121	100.0

Table 4: Respondents Type of house

Types of house	Total	Percentage
Wooden	86	071.1
Wood and bricks	35	028.9
Bricks	0	0.0
Total	121	100.0

Table 5: Respondents size of house

House size	Total	Percentage
Small	30	24.8
Medium	83	68.6
Large	8	6.6
Total	121	100.0

houses to occupy increasing family members. It is understood that most of the houses here are inhabited by between 15-20 people in a single unit.

Table 3 shows the residential status of the residents in Pulau Perhentian. Analysis indicates that only 88 people or 72.7% of the respondents have their own home and 16 people or 13.2% of the respondents are squatting or staying with their parents or in-laws. About 3 people or 3.5% of the respondents rented their house and 14 people or 11.6% of the respondents are occupying government quarters.

Referring to the types of houses, wooden houses are the most occupied at 71.1% while the combination of wooden-brick houses occupied is at 28.9%. Interestingly, there is not a single brick house that was built by the respondents on the island. Table 4 shows the statistics. Table 5 shows that the medium sized houses are the most occupied by respondents at 68.6%.

The percentage of occupation for small and large sized houses is at 24.8 and 6.6%, respectively. Houses that are considered medium and large sized are those that had been modified by the respondents to occupy more family members. From the observations, the modified houses gave somewhat less significance as the condition of the settlements was already crowded and there is little space between houses. Modification is often done to add more rooms and expand kitchen space.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis made on the QoL of residents in Pulau Perhentian, it was found that the level of objective QoL is at a medium level. Qualitatively, the QoL level of the general population is also at the medium level.

From the housing aspect, overall quality is still at the lower levels. However, housing is only one of the six indicators with the rest also contributing to the overall QoL score of the island population. The other five indicators are income, expenses, savings, ownership and health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing is an important factor and must be affordable for the people of this island. Houses built should take several factors into account such as the number of households, number of rooms and the size of the land where the house was built.

Parties involved such as contractors should follow the standards set by the government in accordance with the Malaysian quality of life index. Controlled prices of low cost houses by the government are to ensure that targeted low-income groups could easily afford them. In an effort to improve the quality of low-cost houses, it must have a min floor area of 60 m² with at least three bedrooms in addition to extra areas for drying and cleaning.

From a settlement aspect, the population in Pulau Perhentian is still facing an overcrowding problem. The government should come up with a better plan to relocate the communities to a better location or to give them better alternative areas to build their homes thus enhancing the level of QoL in Pulau Perhentian.

A new and better settlement needs to be developed urgently. Houses that are located in the front areas of Pulau Perhentian Kecil should be relocated to a new section of the island due to the flooding problem that comes every year.

The absence of a suitable and comfortable road network in Pulau Perhentian is another factor that could render defective developments and QoL of the residents here. Efforts from the government to install slab/catwalk should continue and be supervised from time to time. This effort will improve the quality of settlements and housing in Pulau Perhentian.

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