

## **Social Involvement and Acculturation of Noble Values among Residents in a Modern City**

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**Abstract:** This study discusses noble values practised among residents in a modern city. It was carried out due to major changes in population as a result of urbanisation process in the central of Malaysia. Utilising a survey research design, the current study was carried out to determine the relationship between social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and good moral practice among residents. A number of 414 residents aged between 21 and 30 have been participated in this survey. A set of questionnaire was developed, validated and used for data collection. Data was analysed using the SPSS version 22.0. Results revealed that there was no significant difference of the residents' involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and the practice of good moral based on age groups. The correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and good moral practice with the level of education. Results demonstrated that there are significant relationships between social involvements, action plan for acculturation of noble values with good moral practice. The study highlights the need of noble values acculturation programmes for urban community. The action plan needs to be evaluated and upgraded continuously to ensure its effectiveness and to be updated with the current needs for the purpose of increasing the residents' noble values.

**Key words:** Social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values, good moral practice, income, level of education, age groups and Putrajaya

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Society can be defined as a community or group of people who live within the vicinity of a place in a certain way and certain measure. A society somehow reflects the nation of a country. According to Linton, a society is a group of people who live together until they become a close-knit organisation and the members of the society have a sense of belonging with that social organisation within certain limitation. They usually shared some common values and have some sort of relationship to establish good living environment. Noble values practiced by the population are necessary as it determines the societal wellbeing and happiness. Modernisation has affected socio-cultural among residents significantly. It was a great change in the structure of society where most parents have their own careers. Population has increased in urban areas as a result of economic development. Urban properties are expensive and very valuable. Land is very limited at the urban areas and the price of lands is extremely ridiculous, thus, apartment is a more suitable type of housing. Sadly, most apartments are quiet small with narrow space, hence jeopardizing the comfort of home living. In addition, small houses are unable to

provide ample space for the children to play and this resulted with the rise of social problems. Another crucial problem at the urban areas is traffic congestion particularly during peak hours in the morning and late evening. congestions, humidity and indiscipline road users cause stress and unnecessary anxiety which in the long run disrupt one's quality of life.

The problems are even worsening due to poor urban planning regarding the location of industrial areas, housing areas and business centres. The reserved historical buildings scattered in the city make it impossible to make way for road expansion. This condition will be getting even worst in the near future with rapid increase of number of vehicles regardless of various modes of transportation. This contributes to the ever present of road congestion at the city areas and main roads especially during peak hours.

**Noble values practices in a smart city:** Noble values such as honesty, responsible, diligence, hardworking, trust, orderly, cleanliness, discipline, cooperative, polite, grateful and morality are the core of the Islamic noble values but they are also encouraged by other religions and global culture to achieve well-being. Based on this

situation, the Malaysian Government has adopted the city of Putrajaya as a model city by developing a civilised city and civilised residents who practise good attitudes, good behaviours and adhere to good moral values. The absence of good moral values would destroy a society due to powerful negative influences. There is also a statement that poor attitudes are commonly related to current behavioural destruction (Saad, 2007).

The city of Putrajaya is developed in a holistic concept by civilizing practice or acculturation of good values to create a society which has great identity and integrity. The society is taught and trained to practise noble values through several approaches such as the provision of honestly box of newspapers at the pedestrian streets where people can buy and honestly pay for any newspaper from the box without the vendor. This is an example of a good moral value manifested by the government in order to acculturate the residents and making the city as a smart city as commonly practised at many other civilised countries in the world. According to Nordin and Aini (2002) moral decadence has become an issue which stemmed from ignorant human minds who have forgotten the real purpose of living in this world. This simple negligence causing people to easily surrender to the demands of evil desires and they eventually becoming more materialistic. Consequently, this causes the rise of white collar crimes, corruption, fraud, drug addiction and various behavioural delinquencies among people regardless of their level of education.

Putrajaya is indeed a well-equipped city in terms of facilities, landscaping, infrastructure and transportation. With all this equipment, it is crucial to develop well-balanced human assets to balance the demands of life noble values are essential to create a harmonious society with strong solidarity. The progress of a country depends on the attitude of the members of its society. Therefore, it is important to shape the Putrajaya residents to have good and positive attitudes. Thus, it is the best ingredient to ensure smooth execution and proper implementation of the holistic development plan.

**The concept of a smart city:** According to Lash (2002), smart city is a micro concept in the macro urban concept which refers to a global and sustainable city. “Smart” literally refers to the advancement of ICT-based technologies that leverage the pulse of the city life with world-class facilities. According to Sassen (2002) the notion of intelligent or smart city is actually covering a broader term including the process of urbanization, urbanity and urbanised city. Hence, the term smart

does not only refer to the state-of-the art infrastructure and the use of ICT technologies but it also involves good governance, social progress and life quality of the society.

The concept of smart city is also related to the fulfillment of economic and industrial demands by advancing the knowledge-based economic activities (k-economy) particularly in the commercial aspects through electronic commerce, E-banking, E-finance and tele-marketing. The society is progressing through its knowledge-based working community of knowledge workers. The success of the smart city is measured through its economic advancement and industrial progress and on its ability to attain technological advances status, modern entrepreneurship and its contribution to the country’s GDP and GNP. According to Castells and Hall (1994) and Jones and Dickson (1985) there are other city concepts which particularly show economic advancement such as the concept of Techno pole city and science city.

In addition to the philosophy behind this development of smart city, the goal is to improve the quality of sustainable life in every aspect of human life, namely to provide a good healthy life, habitable living condition, affordable cost of living, collegial and harmonious society, caring, tolerance and respectful residents particularly towards culture diversity, ethical and strong personality of the community. The smart city concept is related with urbanised design, landscaping, images and activities. The urbanism environment and living spaces are harmonised by a waterfront which is developed by creating lakes, rivers and ponds as part of its development landscape to provide recreational areas with an attractive and comfortable environment for its residents (Fig. 1).

This study was conducted to examine the residents’ perspective on the acculturation of noble values practice in the Putrajaya neighborhood. The acculturation of noble values practice in this study, focuses on two main components, namely; involvement of the residents in social activities that lead to noble values such as

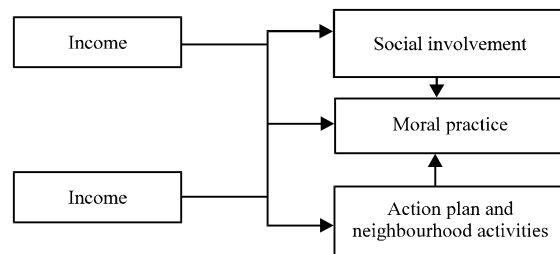


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

cooperation, caring and involvement in social activities; action plan for acculturation of noble values refers to assessment done by the residents on the programs conducted by the Putrajaya Corporation for the benefits of the neighbourhood. Among the items evaluated by the residents are management governance, religious activities, social activities, security and health programs, law and regulations to improve the practice of noble values among the residents of the Putrajaya neighborhood. This study, also examined the demographic aspect of the residents particularly on the aspects of age groups and income. Those aspects are crucial to be examined in order to determine any significant difference of the components studied. In addition, this study, also identified the relationship and contribution of the research components to further analysed results of this study.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was conducted on 277 residents (66.9%) at the age range between 21-30 years old; another 88 residents (21.3%) were residents from the age group between 31-years old; 34 residents (8.2%) were respondents aged 51 years old and above. In terms of income, 199 residents (28.7%) were residents with the income less than MYR1500; 169 residents (40.8%) were residents with the income between MYR1500-3000; another 54 residents (13.0%) were residents with the income between MYR3001 to RM4500 and another 72 residents (17.4%) were residents with the income more than RM4500 (the crurrency rate was: USD1 = MYR4.00). The research instrument was adapted from previous researches conducted by Gan Wee Lee and Wan Hasmah Wan Mamat and Abdul Razaq Ahmad, etc. A pilot study was conducted on 60 residents from the modern city namely Putrajaya Malaysia to determine the validity and reliability of the items in the instrument. Results of the

pilot study showed that every aspect studied has high value of the alpha Cronbach. This revealed that each item in the constructs was accepted to be used in the real study. The data was analysed using the SPSS 22.0 software. Descriptive analysis involving mean scores and standard deviation was conducted to determine the level of social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral values practised by the Putrajaya’s residents. Inferential analysis involving the Kruskal Wallis test and one-way Anova was also used to reveal any significant difference of social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral values practised by the Putrajaya’s residents based on age groups and incomes. Whereas, Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to find out the relationship between social involvement and action plan for acculturation of noble values with moral values practised by the residents of Putrajaya.

**RESULTS**

**Comparison of the residents’ involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice based on age:** The kruskal Wallis test was conducted and analysed to determine any significant difference of the residents’ involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice based on age. Results of the analysis are described in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference on the residents’ involvement in social activities ( $\chi^2 = 2.151$  and Sig. = 0.542,  $p > 0.05$ ), action plan for acculturation of noble values ( $\chi^2 = 7.279$  and Sig. = 0.064,  $p > 0.05$ ) and moral practice ( $\chi^2 = 0.059$  and Sig. = 0.996,  $p > 0.05$ ) based on age. However for the residents who aged 51 year old and above, this study has shown higher social involvement and moral practice but the

Table 1: Kruskal wallis comparison of the residents’ involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice based on age

Variables	Ages	N	Mean	SD	$\chi^2$	df	Sig.
Social involvement	21-30 years old	277	2.33	0.688	2.151	3	0.542
	31-40 years old	88	2.23	0.661			
	41-50 years old	34	2.35	0.748			
	51 years old and more	15	2.41	0.759			
	Total	414	2.31	0.689			
Action plan	21-30 years old	277	2.31	0.638	7.279	3	0.064
	31-40 years old	88	2.43	0.614			
	41-50 years old	34	2.60	0.677			
	51 years old and more	15	2.46	0.595			
	Total	414	2.37	0.639			
Moral practice	21-30 years old	277	2.73	0.735	0.059	3	0.996
	31-40 years old	88	2.72	0.818			
	41-50 years old	34	2.70	0.806			
	51 years old and more	15	2.77	0.956			
	Total	414	2.73	0.765			

Table 2: Spearman correlation analysis on the relationship between the residents' incomes with their involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice

Relationship	Income		Interpretation
	r	Sig.	
Social involvement	0.018	0.722	-
Action plan for acculturation of noble values	0.182	0.000	Very weak/low
Moral practice	0.056	0.260	-

Table 3: Spearman correlation analysis on the relationship between the residents' level of education with their involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice

Relationship	Income		Interpretation
	r	Sig.	
Social involvement	0.222	0.000	Very weak/low
Action plan for acculturation of noble values	0.258	0.000	Very weak/low
Moral practice	0.272	0.000	Very weak/low

difference is not significant. This means that the residents of the Putrajaya smart city have similar involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice regardless of age groups.

**Relationship between income and the residents' involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice:** Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between the residents' incomes with their involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between action plan for acculturation of noble values with the residents' income and the  $r = 0.182$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Even though, the relationship is positive but very low (weak). However, there is no significant relation between social involvement and moral practice with the residents' income ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Relationship between level of education and the residents' involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice:** Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between the residents' level of education with their involvement in social activities, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between social involvement with the residents' level of education and the  $r = 0.222$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship is positive but very weak (low). Apart from that, there is a significant relation between action plan for

Table 4: Pearson correlation on the relationship between social involvement and action plan with moral practice

Variables	Moral practice		Interpretation
	r	Sig.	
Social Involvement	0.593	0.000	Moderate
Action plan	0.509	0.000	Moderate

acculturation of moral values with the residents' level of education and  $r = 0.258$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship is also positive but very weak (low). There is also a significant relationship between moral practice with the residents' level of education and the  $r = 0.272$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship is also positive but very weak (low).

**Relationship between social involvement and action plan for acculturation of noble values with moral practice:**

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between social involvement and action plan with moral practice. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant relationship between social involvement with moral practice and the  $r = 0.593$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the relationship is positive but moderate. In addition, there is also a significant relation between action plan with moral practice and the  $r = 0.509$  and  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). The relationship is also positive but moderate.

**DISCUSSION**

Analysis on the residents' involvement in social activities conducted at the neighbourhood based on age groups does not show significant difference. This reveals that the residents' involvement in the neighbourhood social activities is not related to certain age groups. This finding is not supporting a result found by a research conducted by Fatini and Mohd Zamani (2006) that older people are matured citizens and it would be easier for them to inculcate noble values in their daily activities. However, based on this research data it is shown that the residents who are 50 year old and above are more positive and they involve in social activities positively, compared to those at the age of below 30 year old.

Results of the spearman correlation test show that there is a significant relationship among social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice with the residents' level of education. Findings of this study, show that the residents who have higher level of education (Bachelor degree, Master's degree, PhD) have higher action plan for acculturation of noble values than other residents who have lower educational level. Conclusion can be made that residents

who have higher level of education would relatively have higher social involvement, action plan for acculturation of noble values and moral practice.

Results of the analysis based on income have found no significant relationship among social involvement and moral practice with the residents' level of income. This is an opposite finding than a result found by Dodge *et al.* (1994) that level of income and socio-economic status influence people's attitudes and behaviours towards social involvement in their neighbourhood. Hence, people who have more income and higher socio-economic status relatively are more comfortable with their environment or surrounding compared to those who have lower income and lower socio-economic status, particularly residents of the urban areas.

This study has linked with the urbanism theory that residents of the urban areas have their own unique urban lifestyle which is of course different than those living at sub-urban or rural areas. This is another contributing factor on why the level of social involvement of the putrajaya's residents is reported very low. This is because putrajaya is a new urban area where residents are pre-rooted from various locations with diversity of socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, not all of them can easily adapt themselves with the new surrounding and new community of a new modern urban area by Selvaratnam *et al.* (2008). The situation is even worsening due to life pressure and busy working life is making the urban people to be more selfish, materialistic and individualistic.

Results of the Kruskal Wallis analysis reveal that there is no significant difference of the residents' proactive on the action plan for the acculturation of noble values based on age. This can be concluded that young and older residents have almost the same action plan for the acculturation of noble values. However, the mean score showed that residents at the age of 41-50 year old have higher action plan for the acculturation of noble values than the other residents of different age groups. Thus, related to that finding, it is also revealed that residents at the age between 21-30 year old have the lowest action plan for the acculturation of noble values.

Correlation analysis on the action plan for the acculturation of noble values undertaken by the Putrajaya corporation as the local authority shows a moderate relationship with the residents' involvement. This means that all the action plan and programs conducted by the local authority received low response from the residents. There are few things the corporation needs to establish in order to improve the low rate of response from the residents. The authority needs to carefully plan the social

projects by taking various aspects of urban life into consideration as suggested by Castell. It was suggested by Castell that a healthy society with good noble values can only be developed through a comprehensive urban concept based on sustainable physical, functions and activities. According to Ibrahim Ngah, there are few things to be considered in order to develop a healthy urban community. Hence, town planning has to focus on three main agendas, namely public security/safety, health and well-fare.

Based on the above findings and discussion, it is deemed effective if the city has continuous improvement plans as a positive reaction towards the action plan or program constituted by the government or the local authority. Fishman and Arif have discussed the context of smart city development as the efforts to develop healthy social community with diversity of knowledge resources and physical outlets which will sustainably acculturating noble values to the urban modern community of a city life.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of modern society today, social activities and neighbourhood programs are neglected due to hectic lifestyle and attitudes of the society. Thus, it is important to have a solid mechanism to regulate attractive community activities for the purpose of transforming the society and its social attributes towards unity. Apart from that, neighbourhood programs have to be functional in developing the local community by conducting activities leaning towards social welfare, economic, health and educational which are beneficial to every single member of the local residents. The formation of neighbourhood watch is another way to portray a positive message in establishing a more harmonious and safe community. Hence, it is everybody's responsibility to inculcate and practise good noble values for the sake of having a healthy neighbourhood which indirectly promotes the 1Malaysia concept of harmonious living for the benefit of all.

## IMPLICATIONS

This study has found that the residents of Putrajaya do not fully involve in social activities at their city neighbourhood. This is not a good sign in order to achieve a healthy lifestyle for the residents of Putrajaya. Low or poor involvement in social activities would disrupt the close-knit relationship among the residents, resulting with difficulty to inculcate noble values among the people and of course it hinders the efforts to

realize the action plan of making moral practice as a social culture for the residents. Putrajaya is a well-equipped urban city with current and modern facilities, infrastructure, landscape and transportation. However, those state-of-the art amenities would be meaningless if the residents fail to involve themselves in various social activities. Hence, it is wise if the residents fully utilise the premises and facilities by conducting and involving in various social activities, which in the long run would naturally improve moral practice.

This study has an implication to the government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) in planning programs for the Putrajaya residents. Based on this study, it is found that the level of the residents' involvement in social activities, action plan and moral practice is still very low. This is an indicator for the authorities to double up their efforts by planning suitable and attractive programs to attract more residents from various backgrounds and age groups to be part of the community's social activities. However, it is important to remember that the goal of the programs is to inculcate good moral values in the lifestyle of the society, thus, the programs to be planned should not be focussing on entertainment or merely for fun.

The amenities and facilities available at the neighbourhood should be maintained to ensure they are in good condition to be utilised by the residents for social activities such as the surau, mosques, city hall, recreational parks or playgrounds. Those facilities are the meeting points for the residents to meet and greet as well as to have direct interaction which would be the easiest way to get to know other people at the neighbourhood. This promotes a sense of neighbourhood identity and cohesion among the residents. Consequently, it encourages better commitment for the residents to be involved in various social activities, thus good moral values are naturally practised as part of their life culture.

This study generally reveals a moderately low achievement of the action plan taken by the authority to inculcate noble values as a life culture for the Putrajaya residents. Based on this revelation, it is unfortunate for the residents to have the action plan but the level of practice is still very moderate. Nevertheless, social involvement is still the strongest factor and the best hope for the efforts to improve good moral practice among the residents of Putrajaya.

Acculturation of noble values by the Putrajaya smart city development project needs a more holistic approach in order to build a society with strong personality and integrity. The process of making noble value as a culture is far from successful and yet to be exemplified by other

people of other states or countries. The values and behaviours should be pillared by religious yet universal principles of peace, love, brotherhood, fairness and promoting goodness for the pure reason of getting the blessing from the God. It is not easy to inculcate good attitudes and social responsibility in the multifaceted of people at a neighbourhood. It needs firm efforts, hard working and solid supports from each individual in the society in order to ensure the functions, objectives and goals of the community programs would be successfully achieved.

A community program can only be successful if all members of the community are responsible and fully committed. The residents' involvement, support, cooperation and responsibility require great commitment and sacrifices. Each member can contribute in various manners such as energy, opinions, ideas and financial support. However, the most important elements are cooperation, willingness and commitment to serve for the benefits of all.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Due to the findings of this study, it is recommended for the authority and Putrajaya Corporation to continuously revise and improve the action plan to ensure its effectiveness and suitability with the current needs and lifestyle of the residents. Apart from that opinions and suggestions from various relevant parties should be considered and taken into account in establishing policies for future action plan and programs.

This study focuses on the residents' involvement in social activities, action plan, moral practice and several influential factors related to noble values. It is recommended for future studies to add other variables related to acculturation of noble values particularly in terms of several other contributing factors such as cultures and religions. In addition, it is worth to study the contributing factors and other models with similar structures in order to get better holistic findings of models and contribution. Apart from that, it is important to analyse various perspectives and views from the local residents regarding the implementation of programs especially the acculturation process of noble values. The perspectives and opinions from the public can be used as the basic information to assess and revise the outcomes of programs and social activities implemented for the sake of developing a healthy living environment for the people. Hence, future studies can use various research designs such as conducting a qualitative study using triangulation research method to collect data.

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