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Determinants of Community Participation in Community Policing Program in Malaysia

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Abstract: Understanding the factors that influence community participation in neighbourhood is vital in developing a successful community policing program in Malaysia. The aim of this study is to highlight the factors that influence participation of community using the socio-ecological model. Five factors were identified and they are individual, community, organizational and governmental factors. The findings helped in developing a conceptual model that could serve as an useful resource for future study.

Key words: Community participation, community policing, socio-ecological model

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is experiencing rapid development and modernization of transformation in which it has also implications for economic change, social control and perception among public (Yero *et al.*, 2012). Statistics and news reported in a period of 10 years (1997-2006), history had shown a bad experience in police force in Malaysia (Suffian *et al.*, 2012). The increase of crime particularly muggings, gang fighting, pick-pocketing, alcohol and drug-related crime, curb crawlers, violent on-street theft, intimidation and threats and the increased in property crime (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Sidhu, 2005) have made people to feel insecure. Anxiety, personal fear and fear of crime lead to feelings of fear to perform daily activities. Undoubtedly, these fears and perception of being unsafe has negative impact on people's psychological wellbeing especially for those who have been victims of crimes and experienced trauma. The increase of street and property crime and the fact that police officers have been reported to accept bribery and exhibit misconduct while, service have contribute with the general negative perception and distrust towards the police force in Malaysia (Suffian *et al.*, 2012).

The negative perception and lack of trust that the police force receive from the general public, the Malaysian parliament setup a royal commission to investigate the allegations and evaluate police force performance. The independent police complain and misconduct commission reported that RMP is working too much on criminal cases and RMP not really care about public concern on personal safety. While, public is not given the priority and they perceived negatively about the police department and give a bad impact to the Malaysian government in managing safety and security issues in country.

Therefore, IPCMC suggested implementing the community policing program to increase public support in crime prevention and also to create harmony environment in country.

As soon as these results and recommendations were reported, there have been a lot of programme initiatives to meet the standards set by IPCMC and enhance Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) performance.

The current initiatives to combat crime in Malaysia and the decreased crime rates are a good indicator that RMP have made efforts to improve their performance and presence (Asmah, 2007). Several local and international evaluation consultants (e.g., Performance Management and Delivery Unit-PEMANDU; Taylor Nelson Sofres) have certified and validated the improvement achieved by RMP. The national crime index had dropped by 11% over a period of two years. More specifically from 2009 -2012, the crime index decreased by 10.1% and the street crimes dropped 43% going down from initially 16,294-9,287 (PEMANDU, 2010) and new initiatives have been put in place to combat crime.

"Malaysia had been ranked 1st out of 19 upper middle-income countries in the World Justice Project and 12th out of 66 countries in terms of order and security. Malaysia was ranked higher than the United States and the United Kingdom" (PEMANDU, 2011).

"The World Justice Project is a multinational that aims to strengthen equality in communities. In the Global Peace Index, Malaysia is the safest country in Southeast Asia and ranked No. 4 in the Asia-Pacific region. We are also ranked 19th worldwide in this index" (PEMANDU, 2011).

"The World Economic Forum's report on the business cost of crime and violence showed Malaysia had risen to 63rd spot from 93rd last year" (PEMANDU, 2011).

Among other initiatives, community policing was introduced as an initiative that encourage police force and the public to collaborate as partners in crime prevention and management. Both police and civilians work together in recognizing problems, identifying effective actions and solution to combat crime and social issues that might contribute to crime and deviant conduct in their community. With the realization that crime is a community problem related to social issues and failures to address such issues, the community understands that crime prevention is not only responsibility of the police force and that the increase of crime rates are indication of poor performance of RMP (Yero *et al.*, 2012; Sidhu, 2005; Jarmal, 2000; Amin, 2000).

Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) made the first step to support the community first initiative of crime watch and prevention by providing police presence and support. The main objective of community policing were to; establish a close cooperation between the police and the community, create opportunities for communities to solve local people's problems in a group, involve the community in addressing increased crime and addressing community concerns over crime, to establish a structured procedure between police and the community as a smart partnership and to implant the spirit of co-ownership rights in the planning and actionable results (Oliver, 2000; Skogan, 1994). However, it's important value to note that community policing cannot cover all forms of policing strategies but it's rather as a complementary strategy in policing (Ferreira, 1996).

This study designed to review of the literature on factors that have identified to be related to participation in community policing. Researchers have categorized several factors that might be associated with community decision of participating in community policing. Based on the literature reviewed, the authors aim to propose a conceptual model for further study.

Community policing in Malaysia: Community policing in Malaysia have been practiced for long time (Suffian *et al.*, 2012). Back in 1967, as result of a research and planning division at Royal Malaysia Police, new methodology was proposed to encourage public and community members to cooperate with police through smart-partnership program named Salleh's system. This approach was adapted from KOBAN approach implemented in Japan (Jarmal, 2000; Amin, 2000; Yero *et al.*, 2012). Japanese KOBAN system (KO-change and Prohibit-meaning guard), that means law enforcement are policing on the street so that public can approach them and assist on matters of inquiry and breach of peace, they have to report which was actually effective as observed later by Bayley (1996).

Then, from KOBAN approach, Malaysian police operationalize the concept and added some cultural elements to make it more inclusive. Therefore System's Salleh consisted of police personnel were trained to be more responsible and portray a plain image that would be acceptable by community; showing police not as a law enforcement agent but like a friend. The modus operandi for community policing consisted of placing police officers to each sectors to; stay and live as a member of the community, introduce themselves, interact and accepted by other members of the community, participate in community activities (e.g., weddings and community cleaning up events) and educate the community about police work, crime prevention and strategies for managing crime and disorder and other thing. In other words, the aim was that "members of the community and the police department will identify local problems and act on the problem solving process together" (Jarmal, 2000; Pratten and Bailey, 2005). Thus, police department should obtain trust and confidence from their community. As police and member of community, it is their duty to monitor and maintain public safety and security in that particular community with participation of other local members. Indirectly, officers could study, analyze and have detailed information about the crime and disorder scenario in those areas. In 1968, the Deputy Prime Minister at that time in Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, has honored RMP for the success of 'Salleh System' and confirmed that it was an effective way to change public's perception of the police and police visibility so that member of the community no longer considered police as an institution to be fear or distrusted but as support and partners companions that can provide assistance when needed (Yero *et al.*, 2012).

When the time changed, the people's problems also changed. From issues of psychological crime, it changed to more advances like cybercrime, international fraud and so forth. A lot of new ideas and technologies took place in society and the police have to change. Slowly, community policing was silent in the police and even though it was never been deleted in the police agenda. Until the IPCMC report was turn up to uphold again the community policing as a method to give back the public confidence and trust towards Royal Malaysia Police. Unfortunately, when the crime index arises in 1997, it did not focus on cyber based but on regular local crime such as street crime and property crime around the community. It continued until recently with new leadership of Prime Minister when the government initiated the National Key Result Area (NKRA) with Reducing Crime as a first initiative to be implemented. With that situation, community participation and co-operation in fight the crime was very much needed.

Socio-ecological model and it's influence to community participation:

Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) was developed under the tree of ecological theory where SEM contributes significantly in explaining the phenomenon of community participation in various field of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Stokols, 1996). SEM highlighted premise that was “individuals must have some kind of interaction with their own community to understand and gain perspectives on factors that shape their behaviour’s, where individuals were viewed as nested within an ever-expanding systems of networks; the microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem”. SEM comprises several immediate environmental context including individual, social, institutional and policy (Stokols, 1996). The core principle of SEM mention by Stokols was “multiple factors influence behaviours, environments are multidimensional and complex, human-environment interactions can be described at varying levels of organisation and the interrelationships between people and their environment are dynamic”. Based on the literature reviewed, the authors believe that SEM provides a good conceptual models to investigate the complexity of people’s engagement in community policing in Malaysia. On the practical implementation, interaction with specific context will influence someone decision either to accept or decline to participate in community policing. Therefore, understanding every possible context in the system, which they embedded, will give substantial information toward factors influence participation (Fig. 1).

Community participation: Definition, elements and structures:

Community participation normally refers to the involvement of member of a community in decision making process and common goal achievement. Community participation is a very important area of research in social science (e.g., sociology, anthropology, psychology and social engineering, etc.) and it has also been used in research development and rural and urban community research (Jobes *et al.*, 2001; Graycar, 1999; Shipway and Homel, 1999; Chantrill, 1998), neighbourhood and community development (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Wandersman and Florin, 2000), health and medical research on specific program for community intervention (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2008; Stokols, 1996; Speer and Hughey, 1995; Eisen, 1994), community action on environmental conflict (Reed, 2008; Tyler, 2006; Halvorsen, 2003), resident participation in community safety (Schelp, 1988; Perkins *et al.*, 1990; Reisig, 2007; Deukmedjian and Cradock, 2008; Dillon and Fanning, 2013) and rural participation in tourism industries (Fahmi *et al.*, 2013; Muhammad *et al.*, 2012; Tosun, 2006).

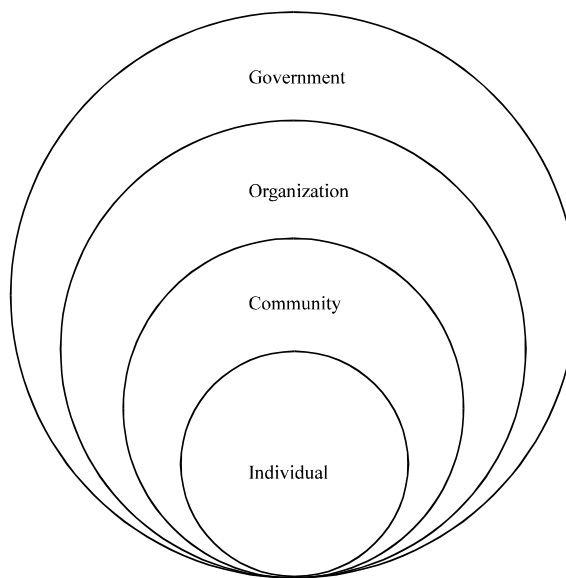


Fig. 1: Socio-Ecological model

A community can be defined as: “A group of people who not only live in a region with fixed boundaries but are also united by similarities in the way of life, beliefs and practices (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Hamzah, 2011). Participation (in community development context) refers to “involvement by members of a community to predetermined programmes and objective with assistant of external intervention” (Oakley, 1991; Simanowitz, 1997; Cavaye, 2010). The involvement and endorsement of community member in intervention programs or initiatives from government bodies, community based organization, non-government organization or corporate group can serve as illustration of community participation. Community participation has been describe as “an active involvement of defied community at least in some aspects of the project design and implementation where the key objective is the incorporation of local knowledge into the project’s decision making process” (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). A more complex definition has been proposed by Ratanavaraha and Jomnonkwao (2013) as a “process enabling people to involve in planning and implementation of development with collaborative thinking and decision-making on their problems. It involves the use of mutually creative generation and knowledge and skill alongside appropriate guiders as well as monitoring organization and related staff’s implementation, thus, resulting in increasing level of living and solve community problems”. For the purpose of this study, the authors have adopted this definition of Community participation.

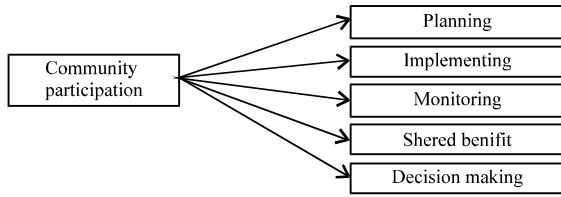


Fig. 2: Elements of community participation (Source: Lyndon *et al.*, 2012)

Table 1: Four dimensions of community participation

Dimentionis
Influence How specific program involve communities in the 'shaping' of regeneration plans/activities and in all decision making
Inclusivity How specific program ensure all groups and interests in the community can participate and the ways in which inequality is addressed
Communication How specific program develop effective ways of sharing information with communities and clear procedures that maximize community participation
Capacity How specific program provide the resources required by community to participate and support both local people and those from other group/agencies/stakeholders to develop their understanding, knowledge and skill

According to Lyndon *et al.* (2012), community participation usually have several elements such as planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (Fig. 2) and it's essential to community participation that the members of the community should discuss, consult and reach consensus among them about any programs or initiatives to be implemented in their community so all members could benefit and as result enhance their quality of life. Thus the authors argue that successful community participation must contain support for grassroots community-level; the establishment and strengthening of networks among professional workers and a commitment to accelerate the program to ensure it influences the majority.

However, all these indicators seem to be criteria of evaluation for a specific program rather than factors that constitute community participation. Therefore, Wilson and Wilde (2003) proposed four dimensions of community participation that can contribute to a better understanding of community participation instead of trying to define it through evaluation criteria (Table 1).

Cavaye (2010) describes community participation as being like "onion rings" (Fig. 3). At the centre of the "core" of community efforts, there is a small number of highly committed and motivated people. Around this "core", there are the people who get involved in the activities organized by the core and provide the support to the core's initiatives, these are known as "participants". In the third ring, there are the "observers",

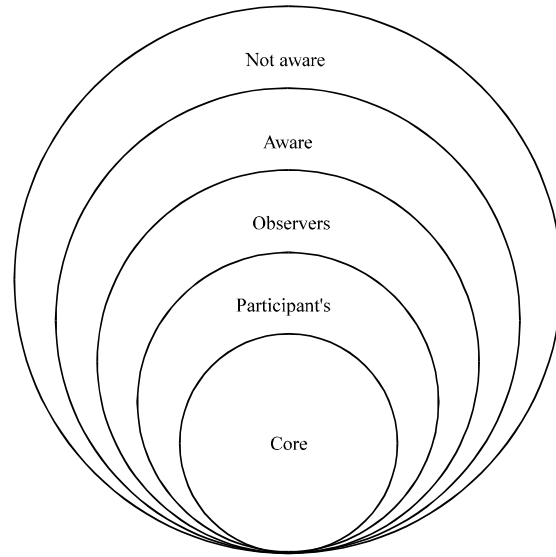


Fig. 3: Structure of community participation

these are the people who normally watch and/or critically monitor the progress of the activities and initiatives developed by the "core" and supported by the "participants". Although, "observers" might have interest and they do not yet become actively involved. Around the "observer", there is a larger circle that consisted of the people that are "aware" of the activities organized and taken place in the community but are not interested to participate in such programs or activities. The last circle is constituted by people in the community that are not aware of the any of the activities or programs happening in their community.

Participation in community policing: There is a number of studies that explore participation in community policing programs. The results of these studies are inconclusive showing both positive and negative aspects of community policing (Skogan, 1994; Goldstein, 1987). Nonetheless, many researchers and practitioners have made emphasis on the importance of the participation of community (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988; Wilson and Kelling, 1989; Bayley, 1996).

FACTORS RELATED TO PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY POLICING

Based on the socio-ecological model, it is identified that atleast there are four context that may influence individual to participate in community policing program such as individual level, community level, organizational level and environmental level.

Individual level: In this study, the researchers focus on the factors of perception towards CP, knowledge about CP, concern about safety and individual commitment for CP.

Perception toward community policing program was the central among other individual factor that contribute to active participation. It was reciprocal with perception toward police organization. According to research on community policing, it suggest that belief on positive perception encourage people's support to the implementation of community policing activities (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Bahaman *et al.*, 2009; Sims *et al.*, 2002). Positive perception of CP program comprises several indicator including trust, credible, meaningful, positive thinking, views and good word.

Knowledge, as described by Arthur-Kelly *et al.* (2003), is fundamental to the behaviour of an individual. Suffian *et al.* (2012) in his finding mention that knowledge also influence participation and increase the program effectiveness. While, according to Bahaman *et al.* (2009), information and knowledge about any particular program can result on increase the participation.

Another factor that can influence community participation is people's concern about safety (e.g., personal, family, neighbours and residential areas) (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Nalla and Madan, 2011). It is the authors' view that people's concern about their safety might motivate their participation in programs like neighbourhood watched in Peninsula Malaysia. Study suggest that there is a positive and significant relationship among the respondent concern about safety toward positive impact on participation (Bahaman *et al.*, 2009).

Commitment has also been associated with community participation (Suffian *et al.*, 2012; Bahaman *et al.*, 2009). Members supposed to be more proactive and give full attention in preventing crime in the neighbourhood, not just respond to the causes of crime but more than that is to confront and solve the problem before it occur (Pratten and Bailey, 2005). The authors argue that individual's commitments are associated with the success of community policing program.

Community level: In this study, researcher focuses on understanding several factors at influence participation among residents such as community cohesion, community attachment, community safety, community organizational support and community leadership.

Term community cohesion and sense of community always been used by sociologist inter changeably as a

construct to frame a common vision and feeling of belonging in community (Glaser and Denhardt, 2010; Lev-Wiesel, 2003; McMillan and George, 1986). Community cohesion proposed with four elements such as; sense of belonging, solidarity, perceived community support and social ties. In this study, researcher would like to explore the strength of community cohesion in influencing community participation.

Community attachment of ten defined as an individual's feelings about their emotional bonds, belief, attitude and commitment to a particular place and their neighbour's (Smith, 1975; Hummon, 1992; Auh and Cook, 2009; Rai, 2011). Attachment is generally seen as having positive impacts for both individuals and for neighbourhoods. Study has demonstrated the association between attachments and individual willingness to participate in community crime prevention activities. Besides, understanding about sense of belonging, scholars also confirmed that tenure of residency and home ownership (homeowners shown to be more attached and willing to participate actively with community crime prevention).

Community safety also play an important role in influencing participation where it encompasses actual fear of crime and perceived safety which exist in specific community (Scott, 2003; Bridenball and Jesilow, 2005; Reisig, 2007; Rai, 2011). It measures the presence fear of crime among residents and the perceptions of safety in their surroundings which impact on their quality of life. Much study on community policing and crime prevention has mentioned the importance of the community safety factors in shaping the resident member participate actively in community activity. They mentioned on their study that high crime rate and low perceived safety will increase the participation of resident because they feel unsecured and scared to go out for leisure activity.

Community leadership have a different spectrum among other type of leadership. Sociologist like Fanelli (1956), Wilkinson (1986) and Goepfing (2002) have similar vision when discussed about community leadership through interactional approach, they agree that community leadership "as an action enacted by individuals who make specific and distinctive contributions to community action". This future study follow leadership components stressed by Angell (1951) as: "Characteristics of leaders at the time of induction into leadership, representation of groups in the population, degree to which the leadership group is grown, relation to the general population, relations among leaders and the technique of leadership".

Community organizational support is an organization which develops by community in the specific area to manage the program in the neighbourhood area. The ultimate objectives of having this organization were to plan and implement all programs that can benefit all the residents' member directly or indirectly. In many studies on community policing, the importance of community organization cannot be denied anymore. Skogan (1994) findings that there is a significant relationship on community organizational support with the effectiveness on community policing program. In this study, community organizational support includes organizational readiness to cooperate with CP group, share resources, commitment on crime prevention and organization recognition and acknowledgment.

Institutional level: As discussed before, implementing community policing on the community setting as crime prevention mechanism cannot be done only by one party (Tyler, 2011). It's a partnership approach that combine police organization, community member, community organization, government's agency, NGO and other stakeholders (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988; Goldstein, 1987; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Kelling and Wilson, 1982; Wilson and Kelling, 1989; Wycoff, 1988). Therefore, the police related factors also give impact on influencing community to actively participate in community policing agenda. In this study, focus is on perception towards police service, quality of police contact with the community, fear of crime and personal fear and satisfaction of police service.

Perception toward police service is really important and has a significant relation on community participation. While, scholars varies in using term such attitudes towards police, satisfaction on police encounters, evaluation of police, confidence in police and support for police. Research has been done in many countries to confirm it crucibles. They found that when the residents of specific area have a positive perception on police service, tendency to participate in community policing activities is more higher than those who didn't perceived well on police (Masterson and Stevens, 2002; Bahaman *et al.*, 2009; Suffian *et al.*, 2012). Unfortunately, when community member perceived negativity towards police service, they become pessimistic and antagonise where they feel like police cannot be trusted and problematic (Jackson *et al.*, 2009; MacDonald *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, this study aims to examine the community perception on police service towards community participation.

A partnership approach required police personnel to have a good contact with the community which they need to portray positive character such as respect, fair, supportive, kind, empathy and pleasant among them (Maxson *et al.*, 2003). An outstanding quality of contact presumably will generate more meaningful relationship between police personnel and residents which inclined the interest of residents to participate (Skogan, 2002, 2005). However, there are several studies shown that negative experiences among residents portray some rejection which may become an obstacle for the continuity of participation among the residents.

Fear of crime and personal fear has been acceptable as one of the construct that measure impact of community policing program (Wynne, 2008). Realizing that preventing crime will reduce fear of crime in community, police organization has to apply partnership approach with community organization. Researcher agree with two definition from scholars in criminology which they defined fear of crime as "the sense of personal security in the community" (Conklin, 1971) while Taylor (1997) defined it as "an emotional response to possible violent crime and physical harm". In relation to reduce fear of crime in community, the frequent police presence in specific area will increase community trust that their neighbourhood area was safe. Therefore, understanding the fear of crime among residents in a specific community will give a better picture about their antecedent factor towards participating in community policing program. In this study, researcher refers fear of crime as response toward variety crime activity happen in community.

While personal fear is more toward individual context which they perceived likelihood of being victim. Keane (1995) divided personal fear in two categories; concrete fear and formless fear. Concrete fear is the fear associated with certain criminal activities such as rape or theft-snatch in which individuals fear more than others, while, formless fear is more generic or less specific fear of crime such as cybercrime, vandalism or gang's crime. Even though literature on fear of crime and personal fear is very much related, however, scholars make a distinctive note that by participating in community policing activities, individual can get information about how to prevent and manage crime if happen to them (Suffian *et al.*, 2012). In this study, researcher refers personal fear as a perceived level of anxiety toward multiple crime situation that may occur to them or their own properties.

Government level: Having community policing in bigger picture, it was included in crime prevention agenda in so

many countries that implement it. Several different studies in different field discussed about the influence of government and societal variables with regard to socio-ecological model (macro-level) where scholars like Stokols, (1996), Bronfenbrenner, (1979) believed that governmental related variables also took part in influencing community participation in specific program toward positive community development. Based on literature, researchers conclude that several factors in governmental level which may influence community to participate such government policies and initiatives, interagency collaboration, media and ICT influence (Suffian *et al.*, 2012).

Based on 10th Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) (EPU, 2010), government stress out that it's crucial to develop a country that less crime and more sustainable society. Through, several national programme, it's believed that the country will be more stable and growth towards vision 2020. The importance of the government policies which support the principle of citizen participation in development is very fundamental in stimulate the citizen to take part actively in developmental process and decision making. Therefore, with pertinent policy development, every citizen in this country is able to play a better role in creating a safer place to live, where as other stakeholders can be more proactive and committed in promoting community participation towards crime prevention agenda. Programme such Government Transformation Program was develop to cultivate the country from various spectrum of development towards a better nation. While another program National Key Result Area (NKRA) was developed by Malaysian to evaluate their achievement in selected field (related to reduce crime and fear of crime) to portray that government really work hard in handling crime in the country and promotes citizen participation and community empowerment in locality is vital for public to trust the government that they can manage the country well.

In conjuncture to policy development, under NKRA initiatives inter-agency collaboration was strengthen better. By admitting that the police alone can't affords to cover all spectrum in crime prevention, therefore police need to seek support and close co-operation from the government agencies, organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) by utilizing the expertise, technology, equipment that are owned by these parties so that the police and public can move towards fulfilling the ultimate agenda of community policing. It's a practical approach that so many countries had done before in order to prevent crime and also to make a better place to live.

Through smart-partnership participation among government agencies such as Department of National Unity and Integration (Volunteer Patrol Scheme), "Ikatan Relawan Rakyat" also known as People's Volunteer Corp and Department of Civil Defence, it is shown that government was really intense in promoting community participation in national agenda. Besides the government agencies, there are many non-governmental organization bodies that promote community participation in community policing and crime prevention such as Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF), Community Policing Selangor (COPS) which is actually a part from International Crime Prevention Organization based on Japan. In Malaysia, MCPF play a role in spreading awareness about crime prevention. It's good to mention that all organization discuss here was recruiting public to become a volunteers with little incentives.

Another important influence that triggers community to participate in community policing was the influence of media and ICT. The need for crime information nowadays can't be denied anymore. It happens because people feel scared and unsafe to go somewhere especially a place which they know that are not safe. While media was seen as an agent for channelling information to the mass, the role in media is important to impress the public that the government is trying the best to resolve crime problem. RMP and interested parties should enable to penetrate more information through various type of media including, newspapers, magazine, billboards, TV's news and programme, radio, web, blogs, social media and SMS about the important message such as awareness of crime, criminal behaviour, what public should do or shouldn't do if crime happens and so on, to the public as a crime prevention effort. Besides that, promoting community participation in community policing especially to the community residents also will uphold the safety and security in their area. Report from (PEMANDU, 2011) with the support from media agencies, Malaysian government believed that the public is feeling safe and better than before. Even though, it's not really much related to community participation but the intention that media did influence public satisfaction towards the safety country.

Current research agenda: With extensive literature support, researcher hypothesize that all factors discussed have influence significantly toward community participation in community policing. The summary of factors is portrayed in Fig. 4. In this framework, it is hypothesized that all predictive factors have a positive relationship towards the community participation.

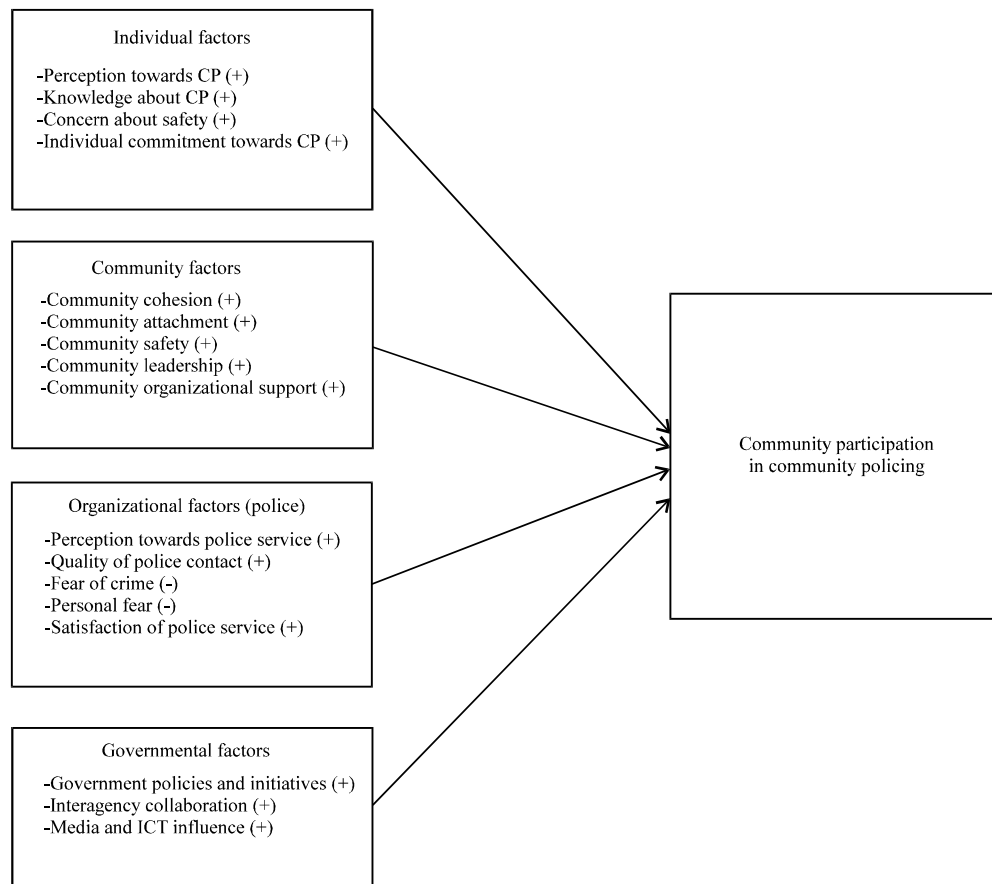


Fig. 4: Reasearch framework for multiple factors influencing

CONCLUSION

Understanding multi factors influence participation, socio-ecological perspectives is important in developing a holistic participation model. In this study, researcher collected a lot of research base material to support that there are several factors which can be constructed together in developing a community participation model.

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