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## Potential Impingement Factors of Reading Habits at Rural Library in Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>Raidah Mazuki, <sup>1</sup>Siti Zobidah Omar, <sup>2</sup>Jusang Bolong,

<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Lawrence D'Silva and <sup>1</sup>Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shaffril

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Social Science Studies,

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Modern Language and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Rural library in Malaysia is purposively built to combat illiteracy and enhance knowledge possession among the rural community which is important in order for them to cope with the demand of globalization. The source of the library information is expected to change the lifestyle of the local community. This conceptual study suggests the potential impingement factors for reading habits at the rural library in Malaysia. Based on the document analyses performed, various potential factors that impinge the reading habits at the rural library are identified namely place and the building, adequacy of tools and the librarian. A number of discussion have been placed and it is a hope, such discussion can assist to further cultivate reading habits among the community particularly among those who settle in the rural areas.

**Key words:** Rural library, information management, community development

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### INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made effort in seeking information and knowledge is simpler than before. Just by a click on the computer, a person nowadays is linked to the non-boundaries world of information. Despite the superior advantages brought by ICT to the community, nevertheless, yet, there are still people out there particularly in the rural areas who still rely on conventional way of seeking information for example, through the services offered at the rural library (Omar *et al.*, 2014). Within the local setting, less has been understood on the reasons regarding why rural people still rely on rural library for seeking information and this study tries to fill the gap by performing document analysis in identifying the potential factors of reading habits at rural library in Malaysia. To have a better understanding on such issue is vital as refusal to do it will result in the concern parties to produce strategies that is unfit to the rural community ability and interests. Information of the present study is expected to offer a number of significance such as contributing new knowledge to existing literature, act as a basis for more related studies to be conducted and supporting the relevant agencies in constructing strategies to further improve reading habits in Malaysia.

### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALAYSIA (NLM)

The National Library of Malaysia (NLM) is one of government agencies placed under the governance of the

Ministry of Information Communication and Culture Malaysia. As the main library agency in Malaysia, NLM is guided by four missions namely, (1) Lead in library development and library services, (2) Be a center of excellence for the national intellectual heritage, (3) Manage and provide easy access to national information resources and (4) Cultivate reading habits among Malaysians. In the period of eight years (2004-2012) there is significant increase with regard to the number of libraries in Malaysia from 1,879-2,435 libraries which comprises the National library of Malaysia, Public libraries, Special libraries (government and private sector) and University libraries (government and private university). In addition to this, there is a total of 9,922 existing school libraries making up the total number of libraries in Malaysia is 12,358.

### RURAL LIBRARY IN MALAYSIA

In addition to public library and special library, another recognized effort by the Malaysia government is the establishment of rural library in remote area. Up to 2012, the recorded number of rural library across the country was 1,114 rural libraries (Table 1) while the number of visitors to rural library in 2012 was exceeding 6.3 million. In addition, the number of public participation in rural library activities is exceeding 800,000 participants (Table 2). Albeit its conventional roles of providing sources of knowledge and information to the rural community, however, within the current setting, rural libraries services in Malaysia is able to perform additional

**Table 1: No. of rural library in Malaysia**

State	No. of rural libraries	
	Malaysia national library	National public library
Johor	39	50
Kedah	56	40
Kelantan	34	3
Melaka	28	27
Negeri Sembilan	60	15
Pahang	32	32
Perak	35	43
Perlis	18	19
Pulau pinang	34	49
Selangor	17	54
Terengganu	39	51
Sabah	49	75
Sarawak	36	176
Wilayah Persekutuan labuan	3	0

National Library of Malaysia (2013)

**Table 2: Rural library parameters**

Parameters	Years 2012
No. of library	1,114
Membership cumulative	1,347,405
No. of visitors	6,352,686
No. of users	5,249,105
No. of borrowing collection	4,261,341
No. of ICT usage	1,081,589
Collection cumulative	9,420,444
No. of organize activity	43,894
No. of public participation	805,419

National Library of Malaysia (2013)

roles of social restructuring as they offer learning and skill support such as basic skills, family learning and education to local communities in the rural area. The main aims of the rural library is to (1) Inspire reading habits among the rural people, (2) Offer useful reading sources to the rural community, (3) Assist rural students in getting useful sources for their studies and (4) Provide related recreational activities for the rural community. Most rural libraries are conducting community programmes especially one that related to reading. To have such activities is accentuated by the government in each of the rural library as reading is considered as a cornerstone for success, not just in schools but also throughout the adult life of an individual (Anderson *et al.*, 1985). In addition to this, positive reading attitudes create positive reading experiences which then drive towards a higher academic performance (Abdul Karim and Hasan, 2007).

**POTENTIAL IMPINGMENT FACTORS OF READING HABITS AT RURAL LIBRARY IN MALAYSIA**

**Place and the building:** Rural library is linked with the tranquility and conducive environment of rural areas which is one of the advantages offered. Convenient spaces and areas offered by the rural library can be a great attraction to the users (Taylor, 2007). In the rural library,

for those who wants to have a discussion, they are provided a spacious discussion section and for those who wants self-reading or doing revision they can stay at self-reading section. At this point, rural library can be a meeting point for the youngster or even the older generation to do some discussion or homework together in a place so called knowledge center. It helps to improve the community lifestyle to fulfill their leisure times in a conducive and quiet place. On the other hand, the signpost for showing the location or the direction must be updated. The potential users are come from all over the places. The clear and complete direction will ease the users to find the rural library.

**Adequacy of tools:** The availability of computers in a rural library is a great addition to its existing services. Instead of computers, internet connection should be provided in order to act as an alternative information searching tool to the users. Some of the rural libraries are offering wifi services which benefit the laptop and note book users and this indeed is another great addition to the existing rural library services. The reading sources can be either international or national, material such variation of materials in term of languages and content is another potential attraction for the users to come to rural library. Besides youth, housewife is one of the main rural library users (Omar *et al.*, 2012). Sometimes they use rural library as a place for club/organization/association meeting and other related activities (e.g., sewing class) during weekends. Adequacy of tools have always been one of community consideration to use or not the rural library services offered (Omar *et al.*, 2014) and replacement for any missing and defect materials must be done in a short period whereas failure to do so will result in a longer waiting period and result in decrease of interest to use the rural library services. A systematic organization of materials in the rural library is another potential impingement factor whereas well organized and easy to access material will ease the searching effort of the users. The duration for borrowing and returning book or other references must be considered as limited time of borrowing will result in refusal among the users to use the services offered.

**Librarian:** Adequate number of staffs will always produce library services which are fit in terms of its quality and quantity. As the main ‘player’ for the rural library, the librarian must be proactive in all their actions. The librarians are responsible in promoting and their communication skills are needed to inform the community on the vary services offered by the rural library. Furthermore, the librarian are responsible for providing

information, assisting the user and collecting and organizing library materials. In addition to this, the librarians must be professional in searching the information and also friendly. The operation time must be standardized to ease the librarian. Each state have different operation time. When the operation time is on the weekend, some of the staff have to bring their children. This is because the nursery are closed on the weekend or the other choice they have to leave. This will effect the performance of the librarian.

### CONCLUSION

Three guidelines had been listed by Kempson (1986) for creation and operation that should be considered as a definition of rural libraries (1) The rural library should not solely be based on the provision of printed materials, (2) The rural library should be rooted in the community and for the most part, facilitated by members of that particularly community and (3) The rural library service should be a channel for transferring information both to and from the local community. Majority of the rural community members beliefs that rural libraries support and assist their self-development and self-improvement by changing their lifestyle. Rural library also anessential community space, one that allows users to access a variety of informational and social resources-resources than can make a difference in their lives. They come to the rural libraries for more than just reading. They meet, they talk, they shared and they also give to each other. Fisher *et al.* (2007) arising the public library concept where the libraries as informational places where people come when they have an information-related need or ant to find an environment with an atmosphere that supports the fulfilling of information related needs, whether for educational, business, or recreational purposes or for purposes comprising all themes including information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources and learning environment. In the era of globalization, it is recommended to the rural community to change their lifestyle by being a member in rural library

membership and fully utilize the service that had been provided to uplift the quality of life. There is no reason for the community to access what happened to real world instead of their own world.

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