



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF LIVING
AMONG RURAL MALAYS IN TWO VILLAGES
OF KUBANG PASU DISTRICT**

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ATTITUDE TOWARDS IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF LIVING
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OF KUBANG PASU DISTRICT

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RISDA	Rubber Industries Smallholders' Development Authority
MADA	Muda Agriculture Development Authority
KEDA	Kedah Regional Development Authority
KEMAS	Community Development Division
ha	Hectare



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The primary objective of this study was to explore the attitude towards improving the level of living among the rural Malays, in two villages of the Kubang Pasu district. The specific objectives were: a) to analyze the relationship between selected socio-demographic variables and the attitude towards improving the level of living, and b) to identify the profiles of those with positive attitude towards improving their level of living.

The data collected from 120 male heads of households revealed that their attitude scores towards improving the level of living was average. This was manifested by their average exposure towards change agents, high aspiration to improve their lives and an average score on



the Internal-External Locus of Control scale. The years of schooling and income per month were found to be significant and positively related to the attitude towards improving the level of living. The oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that there were differences in the mean score between those uneducated, and those with primary, and secondary levels of education. Differences of group mean score was also found between those earning below and above M\$500.00 per month.

The profiles of individuals with positive attitude towards improving the level of living were found to be a) those with income of more than M\$500.00, have more land, highly exposed to change agents, and possess self-control; and b) those who have at least primary education, still young, do not necessarily own any land, highly exposed to change agents and have aspiration to improve themselves.



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**SIKAP TERHADAP MEMPERBAIKI TAHAP HIDUP DI KALANGAN
MASYARAKAT MELAYU LUARBANDAR DI DUA BUAH KAMPUNG
DALAM DAERAH KUBANG PASU, KEDAH**

oleh

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Objektif utama kajian ini ialah untuk meninjau sikap terhadap memperbaiki tahap hidup di kalangan masyarakat Melayu luarbandar, di dua buah kampung dalam daerah Kubang Pasu. Objektif-objektif khusus kajian ialah: a) untuk menganalisis hubungan di antara angkubah sosio-demografi yang dipilih, dengan sikap terhadap memperbaiki tahap hidup, dan b) untuk mengenalpasti profail mereka yang mempunyai sikap positif terhadap memperbaiki hidup mereka.

Data yang dikumpulkan dari 120 ketua keluarga (lelaki) menunjukkan bahawa mereka mempunyai purata skor sikap yang sederhana dalam memperbaiki tahap hidup mereka. Sikap ini dapat dilihat dari segi pendedahan sederhana mereka terhadap agen-agen perubahan, cita-cita



yang tinggi untuk meningkatkan taraf hidup dan skor yang sederhana dalam sekil Lokus Kawalan Dalaman-Luaran. Bilangan tahun persekolahan dan pendapatan sebulan didapati mempunyai hubungan positif dan signifikan dengan sikap terhadap memperbaiki tahap hidup. Analisis varian (ANOVA) menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan pada skor purata kumpulan bagi sikap di antara mereka yang tidak berpendidikan, yang bersekolah hingga peringkat rendah dan mereka di peringkat menengah. Perbezaan skor purata kumpulan juga didapati di antara mereka yang berpendapatan di atas dan di bawah paras M\$500.00 sebulan.

Profail individu-individu yang mempunyai sikap positif terhadap memperbaiki tahap hidup didapati pada a) mereka yang mempunyai pendapatan lebih dari M\$500.00, mempunyai tanah yang banyak, banyak terdedah pada agen-agen perubahan, dan mempunyai kawalan diri; dan b) mereka yang mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya pendidikan sekolah rendah, masih muda, tidak semestinya memiliki tanah, banyak terdedah kepada agen-agen perubahan dan mempunyai cita-cita untuk meningkatkan diri.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a country undergoing rapid development. The five-year economic plans, which have reached their fifth term (1986 -1990) have witnessed many improvements (Fifth Malaysia Plan, 1986). The major concern of all the five-year plans is to uplift the level of living among the population.

Nevertheless, not all countries are free from the problem of poverty (Nafziger, 1984). Malaysia is no exception. However, the report from the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986: 85) has shown tremendous decline in the incidence of poverty in 1984 as compared to 1970 (Table 1). The overall incidence of poverty has declined by 30.9%, from 49.3% in 1970 to 18.4% in 1984. The rural sector, where poverty is most prevalent, shows a decline from 58.7% in 1970 to 24.7% in 1984. The level of living of the people in two of the agricultural economic sectors, namely the rubber smallholders and the paddy farmers, has improved over the past fourteen years. The rubber smallholders have experienced a reduction in the incidence of poverty by 21.4% while that of paddy farmers have shown a reduction of 30.4%. This implies



Table 1
 Peninsular Malaysia:
 Incidence of Poverty in Rural Agriculture Sector,
 1970 and 1984

Stratum	1970			1984		
	Total Households ('000)	Total poor Households ('000)	Incidence of poverty (%)	Total Households ('000)	Total poor Households ('000)	Incidence of poverty (%)
Rural	1,203.4	705.9	58.7	1,629.4	402.0	24.7
Rubber smallholders	350.0	226.4	64.7	155.2	67.3	43.4
Paddy farmers	140.0	123.4	98.1	116.6	67.3	57.7
Estate workers	148.8	59.4	40.0	81.3	16.0	19.7
Fishermen	38.4	28.1	73.2	34.4	9.5	27.7
Coconut smallholders	32.0	16.9	52.8	14.2	6.6	46.9
Other agriculture	144.1	128.2	89.0	464.2	158.8	34.2
Other industries	350.5	123.5	35.2	763.6	76.5	10.0

Source: Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986: 86)

that various development projects especially in the rural areas have helped the rural poor to improve their level of living.

The Fifth Malaysia Plan's report revealed that the objectives of the New Economic Policy (1970 - 1990) are being achieved. The policy's objectives are:

- i. to eradicate poverty irrespective of race
- ii. to restructure the Malaysian society, to correct imbalance as to avoid identification of race with economic function and geographical location.

(Fourth Malaysia Plan, 1981: 4)

Apart from that, this report also shows that the efforts in reducing poverty level which are targetted at 16.7% by the year 1990, as stated in The Outline Perspective Plan, could be achieved (Fourth Malaysia Plan, 1981: 31). This forecast is claimed to be due to:

The availability of replanting grants, the provision of increased and subsidised input to various agricultural activities and the use of special agencies to assist in the marketing of produce and in obtaining access to inputs, together with measure to stimulate growth in the poorer states have all helped the rural poor.

(Fourth Malaysia Plan, 1981: 4)

Nevertheless, this does not reflect the level of utilisation of all the opportunities given to help the



rural poor. Sim and Yeoh (1976), in their study on the value orientation towards change among the rural population, found that there were more successful individuals who have achieved better level of living in areas where there are less development inputs allocated. This leads to the argument that there are other factors, apart from physical input, that determine the success or failure of individuals who are exposed to government's assistance. Sim and Yeoh attributed this to the individuality factor that distinguishes the capability of certain people to utilise available resources within their ecosystem.

In the Fifth Malaysia Plan report, it was explained that the will to change and to respond to opportunities is influenced by one's attitude.

Attitudes as well as cultural and social factors also have an influence on the livelihood of the individuals. Where the motivation towards hard work is weak, where social and cultural factors inhibit the adoption of modern practices, for example, the underutilisation of land to its full potentials, and where the motivation to change and respond to new opportunities is lacking, there will be less progress and households with these values and attitudes will continue to remain backward.

(Fifth Malaysia Plan, 1986: 84)

Attitude was also said to be the barrier to many development efforts (Mahathir, 1970; Deacon and Firebaugh; 1975; Sim and Yeoh, 1976). As attitude is a



hypothetical construct that is not easy to quantify, it remains as a potential element in explaining human behaviour. However, it is not impossible to measure the attitude towards improving the level of living. The scope of measurement of attitude should include various socio-cultural factors which could help explain the population's attitude towards improving their families' level of living.

In a traditional setting, the community follows certain norms. For instance, in male-headed households, men's authority in decision making is seldom contested. Their behaviour and predisposition will definitely influence the family's decisions, especially on matters concerning the investment and aspiration to improve their family's level of living. Since the men are normally the target population for development programmes, they are more exposed to extension agents. In this study, the attitude of the male heads of households towards improving their family's level of living will be explored.

Statement of the Problem

The Culture of Poverty Theory (Thomas, 1972) states that individuals who come from poor families tend to adopt a certain cultural trait which prevents them from improving their lives. Such cultural traits have



somehow trapped the individuals in a vicious cycle of poverty which is passed on intergenerationally. However, some scholars refute this cycle of poverty concept and argue that given the opportunity, and an equitable distribution of wealth, information, and assistance, the individuals can improve their lives (Sampson, 1971; Thomas, 1972; Salleh Ismail, 1983; Shlonsky, 1984). The social and structural barriers were claimed to impede the efforts to improve the level of living (Salleh Ismail, 1983). Such barriers, in the form of discrimination in the accessibility to resources and opportunities, must be removed in order for the poor to improve their level of living.

It is also suggested that material input alone does not ensure improvement in the level of living (Sim and Yeoh, 1976). Internal barriers within the individual that prohibit the acceptance of new ideas and change must also be removed. Since attitude is the "hidden" element which tends to influence feelings, thoughts and behaviour, an "attack" on attitude must be made in order to create a dissonance within the individual. The disequilibrium should then be remedied by introducing stimuli that can direct the individual towards a more favourable predisposition. On this, Katz (quoted from Secord and Backman, 1964:120) observed that an attitude

might change when the attitude and the activities related to it no longer provided the satisfaction they once did and/or when the individual's level of aspiration had been raised.

For a typical rural Malay community, there is a tendency for the members to lead a simple, unchanging and traditional way of life. There are few and sometimes no new challenges to be met. However, according to the Dissonance Theory (Sampson, 1971), if a stimuli is injected into the community thus creating a disequilibrium within that community, a reaction towards stability will occur either by restoring the old state or creating a new one. Following this theory, if the community is given some development input such as good infrastructure, and exposed to various types of change agents, there are possibilities that awareness among the people to seize the opportunities or incentives will be created, consequently leading to positive moves to improve their lives. Through new ideas delivered by the change agents, more avenues will be at the disposal of the receivers which may raise their aspiration level to work towards improving their level of living. Thus, if the people think that the reward for making the effort to utilise the input is greater than remaining passive and oblivious of what was given, they

may change their way of life as a means to improve their lives. Following this, if a community is given various inputs - in the form of material, information and technical assistance - can favourable attitude towards improving the level of living take place ?

Therefore the purpose of this study is to explore the existence of a favourable attitude towards improving the level of living among respondents in two Malay villages after being exposed to various inputs that can be utilised to improve their level of living. Specifically, the study attempts to explore the extent of the villagers' feelings, thoughts, and predisposition to utilise resources, from outside and within, that are available and accessible in their ecosystem or environment, in order to improve their level of living.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because its findings can identify the characteristics of the people in the rural community and their predisposition towards any effort to improve their level of living. Since the government has spent much effort and resources to improve the level of living of the people especially in the rural areas, it is hoped that this study may highlight the efforts of the receivers who are exposed to such community development inputs, to improve their level of living.

The knowledge and insight gained from this study will further facilitate the understanding of the rural Malays and will hopefully assist in developing efficient and meaningful family and community development programmes. The findings from this study may also be used by academicians, policy makers, programme planners and extension workers in their efforts towards providing better services to the rural population.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore the attitude of the rural Malays in two villages of Kubang Pasu district towards improving their level of living. This objective encompasses the specific objectives of exploring the relationship between the socio-demographic factors and the attitude towards improving the level of living among the rural Malays in the two villages; and identifying the profiles of the rural Malays who are predisposed to positive attitude towards improving their level of living.

Hypotheses

Attitude is that cluster of perceptions, experiences, and tendencies a person forms within himself on reaction to stimuli exerted on him. It becomes a self-defense mechanism when he is "forced" to take a stand. Attitude, as an inclination towards an aspect of