



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG RIVER  
COMMUNITIES ALONG SUNGAI PAHANG AND SUNGAI MUAR,  
MALAYSIA***

**SITI AISYAH BT RAMLI**

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COMMUNITIES ALONG SUNGAI PAHANG AND SUNGAI MUAR,  
MALAYSIA**

**By**

**SITI AISYAH BT RAMLI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Science**

**November 2014**

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## DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family, ayah (Ramli bin A. Rahman), emak (Noor Hayati binti Kamser) for their pure love, support and source of strength, my sister (Siti Rahmah) and my brother (Abdul Rahman) who always cheer me up with their story and jokes. I love all of you.*

Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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**November 2014**

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The purpose of this study was to examine the quality of life of river communities. Although the government has been championing efforts to keep rivers clean and environmentally sustainable but there are only certain to be known about the past and current impact of rivers onto the quality of life for those living near the rivers. The question to be answered is whether after several decades of economic development the quality of life of communities along the rivers has improved? The main objective of this study is to determine the quality of life among the river communities along Pahang and Muar river. Specifically, the objectives for this research are 1) To determine the level of quality of life among community living along the Pahang River and Muar River; 2) To compare the differences in dimension of quality of life by location, gender and level of education; 3) To determine the relationship between selected demographic factors and quality of life aspects; 4) To determine factors contributing towards the quality of life.

This study involved 900 respondents who live within two km from the river from three areas which are Pekan, Bahau and Muar. This study was conducted using quantitative method. The questionnaire was developed from previous research instruments. At the pre-test (Pilot Test) stage, thirty respondents were selected and analysis showed that the instrument as reliable.

To determine the quality of life of the respondents, researchers used SPSS version 20 for data analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to define the socio-demographics of respondents. Then to identify the difference and the relationship between the socio-demographic factors and the quality of life, t-test analysis, ANOVA and Pearson product-moment correlation was employed. Regression analysis was used to determine factors that contributed towards the quality of life among the river community.

Findings showed that the quality of life among river community was at the moderate level. Analysis such as t-test indicated that there is a difference between socio-demographic factors (gender and education level) and the quality of life. However, there is no difference between location and quality of life. Based on the Pearson product-moment correlation and regression, monthly income and distance to the nearest river was shown to have associated with and contributed to the quality of life among river community along Pahang and Muar river. So, the government and local agencies need to cooperate and work together to improve policies and increase monitoring especially planning in managing, controlling, coordinating and strengthening the development of physical, social and economic area of the river to ensure a higher quality of life of river communities.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG BERKAITAN DENGAN KUALITI HIDUP  
KALANGAN KOMUNITI SUNGAI SEPANJANG SUNGAI PAHANG DAN  
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Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kualiti hidup masyarakat sungai. Walaupun kerajaan telah memperjuangkan usaha untuk menjaga kebersihan sungai dan alam sekitar yang mampan tetapi sedikit yang diketahui tentang kesan semasa dan masa lalu sungai ke atas kualiti hidup bagi orang-orang yang tinggal berhampiran sungai. Persoalan yang perlu dijawab ialah sama ada selepas beberapa dekad pembangunan ekonomi kualiti hidup masyarakat di sepanjang sungai-sungai telah bertambah baik? Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kualiti hidup di kalangan masyarakat di sepanjang sungai Pahang dan Muar. Secara khususnya, objektif kajian ini adalah 1) Untuk menentukan tahap kualiti hidup di kalangan komuniti yang tinggal di sepanjang Sungai Pahang dan Sungai Muar, 2) Untuk membandingkan perbezaan dalam dimensi kualiti hidup berdasarkan lokasi, jantina dan tahap pendidikan; 3) Untuk menentukan hubungan yang mungkin berlaku antara aspek kualiti hidup dan faktor-faktor demografi yang dipilih; 4) Untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempunyai perkaitan dengan kualiti hidup.

Kajian ini melibatkan 900 responden yang tinggal berdekatan dengan sungai (dalam lingkungan dua km dari sungai) dari tiga kawasan yang Pekan, Bahau dan Muar. Kajian ini dijalankan menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif. Soal selidik yang telah dibentuk melalui instrumen penyelidikan sebelumnya. Di peringkat kajian rintis, tiga puluh responden telah dipilih dan analisis menunjukkan instrumen adalah boleh dipercayai.

Untuk mengetahui kualiti hidup responden, penyelidik telah menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 20 untuk analisis data. Analisis deskriptif telah digunakan untuk menentukan sosio-demografi responden. Kemudian mengenal pasti perbezaan dan hubungan antara faktor-faktor sosio-demografi dan kualiti hidup,

analisis ujian-t, ANOVA dan korelasi pearson telah digunakan. Regrasi pula telah digunakan bagi mengetahui faktor yang mempunyai perkaitan dengan kualiti hidup penduduk sungai.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kualiti hidup di kalangan masyarakat sungai berada pada tahap sederhana. Analisis seperti ujian-t membuktikan bahawa terdapat perbezaan antara faktor-faktor sosio-demografi (jantina dan tahap pendidikan) dan kualiti hidup. Walaubahaimanapun, analisis AVONA menunjukkan tiada sebarang perbezaan antara aspek kualiti hidup dengan lokasi. Berdasarkan korelasi pearson dan regrasi, pendapatan dan jarak ke sungai terdekat telah menunjukkan mempunyai perkaitan dan sumbangan dengan kualiti hidup. Jadi, agensi-agensi kerajaan dan tempatan perlu bekerjasama dan bekerja bersama-sama untuk meningkatkan dasar dan meningkatkan pemantauan terutamanya perancangan dalam mengurus, mengawal, menyelaras dan memperkukuhkan pembangunan kawasan fizikal, sosial dan ekonomi sungai untuk memastikan kualiti hidup yang tinggi bagi masyarakat sungai.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

QOL	Quality of Life
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation & Rehabilitation Authority
RISDA	Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority
RIDA	Rural and Industrial Development Authority
FAMA	Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
NEP	New Economic Policy
KEMAS	Community Development Department
JKKK	Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung
NDP	National Development Policy
NKRA	National Key Results Areas
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
8 <sup>th</sup> MP	8 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Pelan
9 <sup>th</sup> MP	9 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Pelan
PBPT	Local Planning Authority
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
MQLI	Malaysian Quality of Life Index
HDI	Human Development Index
GDW	Gerakan Desa Wawasan

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the study. It provides the context of the study, background of study, problem statement, purpose of study, research significance, scope and limitation of the study, and also the operational definitions of the study. This chapter also discusses the importance of quality of life (QOL), the efforts by the government to improve the quality of life and situations of the river community. It focuses on the forms of assistance extended in accordance with the needs of the people at present and the sort of challenges that the river community face today. Thus, in line with the development and progress of the country, the question remains whether the river communities received the benefits of the development.

This study was conducted to determine the QOL or sustained changes in community and social systems. To know the QOL, a measurement tool was used to assess the balance of national development and the social systems of the community. Various aspects are often considered in determining the QOL of a country or society, including education, health, safety, housing, environment and working environment.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

Malaysia is a country who is started from an agriculture and commodity based in low-income economy and then the economy rapidly growth and successfully achieve the middle-income economy. This result has improved the Malaysian quality of life. Now the government is aiming to become a high-income nation by 2020 with both inclusive and sustainable. The development of a nation is measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Kalsom & Norashikin,2006). The Department of Statistics Malaysia reported that the GDP at national level in 2013 have increased from RM31,920 to RM32,984.

Since independence, the government has implemented various development programs to improve the quality of life of the rural community. Provision of basic facilities, social amenities, education and health become a major focus for government to increase income and reduce poverty. The evolution of rural development started with the establishment of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and followed by the establishment of Rural and Industrial

Development Authority (RIDA). It became a catalyst for the development and management of land and rural area in agriculture aspects.

Then in 1965 Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) was established to help farmers to market their products. The following years Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) was established for developing, encouraging, facilitating and fostering the economic and social development in the federation, particularly in rural areas. However to address the problem of idle land, the government has set up Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA) to help the residents to improve their living standards.

In the New Economic Policy (NEP) 1970-1990 has emphasize two main objectives; eradicate poverty irrespective of race and restructuring of society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. Among the measures undertaken was to established Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) in 1973 and Community Development Department (KEMAS) in 1977. RISDA has established to promote smallholder and conducting rubber cultivation. While KEMAS is to mobilize community participation in development programs in collaboration with Jawatankuasa Kemajuan & Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK).

To achieve a high-income nation by 2020, the government has set the National Development Policy (NDP) which ran from 1990-2000. The objective of the policy is for national unity through the aggressive improvement of economic status and the quality of life for all Malaysian such as access to land, training, public facilities and physical capital. Besides, to increase the QOL of rural areas especially for community development the government has launched the new Philosophy and Strategy for Rural Development in 1994 which is supervised by Ministry of Rural and Regional Development. Later in 1996 the Gerakan Desa Wawasan (GDW) has established to increase the empowerment of communities through awareness, changes attitudes and the establishment of capability.

### 1.3 Government Transformation Program in Improving the QOL

7KH JRYHUQPHQW in assisting and developing the community Areas (NKRA) to turn the country into a high income nation, especially for the rural communities. These seven NKRA are reducing crime; fighting corruption; assuring the quality of education; raising the living standard of Low-Income

Households; improving rural development; improving urban public transport; and addressing cost of living.

The government has never stopped providing support to the community; and F H U W D L Q O \ R Q H R I W K H P D L Q S X U S R V H V L V W R L P S U R 7 K H O D W H V W V X S S R U W V ~~Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~Bantuan~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~Rakyat 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~Baucer Buku 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia~~ is a mini-market concept of stores that sell a variety of basic necessities with low prices. The aim is to ease the burden of low-income people in towns and can be expected to assist control of retail prices of goods. Most goods are S U R G X F W V R I V P D O O D Q G P H G L X ~~Bantuan Rakyat~~ <sup>6</sup> ~~Malaysia~~ <sup>6</sup> ~~Baucer Buku 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>6</sup> presentation. They are expected to provide benefits to 1.3 million students.

<sup>3</sup>~~Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~Bantuan~~ <sup>3</sup> to reduce the burdens in the form of cost of living. A cash support of RM500 has been channeled to households with monthly incomes less than RM3000. It is expected to provide benefit to 5.2 million households. The Deputy Prime 0 L Q L V W H U 7 D Q 6 U L 0 X K \ L G G L Q < D V V L Q K D V S U R S R V H G 5 D N \ D W 0 D O D \ V L D ' F D Q E H F K D Q Q H O H G I R U W K H V H Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak gave a positive response towards the motion. Again in the year 2013, the government has disbursed to each deserving household RM500 and in the year 2014 the cash support will increase from RM500 to RM650. Besides, starting the year 2013 unmarried individuals aged 21 and above earning not more than RM2000 monthly would receive RM250 as financial support and the payment would be increased from RM250 to RM300 in 2014. In addition, in 2014 there are several groups that will receive benefits; 1) households with incomes between RM3001 to RM4000 will receive cash support of RM450; 2) People aged 60 and above and living alone would also receive a rise in the payment from RM500 to RM650; 3) a F R Q W U L E X W L R Q R I 5 0 Z L O O E H P D G H W R W K H 0 D O D Insurance or i-BR1M for all household recipients and will receive protection of up to RM30,000 in the event of death or permanent disability.

7 K H ~~Baucer Buku 1 Malaysia~~ <sup>7</sup> ~~Bantuan~~ <sup>7</sup> them to purchase books or other equipm H Q W \ V U H O D W H G W R O H D U Q L Q well as to foster interest in reading among them. In addition, the government has also introduced a "~~Bantuan Teksi Rakyat 1 Malaysia~~". This assistance was aimed at reducing the burden of the taxi driver due to rising maintenance costs. Thus, this initiative helps to improve the taxi services in Malaysia and improve passenger safety and comfort of a taxi. Drivers who qualify will receive two copies of the voucher which is worth RM260.00 each to purchase two tyres.

## **1.4 The Challenges Faced by the River Community**

The river is a main water channel and usually rain that falls on the land will flow into the river to discharge into the sea. The river is also an economic source for river community. This is because the areas around the river are usually more fertile for planting crops and also a lot of fish can be found in the river. However, now there are several challenges facing the river community.

### **1.4.1 River Pollution**

Pollution problems are no longer a new issue in Malaysia. But it had been a major issue for the implementation of development in Malaysia. The river community is the main communities affected by this problem. There are several factors that cause pollution. First is the impact of agriculture. Agriculture inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides used will flow into the river when it rains. Fertilizers and pesticides contain chemicals that are high in pollutants and not suitable for aquatic life.

Second is the industrial waste. Many industries, such as factories will drain the waste water into the river. Next is the disposal of oil into the river by boats. The disposal of this oil will cause the aquatic life to be lack of oxygen and eventually die. Finally, garbage is also disposed into the river by communities living along the river. This action will not only lead to water quality impairment, but also it will cause the water flow to slow down.

### **1.4.2 Basic Facilities**

The basic facilities are needed to be made available by the government to fulfill the demands of the people. The necessary basic facilities are, clean water, electricity, waste disposal system, garbage disposal system, drainage, health facilities, places for religious activities, education and recreation. Even though the government has allocated large sums of money, it still has not been able to provide complete basic facilities to all residents of Malaysia, especially for people who are living far away from densely populated areas. But there are also people who have never received clean water and still use river water for daily activities such as cooking, bathing, and drinking. This is similarly happening for electricity and education. For education, schools in rural areas need more teaching tools as what are they provided are still not adequate,

such as lack of computer facilities. Consequently some of the rural students are still computer illiterate.

### **1.4.3 Poverty Problems**

The issue of poverty among the rural population is also not a new issue. The government has made many initiatives to increase their incomes. However, many of them are still below the poverty level with total income of less than RM750 a month. This is because the economic distribution for rural population is unbalanced. This is probably the effect on the pollution of rivers especially for those people who make the river as their main sources, unable to carry out this activity. Then they had to do other work that is not their field and thus receive small wages. Rising prices of agriculture inputs also further decrease their incomes primarily of agricultural product which they produce are worth less than the cost they had to incur.

### **1.4.4 Migration**

A migration issue in Malaysia continues to the present day especially the migration from rural areas to urban areas. There are many factors that cause the move to the cities especially for the younger generation. The first is poverty. They migrate to city to seek better jobs with expected higher income than in the countryside. Besides, there were those who moved because of further education to a higher level. After they finish their studies they will continue to stay in the city. In addition, the facilities available in the city are more complete than in the countryside and that is another reason why more rural communities migrate to the city.

### **1.4.5 Social Problems**

Social problems also occur in this community and this is closely related to quality of life. The common social problems are unemployment, drug addiction and theft. Unemployment occurs when there are limited available jobs, lack of skills for jobs and no jobs that match their education level. Theft occurs when there is no adequate monitoring by local communities and authorities. This theft is usually committed by illegal immigrants working in the area.

## 1.5 Problem Statement

The river is an important environmental element to humans and has a close relationship with the river. This is because according to Haliza (2007), the river serves as a means of transport and communication, source of water supply for domestic and agricultural as well as a source of protein to humans. The various functions of the river in human life have made the river as a very important asset. In addition, there are still many small cities and towns situated on the banks or estuary of a river (Andaya & Andaya, 1992).

However, according to Sulong et.al (2005), the use of the river is now confined and limited to only transport routes as a result of industrial and commercial activities. River quality is also deteriorating due to erosion, sedimentation and pollution. As a result, it has been disrupted the relationship between human beings and the river as the river is now no longer can be used for bathing, washing, fishing and recreation. In this regard, the government has allocated a high amount of costs in an effort to restore the quality of the river as described in 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan (8<sup>th</sup> MP) and 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan (9<sup>th</sup> MP).

To achieve a better quality of life and satisfaction the government has set two stages of rural development transformation and evolution strategies. The first stage was during 1957-1994 where two policies developed which were the Pre New Economic Policy and New Economic Policy. The second stage way during 1994-2020 where two policies were also developed which were the National Development Policy and National Vision Policy. The impact of these two stages of development created a better quality of life among the rural community. This is as recorded in Malaysian economic report of 2010. This report shows that the quality of life for Malaysian had increased for every year from year 1999 to 2008.

In addition, the river community is a special segment of the rural population that has not been thoroughly studied as an important group. Currently, the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia has carried out several projects for cleaning up and beautifying rivers in Malaysia. Although the government has been championing efforts to keep rivers clean and environmentally sustainable but little is known about the current and past impact of rivers onto the quality of life for those living nearby the rivers.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors that associated with the quality of life of the river community from eight independent variables, namely gender, age, level of education, income per month, period of staying at the river, distance to the nearest city, distance to the nearest river and number of family members. The question to be answered is whether the quality of life of

communities along the rivers has improved after several decades of economic development?

## **1.6 Objective**

### **1.6.1 General Objective**

According to the problem statement discussed, the main objective of this study was to identify factors that associated with the QOL among the river communities along Pahang and Muar rivers.

### **1.6.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To determine the level of QOL among communities living along Pahang and Muar rivers.
2. To compare the differences in dimension of QOL by location, gender and level of education.
3. To determine the relationship between selected demographic factors and QOL aspects.
4. To determine the factors associated with QOL.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

There is still lack of research done on quality of life (QOL) of the river community in Malaysia. Hence, this study will be the first in Malaysia that try to discover the quality of life of the communities who live along the Pahang River and Muar River. This study is an attempt to explore other relevant indicators for QOL. This is aimed as better measuring QOL of a segment of the Malaysian population that is living especially along the rivers. It is hoped that the study can uncover several relevant indicators for such a community that reside in a rural environment. It is also hoped that the study shall uncover a different perspective of the QOL of rural community in Malaysia and specifically those that may still depend on a natural resource such as the river.

Comprehensive representation about the quality of life for river community will help or be useful to the related agencies such as District Council or Local Planning Authorities (PBPT) and the Department of Town and Country Planning to manage, control, coordinate and strengthen the development of



physical, social and economic area of the river. All of these for sure will bring lots of benefits to the river community.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is to determine the quality of life and it focuses on the river community along Pahang Muar river. It further focuses on three areas which are Muar River, the confluence of the Pahang and Muar rivers and the Pahang river. About 71 villages to be near the rivers have been identified as the research locations.

A limitation of this study is that research was focused in Pahang River and Muar river areas. Therefore, the findings could not reflect the real situation for all river communities in Malaysia.

### **1.9 Operational Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined to clarify the concepts of this study:

#### **1.9.1 The Quality of Life (QOL)**

For the purpose of this study, the quality of life is refers to the river community life condition based on several indicators that influence their life quality.

#### **1.9.2 Rural community**

The rural community is a community with the main economic activity is based in agriculture and natural resources. The population density in the area is also low.

#### **1.9.3 River Community**

The river community is a group of residents who live near the river. For the purposes of this study, it includes those who live two km from the river.

#### **1.9.4 Socio-demographic Factors**

The socio-demographic factors are those that influence certain things either directly or indirectly, such as gender, age, race, education and monthly income.

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