



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***SENSATION SEEKING AND RISK TAKING BEHAVIOR OF THE  
MOUNTAIN  
CLIMBERS IN MALAYSIA***

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CLIMBERS IN MALAYSIA**

**By**

**SITI NURSYADIQ BINTI ANUAR**

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

**June 2014**

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Abstract of this thesis is presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in  
Fulfilment for the degree of Master of Science

## **SENSATION SEEKING AND RISK TAKING BEHAVIOR OF THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS IN MALAYSIA**

By

**SITI NURSYADIQ BINTI ANUAR**

**June 2014**

Chairman : Manohar Mariapan, PhD  
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The thrill of adventure has attracted many people to the sport of mountain climbing. The search for sensation has caused many people to launch expeditions to conquer mountains. However, they often did not consider their own safety. As a result, many have been lost in the mountains of Malaysia. Studies showed that the total number of incidents reported during mountain climbing is 56 cases in 10 years. Accidents occur not because people are not aware or do not take any precautions. The trait of sensation seeking is a possible justification for this behaviour.

The objectives of the study are to determine the sensation seeking tendency of the mountain climbers, to analyze the differences in sensation seeking between gender and to examine whether a relationship exist between sensation seeking and risk taking behaviour of the mountain climbers. The non-random sampling technique was used combining the purposive and snowball sampling technique. The questionnaire comprises 4 sections of questions were distributed during January to June 2012. The Sensation Seeking Scale comprises 35 pairs of choices of subjects that the respondents were asked to choose which of the two statement best describes their interests and preferences. While the Risk Taking Behaviour Scale measured the likelihood with which respondents might engage in risky behaviour originating from five domains of life.

The results show that the mountain climbers in Malaysia were high in Sensation Seeking. They score higher in Thrill and Adventure Seeking, moderately high in Experience Seeking and Boredom Susceptibility and lower in Disinhibition. Male mountain climbers' have higher tendencies in Thrill and Adventure Seeking, Experience Seeking and Disinhibition compare to female, while in Boredom Susceptibility, female are likely to have more tendencies. Only the trait of Thrill and Adventure Seeking and Boredom Susceptibility are significantly depending on gender. It shows that Sensation Seeking positively correlate with risk taking behaviour.

The influences of the environment and culture could be the reason for Disinhibition sub-trait being low in Malaysian mountain climbers. It can be said that males show greater amount of traits attributes as such aggression, neurotise, emotional stability and desire for participating in physical activities compared to female. The elements in the Sensation Seeking relates to the physical type of risk. It shows that sensation seeking is one of the personality traits that are highly correlated with the risk taking behaviour.

The personality traits are the predictable ways to explain the expectation of the adventure tourism consumer that occurs differently among them. This can maximize the experience of the mountain climber so that a higher quality of experience can be achieved. The tourism marketers can also create and promote products that cater to the needs and interest of their high or low sensation seeker rather than creating or promoting products that appeal to everyone.



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

## **PENCARIAN SENSASI DAN TINGKAHLAKU RISIKO TINGGI DI KALANGAN PENDAKI GUNUNG DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Cabaran di alam semulajadi telah menarik ramai orang untuk melibatkan diri dalam aktiviti mendaki gunung. Pencarian sensasi telah menyebabkan ramai orang telah mengadakan ekspedisi untuk menakluk gunung. Dalam pencarian ini, mereka sering kurang mengambil mengangap keselamatan mereka sendiri. Hasilnya, ramai telah hilang di pergunungan Malaysia. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa jumlah insiden yang dilaporkan semasa mendaki gunung adalah 56 kes dalam 10 tahun. Kemalangan berlaku bukan kerana orang tidak mengambil apa-apa langkah berjaga-jaga. Pencarian sensasi adalah satu sebab yang mungkin bagi tingkahlaku ini.

Objektif kajian adalah untuk menentukan tahap kecenderungan pencarian sensasi dikalangan pendaki gunung, untuk melihat perbezaan tahap pencarian sensasi antara jantina termasuk meneroka samaada hubungan wujud di antara pencarian sensasi dan tingkahlaku pengambilan risiko oleh pendaki gunung. Teknik persampelan bukan rawak telah digunakan dengan menggabungkan teknik pensampelan "purposive" dan bola salji. Borang soal selidik terdiri daripada 4 bahagian telah diedarkan pada bulan Januari hingga Jun 2012. Skala Pencarian Sensasi terdiri daripada 35 pasang pilihan di mana responden telah diminta untuk memilih yang mana satu kenyataan dua terbaik menerangkan pilihan mereka. Semantara Skala Kelakuan Berisiko Skala diukur dengan yang kemungkinan yang mana responden akan melibatkan diri berdasarkan dari lima domain kehidupan.

Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pendaki gunung di Malaysia adalah tinggi dalam trait pencarian sensasi. Pendaki gunung mendapat skor yang lebih tinggi dalam Adventure Seeking, sederhana tinggi dalam Experience Seeking dan lebih rendah dalam Disinhibition. Pendaki gunung lelaki mempunyai kecenderungan yang lebih tinggi dalam subtrait Thrill and Adventure Seeking, Experience Seeking dan Disinhibition berbanding dengan wanita, manakala subtrait Boredom Susceptibility, wanita mempunyai lebih kecenderungan. Hanya subtrait Thrill and Adventure Seeking dan Boredom Susceptibility

adalah ketara bergantung kepada jantina. Ini menunjukkan bahawa trait pencarian sensasi berkait positif dengan tingkah laku pengambilan risiko.

Pengaruh persekitaran dan budaya boleh menjadi sebab untuk Disinhibition subtrait rendah di kalangan pendaki gunung di Malaysia. Ia boleh dikatakan bahawa lelaki menunjukkan sifat-sifat yang lebih ketara berbanding wanita antaranya sifat neurotism, kestabilan emosi dan keinginan untuk mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti fizikal. Ini menunjukkan bahawa pencarian senses iadalah salah satu daripada trait personaliti yang berkaitrapat dengan tingkahlaku pengambilan risiko.

Personaliti adalah cara untuk menjelaskan jangkaan pelanggan dari sector pelancongan alam liar dimana terdapat perbezaan kepuasaan di kalangan mereka. Ini boleh memaksimumkan pengalaman pendaki gunung supaya kualiti pengalaman yang lebih tinggi dapat dicapai. Pihak yang terlibat dalam industry ipelancongan juga boleh mewujudkan dan mempromosikan produk yang memenuhi keperluan dan kepentingan pencari sensasi dan bukan sekadar mewujudkan atau mempromosikan produk yang sama rata kepada semua orang.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 23 June 2014 to conduct the final examination of Siti Nursyadiq binti Anuar on her Master of Science thesis entitled “**Sensation Seeking and Risk Taking Behaviour of Mountain Climbers in Malaysia**” in accordance with Universities and university college act 1971 and the constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Master of Science.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SS	Sensation Seeking
SSS	Sensation Seeking Scale
TS	Thrill and Adventure Seeking
ES	Experience Seeking
Dis	Disinhibition
BS	Boredom Susceptibility
MAO	Monoamine Oxidase
DOSPRT	Domain Specific Risk Taking Scale
OGKL	Orang Gunung Kuala Lumpur



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlighted the background of the study, problem statement, and objectives of study. The background of the study discusses the relationship of sensation seeking and the mountain climbing activities in Malaysia. The problem statement discusses the importance of this study and why it was conducted.

#### 1.1 Background of Study

Every person is exposed to risk at some degree as it is a daily experience in our life. Some people stay away from risk as much as they can but some people may be attracted to it and look at it as a challenge. Risk-taking refers to the tendency to engage in behaviours that have the potential to be harmful or dangerous, yet at the same time provide the opportunity for some kind of outcome that can be perceived as positive. Although risk may put us at risk for serious harm, it also produces positive thoughts in the moment of action.

High risk recreational activities have increased in recognition, popularity and satisfaction. It is important to investigate whether the climbers are aware or not of the risk or just seeking risk for the sake of their experience. This research is important not only to the various service providers in term of planning facilities but also to the experience so that they can provide better service. The information from this study can allow service providers to offer new physical activities for participants with high sense and stimulation seeking needs.

This study is specifically concerned with sensation seeking, the risk taking behaviour, the experience of the climbers and their socio-demographic profile. The focuses of the study is on the differences in sensation seeking between genders who engage in mountain climbing in the past five years. This study also focuses on the relationship of sensation seeking and the risk taking behaviour among mountain climbers who have climbed a mountain in Malaysia for more than five times.

Sensation seeking is one of the personality traits that are highly correlated with the risk taking behaviour (Jonah, 1997). While according to Galloway and Lopez (1999), sensation seeking has been used to provide an extensive justification on a variety of behaviours. A person who needs experienced to maintain an optimal level of arousal is called a sensation seeker. It has been found that sensation seekers are positively correlated with risky behaviour and have an inclination to avoid repetition. Sensation seekers also find formal situation intolerable, are interested in adventure travel and intense experiences, have propensity towards

disinhibiting and proneness to boredom under restrained and repetitive situations. When the experience is repetitive, the sensation seeker will become bored and nonresponsive more quickly.

Marvin Zuckerman in 1979 initially developed the theory of sensation seeking. The concept of sensation seeking is to assess individual differences in optimal levels of stimulations. Since its initial development, the sensation seeking scale has undergone various changes. The most recent form has 40 forced-choice items separated into factorial derived subscales designed to measure the dimension of sensation seeking. Zuckerman proposes that there are four sub-dimensions to the sensation seeking trait: (1) "Thrill and Adventure Seeking" which relates to the willingness to take physical risks and participate in high risk sports, (2) "Experience Seeking" which relates to the need for new and exciting experiences and is associated with all types of risk taking, (3) "Disinhibition" which relates to a willingness to take social risks and engage in risky behaviours for even if it affects their health for example, having unprotected sex and drinking), and (4) "Boredom Susceptibility" which relates to the intolerance for monotony.

Mountain climbing is a wonderful way to discover the uniqueness and the diversity of Malaysia's natural forest landscape. Mountain climbers are the most frequent group trekking in the tropical forest trail. They are the people who actively and independently seek adventure and would not consider themselves to be tourist (Collister, 1984 and Scott, 1994). It is also one of the adventure recreation activities that involve an element of risk and danger. Studies of mountaineers' personalities reveal that they have sensation seeking traits (Breivik, 1996; Cronin, 1991; Goma` Freixanet, 1991; Jack & Ronan, 1998 and Rossi & Cereatti, 1993). The motivation-based research that has been conducted by Elmes and Barry (1999) and Ewert (1985) suggests that the complex motives cause the mountaineering participation including risk and challenge seeking.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

A sport of mountain climbing was becoming popular among the outdoor activities. One of the factors push people to engage in mountain climbing is the element of sensation. The search for sensation has caused many people to launch expeditions to conquer mountains. Safety is secondary to them (Laskar, 2011). As a result, many have been lost in the mountains. There had been an increasing number of cases regarding to death and other ill-fated incidents encountered by climbers in recent years.

Studies showed that the total number of incidents cases In Malaysia reported during mountain climbing is 56, from year 1991 to 2009 (Libes, 2010). This

number might be small, but there are still a large number of unreported cases. Furthermore, the Department of Forestry and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks had yet to produce a proper record of any incident which has occurred in the mountain trails, especially in mountain climbing activities. What climbers usually see or feel is the beauty of the landscape, the purity of the air, solitude, and a sense of endurance challenge. Only a few persons have the actual requisite for physiological activation or interest in undertaking the risk of climbing mountains.

Local guides and rescue groups say there are reasons why so many climbers have had accidents on the mountains. Among most frequent type of incidents or injuries reported are exhaustion (collapse), burning (as a result of being struck by lightning) and bruises. According to the American Alpine Club, common cause of accidents may vary from being struck by lightning, getting lost while hiking, being attacked by hornets, trampled by fallen trees, falling into ravines while descending and many more. Stewart (2009) stated that many climbers also die because of unpreparedness, not bringing the right equipment and clothing, being inexperienced, and bad weather.

The management authorities are serious about accident in outdoor recreation, especially mountain climbing as it leads direct to death. Accidents still happen and have been reported through the years for mountain climbers. Accidents occur not because people are not aware or do not take any precaution; it is because people are risk takers. The trait of sensation seeking is a possible justification for this behaviour. It has been well research in the area of high risk activity, but gender differences in high risk activity are poorly investigated. The differences of sensation seeking in gender will provide the information for the management authorities to ensure a higher quality to be offered to the visitors.

Many studies have been conducted across a variety of anti-social risk taking behaviour involving sensation seeking. According to Rossi and Cereatti (1993), risk taking has been associated with sensation seeking. The creation of the Sensation Seeking Scale by Zuckerman (1984) shows that a great deal of research was conducted on this subject. The term sensation seeking was coined to describe the generalized trait that includes a diversity of risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviour as well as the expressed intolerance of boredom (Malkin, 2011). To date, no research has been done on the mountain climber's risk taking behaviours among gender in Malaysia.

This study is designed to find the reason why some people are willing to be involved in a risky activity that might cause death or serious injuries that last a lifetime. It is vital to seek the answer for this question to maximize the experience of the mountain climber. Participation in high risk recreational activities may provide a high sensation seeking character with the needed of stimulations and experiences. Sensation seeking is an interesting personality trait that may effect

on several stages of our lives (Murtaza, 2011). Recreation professionals should consider what activities could be offered to satisfy these individuals who have high sensation seeking needs to fulfil the demand of recreation services.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is gain better understanding of personality traits, and the behaviour of people who engage in mountain climbing in Malaysia.

More specifically, objectives of the study include:

1. To determine the sensation seeking tendency of the mountain climbers.
2. To analyze the differences in sensation seeking between genders who engage in mountain climbing.
3. To examine a relationship exist between sensation seeking and risk taking behaviour of the mountain climbers.

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