

ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF YOUTH STUDIES

*An Open-Access, Peer Reviewed International Scholarly Journal
That Publishes Research, Policy and Practice Based Articles on
Issues Concerning Youth and Young Adults*



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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Youth Studies (formerly known as the Malaysian Journal of Youth Studies) has been the official scientific journal of Institute for Youth Research (IYRES), Malaysia Ministry of Youth and Sports'. The Asia-Pacific Journal of Youth Studies is an open-access, international scholarly journal that publishes research, policy, and practice-based articles on issues concerning youth and young adults.

The journal has an interdisciplinary profile that aims to be of relevance to researchers, students, practitioners and policy-makers. The journal encourages submission of papers from all countries and contexts, with a special emphasis on youth residing in the Asia-Pacific region. All papers are subject to editorial screening and double-blind peer review. For research-based manuscripts, we welcome articles from both quantitative and qualitative traditions.

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**ASSESSING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP-SEEKING
ATTITUDES AMONG MALAYSIAN AND INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Mental health issues have become prevalent among youth, particularly among university students. However, the utilization of psychological services remains low. Despite the mismatch, limited studies explored the psychological help-seeking attitudes and their barriers in a cross-cultural context. This study aimed to examine the differences of in terms of gender, openness, value and need in seeking professional help among Malaysian and International university students. The findings of this study will aid in the implementation of better policies to ensure the wellbeing of both Malaysian and International university students. The data was collected in May 2022 using a cross-sectional survey questionnaire distributed at one of the public universities in Malaysia (n=54). The results revealed that the psychological help-seeking attitudes among International students and Malaysian are similar and low, albeit the insignificance. However, males and females are found to have a significantly small difference in the value and need in seeking professional help. Broadly, the results of this work inform that psychological help-seeking attitudes are most likely the same for both Malaysian and International students. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to explore the current factors that hinder students from perceiving psychological help as a need.

Keywords: Mental Health, Help-seeking attitudes, Cross-Cultural, University

Students, Undergraduate Students

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing concern about the mental health of university students globally, including in Malaysia. The Institute for Public Health (2017) reported that over one-third (29.2%) of Malaysians aged 16 and above have experienced mental health problems. Mental health issues contribute to approximately 37% of the total disability burden in Malaysia. The prevalence of mental disorders is highest in East Malaysia (43%) and Kuala Lumpur (40%) according to the same survey.

Among Malaysian students, the incidence of mental health issues has risen from 1 in 10 individuals in 2011 to 1 in 5 individuals in 2016. University students are particularly vulnerable due to the significant transition period they undergo. The Malaysian Ministry of Health has identified adolescents aged 15 to 25 as a high-risk group for suicide (Ali et al., 2012). This age group faces substantial physical and psychological changes, making it one of the most stressful periods in life (Islam et al., 2018), often exacerbated by academic pressures (Hamzah et al., 2019).

Despite the prevalence of mental health issues, many individuals do not seek help and leave their conditions untreated, which can lead to further complications. Counselling services in Malaysia are underutilized, especially by university students (Arifin et al., 2022; Salim, 2010; Salina & Khairul, 2018). Understanding the reasons behind the reluctance to seek professional help is crucial. This knowledge can improve the effectiveness of mental health services and ensure that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds benefit from these resources.

Background and Problem Statement

University students face numerous challenges, including independent living, academic stress, peer pressure, and family problems, which predispose them to depression (Shamsuddin et al., 2013). These issues are compounded by financial instability and the pressures of creating new social circles (Cebi, 2009). Depression, anxiety, and stress are prevalent among university students and appear to be increasing (Fauzi et al., 2021). Studies show that Malaysian students exhibit higher rates of mental health issues compared to their counterparts in the United Kingdom, with 95% of Malaysian students reporting high levels of depression, stress, and anxiety. Specifically, research among Malaysian undergraduates indicates a prevalence of moderate to extremely severe depression (13.9% to 29.3%), anxiety (51.5% to 55.0%),

and stress (12.9% to 21.6%) (Gan et al., 2011; Al-Ani et al., 2015).

International students in Malaysia also face significant mental health challenges. They often lack awareness of available mental health services and underutilize on-campus support (Chandrasekara, 2020; Bradley et al., 1995; Mori et al., 2000). Addressing these gaps by increasing the visibility and accessibility of mental health resources is crucial. Timely detection and management of mental health disorders among university students are essential for safeguarding public health (Kumaran et al., 2022).

The mental health burden among Malaysian students has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many students experiencing moderate to severe levels of mental health issues (Kumaran, 2022). A study by Wen et al. (2020) found that 37.4% of participants had suicidal ideation related to depression and self-esteem. Despite the high incidence of mental health issues, there is a notable reluctance to seek professional help, creating a service gap between available mental health

services and their utilization (Ahmad & Asro, 2020; Cramer, 1999; WHO, 2022). Barriers to help-seeking include cultural factors, stigma, lack of knowledge, and socioeconomic status (Eui & Tan, 2019; Lannin et al., 2019; Mesran et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2019).

In contrast to Malaysia, the demand for counselling services on UK campuses has risen dramatically by 33% since 2008 (Froio, 2013). Despite the cultural compatibility of counselling within the Malaysian context, university students still do not widely utilize these services (Yin-Fah et al., 2016; Othman & Abdullah, 2015; Pheng et al., 2019). Negative attitudes towards mental health are prevalent among Malaysian students, contributing to poor mental health outcomes (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Kotera & Maughan, 2020). These negative attitudes, which include beliefs that mental health sufferers are weak or incompetent, can lead to feelings of shame and further reluctance to seek help (Kotera et al., 2019; Haroz et al., 2017).

Openness towards seeking psychological help can reduce suicidal ideation among adolescents (Husky et al., 2009). However, many Asian students feel uncomfortable seeking help from strangers, preferring to deal with mental health issues independently due to stigma (Alavi et al., 2014; Goodwin et al., 2016). This preference for informal help sources over formal

counselling services highlights the need for culturally sensitive approaches to mental health support.

In summary, understanding the factors influencing psychological help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian and international students is crucial. This knowledge can help address the service gap and improve mental health outcomes by tailoring interventions to the specific needs of university students.

Research Question and Objective

Previous research (Reiko, 2008) has shown that age, ethnic background, religion, education level, and residential location significantly influence help-seeking behaviors. Therefore, this study aims to explore the variations in psychological help-seeking attitudes between Malaysian and international students, specifically examining gender, openness, perceived value, and perceived need for professional help. Thus, the research question guiding this study is: 'Are there differences in psychological help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian and international students in terms of gender, openness, value, and need?'

LITERATURE REVIEW

Help-seeking behavior, as defined by Fischer and Turner (1970), involves utilizing various external sources to address situations threatening one's normal life functions. Maki and Kitano (2002) and others agree that individuals often deal with psychological issues independently or seek help from friends, family, or community

members before turning to professional counsellors. This preference indicates that professional psychological help is typically considered a last resort, utilized only if personal efforts and social support fail (Cramer, 1999; Sherbourne, 1988; Wivell & Webb, 1995).

Despite the high prevalence of mental health issues, counselling services in Malaysia remain underutilized, particularly by university students (Salim, 2010; Salina & Khairul, 2018). Cultural norms significantly influence attitudes toward seeking professional help. In collectivistic cultures like Malaysia, interdependence and social harmony are emphasized, and individuals often avoid seeking professional help due to concerns about societal judgment (Mansor, 2010; Kotera et al., 2019). Malaysian students, in particular, are concerned about how others perceive them if they have a

mental health issue, contributing to low help-seeking attitudes and a preference for keeping mental health problems private.

Stigma and negative beliefs towards mental health services are major barriers to help-seeking. A Malaysian study (Ibrahim et al., 2019) found stigma to be a top reason for avoiding psychological help. Clement et al. (2015) supported these findings, noting that stigma was the fourth highest barrier to help-seeking in a review of 144 studies involving 90,189 participants. Additionally, Raaj et al. (2021) estimated that only 20 percent of Malaysians seek mental health care due to social stigma.

Lack of readiness to seek help is another significant barrier. Studies by Salim (2010) and Reiko et al. (2008) found that Malaysian university students are generally not ready to seek psychological services. Kotera et al. (2021) posited that negative attitudes toward mental health might be linked to low awareness and the stigma surrounding mental health issues, leading to shame and reluctance to discuss these problems (Su Lin, 2018). Consequently, many students with mental health issues leave them untreated, which can have various negative impacts.

Understanding students' attitudes towards seeking psychological help is crucial for developing effective mental health interventions. Addressing these attitudes and reducing stigma can encourage more students to utilize available mental health services, ultimately improving their well-being and academic success.

Research Framework

This study was conducted on the grounds of The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). According to TPB, students' intentions to seek help are influenced by three considerations: beliefs about the behavioral consequences (behavioral beliefs), social pressures while seeking help (normative beliefs), and beliefs about factors that hinder help-seeking (control beliefs) (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001). The main principle of this theory is that performing a behavior influences one's intention to perform a behavior and intentions and actions change when there are changes in attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Based on the past findings, in this study, it is assumed that subjective norms and normative beliefs, in the form of stigma on psychological help-seeking may hinder help-seeking attitudes and intentions (Ciftci et al., 2013). It is assumed that the fear of societal stigma, beliefs of negative outcomes of mental health problems and beliefs of social control over behavior may inhibit one from seeking psychological help which leads to poor help-seeking behavior.

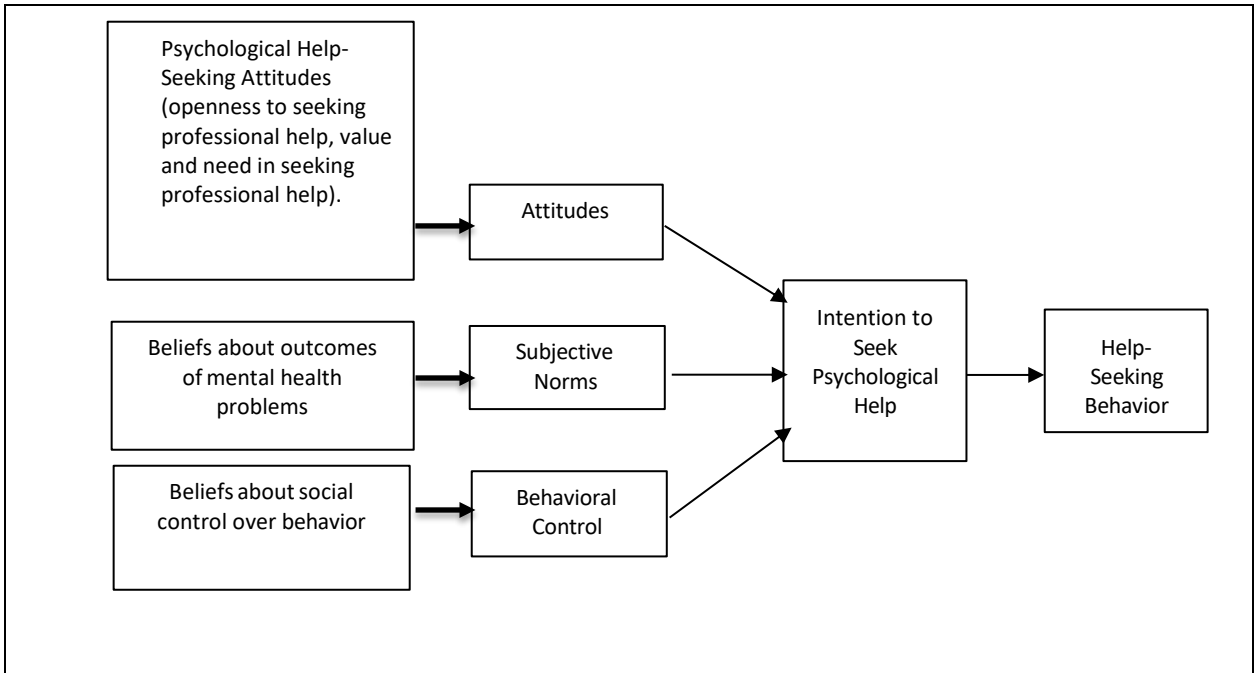


Figure 1. *The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).*

METHODOLOGY

Research Population and Sampling

Participants were recruited through cluster random sampling in which two clusters, namely Malaysian and international were created. The undergraduate students were randomly selected based on criteria like nationality and educational background.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study used The Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Scale Short Form (ATSPPHS-SF) which was developed by Fischer and Turner (1970) to measure attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. This scale consists of 10 items such as, ‘Although there are clinics for people with mental troubles, I would not have much faith in them (item 1). The scale included two dimensions: openness to seeking professional help for emotional problems (items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7) with item scores ranging from zero (disagree) to three (agree); value and need in seeking professional help (items 2, 4, 8, 9, 10) with items scored in reverse (zero = agree and three = disagree).

The total score of the scale ranges from zero to 30 with higher scores indicating a better help-seeking attitude. The cut – off score on the scale is greater than 20 points and for each dimension is greater than 10 points; otherwise, the attitude is deemed to be negative. A high score indicates positive attitudes towards seeking professional help in mental health services. Participants' average scores across the 10 items of the ATSPPHS-SF were computed to create scale scores. The reliability and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) process for this instrument was also conducted and it was discovered that all the items were appropriate and thus, should be retained ($\alpha = 0.61$, Kaiser-Meiyer-Olkin 0.63, and Bartlett's Test p - value < 0.00).

In the present study, a quantitative method was applied in which the research used survey forms to collect data. Data collection through survey forms were carried out directly from the population sample. Prior to data collection, an approval letter seeking permission to conduct research in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) was sent. Upon receiving the approval, data collection was conducted in early May 2022.

Data Analysis

The demographic data was processed using the descriptive analysis. To test the hypothesis, an independent t-test was run. The data was separated into two groups, for analysis by creating a grouping variable called independent variable, and name "Malaysian students" a value of "1" and "international students" a value of "2". Psychological help-seeking attitudes will be entered under the variable name (Dependent variable). The output of the t-test was interpreted to identify if there are significant differences shown in the psychological help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian and international students. The output was also examined for significant outliers, to determine normality and for homogeneity of variances.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The study was conducted at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), a public university in Malaysia which is headquartered in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur and has another six branches all over Malaysia. A convenient sample of 54 subjects were selected from IIUM. As shown in Table 1, the sample included 25 males (46.3 %) and 25 female students (53.7 %). Around 64.8 percent of the participants aged from 18 to 22 years old, while 31.5

percent of them ranged from 23 to 27 years old. Only 3.7 percent of the participants aged from 28 to 32 years old. The participants represented two academic fields, namely, Arts and Science. The majority of the participants were from the Arts field (n = 34, 62.9%) whereas 37.1% are from Science field.

Another inclusion criterion in this study were for the participants to hold a Malaysian or International citizenship. This criterion is vital in studying the effect of stigma on different cultures in psychological help-seeking attitudes. In a total of 54 participants, 28 Malaysian students and 26 International students took part in this study. Malaysian students represented the Malay ethnicity with 51.9 percent, while most of the international participants represented the Arabian ethnicity with 16.7 percent.

Table 1. *Respondents Demographic*

Demography	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Total
Gender			
Male	25	46.3	54 (100%)
Female	29	53.7	
Age			
18 to 22 years old	35	64.8	54 (100%)
23 to 27 years old	17	31.5	
28 to 32 years old	2	3.7	
Academic Field			
Science	20	37.1	54 (100%)
Arts	34	62.9	
Nationality			
Malaysian	28	51.9	54 (100%)
International	26	48.1	
Ethnicity			
Malay	28	51.9	54 (100%)
Arabian	9	16.7	
Indian & Sri Lankan	6	11.2	
African	7	13.1	
Chinese	4	7.5	

Table 2. *Level of Openness to Seeking Professional Psychological Help, Value and Need in Seeking Professional Psychological Help and Psychological Help-Seeking Attitudes among Malaysian and International University Students.*

Construct	Score	Malaysian		International	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Psychological Help-Seeking Attitudes</i>	0 - 10	1	3.4	6	24
	11 – 20	21	72.4	15	60
	21 - 30	7	24.2	4	16
Construct	Score	Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	
<i>Openness to Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 - 9	Negative	20	37.3	
	10 - 20	Positive	34	62.7	
<i>Value and Need in Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 - 10	Negative	51	94.6	
	11 – 20	Positive	3	5.4	

Results in Table 2 show no differences between both the groups of participants in their professional psychological help-seeking attitudes. The majority of both participant groups, Malaysian (n = 21, 60%) and international (n = 15, 72.4%) students are moderately inclined towards seeking professional psychological help, followed by 24 % of Malaysian students (n= 6) and 3.4 percent of International students (n = 1) showing negative attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. Only 16 percent of Malaysian participants (n = 4) and 24.2 percent of International participants (n = 7) showed a positive attitude in seeking professional psychological help. It was also found that 37.3 percent participants responded negatively indicating their lack of openness in seeking psychological help, while 62.7 percent are open to seeking psychological help when needed. Besides that, results also reveal that the value and need to seek psychological help is negative among 94.6 percent, n = 51 participants which is the majority, while only 5.4 percent needed and valued seeking professional psychological

help.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Openness and Value in Seeking Psychological Help among Students and the Results of the Non-Parametric Mann-Whitney U Test to Compare between Them.

Dimension	Groups	Median	n	r	U	Z	p-value
Openness To Seeking Professional Help	Malaysian	11	28	-0.23	264.5	-1.737	0.23
	International	10	26				
Value and Need in Seeking Psychological Help	Female	11	29	-0.08	327.5	-0.612	0.54
	Male	11	25				
Value and Need in Seeking Psychological Help	Malaysian	6.0	28	-0.09	324	-0.70	0.48
	International	6.5	26				
Value and Need in Seeking Psychological Help	Female	7	29	-0.29	241	-2.129	0.03
	Male	6	25				

* $p < 0.05$

A Mann-Whitney U Test was also conducted to examine the differences of participants (nationality and gender) in both the dimensions measured through the ATSPPH-SF. In the Openness to Seeking Professional Help dimension, Malaysian (Median= 11, n = 28) and International (Median= 10, n = 26) students, scored U = 264.5, Z = -1.737, p = 0.23, r = -0.23. These results show that there is an insignificant difference with a small effect among participants' nationality and openness to seek help. The same results were found for gender, in which female (Median = 11, n = 29) and male (Median = 11, n = 25) participants scored U = 327.5, Z = -0.612, p = 0.54, r = -0.08. The results derived from this analysis proves that both gender and nationality does not impact the openness to seeking psychological help among students.

Besides that, the results also show that the nationality of participants (Malaysian, Median = 6, n = 28 and International, Median = 6.5, n = 26) showed an insignificant difference with small effect, U = 324, Z = -0.70, p = 0.48, r = -0.09. However, it was found through this descriptive study that gender play a role in determining the value and need in seeking professional help. Female (Median = 7, n = 29) and Male (Median = 6, n = 25), scored U = 241, Z = -2.129, p = 0.03, r = - 0.29. There is a significant difference with small effect among male and female students in terms of value and need in seeking professional help. It can therefore be concluded that regardless of the nationality, gender roles impact students' attitudes in values and needs in seeking professional psychological help.

Table 4. *Level of Openness to Seeking Professional Psychological Help, Value and Need in Seeking Professional Psychological Help Among International and Malaysian Students.*

Construct	Score	International		Malaysian	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Openness To Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 - 10	15	60	10	34.5
	11 – 20	10	40	19	65.5
<i>Value and Need in Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 – 10	23	92	28	96.6
	11 – 20	2	8	1	3.4

Table 4 shows that Malaysian students (n = 19, 65.5%) are more open to seeking professional help compared to International students (n = 10, 40%). International students seem to be reluctant in seeking professional help, in which a majority of 60 percent scored on the negative scale. Table 4 shows the number of respondents based on their nationality and value and need in seeking professional help. The study results show that both Malaysian (n = 23, 92%) and International students (n = 28, 96.6%) do not show a difference in value and need of seeking professional help-seeking. Only 3.4 percent of Malaysian students and 8% of International students do value and need professional psychological help. This outcome proves that the inclination of university students' value and need in seeking professional help is still low.

Table 5. *Level of Openness to Seeking Professional Psychological Help and Value and Need in Seeking Professional Psychological Help Among Male and Female Participants.*

Construct	Score	Female		Male	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Psychological Help-Seeking Attitudes</i>	0 - 10	2	6.9	5	20
	11 – 20	19	65.5	17	68
	21 - 30	8	27.6	3	12
<i>Openness to</i>	0 - 10	12	48	13	44.8

<i>Seeking Professional Help</i>	11 – 20	13	52	16	55.2
<i>Value and Need in Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 - 10	24	96	27	93.1
	11 – 20	1	4	2	6.9

Comparatively, both Female (n= 19, 65.5) and Male (n= 17, 68%) showed a moderate attitude towards seeking psychological help. A small percentage of difference was reported among the numbers, in which as an overall, female student (n= 8, 27.6%) scored higher than male students (n= 3, 12%). This shows that female students have moderately positive to positive attitudes in seeking psychological help compared to male students. Besides that, the results prevailed that both female (n= 16, 55.2%) and male students (n= 13, 52%) are generally open to seek professional help while 48 percent of male and 44.8 percent female participants still are reluctant in being open to seek professional help. Furthermore, both female (n= 27, 93.1%) and male students (n= 24, 96%) have negative tendencies towards the value and need in seeking professional help.

Table 6. *Level of Psychological Help-Seeking Attitudes, Openness to Seeking Professional Help and Value and Need in Seeking Professional Help and Participants' Age.*

Constructs	Score	18-22		23-27		28-32	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Psychological Help-Seeking Attitudes</i>	0 - 10	6	17.1	1	5.9	0	0
	11 – 20	23	65.8	12	70.6	1	50
	21 - 30	6	17.1	4	23.5	1	50
<i>Openness to Seeking Professional Help</i>	0 - 10	18	51.4	6	35.3	1	50
	11 – 20	17	48.6	11	64.7	1	50
<i>Value and Need in</i>	0 - 10	32	91.4	17	100	2	100

<i>Seeking Professional Help</i>	11 – 3	8.6	0	0	0	0
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Table 6 of the study indicates that psychological help-seeking attitudes among university students vary significantly by age. Specifically, 23.5% to 70.6% of students aged 23 to 27 years and 17.1% to 65.8% of students aged 18 to 22 years displayed moderately positive to positive attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. Conversely, students aged 28 to 32 years exhibited low attitudes in this regard.

When examining openness to seeking professional help, the study found that 64.7% of students aged 23 to 27 were more open to seeking professional help compared to 48.6% of students aged 18 to 22 and 50% of students aged 28 to 32. Younger students (18 to 22 years) had higher scores indicating low openness to seeking professional help.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that age significantly impacts openness to seeking professional psychological help, with students aged 23 to 27 showing the highest openness. However, the study also measured the perceived value and need for professional help across different age groups and found no significant differences, as all age groups scored high on the lower end, ranging from 91.4% to 100%. This suggests that while age influences openness to seeking help, it does not determine the perceived value and need for professional psychological help.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigates the psychological help-seeking attitudes of local and international university students, revealing no significant differences between the two groups. Contrary to expectations and previous research, the findings suggest that both local and international students exhibit similar attitudes towards seeking psychological help. This similarity may be attributed to shared cultural values, particularly the interdependent orientation value, which emphasizes social connectedness and may discourage seeking professional help for mental health issues. Individuals endorsing this value might prefer informal support within their social groups over professional assistance.

The assimilation of international students into the interdependent cultural values of their host countries, as suggested by Norton and Fatigante (2018), could explain the observed similarity in help-seeking attitudes. This assimilation may lead international students to prioritize the needs of their family and in-group, thereby seeking informal emotional support from peers rather than professional help. This tendency was reflected in the low scores obtained by both local (13.71) and international students (13.87) on the attitudes towards professional psychological help-seeking scale, despite both groups being generally open to receiving help.

The study suggests that cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues, particularly in Asian cultures, may contribute to the low help-seeking attitudes observed. This stigma can lead to a preference for seeking help within trusted in-group members to maintain privacy and avoid shame (Haroz et al., 2017; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2016; Tabata & Sato, 2019).

Furthermore, Miville and Constantine (2006) propose that personal beliefs, social support, and previous experiences with seeking help might have a more substantial influence on help-seeking attitudes than racial or cultural differences. This aligns with the study's findings, which suggest that university students, regardless of background, may feel more comfortable seeking help from familiar individuals rather than professionals (Teixeira et al., 2022).

The characteristics of Generation Z, such as perceived independence, self-sufficiency, and reliance on technology for problem-solving, may also influence their help-seeking attitudes. Exposure to advanced technology has led Generation Z to develop self-coping methods and a resourceful approach to mental health issues, potentially reducing the perceived need for professional help (APA, 2019; Bresler, 2021; Vejano et al., 2021).

Previous studies highlight that university students across different cultural contexts exhibit low help-seeking attitudes, often due to negative attitudes towards mental health and the stigma associated with it. This trend is consistent with findings from various countries, including Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia, where stigma and negative attitudes are prevalent among students (Yeap & Low, 2009; Abolfotouh et al., 2019; Puspitasari et al., 2020; Sangeeta et al., 2020).

The study also notes gender differences in help-seeking attitudes, with female students exhibiting more positive attitudes towards seeking psychological help compared to male students. Additionally, age differences were observed, with younger students (23-27 years old) being more open to seeking help than older students (28-32 years old). These variations are influenced by multiple factors, including gender, age, educational level, and sociocultural factors (Chen et al., 2020; Topkaya, 2021). Overall, the findings highlight the need to consider shared cultural values, gender, age, and generational characteristics when examining psychological help-seeking attitudes among university students. Developing interventions that align with students' preferences, such as online resources and virtual counseling, could enhance engagement and promote positive mental health outcomes.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined the psychological help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian and international university students, finding that these attitudes are both low and similar across these groups. However, significant differences emerged based on gender and age, with female students and those aged 23 to 27 being more inclined to seek psychological help during a crisis. Despite the generally low attitudes towards seeking help, both groups showed a high openness to receiving psychological help.

The findings indicate that females place a higher value on psychological help than males. This highlights the need for increased awareness about the importance of seeking psychological help, tailored to specific demographics such as gender, nationality, age, and academic level. Implementing targeted awareness programs and interventions could enhance the effectiveness of mental health support services for university students.

The study also addresses a knowledge gap regarding psychological help-seeking attitudes in a cross-cultural context among university students. Despite existing awareness programs and early interventions, barriers to seeking psychological help persist. Understanding these barriers and their impact on students' decision-making processes is crucial for improving help-seeking attitudes.

Gender emerged as a significant predictor of the perceived value and need for psychological help, suggesting that societal norms and stigma around mental health, particularly for males, need to be addressed. Future research

should further explore the relationship between gender and psychological help-seeking barriers to better understand how these factors influence attitudes.

The study's findings can help school administrators and counselors create safe spaces and raise awareness about mental health from an early age, normalizing help-seeking behaviors and potentially preventing issues such as suicide. The low perceived value and need for psychological help across age groups, despite openness to receiving it, suggests a need for improved perception of mental well-being's importance. Implementing mandatory mental health screenings in educational institutions and workplaces could facilitate early detection and management of mental health issues. Promoting positive psychological help-seeking attitudes could reduce the prevalence of mental health issues. Academic institutions and counselors should adopt creative and up-to-date techniques to build students' trust in psychological help services. Regular education and awareness campaigns on mental health, addressing self-stigma and targeting transitional periods for students, are recommended to increase knowledge and understanding of mental health issues and prepare students with effective coping strategies. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of tailored interventions and ongoing mental health education to improve help-seeking attitudes among university students, ensuring their well-being and mental health.

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INTEGRATING MADANI VALUES INTO MALAYSIAN SPORTS: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

MADANI is the acronym of a set of six core values introduced by Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 2023. These values are envisioned to shape Malaysia into a civilised, skilled, and inclusive society, with a particular emphasis on empowering the youth as a driving force for the nation's future. Intended to permeate all levels of Malaysian society, including youth development and sports, these values embrace the multicultural diversity of Malaysia. While sports are often associated with elitism and competition, their socio-cultural dimension offers a platform for instilling human development values in the youth, fostering positive growth. This inclusive set of core values, *MADANI*, holds promise for being integrated into youth development programmes through sports, facilitating positive change. This exploration of incorporating *MADANI* values into youth development through sports serves as a model for leveraging sports and its ecosystem for socio-cultural development through a framework of *R.E.C.O.G.N.I.S.E.* that integrates *MADANI* values into the segments of the ecosystem of sports. This framework will guide *MADANI* into the socio-cultural dimension of sports for societal change and development.

Keywords: *MADANI*, sports socio-culture, youth development, positive change, cultural inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the potential integration of MADANI values into Malaysian sports activities and culture. The discussion draws upon literature review to examine the rationale behind incorporating MADANI values into Malaysian sports as it is a new core set of national values set by the 10th Prime Minister.

MADANI, an acronym for a set of core values introduced by Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim in 2023, aims to steer the nation towards becoming a civilized, skilled, and inclusive society (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2023). Its Malay acronym stands: *KeMampanan, Kesejahteraan, Daya cipta, Hormat, Keyakinan, Ihsan*. In English, its acronym is *S.C.R.I.P.T. (Sustainability, Care and Compassion, Respect, Innovation, Prosperity, Trust)*. They are intended to permeate various sectors of Malaysian society, Economy and Finance, Legislation, Institutions, Education, Community, Culture, Urban, and Rural sectors (Bernama, 2023).

Sports within the broader socio-cultural landscape of a nation, play a significant role in fostering and promoting important values, especially in Malaysia, where MADANI values are considered universal. Sporting organisations such as WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) and Malaysia's ADAMAS (Anti-Doping Agency of Malaysia) have developed sports values to combat doping and cheating, promoting integrity, and supporting character development among athletes and stakeholders.

Sports are usually equated with extrinsic rewards, competitiveness, elitism, goals of excellence, with high earnings and revenues for its industry and commercial aspects (Lee & Hassim, 2023). According to Asia Sports Tech (2024), the sports industry in Malaysia contributed US\$21.89 million or MYR101.72 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, with the revenue from sports and outdoor market projected to reach USD137.40 million in 2023. As a result, the Malaysian government allocated MYR399 million to the sports industry in that year. These figures are an indicator of elite sports enjoying a higher profile and prominence than the socio-culture of sports, which is more subjective and qualitative. However, it is more difficult to produce tangible figures in this dimension of sports.

While sports emphasize their extrinsic rewards and commercial aspects, they also embody intrinsic socio-cultural values that contribute to personal, emotional, mental, and attitudinal development. The economic impact of sports is tangible and highly visible and has a higher profile compared to its socio-cultural dimension which is less visible but equally significant. Together, both dimensions contribute to financial returns as well as to holistic personal development.

In the broader context, sports not only involve the athletes or participants but also the spectators and fans in the stadiums and at home (Zajda & Vissing, 2023) Sports not only serve as a means of recreation, promoting physical fitness, mental well-being,

and social interaction, but also about play and fun to recharge and recuperate. Sports can be organised and structured or casual, promoting local cultures through indigenous sports and games (Zajda and Vissing, 2023).

In the context of youth welfare and development, diversion from self-destructive behaviours towards pro-social engagement through sports is recognised as a positive social intervention (Wagstaff & Parker, 2020, cited by Zajda and Vissing, 2023). Therefore, it is accepted that sports play a role in promoting social integration among young people to enhance cultural understanding and foster diversity (Bailey, 2008).

Today, sports are multidimensional, encompassing not just the elite competition, and professional elements, but also the socio-cultural, digital and technological dimensions. However, the balance of socio-cultural values remains crucial for ensuring sports positivity, integrity, and development.

Sports as a phenomenon are associated with social change including population growth and composition changes, technology, environmental issues, conflict, politics and economy, culture. The study completed by the Council of Europe on diversity and cohesion has recognised the role of sports understanding and appreciation of cultural differences (Bailey, 2008).

Amidst societal changes, sports can serve as a catalyst for positive social change, especially among youth, promoting social integration, cultural understanding, and diversity appreciation. Integrating values such as MADANI into sports activities can enhance youth development and contribute to a more inclusive and values-driven society. Danish et al 2006) had pointed out that sports in youth can enhance their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are essential for positive behavioural change, supporting their holistic development.

Given the emphasis of MADANI values across sectors, including sports, it is imperative to explore how these values can be integrated into sports activities, particularly for youth development. As sports are popular among Malaysian youth, tapping into its potential to promote MADANI values can have a significant impact on their development and the broader societal fabric.

This paper aims to explore the sociological and socio-cultural contexts of sports, focusing on integrating MADANI values into sports activities for youth development. It emphasizes the significance of acknowledging the role of youth involvement in sports, given their strong presence at grassroots levels and their potential as future elite athletes and the nation's leaders.

The exploration of MADANI values in sports is significant, particularly considering the popularity of sports among Malaysian youth. While not delving into empirical research, this article aims to stimulate future studies on MADANI values in sports and proposes the R.E.C.O.G.N.I.S.E. model to integrate these values into

Malaysian sports, foster positive developmental changes among youth, and broader societal advancement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review examines the issues related to the scope of this paper comprising of socio-culture and values, socio-cultural issues in sports, definition of sports and its sport ecosystem, MADANI values in sports, and approaches to inculcating values through sports.

Socio-Culture and Values

Values are fundamental components of culture, dictating individuals' perceptions of right and wrong, as well as shaping societal norms and behavioural patterns (Doh and Luthans, 2018; Delaney and Madigan, 2021). Within the context of sports, cultural values play a pivotal role, influencing how individual express their beliefs and ideas within sporting environments (Coakley, 2021). Sports, whether traditional or emerging, reflect unique cultural values, serving as agents of change and fostering diversity (Coakley, 2021).

Values learned from culture shape the individual and determine the person's behaviour (Doh & Luthans, 2018). Values combined with shared knowledge, language, norms, and behavioural patterns contribute to the definition of culture in a society that will be handed down from one generation to another as a way of life. It will dictate what is considered "proper" and "improper" behaviour based on the context and circumstances of a situation (Delaney & Madigan, 2021).

Each sport embodies its own culture, and reflects cultural values through gameplay, governance, and societal activities. Indigenous sports, martial arts, and emerging digital sports carry distinct cultural values, contributing to the rich diversity of sporting cultures promoted and fostered directly or indirectly through sports. The culture of each sport is embedded through style of play, the rules set by the governing bodies, and the local community sport activities. Among such sports are indigenous sports, traditional sports and games, martial arts or combat sports (e.g. sumo wrestling, taekwondo, karate, silat, capoeira, silambam, kabaddi, wushu). Such sports reflect their own cultural values from their country of origin. Some of these sports are well-known, while others are new members in the sports fraternity. In fact, some of the new technology-based sports, such as esports, robot combat sport, and drone soccer have evolved their own sports culture.

In youth sports, emphasis should be placed on aligning socio-cultural values with youth development approaches, emphasizing asset-based empowerment rather than deficit-based correction (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). Positive youth development in sports fosters desirable personality traits such as integrity, maturity, and honesty (Danish et al., 2006; Leonard II, 1998). There are many factors that shape and

determine whether sports benefit and lead to positive asset development or PYD. These elements are the social, cultural, and historical context that are linked with sports, and they also involve beliefs, customs, traditions, education of the community and civil society (Coakley, 2016). Coakley argued that not all sport-based development programmes can lead to positive results which is a common misconception. Their positive effect depends on the model used with critical awareness and action strategies linked with fostering equality, social justice, and other assets of a progressive nature (ibid.). However, Coakley pointed out that the culture of youth sport programmes can be grounded in strongly held beliefs and institutional logic when they are supported by the sports officials, administrators, and coaches.

There are core values embedded in the institution of sports, which can determine acceptable solutions to problems in the secular sphere of life (Edwards, 1973, cited in Leonard II, 1998); among them are cultural variations in values for autonomy development character values, like responsibility, risk-taking, conformity, persistence, courage, and self-control (Zimmer-Gemback & Collins, 2006). In positive youth development (Danish et al., 2006), these core are in character building and the inculcation of socially desirable personality traits such as integrity, wholesomeness, maturity, honesty, dependability, and cleanliness (Leonard II, 1998). In Malaysia, the national MADANI values offer a framework for integrating values into sports.

Defining Sports

The definition of sports encompasses both restrictive and broad interpretations. Restrictive definitions emphasize competition, physical activity, institutional games, and extrinsic rewards, while broad definitions include leisure, recreation, social and cultural aspects of sports (Mull et al., 2013).

Sports can be categorised based on competitiveness, physicality, and technology, ranging from traditional competitive sports to virtual, digital, and robotic sports (Stefani, 2017; Lee & Hassim, 2023). The competitive dimension of sports focuses on extrinsic rewards and commercialisation and glorifications of titles and medals, while the socio-cultural dimension emphasizes intrinsic rewards, values, and developmental outcomes including those of the recreational, leisure, and play domains of sports. Additionally, the third dimension of sports is that of the digital, virtual and technological domains of sports that incorporates both competitive and socio-cultural elements. Figure 1 demonstrates the three main dimensions of sports and the positioning of its socio-cultural values, including MADANI values.

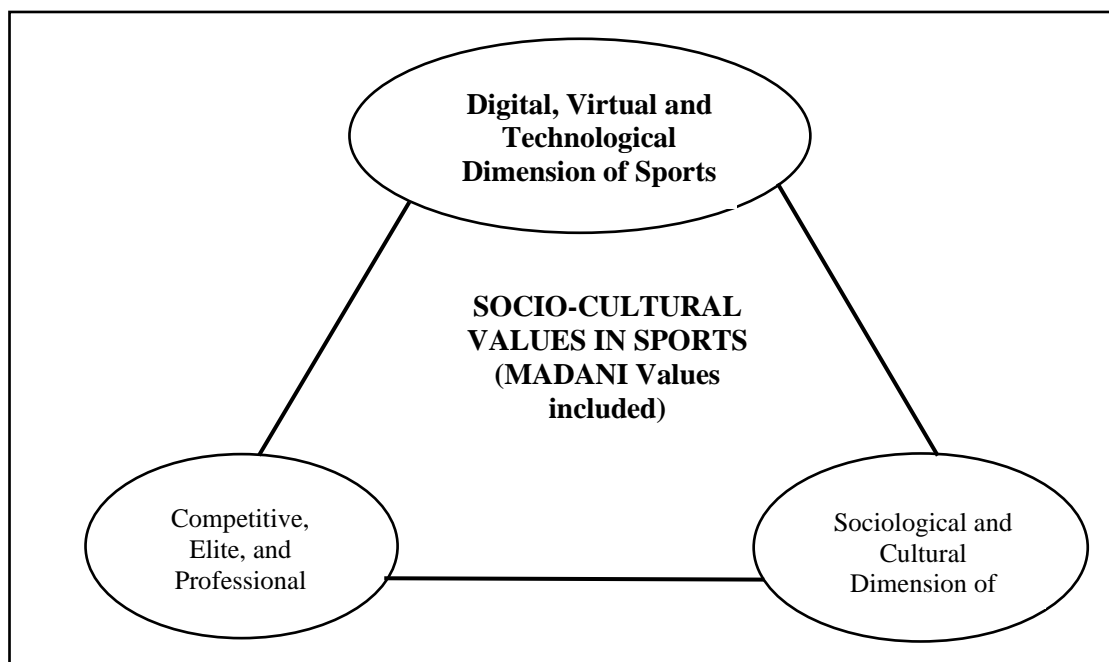


Figure 1. *The 3-Dimensional perspective of Sport with Socio-cultural Values*

The three dimensions of sports are intertwined, and the reality of sports is misrepresented when limiting it to its competitive and extrinsic dimensions. The multidimensional ecosystem of sports (See Figure 2 further below) accurately depicts the holistic nature of sports, which is linked to the definition of sports and its evolving concepts. There are both restrictive and broad definitions of sports (Mull et al., 2013) which can be interpreted in numerous ways.

According to the restrictive definition, sports comprise competition, physical activity, institutional games, use of specialised equipment and facilities, requires skill and exertion, governed by set of rules and regulations with determinate boundaries, offers extrinsic rewards in the form of medals, titles, trophies, monies which motivate the participants (Mull et al., 2013). The various sports can be classified according to whether they are individual or team sports (Vissing, in Zajda & Vissing 2023). The motivation in such sports can be both intrinsic and extrinsic (Hassim, 2018). Competitive sports include professional sports that can be elitist and represent a high level of mastery, played in competitions, tournaments, championships, and leagues.

On the other hand, the broad definition of sports includes all organised activities for the sake of leisure, recreation, health, fitness, and education (Mull, et al., 2013) and can be either casual or competitive; include indigenous and traditional sports and games; contribute to physical and mental well-being, and increase social interaction

(Vissing, 2023). This definition also covers martial arts and self-defence, paralympic sports, extreme games, and mind sports such as chess, bridge and other board games. Further, there are mass sports initiatives like *Sport-for-All (SFA)*, *leisure sport*, and *Sport for Development and Peace (SfDP)* related to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Based on Stebbins' (2012; 2015) perspective of *leisure*, sports can be work, leisure, recreation, or play. It can be casual, serious, or project-based pursuits. Therefore, sport that is work-based is included in the 'materialistic', extrinsic dimension of competitions, as part of professional sports as athletes train full-time to excel in their sport and earn their living. When a sport is played for fun, recreation, voluntarily, and as play without the goals of excellence or income, it is included in the socio-cultural dimension, serving intrinsic and developmental purposes. It is in this leisure and recreation domain where a sport has a unique cultural identity, is imbued with specific values and establishes its own traditions, thus becoming a social phenomenon (Torkildsen, 2005).

These sports in the competitive and socio-cultural dimension are related to physical or mental sports related to the physical and social sciences. Today, however, a third category of sports is emerging in the virtual, technological, and digital sphere. The virtual world manifests through the non-physical realms such as esports, simulated games and virtual games while other new sports use physical equipment that are remotely controlled, such as drone soccer and drone sports, robotic games, etc that can either be in the competitive or non-competitive, recreational domain. Since these sports have only just begun to emerge and are still evolving, a collective name has yet to be found for them.

Whether a sport is competitive or recreational depends on how it is played and for what purpose. Many sports have developed within a specific culture, such as those of martial arts (which can further be defined as combat and contact sports), dance and performing arts.

Stefani (2017; Lee & Hassim, 2023) defined sports in four ways: sports (a competition with a set of rules for determining the winner, requiring physical prowess and skill); mind sports (those that require intellectual prowess and skill); physical sports (that requires physical prowess and skill to move the physical competitor and/or using a physical object as required by the rules); and e-sports (similar to physical sports but played virtually or digitally).

Most people, however, understand sports as an activity that is competitive, elite, professional and organised in the form of competitions, tournaments, leagues, championships, and circuits. This is because sports in this dimension have a very high profile, their own industry, and generate large profit. Coakley (2016) suggested it might be due to these assumptions that it is a primary foundation of social order; it is an effective source of economic growth; people are motivated by its competition and

wealth; its competitive reward structure leads to progress in society. Its outcomes and results are also more tangible and extrinsic in terms of titles, prize monies, status, and wealth that can be generated from sports.

The same, regrettably, is not the case in the socio-cultural dimension of sports where its benefits and outcomes are subjective, intangible, and intrinsic. It is not as visible as in competitive, elite, and professional sports. However, this dimension of sports is equally important, even though its ecosystem is largely unknown. The socio-cultural dimension is actually part of the holistic spectrum of sports and is, like most part of an iceberg, mostly hidden beneath the surface. When we learn more about this dimension of sports, we learn to see the bigger picture in a broader context, and it becomes more visible to us: sports is a multidimensional phenomenon.

Considering the broad definition of sports, we understand why sports is correctly conceived as three-dimensional, consisting of a competitive dimension, a socio-cultural dimension, and a technological dimension. The competitive domain includes sports that focus on extrinsic rewards, are commercialised, quantifiable, and its outcomes are tangible, while the socio-cultural domain covers development, intrinsic rewards, values, and recreation, and its outcomes are intangible. The third domain includes those sports that have digital and virtual components but not being physical in nature.

Sports Ecosystem

A sports ecosystem comprises interconnected segments or layers supporting the functioning of sports at various levels. This includes governance, financial resources, infrastructure development, talent scouting and training (Goenka, 2018). A well-managed sports ecosystem enhances a country's sports performance, leading to international recognition and economic growth.

Key actors in the sports ecosystem include athletes, clubs/teams, fans, sponsors, advertisers, media, and governing bodies (Centre for Sport & Human Rights, 2024; Euler, 2020). Each entity plays a role in shaping the sports landscape, contributing to its success and sustainability. Figure 2 further below is a model of the sports ecosystem.

An *ecosystem* is usually understood as having to do with living things, nature, organisms, environment, ecology, and their system of relationships (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024; Dictionary.com, 2023). However, the term is also applied to a system or network of interconnecting business parts (Dictionary.com, 2023); as well as its people, processes, activities, technology and the way they affect each other (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). A sports ecosystem is not merely about the athletes and events and competitions. An athlete or participant needs a supporting ecosystem to function effectively, especially at the elite and excellence levels and for sociological, cultural, and developmental purposes.

In a LinkedIn post (2018), Rajeev Goenka, a founder CEO of BFY Sports & Fitness, explained the nature of a sports ecosystem and its role in a country. The sports ecosystem is a network of interconnecting parts that supports the key elements of sports such as governance, financial aid, production of sports goods, marketing strategy, infrastructure, scouting and training new talents. In this ecosystem, all elements interact dynamically to achieve the proper functioning and growth of the whole. With a properly managed sports ecosystem, a country will perform exceptionally well in sports, and gain international recognition, thereby raising its standing, boost its finance and tourism sectors, and establish relationships with other countries. However, depending on one element alone without its interconnected networks can lead to negative outcomes for their sports. Only when supported by a highly interconnected ecosystem, can sports be balanced and efficient.

The Centre for Sport & Human Rights (2024) on human rights issue in sport ecosystem suggested that a holistic people-centred perspective can address several concerns of sports through its symbiotic relationships in the ecosystem that affected its institutional actors and its stakeholder groups due to their direct and indirect roles. While the athletes and individuals involved in sport are at the centre of the ecosystem, the local community, the schools and universities, elite and professionals; family and entourage, technical officials, general public, journalists and workers impact each other through their different roles and capacities. This group are in return influenced by other sectors (i.e. private, public, not-for-profit) at local, national, regional and international levels. In addition, sports bodies play an important role through organising and delivering regular sport activities and events together with other stakeholders and institutions.

Lee and Hassim (in Zajda & Vissing, 2023) conceptualised and presented a general and comprehensive sport ecosystem model (Figure 2) based on sports segments comprising of: 1) the inner core segment comprising of sports events, programmes and activities; 2) an outer segment on support segment comprising of the stakeholders on and off the field who are directly involved with the sports events and athletes; 3) the sport industry and resources including broadcasting media, sports businesses, commercialisation, sports products and merchandise, sports tourism, professional sports organisation, and digital technologies; and 4) the outer most segment comprising the legislative, policy and governance with the management and administration, and sports education and training. This sports ecosystem model demonstrated the respective socio-cultural issues in each of the segments. According to Vissing and Zajda (2023), the socio-cultural values associated with sport are framed with a moralistic and humanity view. The framework is an examination of the impact of socio-cultural components in the sport ecosystem that reflect societal values and priorities through sports, this indicating its socio-cultural role of sports in human and social development.

There is no universal model or design of a sports ecosystem. In fact, the one conceived by Lee and Hassim (2023) can comprise several sports sub-ecosystem depending on its contexts. For instance, da Silva and Casas. (2018) suggested that a sports club can

operate its own sports ecosystem with its limited number of stakeholders to coordinate relevant resources and enhance the value proposition of the sports club alongside that of its partnerships, sponsors, suppliers and fans. Their study presented sports ecosystem in the US that is modeled in a linear, horizontal model, comprising of sports leagues, goods suppliers, fans' management, stadium or arena, club management, partnerships, sponsorships, and public media.

MADANI Values

MADANI values was introduced by the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, representing a vision for a civilised, skilled, and inclusive society. These values, include Sustainability, Care and Compassion, Respect, Innovation, Prosperity, and Trust, aim to address societal needs across various sectors (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2023).

In the context of sports, sustainability can be reflected in the development of eco-friendly sports facilities and practices that ensure long-term viability. Care and compassion can be promoted by providing accessible sports programmes for all segments of society, including marginalised groups, and ensuring the well-being of athletes. Respect is fundamental in promoting fair play, cultural diversity, and inclusion within sports communities. Encouraging innovation can lead to advancements in sports science, training techniques, and the use of technology to enhance performance and fan engagement. Prosperity can be achieved by creating economic opportunities through sports, such as job creation, tourism, and local business growth. Finally, trust is essential for maintaining integrity in sports, ensuring transparency in governance, and fostering trust between athletes, coaches, officials, and fans. By aligning with MADANI values, the sports framework in Malaysia can contribute significantly to societal development and national unity. By integrating these principles, the sports sector can achieve sustainable development, enhance community support, and promote ethical practices, thereby contributing to the overall vision of a civilised and skilled society.

MADANI values serve as guiding principles for the nation, promoting problem-solving, peace, prosperity, and human potential fulfilment. They are inclusive, and target all segments of Malaysian society, irrespective of race, religion, or culture in fostering national unity and development (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2023). Integrating the MADANI values into Malaysia's sports framework can profoundly enhance the sector by promoting sustainability, inclusivity, and integrity. By developing eco-friendly sports facilities and practices, the principle of sustainability ensures long-term viability and environmental responsibility. Care and compassion can be fostered through accessible sports programs for all societal segments, prioritizing the well-being of athletes. Respect is cultivated by promoting fair play, cultural diversity, and anti-discrimination policies. Innovation drives progress through advanced training techniques and technology, enhancing performance and engagement. Prosperity is achieved by leveraging sports for economic growth, job creation, and global recognition. Trust is built through transparent governance and ethical practices,

strengthening confidence in sports institutions. This holistic integration fosters national unity, economic growth, and a supportive environment where every individual can thrive, contributing to Malaysia's vision of a civilized and inclusive society.

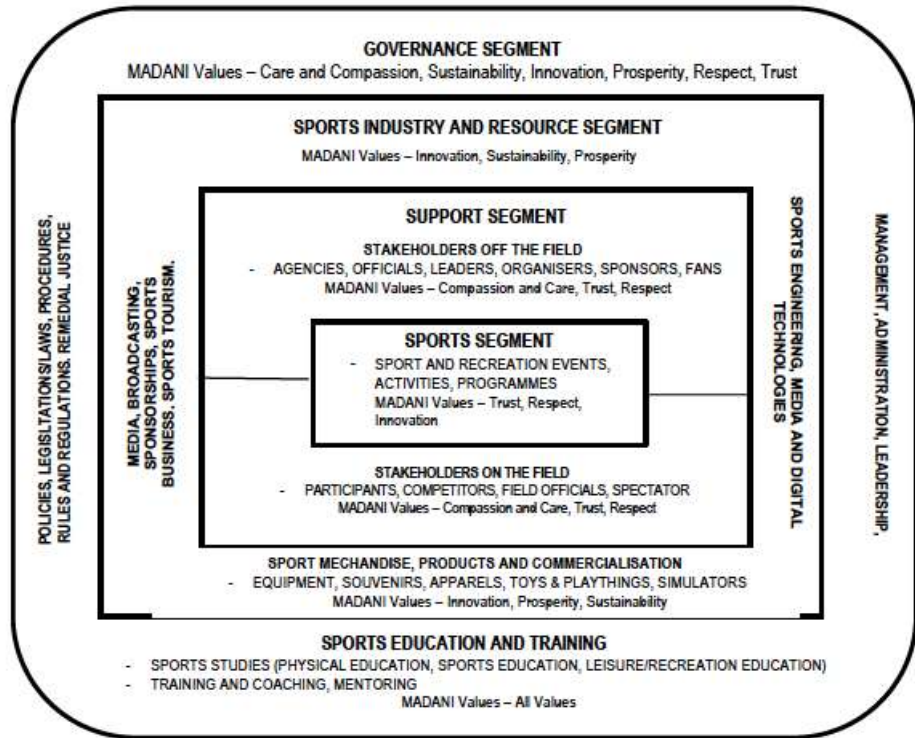


Figure 2. *MADANI Values Within the Sports Ecosystem*
 (Adapted from Lee and Hassim, in Zajda and Vissing, 2023.)

The agenda of MADANI is to focus on problem-solving process; meeting the needs of the nation; creating a peaceful and prosperous future; and fulfilling the potential of the people and the country. It is targeted on economy and finance, legislation, institutions, education, community, culture, urban and rural communities (Prime Minister’s Office of Malaysia, 2023). Incorporating MADANI values into sports and the sports ecosystem (Figure 2 above) can significantly contribute to achieving the agenda's goals. Sports can be a powerful tool for economic and financial growth through sports tourism, events, and related industries. Legislation and institutional integrity can be strengthened by promoting fair play, anti-doping measures, and transparent governance in sports organizations. Educational aspects are enriched by incorporating sports into school curricula, promoting physical education, and nurturing young talent. Community and cultural values are emphasized through inclusive sports programs that respect diversity and encourage participation from all societal segments. Urban and rural development can be balanced by providing equitable

sports facilities and opportunities across all regions, ensuring that both urban and rural communities benefit equally. When considering these values and aims, we can see that they can be included into sports as part of its socio-cultural values. When considering these values and aims, we can see they can be included into sports as part of its socio-cultural values.

METHODOLOGY

This paper does not employ an empirical research methodology. Rather, it is an exploratory paper to develop a concept of how MADANI values can be instilled and integrated into Malaysian sports activities and sports culture. It is based on a review of literature to determine whether there is a rationale for MADANI values to be incorporated into Malaysian sports.

Since there is an underlying assumption that MADANI values can indeed be incorporated into Malaysian sports, the discussions will deliberate on the arguments to support it, and the ways in which it can be achieved, and also for future studies to be initiated in this concept.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Inculcating Values through Sports

Values in sport are believed to offer numerous benefits in everyday life, with a sizable impact on society. They play a pivotal role in shaping societal behaviour, with sports serving as a platform to promote positive values such as respect, fair play, and teamwork that can serve as role model. Conversely, negative values can have detrimental effects on individuals and communities. Therefore, promoting positive values in sports activities is crucial (Purnomo, et al., 2023).

Sports, conceptualised through desirable values that individuals and society aspire to achieve, promote character building, discipline, patriotism and even religiosity, thus shaping how people perceive and engage with sports (Leonard II, 1998). However, sports also have a dark side, involving deviant behaviour, fraud, corruption, violence, discrimination, and human rights violation (Woods, 2016; Coakley, 2021). As an institution, the types of games people play, the degree of competitiveness, the type of rules, the type of change, and reward system in sport are embedded into the society of sport (ibid.). Values in sport are, therefore, very important which can be expressed by sport heroes and icons as role models as well as in sports attire, fashion, infrastructures, and equipment.

Addressing these socio-cultural issues in sports require instilling positive values through human interactions within the sports community and being open to external influences (Doh & Luthans, 2018; Chelladurai, 2014). Sports serve as a platform for promoting health, entertainment, recreation, and social interaction, reflecting cultural symbols, rituals, and role models (Jarvie, 2006).

Instilling and inculcating socio-cultural values in and through sports is very important in order to address the many sociological issues in sports such as deviant behaviour, match-fixing, fraud and corruption, violence and rule breaking, gangsterism, negative role identity, racism, discrimination, gender abuse, greed are among the dark side of sport (Woods, 2016; Coakley, 2021), as well as human rights violation (Vissing, 2023). This negative dimension of sports and lead to doping, cheating, match-fixing, corruption, exclusion, racial oppression, sexual exploitation, prejudice, and stereotyping (Hassim, 2018).

This dark side in the socio-cultural dimension of sports can be addressed through values in human interactions among members of the sports fraternity as well as relevant outside influences. These social behaviours are acquired life experiences that are shared by members of a group or organisation (Doh & Luthans, 2018; Chelladurai, 2014). Culture and its values then can be facilitated for effective and sustainable relationships (Jim Weese, in Chelladurai, 2014). As a popular culture, sports can be humanised through its framework of activities of health, entertainment, recreation, and leisure in the society (Solmas, 2012, as cited by Temel at al., 2019).

This can be demonstrated and reflected in the symbols, rituals, role models, ceremonies, and characteristics in sports (Jarvie, 2006). With the introduction of new virtual, digital, robotic and mechanical technologies, those traditional values should evolve together with new cultures in sports. Moreover, the Covid-19 epidemic has brought forth a new culture of sports focusing on general health and well-being.

Trendifilova and Ziakas (2022) suggest that sports, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, embody values, norms, beliefs, and perceptions that define and shape the sport experience. Cultivating shared values can drive behaviours, foster trust, and enhance mutual understanding among participants. A socio-ecological framework for sports helps understand and manage activities while considering local customs, values, and practices for long-term sustainability. It is a holistic approach to better understand the interdisciplinary domain of sport socio-culture and its nature.

For instance, efforts in Malaysia, exemplified by ADAMAS education modules, underscore the importance of values such as perseverance, respect, discipline, passion, and trust. Initiatives like those by WADA and UNESCO further emphasize the significance of values in sports, particularly in combating doping and fostering clean sports. These values align with MADANI values like respect and trust. Additionally, initiatives like WADA's publications on sports values and UNESCO collaboration emphasize the importance of values in combating doping and promoting clean sports. WADA, in this respect, focuses on the three core values of respect, equity, and inclusion.

Cultural Integration and Inclusivity

There are practical actions that can integrate MADANI values into sports, such as fostering cultural exchange programmes and inclusive participation in community-

based sports such as recreational sports, sport-for-all, and mass sports. Culture-based sports include those of the martial arts sports such as wushu, taekwondo, silat, karate reflects on their own diverse cultural identities.

The diversity of Malaysian society is reflected in its sports activities, fostering an intercultural and multicultural environment. Traditional and indigenous sports contribute to preserving cultural heritage, while inclusive participation promotes values like care, compassion, and empathy. This includes those sports for the disabled such as paralympic sports, and sports for ethnic minority groups such as for example in Malaysia, *menyumpit (blowpiping)*, *sepak takraw*, *wau (traditional kite flying)*, *gasing (traditional top spinning)*. By embracing diversity and in participation, such sports can serve as a unifying force, promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

Sports are intercultural when diverse groups of people participate in the various sports activities together. All sports share the same culture and language, and even though some sports are culture-specific, people from all backgrounds are able to engage in them and adopt them into their own context. When people participate or engage in a sport, its cultural values are appreciated and integrated into the local culture. Further, traditional or indigenous sports can help preserve a people's cultural heritage in the form of organised events and festivals thus promoting their sustainability in a multicultural and intercultural setting. Similarly, sports for the disabled and minority groups allows them to identify with their champions and celebrate their achievements as worthy representations of their own group.

Economic Impact

The sports industry significantly contributes to Malaysia's economy, encompassing areas like sports tourism and events, sports products and sports merchandise, media and broadcasting, sponsorships, endorsements, and advertisements, to enhance its prosperity. The economic benefits are also reflected in the sales of sports equipment, retail shops, rental of sports facilities and sports equipment, as well as the hospitality industry of hotels and accommodations. Professional athletes can also generate high earnings from the prize money, endorsements and sponsorships.

Innovation in sports

Innovation in sports technology and infrastructure further enhances the industry's prosperity. Additionally, fostering trust among stakeholders is crucial for sustainable development and prosperity within the sports ecosystem. The value of innovation can be developed through the evolution of sport activities such as drone soccer, esports, robotic sports, sports engineering technologies, sports equipment, and facilities as well as new digital platforms for engaging in sports and new aids for sports performances. Sports attires, for instance, has over the years required constant innovation to enhance safety, address injuries, and improve performance.

MADANI values in Cultural Diversity

As describe earlier, MADANI is an amalgamation of cultural diversities that transcends multicultural diversity in Malaysia. Hence, is there any reason why MADANI values cannot be part of the Malaysian sports society?

When athletes, officials, coaches are engaged in sport bodies with different communities or society members, they learn to foster respect for its members, its hierarchy, its governance and its rules and regulations. Through their interactions with the athletes, the coaches, officials, and sports bodies, they can foster and develop the value of care, compassion, empathy, kindness and service.

Winning and losing is part-and-parcel of sports especially at the competitive levels where respect is important to acknowledge the winners and high performers as well as the fans who support the sport. Trust is essential in the sports ecosystem, binding stakeholders together and facilitating development.

Generally, by embedding MADANI values in the sports framework, Malaysia can promote social cohesion, economic development, and national unity, and ensuring sports to be a cornerstone of societal advancement and cultural enrichment. The MADANI core values are intended to benefit the whole nation and all segments and levels of Malaysian society. It serves as the guiding set of values for all Malaysian communities of all sectors supporting the nation’s development and growth.

Table 1. *MADANI Values in the Sports Ecosystem segments*

Sports Ecosystem Segments	Elements of the Sports Ecosystem Segments	MADANI VALUES
Sports Segment	Sports activities, programmes, events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trust ▪ Respect ▪ Innovation
Support Segment	The stakeholders on and off the field – competitors, coaches, officials, fans, spectators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compassion and Care ▪ Trust ▪ Respect
Sports Industry and Resource Segment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members of the sport industry ▪ Event managers ▪ Entrepreneurial merchandisers, product, equipment and marketing personnel ▪ Media and broadcasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovation ▪ Sustainability ▪ Prosperity

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Digital influencers ▪ Sports facility managers and organisers ▪ Sports engineers 	
Governance Education Developmental Segment	with and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legislations, policies, governing bodies and officials ▪ Managers and Administrators ▪ Rule regulators and arbitrators ▪ Sports education, coaching and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Care and compassion ▪ Sustainability ▪ Innovation ▪ Prosperity ▪ Respect ▪ Trust

Table 1 summarises the integration of MADANI values into the Malaysian sports ecosystem framework. It suggests how MADANI values align with different segments of the sports ecosystem, highlighting their importance in fostering trust, respect, innovation, and prosperity. Reciprocally, the coaches and managers have to trust their athletes to follow their instructions and be disciplined. Externally, the athletes have to build a trust basis with their fans and media to support them in their training and competitions. If we examine the sports ecosystem, trust permeates each level of the segments, supporting each other and interconnecting with each other. It is the trust that binds the various stakeholders and the industry for the development of sports. Trust is like glue that keeps all the microcosm of a sport ecosystem together. Once a segment breaks, the whole sport spectrum and its development can fall apart, causing sports to decline.

The breakdown of the MADANI values associated with different segments of the sports ecosystem offer valuable insight into the ethical principles that should underpin every aspect of the sporting activity. Each segment, from the core sports activities to the support infrastructure and governing bodies, is linked with specific MADANI values that encapsulate ideals such as trust, respect, compassion, innovation, sustainability, and prosperity.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive framework provided by the MADANI values, there may exist gaps in their implementation or alignment within the sports ecosystem. These gaps can manifest in inconsistencies in applying ethical principles, disparities in inclusivity and access, insufficient attention to environmental sustainability, or shortcomings in governance and accountability. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including sports organizations, governing bodies, policymakers, community leaders, and parents/guardians to ensure that the ideals of MADANI are not just theoretical concepts but actionable guidelines driving real-world practices.

By recognising and addressing these potential gaps, the sports community can move closer to realizing its full potential as a force for positive social change and collective well-being. By fostering a culture of integrity, inclusivity, sustainability, and accountability, informed by the principles of MADANI, the sports ecosystem can become more equitable, resilient, and impactful domain, enriching the lives of participants and stakeholders alike while serving as a beacon of inspiration for future generations.

Approaches to Inculcating Values through Sports

Various approaches can develop values in sports. Purnomo et. al., (2023) had suggested training programmes, teamwork, life skills development, intentional interactions, and structural programmes to improve values in sports. They also cited Rensmann (2015) suggestion of shaping culture by forging, building, and recognising social identity. Such social values should also be shared with the community and more research should be done on the social values promoted in sports activities.

Leadership models like servant leadership, focusing on empowering people, humility, authenticity, and stewardship, can promote values in sports. Education, leadership, participation, opportunities, skills development, coaching, mentoring, and governance through policies and guidelines are essential for instilling values. Servant leadership characteristics build trust, integrity, and inclusion together with compassion, forgiveness, and empathy. The servant leader then provides direction and serving as a role model through stewardship.

MADANI values can be assimilated into Malaysian sports at all levels, from athletes to governance, emphasizing trust, respect, care, compassion, innovation, sustainability, and prosperity. MADANI values can be incorporated into those processes, if not visibly then subtly and unobtrusively. MADANI values can focus, for example, on cultural awareness and appreciation, equal access to opportunities, its social integration and interaction among the sporting society, language inclusivity, understanding interfaith norms, a new governance through legislation and policies, public perception, media profile and representation, education, and sporting qualities.

However, the process of inculcating values takes time and cannot be achieved solely through regulations. Governance of values differs for competitive sports (extrinsic measures) and socio-cultural development (intrinsic measures), with intrinsic governance focusing on internal empowerment rather than external regulation. Values need to be internalised, then realised, and understood. While extrinsic measures can be used to instill values, they need to be appreciated, recognised and internalised by the individual. Such intrinsic governance can be through H.E.R.S. (Humility, Empowerment, Respect, Service). This can mean being role models and setting good examples of positivity, diligence, discipline, and service above self.

Ultimately, promoting values in sports requires a multifaceted approach, integrating MADANI values into Malaysia's sports culture while fostering trust, respect, and inclusivity among all stakeholders. It requires using the soft approach of leadership that is bottoms-up rather than top-down and influencing rather than directing.

In order for MADANI values to become integral to Malaysian sports, it is essential to incorporate each of its six values into existing sports programmes and activities, involving all sports stakeholders. A guiding framework such as the one proposed here (Table 2 below) can be helpful in this endeavour. However, it is important to note that this framework is not exhaustive and may require adaptation based on individual perceptions and interpretations. Further studies, possibly through a longitudinal approach, could be initiated to assess the effectiveness of these values in practice. Nonetheless, this framework can serve as a starting point to strengthen the practice of MADANI values in Malaysian sports.

Table 2: R.E.C.O.G.N.I.S.E Acronym of MADANI Values

R.E.C.O.G.N.I.S.E.	
R	REALISE: Recognise the potential for MADANI values to be part of Malaysian sports culture.
E	EMBED and ENCULTURE: Integrate MADANI values into Malaysian sports through cultural immersion.
C	COACHING: Utilize coaching with mentoring approaches to instill MADANI values.
O	OPPORTUNITIES: Provide opportunities for the integration of MADANI values into sports culture.
G	GUIDELINES: Establish governance guidelines and policies outlining the incorporation of MADANI values into Malaysian sports.
N	NURTURE: Foster the growth of MADANI values within Malaysian sports.
I	INTEGRATE: Blend MADANI values with other sports values seamlessly.
S	SECURE: Ensure the sustainability of MADANI values within Malaysian sports culture.
E	ENABLE: Facilitate the adoption of MADANI values through educational and experiential learning.

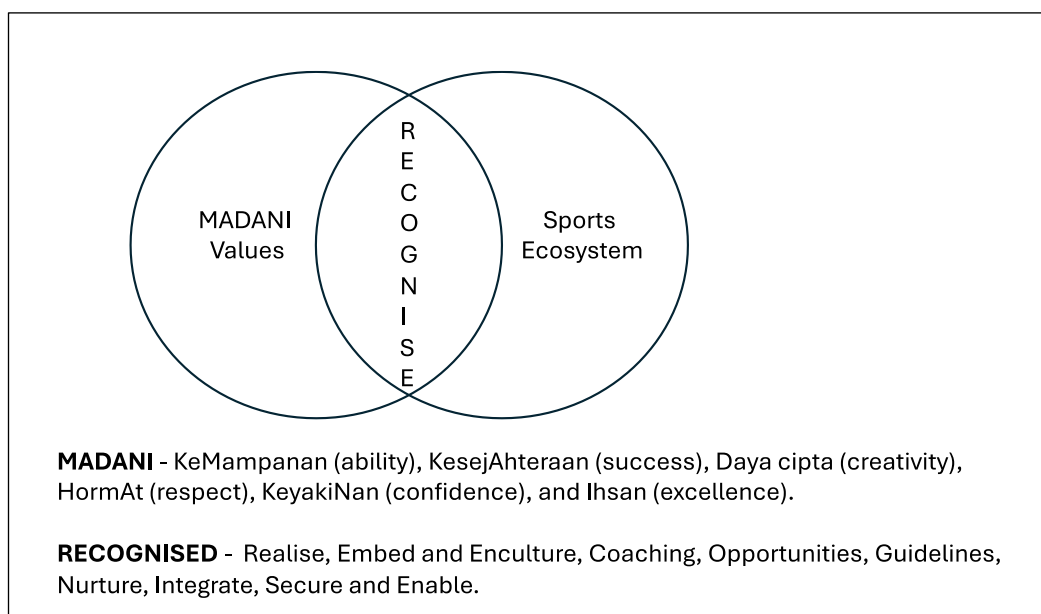


Figure 3. *The Position of MADANI Values with the Sports Ecosystem*

Figure 3 above suggests where R.E.C.O.G.N.I.S.E. fits in the position of MADANI values with the sports ecosystem. This study, nonetheless, has its limitations as it is not empirical research, but an exploratory concept as mentioned earlier. The concept of this model could not be tested at this point as it is newly conceptualised and hypothetical as it does not have a sample for study and therefore was not able to be analysed statistically. However, the analyses and discussions here set a framework and direction for a future study to provide further evidence on how MADANI values could be integrated into the sports ecosystem and then to validate it in the future.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Integrating MADANI values into Malaysian sports presents an opportunity to enhance the sports culture, promote inclusivity, and foster positive societal values. By recognising and addressing potential gaps, Malaysia's sports community can realise its full potential as a force for positive social change and collective well-being. It is now clear that the result of integrating MADANI values into Malaysian sports presents a significant opportunity to elevate the sports culture, promote inclusivity, and foster positive societal values. By embedding MADANI principles into the sports framework, Malaysia can create a more resilient and forward-looking sports environment. This integration ensures that sports facilities and practices are environmentally sustainable, inclusive of all societal segments, and uphold the highest standards of fairness and respect. By leveraging innovation, Malaysia can enhance athletic performance and

engagement, while promoting economic growth through sports-related activities and industries.

Addressing potential gaps in the current sports framework, such as accessibility, resource allocation, and governance, will further ensure that the benefits of sports are equitably distributed. This comprehensive approach allows the sports community to harness its full potential as a catalyst for positive social change and collective well-being. Through this alignment with MADANI values, Malaysian sports can contribute significantly to enhance national unity, economic prosperity, and the holistic development of individuals. Ultimately, this integration underscores the role of sports as not just a physical activity, but a vital component of Malaysia's socio-cultural fabric and a driving force for the nation's progress.

These MADANI values in Malaysian sports should complement, rather than overshadow, existing sports values in Malaysia, enhancing the nation's sporting ethos. Practical applications of these values need to be developed and integrated, supported by evidence-based approaches to justify their adoption.

By demonstrating how cultural values can be ingrained through sports, particularly in the socio-cultural domain, Malaysia can underscore its commitment to fostering societal development through sports. Ultimately, these values promote a "Culture through Sports" paradigm, contributing to the advancement of sports within society.

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**EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL COSTS, ERGONOMICS,
AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' MENTAL
HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of built environment, ergonomics, and financial cost on students' mental health during COVID-19 in Malaysia. The central problem that motivates the study is the potential misidentification of critical factors in terms of functional dimensions of the learning environment financial sustainability. Focusing on students' population residing in Malaysia during the COVID19 pandemic, the main research objective is to determine how the surrounding and comfort affect them. These students are between 20 to 25 years of age, comprises all races in Malaysia. The dependent variable is mental health, and the independent variables are financial cost, ergonomics and built environment. By analyzing questionnaire data and employing SEM-PLS, the study reveals that ergonomics and financial costs significantly affect Malaysian students' mental health. The unique aspect of this research lies in considering the functional dimensions of the learning environment and financial sustainability as factors influencing personal health. The findings have practical implications for educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of designing ergonomic virtual learning spaces and promoting sustainable practices to mitigate mental health risks among university students.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, Sustainability, Student mental health, Built environment, Ergonomics*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health conditions, such as depression, are prevalent and can significantly impact an individual's well-being. Depression is a mental health condition that is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is a leading cause of disability globally and can result in a reduced quality of life. In fact, as stated by WHO (2022), indicated mental health can have a range of causes that involve complex interactions between psychological, social, and biological factors creating a multifaceted challenge that requires sustainable solutions.

Although there are effective treatments for depression, including both pharmaceutical and psychosocial therapies, they may not be readily available or accessible in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2022). In many cases, individuals with mental health conditions in these countries do not receive the necessary treatment and support they need, with estimates suggesting that up to 75 percent of individuals with mental health conditions in these areas do not receive treatment. Improving access to mental health care and support in a sustainable manner is crucial to ensure the well-being of individuals with mental health conditions globally.

Depression can have a significant impact on all parts of life, including academic achievement, work productivity, relationships with family and friends, and ability to participate in community activities (Mofatteh, 2020). It affects people of all ages, with women being more prone than males to suffer from it. Realizing the issue, mental health was included in the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) - "Good Health and Well-being" - in 2015. The United Nations (2015) emphasizes the importance of attaining universal health coverage and access to high-quality healthcare to enhance physical and mental well-being and increase life expectancy for all. The focus is on preventing and treating non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including behavioral, developmental, and neurological conditions. In short, an integrated development strategy that priorities mental health as both a means and a goal of international development is essential.

In 2015, the United Nations highlighted the importance of "Good Health and Well-being." Emphasizing the need for universal health coverage and access to high-quality healthcare, the UN aims to enhance physical and mental well-being and increase life expectancy for all. The focus is on preventing and treating non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including behavioral, developmental, and neurological conditions. An integrated development strategy that prioritizes mental health as both a means and a goal of international development is essential.

One of the individuals who are impacted as well during the pandemic are university students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, university students around the world faced numerous mental health challenges. Consequently, researchers have begun to explore depression and its impact on students' well-being. One study by Zhu et al., (2023) in China found that the absence of face-to-face interactions and lectures had negative effects on undergraduate nursing students. As the COVID-19 outbreak intensified, these students experienced higher levels of anxiety, depression, and learning fatigue. However, their academic self-efficacy helped to moderate the impact of mental health issues on learning burnout. This highlights the importance of considering factors like students' learning attitude, behaviour, and mental health status, as well as the immense stress of dealing with the pandemic. Unfortunately, some countries and regions have ignored the psychological needs of their students, leaving them vulnerable to issues like learning burnout and poor mental health (OECD, 2020).

Similarly, as stated by Park et al., (2022) and Wang et al. (2023), college students in the United States and China faced significant challenges during the pandemic. The frequency and impact of COVID-19-related stressful life events predicted worsening mental health over time, but prior social connections reduced the negative impact of these events on life satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of fostering sustainable social interactions among college students. In term of gender, women experienced more stressful life events, higher levels of anxiety and depression, and lower levels of life satisfaction than men. To address this disparity sustainably, it is therefore essential to implement prevention and intervention activities to improve social interactions and welfare among college students, particularly female students.

Another severe impact stated by previous studies such as Cress and Ikeda (2003), Jenaro et al. (2021) and Swed et al., (2022) are difficulty concentrating, memory problems, and missing deadlines. Students who are depressed due to financial or living circumstances may feel overwhelmed and unable to cope with academic responsibilities. This can lead to physical health problems such as insomnia, fatigue, and a weakened immune system, which can affect academic performance and overall well-being. In severe cases, depression can even lead to suicidal thoughts and self-harm.

Furthermore, during the study-at-home phase, students were required to learn from home, and the built environment had a significant impact on their academic achievement. Factors like seating, lighting, noise levels, and color can all affect learning ability (Samani, 2012). Students who learn in a positive learning environment are more motivated, and engaged, and have higher overall learning ability. However, those who learn in unfavourable conditions, such as an uncomfortable, noisy, or

distracting environment, will struggle to retain knowledge and remain engaged. To create sustainable learning environments, it is important to consider the ecological impact of the built environment. By incorporating sustainable design principles, such as energy-efficient lighting, natural materials, and proper insulation, educational institutions can not only enhance students' learning experiences but also minimize their carbon footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Students faced a variety of obstacles, such as social isolation, financial strain, worry about their future, and difficulty with online learning, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health and well-being of students. Several students have experienced increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of the disruption to their typical routines and social life, as well as the fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Furthermore, the transition to online learning has presented issues for students who lack reliable technology or a quiet study environment at home. Based on these circumstances, the research question intends to be answered is how do financial cost and built environment factors contribute to students' depression levels during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia? Thus, the objective of this study is to assess the sustainable impact of financial cost and built environment on students' depression levels in Malaysia during the COVID-19 setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Depression and mental health

Depression is not only a significant health issue but also has implications for sustainability, as it can impact individuals' productivity, work performance, and overall well-being, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems that promote mental health in sustainable ways. Depression (major depressive disorder) is a prevalent and serious medical condition that negatively affects how you feel, think, and behave (WHO, 2017). Thankfully, it is curable. Depression causes melancholy feelings and/or a loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities. It can lead to a variety of mental and physical issues, as well as a decrease in your ability to function at work and at home (Torres, 2020). Depression is distinct from normal mood swings and fleeting emotional responses to ordinary stresses. Depression can be a major sustainable health issue, particularly when it is recurring and moderately or severely intense. It can lead to significant suffering and poor performance at job, school, and in the family. At its most severe, depression can result in suicide. Approximately 700 000 individuals die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the fourth highest cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29 (Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2021; Evans-Lacko et al., 2018).

There are different types of depression, some of which develop due to specific circumstances; major depression, which includes symptoms of depression most of the time for at least two weeks that typically interfere with one's ability to work, sleep, study, and eat. Persistent depressive disorder (also called dysthymia), which often includes less severe symptoms of depression that last much longer, typically for at least 2 years. Perinatal depression, which occurs when a woman experiences major depression during pregnancy or after delivery (postpartum depression). Seasonal affective disorder, which comes and goes with the seasons, typically starting in late fall and early winter and going away during spring and summer. Depression with symptoms of psychosis, which is a severe form of depression where a person experiences psychosis symptoms, such as delusions (disturbing, false fixed beliefs) or hallucinations (hearing or seeing things that others do not see or hear) (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d)

The negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents, especially those who are already susceptible, are a source of great concern. Many factors, including emotional, physiological, and behavioral stress, have contributed to the occurrence of mental health issues in diverse age groups (Holmes et al., 2020; Racine et al., 2021). These have happened due to variables such as social isolation induced by school closures, parental concern regarding the virus and employment, increases in unreported child abuse, a rise in cyberbullying because of an increase in online activities, and the trauma of losing family members (Kauhanen et al., 2022). In the United States, depression symptoms were more than three-fold higher during COVID-19 compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals with lower social resources, lower economic resources, and greater exposure to stressors (eg, job loss) reported a greater burden of depression symptoms. Post-COVID-19 plans should account for the probable increase in mental illness to come, particularly among at-risk populations (Ettman et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted collegiate life as the pandemic's unknown timeline affects students' academics, lives, and mental health (Saraswathi et al., 2020; Kecojevic et al., 2020). The pandemic has emphasized the need for sustainable interventions that address the mental health challenges faced by college students, as prolonged periods of loneliness and disrupted academic life can have long-term consequences on their well-being and overall sustainability. Young adults are at high risk for increases in loneliness and mental health problems during the COVID-19 (Lee et al., 2020). There is a definite correlation between being lonely and experiencing depression. In a study which utilizes systematic review of 63 studies of 51,576 participants by Loades et al., (2020), they found a clear association between loneliness and mental health problems in children and adolescents. These findings were consistent

across studies of children, adolescents, and young adults. There may also be sex differences, with some research indicating that loneliness was more strongly associated with elevated depression symptoms in girls and with elevated social anxiety in boys. The length of loneliness appears to be a predictor of future mental health problems. This is of relevance in the COVID-19 context, as politicians in different countries consider the length of time that schools should remain closed, and the implementation of social distancing within schools.

During COVID-19 confinement, a longer term of study and worry about insufficient sanitizer supplies were common indicators of increased negative affect, anxiety, and depression. Focusing on states of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and affectivity, Li et al., (2022) performed a longitudinal study which examine changes in the mental health status of a college population before and after their COVID-19 incarceration for the first two weeks. Two online surveys were completed by the participants: one on anxiety and depression, and the other on positive and negative affect. The first survey was done prior to confinement, while the second was completed 15–17 days (about 2 and a half weeks) after confinement began. After two weeks of confinement, increases in negative affect and symptoms of anxiety and sadness were detected. The findings show that healthcare policymakers should carefully examine the proper length of confinement and maintain enough supplies of basic infection-control products.

Financial well-being and mental health

Financial well-being and psychological stress are two interconnected topics that have received a lot of attention in recent years. Financial well-being is defined as a condition of financial stability, satisfaction, and security, whereas mental stress is defined as the psychological and emotional reaction to external stressors such as financial obstacles (Friedline, 2021; Drentea et al., 2020). According to research, one of the most common causes of psychological anguish is financial stress, which can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders (Gupta et al., 2023; Johnson & Smith, 2021; Mason et al., 2018). Those who are experiencing financial troubles are also more likely to have poor mental health, including high levels of stress and decreased well-being (Choi et al., 2021; Huffman & O'Connell, 2021). Individuals of all ages and ethnicities, regardless of income level, can be affected by financial stress. By addressing financial stress through sustainable interventions, we can mitigate the negative impact on mental health, promote overall well-being, and work towards a more equitable and sustainable society.

Better mental health outcomes have been connected to financial well-being. According to research, those with higher degrees of financial security and stability have better mental health and well-being than those with lower levels of financial security

(Weber et al., 2021). When faced with financial difficulties, financial well-being has also been linked to higher resilience and better coping mechanisms (Teng, 2018). In fact, financial well-being has an impact on mental health that reaches beyond individuals to families and communities. Financial stress can have a negative impact on the well-being of entire families, causing greater stress and conflict in relationships (Britt et al., 2021). Furthermore, communities in financial distress may have greater levels of crime, poverty, and other social difficulties, which can have a severe impact on the mental health of those who live in those places (Buttner et al., 2020).

According to research, financial well-being and mental stress are major issues among university students. Anxiety, sadness, and poor academic performance have all been related to financial stress (Liberatore et al., 2019). Students from low-income households or who take part-time jobs while studying are more likely to experience financial stress, which has a negative impact on their mental health (Kelsey et al., 2020). Higher levels of financial literacy, on the other hand, have been linked to better financial well-being and lower levels of financial stress (Huston et al., 2019). Effective sustainable interventions aimed at financial education and assistance can help enhance university students' financial well-being and mental health.

Mental health and the built environment

The built environment is an important component of sustainable human living situations because it influences physical, social, and mental well-being. Recent studies have highlighted the significance of sustainable features within the built environment, such as energy-efficient housing, access to green spaces, and reduced noise pollution, in mitigating mental stress and improving overall public health outcomes (Galea et al., 2020). The built environment also includes a variety of characteristics such as housing quality, green areas, transit accessibility, and noise pollution. According to research, living in low-quality housing and underprivileged communities increases the risk of mental stress and related diseases (Galea et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a lack of access to green areas and natural habitats has been linked to increased levels of mental stress (Bratman et al., 2019). Noise pollution, such as traffic noise, has also been related to mental stress and a decrease in well-being (Munzel et al., 2018). Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression can result from these circumstances, impacting everyday functioning and quality of life. The presence of well-designed and managed green spaces, such as parks and gardens, on the other hand, can have a favourable impact on mental health and stress reduction (Van den Berg et al., 2015). Enhancing home quality and lowering noise pollution can also contribute to better mental health outcomes (Tennant et al., 2021).

Ergonomics and psychological health

Ergonomics is the scientific study of how people interact with their work environment, with the goal of designing comfortable, efficient, and safe workspaces. By prioritizing sustainable ergonomics, such as incorporating adjustable furniture, promoting physical activity, and providing natural lighting, organizations can create workspaces that not only enhance comfort and efficiency but also contribute to improved mental health and overall sustainability. Much study has been conducted on the relationship between ergonomics and mental health. According to studies, poor ergonomic design can contribute to work-related stress and anxiety, which can lead to a variety of physical and mental health issues. Poor ergonomics, according to Wicker et al., (2018), can lead to musculoskeletal diseases such as back discomfort, which can contribute to depressed symptoms. Additionally, frequent or boring work duties can cause mental weariness and decreased job satisfaction, both of which are detrimental to mental health. Another study, conducted by Bevan et al., (2015), discovered that employees who reported poor ergonomics at their workplace were more likely to feel stress and sadness.

A well-designed ergonomic workspace, on the other hand, can have a good impact on mental health. According to a study conducted by Robertson et al., (2016), an ergonomic intervention programme in a call centre reduced psychological discomfort and increased job satisfaction among employees. Similarly, Sundstrup et al., (2016) discovered that applying ergonomic improvements in a manufacturing plant reduced work-related stress and enhanced mental well-being. Ultimately, there is a complicated and diverse relationship between financial stress, the built environment, ergonomics, and mental health. Further study is needed to fully understand the mechanisms underlying this association and to create effective interventions to boost mental health in those experiencing financial stress and living in a bad built environment.

Despite prior research on depression and mental health in psychology, behavior, and socialization, there has been little attention paid to the impact of financial strain and the built environment on students' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. While several studies such as Choi et al., (2021), Ding et al., (2020), and Kierkegaard (2021) have conducted on the impact of finances and the built environment on working adults, knowledge gaps exist regarding university students' experiences during the pandemic's study-at-home phase. During this phase, students who relied on part-time jobs to support themselves faced difficulties paying tuition fees, purchasing study materials, and paying rent. The impact of these challenges on their depression levels is unknown.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study can be described as a quantitative survey utilizing Structural Equation Modeling – Partial Least Squares SEM-PLS 4 for analysis. The design was chosen as it is suitable for addressing our research question, that is ‘How do financial cost and built environment factors contribute to students' depression levels during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia?’ SEM-PLS is particularly suitable for exploring the intricate and predictive relationships between financial costs, built environment factors, and students' depression levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. This methodology not only enhances the robustness and validity of the findings but also supports the development of a theoretical framework that can inform future research and practical interventions.

The study focused on undergraduate students enrolled in public universities in Malaysia, specifically those who were directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they met specific criteria relevant to the research question. These criteria included being currently enrolled in a public university and experiencing the effects of the pandemic on their academic and personal lives.

A total of approximately 250 questionnaires were distributed to students across various public universities. Out of these, 128 completed questionnaires were collected and used for the analysis. The inclusion criteria ensured that all participants were undergraduate students who had faced disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as transitioning to online learning, financial difficulties, and changes in their living environments. There were no explicit exclusion criteria mentioned, aside from not meeting the primary inclusion criteria.

Questionnaires served as the research instrument for the survey methodology. These were first validated by a commission, after which the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. The questionnaire items were designed to measure key constructs relevant to the study, such as financial costs, built environment factors, and depression levels among undergraduate students. Before distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by a commission comprising experts in psychology, education, and survey methodology. The commission assessed the content validity to ensure that the items accurately captured the constructs of interest. The validated questionnaires were then distributed to the target population, which included undergraduate students from various public universities in Malaysia. Distribution method was through online survey platforms. Out of approximately 250 distributed

questionnaires, 128 completed responses were collected. This yielded a response rate of about 51.2%, which is considered adequate for survey research.

The dependent variable is mental health, and the independent variables are financial cost, ergonomics and built environment. The construct of the built environment was measured using a comprehensive set of nine items that capture various aspects of students' living conditions, which are hypothesized to influence their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The items included: house size (BE1), which assesses the overall space available within the home; house layout (BE2), evaluating the functional arrangement of different areas within the residence; and safe housing area (BE3), which measures the perceived safety of the neighborhood. Noise level (BE4) gauges the extent of disruptive sounds in the environment, while own study space (BE5) identifies whether students have a dedicated area for academic work. Air ventilation (BE6) assesses the quality and adequacy of airflow within the home, and sufficient artificial lighting (BE7) and sufficient natural lighting (BE8) examine the availability and adequacy of both artificial and natural light sources. Finally, home being the best place to study (BE9) captures students' overall satisfaction with their home environment as a conducive space for academic activities. These items collectively provide a detailed understanding of the built environment's role in influencing students' depression levels during the pandemic.

The construct of ergonomics was measured using six items that evaluate various physical discomforts and ergonomic issues experienced by students during their study sessions, which could impact their overall well-being and academic performance. The items included neck pain (EM1), assessing the frequency and severity of discomfort in the neck area; static body posture when studying (EM2), which evaluates the duration and impact of maintaining a single posture for extended periods; and improper table height (EM3), identifying issues related to furniture height that may cause strain. Vision worsen (EM4) and hearing worsen (EM5) measure any deterioration in visual and auditory functions, respectively, due to prolonged study sessions or inadequate ergonomic setups. Lastly, cross-legged when studying (EM6) examines the habit of sitting cross-legged, which may indicate the lack of suitable seating arrangements and contribute to musculoskeletal problems. These items collectively provide a detailed assessment of ergonomic factors that could influence students' physical health and comfort during their academic activities.

The construct of financing cost was measured using eight items that explore various financial challenges and behaviors experienced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic. These items included insufficient pocket money (FC1), money spent on online learning accessories (FC10), and depending entirely on family for financial

support (FC2). Additional items assessed increased spending (FC3), inability to do part-time jobs (FC4), receipt of government financial assistance (FC6), frugality in spending (FC8), and the ability to save money (FC9). These items collectively provide insights into the financial pressures and adaptations students faced, which could influence their mental health and academic performance.

The construct of mental health well-being was measured using eight items that capture various emotional and psychological challenges faced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic. These items included feelings of depression (MHWB1), persistent tiredness (MHWB2), and a sense of giving up (MHWB3). Additional items assessed feelings of anger (MHWB4), trouble sleeping at night (MHWB5), difficulty focusing (MHWB6), changes in eating habits such as overeating or losing appetite (MHWB7), and frequent crying (MHWB8). These items provide a comprehensive assessment of the mental health and emotional well-being of students, reflecting the multifaceted impact of the pandemic on their psychological state.

The findings of the study, which examined the relationship between financial costs, built environment factors, and students' depression levels during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, may have limited generalizability to other populations or settings. The study focused on undergraduate students from public universities in Malaysia, utilizing purposive sampling, which may restrict the diversity of the sample and thereby the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the unique circumstances of the pandemic, such as lockdowns and remote learning, may limit the applicability of the findings to other temporal or contextual settings.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Prior to analyses, data is gathered, screened and cleaned using SPSS. Below is the respondents' profile (Table 1). Based on the information, a diverse group of individuals participated in a study during the COVID-19 online study period. The participants consisted of 65 females and 33 males, with the majority falling within the age range of 21-26, comprising 35 individuals in this category. A significant portion of the participants, 59 in total, identified as Malay, followed by 17 Chinese, 12 Indian, and 9 belonging to other ethnicities. Most participants were Malaysian citizens, with 91 individuals holding Malaysian citizenship, while 5 were non-Malaysian. In terms of educational institutions, 52 participants attended Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), followed by 20 in college or other institutions, 10 in Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), and smaller numbers in other universities. During the online study period, most participants, 61 in total, stayed at their family home, while 19 stayed in hostels and 18 stayed in rental homes. The number of people staying in the participants' houses

varied, with 46 individuals having 1 to 4 people and 39 individuals having 5 to 8 people in their households.

Table 1: *Respondents' Profile*

		Number of respondents	
Gender	Female	65	
	Male	33	
Age	21-23	35	
	24-26	31	
	18-20	23	
	27 & above	9	
Race	Malay	59	
	Chinese	17	
	Indian	12	
	Others	9	
Citizenship	Malaysian	91	
	Non-Malaysian	5	
Educational Institution	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	52	
	College or Others	20	
	Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)	10	
	Universiti Malaya (UM)	7	
	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	6	
	Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL)	3	
	Count of During COVID19 online study period, most of the time I stayed	at family home	61
		in the hostel	19
		at rental home	18
Number of people staying in the house	1 to 4	46	
	5 to 8	39	
	More than 9 people	6	

Note: N=128

Factor analysis was then carried out by reviewing the factor loading of each variable as in Table 2. The findings revealed significant results that shed light on the relationships between the mental health wellbeing (MHWB) and the independent variables that are built environment (BE), financial cost (FC) and ergonomics (E). As higher factor

loadings are favorable since they indicate a stronger relationship between variables, we decided to accept the cut-off value 0.5 as suggested by Hair et al (2017). Besides the loading figure, we also pay attention to statistics that made up of factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The factor loadings are required to determine whether all the items are significantly loaded on a construct prior to analysing the convergent validity. Therefore, like factor loading cut-off values, the cut-off values for all statistics are based on the suggestions by Hair et al. (2017) as follows: 0.7 for CR and 0.5 for AVE.

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Build Environment</i>	BE1 (house size)	0.929	0.972	0.797
	BE2 (house layout)	0.915		
	BE3 (safe housing area)	0.914		
	BE4 (noise level)	0.79		
	BE5 (own study space)	0.798		
	BE6 (air ventilation)	0.926		
	BE7 (sufficient artificial lighting)	0.936		
	BE8 (sufficient natural lighting)	0.919		
	BE9 (home best place to study)	0.893		
<i>Ergonomic</i>	EM1 (neck pain)	0.938	0.953	0.771
	EM2 (static body posture when studying)	0.931		
	EM3 (improper table height)	0.937		
	EM4 (vision worsen)	0.849		
	EM5 (hearing worsen)	0.775		
	EM6 (cross-legged when studying)	0.823		
<i>Financing Cost</i>	FC1 (insufficient pocket money)	0.805	0.911	0.563
	FC10 (money spent for online learning accessories)	0.709		
	FC2 (depending entirely on family)	0.793		

	FC3 (using money more than usual)	0.869		
	FC4 (Could not do part-time job)	0.819		
	FC6 (government gives financial assistance)	0.663		
	FC8 (frugal in spending)	0.688		
	FC9 (saved a lot of money)	0.624		
<i>Mental Health Wellbeing</i>	MHWB1 (depressed)	0.876	0.944	0.679
	MHWB2 (tired)	0.889		
	MHWB3 (giving up)	0.848		
	MHWB4 (felt angry)	0.865		
	MHWB5 (trouble sleeping at night)	0.784		
	MHWB6 (trouble focusing)	0.69		
	MHWB7 (overeating/losing appetite)	0.838		
	MHWB8 (cried a lot)	0.784		

Table 2: Factor Loading

Note: FC5 was deleted due to low factor loading.

We dropped item FC5 further analysis as all its factor loadings were below the cut-off point of 0.5. For CR and CV values, the results show that all CR values exceeded the cut-off point of 0.7, confirming the internal consistency of each construct. Similarly, convergent validity is also established since all AVE values exceeded the cut-off point of 0.5.

Discriminant Validity Results

To ensure the uniqueness of the underlying constructs, we conducted a discriminant validity analysis which investigates the ability of the measures in our study to distinguish between the various constructs. This analysis allows us to determine if the observed variables predominantly load on their intended factors and exhibit minimal overlap with other factors. To assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the correlations between the latent constructs were examined. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity - Correlations between Constructs

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Build Environment	0.893	-	-	-
2. Ergonomic	0.113	0.878	-	-
3. Mental Health Wellbeing	0.148	0.598	0.824	-
4. Financial Cost	0.25	0.645	0.535	0.751

All constructs exhibit discriminant validity as the correlations between them are less than the square root of their respective AVEs. This indicates that the constructs studied are genuinely distinct and have their own distinctive characteristics. It also indicates that the measurements used for each construct effectively differentiate between distinct aspects or concepts and, are not highly correlated.

Next, we performed hypothesis testing using a total of 5,000 bootstrap subsamples that were created using SmartPLS 4 (Hair et al., 2017). The results are presented in Table 4. The significant predictor of mental health wellbeing is ergonomics ($\beta = 0.435$) and financing costs ($\beta = 0.245$). Ergonomic – wellbeing positive result is expected as better optimizing ergonomics may have enhanced well-being, including improving comfort, productivity, and reducing the risk of injuries and discomfort. On the other hand, financing cost-wellbeing positive result was not as hypothesized as ideally, a higher financing costs are generally not associated with better well-being due to increased financial strain and burden. The observed outcome may be since students, being typically not the main financial providers in their families, do not experience the same level of financial burden as adults.

In regard to the model's fitness, the R^2 value of 0.397 suggests that approximately 39.7% of the variance in the MHWB can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The model is considered as a strong model since the R^2 value of 0.397 exceeds 0.26, a cut-off value for a strong or large effect as suggested by Cohen (1988).

	Std. Beta	Std. Error	R^2	BCL	UCL	t-value
Build Environment → Mental Health Wellbeing	0.038	0.161	0.397	-0.269	0.248	0.234
Ergonomic →Mental Health Wellbeing	0.435	0.135		0.186	0.621	3.226* **

Financing Cost → Mental Health Wellbeing	0.245	0.144	0.059	0.526	1.699*
					**

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Note: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

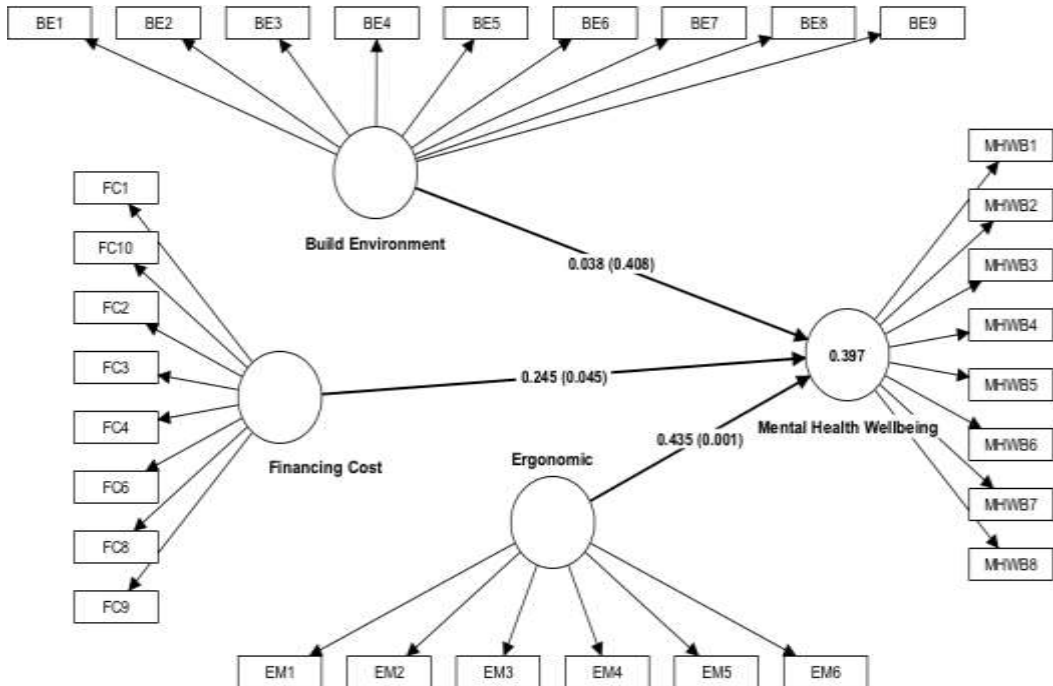


Figure 1: Structural equation modelling

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought sustainability into focus, highlighting the need to reimagine university learning styles and incorporate sustainable practices that promote both academic success and mental well-being. The pandemic also has led to distinct variations in university learning styles between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods. Prior to the pandemic, the conventional learning environment encompassed physical attendance at university lectures, which facilitated social interactions, unrestricted mobility for academic pursuits, and accommodation in university-provided hostels. Consequently, there were minimal notable concerns regarding mental health

well-being associated with the learning style under these circumstances. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevailing circumstances necessitated a shift in learning styles, compelling universities to suspend their physical facilities. Consequently, a significant proportion of students were mandated to reside with their families while adhering to stringent social restrictions. Recognizing the importance of student well-being during this period, university staff diligently addressed concerns surrounding their welfare. Against this backdrop, the present study undertook an analysis of determinants of well-being, specifically examining the impact of remaining at home and facing financial burdens. The independent variables considered in this study are built-environment, ergonomic and financial cost. We ran 3 analyses: factor analysis, discriminant validity analysis and hypothesis testing. Based on our factor loading figures, we suggest that the items in our variables are good indicators for this study. The discriminant validity results confirm that the constructs are effectively different among themselves. Regarding the relationship between BE, E, FC and MHWB, better ergonomic was suggested to improve the mental health of students, however, bigger financial cost has increased the mental health wellbeing. The latter result caused challenge to justify as the result suggested that a heightened cost causing better mental wellbeing – thus, calling for further analysis to be carried out. Interestingly, built environment was insignificant in this model. Depression is a prevalent mental health condition that significantly impacts individuals' well-being. Access to effective treatments is limited in many low- and middle-income countries. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened mental health challenges among university students globally, with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and learning burnout. Financial strain and the built environment further contribute to students' mental health issues. Proactive measures from educational institutions and policymakers, such as extending academic calendars and addressing the learning environment, are crucial for supporting students. Prioritizing mental well-being and providing necessary resources can mitigate the pandemic's negative effects and promote a healthier learning environment. Therefore, institutions must take sustainable actions to address the underlying causes of depression to avoid such disastrous consequences. This can include implementing sustainable mental health support services and programs such as online counselling platforms. Additionally, in creating sustainable learning environment, educational institutions can offer approaches to reduce study-related stress during the pandemic such as extending the academic calendar, offering more flexibility in assignment submission deadlines, and reducing workloads. Additionally, educators and staff members are trained to recognize and assist students in need, and institutions incorporate broader health policies and processes into their daily operations (Abrams, 2022).

The implication of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a reevaluation of university learning styles, emphasizing the importance of incorporating sustainable practices to promote academic success and mental well-being. The shift from conventional to remote learning environments has highlighted the significance of proactive measures to address student well-being amidst financial strain and altered living arrangements. While the study findings suggest a positive association between better ergonomic conditions and improved mental health, the unexpected finding of increased financial costs correlating with better mental well-being underscores the need for further investigation. Educational institutions should prioritize sustainable actions, including the provision of effective mental health support services, flexible learning environments, and training for staff to recognize and support students in need. While the study recognizes the positive impacts of ergonomic conditions on the academic performance and well-being of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to recognize certain limitations. The unexpected finding that improved mental well-being is associated with increased financial costs challenges conventional wisdom and requires additional research. Furthermore, the model's disregard for the built environment's significance stimulates inquiries regarding its influence on mental health outcomes, necessitating a more thorough examination of its influence. In order to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between environmental factors, financial costs, and mental health outcomes among university students, future research should strive to address these limitations by utilizing more comprehensive measures, employing larger and more diverse samples, and considering additional contextual factors.

In summary, ergonomics facilitated the enhancement of students' academic performance, productivity, and well-being, despite the social constraints and COVID-19 infection. Students were able to create a learning environment that was conducive to learning by designing educational settings and spaces that were conducive to learning, despite concerns that the built environment could hinder learning effectiveness. Therefore, policymakers might want to prioritize ergonomics as a fundamental component of education, as positive ergonomics can cultivate an environment that is conducive to the academic success and mental well-being of students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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**ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS AND THEIR EFFECTS
ON BARRIERS IN SEEKING PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP: A STUDY
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN SABAH**

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ABSTRACT

The mental health programs/campaigns organized by the relevant authorities can help elevate awareness among Indigenous students' attitudes towards seeking psychological support. It is assumed that attitude towards mental illness can affect their interest in gaining psychological support when experiencing distress and depression. To explore this phenomenon, 87 Indigenous students in Sabah were involved in this study. Participants were selected via a random sampling of readily available and willing students. Data was collected using Google Forms links and face-to-face surveys. The data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis. This study aimed to examine students' attitudes towards mental illness and its impact on barriers to seeking psychological support. Based on a simple regression analysis, the study found that students' attitudes had no significant effect on obstacles to seeking psychological help. However, students' attitudes showed notable negative effects on one barrier component (i.e., perceived devaluation). The attitudes towards mental illness contributed 8.2 percent of the variance in perceived devaluation. This indicates that Indigenous students who showed more positive attitudes towards mental illness tended to demonstrate less perceived devaluation in seeking psychological help (e.g., they disagreed that their self-confidence might decrease if they sought psychological support from a professional). These positive attitudes likely derive from mental health programs/campaigns organized by universities and relevant organizations. Indeed,

highlighting the importance of fostering positive mental health awareness for Indigenous university students may help to reduce the impediments to students seeking psychological help.

Keywords: Mental Illness, Indigenous students, Attitude, Psychological help, Awareness

INTRODUCTION

No one is immune to the possibility of being affected by mental illness throughout one's lifetime. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001), one in four people are affected with mental or neurological disorders at some point during their lives. Nowadays, more and more people around the world are facing mental health issues (UNICEF, 2022). Indeed, mental health issues have become increasingly prominent since the COVID-19 pandemic (and its aftermath). For instance, data from the Malaysian Mental Health Association report (dated October 2020) has revealed that the incidence of mental illness increased by two-fold amid the COVID-19 lockdowns (Yusry, 2022). In response, studies on mental illness have also increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly focused on different target groups, such as families, workers, and students. In terms of university students, several studies were conducted focusing on the challenges they faced in uplifting their psychological well-being (e.g., Cosmas, 2020; Cosmas et al., 2022; Ah Gang, 2021; Kong et al., 2022) and in dealing with mental illness (e.g., Kumaran et al., 2022; Son et al., 2020).

To be sure, university students' mental health has become an increasing concern (Sonet al., 2020). To combat the growing issue of mental illness among university students, various studies and mental health awareness programs have been conducted by universities and other relevant organizations to ensure students are more open to seeking psychological support. With the COVID-19 pandemic subduing and entering an endemic phase, a majority of universities have returned to face-to-face teaching. Nevertheless, many students still face academic and psychosocial challenges such as difficulty in fulfilling their academic tasks, achieving satisfactory results, developing good relationships with others, and engaging in various university activities. In other words, although academic life is back to a relatively normal state, some students still need time to adapt (or readapt) to the learning environment after the pandemic. Students who are not well equipped to deal with such challenges tend to experience psychological tensions that may lead to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.

According to Oláh et al., (2022), students, in general, consistently demonstrate low levels of help-seeking behaviors despite the availability of mental health support services provided at schools. Indeed, students tend to exhibit a lack of interest in seeking psychological support. In turn, poor mental health can bring negative impacts on one's health and ability to learn which can limit opportunities for people to reach their full potential (UNICEF, 2022). In regard to Indigenous students, a study conducted by Somiah revealed that Indigenous Sabahans living in rural areas are struggling with mental health issues. Somiah's study found that many men and women living in the most remote parts of the district have indicated suffering from traumas resulting from the disruption of livelihood, loss of physical health, and the "subjugation" of medical information regarding COVID-19 (Daily Express, 2023).

The Indigenous people in Sabah consist of 39 different Indigenous ethnic groups (Khor & Shariff, 2019; Salleh et al., 2021) and constitute about 58.6 percent of the population in Sabah (Salleh et al., 2021). The three largest Indigenous groups in Sabah are Kadazandusun, Bajau, and Murut. Concerning Indigenous youth in Sabah, a study conducted by Ooi (2021) revealed that many are facing various problems such as employability (e.g., mismatched expectations of the working world), lack of mentoring from relevant leaders or mentors to guide them, inadequate life training and soft skills, and lack of motivation and sense of purpose. In 2015, the National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS) reported that Sabah held the highest prevalence of mental health issues among adults, particularly among the Indigenous populations (UNICEF, 2022).

Based on such preceding studies, it is of interest to explore the attitudes towards mental illnesses and barriers to obtaining psychological assistance held by Indigenous students, particularly in Sabah. Academic and psychosocial problems faced by Indigenous students might increase the possibility of experiencing psychological tensions such as stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, all of which may further lead to mental illnesses. A study conducted by Ho et al., (2022) indicated that undergraduate students expressed a high amount of concern regarding academic stress and anxiety with the sudden transition from two years of online learning to a physical environment. The previous challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic might also have affected Indigenous students in bouncing back to a more regular (in-person) academic life. When dealing with psychological tension, some students might take the opportunity to seek psychological support offered by their university. However, other students might exhibit a lack of interest in seeking psychological support due to their negative attitudes towards mental illness. Indeed, some students might show a sense of shame and fear in seeking psychological help.

They may feel ashamed if their peers and lecturers find out about their mental illness. Moreover, some students do not only hold negative attitudes towards mental illness itself but also towards people with mental illness (e.g., avoiding contact with individuals with diagnosed – or perceived – mental illness). Consequently, the negative attitudes towards mental illness and people with mental illness may decrease motivation among certain students to seek psychological assistance from relevant social supports available at their universities or via other support organizations. Duncan (2022) observed that one's attitudes towards mental health are an important aspect of help-seeking behaviors. Attitudes towards mental illness can be influenced by stigmatization from society, such as fear of having contact with people with mental illness or feeling ashamed of having family members diagnosed with a mental illness.

Additional barriers to seeking psychological help include a lack of trust in the effectiveness of social support systems, difficulties in disclosing personal matters, and a lack of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of psychological treatment in alleviating mental health issues. Such negative views towards mental illness may further decrease motivation among students to seek psychological assistance from mental health professionals. For instance, some students may think and decide that it is better to keep their mental health problems secret from their families, friends, and support services offered by their university.

To investigate Indigenous university students' attitudes towards mental illness and its impact on their psychological help-seeking, a study was conducted involving Indigenous university students in Sabah, Malaysia. The main objective of this study was to examine the effects of such attitudes on barriers to seeking psychological help and each of its components (i.e., fear of stigmatization, lack of trust in the mental health services and professionals, difficulties in self-disclosure, perceived devaluation, and lack of knowledge regarding psychological treatments). Past research has revealed that studies that focus on attitudes towards mental disorders among university students are lacking within Malaysia (Al-Naggar, 2013; Sangeetha et al., 2022; Yeap & Low, 2009) and other non-Western countries. Studies regarding Indigenous university students, particularly in Sabah, are also lacking. Therefore, to understand the attitude towards mental illnesses and barriers to seeking help, this novel study was conducted which focuses on Indigenous students that attend a major public university in Sabah. Based on the research objectives, six hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on barriers to seeking psychological help.

Hypothesis 2: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on fear of being stigmatized.

Hypothesis 3: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on trust in the mental health professional.

Hypothesis 4: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on difficulties in self-disclosure.

Hypothesis 5: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on lack of knowledge.

Hypothesis 6: There is an effect of attitude towards mental illness on perceived devaluation.

Figure 1 shows the research framework of the impact of attitude towards mental illness towards psychological help. In this framework, the independent variable is the attitude towards mental illness which consists of the three elements of attitude (i.e., cognitive, emotional & behavioral). Meanwhile, the dependent variable was barriers in seeking psychological help consisting of five barriers to seeking psychological help (see Figure 1).

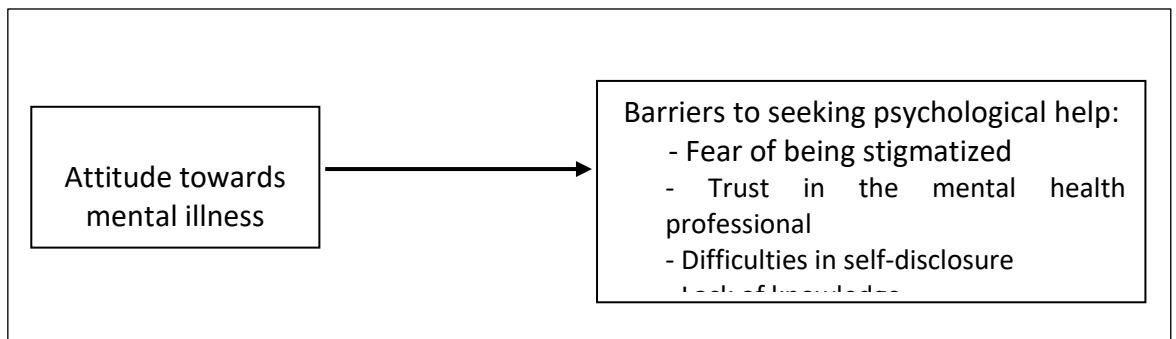


Figure 1. *The Impact of Attitude Towards Mental Illness on Barriers to Seeking Psychological Help*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several past studies focus on the impact of attitude towards mental illness on barriers to seeking psychological help. A recent study by Ah Gang et al. (2024) found that students who exhibited positive attitudes towards mental illness demonstrated fewer barriers to obtaining psychological help. This includes less fear of stigmatization, less difficulty in self-disclosure, and less perceived devaluation. Students' positive attitudes towards mental illness might derive from greater knowledge and awareness about mental health. Furthermore, a study by Al Omari et al. (2021) found that adolescents who exhibit more positive attitudes towards mental illness have greater intention to seek psychological help. Other past studies (e.g., Sangeeta et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2020) have explored students' attitudes towards mental illness. Furthermore, Shi et al.'s study (2020) examined the lack of social support or difficulty in accessing professional services. In a recent study that involved 240 students from one university in Malaysia, Hanis Nadhirah (2023) found that the demand for psychological help services for university students is still underutilized. This study also found that participants' self-stigma and attitude in seeking psychological help showed moderate levels. In these studies, participants were among university students. Nadhirah's (2023) study was in line with a study conducted by Mahfar et al. (2017) that found attitudes toward seeking psychological help among university students were still low. It was found that the attitude towards counseling service was still low, and this has reduced students' encouragement to utilize the counseling service. Their attitude is shown through their statements, such as that they would feel embarrassed if their friends found out they used counseling services, or they thought that more effort is required for them to make an appointment with counselling.

Participants' attitudes discussed in the preceding past studies can be explained by the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen (1991). According to this theory, three elements contribute to a person's intention to perform a behavior: attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioral control. In regards to students' attitudes towards mental illness, if they showed a lack of action in seeking psychological aid, this might be due to their negative attitudes towards mental illness that affect their intention to seek such help. Furthermore, their intention to seek psychological help might similarly be influenced by social norms, for instance, the perception that people might view them negatively if they go to see a mental health professional. Additionally, perceived behavioral control, such as students' knowledge and awareness of mental health services provided by their university or other relevant agencies, can also impact their intention to seek psychological help. Thus, all three elements can affect the intention of students when seeking psychological support.

The study outcome of the preceding studies needs to be understood particularly among the minority group such as Indigenous university students. These past studies can be used as a guideline to conduct a study that focuses on the impact of attitudes towards mental illness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the preceding research objectives and related literature review, a study was designed that utilized the survey method. The survey method may allow researchers to involve more participants from the Indigenous group and it is relevant to use to measure people's attitude and their behavior. As stated by Sylvia (2010), a survey is a type of data collection method in which individuals answer specific questions about their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, or emotions.

Research implementation period

The study was conducted from 25 to 29 October 2022 during the Mental Health programme which was organized by 28 psychology students. During this week, various mental health activities were run. These included an information board that shared brief information regarding mental health issues faced by the student community, interactive games that promote mental health awareness, and mental health talks from clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, and NGO members.

Research population and sampling

The study targeted university students from the group of Indigenous who studying at one of the public universities in Sabah which is located at Kota Kinabalu. There were 87 students from various faculties at one public university in Sabah, Malaysia took part in this study. According to Forcino et al. (2015), sample sizes as small as 58 individuals are sufficient for a broad range of multivariate abundance-based research. In this study, potential participants were randomly approached during a mental health program organized by a group of psychology students. This mental health program was themed 'H.E.L.P' which stood for 'Help, Empathy, Laugh, and Embrace.' Most of the potential participants were approached at the entrance to the university library, faculty buildings, lecture halls, and cafeteria. Once participants agreed to participate, they were provided with a Google Forms link which gave them access to an online survey. Before proceeding to answer the survey questions, all participants were required to provide their consent by ticking 'Yes' in the consent section thereby indicating their agreement to take part in this study voluntarily. A small gift as a token of appreciation was given to each participant for completing the survey.

Research Instrument

In this study, participants were asked to answer the following three sets of questions that measured targeted variables in the study: a demographic scale, attitudes towards mental illness scale, and barriers to seeking psychological help scale. A description of each of the scales used is provided in the following section.

Demographic scale

The demographic scale was comprised of 11 items, including the participant's age, gender, ethnicity, university faculty, campus accommodation, educational level, and strategies used to combat mental illness. This scale was used to measure the academic and personal backgrounds of participants. This information may help researchers identify patterns particular to certain participants' backgrounds.

Attitudes towards mental health illness

This scale used 14 items to measure attitudes towards mental illness. It was adapted from the Attitudes Towards Mental Illness Scale created by Weller and Grune's scale (1988) and a similar scale developed by Topkaya et al. (2017). The items consist of statements framed either in a positive or negative manner. For example, a positively framed item is "People with mental health illnesses should have the same rights as anyone else," while a negatively framed item is "The mentally ill should not be allowed to make decisions, even those concerning routine events." Responses to each statement were scaled from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree.' Eight items were framed negatively, and these required that their scores be reversed before conducting the reliability values and analysis. The higher the score obtained, the greater the number of positive attitudes towards mental health illness indicated by the participant.

Barriers to seeking psychological help.

The Barriers to Seeking Psychological Help Scale was developed by Topkaya et al. (2017) and consists of 17 items within five subscales. The following are examples of items used, one from each subscale: "I worry about whether my friends would mock me if I seek psychological help (fear of being stigmatized); "I worry about whether the professional would listen to me adequately" (trust in mental health professionals); "I refuse to give information about my private problems (violence, etc.), even to a professional" (difficulties in self-disclosure); "My self-confidence might decrease if I seek psychological help" (perceived devaluation); and "I don't want to seek psychological help as places that provide such services are far away" (lack of knowledge). The responses were scaled from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'. The higher the score obtained, the greater the barriers to seeking psychological help displayed by the participant.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The reliability of each of the scales used in this study was acceptable and the values ranged from .67 to .92. **The reliability values ranged from 0.45 – 0.98 is considered acceptable and sufficient (Taber, 2018).** See Table 1 for a breakdown of the reliability values.

Table 1: *The Reliability Values for Each Targeted Variable*

Variables	Number of items	Reliability values
Attitudes towards mental health	14	.81
Barriers to seeking psychological help.	17	.90
- Fear of being stigmatized.	4	.77
- Trust in mental health professionals	4	.76
- Difficulties in self-disclosure	2	.53
- Perceived devaluation	3	.65
- Lack knowledge	3	.81

Of a total of 87 participants, a majority were female, 68 (78.20%), while 19 (21.80%) were male. The participants' mean age was 21.32 (SD=1.19) and they came from various ethnicities, including Kadazandusun, Rungus, Bajau, Murut, Bisaya, and Lundayeh. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the other demographic values measured.

Table 2: *Participants' Demographic Profile (N=87)*

Variables	Number	Percentage
Student's academic background		
Psychology	42	48.30
Non-psychology	45	51.70
Gender		
Male	19	21.80
Female	68	78.20

Educational level		
First year	22	25.30
Second year	31	35.60
Third year	29	33.30
Fourth year	4	4.60
Fifth year	1	1.10
Accommodation		
On-campus	40	46.00
Off-campus	45	51.70
Missing values	1	1.10
Coping skills frequently used.		
Music and nature	76	87.40
Social support	11	12.60

Table 3: Correlational Values for Barriers to Seeking Psychological Help with Each of Its Components

Variables	Barriers to seeking help	Stigmatized	Knowledge	Devaluation	Trust	Self-disclosure
r values						
Barriers to seeking help	1	.89*	.81*	.77*	.79*	.77*

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 3 shows the convergent validity of the barriers to seeking psychological help. Each component showed positive and significant correlational values, ranging from .77 to .89. This suggests that each component measured the barriers to seeking psychological help and showed high convergent validity. The convergent validity indicates that the scale has similar constructs because they are highly correlated (Chin & Yao, 2014). To examine the impacts of attitudes towards mental illness on barriers to seeking psychological help, a simple regression analysis was undertaken. Prior to analyzing the data, the skewness and kurtosis for both variables were checked. The data from the two variables were considered normal because the skewness and kurtosis values were less than 2. Data is considered normal if the skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis is between -7 to +7 (Bryne, 2010). Table 4 shows that there are no significant effects of attitude towards mental health on barriers to seeking

psychological help. However, there was a negative significant effect of attitudes towards mental health in one of the components of the barriers to seeking psychological help (i.e., perceived devaluation)(see Table 5). The attitudes towards mental health contributed 8.2% to the barriers to seeking psychological help.

Table 4: Simple Regression Value of the Effect of Attitudes Towards Mental Illness on Barriers to Seeking Psychological help

Attitudes towards seeking psychological help	R square	Beta	t value	Significant value
Barriers to seeking psychological help	.01	-.12	-.93	.35

Table 5: Simple Regression Values of the Effect of Attitude Towards Mental illnesses on Each Component of Barriers to Seeking Psychological

Attitudes towards mental illness	R square	Beta	t-value	Significant
Fear of being stigmatized.	.010	-.10	-.90	.37
Trust in mental health professionals	.010	-.09	.075	.94
Difficulties in self-disclosure	.00	.008	-.20	.85
Perceived devaluation	.082	-.02	-2.74	.007
Lack knowledge	.006	-.29	-.70	.49

Note: $k < .05$

This indicates that participants who showed a positive attitude towards mental illness tended to demonstrate less perceived devaluation (e.g., they did not perceive themselves as weak if they told their problems to a professional or they did not perceive their self-confidence would decrease if they sought psychological support) ($B = -.02$ ($_{1.86}$), $t = -2.74$). This finding suggests that participants with a greater number of positive attitudes towards mental illness exhibit less perceived devaluation when they seek psychological assistance. In terms of the five barriers to seeking psychological help, the highest mean reported was the fear of being stigmatized (mean=12.54; SD=3.91). On the other hand, the smallest or least significant barrier to seeking help was perceived devaluation (Mean=9.31; SD=3.05). Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the five barriers.

Table 5: *The Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Subscale of Barriers to Seeking Psychological Assistance (N=87)*

Barriers to seeking psychological help.	MeanSD
Fear of being stigmatized.	12.543.91
Trust in the mental health professionals	12.533.99
Difficulties in self-disclosure	9.762.51
Lack of knowledge	9.193.50
Perceived devaluation	9.313.05

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that participants who showed a greater number of positive attitudes towards mental illness exhibited less perceived devaluation in terms of seeking psychological help. In this study, less perceived devaluation refers to a participant's perception that seeking professional psychological help did not render them weak or diminish their self-confidence, and deduced concern that, if they sought psychological help once, then they would need it whenever they face new problems. In this study, barriers to seeking psychological help were measured based on five factors: fear of being stigmatized, trust towards mental health professionals (or services), difficulties in self-disclosure, perceived devaluation, and lack of knowledge. In regard to positive attitudes towards mental illness, this refers to the participants' view that people who are diagnosed with mental health illnesses should be given a chance to make their own decisions and have similar rights as other people do. In turn, these positive attitudes comprised the participants' beliefs, emotions, and psychomotor behaviors towards individuals with mental illness (e.g., that one should not avoid all contact with people who are mentally ill) and the way they perceived themselves should they be diagnosed with mental illness (e.g., I should not hide my mental illness from my family and friends). Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that holding positive attitudes towards mental health could reduce one aspect of the barriers to seeking help for mental health problems (i.e., less perceived devaluation in seeking psychological help). People with positive help-seeking attitudes tend to be more active in trying to find a solution to their problems (Buanasari et al., 2023).

Although the findings suggest that Indigenous university students' attitude towards mental illness did not show any significant effects on barriers to seeking psychological support, the study did reveal that the students' positive attitude towards mental illness can reduce students' perceived devaluation in seeking psychological help. This finding showed minimal support from past studies (e.g., Abolfotouh et al., 2019; Henderson et al. 2013; Sangeetha et al., 2022) in as much that positive attitudes towards mental illness can predict a person's intention to seek professional help when needed. People's positive attitudes towards mental illness can be measured based on their positive thoughts, feelings, and their tendency to behave with understanding, compassion, or tolerance towards people with mental illness. Hence, holding positive attitudes towards mental illness may reduce certain perceptions of devaluation when seeking professional help for psychological problems. In other words, individuals who hold such positive attitudes tend to put aside certain perceptions regarding devaluation that may otherwise be perceived with the intention of seeking psychological help.

The positive attitudes towards mental health shown by Indigenous students in this study might be due to their engagement in various awareness programs/campaigns about mental illness conducted in their university. Engaging in mental health awareness programs/campaigns may help enhance students' knowledge about mental illness. In addition to such programs/campaigns, students also learnt about mental health issues from various psychology units offered as part of their psychology course. Such units provide students with further opportunities to explore mental health issues including mental illness symptoms, types of mental illnesses, psychological therapies, and psychological support services. It is worth noting that in this study, 42 (48.30%) of participants were psychology students. Other reasons that might contribute to positive attitudes towards mental health among Indigenous university students could include their previous experiences in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. A study conducted by Ah Gang and Torres (2022) revealed that during the pandemic's turbulence, many students searched within themselves to find their inner strengths so as to manage and cope with their mental issues, such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Universities also showed good efforts in organizing mental health programs to assist students in coping with the unexpected hardships resulting from COVID-19.

In this study, all participants came from one university. This university – University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) – together with the Malaysia Ministry of Health have implemented a comprehensive program to improve mental health literacy among students and the wider community. The Ministry of Health and UMS have also collaborated with various Indigenous groups in Sabah, such as the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), to reach traditional healers, Indigenous chiefs, and village elders as well as with rural village associations and volunteers to engage rural

Indigenous populations. Another intervention involved engaging social media celebrities to reach social media users and using mental health promotional videos in native languages (Guan et al., 2018). Mental health services for Indigenous students at UMS are offered via the two university health centers. Moreover, mental health services were also provided to the rural community in Sabah through *Program KPT Prihatin Komuniti Sejahtera (KRIS)*. The implementation of the KRIS program was initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2021 and focused on university hospitals providing essential community medical services in rural areas across Malaysia (Anjumin, 2021).

Besides mental health awareness programs/campaigns, universities should also offer programs that may foster a reduction in barriers to seeking psychological assistance. This can be done through psychoeducation, stigma reduction campaigns, and standard in-person counselling (Olah et al., 2022). Furthermore, students can also take the initiative and organize mental health programs/campaigns which may offer increased opportunities for fellow students to understand mental health issues and strategies to deal with mental health illnesses. Students studying at higher learning institutions are at increased risk of developing mental health problems as compared to peers of similar age (Hamdan-Mansour et al., 2009). Thus, each stakeholder ought to collaborate in creating awareness of mental health and the ways to prevent and tackle mental health illnesses in order to foster increased positive attitudes towards mental health. In addition, more mental health resources need to be mobilized throughout Malaysia since such resources are lacking compared to developed nations (Guan et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION

In sum, this study revealed that although Indigenous students' attitudes towards mental illnesses did not show any significant effects towards barriers to seeking psychological help, it was found that such attitude showed a negative significant effect on one aspect of seeking psychological help (i.e., perceived devaluation). This indicates that Indigenous university students who reported positive attitudes towards mental illnesses such as 'I should not hide my mental illness from my family and friends' tend to report less perceived devaluation (i.e., that their self-confidence would not decrease or that they would not feel weak when seeking psychological help). As was shown by this study, participants who demonstrated positive attitudes towards mental illness tended to show fewer barriers in seeking help. This implies that, in today's world, many students are more open and have greater encouragement to seek psychological help when experiencing mental health problems. Arguably, a silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic was that students became increasingly aware of their mental health as well

as the psychological support services available to them. Indeed, during the pandemic, universities and other organizations run various mental health initiatives to increase awareness of mental health problems and assist students cope with such challenges. A suggestion leading from this study is for the continuation and increase in mental health awareness programs/campaigns, particularly those aimed at university students from various backgrounds. Although this study comprises a small sample size (87 Indigenous students), it is hoped that it might encourage further psychological research focused on the mental health of Indigenous groups of students in Sabah or Borneo (i.e., Sabah and Sarawak).

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Disclosure statement

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Getrude C. Ah Gang, upon reasonable request.

Informed consent from participants

Participants were asked for informed consent for anonymous collection, processing, storage, and analysis of the provided data.

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**PERSEPSI PENGUNDI MUDA (UNDI 18) TERHADAP ISU DAN
DASAR KERAJAAN TERENGGANU**

***YOUNG VOTERS' PERCEPTION (UNDI 18) REGARDING ISSUES AND
POLICIES OF THE TERENGGANU STATE GOVERNMENT***

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ABSTRACT

Elections, a crucial aspect of parliamentary democratic systems, serve as a means of empowering citizens by allowing them to determine their government at both state and national levels. The outcome of elections determines which political party will assume power and be responsible for fulfilling the promises outlined in their pre-election manifestos. Thus, this study aims to explore voter perceptions, particularly within the Manir state assembly area of Kuala Terengganu. To achieve this objective, 100 respondents aged 18 to 20 completed questionnaires, providing primary data. Additionally, secondary data was gathered through extensive literature review, including articles, journals, and scientific studies. The primary data was analyzed using SPSS software and presented through tables and figures. Findings revealed that electronic and social media are the primary sources of information for respondents regarding the State Government. Furthermore, respondents expressed confidence in the State Government's competence and the positive impact of its programs on the populace. This study is anticipated to serve as a foundation for future research endeavors and offer valuable insights to stakeholders involved in state-level governance and policymaking.

Keywords: *Elections, Voters, Perceptions, Government, State Legislative Assembly.*

ABSTRAK

Pilihan raya yang merupakan salah satu elemen yang penting dalam sistem amalan demokrasi berparlimen bertindak sebagai pembahagian kuasa kepada rakyat dalam menentukan sesebuah pemerintahan sama ada pada peringkat negeri mahupun negara. Kemenangan pada pilihan raya menentukan sesebuah parti politik untuk membentuk kerajaan yang akan melunaskan segala manifesto yang dijanjikan kepada rakyat sebelum pilihan raya tersebut. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi pengundi terhadap pemerintah terutamanya mereka di kawasan DUN Manir, Kuala Terengganu. Dalam mencapai objektif kajian, seramai 100 orang responden berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun diberikan borang soal selidik. Usaha ini adalah dalam mendapatkan data primer, manakala bagi mendapatkan data sekunder, rujukan terhadap artikel, jurnal, kajian ilmiah serta pembacaan bahan bertulis telah dilakukan. Data primer yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS dan diterjemahkan melalui bentuk jadual dan rajah. Hasil kajian mendapati media elektronik dan media sosial adalah merupakan medium yang paling banyak digunakan oleh responden dalam mendapatkan maklumat mengenai Kerajaan Negeri. Selain itu, responden juga turut bersetuju bahawa Kerajaan Negeri bertanggungjawab dan menjalankan amanah yang diberikan dengan baik, serta setiap program yang dilaksanakan oleh Kerajaan Negeri memberikan impak yang positif kepada rakyat. Justeru, kajian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi panduan kepada kajian seterusnya serta dapat memberi manfaat kepada pihak yang terlibat terutamanya mereka yang berperanan dalam membuat dasar kerajaan di peringkat negeri.

Kata kunci: *Pilihan Raya, Pengundi, Persepsi, Kerajaan, Dewan Undangan Negeri.*

PENGENALAN

Sistem demokrasi berparlimen seperti yang diamalkan di Malaysia memberikan kuasa kepada rakyat untuk memilih pemimpin negara. Amalan yang berasaskan Westminster ini memberi hak kepada rakyat untuk memilih pimpinan mereka di peringkat negeri dan negara melalui pilihan raya umum (PRU). Perkara ini disebut sebagai kuasa popular dan kedaulatan rakyat (Brahim, 2014). Hak yang dimiliki oleh rakyat ini secara langsung memberikan mereka pemilikan kepada masa depan negara. Dalam menentukan masa depan tersebut, rakyat bertanggungjawab memilih mereka yang dianggap mampu merealisasikan impian dan harapan untuk Malaysia. Kuasa yang dimiliki oleh rakyat juga menjadikan mereka berhak untuk mempersoalkan tindakan atau keputusan yang diambil oleh para pemimpin, namun haruslah melalui medium yang betul tanpa

melanggar undang-undang dan peraturan. Konsep ini adalah sangat perlu dan penting untuk difahami oleh rakyat agar keharmonian negara dapat dilestarikan kepada generasi akan datang.

Tujuan PRU dijalankan adalah untuk memilih pemimpin bagi mengelolakan pentadbiran negara dan negeri dalam usaha membawa hasrat rakyat yang ingin melihat Malaysia menjadi sebuah negara yang lebih baik daripada sebelumnya. Bagi menjadikan itu suatu kenyataan, rakyat seharusnya menggunakan kuasa dan hak mereka untuk memilih dan menilai pemimpin. Perkara ini membolehkan adanya semak dan imbang oleh rakyat sendiri. Pada peringkat negeri, pilihan raya negeri (PRN) dijalankan untuk memilih pemimpin negeri bagi tempoh 5 tahun ke hadapan. Keputusan Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-14 (PRU-14) yang lalu telah mengejutkan ramai pihak kerana masing-masing tidak menjangkakan kejatuhan parti Barisan Nasional daripada tampuk pemerintahan negara. Perkara ini menunjukkan bahawa pengundi sudah mula menyedari akan kuasa mereka dalam memilih dan juga penilaian mereka terhadap pemimpin tersebut. Pengundi mula menyoal mengenai tingkah laku pemimpin dalam pekerjaannya dan perkara ini menjadi satu topik yang sangat banyak dibahas di laman-laman sosial dan internet terutamanya dalam kalangan belia sehingga menyebabkan berlakunya “tsunami politik” (Besar, 2017). Keputusan ini menunjukkan sokongan daripada pengundi adalah amat penting bagi menjamin keutuhan sesebuah parti politik.

Walaupun perubahan mendadak ini berlaku pada peringkat persekutuan, namun di Negeri Terengganu, perkara itu tidaklah asing kerana sejarah politik di Terengganu itu sendiri menunjukkan selang peralihan kuasa pemerintahan yang dinamik. Sebagai contoh, UMNO yang pertama kali diberikan mandat untuk memerintah negeri pada tahun 1955 telahpun dirampas kuasanya oleh PAS pada 1999 yang kemudiannya didapatkan semula oleh UMNO pada 2003 melalui pilihan raya. Perubahan kerajaan memerintah ini berlaku sehingga kini menyebabkan kerajaan mahupun pembangkang perlu sentiasa melakukan yang terbaik untuk pengundi Terengganu khususnya. Berbeza dengan pemerintahan di Kelantan, Zainuddin dan Rahim (2018) melaporkan pengundi di Kelantan lebih memilih parti PAS kerana mereka melihat kepada dasar parti serta undian warisan.

Kebanyakan kajian mengenai politik dilakukan dalam ruang lingkup Dewan Rakyat serta parlimen dan jarang kajian dibuat mengenai ADUN dan DUN. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tentang persepsi pengundi terhadap Kerajaan Terengganu di kawasan DUN Manir, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu.

LATAR BELAKANG

Barisan Ahli Parlimen dan Blok Pembangkang mencipta sejarah apabila berjaya memberi sokongan majoriti bagi meluluskan Rang Undang Undang Perlembagaan (Pindaan) 2019 di Dewan Rakyat pada 16 Julai 2019. Pada ketika itu, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad selaku Perdana Menteri yang membentangkan RUU tersebut mencadangkan untuk meminda perenggan (b) Perkara 47 Perlembagaan Persekutuan untuk menurunkan umur warganegara yang layak untuk menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat daripada 21 tahun kepada 18 tahun. Selain itu, ia juga bertujuan meminda perenggan (a) Fasal 1 Perkara 119 Perlembagaan Persekutuan untuk menurunkan umur warganegara yang layak untuk mengundi daripada 21 tahun kepada 18 tahun. Sebelumnya, usul ini telah dibawa ke peringkat Kabinet menerusi Menteri Belia dan Sukan, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman.

Penurunan umur mengundi ini merupakan hasrat Kerajaan Persekutuan untuk melakukan reformasi dalam pilihan raya selaras dengan Manifesto Pakatan Harapan di bawah janji yang ke-17. Melalui ucapannya, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad pada ucapan ketika bacaan kali kedua RUU tersebut, pengasas-pengasas negara pada ketika Perlembagaan Negara digubal berpendapat umur yang sesuai untuk layak mengundi adalah 21 tahun dengan anggapan kematangan seseorang individu itu secara umumnya dicapai pada usia berkenaan, serta generasi tersebut sewajarnya menumpukan masa mereka untuk belajar tanpa diganggu polemik politik. Oleh sebab itu, penetapan umur 21 tahun sebagai hak kelayakan mengundi di sisi undang-undang telah pun dipersetujui.

Setelah hampir 60 tahun Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara demokrasi, kelayakan had umur mengundi ini tidak pernah dikaji untuk diubah seperti mana negara-negara lain yang sama mengamalkan demokrasi berperwakilan. Selepas 1970-an, negara-negara maju seperti Amerika Syarikat, Kanada, Perancis dan Australia telah menurunkan had umur mengundi kepada 18 tahun, kemudian diikuti oleh India, Pakistan, dan semua negara di Amerika Latin, Afrika dan Asia pada akhir era 1980-an. Jepun juga mengikuti jejak mereka pada tahun 2016. Hampir semua negara di Asia telah melaksanakan had umur mengundi 18 tahun sebagai umur kelayakan mengundi. Pada ketika itu, hanya Malaysia dan Singapura di rantau ASEAN serta beberapa negara lain seperti Kuwait, Lubnan dan Oman yang masih mengekalkan had umur mengundi 21 tahun.

Berikutan perkembangan di seluruh dunia ini, kerajaan telah mengkaji semula umur mengundi dan mendapati secara umumnya kesedaran politik dalam kalangan belia telah meningkat. Pemikiran serta kematangan mereka

terlihat lebih ke hadapan, seiring dengan kemajuan negara. Pendedahan yang luas kepada maklumat, pengaruh media massa serta kemajuan teknologi maklumat menjadikan mereka matang dalam berfikir. Oleh sebab itu, kerajaan percaya mereka mampu mengimbangi tanggungjawab mereka terhadap diri sendiri, serta tanggungjawab terhadap masa hadapan negara.

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Kajian mengenai persepsi pengundi sudah banyak dijalankan oleh para sarjana, namun fokus dalam kajian adalah berbeza. Dalam kajian ini, pengundi merujuk kepada mereka yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun yang baru pertama kalinya merasai pengalaman keluar mengundi setelah usul Undi 18 diluluskan dan dikuatkuasakan sebagai undang-undang. Politik merupakan salah satu perkara penting dalam sesebuah negara yang mengamalkan demokrasi seperti Malaysia. Pendedahan mengenai politik kepada golongan muda ini amat penting dalam memastikan mereka ambil peduli akan perkara yang berlaku dalam negara sendiri kerana golongan inilah yang akan mentadbir dan memerintah negara kelak. *Theory of Citizenship Education* oleh Bernard Crick menyatakan rakyat perlu mempunyai peluang mendapatkan pendidikan politik supaya dapat menjadi warganegara yang baik (Shaari et al., 2017). Oleh sebab itulah, kesemua universiti awam di Malaysia menawarkan subjek Kenegaraan Malaysia sebagai subjek wajib diambil sama ada di peringkat sijil, diploma atau ijazah pertama. Usaha ini adalah bertujuan untuk memupuk nilai patriotisme dan nasionalisme dalam kalangan pelajar di samping mendedahkan mereka kepada perkembangan politik di Malaysia.

Institusi pendidikan seperti yang sedia maklum merupakan agen sosialisasi politik khususnya kepada pengundi muda yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun ini. Namun, semestinya terdapat agen-agen yang lain yang turut sama menyumbang kepada persepsi mengenai politik dalam kalangan para pengundi muda ini. Sebagai contoh, pengaruh kepemimpinan politik, pengaruh media massa dan juga persekitaran sosial. Agen-agen sosialisasi ini akan digunakan untuk mengukur pengaruhnya terhadap pandangan atau persepsi politik dalam kalangan pengundi muda di Terengganu, khususnya di kawasan DUN Manir.

Pengaruh Kepimpinan Parti Politik

Besar et al., (2016) dalam kajiannya menggunakan teori pilihan rasional mendapati pengundi akan memberi undi kepada parti atau pemimpin yang paling berkemungkinan dapat memenuhi tuntutan mereka berpandukan maklumat dan pengetahuan terhadap sesuatu pilihan itu. Selain itu, menurut Campbell et al., (1960), seseorang akan memilih pemimpin atau parti

berasaskan kepada ikatan dan kesetiaan seseorang itu terhadap parti tersebut (Besar et al., 2016). Dalam pada itu, Downs (1958) mendapati majoriti pengundi akan menyokong parti yang memenuhi janji serta menyokong parti yang mengutamakan rakyat. Selain itu, responden juga akan menyokong parti yang dapat membentuk kerajaan yang boleh memanfaatkan sumber kekayaan negara untuk kepentingan rakyat (Besar et al., 2016). Kajian yang dijalankan oleh Downs (1958) juga menyatakan pengundi akan memilih sesuatu parti atau pemimpin berasaskan keuntungan yang akan diperolehi daripada pilihan tersebut. Dapatan kajian yang dijalankan oleh Besar et al., (2016) menyatakan bahawa pemimpin yang mesra rakyat serta mempunyai pengalaman dalam mengurus atau mentadbir mampu meraih undi, begitu juga dengan parti yang mengamalkan ciri-ciri keislaman serta telus. Hasil kajiannya juga menunjukkan responden lebih memilih pemimpin yang mempunyai latar belakang serta pendidikan yang tinggi. Hal ini kerana, calon pemimpin yang mempunyai ciri-ciri tersebut merupakan nilai tambah untuk menjamin pembangunan yang lebih pesat dan bersifat ke hadapan. Menurut Ghazali (2006), pengundi akan bertindak secara rasional dengan memilih calon pemimpin atau parti yang sesuai dengan kehendaknya dan dijangka akan memberi faedah kepadanya (Besar et al., 2016). Oleh sebab itu, sekiranya terdapat permasalahan yang membabitkan parti politik, sedikit sebanyak pengundi akan terpengaruh. Hal ini sesuai dengan kajian yang dijalankan oleh Muhd et al., (2018) yang menyatakan daripada hasil kajiannya, parti politik yang bermasalah akan cenderung untuk kehilangan penyokongnya. Hal ini menandakan strategi yang digunakan oleh sesuatu parti politik itu juga akan memberi impak kepada sokongan penyokong mereka.

Pengaruh Media Massa

Media massa merupakan agen sosialisasi politik yang semakin besar peranannya. Menurut Besar et al., (2015), perkembangan teknologi maklumat seperti penggunaan media massa yang merangkumi media cetak, media elektronik dan media alternatif telah mewujudkan suasana yang baru dalam pembentukan sikap dan pandangan terhadap politik. Kepelbagaian rangkuman tersebut mampu mempengaruhi cara pandang, cara fikir, cara tindak, budaya dan sikap politik seseorang (Basori & Besar, 2020). Media ditafsirkan sebagai “geopolitik popular” yang dapat mempengaruhi pemikiran dan pilihan politik seseorang. Menurut Taylor dan Johnston (1979) dalam Besar et al., (2015), geografi politik adalah kajian yang berkaitan dengan geografi pengundian, pengaruh geografi terhadap pengundian dan perwakilan. Medium atau sumber geopolitik popular ialah media cetak, media elektronik dan media alternatif. Kajian lepas menunjukkan media memainkan peranan penting sebagai sumber maklumat politik dan berita pilihan raya. Besar et al., (2013) dalam kajiannya mengatakan pengaruh media memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi perlakuan politik. Hasil kajiannya itu menunjukkan golongan muda ini lebih

mudah terpengaruh dengan media massa dalam penglibatan mereka dalam politik.

Bukan sahaja di Malaysia, kajian mengenai pengaruh media massa terhadap penglibatan politik ini juga dikaji di luar negara. Meesuwan (2016) telah mengkaji hubungan antara media atas talian dengan partisipasi politik di Thailand mendapati parti politik yang aktif di media sosial lebih dikenali dan mempunyai pengaruh yang ramai disebabkan kecepatan dan keberkesanan penyampaian maklumat kepada golongan pengundi.

Pengaruh Persekitaran Sosial

Dalam sosialisasi politik, terdapat beberapa agen yang memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk sikap, nilai, norma dan perlakuan terhadap politik. Selain daripada faktor kepimpinan parti politik dan media massa, persekitaran sosial seperti keluarga, rakan-rakan, institusi pendidikan, serta pekerjaan juga mampu mempengaruhi perilaku politik seseorang individu. Rush dan Althoff (1971) yang memperkenalkan teori sosialisasi politik juga mengatakan terdapat lima agen sosialisasi politik yang diketahui umum, iaitu keluarga, sekolah, rakan sebaya, media massa dan pemerintah. Malah Almond dan Verba (1963) juga mendakwa hal yang sama. Pada sistem politik, penerimaan kepada sesuatu tindakan bergantung kepada kepuasan terhadap agen-agen sosialisasi tersebut.

Dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat, setiap individu pastinya akan berinteraksi dengan individu yang lain. Persekitaran sosial ini mampu untuk mengubah keadaan atau sifat seseorang individu mengikut tujuan atau situasi yang berlaku pada masa-masa tertentu. Tambahan pula, pengalaman sosialisasi yang dialami oleh seseorang individu memainkan peranan yang sangat penting kerana proses sosialisasi ini melibatkan penerapan norma-norma, perlakuan serta nilai politik daripada satu generasi kepada generasi yang lain (Mamat & Ramli, 2022). Agen sosialisasi politik seperti ibu bapa dan keluarga merupakan faktor-faktor pemula dan stabil yang menyumbang kepada proses penyerapan nilai dan kepercayaan. Sesuai dengan yang dinyatakan oleh Rush dan Althoff (1971) bahawa ibu bapa dan keluarga mempengaruhi sikap individu terhadap politik kerana mereka merupakan pihak autoriti pertama yang boleh dijadikan panduan dan pegangan oleh anak-anak.

Perbezaan Pengundi Muda Berdasarkan Demografi

Golongan muda merupakan golongan penting dalam kelompok masyarakat kerana mereka merupakan pelapis pemimpin dan peneraju negara (Razali et al., 2016). Mereka dianggap sebagai aset dan pewaris negara yang memainkan peranan penting dalam mencorakkan bentuk, nilai dan gaya hidup masyarakat sesebuah negara (Besar et al., 2012). Maka, kesedaran dalam diri mereka ini

perlu ditingkatkan sebagai pewaris negara pada masa hadapan bagi memastikan agenda pembangunan negara dapat dilakukan secara berterusan. Kemajuan dalam teknologi serta kemudahan untuk melayari media pada masa kini dapat membantu golongan muda untuk mengakses dan mendapatkan maklumat bagi menambah pengetahuan mereka, termasuklah hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan politik. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat sesetengah kawasan terutamanya di luar bandar yang masih belum dilengkapi dengan kemudahan untuk mengakses maklumat secara mudah ini, melainkan melalui pembacaan surat khabar atau pun hanya sekadar melalui buletin di televisyen. Oleh sebab itu, perbezaan demografi juga sedikit sebanyak memberikan perbezaan dalam hasil pengetahuan mengenai politik yang ditanggung oleh belia. Jali et al., (2017) dalam kajiannya menyatakan dinamika politik di bandar adalah menarik oleh kerana proses urbanisasi dan sosialisasi yang mana mempengaruhi persepsi dan tingkah laku politik mereka yang tinggal di bandar. Dalam *Multilingual Demographic Dictionary* (2012), demografi bermaksud mempelajari atau mengenal pasti budaya dan persekitaran sesuatu kawasan terutamanya tentang komposisi penduduk, struktur dan perkembangan sesuatu kawasan tersebut (Samsi, 2014).

Persepsi Pengundi di Luar Negara

Bengtsson et al., (2010) menjalankan kajian berdasarkan pilihan raya Finland pada tahun 2007 mengambil kira persepsi pengundi terhadap gaya dan perwakilan politik. Hasil kajiannya memberi gambaran yang jelas mengenai persepsi pengundi yang kuat terhadap gaya perwakilan politik. Hasil kajiannya mendapati majoriti pengundi dengan 90 peratus bersetuju bahawa wakil parti politik sepatutnya bertindak berdasarkan akal fikiran mereka sendiri, manakala pernyataan wakil sepatutnya mengikut pandangan mereka sendiri secara berasingan daripada kumpulan mereka dipersetujui oleh responden dengan 73 peratus. Kedua-dua pernyataan ini menggambarkan gaya perwakilan yang bebas, selaras dengan model mengurus/*trustee*. Pernyataan lain yang berkaitan dengan model bertindak/*delegate* juga disokong oleh responden iaitu wakil parti politik perlu sentiasa mencari dan mengambil kira pendapat serta bertindak menurut pendapat responden. Bengtsson et al., (2010) juga telah mengenal pasti pernyataan yang menggambarkan model mewakili/*resemblance* iaitu, adalah pembahagian gender dan umur dalam parlimen perlu disesuaikan kepada orang awam.

Kebanyakan kajian lepas yang dijalankan oleh sarjana mendapati terdapat ciri-ciri seperti latar belakang calon, agama dan ideologi calon pilihan raya mempengaruhi undian yang diberikan kepada calon yang bertanding tersebut. Ciri-ciri tersebut juga terutamanya dari aspek kesamaan tempat tinggal menjadi tumpuan dalam kajian Evans et al., (2017) yang mendapati faktor tempat tinggal

dan asal calon mempengaruhi undian terhadap mereka. Dalam kajiannya, tempat tinggal pengundi dengan calon yang bertanding mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan. Pengaruh perbezaan tempat tinggal dengan jumlah undian dapat dilihat pada pilihan raya umum UK pada 2015. Calon yang bertanding di kawasan bukan tempat tinggalnya memperoleh undian yang lebih rendah berbanding calon yang sememangnya berasal dari tempat bertanding.

Schaffner (2006) dalam kajiannya mendapati keupayaan pengundi memperoleh maklumat tentang calon pilihan raya sangat penting untuk calon tersebut. Oleh sebab itu, adalah kritikal untuk calon tersebut berkempen dan mengiklankan kempennya melalui media di seluruh Amerika Syarikat. Walau bagaimanapun, pertimbangan geografi politik perlu diambil kira dengan mempelbagaikan pengiklanan tersebut di seluruh negara.

Politik dan Pilihan Raya di Malaysia

Gill et al., (2012) mendapati persepsi pengundi terhadap pemilihan calon wakil rakyat adalah berdasarkan profesion atau jawatan calon wakil rakyat sebelum mereka menjadi calon dalam mana-mana pilihan raya. Calon yang berjawatan pegawai kerajaan adalah yang paling popular dalam kalangan belia minoriti kerana mereka berpendapat bahawa pegawai kerajaan telah mempunyai pengalaman dalam menghadapi isu-isu masyarakat ketika mereka berkhidmat. Faktor pendidikan juga diambil kira kerana pegawai kerajaan dilihat mempunyai pendidikan yang tinggi. Selain itu, profesion guru, doktor, peguam, ahli perniagaan dan pensyarah universiti turut menjadi pilihan dalam faktor pemilihan calon wakil politik oleh golongan belia minoriti ini. Juga menjadi keutamaan dalam pemilihan calon wakil politik adalah ciri-ciri calon pilihan raya, serta latar belakang calon tersebut. Ciri-ciri seperti sama ideologi politik, sama negeri, sama agama menjadi syarat utama dalam proses pengundian semasa pilihan raya, manakala latar belakang calon seperti pencapaian akademik, komitmen agama/moral, dan juga penampilan calon menjadi aspek yang dipertimbangkan oleh pengundi.

Besar et al., (2018) menyatakan kejatuhan BN pada pilihan raya 2018 adalah disebabkan tekad untuk menjatuhkannya, ditambah pula dengan faktor-faktor ekonomi dan kos sara hidup rakyat, pengaruh undi 18 serta perang persepsi. Faktor-faktor tersebut telah membentuk satu gelombang yang akhirnya telah menumbangkan BN pimpinan Najib Razak, disokong lagi oleh sentimen negatif yang diterap melalui media sosial dan ceramah bahawa undi PAS = undi BN membawa kepada kemenangan besar PH dalam Pilihan Raya Umum 2018.

Kee (2018) juga menyebut *come back* yang dilakukan oleh Tun Dr. Mahathir berjaya menawan Putrajaya. Fenomena ‘euforia’ atau takjub atau teruja telah melanda rakyat Malaysia pada pasca PRU 2018 apabila kerajaan baharu di bawah (PH) telah dipilih dengan menumbangkan BN yang memerintah selama 60 tahun. Sebab utama penolakan rakyat terhadap BN pada ketika itu adalah isu korup oleh Najib Razak yang juga dianggap sebagai pemimpin kleptokrasi. Walau bagaimanapun, perolehan negeri Pantai Timur kepada parti politik PAS tidak dapat disangkal lagi kerana kekuatan jenteranya serta adanya agen akar umbi yang meluas seperti golongan ustaz dan penceramah, serta keyakinan bahawa hanya PAS yang dapat membela dan memartabatkan agama Islam dan bangsa Melayu. Sentimen agama yang dimainkan serta sentimen negatif iaitu undi PH = undi DAP telah memberikan kemenangan kepada PAS di Terengganu dan Kelantan.

Samsi et al., (2021) menjalankan kajian untuk meneliti persepsi belia terhadap parti politik dan tahap penglibatan politik belia di Selangor. Dalam kajiannya, beliau mendapati persepsi golongan belia antara kaum Melayu, Cina mahupun India terhadap parti Barisan Nasional dan Pakatan Rakyat berada pada tahap yang sederhana. Tahap penglibatan politik yang rendah kesan daripada fokus mereka kepada pendidikan dan pembinaan kerjaya perlu dipandang serius dan usaha untuk memupuk semangat golongan ini untuk terlibat dalam politik perlu ditingkatkan lagi. Kejayaan sesebuah pentadbiran perlu di dokong dengan sokongan daripada rakyat, maka persepsi sederhana terhadap politik itu perlu dipergiatkan lagi.

Razali dan Muhamad (2022) pula dalam kajiannya dalam kalangan mahasiswa di Universiti Malaysia Terengganu mendapati kesedaran politik dalam kalangan belia mahasiswa adalah masih rendah, tetapi masih ada harapan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran dan penglibatan mereka dengan adanya perkembangan teknologi dan media sosial. Usaha dan kerjasama daripada pelbagai pihak dengan mengamalkan politik sihat, serta pelaksanaan program dalam kalangan komuniti dilihat mampu menarik minat golongan belia ini untuk cakna akan politik dalam negara di samping kemajuan dan kecanggihan media dan sumber-sumber maklumat yang lain.

Politik dan Pilihan Raya di Terengganu

Manaf (2013) dalam kajiannya mengenai politik dan ekonomi di Terengganu menyatakan rakyat Terengganu telah menunjukkan keprihatinan mereka terhadap proses demokrasi sejak pilihan raya pertama lagi. Mereka memilih pemimpin yang dirasakan mampu membangunkan negeri secara fizikal dan rohani. Tambahnya lagi, perkembangan politik dan pembangunan ekonomi adalah berkait rapat. Ini kerana kepekaan rakyat Terengganu dalam menilai

prestasi dan keperibadian pemimpin dibuktikan apabila mereka memilih parti yang melaksanakan manifesto pilihan raya, terutamanya dari aspek ekonomi. Pun begitu, aspek utama yang dititikberatkan oleh mereka tentunya adalah agama. Penglibatan tokoh agama dalam politik pada dekad 50-an, serta penubuhan UMNO di Terengganu pada 1947 telah menarik undi rakyat Terengganu dalam pilihan raya umum pertama iaitu pada tahun 1955. Hasilnya, UMNO menang dengan selesa bukan sahaja untuk kerusi negeri, malah juga untuk kerusi parlimen pada ketika itu.

Besar dan Ali (2016) menganalisis keputusan PRU-13 di Terengganu yang mengejutkan ramai pihak apabila negeri ini tidak terkesan walaupun seluruh negara lainnya memilih BN/UMNO sebagai pemerintah pada pilihan raya tersebut. Terengganu sebaliknya hampir majoriti menolak BN dengan parti tersebut ketinggalan dua kerusi sahaja berbanding PAS. Hampir kesemua kawasan DUN menyaksikan kekalahan BN kecuali di kawasan luar bandar. Didapati ini berlaku disebabkan faktor geografi dan sumber maklumat politik yang terhad kepada media arus perdana sahaja.

Besar et al., (2016) dalam kajiannya mengenai geografi pilihan raya di kawasan DUN Manir, Terengganu mendapati sokongan pengundi di DUN tersebut juga dipengaruhi oleh fahaman keislaman dan perkauman. Malah, majoriti antara mereka di DUN Manir dipengaruhi oleh ketokohan calon dan faktor anak tempatan. Tanpa menafikan kekuatan jentera parti tersebut, keputusan pilihan raya sejak PRU 1990 telah mencatatkan penurunan majoriti undi yang berlaku. Ini menunjukkan kawasan DUN Manir ini masih mampu untuk dimenangi oleh parti lawan. Maka, kawasan yang marginal ini adalah menarik untuk dikaji dengan lebih mendalam. Sani (2017) juga membahaskan bahawa pembangkang ada peluang untuk merampas semula Terengganu jika melihat semula faktor yang mampu menyumbang kepada peralihan kuasa seperti perpecahan parti dan perubahan keyakinan pengundi. Muda (2017) dalam bukunya meringkaskan bahawa rakyat Terengganu berani untuk menggunakan kuasa undi mereka dan ini terbukti apabila mereka berjaya menumbangkan parti memerintah melalui pilihan raya.

Menurut Abdullah et al., (2018) dalam kajiannya mengenai politik masyarakat Melayu di Terengganu, pembangunan merupakan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi pembentukan budaya politik di negeri tersebut. Namun, selepas PRU-10, masyarakat Melayu di Terengganu lebih mengutamakan aspek keadilan dalam pemerintahan. Ini adalah berikutan peristiwa pemecatan Anwar Ibrahim yang pada masa tersebut telah menimbulkan satu gelombang penentangan masyarakat Melayu terhadap UMNO. Walau bagaimanapun, analisis yang dilakukan menunjukkan bahawa sambutan masyarakat melayu

lebih dominan terhadap parti politik UMNO dan PAS berbanding parti-parti politik yang lain. Pun begitu, mereka menjadi lebih rasional dengan mementingkan tadbir urus yang baik, ketelusan dalam pentadbiran serta pembangunan yang adil dan seimbang.

Besar (2021) melihat geopolitik atau kuasa pemerintahan di Terengganu pada PRU-14 bergantung kepada kekuatan sokongan pengundi, peranan pemimpin utama dan isu semasa dalam negeri. Pertembungan tiga penjurong iaitu PAS, BN dan PH menimbulkan kejutan, mewujudkan pelbagai persepsi dan pergolakan dalam politik tanah air. Walau bagaimanapun, penolakan rakyat Terengganu terhadap BN pada ketika itu bukanlah kerana kekuatan PAS tetapi sebaliknya kelemahan BN dalam menangani isu-isu yang timbul dalam kalangan masyarakat. Keputusan PRU-14 tersebut menunjukkan hanya BN/UMNO dan PAS sahaja yang relevan di bumi Terengganu ini. Corak pemerintahan yang dinamik di Terengganu berlaku disebabkan perpecahan parti, perbalahan antara pemimpin negeri serta isu dalaman lain sehingga pengundi hilang keyakinan terhadap kelangsungan pentadbiran (Sani, 2017).

METOD KAJIAN

Pendekatan dan Reka Bentuk Kajian

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kuantitatif. Menurut Cresswell (2008), kajian kuantitatif adalah jenis penyelidikan pendidikan di mana pengkaji memutuskan apa yang hendak dikaji, bertanya soalan khusus, mengecilkan skop soalan, mengumpul data yang boleh dikuantitatifkan oleh peserta, menganalisa nombor-nombor tersebut menggunakan statistik, menjalankan inkuiri dalam bentuk objektif dan tidak bias. Maka dengan itu, pendekatan ini adalah sesuai memandangkan kajian ini yang menggunakan reka bentuk kajian tinjauan. Menurut Idid (1998), reka bentuk kajian tinjauan merupakan kaedah yang dijalankan untuk mengumpul data daripada satu populasi, manakala menurut Cresswell (2012), reka bentuk kajian tinjauan adalah yang digunakan oleh pengkaji untuk menghurai, membanding dan meramal sikap, pendapat, tingkah laku dan ciri-ciri sesuatu populasi. Babbie (2001) mengatakan penggunaan kaedah tinjauan adalah salah satu cara yang dianggap terbaik dalam sesuatu kajian sains sosial kerana kaedah ini berupaya memberikan penjelasan yang tepat untuk mewakili satu populasi yang besar (Mustaffa et al., 2014). Menurut Robson (2011), pendekatan kuantitatif sesuai bagi kajian deskriptif. Oleh sebab itu, reka bentuk kajian tinjauan dapat mencapai objektif kajian ini kerana bersesuaian dengan pendekatan yang digunakan.

Lokasi, Populasi, Sampel, Saiz Sample dan Persampelan

Kajian ini telah dijalankan di Terengganu, Malaysia kerana sesuai dengan kumpulan sasaran yang dikehendaki pengkaji. Kajian ini dilaksanakan ke atas golongan belia yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun di mana golongan dalam lingkungan umur ini adalah mereka yang pertama kali diberikan peluang untuk mengundi pada PRU-15 yang lalu setelah pindaan perlembagaan dilakukan bagi Undi 18.

Saiz sampel ini melibatkan 100 orang pengundi muda yang dipilih secara rawak di kawasan DUN Manir, Kuala Terengganu di mana pengkaji memilih dua atau tiga orang responden yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun di setiap kampung yang tersenarai dalam DUN Manir. Pemilihan mereka yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun ini adalah kerana mereka telahpun layak untuk mengundi setelah pindaan perlembagaan dibuat untuk melayakkan mereka mengundi berbanding pada sebelum ini, umur minima yang layak untuk mengundi adalah 21 tahun. Kajian ini akan menggunakan persampelan jenis bukan kebarangkalian. Secara khususnya, pengkaji akan menggunakan persampelan jenis bertujuan (purposive). Persampelan bertujuan adalah persampelan yang meletakkan ciri-ciri kepada responden. Sesuai dengan kajian ini, responden telah dicirikan sebagai mereka yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun yang tinggal di kawasan DUN Manir, Kuala Terengganu.

Kaedah Pengumpulan Data

Memandangkan kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, maka kaedah pengumpulan data yang sesuai adalah dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik. Menurut Ghafar (1999), soal selidik adalah alat ukur yang digunakan dalam penyelidikan untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang cepat dan tepat terutamanya dalam fakta-fakta kepercayaan, perasaan dan sebagainya. Manakala menurut Idid (1998), soal selidik adalah satu alat yang penting bagi seseorang pengkaji kerana kualiti atau mutu soal selidik akan menentukan nilai penyelidikan pada keseluruhannya.

Untuk memastikan borang soal selidik mempunyai kebolehpercayaan yang tinggi, ia akan diuji terlebih dahulu dengan melaksanakan kajian rintis. Borang soal selidik ini dibangunkan oleh pengkaji sendiri dengan mengambil kira soal kerelevanan dan ketepatan soalan selain daripada membentuk soalan yang mudah difahami. 17 item dengan tiga bahagian dibentuk meliputi penggunaan skala berbentuk nominal atau ordinal di bahagian A dan B, manakala skala likert secara khususnya di bahagian C.

Data Primer

Data primer didefinisikan sebagai data yang berasal dari sumber yang asli atau pertama (Hua, 2016). Data primer adalah data mentah yang dikumpulkan oleh pengkaji sendiri iaitu melalui kaedah soal selidik (Balli et al., 2009). Proses mengumpul maklumat melibatkan data primer mempunyai kebolehpercayaan yang tinggi dengan andaian tidak berlaku sebarang perubahan data semasa menjalankan proses menganalisis data (Hua, 2016). Bagi kajian ini, data primer diperolehi daripada borang soal selidik yang diagihkan kepada 100 orang responden tersebut.

Data Sekunder

Dua kaedah pengumpulan maklumat dan data sekunder digunakan dalam kajian ini iaitu melalui kajian kepustakaan dan kajian atas talian. Kajian kepustakaan dilakukan dengan merujuk kepada bahan-bahan bacaan di perpustakaan seperti akhbar, artikel, jurnal, buku, tesis, laporan dan dokumen. Manakala bagi kaedah kajian atas talian atau internet, maklumat didapatkan melalui rujukan-rujukan laman web yang berkaitan dengan politik dan pilihan raya. Selain itu, pemerhatian menerusi aplikasi *facebook*, *twitter*, *tiktok* dan *instagram* juga sedikit sebanyak membantu pengkaji mendapatkan maklumat yang diperlukan.

Analisis Data dan Persembahan Hasil Kajian

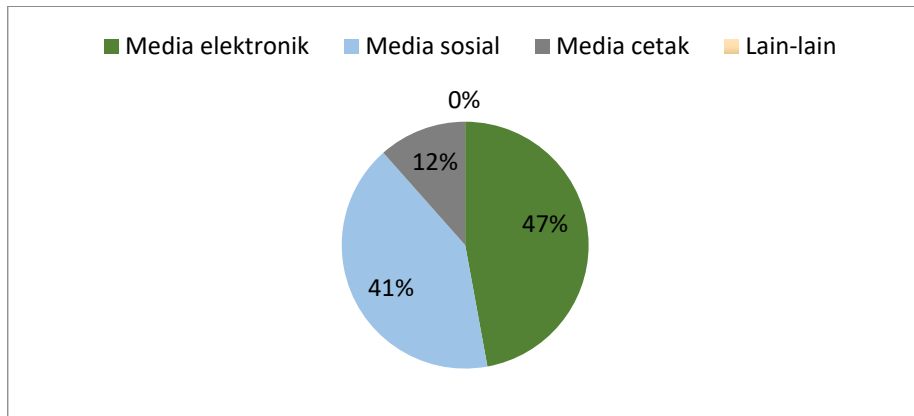
Proses analisis data dilakukan untuk mencapai objektif kajian dengan menggunakan aplikasi SPSS versi 20.

DAPATAN KAJIAN DAN PERBINCANGAN

Sumber Maklumat Yang Dipercayai

Merujuk kepada rajah 1 di bawah, melalui soal selidik yang dianalisis, didapati bahawa sumber maklumat yang dipercayai oleh majoriti responden adalah media elektronik iaitu sebanyak 49 peratus. Media elektronik seperti siaran berita televisyen atau radio memainkan peranan yang tinggi dalam menyalurkan maklumat kepada golongan muda ini kerana mereka beranggapan maklumat yang disalurkan melalui media elektronik ini mempunyai kebolehpercayaan yang lebih tinggi berbanding medium lain. Pada zaman teknologi yang canggih seperti hari ini di mana boleh dikatakan semua masyarakat mempunyai telefon bimbit dan akaun sosial masing-masing, media sosial mendapat peratusan kedua tertinggi mengikuti media elektronik iaitu sebanyak 43 peratus. Kepercayaan maklumat yang disalurkan melalui media sosial juga adalah tinggi berikutan kecepatan penyebarannya dalam membawa satu-satu isu semasa. Di samping itu, media cetak menunjukkan peratusan yang rendah berbanding dua sebelumnya berikutan tambahan cerita yang sering disebarluaskan terutamanya yang mengatakan sesetengah akhbar kini secara terang-terangan menunjukkan

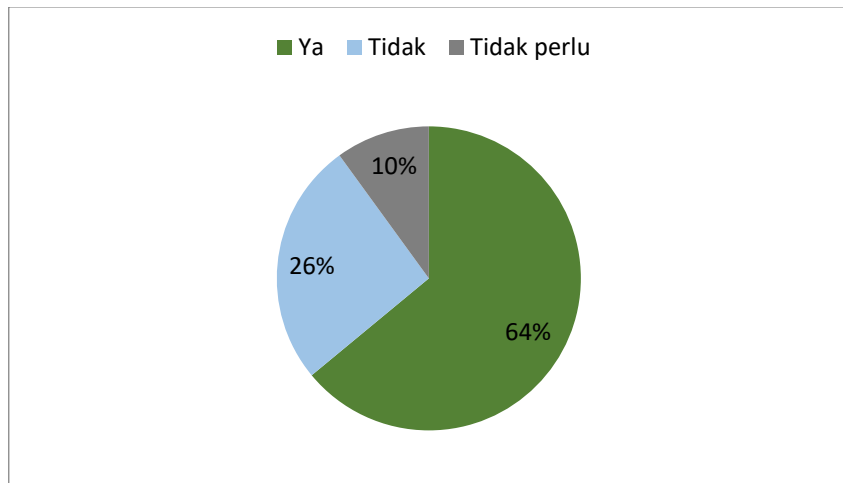
sokongan kepada parti-parti politik tertentu. Sebagai contoh, akhbar Sinar Harian dilabel sebagai penyokong parti politik tertentu dan dituduh dengan persepsi yang jahat. Satu penulisan telah dibuat oleh pihak Sinar Harian pada 13 Julai 2023 yang lalu, menjelaskan mengenai tuduhan-tuduhan itu, serta mengambil peluang tersebut untuk menyampaikan warkah kepada pada pembacanya dan masyarakat bahawa mereka sentiasa memperjuangkan kebebasan media tanpa bias dan berpihak (Rambly, 2023).



Rajah 1: Sumber Maklumat Yang Dipercayai

Penilaian Semula Maklumat Yang Diperoleh

Mempercayai sumber maklumat yang diperoleh bukanlah bermaksud menerima bulat-bulat akan maklumat tersebut tanpa mengetahui kesahannya. Oleh sebab itu, soalan kedua yang diberikan kepada responden melalui soal selidik adalah mengenai penilaian semula terhadap maklumat yang diperolehi mereka. Berdasarkan rajah 2, sebanyak 64 peratus responden menyatakan mereka menilai semula maklumat yang diperolehi. Sikap responden ini dirasakan perlu supaya kebenaran dan kesahihan maklumat dapat dipastikan. Bukanlah sedikit kegiatan penipuan maklumat dilakukan pada akhir ini, maka kepekaan dan keprihatinan dalam mencari dan menerima maklumat amatlah penting. Sementara itu, 26 peratus responden tidak menilai semula maklumat yang diperolehi mereka. Golongan ini hanya menerima sahaja apa jua maklumat yang didapati, manakala 10 peratus responden lagi mengatakan mereka tidak perlu menilai semula maklumat tersebut berdasarkan kepercayaan mereka terhadap sumber maklumat itu diperolehi.



Rajah 2: Penilaian Semula Maklumat

Persepsi Responden Mengenai Isu dan Dasar Kerajaan Negeri

Jadual 1 menunjukkan persepsi responden terhadap 15 isu dan dasar yang dilaksanakan oleh kerajaan negeri. Berdasarkan jadual 1, lebih 95 peratus responden di kawasan kajian bersetuju dengan isu-isu dan dasar kerajaan negeri seperti menteri besar diterima baik oleh rakyat, sektor pelancongan negeri menyumbang kepada peningkatan ekonomi negeri, kerajaan negeri komited dalam memajukan pendidikan agama, dan pemberian lesen motosikal percuma membantu meringankan beban. Isu dan dasar yang mencatat keputusan tertinggi iaitu sebanyak 99 peratus ialah negeri Terengganu akan terus menjadi destinasi pelancongan yang menarik di Malaysia.

Majoriti responden bersetuju bahawa Terengganu akan terus menjadi tarikan pelancong di Malaysia. Umum mengetahui negeri ini sangat terkenal dengan destinasi pelancongan yang pelbagai yang menjadi tumpuan para pelancong sama ada dari dalam mahupun luar negara. Kepelbagaian pulau-pulau yang sering menjadi perhatian para pengunjung iaitu Pulau Redang, Pulau Perhentian, Pulau Kapas, Pulau Gemia dan Pulau Bidong ditambah pula dengan warisan kebudayaan dan juga makanan menjadi daya penarik kepada para pengunjung. Terbaharu, jambatan angkat atau 'Drawbridge' juga menjadi mercu dalam menarik pengunjung ke Terengganu, ditambah pula ianya berdekatan dengan kompleks membeli-belah pertama di Kuala Terengganu iaitu KTCC dan Pasar Payang. Pihak bertanggungjawab juga dilihat sentiasa menambah baik infrastruktur yang mampu menarik para pengunjung seperti bangunan Pasar Besar Kedai Payang yang baharu.

Dalam masa yang sama, sektor pelancongan ini turut menyumbang kepada ekonomi negeri. Tidak dapat disangkal lagi bahawa sektor pelancongan adalah antara sektor yang banyak menyumbang kepada pendapatan negeri. Kepelbagaian produk pelancongan telah menarik kehadiran pengunjung yang ramai sekaligus menyumbang kepada ekonomi negeri. Industri sampingan seperti perhotelan dan pengangkutan juga mendapat kesan positif hasil daripada sektor pelancongan ini.

Jadual 1: Persepsi Responden Mengenai Isu dan Dasar Kerajaan Negeri

Isu dan Dasar Kerajaan Negeri Terengganu	Setuju (%)	Tidak Setuju (%)	Tidak Pasti (%)
1. Menteri Besar Terengganu sekarang diterima baik oleh rakyat.	98	0	2
2. Slogan 'Terengganu Maju, Berkat, Sejahtera' diterima baik oleh rakyat.	94	0	6
3. Terengganu akan terus menjadi destinasi pelancongan yang menarik di Malaysia.	99	0	1
4. Sektor pelancongan di Terengganu menyumbang kepada peningkatan ekonomi negeri.	95	0	5
5. Kerajaan negeri komited membantu mangsa banjir di Terengganu.	90	7	3
6. Kerajaan negeri komited dalam memajukan pendidikan agama di Terengganu.	96	0	4
7. Kerajaan negeri tegas dalam menangani isu jenayah di Terengganu.	94	3	3
8. Kerajaan negeri berusaha membaikpulih dan menyelenggara jalan raya di Terengganu.	86	10	4
9. Pembangunan di Terengganu sangat memuaskan.	84	16	2
10. Jurang pembangunan antara kawasan bandar dan luar bandar masih seimbang.	72	18	10

11. Pembinaan keretapi ECRL memberi manfaat untuk rakyat Terengganu.	91	0	9
12. Pemberian lesen motosikal percuma kepada golongan belia membantu meringankan beban keluarga.	95	5	0
13. Sektor perindustrian dalam negeri memberi manfaat kepada rakyat Terengganu.	87	0	13
14. Kempen 'Hari Tanpa Beg Plastik' pada setiap hari Sabtu adalah wajar untuk memulihara dan memelihara alam sekitar.	95	3	2
15. Perkhidmatan kakitangan kerajaan negeri Terengganu adalah mesra, cekap dan telus.	64	32	4

Menteri Besar Terengganu, Dr. Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar diterima baik dan sangat disenangi oleh rakyat Terengganu. Penerimaan tersebut dapat dilihat menerusi kejayaan beliau mendapat majoriti penuh dalam pilihan raya negeri pada 12 Ogos 2023 yang lalu. Manifesto yang dijanjikan oleh kerajaan pada penggal terdahulu juga dilaksanakan dengan baik seperti yang dijanjikan. Pembangunan sosioekonomi dilaksanakan sesuai dengan keperluan rakyat. Keberkesanan pentadbiran juga boleh dinilai dengan baik berdasarkan prestasi pelaksanaan manifesto kerajaan walaupun boleh dikatakan masih terlalu awal untuk mencapai tahap yang diinginkan oleh rakyat.

Majoriti responden iaitu dengan peratus sebanyak 96 peratus bersetuju bahawa kerajaan negeri Terengganu memberi komitmen yang sangat baik dalam memajukan pendidikan agama dalam negeri ini. Jika dilihat, kerajaan Terengganu terutamanya di bawah kelolaan Dr. Samsuri Mokhtar sangat menitikberatkan pengajian agama. Di mesyuarat Dewan Undangan Negeri, para ADUN juga kerap bertanyakan mengenai status pembinaan sekolah-sekolah agama di Terengganu. Selain itu, 95 peratus responden bersetuju usaha kerajaan dalam memberi lesen motosikal percuma membantu meringankan beban keluarga. Golongan belia terutamanya yang berumur 18 dan 19 tahun memerlukan lesen motosikal untuk memudahkan mereka mencari pekerjaan selepas SPM. Pemberian lesen secara percuma oleh kerajaan ini akan membantu meringankan beban keluarga terutamanya ibu bapa kerana tidak semua mampu untuk membayar yuran kelas memandu yang kini semakin mahal. Di samping itu, 94 peratus responden bersetuju dengan ketegasan kerajaan negeri dalam menangani isu jenayah, manakala 90 peratus responden bersetuju dengan

pernyataan “kerajaan negeri komited dalam membantu mangsa-mangsa banjir di Terengganu”.

Berkuatkuasa Mei 2023, semua pasaraya besar di Kuala Terengganu diwajibkan untuk menyertai kempen ‘Hari Tanpa Beg Plastik’ pada setiap hari Sabtu. Sebelumnya, kempen tersebut mula diperkenalkan kepada rakyat secara berperingkat iaitu dengan mengenakan cas RM 0.20 bagi setiap pembelian di pasaraya besar pada setiap hari Sabtu. Malah, usaha tersebut diteruskan dengan lebih giat lagi apabila bermula Januari 2024, semua pasaraya di Kuala Terengganu diwajibkan untuk tidak lagi menyediakan beg plastik kepada pelanggan. Usaha ini dilihat sangat baik dalam usaha untuk mengurangkan penggunaan beg plastik dalam kalangan masyarakat dan responden juga bersetuju bahawa kempen ini adalah wajar untuk memelihara dan memulihara alam sekitar. Penggalakkan dalam menggunakan beg kitar semula perlu dilakukan dengan giat lagi kerana rakyat Terengganu pada umumnya kurang terdedah kepada kempen kesedaran sebegini, namun telah ada segelintir pihak yang berusaha melakukan pelbagai aktiviti bagi memberi kesedaran tersebut kepada semua pihak. Sebagai contoh, bermula daripada sekolah rendah, anak-anak telah diperkenalkan dengan usaha kitar semula. Selain itu, badan-badan kerajaan dan NGO bersatu mengadakan pelbagai program seperti mana “*Beach Cleaning Programme*” yang dilakukan oleh UMT. Usaha-usaha ini mungkin tidak memberi hasil pada masa kini tetapi kesedaran generasi akan datang perlu dipupuk bermula dari sekarang.

Di samping itu, pembinaan keretapi ECRL yang pada awalnya menimbulkan pelbagai isu, kini dapat dilihat proses dan pelaksanaannya semakin memberi manfaat kepada penduduk negeri ini. Kewujudan ECRL mampu memberi kesan positif kepada pelbagai industri dalam negeri pada masa akan datang, terutamanya industri pelancongan. Kini, pembinaan ECRL telah membuka peluang pekerjaan kepada rakyat, dan seterusnya akan memberi kemudahan kepada rakyat dari segi pengangkutan yang dapat menjimatkan masa dan mesra poket.

KESIMPULAN, IMPLIKASI DAN CADANGAN

Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa wujudnya variasi persepsi terhadap isu dan dasar kerajaan negeri dalam golongan pengundi muda khususnya mereka yang berumur antara 18 hingga 20 tahun. Dalam konteks ini, didapati literasi politik dalam kalangan pengundi muda adalah sangat penting untuk melahirkan generasi muda yang bertanggungjawab. Kajian mengenai belia amat penting untuk terus dilakukan kerana belia adalah golongan muda yang merupakan tonggak utama dalam memacu legasi kepimpinan negara.

Persepsi mereka terhadap politik terutamanya di kawasan DUN masing-masing adalah penting untuk difahami supaya demokrasi di negara ini semakin subur. Kelebihan yang ada pada belia ini, terutamanya dari segi umur mereka diharap dapat membantu dalam memulihkan suasana politik negara.

Perubahan dalam landskap politik Malaysia pada hari ini memberi cabaran kepada golongan muda dalam konteks kecelikan politik mereka. Kecelikan politik ini adalah asas yang penting dalam menentukan kematangan mereka dalam menilai isu-isu secara lebih terdidik. Bahkan kematangan itu berupaya untuk melestarkan kesinambungan pembangunan negara. Semestinya kecelikan politik ini perlu dipupuk daripada awal dengan memanfaatkan penggunaan teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi terkini yang dipandu dengan prinsip dan etika. Kerajaan disarankan untuk mewujudkan ekosistem yang memberi peluang kepada golongan muda ini meningkatkan literasi politik masing-masing dan secara tidak langsung, agenda pemeraksanaan dan pembangunan belia juga dapat dilaksanakan.

Kajian ini dilihat dapat memberi impak kepada perkembangan ilmu terutamanya mengenai keterlibatan golongan muda dalam kancah politik. Malah, kajian ini juga dilihat dapat memberi idea dan manfaat yang baik kepada pengkaji seterusnya untuk menjalankan kajian pada masa hadapan. Akhir sekali, diharapkan kajian seperti ini dapat diteruskan lagi pada masa yang akan datang agar prestasi pentadbiran kerajaan negeri bertambah baik sekaligus meningkatkan kestabilan politik dalam negeri. Diharapkan agar kajian lanjutan dapat dilakukan berkaitan keberadaan politik di Terengganu dan pada yang sama juga boleh menjadi suatu ilmu baharu dalam bidang ini.

Dapat dirumuskan bahawa undi 18 telah mengubah landskap politik di seluruh negara. Dapat dilihat bahawa pendedahan dan pengetahuan mengenai isu-isu politik dalam kalangan pengundi muda di Terengganu terutamanya di kawasan DUN Manir adalah memberangsangkan. Pun begitu, masih perlu adanya bimbingan daripada pelbagai pihak supaya literasi politik dalam kalangan mereka yang berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun ini tidak disia-siakan. Kematangan mereka dalam menilai satu-satu isu adalah penting supaya apa jua tindakan kerajaan dapat dinilai daripada kedua-dua sisi baik dan buruk tanpa berat sebelah. Pemerintahan kerajaan negeri Terengganu juga sangat diterima baik oleh rakyat, apalagi setelah melihat keputusan pilihan raya negeri yang lalu yang mencatatkan kejayaan majoriti penuh kepada pemerintahan kelolaan MB Samsuri. Walaupun telah berada pada kedudukan yang selesa ketika ini, diharapkan pelaksanaan isu-isu dan dasar dalam negeri boleh ditambah baik supaya pembangunan dan kemajuan yang dicapai membawa keberkatan dan

kesejahteraan kepada rakyat secara lestari, sesuai dengan moto “Terengganu Maju, Berkah, Sejahtera”.

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The Relationship between Internet Usage, Alcohol Consumption and Drug Abuse among Malaysian University Students based on respondent's demographics: a Quantitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is ranked as the 10th largest consumer of alcohol concerning its population size. Furthermore, Malaysia's position is 71st in per capita cigarette consumption, indicating an average of 646 cigarettes smoked by each adult annually. The primary aims of this research endeavor encompass comprehending the connections between Internet usage motives, attitudes towards the Internet, drug abuse, and alcohol intake with considerations based on gender, income, religious beliefs, and educational level. Employing a quantitative approach, the current investigation utilizes a questionnaire survey to fulfill its objectives, with a sample size of 440 respondents from University Putra Malaysia. The selection of students was carried out through stratified random sampling. The correlation between Internet usage purpose and attitudes, concerning alcohol consumption, did not yield statistically significant results. Conversely, a noteworthy correlation was found between purpose and attitudes towards Internet usage and drug abuse. The mediating role of attitudes towards the Internet between independent and dependent variables was substantiated. The model indicated that gender, income, and religion have moderator effects, while educational level did not exhibit such influence.

Keywords: Internet Usage, Alcohol Drinking, Drug Abuse, Malaysian University Student.

INTRODUCTION

Rates of alcohol consumption and binge drinking among individuals in the college-age bracket represent a significant focal point within the realm of public health. The ramifications of excessive alcohol intake are manifold, encompassing a rise in incidents such as physical assaults, academic underachievement, sexual assaults, alcohol use disorders, and even fatalities (Hingson et al., 2017). Data from the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) revealed that 45.1% of present alcohol consumers in Malaysia partake in binge-drinking, defined as the consumption of six or more standard alcoholic beverages in a single sitting, thus indicating a worrisome trajectory in the drinking behaviors of Malaysians who indulge in alcohol. Notably, the demographic breakdown showed that 75% were male, with 55% falling between the ages of 20-39, and 27% engaging in this behavior at least once per week (Harun & Nizam, 2024).

The prevailing culture within universities can exert a profound influence on and potentially modify the patterns of alcohol consumption among the student populace. A heightened consciousness regarding how peers and academic institutions perceive alcohol usage could offer a gateway for universities to formulate strategies aimed at mitigating alcohol consumption among their students (Brown et al., 2024).

Malaysia has experienced a surge in drug-related transgressions, criminal activities, instances of violence, and societal dilemmas (Ismail et al., 2022). Despite the implementation of diverse measures by the Malaysian government to combat drug dependency, this issue persists as a formidable obstacle that remains unresolved (Chie et al., 2015). Furthermore, tobacco usage stands out as a principal concern in both Malaysia and globally (Jamal et al., 2014; Nawi et al., 2021).

The study conducted by Gupta et al (2016) demonstrated significant correlations between exposure to Internet-based alcohol-related content and the inclination to consume alcohol, as well as positive perceptions towards alcohol consumption among the youth. The portrayal of alcohol as a natural and essential aspect of life on the Internet could potentially influence young individuals' alcohol consumption patterns.

Internet addiction has adverse implications on an individual's psychological well-being and overall health, leading to various negative consequences, both clinically and in terms of substance abuse. These consequences encompass insomnia, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity

symptoms, reduced sexual activity, diminished self-esteem, substandard academic performance, smoking, and the cultivation of potentially addictive behaviors like alcohol consumption, coffee intake, and drug usage (Jeong et al., 2020). Golpe et al. (2017) further noted that problematic Internet users not only exhibit higher levels of substance abuse but also have a threefold increased likelihood of developing risky drug habits. Wartberg et al. (2016) concur by highlighting that problematic Internet users are more prone to engaging in hazardous alcohol consumption. Additionally, Olashore et al. (2020) identified a correlation between alcohol consumption and Internet usage.

In order to tackle the link between Internet usage, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse, it is crucial to delve into and comprehend the underlying factors. Hence, this research endeavors to address the following inquiries: 1. what is the mediation effect of attitudes towards Internet in relationship with purpose of using Internet and alcohol and drug usage. 2. Is there any relationship between purpose of using Internet and drug and alcohol usage with the moderation effects of gender, religion, income and level of education?

Alcohol usage

Alcohol consumption is widely recognized as a major contributor to various significant health issues, including cirrhosis of the liver and injuries sustained in vehicular accidents. Nevertheless, the scope of health risks associated with drinking extends far beyond just liver disease and car accidents, with research indicating that over 60 different diseases are linked to alcohol consumption (Freeman, 2014; Wiley, December 9, 2019).

While Malaysia indeed exhibits a relatively low global average of alcohol consumption (Sornpaisarn et al., 2020), specific ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Bumiputera Sabah, and Sarawakians (Institute for Public Health (IPH), 2019) display considerably higher levels of alcohol consumption and engage in riskier drinking practices compared to other ethnicities within the country. Notably, Sarawak registers among the states with the highest prevalence of current drinkers in Malaysia, encompassing nearly one-fifth of the population or approximately half a million individuals. Conversely, urban areas exhibit a higher prevalence of current drinkers compared to rural regions, predominantly among males and individuals with advanced educational backgrounds (Health, 2017). The disparities in alcohol consumption across different communities in Malaysia are intricately associated with factors such as religion, alcohol-related regulations, and economic development (Manthey et al., 2019).

The regulatory framework concerning alcohol in Malaysia is robust, with the legal age for purchasing alcoholic beverages set at 21 years, whereas Singapore and Thailand have lower legal age limits of 18 and 20 years, respectively (Hammer J.H. et al., 2018). Alcoholic beverages are readily available in Malaysia, being retailed in local convenience stores. Research findings suggest that limiting the physical accessibility of take-away alcohol can effectively curtail alcohol-per-capita consumption (APC), thereby mitigating associated risks (Sherk et al., 2018).

Previous studies have delved into the impact of exposure to alcohol-related content on the beliefs and attitudes of young individuals towards drinking (Anderson et al., 2009; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009). These investigations have indicated that exposure to alcohol advertising tends to encourage drinking behavior among youths and heighten the likelihood of increased consumption among those already engaged in drinking practices (Babor TF et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2009).

Ethnic groups displayed varying patterns of binge drinking. The majority consisted of Indians at 53.8%, followed by Chinese at 38.5% and Malays at 7.7%. In terms of other substance usage, a higher percentage of binge drinkers, 64.6%, were smokers compared to only 20.7% among non-binge drinkers. Furthermore, nearly half of young individuals engaging in binge drinking also participated in four or more risky behaviors, contrasting with 9.7% of those who did not binge (Singh et al., 2020).

Robert Lourdes et al., (2022) observed a strong correlation between current smoking and drinking behaviors. The prevalence of smokers within the group of current drinkers was noted at 19.2%. These findings are supported by international literature, indicating a reciprocal relationship between smoking and alcohol consumption, leading to an amplified desire for both substances (Verplaetse et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020).

Drug usage

The existence of distinctive cultural norms within various ethnic groups could potentially impact the incidence of substance abuse (National Anti-Drugs Agency, 2023). As indicated by Trendwise Analytics, the misuse of drugs and substances has heightened addiction rates among young individuals, encompassing high school and university students, thereby yielding enduring consequences on the socio-behavioral attributes of individuals (Capusan et al., 2019).

According to the most recent data presented by the National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA), the prevalence of drug dependency is most pronounced in the Malay ethnic group (80.4%), followed by the Chinese (6.4%), and Indian (6.0%) populations (National Anti-Drugs Agency, 2023). These figures align with a prior investigation which noted a greater number of Malay individuals struggling with drug addiction compared to other ethnicities (Abdullah et al., 2021). The higher representation of Malays in these statistics could be attributed to their majority status in the Malaysian population. This pattern bears resemblance to the situation in China where a significant proportion of drug addicts belong to the Chinese ethnic group (Fauzi et al., 2023). Beyond their numerical superiority, the lower levels of education and limited household incomes among the Malay community may have also substantially contributed to their susceptibility to drug addiction (Lua et al., 2018; Lua et al., 2012).

In accordance with the report by the Institute for Public Health conducted by the Ministry of Health Malaysia (IPH) in 2019, the incidence rates of Drug Substance Use (DSU) in the previous month and of substance utilization among individuals in Malaysia who are 18 years old and older were recorded at 0.5% and 1.5%, correspondingly. It was emphasized in the publication that the frequency of Kratom consumption (an organic material capable of inducing effects akin to opioids and stimulants) stood at 0.4% within the last 30 days, while cannabis consumption was noted at 0.7% for individuals trying drugs for the first time (Institute for Public Health, 2020). An investigation conducted by Hong and Peltzer (2019) similarly revealed that the prevalence of ongoing substance consumption among teenagers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region ranged from 11% to 15%.

Ismail (2022) discovered that 22.4% of the survey participants acknowledged using drugs and substances (including alcohol, tobacco, and cigarettes) at some point in their lives, with over half admitting to current usage. Almost one-fifth (19.9%) had consumed tobacco products (such as cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, and others) in their lifetime, while nearly half of that figure were current users. Furthermore, 4.9% had consumed alcoholic beverages like beer, wine, and liquor at some point in their lives, with only 3.5% being current drinkers. Conversely, 5.5% had experimented with drugs in their lifetime, with 3.5% currently using.

These prevalence rates surpassed those previously documented in Malaysia through the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) among adolescents aged 13 to 17 years in 2017 and adults (18 years and older) in 2019 (Health, 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 1994). The report by NHMS indicated that the current prevalence of cigarette smokers was 13.8%, in

comparison to 10.2% among alcohol consumers; additionally, 4.3% acknowledged being lifetime drug users and 3.4% reported current drug use. The findings in all categories highlight that Malaysian youth predominantly consume kratom, cannabis, and methylenedioxyamphetamine (ATS).

The current prevalence of tobacco use dropped from 24% in 2011 to 19.5% in 2023, marking an 18.9% relative decline. Likewise, current tobacco smoking prevalence decreased from 23.1% in 2011 to 19% in 2023, signifying a 17.7% relative reduction. While smoking prevalence decreased from 43.9% in 2011 to 35.7% in 2023 among men, it remained relatively stable for women (1% to 1.5%) (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2023).

The “Malaysia’s Global Adult Tobacco Survey” revealed that the average age of initiation is 17. Studies have shown that 80% of smokers started before the age of 20, with 90% of cigarette purchasers being under 21 (Nordin, August 24, 2015). Moreover, Kyle (24 Sep 2019) asserted that drug-related offenses accounted for 56% of non-drug crimes. Tobacco use stands as a significant preventable cause of mortality, prompting extensive research into its prevalence in Malaysia and globally (Jamal et al., 2014).

Chow et al. (2024) identified a tobacco consumption prevalence of 8.6% in their research, with manufactured cigarettes being the primary tobacco product used. Their study revealed that smoking cigarettes correlated significantly with nationality, ethnicity, religion, educational level, and tobacco use by parents, siblings, and friends. Factors such as being non-Malaysian, Indian, Muslim, a 4th-year student, having tobacco-using parents or siblings, lower education level, and income all exhibited statistically significant associations with current tobacco use. Additionally, lower education levels and incomes render individuals more susceptible to smoking (Widome et al., 2015), while demographic characteristics like religion, gender, age, marital status, and family size may influence substance use (Lim et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, according to the Amendment (Malaysia to Control of Tobacco Products) Regulations 2018, enforced in December 2018, smoking is banned in all “eating places,” defined as areas, inside or outside a building, where food is prepared, distributed, or sold. This includes any space on a train or ship where food is prepared, distributed, or sold, any area around a vehicle within three meters where food is prepared, and any region within three meters of a table or chair used for food preparation, distribution, or sale (Buchanan, January 17, 2019).

Purposes of using Internet

The Internet enables individuals to sustain daily communication with others across different geographic regions via email, local news platforms, instant messaging, Facebook, as well as weather and religious updates.

Hemal et al. (2024) discovered that the Internet has brought about significant changes in education systems. The impact on students' learning processes is profound. Analysis of data revealed that Internet usage is predominantly for educational and entertainment purposes among school students, social media and entertainment among college students, and a mix of education and social media among university students. Academic pursuits drive Internet browsing for school and university students, while college students tend to browse for non-academic reasons. The preference for Internet browsing occurs mostly at night. Across all educational levels, students who perform well academically tend to visit websites like Google and YouTube, whereas those with average or poor academic performance tend to spend more time on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Ozturk et al., (2024) noted that the Faculty of Fine Arts extensively utilizes applications like "Social networking sites," "Video sharing sites," and "Photo sharing sites." Moreover, the purposes of Internet usage among participants vary based on gender distinctions. Additionally, a significant correlation was established between the creative personality traits of the participants and their reasons for using the Internet. The study identified that a considerable number of participants utilized the Internet for social media engagement, sharing academic content like assignments and projects, online shopping, personal growth, connecting with similar individuals, expressing opinions freely to drive change, adapting to new technologies, problem-solving in communication and information retrieval, and feeling more at ease compared to face-to-face interactions.

Fernandez and Kuss (2019) contended that younger individuals who frequently visit online platforms for leisure are more susceptible to high engagement levels or signs of addiction than other age groups, such as middle-aged or older adults.

Attitudes towards Internet

An attitude can be characterized as an individual's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a specific subject matter. Attitudes are acquired through learning; they are adaptable and subject to change based on exposure to stimuli and societal norms or establishments (Binder & Niederle, 2007). Ünlü (2017) contended that social media has also emerged as a relevant factor in the

academic realm. With widespread acceptance among students, social media holds significant potential as a means of communication and education. Educators, in general, are cognizant of the benefits of social media and its high adoption rates. Nevertheless, there remain reservations and obstacles hindering the full integration of social media for interactions between lecturers and students, such as the informal nature of social media and differing perspectives on its role in higher education.

Research by Chou in 2016 revealed that students exhibit favorable attitudes towards the Internet. Additionally, Ünlü (2017) and Warschauer (2014) highlighted that physical education instructors and prospective physical education teachers displayed proficiency in utilizing the Internet. Another study indicated that future physical education (PE) teachers exhibit higher levels of computer self-efficacy. A separate study conducted by Kiliarnta (2016), demonstrated notable distinctions between online and offline relationships. Online connections are characterized as having less depth, yet offering additional connections within social networks. This suggests a higher quantity of relationships, albeit with fewer strong bonds.

Safdar, Mahmood, and Qutab (2010) asserted that undergraduate students exhibited strong support for the Internet as an effective educational tool, cautioning against the potential negative impacts such as unnecessary information, security risks in online shopping, addiction, and cultural challenges. Male students viewed the Internet as a means to socialize, while female students perceived it as not only a waste of time and money, but also conducive to addiction and fostering loneliness. Overall, students held positive attitudes towards the functions and utilities of the Internet. Users acknowledged the Internet as a highly beneficial tool for promptly fulfilling their communication and informational requirements.

Religion, Alcohol consumption and drug abuse

Religious participation has been associated with more conscientious alcohol consumption behaviors in a general context. Discrepancies in the strength of this correlation across different populations have been noted. The level of impact that religion can potentially have on consumption habits tends to increase with the extent of religious involvement in an individual's life. Individuals' perspectives and behaviors towards alcohol are shaped by religious beliefs, influencing their overall approach to alcohol consumption. Moreover, the degree of religious engagement plays a significant role in shielding individuals from excessive alcohol intake (Thompson, 2017).

Religiosity exhibits an inverse connection with excessive drinking habits, contrasting with findings that undergraduates facing alcohol-related issues tend to exhibit lower levels of religious commitment (Stauner et al., 2019). Greater religiosity is linked to reduced likelihood of engaging in binge drinking activities (Rivera et al., 2018), as well as lower frequencies of alcohol consumption for both males and females (McAuslan et al., 2020). Conversely, individuals who perceived religion as playing a minor role in their lives were more prone to recent alcohol consumption (Yockey et al., 2020).

Various major world religions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, are well-represented in Malaysia. A strong correlation exists between religion and ethnicity, with Malays predominantly identifying as Muslims, Indians as Hindus, and Chinese as Buddhists. The diverse religious landscape in the country enhances the importance of religious identity, with many Malaysians holding distinct views on their religious practices compared to others (Williamson, 2014).

Religious festivities, particularly those involving open house celebrations, contribute to the interreligious interactions within the population. Despite moderate tensions among religious groups, Islam being the official religion with a majority following (60% of the population), the government primarily focuses on regulating Muslim practices. National debates often revolve around the government's involvement in religious affairs, such as the support for Islamic practices and institutions or the allowance of greater religious freedoms for non-Muslims. Alcohol consumption stands out as a factor that distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims as well (Williamson, 2014).

Additionally, a relationship has been identified between religiosity and substance abuse. Amat et al., (2020) highlighted that a lack of religious knowledge contributes to the risk of relapse into drug abuse, potentially leading individuals into a cycle of addiction. Conversely, Khairi et al., (2017) discovered that the degree of importance individuals place on religion did not significantly impact drug abuse tendencies.

Hatta (2010) carried out an investigation regarding the association between religion and substance dependency among young Malay Muslims. An examination involving both addicted and non-addicted individuals revealed that a considerable number of addicts demonstrated a lack of awareness towards the doctrines of their faith, treating religion with levity. Addicts exhibited diminished levels on measures of religiosity, whereas non-addicts displayed contrasting outcomes. Khairi et al., (2017) determined that individuals who harbored doubts regarding the significance of religion in their lives did not exhibit any statistically significant predisposition towards drug abuse.

Income, gender, educational level and alcohol consumption and drug abuse

In a study conducted by Abd Rashid et al. (2019), with the exception of educational attainment and age which displayed no predominant linkage to smoking status, the majority of variables exhibited a significant correlation with smoking status. Notably, a high proportion of smokers were male (94.6%), and the investigation unveiled a notable relationship between smoking habits and gender. The research findings indicated a substantial connection between smoking status and ethnicity, marital status, religion, and occupational standing. The study concluded that age and educational level did not show a significant correlation with smoking. Furthermore, individuals categorized as housewives or unemployed were less inclined to smoke in comparison to civil servants. Singh et al., (2020) observed no variations in the prevalence of binge drinking across different age groups or educational backgrounds.

Amat et al., (2020) identified income levels and a lack of religious knowledge as factors contributing to the entrapment of drug addicts in a detrimental cycle. Excess income prompted erratic spending behaviors, drawing individuals towards drug consumption. Additionally, possessing disposable income often led to relapses within this cycle. Conversely, insufficient income acted as a catalyst, compelling individuals to resort to their former illicit activities related to drug distribution.

Khairi et al., (2017) revealed that individuals with primary education faced a heightened risk of substance abuse in comparison to those with tertiary education. Notably, individuals with only primary school education had an 11-fold increased risk of drug abuse compared to their tertiary-educated counterparts. The likelihood of substance abuse in those with a secondary education was nearly three times higher than individuals with tertiary education. Smoking was associated with a 13-fold increase in the odds of drug abuse compared to non-smokers. Similarly, alcohol consumption elevated the odds of drug abuse by almost 13 times in comparison to abstainers. Employment status and monthly income did not exhibit disparities in the likelihood of drug abuse. Individuals who reported alcohol consumption had approximately nine times higher odds of being involved in drug abuse compared to those who did not consume alcohol. These findings suggest a potential impact of educational level on the susceptibility to drug abuse.

Education may serve as a plausible rationale in facilitating the acquisition of skills and fostering risk perceptions among individuals. The incidence of drug abuse tends to be lower among individuals with a higher educational attainment. Moreover, factors such as employment status and monthly income did not exhibit any statistically significant impact on the

likelihood of engaging in drug abuse. Nevertheless, the level of monthly income displayed a strong correlation with behaviors indicative of high-risk drug usage (Khairi et al., 2017).

According to Long et al., (2014), individuals falling within the highest income bracket displayed a significantly positive association with daily heroin/cocaine injection, and daily crack smoking when compared to those in the lowest quartile of monthly income. Similarly, a study conducted in Iran revealed that individuals with a diploma or higher academic education level exhibited a noteworthy protective effect against cocaine consumption in comparison to those with lower educational achievements (Mehrabi et al., 2016).

In a research endeavor encompassing five states of India, it was observed that individuals with higher income levels and residing in urban settings were significantly linked to current alcohol consumption (Kumar et al., 2018). Furthermore, a heightened level of income was positively correlated with high-risk drinking behaviors among middle-aged Korean men (Choi et al., 2019; Murakami & Hashimoto, 2019). Robert Lourdes et al. (2022) also indicated that a lower income level acts as a protective factor against alcohol consumption in contrast to a higher income bracket.

In a separate investigation by Mutalip et al. (2014) focusing on alcohol consumption and patterns of risky drinking in Malaysia, beer emerged as the most favored alcoholic beverage at 59.7%, followed by wine at 16.9%, shandy at 13.3%, and brandy at 10.1%. Both males and females exhibited a similar preference for beer over other alcoholic drinks. The majority of individuals engaged in risky drinking practices preferred beer at 64.3%, followed by brandy at 15.6%, wine at 13.0%, with Shandy being the least favored beverage at 7.1%. More than half of current drinkers reported consuming alcohol once a month or less (62%), with a low frequency of consuming alcohol at least four or more times a week (5.5%). Notably, the study results highlighted an increase in current drinking patterns among individuals with higher educational accomplishments and income levels, while risky drinking tendencies were prevalent among those with lower educational attainments and household incomes.

Theoretical Framework Uses and gratification theory

The theory of uses and gratifications is widely applied concerning the utilization of social media and the satisfaction derived from their use. When research addresses the sharing of information using media (both social and traditional), it is common for both types of media to be involved simultaneously, rather than information being shared solely through one specific medium (Wok &

Mohamed, 2017). Various studies have been conducted on information sharing, involving both traditional and current media, by researchers such as Lim (2016), Zain et al., (2015), and Wok, Tamam, Bolong, & Ahmad (2011). Additionally, Ahmed (2014) delved into political issues in Malaysia through the lens of information seeking.

Research on uses and gratifications of the Internet has identified different facets of gratifications derived from Internet usage. For example, Stafford, Stafford et al., (2004) have identified three primary aspects related to consumer Internet use, namely process gratification (e.g., search engines, browsing, technology interaction), content gratification (e.g., information, knowledge, education, entertainment), and social gratification (e.g., interaction, socializing). Content gratification pertains to the information conveyed by the medium, while process gratification focuses on the actual use of the medium itself.

Theory plan behavior

The theory of planned behavior posits that intention is a key predictor of behavior, representing an individual's readiness to perform a specific action and serving as a direct precursor to behavior. This intention is influenced by three main factors: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

The theory suggests that attitudes specifically related to the behavior in question are crucial for predicting that behavior. In addition to assessing attitudes, it is essential to consider individuals' subjective norms – their beliefs regarding how important others view the behavior. Moreover, perceived behavioral control plays a role in shaping intentions, reflecting individuals' confidence in their ability to carry out the behavior. These factors collectively influence intention, with a stronger intention expected when attitudes and subjective norms are favorable, and perceived control is high (Ajzen, 1991).

Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the mediating role of attitudes towards the Internet in the context of Internet usage purposes and alcohol and drug consumption. Additionally, the study sought to examine the associations between Internet usage purposes and drug/alcohol consumption, considering the moderating effects of religion, gender, income, and educational level.

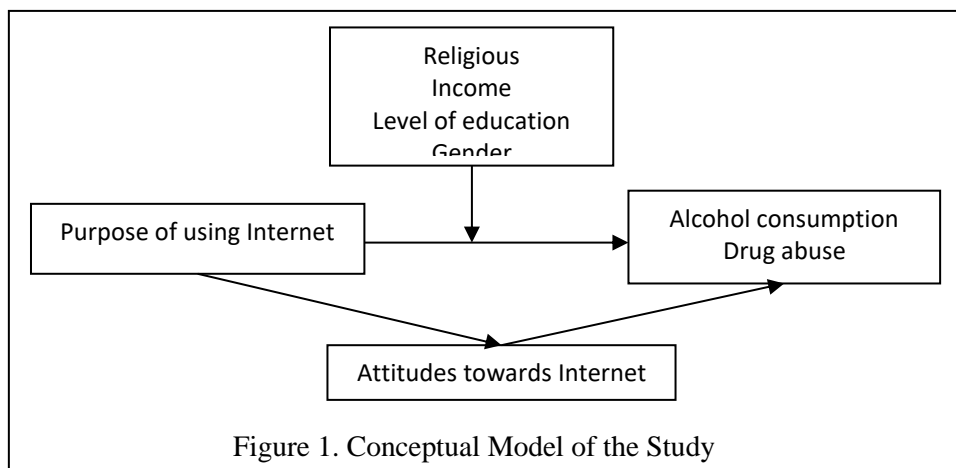


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The data collection for the research was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires among students enrolled at UPM. Utilizing stratified sampling, a form of probability sampling, the researchers followed the formula developed by Israel, $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ (1992) which calculates the sample size (n) based on the population (N) and the desired level of precision (e) (when confidence level is 95% or 0.05). The total student population considered included 13,726 undergraduates and 7,444 postgraduates; $n = \frac{13726+7444}{1 + N(0.05)^2}$. The initial result yielded a sample size of 392; however, data was gathered from 440 students across 16 faculties at the University Putra Malaysia (UPM).

The selection of sample sizes from each faculty was based on the respective population, with an example being the Faculty of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Science which had 490 undergraduates and 257 postgraduates. Consequently, 10 undergraduates and 5 postgraduates were chosen from this faculty, resulting in a total of 15 questionnaires being completed; $n = \frac{\text{Undergraduate Population}}{\text{Total Population}} * 440$. $n = \frac{490}{21170} * 440 = 10$. This research forms a component of a broader investigation that examines the impact of Internet usage on the positive and negative development of young individuals in university settings. The sample pool encompassed both male and female students, with females comprising 67.7% and males 32.3% of the participants.

Participants

Male and female students enrolled at UPM were involved in the current investigation, falling within the age bracket of 18 to 40 and representing three main ethnic groups - Malay, Chinese, and Indian - pursuing Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD degrees. The chosen age range of 18 to 40 aligns with the Malaysian classification of youth as individuals aged between 15 and 40 years (Yunus, 2007). Surveys were specifically distributed to students under the age of 40 who had utilized the Internet, while those above this age were excluded from the analytical procedures.

Measurement

Undergraduate and postgraduate students were invited to partake in the abbreviated version of the Alcohol and Drug usage survey, focusing on topics like Internet usage purposes, attitudes towards the Internet, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse. Inquiry into the demographics of the respondents encompassed factors such as income, religion, and educational attainment.

The investigation encompassed a compilation of measures for both independent and dependent variables, comprising a total of 69 items. The section concerning the purpose of Internet usage entailed 23 items, with respondents selecting from five response options ranging from 1= "Not at all" to 5= "Very Frequent". The resulting scores ranged from 23 to 115, and these constructs were treated as interval measurements.

Attitudes towards the Internet were evaluated through 19 items, utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Participants were prompted to express their opinions regarding Internet usage, with responses ranging from 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 5= "Strongly Agree" for each statement. Scores for this domain varied from 19 to 95, with higher scores indicating positive attitudes towards the Internet. This scale was operationalized as an interval measurement, encompassing both positive and negative attitudes towards the Internet, such as notions of "endless freedom on the Internet", "the fastest way to get knowledge" and concerns about "creating addiction".

Alcohol consumption patterns were assessed using 11 items derived from the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) created by the World Health Organization. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from the option "never" to "4 or more times a week". Additionally, one nominal scale inquired about the primary source of alcohol-related information, offering choices like TV, Internet, friends, and parents. Scores for this aspect ranged from 11 to 55, with higher scores indicating alcohol addiction.

Drug consumption habits were evaluated through 17 items sourced from Johnston, O'malley, Bachman, and Schulenberg (2010), using a Likert scale with response choices like "never" to "4 or more times a week". The resulting scores which ranged from 17 to 85 signaled potential drug addictions. Participants were asked about their usage of various drugs, including substances like "Cigarette", "Heroin", and "Opium". An ordinal item also inquired about the primary source of drug-related information, utilizing a nominal scale with options like TV, Internet, friends, and parents.

In addition, to assess the instrument's validity and reliability, questionnaires were administered to 30 students in a preliminary examination of drug and alcohol utilization. The findings of the pre-test and test revealed that the instrument's reliability surpassed 0.7, as indicated in Table 1. Furthermore, a normality test was conducted on all data before analysis, affirming that the dataset exhibited normal distribution. Despite a minor amount of missing data, these gaps were imputed with the mean.

Table 1.
Measurement Model Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading (>0.5)	Composite reliability (>0.7)	Average Variance Extract (AVE) (>0.5)	Cronbach's alpha
Purpose	Information	0.71	0.87	0.73	0.85
	Services	0.81			
	Entertainment	1.02			
Attitude	Attitude1	0.75	0.89	0.52	0.89
	Attitude2	0.82			
	Attitude3	0.65			
	Attitude4	0.69			
	Attitude5	0.68			
	Attitude6	0.81			
	Attitude7	0.76			
	Attitude10	0.66			
Alcohol Usage	Alcohol 4	0.82	0.95	0.65	0.91
	Alcohol 5	0.84			
	Alcohol 6	0.83			
	Alcohol 7	0.78			
	Alcohol 8	0.78			
Drug Usage	Drug 6	0.86	0.96	0.83	0.90
	Drug 8	0.86			
	Drug 9	0.91			

Drug 14	0.94
Drug 15	0.99

The study's convergent validity is upheld based on the outcomes delineated in Table 1, where the AVE values and factor loadings met the stipulated criteria. The study's reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), yielding a value of 0.70, deemed acceptable (Henseler et al., 2009). Hence, both alpha and composite reliability adhered to the requisite standards, thereby corroborating the instruments' reliability. Additionally, a discriminant validity assessment was conducted to validate the model, utilizing the Fornell-Larcker and cross-loading principles. These principles dictate that if the square roots of AVE exceed the inter-variable correlations, discriminant validity is established. Thus, the conditions for discriminant validity are satisfied. Regarding factor loading, a threshold of 0.6 was set, leading to the removal of factors below this value from the model (Table 2).

Table 2.
Discriminant validity for all variables

	1	2	3	4
Alcohol usage	0.80			
Purpose of using Internet	-0.043	0.85		
Attitudes towards Internet	-0.018	0.251	0.72	
Drug usage	0.372	0.063	-0.080	0.91

1: Alcohol usage, 2: Purpose of using Internet, 3: Attitudes towards Internet, 4: Drug usage

RESEARCH FINDING

Findings from the current investigation indicated that most of the participants were Muslims, comprising 69%, followed by Buddhists at 19.1%, and Christians and Hindus at 7.5% and 3.9%, respectively. The majority of individuals were enrolled as undergraduates, accounting for 79.3%, while 20.7% were pursuing postgraduate studies. Income brackets in this particular examination ranged from below 1000 RM to exceeding 5000 RM. These were segmented as follows: below 1000 RM (equivalent to 234 USD), 1000 to 2000 RM (234-468 USD), 2000 to 3000 RM (468-703 USD), 3000 to 4000 RM (703-937 USD), 4000 to 50000 RM (937-1172 USD), and up to 5000 RM (up to 1172 USD). The income group with the highest representation among respondents was the bracket of 2100 to 3000 Malaysian Ringgit (RM) per month, followed by the monthly income range of 1000 to 2000 RM.

Attitudes towards Internet and alcohol usage

The prevailing sentiment regarding Internet usage was “Internet is the fastest way to research knowledge” (M= 4.47, SD=0.77), closely trailed by the perception of the Internet as a universal library (M= 4.41, SD= 0.81). Moreover, noteworthy opinions conveyed included the notions that the Internet serves as a platform for facilitating educational endeavors, engenders excitement through the dissemination of information, and confers boundless autonomy to individuals. Conversely, the assertion that the Internet induces solitude garnered the lowest mean score (M= 3.01, SD= 1.09), with a marginally higher mean attributed to the concept that the Internet is detrimental to societal cohesion (M= 3.05, SD= 0.97).

Given the preponderance of affirmative sentiments towards Internet utilization as evidenced by the elevated mean scores, it can be inferred that respondents exhibit a favorable disposition towards the transformative influence of the Internet on societal dynamics. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of students demonstrated a positive orientation within the realm of attitudes. The conclusions drawn from this study align with prior research findings indicating a prevalent optimistic outlook among students regarding Internet utilization Akbaba (2001), Becker and Maunsaiyat (2002b), Joiner et al., (2007), Luan et al., (2008), Chou et al., (2010), Ünlü (2017), Warschauer (2014) and Safdar et al., (2010).

Purposes of Internet usage

In terms of the objectives underpinning Internet usage among respondents, the activity of "Checking my Facebook" garnered the highest mean score (M=4.50, SD=0.87), succeeded by the pursuit of "Finding information relevant to research" (M=4.22, SD=0.82), whereas engagement in "E-commerce (Shopping)" registered the lowest mean score (M=2.36, SD=1.20). Notably, these findings mirror the outcomes of earlier studies conducted by Asemi (2005a), Chou et al., (2010), José-Marie and Donald (2008), Lau and Sim (2008).

Correspondingly, akin to previous research by Pew (2002), electronic mail emerged as the predominant mode of interpersonal communication, closely followed by the utilization of social networking platforms. Additionally, these results corroborate the observations of Wellman and Haythornthwaite (2002), who identified moderate correlations across various Internet usage categories, suggesting that students inclined towards a specific Internet activity tend to engage in multifaceted online pursuits, thereby underscoring the integral role of Internet utilization in the quotidian lives of college students. Furthermore, these

findings are consistent with the investigation conducted by Fernandez and Kuss (2019).

Alcohol Usage

Regarding alcohol consumption among the participants, the study found that the highest mean was associated to “viewing depictions of alcohol consumption in films on the Internet” (M=1.23, SD=0.60), while the lowest mean was linked to “being unable to recall events from the previous night due to alcohol consumption” (M=1.03, SD=0.25). A large majority (84%) of the participants reported abstaining from alcohol consumption. Furthermore, a significant portion (91.6%) of the respondents stated that they had not caused harm to others as a result of drinking. When seeking information about alcohol, half of the participants relied on television, followed by 46.4% who used the Internet. These findings diverge from previous research conducted by Waterman-Reilly (2010), Benton, Schmidt, Newton, Shin, Benton, and Newton (2004), and Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, and Lee (2002), which highlighted the prevalence of alcohol consumption among college students.

Drug usage

As for drug usage among the respondents, the study revealed that the highest mean was associated with “using Pain Reliever” (M=1.03, SD=0.31), followed by “smoking cigarettes” (M=1.20, SD=0.81). Conversely, the least prevalent drug use was related to “using Heroin” (M=1.03, SD=0.31). These results contrast with those of a study by Gooch (2012), which identified heroin as the most commonly used drug. Moreover, a significant proportion (79.3%) of the participants reported not visiting drug-related websites. This could be attributed to the educational and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants, as individuals with lower levels of education and income are more susceptible to smoking, as noted by Widome et al. (2015).

Measurement model

Following the methodology outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step approach to structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed in this study. Initially, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model, followed by SEM to explore the relationships between the variables. The analyses were carried out using AMOS version 24.

The measurement model for the variables in the current study was assessed, revealing a good fit (CMIN/DF=654.367, df=183, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA=0.077, CFI= 0.93, GFI= 0.85, IFI= 0.920). Although the purposes of Internet usage were initially categorized into 5 dimensions, some factors had low factor loadings (below 0.50) and one exceeded 1, leading to the removal of

two sub-dimensions. Additionally, a number of items were eliminated from the analysis, including 12 items related to drug usage, 6 items on alcohol consumption, and 11 items concerning attitudes towards Internet usage.

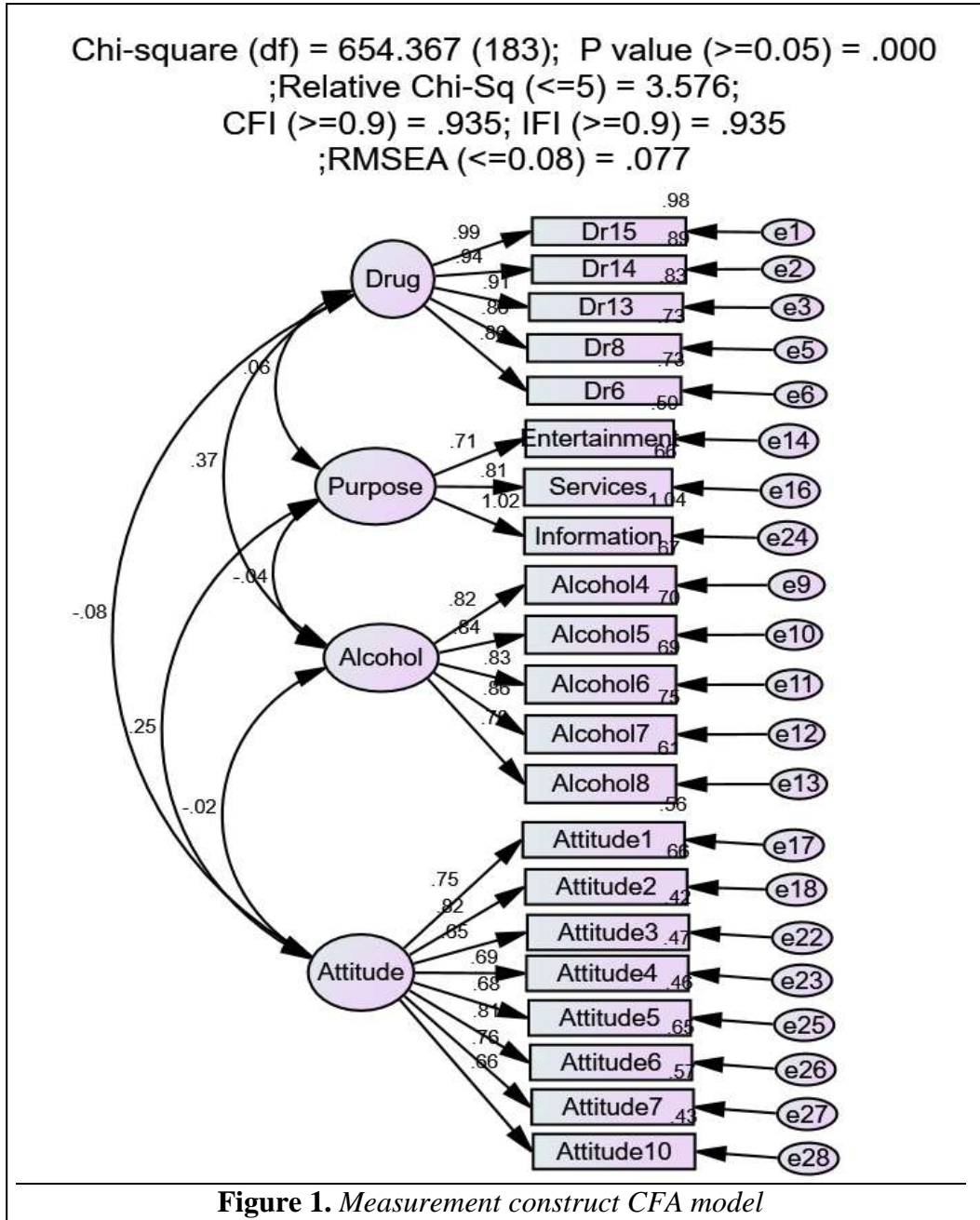


Figure 1. Measurement construct CFA model

Structural model

This study incorporated Internet usage purposes, encompassing three sub-categories: entertainment, information, and services, alongside individuals' attitudes towards the Internet, drug consumption, and alcohol usage. The purpose of Internet use demonstrated a significant effect on drug consumption ($\beta=0.052$, $p<0.05$) with a predictive accuracy of 5%, while attitudes towards the Internet exhibited a notable impact on drug consumption ($\beta=-0.062$, $p<0.05$). Conversely, the association between the purpose of Internet use and alcohol consumption did not yield statistical significance ($\beta=-0.011$, $p>0.05$). Furthermore, attitudes towards the Internet did not exert a statistically significant influence on alcohol consumption ($\beta=-0.002$, $p>0.05$). Importantly, the correlation between drug consumption and alcohol usage was found to be significant and positive ($\beta=0.71$, $p<0.05$) with a predictive accuracy of 71%.

RQ1: Mediation test of attitudes

The model incorporated the utilization of the Internet's purpose as an exogenous factor, while attitudes toward the Internet and drug and alcohol consumption served as endogenous factors. A three-step approach is employed to establish that a mediator (attitudes toward the Internet) mediates the connection between the exogenous factor (Internet usage purpose) and the endogenous factors (drug and alcohol consumption). Initially, it is essential to prove that the exogenous factor (Internet usage purpose) significantly correlates with the mediator (attitudes toward the Internet). Subsequently, the exogenous factor (Internet usage purpose and attitudes toward the Internet) must demonstrate a significant relationship with the endogenous factors (drug and alcohol consumption). Finally, the mediator, attitudes toward the Internet, should exhibit a significant association with the endogenous factors (drug and alcohol consumption). If the link between the exogenous factor and the endogenous factors becomes null upon inclusion of the mediator, partial mediation is established. Conversely, if the relationship between the exogenous factor (Internet usage purpose) and the endogenous factors (drug and alcohol consumption) diminishes with the inclusion of the mediator, partial mediation is confirmed.

As the Chi-square value of the full mediation model is lower than that of the direct and indirect models, the statistics for the full mediation model (CMIN/DF= 654.367, df =183, $p <0.05$, RMSEA=0.077, CFI = 0.935, GFI = 0.877, IFI = 0.935) and the indirect model (CMIN/DF= 680.969, df =185, $p <0.05$, RMSEA=0.078, CFI = 0.932, GFI = 0.873, IFI = 0.932) support the acceptance of partial mediation. Attitudes toward the Internet serve as a mediator between Internet usage purpose and drug and alcohol consumption. The impact of attitudes toward Internet-on-Internet usage purpose is ($\beta=0.20$, $p<0.05$) with a 20% prediction rate. Additionally, the relationships between

attitudes toward the Internet and drug usage are statistically significant and negative, predicting a 6% effect. The significant positive impact of alcohol consumption on drug usage is at 71%. Consequently, attitudes toward the Internet mediate between Internet usage purpose and drug usage.

Table 3.
Standard Regression Weights

Items		Mediation model	Direct model	Indirect model
Attitude ---->	Purpose	.210***		.203***
Purpose ---->	Drug usage	.053	.052	
Attitude ---->	Drug usage	-0.097 (0.063) *		-.062
Purpose ---->	Alcohol usage	-.018	-.011	
Attitude ---->	Alcohol usage	.025		-.002
Alcohol ---->	Drug usage	.71***	.71***	.71***

P<0.05

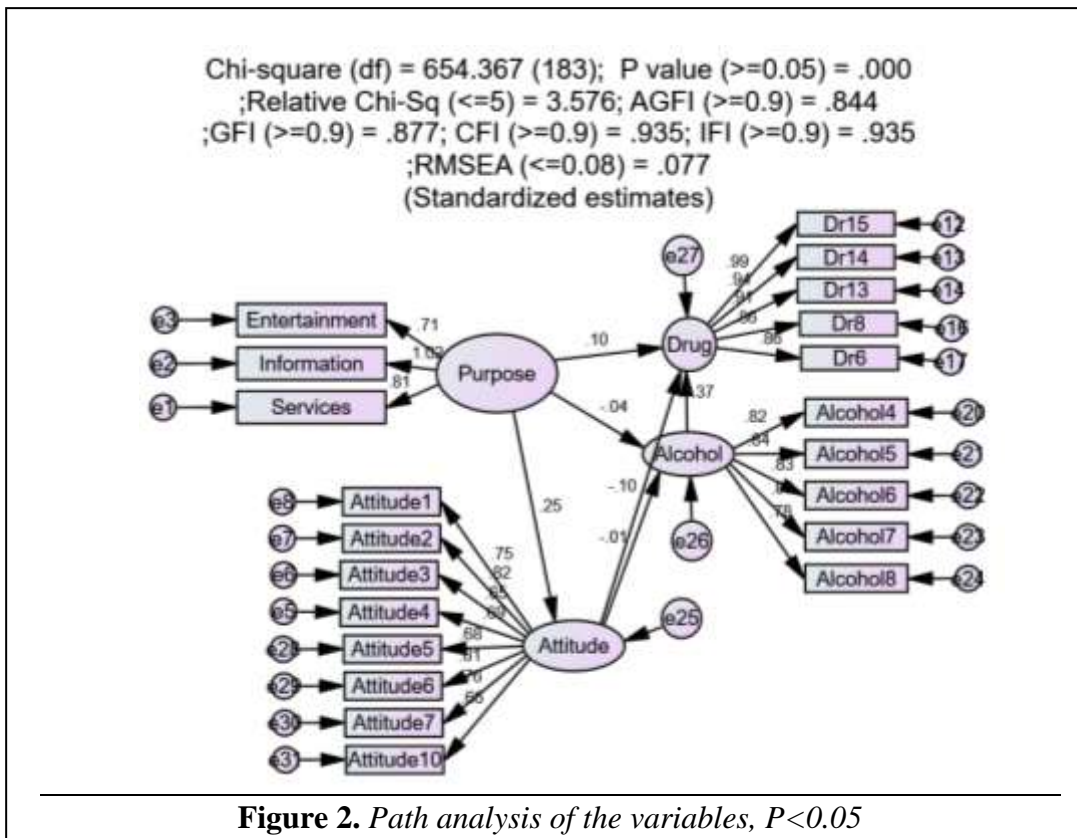


Figure 2. Path analysis of the variables, P<0.05

RQ2: Moderator effects of income

A comparison between the unconstrained model and the measurement residuals model revealed that the unconstrained residual model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1329.670$, $df=366$, $p < 0.05$, $RMSEA=0.078$, $CFI = .884$, $GFI = .729$, $IFI = .885$) and the measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 167.306$, $df=383$, $p < 0.05$, $RMSEA=0.088$, $CFI=.845$, $GFI= .761$, $IFI= .846$) exhibited statistical significance. Thus, the unconstrained model outperformed the measurement model, indicating disparities between low-income and high-income individuals regarding Internet usage, alcohol consumption, and drug consumption.

The findings indicated a significant association between the purpose of Internet use and drug consumption in the low-income group ($\beta=0.105$, $p<0.05$) with a predictive power of 10%; however, this relationship was not significant in the high-income group. The impact of attitudes towards Internet use and drug consumption did not show significance in either group. Drug utilization had an 18% impact on alcohol consumption in the low-income group, whereas this impact was 82% in the high-income group. Moreover, the correlation between the purpose of Internet use and attitudes towards the Internet was statistically significant for both groups, accounting for 11% among the low-income and 10% among the high-income groups. These results align with the findings of Widome et al. (2015) and Hosseinpoor et al., (2011), who observed that individuals with low income are more susceptible to smoking.

RQ2: Moderator effects of Religious

A comparison of "the unconstrained model" with "the measurement residuals model" revealed that the unconstrained residual model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1572.995$, $df =366$, $p < 0.05$, $RMSEA=0.087$, $CFI = .871$, $GFI = .792$, $IFI = .872$) and the measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1663.720$, $df=383$, $p < 0.05$, $RMSEA=0.087$, $CFI=.863$, $GFI= .781$, $IFI= .864$) exhibited significance. Consequently, the unconstrained model outperformed the measurement model, indicating discrepancies between Muslim and non-Muslim individuals in their utilization of the Internet, alcohol, and drugs.

The results indicated a significant correlation between the purpose of Internet usage and attitudes towards Internet usage within the Muslim group ($\beta=0.09$, $p<0.05$) with a predictive power of 9%; however, this impact was ($\beta=0.144$, $p<0.05$) with a predictive power of 14% for the non-Muslim group. The influence of drug and alcohol consumption within the Muslim group accounted for 2%, whereas it was 12% for the non-Muslim group. Moreover, the findings revealed a lack of significant association between the purpose and attitudes towards Internet usage among undergraduate and post-graduate groups.

Correlation between IVs and DVs between male and female

Based on the data presented in Table 4, it is evident that there exists a statistically significant correlation between alcohol and drug usage for individuals of both genders. Moreover, a notable relationship is observed between attitudes towards the Internet and the purpose of Internet use among males and females. However, no significant association is found between attitudes and the purpose of Internet use, and drug and alcohol consumption. This outcome aligns with the findings of Abd Rashid et al (2019), who identified a significant correlation between smoking habits and gender.

Table 4.

Pearson Correlation between IVs and DVs between male and female (n=440)

Variables	1	2	3	4
Drug Usage	1			
Attitudes towards Internet	-0.042 (0.083)	1		
Purpose of using Internet	0.075 (0.069)	0.240** (0.244)**	1	
Alcohol Usage	0.221** ** (0.520)	0.050 (0.65)	0.008 (0.004)	1
Mean	16.88 (15.83)	70.83 (71.93)	78.57 (81.50)	9.35 (8.50)
SD	5.08 (5.07)	9.69 (7.98)	12.90 (11.95)	2.92 (1.65)
Actual range	15-75 (15-71)	19-95 (19-95)	23-115 (23-115)	10-50 (8-30)

Results for males are presented first and for females are presented second.

**p<0.01,

1) Drug Usage 2) Attitudes towards Internet 3) Purpose of using Internet 4) Alcohol Usage

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research endeavor was to explore the potential relationship between Internet usage patterns concerning alcohol and drug consumption, with a focus on the mediating effects of attitudes towards the Internet, as well as the moderating influences of religion, gender, income, and educational attainment among young Malaysians.

Utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study outcomes demonstrate that both the purpose and attitudes towards Internet usage have a discernible impact on drug consumption. These results are consistent with those of Brewer's investigation in 2003, which highlighted a connection between

Internet use and drug consumption (Brewer, 2003). This may be attributed to the portrayal of smoking in movies and its normalization as a social behavior. Existing literature from the United Kingdom suggests that the depiction of drug use has transitioned into a normalized process due to its frequent portrayal (Parker et al., 2002). For instance, the prevalence of drug use and related discourses has increasingly become an accepted part of youth culture (p: 947). Furthermore, many adolescents view drinking and smoking as typical activities, despite being aware of the associated risks (Bachman et al., 2001). It is widely perceived that substance use, including alcohol consumption and smoking, is considered 'cool' and fashionable. In this context, the Internet and broadcasting media are acknowledged as primary sources of information regarding substance use, influencing the perspectives of young individuals (Gutierrez et al., 2014; Hoek et al., 2013).

The impact of Internet usage purposes and attitudes on alcohol consumption did not yield statistically significant results. This finding contradicts the conclusions drawn by Smith and Foxcroft (2009) and Anderson et al., (2009), who reported that exposure to alcohol-related content influences the beliefs and attitudes of young individuals towards drinking. Moreover, studies by Babor et al., 2010 (2010) and Griffin et al., (2009) suggest that alcohol advertising plays a role in promoting drinking among the youth. This inconsistency may be attributed to the predominantly Muslim background of the respondents, as alcohol consumption is prohibited in Islam.

The substantial impact of alcohol and drug consumption is estimated to be at 71%, aligning with the findings of Robert Lourdes et al., (2022), Verplaetse et al., (2017), Khairi et al., (2017) and Wang et al., (2020), indicating that current smokers are more likely to be current drinkers.

Attitudes towards the Internet are identified as a mediating factor in the relationship between Internet usage purposes and drug/alcohol consumption, accounting for 20% of the variance. Consequently, attitudes towards the Internet play a mediating role in the purpose of Internet use and subsequent drug and alcohol consumption.

The findings revealed a lack of significant association between the purpose of and attitudes towards Internet usage, as well as drug and alcohol consumption, among post-graduate and undergraduate cohorts. This outcome mirrors the conclusions drawn by Abd Rashid et al. (2019) and Singh et al., (2020), which suggested that educational level did not show a significant correlation with smoking behavior. Conversely, studies by Widome et al. (2015), Khairi et al., (2017), Mehrabi et al., (2016) and Chow et al., (2024)

indicated that individuals with lower educational attainment were more prone to smoking. Mutalip et al. (2014) and the Institute for Public Health (1999) observed that individuals with higher educational achievements and income displayed specific drinking patterns, while risky drinking behaviors were more prevalent among those with lower education and income levels.

Moreover, there were notable mean differences in alcohol and drug consumption between low and high-income groups. This finding aligns with the findings of Widome et al., (2015) and Hosseinpoor et al., (2011), suggesting that lower income levels increased vulnerability to smoking. Another study by Mutalip et al. (2014), Kumar et al., (2018), Choi et al., (2019) and Murakami and Hashimoto (2019) established an association between alcohol consumption and income. However, Khairi et al., (2017) and Long et al., (2014) found no significant relationship between income and drug usage.

Significant mean differences were also observed between religion and alcohol as well as drug consumption. The results of the current research are consistent with Hatta's (2010), Chow et al., (2024) and Lim et al. (2013) findings, emphasizing the influential role of religiosity in substance abuse. More religious people, particularly Muslim students, tend to exhibit lower or no alcohol and drug consumption due to religious prohibitions in Islam, thereby reducing the impact of media on substance use. Conversely, studies by Amat et al., (2020), Abd Rashid et al. (2019) and Khairi et al., (2017) reported a negative correlation between religiosity and drug use. Additionally, research by Stauner et al., (2019) Yockey et al., (2020), McAuslan et al., (2020) and Rivera et al., (2018) indicated that alcohol-related issues were less prevalent among individuals with stronger religious beliefs.

Furthermore, the results highlighted gender differences in drug and alcohol consumption. This finding is consistent with Abd Rashid et al. (2019), who noted a higher prevalence of male smokers. However, Mutalip et al. (2014) found that both males and females displayed similar preferences for beer over other alcoholic beverages.

CONCLUSION

Generally, it has been observed that the utilization of the Internet is linked to drug abuse but not connected with alcohol consumption. However, researchers need to delve into the specific forms of Internet usage rather than just focusing on the amount of time spent online. Gordon, Juang, and Syed (2007) have also contended that it is crucial to consider the motivations behind individuals' Internet usage in order to comprehend these connections. The majority of students aim to seek information on the Internet; however, the search for information is contingent upon the individual and the nature of the information sought.

According to the uses and gratification theory, individuals engage with media to fulfill various needs such as process gratification, content gratification, and social gratification, ultimately leading to satisfaction. Consequently, individuals exhibit a greater propensity to utilize media. Furthermore, drawing on the planned behavioral theory, it is posited that intention is the primary predictor of behavior, emphasizing that specific attitudes toward the behavior in question are essential for predicting said behavior. Thus, our examination of attitudes toward the Internet indicated that these attitudes influence substance use.

Implication and Future Research

For future investigations, we recommend employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of this subject matter. Additionally, given that a significant portion of the respondents are Muslims, who are typically prohibited from consuming alcohol and tobacco, it is plausible that this prohibition influenced the respondents' behavior. It may be beneficial to focus research efforts on non-Muslim cohorts to evaluate the influence of religion on alcohol and substance use.

Moreover, preventive measures should be implemented within educational institutions, including schools and universities, through workshops and expert-led discussions highlighting the drawbacks of alcohol consumption and substance abuse. There is a pressing need for enhanced education on overall health, alcohol, and drugs within university settings. This educational initiative should extend across all disciplines, as the lifestyle habits of university students may persist into their later years.

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DESTINASI SELEPAS PENJARA DAN FAKTOR PENGHIRAHAN: KAJIAN KE ATAS GELANDANGAN BEKAS BANDUAN DI JALAN CHOW KIT

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ABSTRAK

Jalan Chow Kit sering menjadi destinasi pilihan bekas banduan pasca pemenjaraan. Terdapat sekumpulan besar bekas banduan yang memilih untuk berhijrah dan bertumpu di Kuala Lumpur disebabkan oleh pelbagai faktor. Namun begitu, kekurangan kajian yang memberikan tumpuan kepada kelompok ini dari sudut faktor pemilihan lokasi tumpuan mereka menimbulkan persepsi negatif banyak pihak. Kajian ini memberikan tumpuan kepada mengenal pasti destinasi gelandangan selepas keluar penjara dan mengkaji faktor penghijrahan bekas banduan. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kaedah kuantitatif dengan menggunakan soal selidik untuk pengumpulan data ke atas 142 orang gelandangan bekas banduan di sekitar Jalan Chow Kit. Hasil dapatan kajian

menunjukkan bahawa sebanyak 46.48% gelandangan bekas banduan memilih destinasi ke Kuala Lumpur selepas keluar penjara. Faktor utama penghijrahan golongan ini adalah kerana ketiadaan tempat untuk dituju (24.65%) diikuti dengan faktor lokasi penjara mereka dibebaskan (15.49%), dan pengaruh rakan (10.56%). Dapatan kajian mempunyai beberapa implikasi terhadap dasar dan praktis dan juga keperluan intervensi terhadap golongan gelandangan yang disasarkan untuk menangani keperluan khusus gelandangan bekas banduan.

Kata kunci: destinasi selepas penjara, gelandangan, gelandangan bekas banduan, integrasi semula, risiko gelandangan.

ABSTRACT

Jalan Chow Kit often becomes the preferred destination for former prisoners post-incarceration. There is a large group of ex-convicts who choose to migrate and settle in Kuala Lumpur due to various reasons. However, the lack of studies focusing on this group from the perspective of their choice of resettlement location has led to negative perceptions among many parties. This study aims to identify homeless destinations after release from prison and examine the resettlement factors of former prisoners. The research employs a quantitative method design using a survey for data collection, targeting 142 homeless former prisoners around Jalan Chow Kit. The study findings indicate that 46.48% of the homeless individuals choose Kuala Lumpur as their destination after release from prison. The primary factors influencing this group's resettlement are the lack of a specific place to go (24.65%), followed by the location of their prison release (15.49%), and peer influence (10.56%). The study's findings have several implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address the specific needs of homeless former prisoners.

Keywords: destination post-prison, homelessness, former prisoner homelessness, reintegration, homelessness risk.

PENGENALAN

Gelandangan bekas banduan merupakan populasi rentan yang mengalami pelbagai cabaran selepas dibebaskan dari penjara. Mereka sering memilih untuk bertumpu secara beramai-ramai, terutamanya di kawasan bandar-bandar pesat. Di Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur telah menjadi tumpuan ramai golongan bekas banduan ini sebagai suatu strategi membina kehidupan mereka selepas

dibebaskan dari penjara. Penumpuan di kawasan ibu kota didorong oleh pelbagai faktor termasuk peluang pekerjaan, lokasi penjara yang berdekatan, keberadaan rakan-rakan senasib dari penjara dan isu penolakan keluarga. Penumpuan bekas banduan secara beramai-ramai di kawasan kejiranan memberi cabaran perundangan, dan berpotensi merosakkan budaya di sesuatu kawasan yang menerima kemasukan kumpulan ini (Kirk, 2016). Realiti yang berlaku apabila penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan di kawasan kejiranan yang sama boleh membawa kepada kadar residivisme yang lebih tinggi. Keadaan ini menunjukkan keperluan penyelesaian dasar untuk mengelakkan penumpuan geografi mereka bagi mengurangkan residivisme (Kirk, 2015). Kirk (2009) pernah mengatakan proses memilih untuk bergerak keluar dari kawasan geografi asal dengan ketara boleh mengurangkan kemungkinan pemenjaraan semula untuk bekas banduan. Di Australia, bekas banduan yang menghadapi risiko gelandangan, kemiskinan, dan kekurangan sokongan, dan ketidakstabilan tempat tinggal boleh menjadi peramal kepada perkembalian semula ke penjara (Baldry et al., 2006). Masalah gelandangan dan sistem keadilan jenayah sering bertindih di Amerika Syarikat, dengan faktor risiko dan keperluan untuk perumahan yang mampu dimiliki untuk mengurangkan pertindihan dan meningkatkan keselamatan awam (Remster, 2019). Bekas banduan sering berjuang untuk menghadapi keadilan jenayah dan birokrasi kebajikan, yang membawa kepada kemiskinan dan ketidakpercayaan, dan sering dipenjarakan semula (Halushka, 2020). Kesukaran hidup sepanjang dibebaskan menyebabkan mereka terpaksa memilih hidup sebagai gelandangan di jalanan.

Begitu juga dengan beberapa kajian tempatan telah melaporkan tentang faktor penghijrahan dan penumpuan dalam kalangan bekas banduan ini di sekitar Jalan Chow Kit. Antaranya seperti faktor penolak dan penarik (Jasni et al., 2018), faktor peribadi (Jasni et al., 2021) yang mendorong gelandangan bekas banduan untuk berhijrah dari tempat tinggal asal ke Kuala Lumpur. Jasni et al. (2018) mendakwa bahawa diskriminasi masyarakat dan penyisihan keluarga sebagai faktor penolak manakala peluang pekerjaan dan sokongan rakan sebaya sebagai faktor penarik. Sementara itu, Jasni et al. (2021) lagi sekali telah menambah bahawa faktor peribadi seperti pilihan diri, peluang pekerjaan, kehadiran rakan, akses kepada makanan, dan kemudahan yang pelbagai sebagai faktor tambahan. Kajian yang paling terkini oleh Jasni et al. (2023a) yang membincangkan aspek penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan dari perspektif pegawai profesional dan sukarelawan. Kajian beliau telah menggunakan sekumpulan pegawai dari agensi kerajaan Malaysia seperti Pegawai Yayasan Kebajikan Negara (YKN), Pegawai Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia (JKM), Pegawai Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), Pegawai Jabatan Penjara Malaysia, Pegawai Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan (AADK), dan Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) untuk mengumpul

maklumat yang diperlukan. Menurut pegawai kerajaan dan sukarelawan, penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan boleh berlaku atas pelbagai faktor ekonomi, sosial dan peribadi, selain daripada infrastruktur dan perkhidmatan yang disediakan di sekitar bandar. Kajian Jasni et al. (2023b) yang lain pada tahun yang sama telah menggunakan kaedah kualitatif melibatkan seramai 30 orang gelandangan bekas banduan yang menekankan faktor penghijrahan dari sudut sosial, ekonomi, infrastruktur bandar, perkhidmatan dan faktor tawaran peribadi.

Proses memahami faktor penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan di suatu kawasan adalah sangat penting dalam membangunkan intervensi dan sistem sokongan yang bersesuaian untuk golongan terdedah ini. Kuala Lumpur sebagai sebuah wilayah persekutuan yang maju dengan landskap bandar yang kondusif serta aktiviti ekonomi yang pesat sering digambarkan memiliki kekuatan penawaran pelbagai jenis peluang kepada bekas banduan yang ingin memulakan kehidupan baharu. Malahan, mereka melihat bandar dengan saiz populasi yang padat berupaya memberi kelebihan untuk hidup dalam kesibukan bandar tanpa stigma yang sering mengiringi mereka yang memiliki rekod jenayah. Ekonomi bandar yang membangun dan dinamik disokong oleh pelbagai industri memberi makna kehidupan kepada mereka yang sanggup bekerja keras. Mereka melihat bandar ini dapat menawarkan peluang yang lebih besar kepada mereka. Malahan, ramai yang memilih bandar memandangkan dibebaskan dari penjara yang berdekatan dengan kawasan bandar.

Pemenjaraan meningkatkan kemungkinan seseorang bekas banduan untuk berakhir menjadi gelandangan, namun demikian proses tersebut tidak berlaku serta-merta sebaik dibebaskan. Seringkali tempoh kritikal untuk bekas banduan akan bermula 6 bulan selepas dibebaskan (Moschion & Johnson, 2019). Lelaki yang pernah dipenjarakan boleh menghadapi kesukaran mendapatkan tempat tinggal termasuk terpaksa memilih menjadi gelandangan, disebabkan oleh pendapatan tahunan yang menjadi semakin berkurangan dan potensi untuk mengalami pengusiran dari tempat tinggal (Geller & Curtis, 2011). Terdapat empat bentuk risiko gelandangan seperti umur, kaum, pergantungan dadah, dan rekod penjara yang boleh meramalkan sama ada bekas banduan ini boleh berakhir menjadi gelandangan atau tidak (Remster, 2021). Kadar ketidakamanan perumahan yang tinggi adalah lazim di kalangan bekas banduan, yang dikaitkan dengan faktor risiko seperti penyakit mental, penggunaan dadah, rekod penjara sebelum ini, dan risiko gelandangan (Herbert, Morenoff & Harding, 2015). Pemenjaraan ini boleh menyebabkan pengakhiran hidup sebagai gelandangan secara tidak langsung, dengan dua pertiga bekas banduan yang mengalami ketiadaan tempat tinggal apabila dibebaskan, dan dikaitkan dengan pengecualian sosial dan keadaan status perumahan yang tidak

menentu (Dyb, 2009). Para bekas banduan yang lebih berusia dengan memiliki masalah penyakit dan mental adalah berisiko tinggi untuk mengalami risiko gelandangan (Williams et al., 2010). Risiko untuk seseorang menjadi gelandangan adalah 7.5-11.3 kali lebih tinggi buat bekas banduan berbanding penduduk umum, dengan risiko pemenjaraan. (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008). Hal ini kerana rekod penjara boleh meningkatkan lagi risiko di antara satu sama lain, serta digabungkan pula dengan masalah penyakit mental, penyalahgunaan dadah, dan ciri-ciri sosiodemografi yang kronik (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008). Kajian yang lebih terkini iaitu Bashir et al., (2021) telah mengatakan ketiadaan tempat tinggal adalah 20 kali lebih lazim di kalangan individu yang dipenjarakan daripada penduduk umum, terutama yang mempunyai penyakit mental dan gangguan pembangunan neuro. Keadaan ini menunjukkan kecenderungan untuk golongan bekas banduan ini mengakhiri hidup sebagai gelandangan apabila setiap kali dibebaskan. Stigma terhadap rekod penjara menghalang akses individu yang dipenjarakan ke peluang mendapatkan perumahan (Keene, Smoyer, & Blankenship, 2018). Usaha dalam memastikan bekas banduan yang mempunyai masalah ketagihan dan mental mendapatkan rumah boleh mengurangkan risiko gelandangan dan kelakuan tingkah laku jenayah semula, namun apa yang berlaku apabila hampir setengah daripada bekas banduan ini akan mengalami kegagalan dan hanya berupaya untuk mendapatkan perumahan sementara sahaja (Hignite & Haff, 2017).

Bekas banduan yang dilengkapi dengan kemahiran sebelum, semasa dan selepas tempoh pemenjaraan melihat Kuala Lumpur sebagai tempat untuk memanfaatkan kemahiran ini demi memperoleh pendapatan yang stabil. Walau bagaimanapun, cabaran mencari pekerjaan yang sesuai sering berlaku disebabkan oleh sejarah dan rekod jenayah. Keadaan ini menjadikan pencarian pekerjaan menjadi terlalu sukar. Pelbagai stigma dari majikan timbul sebaik sahaja mengetahui rekod pemenjaraan yang dimiliki mereka. Selain itu, kehadiran rakan senasib di kawasan bandar menguatkan lagi keputusan untuk berpindah atau bertumpu ke sana. Hubungan dengan rakan-rakan yang telah melalui proses pemenjaraan yang sama menyediakan sistem sokongan yang penting apabila berada di suatu kawasan. Rangkaian ini menawarkan sokongan emosi, perkongsian sumber dan pelbagai bantuan lain untuk melalui kehidupan selepas penjara. Bagi kebanyakan gelandangan bekas banduan, sistem sokongan ini sangat penting dalam membantu mereka menghadapi pelbagai cabaran dalam proses peralihan kembali ke pangkuan masyarakat. Ketiadaan sokongan dari ahli keluarga menyebabkan rata-rata gelandangan bekas banduan akan memilih rakan senasib sebagai pengganti dalam mendapatkan kasih sayang.

Di samping itu, penolakan keluarga juga adalah suatu cabaran yang sangat menyedihkan dalam kalangan gelandangan bekas banduan. Ramai bekas

banduan berasa dipulaukan oleh keluarga selepas dibebaskan dari penjara. Faktor penolakan sangat signifikan kepada penghijrahan ke pusat bandar untuk mencari penerimaan yang positif dalam kalangan mereka yang mempunyai ciri yang sama. Keterasingan keluarga ini memburukkan lagi cabaran menyebabkan mereka tiada pilihan selain mencari perlindungan dan permulaan kehidupan baharu di kawasan bandar. Di sebalik tempat yang boleh menawarkan pelbagai peluang, kehidupan di jalanan Kuala Lumpur merupakan pilihan terbaik walaupun penuh dengan risiko. Kehidupan bergelandangan mendedahkan bekas banduan kepada pelbagai kesukaran termasuk kekurangan akses kepada keperluan asas, pendedahan kepada pengulangan jenayah dan risiko kesihatan yang kronik. Perjuangan untuk mencari tempat tinggal yang selamat adalah perjuangan hidup yang perlu dihadapi setiap hari memandangkan wujudnya pilihan sama ada tinggal di tempat perlindungan sementara yang sesak dengan pelbagai peraturan yang ditetapkan atau terpaksa tidur bergelandangan di ruang awam secara bebas. Begitu juga dengan akses kepada kemudahan makanan dan kebersihan yang amat terhad mengakibatkan kesan fizikal dan psikologi. Stigma orang awam apabila melibatkan gelandangan bekas banduan merupakan cabaran tambahan yang mengakibatkan diskriminasi dalam proses pencarian pekerjaan dan mengakses perkhidmatan-perkhidmatan kerajaan yang ditawarkan. Amalan prejudis dalam masyarakat ini terus meminggirkan dan mengekalkan kitaran kemiskinan malah meningkatkan risiko kekal dalam populasi gelandangan. Akhirnya, penolakan masyarakat yang berpanjangan boleh membawa kepada isu kesihatan mental termasuk kemurungan dan kebimbangan. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti kehidupan gelandangan bekas banduan di Kuala Lumpur dan mengetahui sebab di sebalik penumpuan mereka di kawasan bandar. Dapatan interaksi faktor penumpuan seperti keselesaan bandar, peluang pekerjaan, hubungan dengan rakan dalam kumpulan, dan penolakan keluarga membolehkan kajian memberi penjelasan tentang pengalaman pelbagai aspek yang dihadapi oleh penduduk rentan ini. Maka, kajian ini hadir dengan penyertaan sampel yang lebih meluas melalui pendekatan kuantitatif bagi menguji dapatan kajian sedia ada tentang penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit. Tiga objektif kajian yang lebih spesifik adalah seperti berikut:

1. Menenalpasti jenis destinasi yang dominan dituju oleh bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara.
2. Menenalpasti faktor penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara.
3. Menenalpasti tempoh bergelandangan bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara.

KAJIAN LITERATUR

Memahami migrasi dalaman

Migrasi dalaman atau turut dikenali sebagai migrasi domestik merujuk kepada pergerakan orang di negara yang sama, dari satu rantau, bandar, atau tempat ke tempat yang lain (Katuli, 2017). Jenis migrasi ini boleh menjadi sukarela atau dipengaruhi oleh pelbagai faktor termasuk peluang ekonomi, kualiti hidup, keadaan sosial dan persekitaran, dan keadaan peribadi. Tidak seperti migrasi antarabangsa, migrasi dalaman tidak melibatkan pergerakan merentasi sempadan negara, tetapi ia masih boleh mempunyai kesan yang signifikan kepada demografi, ekonomi, dan struktur sosial kawasan yang terlibat. Secara umumnya, migrasi dalaman boleh berlaku dalam empat bentuk seperti berikut (Speak, 2010):

- i. Luar bandar ke bandar: didorong oleh pencarian peluang pekerjaan, pendidikan, penjagaan kesihatan dan taraf hidup yang lebih baik (Chelshi, 2023; Keopasith & Neng, 2020). Jenis migrasi ini biasa berlaku di negara-negara membangun yang menjadikan pusat-pusat bandar sebagai hab aktiviti ekonomi dan pemodenan (Liao & Yip, 2018). Migrasi sebegini boleh disebabkan oleh kemajuan pembangunan yang wujud di dalam bandar (Rashid et al., 2016).
- ii. Bandar ke luar bandar: disebut sebagai melawan proses urbanisasi yang berlaku apabila individu atau keluarga bergerak dari kawasan bandar ke luar bandar demi mencari suasana hidup yang lebih tenang, kos sara hidup yang lebih rendah, atau hubungan yang lebih dekat dengan alam semula jadi.
- iii. Bandar ke bandar melibatkan pergerakan antara bandar-bandar yang dipengaruhi oleh penempatan semula pekerjaan, keupayaan dalam pemilikan perumahan, keutamaan gaya hidup dan peluang pendidikan.
- iv. Luar bandar ke luar bandar: merupakan bentuk migrasi paling jarang berlaku. Namun demikian, bentuk migrasi ini boleh berlaku disebabkan oleh peluang pertanian, faktor keluarga, atau peralihan ekonomi tempatan.

Selain itu, terdapat faktor yang berkaitan dengan bencana alam, perubahan iklim dan kemerosotan alam sekitar mempengaruhi penghijrahan yang dinyatakan. Begitu juga dengan dasar kerajaan, ketersediaan perumahan dan perkhidmatan awam juga boleh mendorong penghijrahan secara dalaman ini. Kawasan yang mempunyai dasar sokongan dan perkhidmatan awam yang lebih baik mungkin menarik lebih ramai orang untuk memilih migrasi dalaman. Migrasi boleh membawa kepada pertumbuhan ekonomi di kawasan penerima

melalui peningkatan bekalan buruh dan permintaan pengguna. Penghijrahan boleh membawa kepada anjakan demografi, pertukaran budaya dan cabaran integrasi sosial. Ia boleh meningkatkan kepelbagaian sambil mewujudkan ketegangan jika kesepaduan tidak diurus dengan baik. Peningkatan migrasi luar bandar ke bandar menyumbang kepada pembandaran, membawa kepada pengembangan bandar, perubahan dalam penggunaan tanah dan permintaan yang lebih tinggi untuk infrastruktur dan perkhidmatan bandar. Perancangan yang tidak mencukupi boleh mengakibatkan kesesakan dan pertumbuhan penempatan tidak formal di kawasan penerima penghijrahan. Fenomena migrasi boleh menjadi antara faktor penyumbang kepada berlakunya kepadatan penduduk di dalam sesebuah kawasan bandar (Rashid et al., 2014; Rashid & Ghani, 2008, 2011, 2014; Rashid, 2010).

Speak (2010), mengatakan migran menghadapi risiko gelandangan yang berpanjangan di bandar disebabkan faktor-faktor seperti perumahan yang tidak mencukupi dan kekurangan perlindungan undang-undang. Di Mumbai, migrasi boleh menyebabkan masalah gelandangan ialah apabila orang berhijrah dari kawasan luar bandar, bekerja dalam pekerjaan yang rendah dan hidup dalam keadaan tidak selamat (Dutta, Lhungdim, & Prashad, 2016). Penghijrahan luar bandar ke bandar sering didorong oleh peluang pekerjaan yang lebih baik, prospek kerjaya, upah yang lebih tinggi dan menyumbang kepada pertumbuhan ekonomi dan pengagihan pendapatan di negara-negara membangun (Liao & Yip, 2018). Penghijrahan luar bandar ke bandar boleh meningkatkan status ekonomi penduduk luar bandar di negara-negara membangun, terutamanya melalui kiriman wang dan dasar kerajaan yang menggalakkan pembangunan pekerjaan dan industri di kawasan luar bandar (Keopasith & Neng, 2020). Penghijrahan luar bandar ke bandar adalah fenomena yang kompleks dengan kos sosial mewujudkan peluang ekonomi yang dekat dengan kediaman (Maddela, 2017). Penghijrahan luar bandar ke bandar secara global membawa kepada cabaran seperti eksploitasi, pemerdagangan, dan kerosakan alam sekitar yang mempengaruhi produktiviti dan urbanisasi pertanian (Chelshi, 2023). Penghijrahan dalaman adalah proses demografi yang dinamik dan responsif terhadap keadaan sosial dan ekonomi yang mempengaruhi pengagihan taburan penduduk di seluruh ruang (White & Lindstrom, 2019). Seseorang lebih cenderung untuk berhijrah ke kawasan geografi yang lebih besar dan berhijrah lebih kerap dalam pencarian kerja mereka (Caliendo et al., 2019).

Kehidupan gelandangan bekas banduan di luar penjara

Integrasi semula bekas banduan ke dalam masyarakat adalah satu proses yang kompleks dan mencabar dengan potensi implikasi yang ketara. Apabila bekas banduan dibebaskan dari penjara, mereka sering menghadapi pelbagai halangan untuk berintegrasi semula, termasuk mencari perumahan tetap, mendapatkan pekerjaan, mengakses perkhidmatan penjagaan kesihatan dan sosial dan membina semula hubungan dengan ahli keluarga dan komuniti. Salah satu cabaran paling mendesak yang dihadapi oleh bekas banduan ialah akses kepada sistem kediaman yang selesa. Cabaran integrasi semula bagi bekas banduan termasuk prospek pekerjaan yang terhad, kekurangan sokongan keluarga, kesukaran mendapatkan tempat tinggal, keadaan fizikal/mental yang tidak stabil dan pergantungan dadah (Tharshini et al., 2018). Mereka tidak mempunyai tempat untuk dituju sebaik dibebaskan. Sedangkan, keluarga adalah faktor penentu dalam membantu bekas banduan untuk berintegrasi semula ke dalam masyarakat, dengan sejarah jenayah memainkan peranan penting dalam penolakan keluarga (Vedvin, 2023). Ramai bekas banduan yang bebas dari penjara tidak mempunyai tempat tinggal kerana kehilangan tempat tinggal semasa dipenjarakan atau dinafikan hak untuk kembali semula ke kediaman asal lantas menyebabkan masalah gelandangan, yang seterusnya boleh meningkatkan kemungkinan pengulangan aktiviti jenayah. Gelandangan bekas banduan sering menghadapi cabaran tambahan seperti kesukaran mengakses perkhidmatan dan sokongan, peningkatan pendedahan kepada jenayah dan keganasan, dan stigma serta diskriminasi masyarakat.

Proses mengintegrasikan semula bekas banduan ke dalam komuniti yang mempunyai akses kepada perkhidmatan adalah penting untuk mengurangkan residivisme. Tetapi pada masa sama, komunikasi antara komuniti dan perkhidmatan koreksional adalah penting untuk kejayaan integrasi semula (Khwela, 2014). Bekas banduan bergelut untuk mengemudi keadilan jenayah dan birokrasi kebajikan, yang membawa kepada kemiskinan dan ketidakpercayaan, dan sering dipenjarakan semula akhirnya (Halushka, 2020). Di Australia, bekas banduan menghadapi isu menjadi gelandangan kronik, kemiskinan, dan kekurangan sokongan, dan ketidakstabilan penginapan. Kesemua ini boleh meramalkan situasi perkembalian ke dalam penjara semula (Baldry et al., 2006). Ramai penghuni penjara yang mempunyai pengalaman menjadi gelandangan sebelum ini, ditambah dengan menghadapi pelbagai penyakit mental, penyalahgunaan dadah, dan keadaan ciri sosio-demografi yang destruktif (Greenberg & Rosengeck, 2008). Malah sebelum dipenjarakan, ramai bekas banduan mungkin telah menghadapi masalah ketiadaan sistem kediaman (tempat tinggal) menyebabkan mereka terpaksa tinggal di tempat perlindungan atau tinggal di perumahan yang tidak mencapai piawaian.

Ketiadaan akses kepada sistem kediaman ini boleh berterusan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara memburukkan lagi cabaran untuk mencari tempat tinggal. Selain itu, bekas banduan sering menghadapi cabaran untuk menyewa atau memiliki rumah kerana kewujudan rekod jenayah menyebabkan gelandangan bekas banduan mempunyai pilihan terhad untuk memilih kediaman. Di samping itu, gelandangan bekas banduan sering menghadapi cabaran dalam mengakses perkhidmatan sokongan seperti penjagaan kesihatan, perkhidmatan kesihatan mental dan rawatan penyalahgunaan dadah. Tanpa sistem perumahan kekal, ternyata sukar bagi mereka untuk menyempurnakan perkhidmatan. Stigma dan diskriminasi masyarakat menyukarkan lagi usaha pencarian tempat tinggal. Kitaran gelandangan dan residivisme amat membimbangkan kerana ia boleh mengekalkan kitaran tingkah laku jenayah dan pemenjaraan. Tanpa perumahan dan sokongan yang berterusan, gelandangan bekas banduan mungkin bergelut untuk berintegrasi semula ke dalam masyarakat, membawa kepada kemungkinan yang lebih tinggi untuk melakukan kesalahan semula dan kembali ke penjara. Keadaan ini bukan sahaja memberi kesan negatif kepada individu yang terlibat tetapi juga kepada masyarakat secara keseluruhan kerana ia boleh membawa kepada peningkatan kadar jenayah, tekanan kepada sistem keadilan jenayah dan kos sosial dan ekonomi yang lebih tinggi.

Begitu juga di England dan Wales, apabila masalah menjadi gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan merupakan isu penting, yang menyumbang kepada perlakuan jenayah semula. Keadaan ini membuktikan keperluan bekas banduan kepada pakej sokongan yang komprehensif untuk mencegah jenayah semula (Jones, 2012). Di Jerman pula, individu gelandangan mempunyai prevalensi penyakit psikiatri dan somatik yang lebih tinggi, kegagalan dalam mendapatkan perumahan (Bertram et al., 2022). Di Malaysia pula, Program pemulihan penjara, seperti Program Pembangunan Insan (PPI), boleh membantu mengurangkan masalah gelandangan, namun demikian keperluan kepada program pra-pelepasan yang lebih berstruktur untuk menyediakan bekas banduan dengan lebih baik untuk menjalani kehidupan selepas penjara (Rosli, Anuar & Hamzah, 2021). Malahan, wanita yang pernah dipenjarakan turut menghadapi halangan dan fasilitator semasa integrasi semula, menonjolkan keperluan untuk intervensi yang sensitif jantina untuk mengurangkan masalah berakhir hidup sebagai gelandangan dan pemenjaraan semula (Salem et al., 2021). Gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan yang dibebaskan baru-baru ini dikaitkan dengan tingkah laku institusi yang ganas dan keperluan kriminogenik sebelum pemenjaraan dikaitkan dengan sokongan masyarakat yang lebih besar (Parhar & Wormith, 2013). Begitu juga, veteran yang dipenjarakan dengan sejarah gelandangan mempunyai lebih banyak

masalah kesihatan mental dan penyalahgunaan dadah (Tsai et al., 2014). Wanita yang tiada tempat tinggal sebelum dipenjarakan lebih berkemungkinan mengalami pencabulan kanak-kanak, serangan seksual dewasa, penangkapan kerana pelacuran, dan penyalahgunaan dadah (Asberg & Renk, 2015). Malahan, umur yang lebih tua, mempunyai pasangan, dan kehilangan tempat tinggal yang kronik dikaitkan pada orang dewasa yang tiada tempat tinggal dengan sejarah pemenjaraan (Nyamathi et al., 2012).

Teori migrasi

Teori migrasi yang diilhamkan oleh Skeldon (2012) menyediakan rangka kerja yang komprehensif untuk memahami corak dan proses migrasi. Pendekatan Skeldon terhadap teori migrasi menekankan kesalinghubungan pelbagai bentuk migrasi dan pengaruh faktor global, serantau dan tempatan. Skeldon menekankan kesan globalisasi terhadap corak migrasi. Beliau berhujah bahawa peningkatan kesalinghubungan ekonomi dunia, kemajuan dalam teknologi komunikasi dan pengangkutan dan penyebaran budaya global dengan ketara mempengaruhi keputusan dan trend migrasi. Jurang ekonomi global dan permintaan tenaga kerja di pelbagai bahagian berlainan di dunia mendorong aliran migrasi. Migran berpindah dari negara atau wilayah yang miskin ke negara atau wilayah yang lebih kaya untuk mencari peluang ekonomi yang lebih baik dan meningkatkan taraf hidup. Skeldon (2012) melihat migrasi sebagai proses yang kompleks, mempunyai pelbagai dimensi yang melibatkan pelbagai jenis pergerakan termasuk migrasi dalaman dan antarabangsa. Skeldon (2012) mencadangkan bahawa migrasi harus difahami bukan sahaja dari segi keputusan individu tetapi juga sebagai proses sosial yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor keluarga, komuniti, dan rangkaian masyarakat. Salah satu elemen teras teori Skeldon ialah pengiktirafan hubungan antara migrasi dalaman dan antarabangsa. Beliau berpendapat bahawa migrasi dalaman selalunya mendahului migrasi antarabangsa. Sebagai contoh, individu mungkin terlebih dahulu berhijrah dari luar bandar ke kawasan bandar dalam negara mereka sendiri sebelum berpindah ke luar negara. Hubungan ini menunjukkan bahawa corak migrasi dalam sesebuah negara menjadi faktor penentu untuk migrasi yang lebih berimpak merentasi negara, dengan kawasan bandar bertindak sebagai permulaan untuk pergerakan selanjutnya.

Penghijrahan menurut Skeldon (2012) menjadi hasil dan penyumbang kepada pembangunan negara. Penghijrahan juga boleh membawa kepada pemindahan kemahiran, pengetahuan dan inovasi yang boleh memberi kesan pembangunan yang positif. Rangkaian migrasi termasuk hubungan kekeluargaan, hubungan komuniti dan rangkaian etnik memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk aliran migrasi. Rangkaian ini menyediakan sokongan, maklumat dan sumber yang memudahkan penghijrahan. Skeldon

berhujah bahawa memahami rangkaian ini adalah penting untuk pemahaman lengkap tentang dinamika migrasi. Menurut teori migrasi Skeldon (2012), migrasi dalaman dalam sesebuah negara menekankan beberapa aspek utama yang membantu memahami corak dan proses migrasi dalaman. Skeldon (2012) mengakui hubungan kuat antara pembandaran dan migrasi dalaman. Beliau mencadangkan bahawa migrasi luar bandar ke bandar sebagai satu bentuk migrasi dalaman yang biasa didorong oleh pencarian peluang ekonomi yang lebih baik, taraf hidup yang lebih baik, dan akses kepada perkhidmatan dan kemudahan yang tersedia di kawasan bandar. Orang ramai sering berpindah dari kawasan kurang maju atau kurang bernasib baik dari segi ekonomi kepada kawasan yang lebih maju atau makmur pencarian peluang yang lebih baik. Faktor ekonomi seperti ketersediaan pekerjaan, kadar gaji yang lumayan dan kos sara hidup bersesuaian adalah pemacu utama migrasi dalaman. Dalam kajian ini, pengkaji mengambil pemilihan gelandangan bekas banduan untuk bertumpu di sekitar Jalan Chow Kit menggunakan Teori Migrasi yang diperkenalkan oleh Skeldon ini. Gelandangan bekas banduan yang berhijrah dari pelbagai kawasan sama ada dari penjara ke Jalan Chow Kit, dari luar bandar ke Jalan Chow Kit atau bandar ke Jalan Chow Kit. Pengkaji ingin mengetahui faktor yang menyebabkan gelandangan bekas banduan memilih untuk berhijrah dan bertumpu secara beramai-ramai di Jalan Chow Kit ini.

METODOLOGI KAJIAN

Reka Bentuk kajian

Kajian ini memilih pendekatan reka bentuk kuantitatif untuk menilai faktor penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit. Untuk mendapatkan data kajian, satu set soal selidik telah digunakan. Setiap soalan dalam soal selidik dianalisis secara statistik untuk menjawab objektif kajian. Penyelidikan kuantitatif membolehkan pengukuran pembolehubah seperti bilangan gelandangan, ciri-ciri demografi gelandangan, tempoh masa bergelandangan, dan sebab memilih lokasi yang dinyatakan. Malahan pemilihan penyelidikan secara kuantitatif seperti kaji selidik, ia dapat memastikan konsistensi dalam pengumpulan data. Konsistensi ini membantu dalam mengurangkan bias pengkaji dan meningkatkan kebolehpercayaan data. Dengan mengumpul data daripada sampel gelandangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit, dapatan umum yang terpakai kepada populasi yang lebih luas dalam kalangan individu gelandangan di kawasan bandar mampu dilaksanakan.

Populasi, sampel dan teknik persampelan

Kajian ini memfokuskan kepada gelandangan bekas banduan yang tertumpu di Jalan Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur sebagai populasi. Berdasarkan maklumat daripada Pertubuhan Kebajikan Ar-Riqab, Kuala Lumpur, populasi gelandangan ini adalah dalam lingkungan 200 orang. Jumlah sebenar bagi populasi kajian adalah tidak menentu bergantung kepada pergerakan dan mobiliti gelandangan bekas banduan di sekitar kawasan ini. Daripada jumlah sedia ada ini, seramai 142 orang sampel dipilih sebagai responden kajian dengan menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan.

Instrumen kajian: Soal selidik berstruktur

Bagi mendapatkan maklumat untuk pengumpulan data, soal selidik telah dibina oleh pasukan pengkaji berpandukan kepada kajian literatur sedia ada. Sebanyak tujuh soalan yang dibina dengan memberikan tumpuan kepada maklumat demografi responden, faktor pemilihan destinasi, faktor berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur, faktor berada di lokasi gelandangan, jenis tempat tinggal, sumber pembiayaan tempat tinggal, dan tempoh gelandangan.

Teknik pengumpulan data

Pengumpulan data telah dijalankan dengan mengedarkan soal selidik secara bersemuka kepada responden kajian. Seramai lapan orang enumerator telah terlibat dalam proses pengumpulan data kajian ini. Pengkaji bersama enumerator yang dilantik mengedarkan soal selidik kepada responden di Pertubuhan Kebajikan Ar-Riqab, Kuala Lumpur.

Etika kajian

Kajian ini mematuhi prinsip etika untuk memastikan kesejahteraan dan hak para responden. Mereka terlebih dahulu dimaklumkan sepenuhnya tentang tujuan kajian, prosedur yang terlibat dan hak mereka sebagai responden. Malahan, pengkaji juga turut mendapatkan persetujuan bertulis daripada responden sebelum pengumpulan data bermula. Kajian ini turut melindungi kerahsiaan maklumat responden dengan tidak mendedahkan maklumat latar belakang secara individu. Pengkaji turut memastikan bahawa data disimpan dengan selamat dan hanya boleh diakses oleh ahli-ahli yang terlibat. Selain itu, penyertaan dalam kajian adalah sukarela dan responden boleh menarik diri daripada kajian pada bila-bila masa tanpa sebarang kesan. Pengkaji turut menghormati privasi responden dengan menjalankan kajian dalam persekitaran yang tertutup dan dirahsiakan. Pelaksanaan kajian juga mementingkan unsur-unsur keadilan tanpa berat sebelah atau diskriminasi memandangkan status mereka yang rentan ini.

Teknik Analisis

Soalan kajian bertumpu kepada elemen dan ciri-ciri demografi mereka. Dengan itu, kajian ini telah menggunakan analisis deskriptif seperti kekerapan dan peratusan. Dalam kajian ini, analisis kekerapan dan peratusan dapat memberi gambaran tentang elemen-elemen yang paling tinggi atau dominan bergantung kepada peratusan dan kekerapan tertinggi sesuatu item tersebut.

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Latar belakang demografi

Perbincangan latar belakang demografi dipecahkan kepada tujuh bahagian iaitu maklumat demografi responden, faktor pemilihan destinasi, faktor berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur, faktor berada di lokasi gelandangan, jenis tempat tinggal, sumber pembiayaan tempat tinggal, dan tempoh gelandangan.

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Jadual 1: *Latar belakang demografi*

Aspek	Keterangan	Kekerapan	Peratus (%)
Umur (tahun)	21-30	1	0.71
	31-40	31	21.83
	41-50	66	46.48
	51-60	27	19.01
	60 ke atas	17	11.97
Jantina	Lelaki	124	87.3
	Perempuan	18	12.7
Bangsa	Melayu	124	87.32
	Cina	6	4.23
	India	9	6.34
	Lain – Lain	3	2.11
Pendidikan	Tiada Pendidikan	9	6.34
	Sekolah Rendah	17	11.97
	Sekolah Menengah	113	79.58
	Universiti / Kolej	3	2.11

Pekerjaan	Tidak Bekerja	108	76.06
	Berniaga /bekerja	18	12.68
	sendiri	1	0.70
	Pekerja Kerajaan	15	10.56
Gaji (RM)	Pekerja Swasta		
	Tiada Pendapatan	102	71.83
	1-500	10	7.04
	501-1000	12	8.45
	1001-1500	11	7.75
	1501-2000	6	4.23
	2001 ke atas	1	0.70
Bantuan yang diterima (Responden boleh memilih lebih daripada satu pilihan)	Tidak menerima Bantuan	81	57.04
	Baitulmal	28	19.72
	Skim Tunai Rahmah (STR)	18	12.68
	Bilik	1	0.70
	Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM)	3	2.11
	Bulanan	1	0.70
	Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (MAIWP)	3	2.11

Destinasi utama dan Faktor penghijrahan bekas banduan

Terdapat pelbagai elemen atau tempat yang dikaji bagi mengenal pasti penghijrahan dan destinasi yang dituju oleh bekas banduan selepas keluar daripada penjara. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian, destinasi utama yang dituju oleh gelandangan bekas banduan apabila keluar daripada penjara adalah dengan penghijrahan mereka ke Kuala Lumpur iaitu seramai 66 orang (46.48%). Selain itu, destinasi kedua tertinggi adalah dengan memilih untuk pulang ke rumah keluarga seramai 36 orang (25.4%), rumah kawan iaitu seramai 17 orang (11.97%) dan lain-lain destinasi seramai 13 orang (9.15%) sebagai destinasi selepas keluar penjara. Selebihnya, paling kurang destinasi yang dituju selepas keluar penjara adalah ke rumah adik-beradik iaitu seramai 4 orang (2.82%) manakala terdapat 6 orang responden (4.23%) yang memilih untuk menuju ke rumah pasangan sebagai destinasi selepas keluar daripada penjara.

Bagi elemen faktor penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan ini ke Kuala Lumpur, terdapat beberapa elemen telah dikaji. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa faktor utama yang mendorong penghijrahan bekas banduan menjadi gelandangan di Kuala Lumpur adalah disebabkan oleh tiada tempat dituju iaitu seramai 35 orang (24.65%) responden. Faktor kedua tertinggi adalah kerana dibebaskan dari penjara yang berdekatan dengan Kuala Lumpur (15.49%), ajakan rakan (15%) dan disebabkan oleh tidak diterima oleh keluarga (14.08%). Selain itu, antara faktor lain penghijrahan golongan bekas banduan ke Kuala Lumpur adalah disebabkan oleh diri sendiri yang tidak mahu kembali ke pangkuan keluarga (10.56%) dan ingin mencari pekerjaan di Kuala Lumpur (7.75%) dan lain-lain.

Selain itu, antara faktor utama dan tertinggi bekas banduan ini menjadi gelandangan adalah disebabkan oleh faktor pengangguran dengan jumlah seramai 69 orang responden (20.91). Faktor kedua tertinggi adalah disebabkan oleh tiada tempat tinggi setelah keluar daripada penjara atau pusat pemulihan (18.48%) dan diikuti dengan faktor tidak mampu untuk menyewa rumah (17.88%). Seramai 51 orang responden juga memilih untuk berada di lokasi gelandangan kerana tiada keluarga yang boleh menanggung dan bergantung harapan. Terdapat responden yang menjadi gelandangan disebabkan oleh kemiskinan (13.03%), dibuang keluarga (8.79%), dan atas lain-lain faktor (5.45%).

Cabaran yang dihadapi gelandangan bekas banduan dijangka lebih buruk, terutamanya apabila mempertimbangkan faktor seperti penolakan keluarga, pengangguran, kemiskinan, ketidakupayaan untuk menyewa rumah, dan kekurangan sokongan selepas pembebasan. Pengangguran yang merupakan isu berleluasa dalam kalangan gelandangan termasuk bekas banduan merupakan halangan utama untuk mendapatkan akses kepada kepemilikan rumah. Kesukaran mendapatkan pekerjaan kerana rekod jenayah lampau atau kemahiran pekerjaan yang terhad dan stigma masyarakat ternyata memburukkan situasi. Walaupun peluang pekerjaan tidak formal tersedia di Jalan Chow Kit, gelandangan bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal bergelut untuk menstabilkan kehidupan, mengekalkan kitaran kemiskinan dan hidup bergelandangan sementara waktu. Kemiskinan memburukkan lagi cabaran yang dihadapi oleh bekas banduan iaitu sebanyak 13.03 % orang responden yang tiada tempat tinggal dan menghadkan akses kepada keperluan asas seperti makanan, pakaian, dan penjagaan kesihatan. Kemiskinan juga menyumbang kepada hilangnya kemampuan memiliki tempat tinggal akibat daripada ketidakstabilan kewangan dan penafian akses kepada rumah mampu milik.

Kekurangan sokongan orang di sekeliling selepas pembebasan juga boleh menyumbang kepada perasaan putus asa, pengasingan, dan residivisme dalam kalangan bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal. Ini terbukti apabila dapatan menunjukkan 41.5% responden tidak mempunyai tempat tinggal dan selebihnya 58.5% berjaya mencari tempat untuk berlindung. Kebanyakan mereka (25.85%) menyewa bilik dengan kadar sewa bulanan. Terdapat sebilangan kecil responden (4.08%) menyewa secara harian. Selebihnya, golongan gelandangan bekas banduan ini akan memilih Rumah Transit Gelandangan (10.88%) dan menumpang di bilik rakan atau keluarga sebagai alternatif tempat tinggal.

Dari segi sumber pembiayaan tempat tinggal pula, seramai 27 orang responden (35.06%) dibiayai tempat tinggal dengan bantuan kerajaan. Ada juga yang menggunakan wang mereka sendiri (31.17%) sebagai sumber pembiayaan tempat tinggal. Manakala sebahagian kecil (2.6%) tempat tinggal mereka dibiayai oleh saudara mara. Hasil daripada tinjauan kajian, kebanyakan responden hidup sebagai gelandangan dalam tempoh 4-5 tahun (55.84%) diikuti oleh 1-3 tahun (26.06%). Tidak kurang juga hanya 25.35% responden yang melibatkan diri hidup sebagai gelandangan kurang dari 1 tahun. Sedikit mengejutkan apabila 13.38% daripada mereka telah hidup sebagai gelandangan melebihi 10 tahun. Ini memberi gambaran bahawa kehidupan gelandangan bekas banduan boleh menjadi kronik di jalanan sekiranya tiada usaha serius dan berterusan diambil.

Fenomena gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan merupakan isu yang kompleks dengan implikasi sosial dan kesihatan awam yang ketara. Selepas dibebaskan daripada pemenjaraan, individu sering menghadapi pelbagai cabaran dalam pengintegrasian semula ke dalam masyarakat, termasuk mendapatkan perumahan yang kekal, pekerjaan tetap dan rangkaian sokongan sosial. Cabaran ini mungkin menjadi lebih teruk bagi mereka yang berhijrah ke pusat bandar seperti Kuala Lumpur kerana kewujudan tumpuan pelbagai peluang walaupun berdepan dengan situasi tegang. Bekas banduan berhijrah ke bandar untuk mencari pekerjaan, menyertai aktiviti yang menjana pendapatan atau mendapatkan akses kepada program kebajikan sosial untuk menyokong usaha pengintegrasian semula. Jadual 2 meringkaskan maklumat berkaitan faktor penghijrahan, maklumat destinasi penghijrahan, gelandangan dan tempat tinggal.

Jadual 2: *Faktor berhijrah, maklumat gelandangan dan tempat tinggal*

Domain	Item	Kekerapan (n=142)	Peratusan (%)
Destinasi selepas penjara	Rumah keluarga	36	25.35
	Rumah Pasangan	6	4.23
	Rumah Adik Beradik	4	2.82
	Rumah Kawan	17	11.97
	Berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur	66	46.48
	Lain - lain	13	9.15
Faktor berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur	Tiada tempat dituju	35	24.65
	Dibebaskan dari penjara berdekatan	22	15.49
	Keluarga tidak menerima	20	14.08
	Tidak mahu kembali ke keluarga	15	10.56
	Ajakan kawan	15	10.56
	Ada kenalan di Kuala Lumpur	13	9.15
	Cari peluang pekerjaan	11	7.75
	Ingin bebas	5	3.52
	Mencari peluang baru	3	2.11
	Lain - lain	3	2.11
Faktor berada di lokasi gelandangan (responden boleh memilih lebih daripada satu pilihan)	Tiada keluarga yang menanggung	51	15.45
	Dibuang keluarga	29	8.79
	Kemiskinan	43	13.03
	Tidak mampu menyewa	59	17.88
	Pengangguran	69	20.91
	Tiada tempat tinggal setelah keluar pusat pemulihan	61	18.48
	Lain - lain	18	5.45

Jenis tempat tinggal	Tidak mempunyai tempat tinggal	61	41.50
	Bilik sewa harian	6	4.08
	Bilik sewa bulanan	38	25.85
	Rumah Transit Gelandangan	16	10.88
	Menumpang bilik rakan atau keluarga	21	14.79
Sumber pembiayaan tempat tinggal (bagi yang mempunyai tempat tinggal)	Wang sendiri	24	31.17
	Bantuan kerajaan	27	35.06
	Bantuan badan bukan kerajaan	6	7.79
	Bantuan keluarga	8	10.39
	Bantuan saudara mara	2	2.60
	Bantuan kawan	10	12.99
Tempoh Gelandangan	Kurang 1 tahun	36	25.35
	1 – 3 tahun	37	26.06
	4 – 5 tahun	43	30.28
	6 – 9 tahun	7	4.93
	10 tahun ke atas	19	13.38

PERBINCANGAN KAJIAN

Perbincangan kajian ini dilakukan dengan terperinci mengikut objektif yang ingin dicapai seperti berikut:

Jenis destinasi yang dominan dituju oleh bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara

Kajian mengenai destinasi selepas pemenjaraan dan faktor penumpuan dalam kalangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit telah memberikan pandangan berharga tentang pengalaman hidup golongan rentan ini. Hasil kajian telah menunjukkan destinasi utama yang tertinggi dan dominan dituju oleh bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan daripada penjara adalah berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur. Ini menunjukkan bahawa Kuala Lumpur merupakan destinasi yang diminati dan menjadi tempat untuk golongan bekas banduan memulakan hidup baru selepas keluar daripada penjara. Hasil kajian juga telah menunjukkan

majoriti gelandangan bekas banduan dikuasai oleh lelaki yang berpotensi besar menyambung hidup di Jalan Chow Kit dan ada di antara mereka sudah melebihi 10 tahun di kawasan ini. Mereka lebih menyendiri dan enggan diketahui umum disebabkan oleh pelbagai faktor seperti malu dan stigma masyarakat. Keputusan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa individu yang lebih tua lebih berkemungkinan menjadi gelandangan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara disebabkan oleh cabaran yang berkaitan dengan integrasi semula ke dalam masyarakat dan mencari perumahan dan peluang pekerjaan yang stabil. Majoriti responden ternyata memilih untuk berhijrah ke Jalan Chow Kit selepas dibebaskan dari penjara menyerlahkan peranan kawasan bandar sebagai destinasi bagi individu mencari peluang dan sokongan selepas dibebaskan dari tirai besi. Antara faktor penumpuan termasuklah tidak mempunyai tempat lain untuk dituju, dibebaskan dari penjara berdekatan, dan penolakan keluarga. Beberapa faktor gelandangan dalam kalangan responden juga dikenalpasti seperti pengangguran, ketiadaan tempat tinggal dan kekurangan sokongan keluarga (Baldry et al., 2006). Penemuan ini menggariskan sifat gelandangan yang kompleks dan saling berkaitan dipengaruhi oleh gabungan faktor ekonomi, sosial dan peribadi (Kirk, 2015).

Faktor penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara.

Oleh kerana destinasi utama banduan selepas keluar daripada penjara adalah ke Kuala Lumpur, ini menunjukkan bahawa Jalan Chow Kit merupakan kawasan bandar yang menjadi tumpuan kebanyakan individu untuk memulakan hidup baru. Hal ini kerana kawasan bandar biasanya mempunyai lebih banyak sumber dan perkhidmatan yang tersedia untuk menyokong individu tanpa tempat tinggal, seperti tempat perlindungan, bank makanan, kemudahan penjagaan kesihatan dan perkhidmatan sosial. Kajian ini selari dengan dapatan kajian sebelum ini yang memfokuskan kepada penghijrahan gelandangan bekas banduan ke kawasan bandar selepas dibebaskan dari penjara (Kirk, 2015). Selain itu, Rashid dan rakan-rakan (2016) ada mengatakan bahawa pembangunan bandar menjadi antara faktor pemilihan untuk bermigrasi ke kawasan bandar ini. Gelandangan bekas banduan sering tertarik ke kawasan bandar kerana akses kepada sumber ini. Kawasan bandar biasanya mempunyai lebih banyak tempat perlindungan gelandangan berbanding kawasan luar bandar. Tempat perlindungan menyediakan perumahan sementara untuk individu yang mengalami situasi gelandangan, menawarkan tempat tidur yang selamat, bantuan makan, dan kadangkala perkhidmatan sokongan lain seperti kaunseling dan latihan kerja. Kawasan bandar biasanya mempunyai tumpuan kemudahan penjagaan kesihatan yang lebih berkualiti, termasuk klinik dan hospital yang boleh menyediakan perkhidmatan perubatan kepada golongan ini. Akses kepada penjagaan kesihatan adalah penting untuk menangani kedua-dua

keperluan kesihatan fizikal dan mental pasca pemenjaraan. Kepelbagaian perkhidmatan dan pembangunan yang wujud boleh menjadi kepada antara sebab untuk berlaku pemindahan dari sesuatu kawasan ke kawasan bandar (Clemens, Ozden, Rapoport, 2014; De Haas, 2010).

Kawasan bandar mempunyai lebih banyak peluang pekerjaan berbanding kawasan luar bandar yang boleh menarik minat gelandangan bekas banduan yang ingin membina semula kehidupan mereka (Geller, & Curtis, 2011). Kawasan bandar mempunyai aktiviti ekonomi, industri dan perniagaan yang pelbagai. Kepelbagaian ini mewujudkan peluang untuk individu yang mempunyai set kemahiran dan latar belakang yang berbeza, termasuk mereka yang mempunyai rekod jenayah (Dyb, 2009). Kawasan bandar biasanya mempunyai tenaga kerja yang lebih padat berbanding kawasan luar bandar, yang boleh mewujudkan permintaan yang lebih besar untuk peluang pekerjaan. Kawasan bandar cenderung mempunyai populasi yang lebih besar dan lebih pelbagai yang boleh memberikan perasaan kurang dikenali dalam kalangan bekas banduan. Mereka juga mungkin mempunyai rangkaian sosial atau sistem sokongan sedia ada di kawasan bandar seperti rakan atau ahli keluarga, yang boleh memudahkan peralihan keluar dari penjara. Kawasan bandar cenderung mempunyai populasi yang lebih pelbagai dari segi kaum, etnik, dan latar belakang sosio-ekonomi. Kepelbagaian ini mewujudkan persekitaran yang lebih inklusif dan merangsang perasaan diterima masyarakat. Oleh itu, mereka cenderung berasa lebih difahami dan kurang terpercail apabila semua lapisan masyarakat hidup bersama tanpa prejudis.

Dalam komuniti yang lebih kecil, terdapat stigma yang menebal apabila dikaitkan dengan bekas banduan menyebabkan sesetengah individu berpindah ke kawasan bandar untuk melepaskan diri. Dalam komuniti yang lebih kecil, orang ramai lebih mengenali rapat antara satu sama lain sehingga memahami latar belakang dan sejarah masing-masing. Ini boleh membawa kepada penelitian dan penghakiman yang lebih teruk terhadap individu yang mempunyai rekod jenayah. Justeru, adalah lebih sukar bagi individu untuk mengekalkan identiti yang tidak mahu dikenali dan merahsiakannya daripada pengetahuan umum. Sesetengah bekas banduan mungkin lebih biasa dengan kawasan bandar, pernah tinggal di sana sebelum mereka dipenjarakan atau mempunyai sejarah perjalanan yang sangat kerap. Kebiasaan ini boleh menjadikan kawasan bandar lebih selesa dan menarik sebagai tempat untuk membangunkan semula kehidupan. Bagi bekas banduan yang pernah tinggal di kawasan bandar sebelum ini, kembali ke persekitaran yang diidamkan mungkin memberi rasa kebiasaan dan keselesaan. Bekas banduan yang pernah tinggal di kawasan bandar sebelum ini mempunyai rangkaian sosial atau sistem sokongan sedia ada. Hubungan seperti ini memberikan sumber sokongan dan bantuan

yang berharga apabila mereka pulang ke pangkuan masyarakat, menjadikan kawasan bandar lebih menarik sebagai tempat untuk membina semula kehidupan baharu.

Tempoh bergelandangan bekas banduan selepas dibebaskan dari penjara.

Dapatan kajian ini juga memberikan gambaran bahawa kebanyakan bekas banduan di kawasan Chow Kit ini telah menjadi gelandangan selama 4-5 tahun. Kajian menemui satu dapatan yang menarik kerana terdapat juga mereka yang sudah melebihi 10 tahun hidup sebagai gelandangan di Kuala Lumpur ini. Ini menunjukkan bahawa satu jangka masa yang lama dan semestinya terdapat elemen-elemen tertentu yang memberikan dorongan kepada golongan ini untuk kekal menjadi gelandangan sehingga 10 tahun di kawasan yang sama. Menganalisis kepadatan gelandangan bekas banduan di kawasan bandar menggunakan teori penghijrahan yang diperkenalkan oleh Skeldon (2012) melibatkan pemahaman bagaimana faktor penghijrahan dalaman, pembandaran, peluang ekonomi dan rangkaian sosial yang saling berkaitan mempengaruhi populasi gelandangan bekas banduan untuk bertumpu di sesuatu kawasan. Teori Skeldon (2012) menekankan hubungan yang kuat antara migrasi dan urbanisasi. Bandar sering menawarkan lebih banyak peluang ekonomi, perkhidmatan dan sumber berbanding kawasan luar bandar. Keadaan ini menarik individu termasuk gelandangan bekas banduan berhijrah ke pusat bandar demi peluang pekerjaan yang lebih baik, perkhidmatan sosial dan rangkaian sokongan yang kuat. Walau bagaimanapun, bekas banduan sering menghadapi halangan yang ketara untuk bekerja kerana rekod jenayah boleh menyebabkan kehilangan tempat tinggal walaupun berdekatan kawasan yang menawarkan pelbagai peluang. Jurang ekonomi serantau mendorong migrasi dari kawasan kurang maju atau kurang bernasib baik dari segi ekonomi berhijrah ke pusat bandar untuk menikmati pelbagai kemudahan dan infrastruktur yang tersedia. Bekas banduan yang kembali ke kawasan bandar akibat daripada tekanan ekonomi mempunyai peluang lebih rendah untuk berintegrasi semula dan mendapat sokongan (Keene et al., 2018). Keadaan ini menjadikan kawasan bandar sebagai pilihan yang lebih menarik walaupun menghadapi pelbagai cabaran. Rangkaian sosial memainkan peranan penting dalam keputusan penghijrahan dan penumpuan dalam kalangan gelandangan bekas banduan kerana mereka boleh berpindah ke kawasan bandar di bawah sokongan daripada rakan atau bekas kenalan (Khwela, 2014). Rangkaian ini menyediakan sokongan penting, maklumat dan sumber yang diperlukan untuk terus hidup walaupun secara bergelandangan.

Menurut teori ini lagi, penghijrahan menjadi proses yang berterusan memandangkan lebih ramai gelandangan bekas banduan yang bertumpu di kawasan bandar. Keadaan ini akan membentuk rangkaian sosial dan sistem

sokongan tidak formal, menjadikan bandar lebih menarik kepada bekas banduan lain untuk mendapat sokongan yang sama. Sokongan institusi di kawasan bandar seperti rumah perantaraan, pusat transit, tempat perlindungan dan perkhidmatan sosial boleh menarik bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal untuk memilih kawasan bandar. Perkhidmatan ini biasanya lebih mudah diakses di pusat bandar berbanding di kawasan luar bandar. Sebaliknya, ketersediaan perkhidmatan ini boleh dihadkan kerana permintaan yang tinggi dan menyumbang kepada risiko gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan yang berhijrah. Kawasan bandar menarik individu disebabkan peluang ekonomi dan ketersediaan pelbagai jenis perkhidmatan. Bagi bekas banduan, harapan untuk mencari kerja dan berintegrasi semula ke dalam masyarakat bertindak sebagai faktor penarik. Kawasan luar bandar atau kawasan ekonomi yang tidak stabil mendorong individu keluar hanya kerana kekurangan peluang pekerjaan, pengangguran yang tinggi dan sistem sokongan yang tidak mencukupi untuk integrasi semula. Kesemua ini menjadikan migrasi bandar sebagai pilihan yang lebih berdaya maju walaupun menghadapi pelbagai cabaran.

Gelandangan bekas banduan sering menghadapi peminggiran dari segi ekonomi dan sosial (Greenberg, & Rosenheck, 2008). Kawasan bandar yang menawarkan lebih banyak peluang mempunyai persaingan yang lebih tinggi untuk pekerjaan dan perumahan, sangat mencabar bagi individu yang mempunyai rekod jenayah. Di sebalik cabaran ini, peluang dan perkhidmatan yang banyak tersedia di kawasan bandar berbanding kawasan luar bandar terus menarik bekas banduan untuk berhijrah dan bertumpu. Kehadiran rangkaian bekas banduan yang ramai di kawasan bandar mewujudkan sistem pengukuhan sosial. Gelandangan bekas banduan baharu tertarik menyertai kumpulan yang senasib dengan mereka, mempunyai hubungan atau tempat yang mereka percaya boleh mendapatkan bantuan sokongan dari rakan-rakan yang boleh dipercayai dikenali sejak di penjara (Halushka, 2020). Rangkaian ini menyediakan maklumat dan sumber kritikal yang membantu pendatang baharu mengharungi kehidupan selepas pemenjaraan. Kepadatan sumber ini boleh menarik bekas banduan yang mencari sokongan dan mendorong keputusan untuk kekal di kawasan tersebut walaupun terpaksa hidup secara bergelandangan. Dasar bandar dan rangka kerja institusi boleh mempengaruhi penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal. Keadaan bandar yang menawarkan perkhidmatan sokongan lebih komprehensif menarik penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan yang lebih tinggi apabila mereka berhijrah untuk mencari bantuan. Namun demikian, kewujudan dasar yang menyekat peluang pekerjaan untuk bekas banduan di kawasan bandar memburukkan lagi risiko gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan.

Implikasi dasar

Dapatan kajian mempunyai beberapa implikasi terhadap dasar dan praktis.

- i. Pertama, terdapat keperluan intervensi yang disasarkan untuk menangani keperluan khusus gelandangan bekas banduan, terutamanya lelaki yang berusia, menghadapi cabaran mengakses sistem perumahan dan mendapatkan perkhidmatan sokongan.
- ii. Kedua, usaha perlu dibuat untuk menambah baik program integrasi semula bekas banduan termasuk menyediakan sokongan untuk mencari perumahan dan pekerjaan yang stabil melibatkan kerjasama antara agensi kerajaan, organisasi bukan kerajaan dan kumpulan komuniti untuk menyediakan perkhidmatan sokongan yang komprehensif.
- iii. Ketiga, terdapat keperluan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran dan pemahaman tentang faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada masalah gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan. Kempen pendidikan yang bertujuan mengurangkan stigma dan diskriminasi terhadap penduduk ini dan mempromosikan penyelesaian berasaskan komuniti untuk menangani masalah gelandangan wajar dipergiatkan. Ternyata pandangan yang diberikan tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi destinasi selepas pemenjaraan dan penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit amat berharga. Penggubal dasar dan penyedia perkhidmatan boleh meningkatkan bantuan untuk gelandangan bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal dan mengurangkan kitaran gelandangan dan pengulangan jenayah melalui pemahaman tingkah laku mereka.

KESIMPULAN

Kajian mengenai destinasi selepas pemenjaraan dan faktor penghijrahan dalam kalangan gelandangan bekas banduan di Jalan Chow Kit telah memberi penjelasan mengenai cabaran yang dihadapi oleh golongan rentan ini. Hasil kajian telah menyerlahkan kelaziman gelandangan bekas banduan dalam kalangan lelaki yang berusia berhijrah ke Kuala Lumpur mencari pelbagai peluang tetapi menghadapi halangan seperti ketiadaan tempat tinggal, pengangguran dan penolakan keluarga. Kajian ini menekankan keperluan intervensi yang disasarkan untuk menangani keperluan khusus gelandangan bekas banduan yang tiada tempat tinggal termasuk meningkatkan akses sistem perumahan, pekerjaan dan perkhidmatan sokongan. Selain itu, usaha untuk

mengurangkan stigma dan diskriminasi terhadap gelandangan bekas banduan adalah penting untuk mempromosikan kejayaan integrasi semula mereka ke dalam masyarakat. Dengan menangani cabaran ini, penggubal dasar dan penyedia perkhidmatan boleh membantu memecahkan kitaran gelandangan dan jenayah yang berulang dalam kalangan gelandangan bekas banduan. Menggunakan teori migrasi Skeldon (2012), penumpuan gelandangan bekas banduan di kawasan bandar boleh difahami melalui lensa peluang ekonomi, rangkaian sosial dan sistem sokongan institusi. Pusat bandar dengan kepelbagaian sumber bertindak sebagai magnet bagi gelandangan bekas banduan yang ingin memastikan integrasi semula dan sokongan. Walau bagaimanapun, cabaran persaingan yang tinggi, peminggiran sosial dan penyediaan perkhidmatan yang tidak mencukupi menyebabkan risiko gelandangan dalam kalangan bekas banduan. Penggubal dasar perlu menangani isu pelbagai aspek ini secara holistik untuk mengurangkan penumpuan dan menyokong kejayaan integrasi semula gelandangan bekas banduan di kawasan bandar.

PENGHARGAAN

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