

CITY AS AN URBAN SOCIAL DIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY OF RUKUN TETANGGA IN KUALA LUMPUR AND SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the level of knowledge, perception and acceptance among the public towards programs organized by Rukun Tetangga (RT). The programs organized include social, educational and recreational activities. Activities related to health and environment, welfare, art and culture, economy and public safety are also carried out. This research looks at the correlation analysis between demographic variables of the respondent with the level of knowledge, perception and public acceptance towards the program organized. In brief, this research tries to answer the question of how far is the effectiveness of RT in organizing activities to promote unity among our community. This is considered as beneficial development in order to identify the RT's direction in the future. The research is done in a few districts in Selangor and Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The selected areas are chosen due to the existence of diversified characteristics of the community that is relevant to the research needs. The characteristics include the aspect of different races and the distribution of location as they are thought to be a threat towards the solidarity among the main races. Moreover, the location is identified because it is the highest in population in the country. The research shows that the knowledge level, perception and public acceptance toward the programs organized by RT are generally high. This result can be used as an indicator that RT is a success entity in all situations. It has also increased harmony and contributed to national integration among Malaysians.

KEYWORDS: *city, social diversity, rukun tetangga, community in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor*

INTRODUCTION

The Rukun Tetangga Scheme (RTS) was introduced in 1975 following the enforcement of Neighbourly Principles (Rukun Tetangga) 1975. The main purpose of this project was to safeguard the people in their residential area due to safety problems and issues arising from the tragedy of 13th May 1969. Among others, the issues were the threat of communist propaganda, the chaos caused by the murder of the Inspector General Police (IGP) and the bombing of the National Monument. In order to overcome these problems, inline with national security force, local residents have been given the responsibilities to safeguard and promote the spirit of solidarity through the introduction of the Rukun Tetangga (RT) programme.

After two decades (1970-1990), the RTS has changed drastically through the tremendous urbanization process in the country. Mass migration of Malay people from the rural areas to the urban areas had caused intense pressure in the city. This has caused the city

to be highly populated with multi-racial community which has diversified activities and lifestyles. This had led to new phenomenon in the context of neighbourhood and inter-racial relationships in this country. Thus, this resulted to RTS being important tool to create national integration with harmony, safety and tolerance in the country.

In addition, in the year 2000, the roles of RTS were widened. Emphasis was given to community development to guarantee the harmony and safety of the people and country. This had caused RTS to diversify its activities to not only focus on safeguarding but also on other activities including those related to education, social, recreation, sports, environment, etc. Through the variety of activities, the government hopes to create national integration in respective communities. Hence, more RTS were established all over the country and more allocations were allotted for activities under the scheme.

All activities were aimed to enabling the members of the local community to get to know each other, to help each other in handling problems, to interact and develop good relationship between the leaders and communities of different ethnicities, religions, customs and cultures. The types of activities carried out under the RT scheme are social (celebrations of major festivals), educational (motivations, tuitions, talks), sports (tele-matches, traditional and folklore games) recreational (expeditions, workshops), health and environment (health talks, anti drugs campaigns, cleanliness campaigns) welfare (visits to old folks' homes, charity work, helping victims of flood and other natural disasters), religious (religious talks and forums), arts and culture (dancing classes, crafts, traditional games, stage shows) economy (small industries and selling at *Pasar Malam*) safety (voluntary patrolling, detecting and reporting of issues pertaining to relationship among races).

An ideal RT area must have at least 2,000 residents or 80 houses. However, the size of an ideal RT cannot be more than 6,000 residents in order to achieve good relations and to know each other well. To make the activities run well in one RT area, one RT committee has to be established. The committee must consist of 15 to 30 people depending on the size and location of the residential area. The committee members should be the active residents in that area.

Even though the RT has successfully organized varieties of activities, it is not clear whether they can strengthen the cooperation and integration among different race groups. In fact, at the moment, there have been very few comprehensive studies done to re-evaluate the effectiveness of RT in strengthening the understanding, tolerance and unity amongst the multi-racial community in this country. Therefore, this study is significant in order to gain information about the effectiveness of the RT program from the community's perspective. The result of the study will ascertain the best resolution to determine the direction of the RT especially in this new millennium.

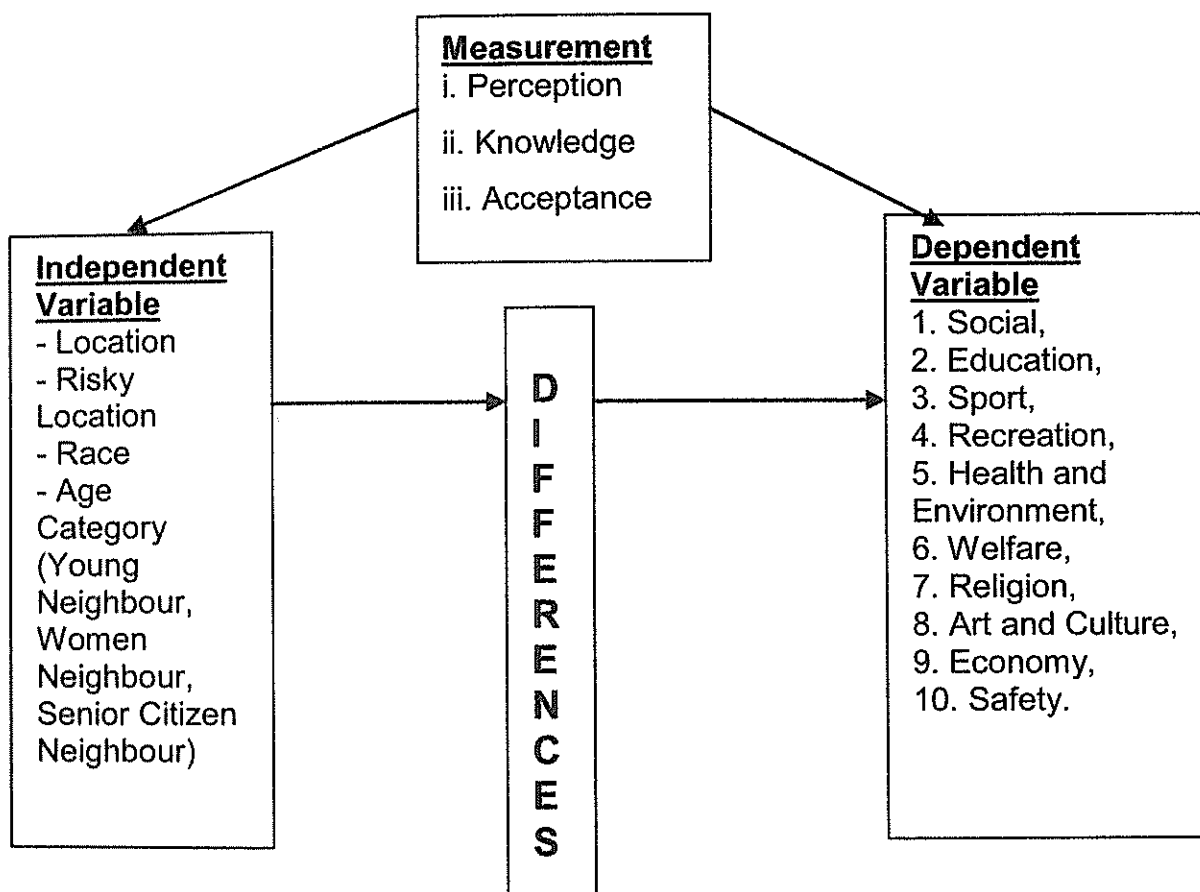
The main purpose of this study is to investigate the level of knowledge, perception and acceptance towards RT activities amongst residents of Federal Territory of KL and selected districts in Selangor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this research is quantitative (statistics) approach which is based on descriptive method. According to Mohd. Majid Konting (2000), descriptive research are studies that aim at explaining certain phenomenon and this method does not need any effort to control variables. Quantitative approach also emphasizes on

correlation in which stress is given on the determiners and observation is done on how much is the correlation among variables. In this matter, Kerlinger (1973) explains that correlation research involves two or more sets of data collected from a subject group to determine the relationship between the data.

In terms of research framework, this case study is an explorative and observational research which looks at the effectiveness of the RT programmes. This study seeks to study the correlation between the level of perception towards RT with the effectiveness of RT programmes in promoting national unity and integration. Besides that, the study looks at the relation between knowledge about RT with the effectiveness of RT programmes in promoting national unity and integration. Finally, the study looks at priorities and to analyse factors contributing to different levels of perception, knowledge, acceptance towards social, educational, health and environment, welfare, religious, arts and cultural, economy and safety activities. The research framework is shown in Figure 1.



The research population were the residents of Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Diversity in ethnicity and locality as well as different forms of communal groups and their backgrounds make these areas suitable for this study. Besides, these areas are known to have the highest number of population in this country. Based on these criteria, this research covers residential areas in the districts of Setapak, Campbell, Brickfields, Sentul and Cheras in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Petaling, Kelang, Shah Alam and Gombak are the chosen districts in Selangor.

The instruments used in this research are likert scale, tables and documents analysis. The instruments are constructed from the questionnaires which were distributed to respondents. The questionnaire is divided into two parts:

- a. Part A: Respondent's profile (Race, Locality, Group, Age and Risk Area).
- b. Part B: contains variables with reference to the RT activities including social, educational, sports and recreational, health and environmental, welfare, religious, arts and cultural, economy as well as safety activities. Part B of the questionnaire aims to measure the level of perception, knowledge and acceptance of the respondents towards the RT program.

All the data gathered are analyzed based on the research questions and objectives. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods are used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistical method is used to get the mean, standard deviations, and percentage of all variables. In this research, the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS Version 13.0) software is used to assist calculation and to ensure accuracy in calculation. The use of SPSS Software to analyze the statistical data can produce accurate calculation and is free from errors (Mohd. Majid, 2000).

FINDINGS

The three main components of this research are the level of knowledge, perception and acceptance towards RT and the activities organized. Following are the mean scores analysis and the level of knowledge, perception and acceptance of the respondents' towards each sub-scale (activities) of RT namely social, education, recreation, health and environment, welfare, religion, art and culture, economy, safety as well as RT activities as a whole. The scores are grouped into three levels: low, moderate and high. The division of scores at all levels are as follows:

| <u>Level of Knowledge</u> | <u>Mean Score Marks</u> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Low | 0 to 33.33 |
| Moderate | 33.34 to 66.67 |
| High | 66.68 to 100 |
| <u>Level of Perception and Acceptance</u> | <u>Mean Score Marks</u> |
| Low | 1 to 2.00 |
| Moderate | 2.01 to 3.00 |
| High | 3.01 to 4.00 |

Table 1 shows the analysis of mean scores and the respondents' level of knowledge towards RT activities namely social, educational, recreational, health and environmental, welfare, religious, art and cultural, economy, safety, and sports together with their perception towards RT activities as a whole. Overall, the respondents' level of knowledge towards RT activities is high, which is at 67% and above. The results show that the respondents' level of knowledge towards social, sport, health and environmental, recreation, safety and welfare activities is high which is at between 69% and 86%. The respondents' level of knowledge towards religion, education, economy, art and cultural activities is moderate that is at between 49% and 63%.

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Respondent's Level of Knowledge towards Rukun Tetangga Activities

| | Activity | Min | Level |
|----|------------------------|-------|----------|
| 1 | Social | 86.26 | High |
| 10 | Sport | 76.19 | High |
| 4 | Health and Environment | 75.68 | High |
| 3 | Recreation | 70.80 | High |
| 9 | Safety | 69.57 | High |
| 5 | Welfare | 69.37 | High |
| 6 | Religion | 63.38 | Moderate |
| 2 | Education | 62.29 | Moderate |
| 8 | Economy | 49.18 | Moderate |
| 7 | Art and Culture | 49.13 | Moderate |

Table 2 shows the mean scores analysis and the respondents' level of perception towards all RT activities namely social, education, recreation, health and environment, welfare, religion, art and culture, economy, safety, and sports activities as well as their perception towards RT activities as a whole. The result of the research shows that the level of the respondents' perception towards RT activities as a whole is high with the mean scores between 3.03 and 3.18.

Table 2: Mean Analysis of Respondents' Level of Perception towards Activities in Rukun Tetangga

| | Activity | Min | Level |
|----|------------------------|------|-------|
| 1 | Social | 3.18 | High |
| 4 | Health and Environment | 3.16 | High |
| 10 | Sport | 3.15 | High |
| 3 | Recreation | 3.12 | High |
| 5 | Welfare | 3.11 | High |
| 9 | Safety | 3.11 | High |
| 2 | Education | 3.09 | High |
| 6 | Religion | 3.04 | High |
| 8 | Economy | 3.04 | High |
| 7 | Art and Culture | 3.03 | High |
| 11 | Overall Activities | 3.10 | High |

Table 3 shows the mean scores analysis and respondents' level of acceptance towards RT activities namely social, education, recreation, health and environment, welfare, religion, art and cultural, economy, safety, and sports activities as well as their perception towards RT activities as a whole. The results show that the respondent's level of acceptance towards RT activities is moderate with the min scores between 2.42 to 2.98.

Table 3: Mean Analysis of Respondents' Level of Acceptance towards Rukun Tetangga Activities

| | Activity | Min | Level |
|----|------------------------|------|----------|
| 8 | Economy | 2.98 | Moderate |
| 7 | Art and Culture | 2.95 | Moderate |
| 10 | Sport | 2.95 | Moderate |
| 4 | Health and Environment | 2.93 | Moderate |
| 5 | Welfare | 2.88 | Moderate |
| 6 | Religion | 2.87 | Moderate |
| 3 | Recreation | 2.81 | Moderate |
| 2 | Education | 2.77 | Moderate |
| 9 | Safety | 2.73 | Moderate |
| 1 | Social | 2.42 | Moderate |
| 11 | Overall Activities | 2.86 | Moderate |

DISCUSSION

In brief, the research analyses and investigates the effectiveness of RT programmes with regards to the level of knowledge, perception and acceptance of the community members. Firstly, level of knowledge. The study looks at how far is the RT members' general and specific knowledge about the establishment and roles of RT. The level of perception then looks at what are the RT members' views, descriptions and interpretations regarding the activities done in their RT areas based on the stimulus of their senses. As for level of acceptance, the study identifies how far the RT members can accept each activity done by RT. The level of perception and acceptance items includes sub-scales of social, education, recreation, health and environment, welfare, religion, art and culture, economy, safety and sport.

Level of Knowledge about RT Activities

Our findings provide evidence that the knowledge level about RT activities as a whole among all RT members is excellent. This demonstrates that the establishment of RT in this country is well known and well accepted by the community. In fact, the RT scheme is synonymous to the night patrol activities that are still actively done in the many RT areas especially in the cities. In addition, the results show that the establishment of the Department of National Unity and Integration in each state has done a good job in spreading the information about the existence of RT scheme.

Level of Perception towards RT Activities

The level of perception towards the RT activities based on respondent's gender is high except for social activities. The differences clearly indicate that the social activities are lower than other activities. The study shows that there are few reasons as to why this is happening. Among others, it is due to the indicators used in this study, which are different from other research. This research differs from other research because it is based on ethnicity and samples collected vary from one location to another.

In addition, the level of perception towards RT activities based on respondent's age is high except for those below 20 years old. It is because the older members of the community Involve in activities compared to those 20 years of age and below. In other words, adults lead all activities involving generation of 20 years old and below. Hence, the perception of those 20 years and below towards RT activities is moderate. This is due to their level of activeness and presence in these activities depends on the adults who are in charge of the RT activities from time to time. If the adult members were actively involved, therefore their RT group would be active and vice versa.

The level of perception towards RT activities as a whole based on respondents' race, occupation, religion and residential areas is high. It shows that races, occupation, religion and residential areas do not cause different perception towards the RT activities. This also shows that the information about RT activities is equally race, occupation, religion and residential areas. The only difference is the willingness of the members of the community to participate in RT activities.

The overall level of perception towards RT activities based on respondents' district is high except for respondents in Cheras, which is moderate. Ineffective leadership among the committees and very minimal supervision by the officers from National Unity and Integration Department are identified as the causes to this phenomenon. This issue needs to be looked into in order to get to the bottom of the problem.

Acceptance Level towards RT Activities

As a whole, the level of knowledge and perception among the respondents is high while the acceptance level is moderate. There are a few factors identified as obstructing residents' involvement and participation in RT activities. These factors have also contributed to the moderate level of acceptance towards RT activities. The factors are:

i) Work pressure

Most of RT members find it difficult to get involved in activities organized by RT due to workload pressure in their fields. RT activities and programmes are usually held during weekends. Most of RT members choose the weekends as their personal time to rejuvenate.

Challenging and competitive lives in the city force the city dwellers to have their own space and time for relaxation and therefore they choose to isolate themselves and rest at home instead of involving in the activities organized by RT.

ii) Distance of Working Place from Home

Most of the RT members' working places are quite far from their homes. This situation causes them to face traffic jams especially for those in the Klang Valley. Their journey home takes a long time, causing them to feel exhausted the moment they reach home. The situation makes them feel pressured thus unable to get involved in RT activities and programmes.

iii) Quality Time with the Family

Most of the RT activities are done on Saturdays and Sunday for almost all RT locations. The strain of working five days a week makes the weekends, or Saturdays and Sundays the only days available for them to visit their families and to do other activities. This is also a factor why most of the RT members are not interested to participate in the RT activities organized in their area. Most of the respondents who are not involved with RT prefer to spend their time at home with excuses like feeling exhausted from workplace.

For that reason, JPNIN should look into this matter more closely to find an effective solution to encourage all members of the community to participate in RT programs.

Any future activities must take this problem into consideration. Short and brief yet informative activities should be considered to encourage more participation from the community. This suits the "instant" culture of the city community in which everything done should be simple, easy and quick. It is undeniable that the hectic and busy lifestyles in the city make the individual usually considered the need to rest and be alone rather than involve with the community, avoiding the needs to gather in the community itself. However, this must be avoided as the community concept that is commonly known to be the principal for the East culture community will not lose.

iv) Individual's Attitude and Motive

The research shows that individual's attitude and motive is one of the reasons on why the perception and acceptance among the public towards the RT activities are low. This attitude is directly making an impact on their action and behaviour. Motive is usually referred to the people's reason to involve in an activity, basically related to the individual's interest.

Various incentive proposals have been made to get a community interested to participate in RT activities. This incentive hopefully will create more community's involvement in RT programmes. Individual's motive and attitude as a major influence has been discussed in previous research by Omar Mohamad (1979), Yahya Ibrahim (1996) and Tan Min Nee (1999).

v) Information Gathering

Information gathering and dissemination for the public knowledge is also one of major problem that need urgent attention. Research shows that the differences in knowledge level, public or community acceptance and perception mostly because of the lack of information. Information is a powerful tool, especially to disseminate the community about scheduled and upcoming activities organized by RT committee. Therefore, types of information are important to encourage RT member's participation in RT programmes. This situation will help the members to understand more on RT role and its function.

The department responsible should improve the information delivery and dissemination effectively to reduce this problem. The usage of notice board nowadays might be outdated and not suitable. The enhancement way for dissemination leads to well organized information, thus change the attitude among RT members.

The problems arise above can be a positive factor or threat to the resident involvement in RT programmes. Actually, the same problems have been discussed since the establishment of RT. Unfortunately these problems are appeared not resolved. If nothing is done, it will give a negative feedback to the RT programmes.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings above, there are some suggestions can be considered to create effectiveness in RT activities:

- i) Improve the Image of RT
- ii) More Transparent RT Leadership
- iii) Implement Various New Activities
- iv) Create a Better Neighbourhood Administration
- v) Promote a Better Social Infrastructure
- vi) Using New Approaches in Effective Program Strategy
- vii) Encourage more Research on Rukun Tetangga
- viii) Encourage Involvement of more Chinese residents in Various RT Activities

CONCLUSION

The overall statistical analysis shows that the knowledge, perception and acceptance level among the community towards RT concept and RT activities are high. This indicates that the existence of RT and activities held by JPNIN are on the right track. Furthermore, there are no reports about major problems with regards to national solidarity in the local newspapers and media. It shows that the national unity and integration level in this country is at a good state. These situations indirectly become an indicator to the effectiveness of RT activities and role in local areas. Therefore, it is advisable that the existing RT programmes need to be continued and be enhanced with more new and interesting programmes and activities.

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