Social Ecology and Survival among Multi-Ethnic Youths in Urban Areas

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This is a survey research for the identification of social ecology support and survival among youths from various ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia. Social ecology encompasses several aspects including the support from institutions, families, local communities, and online platforms. Survival refers to knowledge, skills, lifelong education, as well as value and creativity. The sample comprised 2,400 respondents selected by a stratified random method from different ethnicities, which covered Malay, Chinese and Indian groups. All respondents are living in 6 zones in an urban area of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The result of the pilot study showed that the reliability level of the overall item was at a high confidence level of 0.834 -0.929 when analysed using Cronbach's alpha. The finding of this study shows that the level of social ecology support is high. Survival on the other hand is also at a high level. As for stepwise regression analysis, the factor of online support, which relates to enhancing knowledge, gaining new skills, and networking through online applications, has aided youth in improving the longevity of their urban life. This research also reveals that support primarily in the form of online platforms should be given special attention at various stages in shaping the youths. This is compatible with global generations especially in urban areas.

Key words: *Social ecology, survival, urban area, multi-ethnic youth.*

Introduction

Urban life poses many challenges due to the complexity of socio economic status as well as culture and value (Juhari Ahmad & Abdul Razaq Ahmad, 2016). In addition, living in cities

requires a wealth of new knowledge and skills to help communities, especially for the youths constantly competing in vibrant urban life (Chourabi, Nam et al., 2012).

Technological developments are also affecting the societal structure of those living in urban areas. Ding, Zhong, et.al (2015) found that the growing world of technology has established a community without borders. This has changed social interactions so that there is an interaction gap that can erode the values of the community. Dzul Fitry Ismail (2011) and Jalaluddin & Mohd Asruladlyi (2015) find that today's education system needs to be adapted to the needs of the industry, especially in urban areas, because the conventional curriculum does not instil the value of competition amongst youth living in the cities. Realising the importance of this phenomenon, this study will focus on how social ecology in urban areas can improve urban survival among youth by looking at how their quality of life in the city can be improved in various respects.

Social Ecology and Survivability

Social Ecology

In this study, the social ecological theory used is the theory by Bronfenbrenner (1989). In this theory, the environment is divided into 5 layers namely Microsystem, Ecosystem, Mesosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem. The environment greatly influences the attitude and behaviour of individuals living in the community. In this study, it is used to observe the social ecological support in increasing the survivability of various ethnic groups in the urban area. Social support is a vital factor in helping a community to live a harmonious and prosperous life (Ilaria Greco & Angela Cresta, 2015). Therefore, prosperous communities need to rely on one another and reduce the gaps in their lives. This awareness will begin with the support of family, peers, communities, institutions and even online platforms.

Urban Life Survival

The theory of survival was presented by Spencer (1976), who acknowledged how each individual strives to adapt to the social changes that occur around him and fight for survival in a challenging life. To survive in an urban area that is challenging and dynamic, an individual must be strong in terms of personal values, self-regulation, intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ) and social quotient (ES), which encompass knowledge, skills, learning throughout life, values as well as creativity.

Survival is a development of human evolution which became the basis of growth and self-development in life with the purpose of meeting its needs and desires (Hadi, Harman,

Mohamed et.al, 2006). The reason of survival for every organism is to cope with the changes in the environment. Humans particularly will work hard, be vigilant and diligent in facing unavoidable challenges as well as begin evaluating themselves to recognize their strengths to adapt with the changes that are taking place (Juhari, Norshariani et.al, 2011 & Mohd Mahzan, Alfitri et.al, 2016). If they fail to do this, they are more likely to lose their jobs, resources, and houses, and will thereby be left out of the modernisation process.

People who are more progressive see modernisation as an opportunity for a better quality of life. Humans learn and improve themselves from every mistake they make. Self-reflection in identifying weaknesses and own's strength is important. It is also closely related to the willingness to learn (Mohd Mahzan, Abdul Razaq, Nora'sikin et al., 2013). The concept of lifelong learning to improve knowledge and enhance skills is essential to face competitive challenges. Self-improvement will never stop because every person needs to seize the opportunity to improve in the face of the ever-growing and dynamic city.

This study also uses the Survival Model presented by Simon Herthnon (2005) as a supportive theory to look on the sustainability of youth in the urban area. This theory highlighted the satisfaction of human needs (Theory of Universal Human Needs) which was divided into two components namely survival and betterment. Based on the above formulations, the basis for studying urban life in youths focuses on Knowledge, Skills, Life Long Education, Value and Creativity.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the perspective of multi-ethnic youth living in urban areas of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia based on the aspects of social ecological support, which involve institutions, families, local communities and online platforms. The aspects of urban survival relate to knowledge, skills, lifelong learning, values and creativity. In addition, this study also identifies the extent to which the influences of social ecology affect the survivability of their lives in the city.

Research Methodology

The research was a survey study using a questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaire for social ecological construct contains the aspects of support from Institution (8 items), Family (8 items), Local Community (6 items) and Online Platforms (7 items). The aspects for this item are constructed based on Bronfenbrenner theory and are adapted from the questionnaires survey by Dotti (2016). For survivability construct, the aspects that were observed were Knowledge (9 items), Skills (8 items), Life Long Education (5 items) and Value

and Creativity (5 item), which were based on Spencer theory and were also adapted from the questionnaire by Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razaq Ahmad et.al, (2016).

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study involving 203 respondents was conducted. Cronbach Alpha analysis revealed a high value of 0.853-0.919 for the social support construct and 0.834 -0.929 for survivability. This high number indicated that the questionnaires used in this study were high in reliability. Likert scales (1–5) with anchors ranging from 'lowest priority' to 'highest priority' were used for each construct. Meanwhile, the mean score table was divided into 3 categories namely low (1.00-2.33), medium (2.34 - 3.67) and high (3.68-5.00). The sample was comprised of 2,400 respondents selected by the stratified random method, who were from Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic backgrounds in all 6 zones in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

Among the respondents, a total of 256 persons (66.3%) were Malays and 130 (33.7%) were non-Malay. 144 persons (37.3%) were youths aged 25 and under. 172 persons (44.6%) were between 26 to 30, and 70 (8.11%) youths were 31 years and older. Respondents of this study had various levels of education: 114 (29.5%) had a Malaysian Certificate of Education, 150 (40.9%) had a Malaysian Higher School Certificate / Diploma/ Matriculation, and 114 (29.6%) had a degree. A total of 230 persons (59.6%) were working in the private sector, 102 (26.4%) were in the public sector, and 54 (14.0%) were self-employed.

In terms of income, 82 16.2%) respondents in this study had an income of 1,500 MYR (Malaysian Ringgit) or below, 172 (44.6%) earned 1,501 MYR to 3,000 MYR, and 96 persons (24.9%) had between 3,001 MYR to 5,000 MYR. 36 persons (9.3%) earned more than 5,000 MYR per month. A majority of the respondents (69.9%) have their own vehicles, 90 (23.3%) relied on public transportation and 26 people (6.7%) shared vehicles. A total of 286 respondents (74.1%) said that living in Kuala Lumpur had many challenges, and only 66 people (17.1%) claimed that they were happy living in Kuala Lumpur. 34 respondents (8.8%) stated that they felt neither challenged nor happy living in Kuala Lumpur.

The analysis of the data obtained in this study used mean descriptive and standard deviation. To identify the level of the social ecological and survival constructs, stepwise analysis was performed to analyse the influence of social ecology support towards survivability among youth from various ethnicities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Results

Level of Social Ecology among Multi-Ethnic Youth in Urban Area

Based on Table 1, social ecological support from the institutional level (M = 3.561, SD = 0.645) is at a moderate level. This indicates that institutional support in the urban area of the city council program is less supportive in term of conducting activities that promote social life. For the aspects of social support (M = 4.228, SD = 0.562), local community support (M = 3.892, SD = 0.557) and online support (M = 3.931 , SD = 0.572), all constructs show a high level and reveal that social ecological aspects have a high influence on the survivability of youth in Kuala Lumpur.

Table 1: The Mean Score for the Social Ecology Construct

Item	Mean	S. D.	Interpretation
Institutional Support	3.561	.645	Moderate
Family Support	4.228	.562	High
Local Community Support	3.892	.557	High
Virtual Platform Support	3.931	.572	High

Level of Survival among the Multi-Ethnic Youth in the Urban Area

Based on Table 2, descriptive analysis suggests that the knowledge of urban life (M = 3 .490, SD =0.708), city life skills (M = 3.518, SD =0.794), lifelong learning (M = 3 .594, SD =. 665) as a whole is at a medium level, which shows that the survivability of youth has not yet reached a satisfactory level. On the other hand, the values and culture aspect is at a high level (M = 3,687, SD = .727), which indicates that, despite the complex community living in the urban area, youths regardless of ethnicities still have good values and cultures.

Table 2: The Mean Score for the Survival Construct

Item	Mean	S. D.	Interpretation
Knowledge of Life in the City as a whole	3.490	.708	Moderate
Life Skills in the City as a whole	3.518	.794	Moderate
Lifelong Learning	3.594	.665	Moderate
The Value and Culture of the City as a whole	3.687	.727	High

The Contribution of Social Ecology towards Survivability among Multi-Ethnic Youth in Urban Area

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the significant association of the independent variables of social ecological support, namely institutional support, family

support, local community and online platform support for youth survivability when living in Kuala Lumpur. This multiple regression analysis involves four independent variables that are relevant to social ecological support.

Based on table 3, the researcher first determined whether the distribution of the questionnaire is normal and linear or otherwise. This was performed by obtaining the residual scatter plot and normal regression plot that can be obtained from the Linear Regression Plot subprogram found in the SPSS program. Based on the distribution of plots, it was found that the score distribution of the survey questionnaire was normal and linear.

Table 3: Stepwise regression analysis for dependent variables of institutional support that contributes towards youth survivability

Variable(X)	B	Beta (β)	Nilai-t	Sig. -t	R^2	Contribution (%)
Online Platform Support	.367	.415	21.107	0.000	.373	37.3
Family Support	.164	.178	9.174	0.000	.417	4.3
Local Community Support	.193	.180	8.764	0.000	.435	1.8
Constant	.789		11.289	0.000		

R Value	0.660
R Value Square	0.435
R Value Square (Fitted)	0.434
Standard Error Val	0.070

Multiple regression analysis *(stepwise)* in table 4 showed that the independent variables such as online platform support, family support, and local community support have significant correlations (43.5%) ($p < 0.05$) with youth survival in Kuala Lumpur. Online platform in particular is the most dominant aspect or variable and greatly contributed towards the survivability of the youth in line with today's technological era.

The existence of multicollinearity in the independent variables as well as the dependent variables was studied to ensure that there was no multicollinearity in the variables involved in this study. Tolerance values recorded were 0 .872, 0.738 and 0.660, which suggested that there was no multicollinearity in the variables present in this study.

Tables 3 and 4 show the results of the stepwise regression analysis involving four independent variables on dependent variables relating to quality of life. All four variables showed significant correlations and contributions ($p < 0.05$) towards survivability.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Square	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F- Value	Significant Level (p)
Regression	364.309	3	121.436	612.587	**0.001**∗∗
Residual	473.187	2387	.198		
Total	837.496	2390			

Discussion and Implication

Based on the findings of this study, the level of social ecology support from the four aspects studied, namely institution, online platform, family, and the local communities support, were at a high level. This shows that social ecological support within the urban community provides a very positive influence in promoting better survival skills for youth living in the urban area. This study was supported by Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razaq Ahmad et.al (2016), whose research found that, despite its complexity, families living in the city still focus on the well-being of the children. In addition, this study also reinforces social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which found that the environment, both macro and micro, highly affected an individual's life within the community. We also presented the construct of online platform in the social ecology theory when it was never discussed previously. We found that online platform provides the greatest influence towards increasing the survivability among youth and can be considered as a vital part of social ecology.

For the youth from various ethnicities in the urban area, especially in Kuala Lumpur city, gaining new knowledge and skills as well as lifelong learning has not been fully mastered. This indicates that although the youth living in the urban area are exposed to various facilities in urban area, they still do not fully utilise the opportunities. This study is in contrast with Clark, Algoe & Green (2017) who found that in terms of convenience and leisure opportunities, it is possible to increase youth skills especially for those living in urban area. The finding of this research also shows that despite living in a complex and somewhat individualistic society, the youth regardless of their ethnic background are still maintaining their values and culture. This study is contrary to Vygotsky (1978) who found that complex urban life caused individualism to be individualistic and deviate from the values of their lives.

Regression analysis reveals that online platform factors related to interaction, learning, skills, new knowledge as well as networking are the dominant factors contributing to the survival of youth living in urban Kuala Lumpur. This result is in line with the study conducted by Fazilah, Ezhar, et.al (2005) which found that the virtual platform strongly influences young people as they are more exposed and engaged in virtual activities.

The implication of this study indicates that various parties need to evaluate various aspects of education in order to provide better opportunities and chances to equip the youth with new skills. This is in order to enhance their ability to survive as well as live longer in an urban area. In addition, responsible parties must be more open and cooperative in meeting the aspirations of new millennials by providing a platform for the youth or future generations in line with the needs of the workforce in this Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Conclusion

Development in urban areas needs to take into account various requirements in terms of the physical, intellectual, and economic needs of the city to ensure the prosperity of the urban community. This long-term comprehensive development plan needs to be planned starting today to ensure that it will lead to the construction of a prosperous community. In addition, the planning and the development of planned cities have to be based on significant research that are bottom-up rather than top-down. This is to ensure that it meets the needs of the urban community especially in the most vibrant urban area in Malaysia.

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Appendix

Diagram 1   Normal Regression Plot Graph Dependent Variable : Survivability
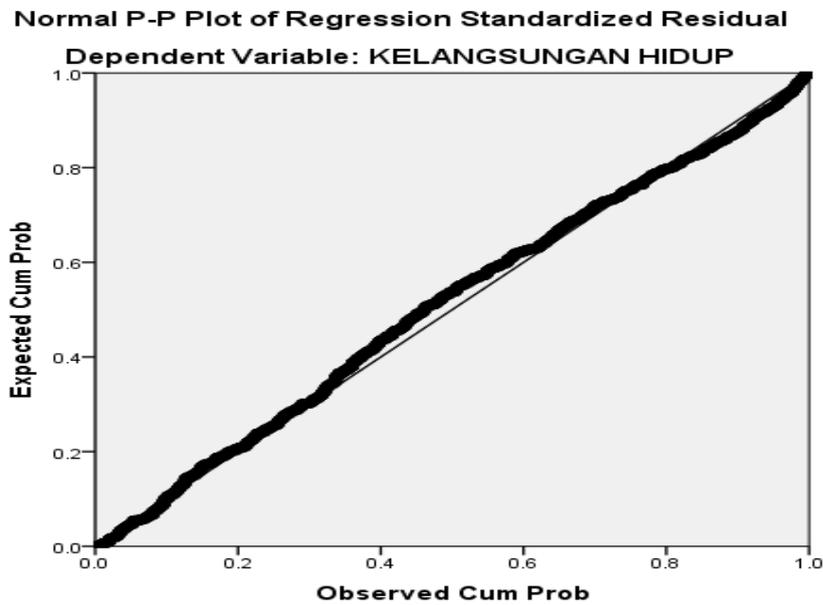
Diagram 2   Scatterplot Graph Dependent Variable : Survivability