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## Personality Traits and Skill Competencies on Community Empowerment among Iban Women in Sarawak

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### Abstract

This study proposed to investigate the power of personality and skills competencies of Iban population as the largest ethnic group in Sarawak. The influence of content and process on initiatives to empower the Iban women community in Sarawak will be an indicator of the measurement and evaluation of the program to the empowerment of Dayak women. This concept paper aims to critically review and identify gaps in the current literature on community empowerment, personality traits and skill competencies and come out with expected outcomes and recommendations for future research. This study applies a quantitative approach with a descriptive design through the questionnaire form for purpose of data collection. This study investigates five dimensions of the Big Five personality namely openness to experience, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. This study also investigates three dimensions of skills competencies namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The findings of personality traits and skills competencies will be transformed into profiling data of Iban Women and proposed new initiatives and programs to empower Iban women. Overall, the findings will highlight and explain further the personality traits of Iban women, and the skills possessed for the market-appropriate job. Future studies are recommended to include more indicators like entrepreneur for enhancing Iban women empowerment initiatives in Sarawak.

**Keywords:** Personality, Skills, Competencies, Iban Women, Community, Empowerment

### Introduction

The empowerment of women has been one of the top Malaysian agendas in promoting women's participation in social, political, and economic aspects where it aligns with the goal of gender equality in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In response to this national agenda, the Sarawak state government also has allocated RM7.6 mil to Sarakup Indu Dayak

Sarawak Indigenous Corporations (SIDS) for the development and empowerment of Dayak women in the state. SIDS proposes four important elements of empowerment includes education, empowering women, developing Dayak culture and human capital of Dayak women (Utusan Borneo, 2020). The role of Dayak women is significant in contributing to the development of Sarawak in terms of skills, technology, economy and others (Star, 2020). Iban women, especially in rural areas, need to develop their skills and transform them into products that can be marketed in the local as well as international markets. Chairman of SIDS Tan Sri Empiang Jabu said, various aspects in the creative or rural industries can be ventured to increase income and raise the economy of their families (Utusan Borneo Online, 2014). Dayak community is the largest community in Sarawak comprises majority ethnic groups namely Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu (Tateh et al., 2014). The Iban community is the largest group in the State of Sarawak at 35.3% of the total population and forms the largest indigenous ethnic group in Sarawak and inhabits all Divisions in Sarawak. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016), the Ibans lives 50% of the total population of Sarawak, which is 858,989 people. Since the Iban community is the largest in Sarawak, more research is needed to understand the woman empowerment among Iban women particularly.

Historically, most Dayak communities, especially Ibans in Sarawak, practice shifting cultivation as an economic resource apart from fishing and hunting for survival. In addition, in early 1970 the Iban Community has been regarded as the largest farming community in the state of Sarawak especially in the rural area (Ugeh et al., 2015). Meanwhile, most women are at home to take care of children and most of them stay at Longhouse. The Iban women do not only play the role of wives but also double as both mothers and fathers for their children when their husbands go to work. The women do not only have to make sure their children go to school but also received sufficient food and make sure that the paddies in the fields are in good conditions to enable a quality yield of paddy harvest (Daniel Ugeh et al., 2015). Thus, women's empowerment continues to be an important national agenda as required women's equal participation in social, political and economics. Therefore, Dayak women no longer must stay at home but can independently contribute to growing their (household) economy and not be left behind in getting the proper education.

Empowering women in the economic sector and making them the focus is a moral imperative. Growing research on women's empowerment shows that the increase women's participation in economic sectors boosts the national economy, increase household productivity and living standards, improve child well-being with positive long-term effects and increased women's agency and overall empowerment (UN Women, 2012). In developing countries, women constitute a large part of the total workforce, particularly in the agricultural sector. Based on the reports by Malaysia Prime Minister's Department (2017), Malaysia has made significant progress in terms of gender equality, for instance, in education and economic participation of women has improved. In education aspects, life expectancy for women is longer than that for men, while gender parity has been achieved in education since the early 1990s. In 2015, female student enrolment in public higher education reached 62 percent and has exceeded 60 per cent since 2003 (Malaysia Prime Minister's Department, 2017). In economic aspects, it shows an upward trend towards achieving the target of 59 per cent by 2020 compared to 46.4% in 2009. Similar works have also been carried out by Tan Sri Empiang Jabu in Utusan Borneo Online (2014), in which the participation of Iban women in economic activities is increasing. They also stressed that Iban women must be committed,

patient, open-minded and diligent to improve their skills, standard of living in generating family income while seizing opportunities provided to develop their potential and ability. Consequently, this study critically reviewed the two aspects that have a major influence on initiatives to empower the community of Iban women in Sarawak which are personality traits and skills competencies.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Personality Traits and Skill Competencies***

Personality is defined as the natural characteristics of an individual (Barrick & Mount, 1993). Personality also refers to patterns of thought and behaviour that show stability over time (Bozionelos, 2004). Each individual has distinct personality traits, and they influence an individual's behaviour and thinking (Wallace, 2004). Personality is also shaped by interactions between individuals and the environment. These interactions also exert an influence on the lives of individuals (Rotter 1990, Azizi et al., 2011). The Big Five describe an individual's personality on the most global level with five independent dimensions (De Raad 2000; Goldberg 1990; John et al., 2008; Rammstedt et al., 2017). In this study, the five traits include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The role of these five personality traits is a determinant of the condition of women, the extent to which minority women can highlight personal personality traits among the population.

Personality, motivation, interest, and beliefs are referring to non-cognitive skills. There is evidence that important personalities and life outcomes have produced high potential key missions related to public policy and intervention, that is, although the importance of cognitive skills in predicting key indicators of life success is undoubted, cognitive skills such as personality are often equally strong (Rammstedt et al., 2017). Personality is affected by job performance (Hogan and Holland 2003) and income (Judge et al., 2012). Finding by Rammstedt et al (2017) indicate that the Big Five personality dimensions contribute significantly to explain life success. The individual's level of life satisfaction depends not only on the social environment but related on personality. Specifically, individuals who are more emotionally stable, extraverted, conscientious, and agreeable tend to experience greater life satisfaction (Steel et al., 2008).

Serlie & Neelen (2017), analyzed that competency describes a vast range of skills, expertise, abilities, and knowledge. The competency model depends primarily on one's expertise or skills. Even though expertise is not limited to factual knowledge of a job or profession, it is determined by the content or aspects of the job-related problem. However, to be effective at work, the experts must be used adaptively and relevantly. By assessing personality as a fundamental tendency of behavioural competence can be useful in determining the level and "feasibility" of that competence, which greatly helps employees in the context of career development.

The importance of mastering a specific set of competencies for each job is something that has been documented in the literature (Masrek et al., 2012). Helmick & Jaguszcwski (2006), have suggested career development among individuals. For this reason, previous researchers have developed various models and competency frameworks for various types of jobs. According to Griffiths & King (1985) in Masrek et al (2012) competence refers to the generic knowledge, skills and attitudes of a person related to the effective behaviours exhibited by the individual. Knowledge refers to the information obtained and the understanding of something. Skills, on the other hand, refer to the ability to apply knowledge effectively.

Attitude refers to an individual's emotional and mental approach to something. Competence is referred to as flexible knowledge and skills for individuals (Helmick & Jaguszzewski, 2006). According to Masrek et al (2012), an individual will be able to distinguish between professional competencies i.e. generic skills, attitudes and values.

### **Problem Statement**

In Malaysia, some populations of Iban still live on the poverty line and they are living near rivers and jungles. As a result, the Dayaks society is still engaged in basic employment. This locus makes the Dayak community is still lagging and become vague, according to statistics released by the Malaysian Government (Neging, 2021). There are academic and practical significance for studying the relationship between personality traits and skills competency among Iban Women in Sarawak. Theoretically, personality traits will predict the initiative of community empowerment towards quality of life. The community empowerment in economic growth and poverty alleviation is very important and it will lead to economic efficiencies.

As the country moves towards aging nation status by 2030, the government need to establish mechanisms for women's to equally participate in economic sectors particularly. At such, women's empowerment programs need to be implemented in promoting women's participation in employment sector. In this study, the target group is Iban Women which is the largest community in Sarawak that need to be focused on for this empowerment. This groups should be allowed to highlight their identity through their competency skills.

Besides focusing on the personality traits, this research also focusing on the measurement and evaluation of the skills gap among Iban women in Sarawak. Thus, appropriate methods and initiatives will also be proposed in this study. Industry 4.0 is expected to have a very significant impact on the labour and employment markets such as the creation and elimination of jobs (job displacement), increased labour productivity and the widening skills gap. Therefore, the country's human capital needs to have relevant skills and always meet the needs of the country's dynamic market and economy. Along with the development towards the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, the job landscape has changed rapidly where the government needs to open more opportunities and space for the establishment of training or education centres that can educate the younger generation to improve intelligence in manufacturing, machine learning, Internet, and data technology advancement (Utusan Borneo Online, 2018). Better job offers will enable Iban women to advance in a more competitive world.

To adapt to the changing environment, this study focuses on identifying the personality traits and skills of ethnic minorities. This is an initiative to help the government and industry identify suitable areas of employment and activities performed by Iban women specifically. This targeted focus will further facilitate the women's empowerment strategy that will be formulated as well as make this ethnic minority an indicator and reflection to Dayak women in Sarawak. According to Gartner (2019), the expectation of employees such as job change because of devitalization is "I need skill upgrades." The question is, how much improvement? Without a competency assessment, we will not know. Competency assessments serve to convey job expectations and best practices so that everyone knows how to look great and how to get there. This study will look at the competencies and skills possessed by Iban women to becoming in the new job market and technology.

## **Objectives**

### ***General Objective***

Assessing personality traits and improving skills competencies as an initiative to empower Iban Women in Sarawak

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To identify the personality traits of Iban women in Sarawak.
2. To measure level of competency skills of Iban Women in Sarawak.
3. To evaluate the relationships between personality traits and skills competency among Iban Women in Sarawak.
4. To determine the influence of personality traits and skills competency among Iban Women in Sarawak.
5. To provide data profiling of Iban Women in Sarawak.

## **Research Methodology**

In the context of studies on the empowerment of Iban women in Sarawak, data collection strategies will be planned concerning the literature review obtained. As a large community group, the socio-cultural needs of the Iban community will directly reflect the ethnic minorities in Sarawak. This study will use quantitative research methods. Researchers will use the questionnaire form as a method to obtain data. The focused community of this study is the largest indigenous ethnic group in Sarawak, namely the Iban. The researcher used the cluster sampling method to select the study respondents from various walks of the Iban community in Sarawak.

The study sample consists of Iban women localities in five Divisions namely Miri, Bintulu, Sibul, Kuching and Kapit which have the largest Iban population. A total of 300 respondents will be involved in this study which consists of youth ages 18 to 40 years. Questionnaires will be distributed via email, social media, and field studies. The research instrument consists of two parts, namely Part A: Demographics Respondents, and Part B: personality traits and skills competencies. Data collection will be conducted in July 2021 and the analysis and report preparation phase will extend until December 2021. Data analysis will be divided into three stages (descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis) using SPSS Version 26.

## **Expected Outcome**

The impact of the implementation of the program can assess the effectiveness as well as new initiatives and programs to empower Iban women. These include job creation, entrepreneurial activity, and the use of technology-based on the findings of the study. (Malaysia Prime Minister's Department, 2017). The personality traits and skills possessed by Iban women will be indicators of the measurement and evaluation of programs to the empowerment of Dayak women in Sarawak. The uniqueness of identities and communities of Dayak in Sarawak will create the field of new job creation as an initiative and job opportunities for Iban women to improve their economic status. For example, providing upskilling and reskilling programs to Iban women to enhance self-development and social skills in adapting to the changing needs of the future work as well as the increasingly competitive and dynamic global environment. Conclusively, this study will be an instrument or benchmark to monitor the development of the quality and well-being of the Dayak community in Sarawak. In addition, this study will provide data profiling of Iban Women's,

by making background and skills as indicators. The researchers believe this study will be a reference for change and innovative development for Dayak community development programs in the future.

### Conclusion

Community empowerment shows that Iban women have the capabilities and abilities to venture into new area of employment and business. By collecting more people within the Iban community to help and expose them more to Sustainable Development Goals, it could achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. It can produce a unique finding for the Iban women community in Sarawak. The Iban community tends to be aware of opinions through actions and appearances. Awareness of the status of the Iban community makes them feel humble to socialize with people of higher status (Negin, 2021). Therefore, the needs attention must be given especially to Iban women to enhance economic and social development. Further, after reviewing previous studies related to community empowerment, personality traits, and skill competencies, the researchers have made some recommendations. Study of personality and skills will increase participation of Iban women in the economic sector and continuation of activities to ensure sources of income and improve the living standards of Iban women in the study area. The findings of this study will be a reference to stakeholder and government to develop a Strategic Plan for the empowerment of Iban Women to ensure the well-being of Iban women in the area of study.

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