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Reviewing Civil Servants' Well-Being and the Role of the Ecological System Theory

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Abstract

The quality of life has been debated since the Tenth Malaysia Plan. It continues to be a vital aspect of the Eleventh Malaysia Plan to improve the community's living standards in line with Vision 2020 based on the Malaysian People's Well-Being Index (IKRM), which was first used in 2012. In general, well-being is a psychological (internally) form involving happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-efficacy, family life, employment, education, and finance. Well-being issues will continue to be discussed, especially in the context of civil servants being associated with success at the professional, personal, and interpersonal levels, with competent individuals showing higher productivity in the workplace, more effective learning, increased creativity, more prosocial behavior, and positive human relationships. Thus, this paper discusses the status of civil servants in Malaysia, the ecological system theory, and related past studies. Well-being is a dynamic process that will add value to human beings on how their lives can evolve positively or otherwise. Well-being is usually assessed from a psychological point of view which covers cognitive and affective aspects. These elements are an accurate measure to the individual to help towards well-being in life. This review can influence well-being by several key factors: physical health, quality of life, emotions, happiness, and good intimacy with society (social).

Keywords: Ecological System Theory, Happiness, Life, Quality, Well-Being

Introduction

The people in Malaysia have begun to open their eyes to life's well-being, which is linked to the quality of life. The quality of life has been debated since the Tenth Malaysia Plan. It continues to be a vital aspect of the Eleventh Malaysia Plan to improve the community's living standards in line with Vision 2020 based on the Malaysian People's Well-Being Index (IKRM), which was first used in 2012. Costanza et al (2007) argue that well-being refers to an individual's or group's response to happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being. On the other hand, Bretones and Gonzales (2011) define well-being as a concept that can explain various forms of well-being such as work, material things, or marriage.

Among civil servants, well-being can be measured based on household income, educational background, ownership of assets such as houses, land, and others, and commitment or savings of financial instruments. In addition, the recognition, appreciation,

and comfort that are often valued in life by society become benchmarks in the well-being of life (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). According to Brown et al (2007), the monthly income received by individuals does not affect overall career satisfaction. Still, the position or rank in a ministry/department/agency/organization can increase self-esteem and job satisfaction which indirectly describes the well-being of one's life.

Education is a crucial factor in human life and is essential for Malaysia towards a developed and high-income country. However, education that ends with a qualification will not guarantee one's success in the future if it is not accompanied by non-formal education. This is because it has become a habit that non-formal education profoundly affects life and can change a person into a more brilliant one. Non-formal education provides lessons to society alone, but it is also a channel to convey the noble values in a plural society, such as respect, tolerance, cooperation, and moral aspects applied to the community to achieve prosperity and live a peaceful life. Education is usually obtained through talks, training, courses, seminars, workshops, forums, and face-to-face or online conferences.

A person's success in achieving well-being in life also depends on a person or a group of people around him. The encouragement of the social environment is the presence or involvement of one or more people personally by providing advice, motivation, instruction, and suggestions when a person experiences problems while doing something (Bastaman, 2014). The encouragement and involvement of parents at an early stage is necessary to affect children's development positively and even be more resilient in any situation. Usually, individuals or a group of people in this group are close and trustworthy; therefore, the encouragement of the social environment and its involvement plays an essential role in the well-being of human life.

In general, well-being is a psychological (internally) form that involves several dimensions such as happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-efficacy, family life, employment, education, and finance (Costanza et al., 2007; Bretones & Gonzales, 2011). According to Magrabi et al (1991), well-being is healthy, comfortable, and happy due to consuming goods and services. Moreover, well-being is also referred to as feeling free from any stress and poverty, feeling happy, overcoming sadness in the long run, feeling optimistic about life, and obtaining what is desired in line with goals (Atchley & Barusch, 2004). Billson (2006) refers to well-being as an optimal state measured in satisfaction, confidence, endurance, and physical health. In contrast, Costanza et al (2007) refer to well-being as an individual or group response to happiness, life satisfaction, utility, or well-being.

Well-being issues will continue to be discussed, especially in the context of civil servants being associated with success at the professional, personal, and interpersonal levels, with competent individuals showing higher productivity in the workplace, more effective learning, increased creativity, more prosocial behavior, and positive human relationships. It is also associated with several better physical health and longevity outcomes and better individual performance in the workplace. Higher life satisfaction is associated with better national economic performance.

For civil servants, improving the subjective well-being of this group is just as important as any other group of society. The proof is that the government has made various efforts, either in the form of policies or programs, which aim, among others, to improve their well-being. One of the factors that contribute to life's well-being is education. For civil servants or individuals who have worked, Non-formal education is one of the platforms to increase knowledge, whether it involves the knowledge of skills that can generate finance or

knowledge in general. Thus, this paper discusses the status of civil servants in Malaysia, the ecological system theory, and related past studies.

Background of Civil Servants in Malaysia

Provisions on the public service are explained under Clause 1, Article 132 of the Federal Constitution: "For this Constitution, the public service is i. Armed Forces, ii. Judicial and legal services, iii. Federal general public service, iv. The police force, v. Repealed, vi. Joint public service, vii. Civil service of each state and viii. Lesson services. In that context, the federal civil service includes the national general civil service, the education service, the judicial and legal service, the police service, and military personnel. In comparison, joint service is a service where the federation can make the filling of officers, but the post belongs to the state concerned (Public Service Identification Kit). The government introduced and implemented the New Public Service Remuneration (SBPA) in 2011 to replace the Malaysian Remuneration System (SSM), in effect since 2002.

This implementation involves a service structure that includes service schemes, conditions of service, salaries, allowances, facilities and retirement, and retirement benefits. The service structure under SBPA is divided into four service groups: Premier Group, Top Management Group, Management, Professional Group, and Implementation Group. The Premier Group is at the top tier in the Public Service Structure that holds strategic and critical positions. The Top Management Group consists of Principal Positions and Special Grade Positions. A key position is at the highest management level in certain services that play a strategic role in leading the organizational management machinery of a ministry, department, and agency.

At the same time, the Special Grade position is determined based on recognizing the level of expertise and experience of officers who do not perform roles or tasks that are managerial and strategic. The Management and Professional Group plays the same role as the Top Management Group but at a lower grade post before promotion. The Implementation Group was introduced to replace the Support Group. The graded layer for the Implementing Group is according to the minimum entry qualifications stipulated in the service scheme. The minimum entry qualification into the civil service is set at the Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR) level.

Civil servants in Malaysia are divided into two categories, namely federal civil servants and state civil servants. The power to appoint federal civil servants is under the jurisdiction of His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, while the civil servants of a state are under the Raja or Yang di-Pertua Negeri. The Appointing Authority implements the recruitment body (PBM), consisting of the Armed Forces Council, the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Police Force Commission, and the Education Services Commission (Public Service Identification Kit). Civil servants are the main lifeblood as a transformation agent of a country's success. The slogan of efficient, fast, and integrity is the pillar of civil servants' practice in implementing the government's mission and Vision and further improving the civil service's performance from time to time.

The government has long tried to implement a better quality and integrity public service in the country through the introduction of several related policies and policies starting with the launch of the Clean, Efficient, and Trust campaign in 1982, the Leadership by Example campaign in 1983, the Policy on the Application of Islamic Values in 1985, Islamic Work Ethics in 1987, Outstanding Work Culture in 1989, Quality Award in 1990, Client's Charter in 1993, e-government and MS ISO 9000 in 1996, Outstanding Service Award in 2002, key performance

indicators (KPIs) and Islam Hadhari on 2005, Creative and Innovative Awards in 2012, Organizational Anti-Corruption Management in 2018 and many other measures.

This non-formal education allows anyone to acquire knowledge throughout their life or as long as they have the ability. Non-formal education means teaching and learning activities implemented throughout life, especially for adults. It is considered beneficial to individuals because it can improve one's life by improving work skills, personal improvement, and the addition of knowledge. According to Albert (2009), lifelong learning is a process of continuous learning of a person to improve skills or develop a career in a field of employment now or the future. A more comprehensive understanding of lifelong learning is seen in Longworth and Davies (1996), namely lifelong learning is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity, and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments. Thus, lifelong learning is a process of continuously building human potential throughout his life.

All the knowledge, skills, and values learned can be implemented to improve his life and can be categorized as non-formal education. Lifelong learning is a continuous educational process in which each individual has the opportunity to continue their studies after the end of the actual school system. It can be full-time or part-time and contains vocational or non-vocational lessons. According to Jarvis (1995), lifelong learning means complementing the personality, social, and professional development throughout an individual's life to enhance the quality of that individual and the surrounding society. According to Knapper and Copley (2021), lifelong learning is a method to meet changes in the workplace and continue education in schools and universities based on work organization.

Darsuki (1993) stated that lifelong learning has three components: non-formal education, non-formal education, and formal education. A European Commission also lists the same concept, the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE), which states '... lifelong learning is therefore about valuing all forms of learning, including formal learning, such as a degree course followed at university; non-formal learning, such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace; and informal learning, such as inter-generational learning, for example where parents learn to use ICT through their children. This means that lifelong learning emphasizes the concept of continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies from formal education to the next level, leading to better changes in attitudes and behaviors, thereby increasing the potential and ability of individuals to contribute to the development—self, society, and state.

Ecological System Theory

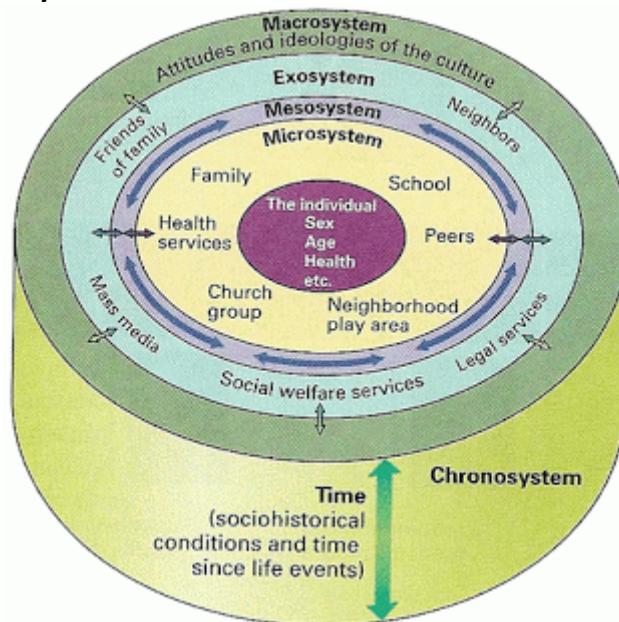


Figure 2.1 Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1995)

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1995) Ecological Systems Theory, peers are part of the adolescent microsystem. Through Ecological Systems Theory, the environment exerts a significant influence on a person's development. This Ecological System Theory describes the existence of five human ecological environments, namely microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems, that influence the formation of values in the culture of community life. Microsystems that influence individual thought patterns and values involve families, health services, religious groups, peers, neighbors, and the school community. The interactions and the cultural values developed have developed the individual's personality. On the other hand, mesosystem refers to the changes in values and culture that form from education, training, and beliefs in the individual himself.

Touching on the aspect of personal change towards better values and culture, what appears on the surface does not fully reflect the internal factors of an individual. In other words, the inter-ethnic relations that take place will be more profound if the internal aspects of the individual are willing to accept and recognize each difference rather than just being superficially highlighted merely to obscure the facts. This is in line with the description of the iceberg theory of individual character and identity as follows.

External appearances do not necessarily describe the implicit aspects of the individual internally. The appreciation of patriotism and tolerance values should be rooted in attitudes, positive perceptions, and group norms by denying negative attitudes that can provoke conflict. Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917 - 2005). The ecological theory is a sociocultural view of development that consists of five spheres ranging from direct interaction with social agents to cultural influences. The five systems in Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology are microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the ecological theory focuses that individuals who go through growth and development are included in an environmental system that emphasizes the interaction between each other. A child's interaction with their environment and people around them, such as family, peers, teachers, and others, can influence their development and growth.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes child development as the result of interactions between the environment and the child. According to him, a child's development is the effect of the environment on the child and the child's characteristics on the environment. The environment greatly influences the behavior and intellectual and spiritual development of a student. A positive environment will help children achieve excellence in academics, while a negative environment will hamper all the efforts taken by the student. The environment inherited by a student will shape behavior that will shape academic and personality development. Thus the environment can influence the development and learning of students.

Therefore, a teacher must judge the teaching objectives because there are individual differences in gender, physical, health, social, language, and race. Teachers need to know the personality of a student to facilitate the teaching and learning of teachers. In addition, teachers must be prepared for various situations for successful teaching and learning in the classroom.

Microsystems involve the immediate environment in which children have direct interaction and spend the most time. It encompasses families, teachers, peers, schools, and settings directly engaged with children. Parents are the most important socializing agents in a child's life, and as the closest individuals to a child's community, parents have a significant influence on a child's behavior. According to Bronfenbrenner, the individual is not a passive recipient of experience in this environment but someone who helps develop the environment or atmosphere.

Mesosystem is the relationship between microsystems such as family and school, family and children's peers, parents and employers, etc. All of these relationships affect a child's development. According to Bronfenbrenner (2004), children who are encouraged to interact and communicate in this mesosystem show better performance than children who lack the opportunity to connect and interact with those around them. An ecosystem is a system that involves the external environment in which children do not play an active role. Still, the actions of members influence their development in this ecosystem through the experiences they go through.

Macrosystem refers to a system of the influence of sociocultural elements and socioeconomic position on the development of children. This macrosystem includes factors of gender, ethnicity, customs, values, and socioeconomic status that influence children's development. According to Eccles (2007), poverty is one of the crucial aspects of this macrosystem that hinders children's development while reducing their learning ability.

On the other hand, chronosystems focus on the influence of sociohistorical conditions and events on the development of children in a particular era. The lives of children today are very different from the childhood lives of their parents or grandparents (Schaie & Uhlenberg, 2007).

Past Studies

Previous researchers have extensively studied this well-being issue, although the terms are different. Some studies feature new techniques in calculating the quality of life index, specifically highlighting the calculation by a mathematical model of Fuzzy Sets Theory (Lazim & Abu Osman, 2009). The model formed supports significantly increasing the value of quality of life. Some studies include indicators and indices of quality of life (Syafii & Miskam, 2011). According to space and time, the study examined the local population's socio economic changes, needs, and wants. Foreign countries such as Hong Kong also conduct quality of life studies conducted under the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). This quality of life, in

addition to being related to the opportunity for survival and satisfaction in meeting psychological needs, quality of life also includes satisfaction with emotions, such as satisfaction with freedom, justice, and opportunities for an individual to grow and develop well (Shek et al., 2005). The study conducted by CUHK is still ongoing, and reports are produced annually.

In contrast to Malaysia, the 'Hong Kong Quality of Life Index Report' was developed by academics under the Faculty of Social Sciences starting in 2002. Well-being or quality of life is very related and significantly impacts national development. This is because national development and well-being are entities of the spatial element. Each space or area with a different atmosphere, environment, ideology, or culture will eventually form individual well-being and influence the existing development.

Support is said to be one of the crucial variables that can affect the well-being of a person (Syafii & Miskam, 2011). Ongoing support from family, friends, or individuals can further improve one's well-being (Hadi et al., 2004). This is based on the importance of this support to aspects of health, care of nutritional practices, basic needs, etc. Happiness has to do with the quality of life and can affect one's well-being. Happiness indicates that an individual has positive emotions, satisfaction, and a more meaningful life. Individuals who achieve happiness and simplicity in their lives can weather problems with more effective coping strategies.

Clark et al (2017) suggest several essential aspects of enhancing social relationships toward the well-being of life in a community. The social relations activities discussed are related to the use of technology-based social interaction as an essential factor in creating a prosperous community that is social sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and various other social media. For him, this aspect facilitates quick and fast interaction and involves more community members. Although seen as simple, this approach is very suitable for strengthening relationships and well-being in the context of modern society.

Based on a study conducted by Ali and Yusof (2004), the family plays a significant role in dealing with an individual's behavior because the family has a strong enough influence to contribute to individual behavior formation. The students in the study expected their families to play a role by paying attention to their future formation (35%), education (29%), finance (22%), loving care (19%), and career choice (4%).

According to a previous study conducted by Yusoff et al (2013), there is a significant relationship between family socioeconomic background on the level of academic achievement from aspects of different social classes, residential areas, and ethnic groups. In his study, the most significant influence was the social class, where individuals from high social class had a much better chance of getting a much better education than students from low social class. This study aligns with Ganesen's (2013); Gunasekaran's (2003) family socioeconomic factors that are less prominent to influence individuals to achieve good academic levels.

This is evidenced in Puvanesvaran's (2004) study on financial factors that do not allow individuals to drop out of school because they can not cover their school expenses and work part-time to reduce the socioeconomic problems of the family. Lack of individual income and family financial problems caused them to start working part-time as car washers, night market stall assistants, and laborers in nearby housing estates to supplement the family's livelihood. It ended with individuals not continuing their education due to being deceived about income, which is decent.

According to Puvanesvaran (2004) again, low socioeconomic factors are the leading cause of educational dropout among the Indian community. The socioeconomic backwardness of Indian society has lingered despite migration over the centuries. In

Muniandy's (2015) research, this factor has given various adverse effects that persist in the Indian community and continue to maintain the Indian community in the B40 group.

Moreover, an article written by Gouda (2014) states that the educational background possessed by an individual is related to the level of academic achievement. In his article, individuals from affluent families are fortunate because the chances for such individuals to complete higher education are high and guaranteed. Individuals will strive to ensure that they can achieve the highest level of education.

The findings of a study by Arcuria (2011) found that skills such as interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial skills, and motivational skills are essential for individuals to adopt in the future. Aiello's (2015) findings tell about the perception of employers who want individuals with high technical skills and generic skills (knowledge) to serve in their company. In addition, Ab Halim (2013) found that courses offered in educational institutions need to meet the needs of the industry because the suitable courses affect the knowledge and skills of individuals. Knowledge and skills are fundamental critical issues in determining the marketability of graduates (Mokhtar & Mustapha, 2010).

Masud's study (2013) found that individuals need to improve their skills and academic qualifications to get a good job quickly. This shows that the industry needs employees who are skilled in various skills and knowledge and expect that educational institutions can produce the desired employees. Effandi and Norliza (2009) conducted a previous study to determine study participants' level of knowledge and skills after attending non-formal education. The study findings showed that participants' ability was at a moderate ratio while the ratio for knowledge was high. This indicates that non-formal education can affect a person's knowledge and skills. Other researchers also stated that non-formal education produces knowledgeable individuals and produces highly skilled students who meet the needs of the industry.

Salmiah, Elyana, and Yuzilawati (2017) found that among the benefits of participation of the disabled in non-formal education programs identified are experience, teaching and learning facilities, and a variety of courses, teacher skills, and employment opportunities. The participation of the disabled in this non-formal education program can increase the capacity of talent and contribute to the well-being of the disabled themselves.

Past studies have stated that the credibility of institutions that offer non-formal education programs has other factors such as duration of research and teaching and learning methods is an important influence for the working class in choosing to follow a program of study (Barnett, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper discussed the status of civil servants in Malaysia, the ecological system theory, and related past studies. Well-being is a dynamic process that will provide added value to human beings on how their lives can evolve positively or otherwise (Azizah et al., 2013). Positive living values in the residential area can create a sense of calm and happiness in the residential area and affect the performance of work in the office. The term "Home Sweet Home" needs to be realized so that every community member feels happy and has fun in their residential area. The well-being of an individual largely depends on the psychological well-being they experience. Happiness is subjective. The well-being of life will cause a person to feel fun and happy and feel his life is meaningful.

Well-being is usually assessed from a psychological point of view which covers cognitive and affective aspects. Both aspects refer to the positive and negative feelings about

life that he has experienced so far by focusing on life satisfaction, such as quality of life, emotional joy, and happiness to be enjoyed. A positive living atmosphere will inspire and generate healthy thoughts to form a healthy and mature chain of action. Patience, concern, an urgency to act, and readiness to face all possibilities will be built in a more structured way in the thinking box of the population to manifest mature actions based on rational and thoughtful thinking. Symptoms of frustration, anxiety, and emotional disturbances can lead to moral decadence issues that can lead to acts out of control. Well-being also refers to well-being obtained from various other aspects such as social support, family relationships, and psychology. There are vital elements as a measure of well-being, namely autonomy, environmental control, self-development, positive relationships with others, and life goals and self-acceptance. These elements are an accurate measure to the individual to help towards well-being in life. This review can influence well-being by several key factors: physical health, quality of life, emotions, happiness, and good intimacy with society (social).

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