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The Impact of Information Literacy Programme to Rural Communities in Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malaysia

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) listed Quality Education and lifelong learning as Goal 4 from intersectional and integrated 17 goals. Rural libraries have been serving the local communities since 2005 as lifelong learning agents that offer various services including Information Literacy Programme which will improve self-development skills in reading by the public on a daily basis. The frequencies of the programme done by rural libraries and facilities provided might influence and contribute to the lifelong learning process. This study will investigate the impact of the Information Literacy Programme done by rural libraries to the rural communities' lifelong learning. Closed-ended questionnaires will be distributed to 125 rural libraries in Northern Region of Malaysia as targeted respondents. Collected data will be analysed using SPSS and the findings will encourage stakeholders to upgrade and improve the services and facilities in rural libraries.

Keywords: Rural Libraries, Information Literacy, SDGs, Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Rural libraries are a local gateway to the information and play an important role (Singh, 2020) even though they are located in small areas. This is one of the government's initiatives under supervision of Malaysian National Library to local society. They provide basic facilities of infrastructure and information to serve locality with reading materials, internet and computers, scanners, photocopy machines and promote reading encouragement programs (Saleng et al., 2021). Mohamed et al (2020) stated that users of rural libraries like reading activities. The impact of reading encouragement programmes done by PNM to the society is 69% of achievement (Dahlan et al., 2021). One of the reading encouragement programs is

information literacy that is scheduled periodically to teach and guide users, especially school students. Collaboration between rural libraries and schools show the engagement of social sustainability (Rafie et al., 2021). Library also known as a lifelong learning centre where everybody should be provided and given opportunities to learn new knowledge all the time regardless of age and education level. Adult education using the BFP model (learning, understanding and practice) combined ICT usage, information literacy and practical to be better has been done by rural libraries (Saleng et al., 2018). Rural libraries as lifelong learning agents should motivate and improvise users' life achievements (Pieper, 2010). Nowadays, users prefer to do online information searching rather than printed material because of rapid information age development. The digital contents are crucial especially in the education field (Rosman et al., 2020). This requirement plays an important part to ensure the achievement of Quality Education, Goal 4 in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) listed by the United Nations. Also defined as 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2015). Unfortunately, no study yet discusses the effectiveness of the information literacy programmes done by rural libraries to communities. Also how far the impact of the programme is to users' lifelong learning process. Most of the related studies discussed higher education context. Rural libraries under Malaysian National Library called Public Library in Rural Area were established in 2005. After 16 years of service, hope from this study will come out with findings and recommendations to the stakeholders. There is some improvement needed in terms of physical building, library collection and utilities, especially the internet as a gateway to the information age. Parbie et al (2021) in their study stated that student's expectations of the library facilities were higher than their perceptions on what library provided. The digital information age must go along with the development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) in libraries and librarianship (Hussain, 2020). Nisha & Varghese (2021) mentioned that information literacy is important in facing the challenges of the IR 4.0.

Problem Statement

The Information Literacy Programme is one of the national initiatives under PNM and all types of libraries are required to support and participate in it. Most of the Information Literacy Programmes are focused on reading habits or digital contents in all ages categories in order to reduce inequality between rural and urban communities. Government allocates a certain amount every year to support the Information Literacy Programme to attain lifelong learning (BPOM, 2019). The question is what are the efforts and encouragement taken by all libraries to promote and make it happen successfully. Are the users taking part in all programmes offered and fully utilise it? Are the facilities provided helps libraries to promote and conduct the programmes accordingly? At the end of the day, do the users improve their literacy and skills? Several related studies done in Malaysia only focus on higher education. Study by (Idzwan et al., 2011) mentioned that in order to achieve excellent academic performance, students must be equipped with appropriate information literacy competencies such as searching skills, evaluating skills and referencing skills. This literacy is not only for academic purposes but also for implementation in the lifelong learning process and productive community. To fulfil desires, academic libraries should provide various information literacy programmes continuously, not only library orientation or user education. Saad et al (2005) stated the way higher education students were assessed are depending on how the information literacy programmes are delivered to them and from that they can find the learning outcomes. Academic libraries have a few choices of either teaching information

literacy as a generic course or embed it within a course or embed it within a final year project. Assessment is an ongoing process and everyone can use every possible method until an ideal one is found. However, the main objective of this study is to identify the success of information literacy programmes held by Public Library in Rural Area and its impact on rural communities. This study motivates people to choose because when we bring the library to unconventional places, we are actually reducing inequalities. This is aligning with Perpustakaan Desa's vision, as an agent of change for social development and a catalyst for the unification of reading culture. While Perpustakaan Desa's mission is to provide information resources in rural areas. The main objective of Public Library in Rural Areas to be a neutral place for all that cover 5 pillars such as one stop centre, lifelong learning, national celebration, smart partnership and social networking. Omar et al (2015) in their study mention, even though the numbers of rural libraries are huge, but the study regarding this type of libraries in Malaysia are still lacking. The study also needs to be conducted in order to examine the basic knowledge of the rural communities and the quality of the library's services for them. In the study by (Mazuki et al., 2014), they conclude that the majority of rural communities' members come to rural libraries not just for reading only. Many of them make rural libraries as a meeting place, they talk and share information and also give to each other. They believe that rural libraries support and help build self-development progress. Also develop self-improvement in changing their life. Another objective of this study is to identify the frequencies of information literacy programmes organised in the rural communities. Are the numbers of programmes done give an impact to the rural communities and influence their lifelong learning? Next objective is to identify the level of facilities provided in Public Library in Rural Area to support national information literacy programmes and to fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning. The authorised agency should come out with solutions and suggestions on how to enlarge the library's physical, infrastructure, info structure and programmes to ensure lifelong learning can be implemented in rural communities and achieved SDGs. These two objectives are to examine the relationship between the effect of information literacy programmes with the performance of rural libraries and the relationship between the effect of facilities level with the performance of rural libraries to fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning.

Research Objectives

Main Objective of this study is to investigate the impact of information literacy programmes done by on rural communities. There are four sub-objectives to be identified in this study.

Sub-objectives:

- a) To identify the frequencies of information literacy programmes, organise in the rural communities
- b) To identify the level of facilities provided in Public Library in Rural Area to serve the rural communities
- c) To examining the relationship between the effect of information literacy programmes with the performance of to fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning
- d) To examining the relationship between the effect of facilities level with the performance of Public Library in Rural Area to fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning

Research Question

Main question: What is the impact of information literacy programmes done by to rural communities?

Sub-questions:

- a) How frequent are the information literacy programmes organised by Perpustakaan Desa?
- b) What is the level of facilities provided in PD to serve the rural communities?
- c) What is the relationship between the effect of information literacy programmes with the performance of PDs to fulfil SDGs lifelong learning?
- d) What is the relationship between the effect of facilities level with the performance of Public Library in Rural Areato fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning?

Literature Review

Libraries are the repositories of knowledge with various types of medium. Most of the libraries are moving to be 'digital libraries' especially academic libraries (Kato et al., 2021) and also for the military (Abdul Rahman & Mohezar, 2020) with some challenges and initiatives of development (Rahman, 2020). Nowadays people like to do information searching using online methods because they can access the information needed everywhere at any place and any time. With borderless information, literacy is needed in order to filter the information gathered. It is important for everyone to have information literacy including search, select, use and evaluate information effectively (Alfiyah et al., 2017). All libraries should promote and provide information literacy programmes to users (Joint & Wallis, 2005). Rural libraries are one of them and play vital roles in educating local communities with the skills (Md, 2020). The literature review will discuss more on related articles of information literacy, rural libraries, rural libraries and information literacy programme, and library in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Information Literacy

Information literacy is a vital ability nowadays aligned with the progression of the internet and ICT. Due to rapid development and pandemic, most people all over the world are exposed to unlimited and borderless information. In order to select and filter the exploded information, literacy skills are needed. According to the American Library Association (ALA), information literacy is one of survival skills in the Information Age, where people who are information literate know how to find, evaluate and use information effectively to solve a particular problem or make a decision. In other definition, information literacy is the ability to define one's information needs and then to access, process, evaluate and use information for decision-making, learning and problem-solving. It is a tool for lifelong learning in the networked environment (Samantaray, 2017). Coonan et al (2018) in CILIP Definition of Information Literacy 2018 stated that Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. Seifi et al (2020) & (Kennedy & Gruber, 2020) in their studies discussed the effectiveness of information literacy instruction on lifelong learning readiness. Within the National Information Literacy Agenda (NILA), the information literacy framework for Malaysia was proposed in the study conducted by (Edzan & Sharif, 2005) where every library has roles and responsibilities to conduct and deliver information literacy programmes. Yazid & Zuliana (2018) also have come out with a model of information literacy for rural societies in order to assist them in education, human development, economic development, social development and lifelong learning. Even though the model and framework included all related participants of information literacy programmes from higher levels of agency such as Malaysian National Library and other

stakeholders to lower levels such as primary school libraries, the implementation focused more on school and higher education rather than rural communities.

Rural Libraries

In Malaysia, rural libraries are called Public Library in Rural Area (PD). Main purpose is to serve local communities with reading materials, information technology facilities and conduct information literacy programmes (PNM, 2019). In order to support the desire of SDGs, all libraries including rural libraries have to play roles to ensure everyone is information literate and practise lifelong learning (Md, 2020). It is important to ensure the gap of inequality in literacy between rural and urban communities is not too obvious. Ejedafiru (2015) in her study stated that the need to mainstream rural communities in order to enhance equity in information accessing and gathering and educational opportunities irrespective of locality. The escalating knowledge gap that exists between the rural and urban dwellers need to be bridged, literacy should not be a privilege of the few populations living in urban cities. It is pertinent for every citizen irrespective of locality to have access to library and information services to enable them to improve their level of literacy. According to (Reitz, 2004), a rural library is a library or library system that serves a population living primarily on farms and branches and in remote communities rather than in a town or city. Rural libraries typically provide outreach services such as bookmobiles and books-by-mail to bring library resources and services to users. Before the establishment of Perpustakaan Desa, public libraries such as State Library and District Library played the same roles but in a wide scale of communities. And all the outreach services stated above were offered by public libraries including mobile libraries and served not only communities but also school pupils. Furthermore, Public Library in Rural Area can cater locality in small numbers below 10, 000 people or according to the Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) area. Even though rural libraries can assist the communities in lifelong learning, the facilities provided are still lacking and inequitable compared to urban ones (Alam et al., 2017; Parbie et al., 2021; Adkins et al., 2014). It includes utilities such as electricity, water, internet and physical building infrastructure of rural libraries (Iwhiwhu, 2012).

Rural Libraries and Information Literacy Programme

Malaysian National Library is functioning to encourage and facilitate the cultivation of the nature of reading to the nation (PNM, 2021). All types of libraries under PNM should support and run all the programmes' listed including Perpustakaan Desa. One of the reading programmes is information literacy. Programme that teaches users to find, use and evaluate information accurately. The importance of rural libraries in information literacy to communities have been discussed in few studies (CIn & David, 2015; Krolak, 2006; Karisiddappa & Rajgoli, 2009). In order to be information literate, someone should be knowledgeable on it by implementing the information literacy process in their life. And to be an educated person, someone should be considering learning as a lifelong process. The process that never ends even though someone is having the highest education level. This is what rural libraries should do by spreading the importance of information literacy programmes in local communities and help them to increase their life achievement (Harding, 2008). Also, to inequitable the gap between urban and rural communities in terms of knowledge and skills. Stakeholders should support rural libraries in terms of facilities, funding and human resources.

Library in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDGs were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Libraries are key partners in this global work. Achieving all of the Goals depends on libraries and information. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has been actively involved with the creation and promotion of the UN 2030 SDGs. Libraries play a big part in helping to provide knowledge, understanding, and resources to our communities. When libraries are providing information at the local level, they are providing resources, skills, and tangible ways to achieve the goals of the SDGs (Abdulrahman et al., 2019). The importance of public libraries to sustainable development efforts are implicitly recognized within the UN 2030 Agenda.

“It envisages: a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive...A world with universal literacy. A world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured”, (UN, 2015).

Md (2020) found that an important key to achieve sustainable development is information. Information poverty is a huge obstacle in many countries. The study also found that community libraries plays vital roles as a hub for information and activities for local communities. More than its typical function as we know, a small building with few shelves of books, a few Personal Computers for information searching with a limited number of staffs to serve the locals especially for rural communities. Main purpose is to help illiterate people and offer the continued information literacy resources for lifelong learning. A study done by (Benson et al., 2015), stated in their finding that the expectations of services from community and public libraries as well as the relevant action plans they can implement to achieve the expectations; the challenges community and public libraries face in their efforts to support socioeconomic development; and the actions they can take to enhance their effectiveness in supporting socioeconomic development in their communities. All the studies show that libraries play important roles to ensure everyone gets equal opportunities of knowledge gathering, resources and information related to their needs. It's a basic requirement to improve their background, especially education to avoid increasing the number of lost generations.

Methodology

Data will be collected using quantitative methods for this applied research. The cross-sectional online questionnaire will be distributed through Google Form to the respondents via WhatsApp messages or email. The research question will construct from a few previous studies (Alam et al., 2017, Ali et al., 2019 & Amadi et al., 2020) will begin by building a foundation of essential data for each Public Library in Rural Area in the study such as allocation and expenditures, human resources, size of collections, number of visitors, ICT facilities, information literacy programmes and user data. Also on its community demographics, education background, household income and economic base. Closed-ended research questions will be collected in Microsoft Excel derived from Google Form and will be analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The targeted respondents are Perpustakaan Desa, PNM in the northern region of Malaysia (Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perlis).

Population

Table 1-1

Public Library in Rural Area in Northern Region of Malaysia

PERPUSTAKAAN DESA, PNM	NUMBERS
PULAU PINANG	32
KEDAH	57
PERLIS	36
TOTAL	125

Table 1-1 above shows the numbers of in the Northern Region of Malaysia. The Number of Public Library in Rural Area in Pulau Pinang is 32, Kedah is 57 and Perlis is 36 and the total is 125. So this study will cover 125 Perpustakaan Desa, PNM in the Northern Region of Malaysia only.

Sampling

Based on Krejcie and Morgan Table (Abdul & Bukhari, 2021), the sample size for a population of 125 is 97. But for this study, the questionnaire will be distributed to all Perpustakaan Desa, PNM in Northern Region and if possible, the field visit and informal conversation of a few Public Library in Rural Area will be done in order to get the information and feedback. Also, to ensure data gathered in questionnaires are tally with real situations and to observe the current physical infrastructure of the libraries.

Data Collection

Data collection methods will be conducted in 2 types; First, Primary Data (data will be gathered through questionnaire, survey, informal conversation and observation will be used to get the first-hand data). Second, Secondary Data (data collection derived from Annual Report, Strategic Planning, Statistics and related publications.).

Theoretical Framework

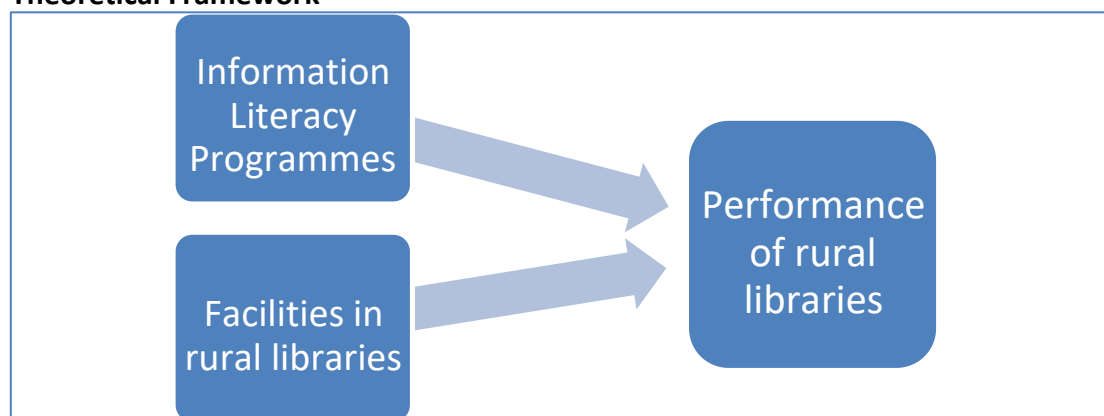


Figure 1-1 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework is the structure that supports a theory of a research study. In this study, there are two Independent Variables (IV) listed. First, information literacy programmes and second is facilities in rural libraries. These Independent Variables influence the performance of rural libraries as Dependent Variable (DV).

Limitation

This study is at the initial stage and many of the developments are still in the early process. Due to pandemic Covid-19, some field visits might be postponed and delayed. The impact of Information Literacy Programme implementation for lifelong learning process to rural communities can benefit the nation. Through this study, we believed to come up with suggestions on how to bridge the gap of inequalities between rural and urban information literacy. Enhance the collaboration of Information Literacy Programme especially with the Ministry of Education in order to advocate reading fluency among rural communities (Badiran, 2021).

Conclusion

This study intends to investigate the impact of the programmes done by Public Library in Rural Area to rural communities in their lifelong learning. This is important because information literacy grants many advantages to an individual and to the community in general. Many studies mentioned the importance of libraries in imparting information literacy as an essential skill in the current society (Nisha & Varghese, 2021). This research will identify the frequencies of information literacy programmes organised in the rural communities. Also, to identify the level of facilities provided in Public Library in Rural Area to attainment of SDGs and lifelong long learning process. Lastly, to examine the relationship between the effect of information literacy programmes with the performance of Public Library in Rural Area and the effect of facilities level with the performance of Public Library in Rural Area to fulfil the SDGs lifelong learning.

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