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Role of Higher Education Institution to the Development of Community: Evidence from UiTM Melaka

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Abstract

This paper aims at understanding the impacts brought by UiTM Melaka to the development of community. It is partly due to the traditional argument that the university has been detached from the community development. A simple random sampling was employed, and 52 respondents managed to participate in this study by answering questionnaires. Next, the structured interviews were conducted to cross-check the statistical analysis findings among the communities in Alor Gajah, Bandaraya Melaka and Jasin. The purpose of this study is to find out how the existence of UiTM Melaka has impacted the community development, especially in the aspects of public transportation, facilities, business growth, education and job opportunities. The results found that the existence of UiTM Melaka contributes to the valuable impacts to the development of those aspects, particularly on promoting youth and teenagers to pursue higher education. Besides, its establishment does assist the community to increase their income as more job opportunities are available in the surrounding areas. However, there is a need to look at how UiTM Melaka can help in growing the business companies (commercial) around the residential areas. These findings provide significant implications to the university management and policymakers to re-look at specific strategies to further strengthen the university engagements and community development in the future.

Keywords: Service Development of Community, Community Development Theory, Higher Learning Institution, UiTM Melaka

Introduction

Universities are important hubs for the local area particularly to boost employment and spending among local communities. Universities are major employers and usually generate jobs indirectly, through their spending on local goods and services. Besides of these economic benefits, universities support the local community in many ways such as providing facilities for the community, for example facilities shared with schools or offer advice and consultancy to local peoples and businesses. With regards to UiTM Melaka, its development has certainly open up vast opportunities for the surrounding communities. Since its development, it has contributed to the community development through land utilization, especially in Alor Gajah

and Jasin. As shown in Table 1, the statistics on land utilization within 10 kilometers radius of Alor Gajah and Jasin campuses show a drastic percentage change of bare soil, forest land, mixed vegetation land and developed areas from 1990 to 2019.

Table 1. The changes of land cover from 1990 to 2019 within 10 kilometres radius of UiTM Melaka

Types of Land Cover	Alor Gajah		Jasin	
	1990	2019	1990	2019
Forest	77.12%	33.37%	77.69%	42.77%
Bare soil	6.28%	10.53%	2.75%	7.36%
Mixed vegetation	14.55%	38.37%	17.03%	37.19%
Developed area	1.34%	16.69%	0.49%	10.43%

The most drastic changes happened for the forest land, in which the forest land has been reduced by 43.75 percent and 34.92 percent in Alor Gajah and Jasin respectively, from 1990 to 2019. Besides, more areas were developed within the years with the percentage increased by more than 9 percent in both areas. These developed areas include the areas with temporary and permanent buildings, houses, villages and artificial infrastructures. The change in land utilization within 10 kilometres radius of the UiTM Melaka is one of the evidences to reflect the roles of UiTM Melaka in developing the communities. Its establishment helps in the development of various opportunities that assist the surrounding communities to reap the benefits.

At one time, the university has been detached from the community because many academics thinks that community engagement is not important in their work. Nevertheless, effective collaboration between universities, schools, businesses, government and populations are become extremely important for community growth. This collaboration upsurges the probability that institutions influence a larger group of people, better use of their resources and deal more efficiently with the various problems faced by communities (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). The challenges related to social and economic activities, and shortage of resources lead to universities and communities reach out to one another to build boost social capital. Collaborations can be done in various methods, from offering advice to active participation. Therefore, university–community partnerships concept is become extremely important because of “can increase impact and share strength and expertise (Buys & Bursnall, 2007).

Due to these arguments, therefore, this paper aims at examining the social impacts brought by UiTM Melaka to the communities, especially in the infrastructure and development of community as well as business opportunities. Given that the government has allocated massive amount of funds to develop the three campuses, it is meaningless if the contributions brought by the university is very minimal. Hence, the findings are helpful in providing mindful thoughts on the contribution of the university to the community development. Vast contribution reflects the success of the university as well as the Melaka state government in enhancing the living standards. The findings assist the university management and policymakers to re-design on specific strategies to further strengthen the university engagements and community development in the near future.

The rest of this article is arranged as follows. The related literature is reviewed in the following section, while the research methodology adopted in this study is elaborated in section three. The results of the study are then discussed in section four. The final section highlights the key conclusion, drawbacks and offers recommendations for future works.

Literature Review

Community is defined as a group of people that have diverse characteristics and engage in a geographical setting. When universities are located in the same geographical area as the community, their relationship should not be neglected. In-line with the civic and community engagement theory, it dictates the importance of universities to the community development (O'Meara et al., 2010). Instead of dedicating their establishment to students' learning and personal development, their roles expand on building the society through community engagement. The traditional roles are no longer relevant as the universities are expected to give value added to the society and surrounding community. As one of the major innovations within higher education (Watson, 2007), the universities are expected to develop students with various skills and specialties, that have a complete set of civic or moral values. Since their establishment is as the cornerstone to build individuals scientifically, culturally, socially and cognitively, the outcomes produce by the universities should contribute to the societal development, through knowledge extension, technology, skills and moral values (Al Hila et al., 2018). Combining all elements together, it will give fruitful effects to the community partners through various ways such as entrepreneurial opportunities, business creation and infrastructure development. Besides, graduates with skills and high moral values help in improving the integrity, efficiency and productivity of the nation as a whole.

The roles of universities in enhancing community development were being highlighted in the "UN Agenda 2030" and one of the UNESCO initiatives, "education for sustainable development" (Fissi et al., 2021). Apart from producing great talents, these initiatives are possible by continually seeking for community engagements and collaborations. It involves outreach activities by producing new invention, innovations or proposing new business ideas for start-up incubators. This, in turn, provide greater opportunities to the community in venturing into business and entrepreneurship. In-line with the universities' curriculum, universities nowadays focus of innovation and entrepreneurship. The collaboration between universities, government, business, and technologies had proven to help to drive to improve the communities. Universities offer students with the skills to compete globally and can change the landscape of new area as universities are consider as important investors. Campus developments reshape the horizon while providing new community identities. The physical and social projects build by universities are benefited for the wider community. In addition, universities function is to attract talent worldwide as universities have an ability to attract talent worldwide. Universities employees including staff and students contribute more as they contribute to the liveliness of their communities and help develop open-minded and wide-ranging societies.

Community Development Theory is practical framework for social workers in quest of transformation for individuals, communities and societies (Hayashi & Walls, 2019). Community development is important because it creates strong, diverse communities that are able to attract and keep talent, start and grow businesses, and overcome issues that arise in the community. Universities and community can collaborate in many ways. One of the ways

is through community-university collaboration which both community and universities work together toward a common goal which benefited others (Gittelsohn et al., 2020). Developing a relationship is influenced by many components such as trust, communication, respecting diversity, and a culture of learning. However, collaboration also have challenges and threats, including issues of power and control, resource inequality, time commitment, conflicts of interest, and budget cuts/end of funding (Gittelsohn et al., 2020).

Regardless of those challenges, it should not hinder the universities to develop the nearby communities. For instance, University of Florence in Italy, was once facing with a lack of adequate financial resources (Fissi et al., 2021). However, the university managed to continuously engage with the nearby community, by conducting free lectures to the public. The lectures are focusing on various topics such as sustainability and best practices. Indirectly, the surrounding people are able to receive new ideas and valuable feedbacks on their business ventures, new business opportunities, and so on.

Apart from that, universities also offer important services to their surrounding communities including access to health-care, cultural and sports facilities, especially after declining funding from the public sector. In addition, universities also nurture creativity and open debate as universities support a number of creative activities as these, in turn, generate exciting intellectual that can contribute to the community. Next, higher education had proven to improve lives as it enhances knowledge, employment opportunities and promotes community participation. As the mediators of social mobility, universities act more than just platform of training, but become some essential intellectual settings where knowledge is created, disseminated and challenged. The role of higher institution is extremely important because it can foster opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange and social empowerment.

In addition, the existence of universities, particularly in the remote areas, address the public transportation issue among the local community. This issue might be irrelevant for the urban community due to high congestion, which forces the government to provide various types of public transportation to ease the problem. Nevertheless, community in the rural areas might not receive such benefits if lack of infrastructure development is conducted in their areas. Hence, the establishment of universities that encompass high number of staffs and students, give privilege to the rural community to receive public transportation services at an affordable cost (Bank & Kruss, 2018). Besides, they also enjoy the improved connectivity in the road network, as well as other facilities such as power supply and a better sewage system. It ultimately helps in attracting more investors and house developers into the areas. In turn, the business and job opportunities will skyrocket as those basic facilities are already in place. In achieving future sustainability, university-community engagement can assist in developing a better socio-ecological practices by sharing ideas and expertise on green infrastructure technology that can be applied on public transportation and other public services (Gerlak & Zuniga-Teran, 2020). It is with the aim to achieve better cost effectiveness and maintain great partnership with the community.

The above theoretical and empirical studies found that universities have a pivotal role in the development of community. The aspects in which UiTM Melaka as a higher learning

institution in Malaysia contributed to the Melaka's community development are highlighted in section IV of this paper.

Methodology

A qualitative and quantitative research designs were used to obtain in-depth information on the contribution of UiTM Melaka as a higher learning institution to the community developments, particularly in the areas of Alor Gajah, Bandaraya Melaka and Jasin. These three areas were chosen due to the establishment of the three campuses in Melaka. Using questionnaire as data collection method, we managed to receive complete feedbacks from a total of 52 out of 57 respondents who were living closely to the UiTM Melaka campuses. All respondents were willingly participated in this study. The participants were selected using a simple random sampling, across varying socioeconomic background within the study areas.

The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part is the demographic questions, aim in understanding the respondents' profiles, while the latter part encompassed nine questions related to their opinions on how the existence of UiTM Melaka give social impacts to the close community. Among others, the impacts are focusing on transportation services, business and job opportunities, public facilities as well as income generation. The respondents were asked to rate the impacts by using Likert scale, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The methods of analyses comprise of descriptive statistics and frequency analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the respondents' profiles as per stated in the first section of the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the nine questions in the second part were analyzed by using frequency analysis.

Next, interview is one method of collecting data in obtaining information on the issues of interest. Interviewing is a useful data collection method, especially during the exploratory stages of research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, in this study, interviews were conducted to cross-check the statistical analysis findings. The type of interview used was structured interview. Structured interviews are those conducted when it is known at the outset what information is needed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, structured interviews were employed among the communities in Alor Gajah, Bandar Melaka and Jasin to cross check the statistical analyses result of this study. Table 2 shows the list of profiles of the interviewees.

Table 2. Details of Respondents in Structured Interviews

Interviewees	Gender	Location	Duration (minutes)
1	Female	Alor Gajah	15
2	Female	Bandaraya Melaka	20
3	Female	Jasin	10
4	Male	Alor Gajah	10

They were chosen as the interviewees due to their experience and knowledge and longest stay in the area. The researcher approached them and requested for approval in conducting the structured interviews. The date, time and list of interviewees were included in that request. The researcher's request was approved with no objection on the date, time and list of interviewees. The interviews were conducted personally via telephone. An interview guide was developed by the researcher, including a list of questions to cross-check the statistical

analyses results. Every interviewee was informed on the purpose of the interview. Notably, permission from every interviewee was obtained prior to the publication of their answers on the interview questions. In total, there were three (3) interviews. These interviews lasted from 10 minutes to 20 minutes each. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Results

This section discusses results obtained from two sources, quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 52 responses were received across the three respondent groups, as seen in Table 3. The largest group of respondents was in Alor Gajah (38.46 percent), followed by the Bandaraya Melaka (36.54 percent) and Jasin (25.0 percent). More than half of respondents were female (34 respondents, 65.38 percent), 18 respondents were men (34.62 percent), and 63.46 percent of them were married. Among respondents, 78.85 percent were Malays, while Indian and Chinese represented 21.16 percent (11 respondents). In term of education, 33 respondents (63.46 percent) were university graduates, and majority of respondents were working (94.23 percent) with private companies (56.0 percent). Only 12 respondents (24.0 percent) represented self-employed or an employer, and the remaining 10 respondents (20.0 percent) were attached with public agencies (20.0 percent). In total, 33 respondents (63.46 percent) were local residents, and a further 19 respondents (36.54 percent) were identified as non-residents. All respondents were non-UiTM staff. The next questions were: “*Do your family members (excluding relatives) serve UiTM?*”, and “*Have you or your family members even studied at UiTM?*”. Figure 1 shows only seven of the respondents’ family members (13.46 percent) were serving at UiTM from four different campuses. Of 52 respondents, 21 respondents (40.38 percent), or their family members were graduated from UiTM included UiTM Kampus Bandaraya Melaka and Shah Alam (10 respondents; 19.23 percent), and 6 respondents (19.05 percent) were graduated from UiTM Arau, Jasin, Jengka, Kota Bharu, Macang, Puncak Alam and Puncak Perdana. UiTM Alor Gajah represented 4 respondents (19.05 percent), as seen in Figure 2.

Table 3. Demographic Profiles (*n*=52)

	Category	N	Percentage
Campuses	Alor Gajah	20	38.46
	Bandaraya Melaka	19	36.54
	Jasin	13	25.00
Gender	Male	18	34.62
	Female	34	65.38
Marital Status	Single	16	30.77
	Widow/Widower	3	5.77
	Married	33	63.46
Race	Malay	41	78.85
	Chinese	2	3.85
	Indian	9	17.31
Religion	Muslim	41	78.85
	Hindu	2	3.85
	Buddha	9	17.31
Highest Academic Qualification	Higher Institutions	33	63.46
	Secondary School	18	34.62
	Primary School	1	1.92
Are you working?	Yes	49	94.23
	No	3	5.77
Your job category?	Self-employed/Employer	12	24.00
	Public	10	20.00
	Private	28	56.00
Are you from this district/area/place?	Yes	33	63.46
	No	19	36.54
Are you a staff of UiTM?	Yes	0	0.00
	No	52	100.0

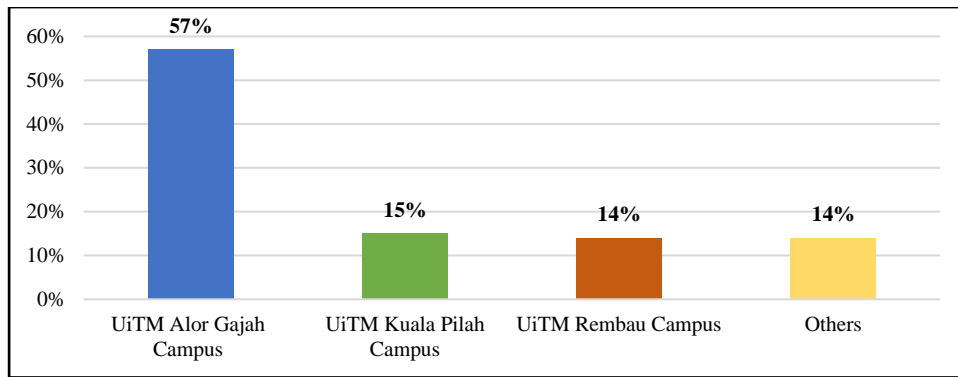


Figure 1. Do your family members (excluding relatives) serve UiTM?

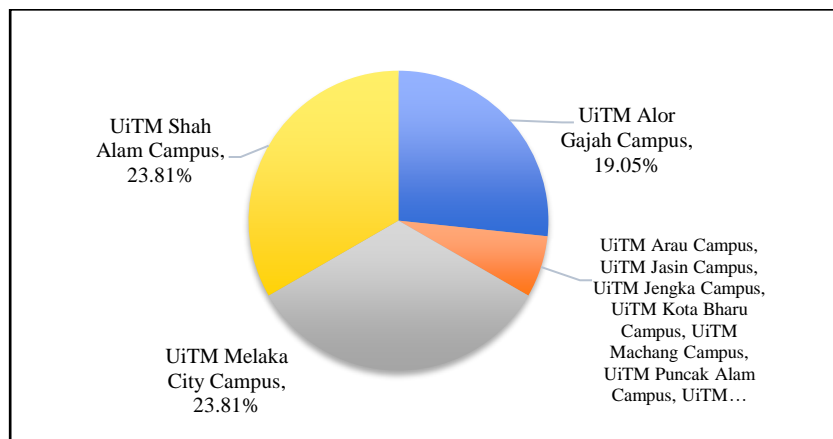


Figure 2. Have you or your family members even studied at UiTM?

Table 4 shows mean and standard deviation values for each item. There were eight questions related to the impact of UiTM Melaka, specifically infrastructure, community development and business opportunities. The mean values for item Q1-Q8 were greater than 4, ranged between 4.1064 and 4.3830, indicating that respondents reacted positively to the questions relating to the impact of UiTM on public transport services, businesses, public facilities, knowledge, income and job opportunities. Except for Q9, the mean value was below than 3, respondents were not fully agreed with the question. Relatively, SDs for each item shows the diverse values across the responding mean values, indicating respondents had varying opinions about the statements.

Questions	Mean	SD
Q1: The existence of UiTM has given a positive impact on the level of public transport services around the campus (bus, taxi, rental cars etc.)	4.2174	0.2158
Q2: The existence of UiTM in general has influenced the development around the campus	4.3617	0.2256
Q3: More businesses and services are opened to meet the needs of UiTM staff	4.3404	0.3581
Q4: The public facilities provided have been enhanced to facilitate the use of residents here	4.2391	0.3952
Q5: The growth of business companies (commercial) around the residential areas originally depended heavily on the existence of UiTM/ITM	4.1064	0.4986
Q6: The existence of UiTM has increased the tendency of teenagers/youths in the surrounding area to increase knowledge	4.3830	0.2278
Q7: The existence of UiTM has increased the income of the residents in this surrounding area	4.3913	0.4216
Q8: The existence of UiTM has increased the job opportunities in this surrounding area	4.3696	0.4177
Q9: The social problems that occur in this area are mostly done by the UiTM's students	2.7955	0.4817

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) Values

Table 5 reports the reactions of respondents on the statements related to the impact of UiTM Melaka on the development of public transportations, facilities, business growth and job opportunities. The results were based on the five-Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). For Q1, majority of respondents (26 respondents; 55.32 percent) were agreed that UiTM Melaka has given the significant impact on the level of public transport services, such as buses, taxis, or rental cars around the campus, whilst 15 respondents (31.91 percent) had strongly agreed on the statement. In the next item, 28 respondents (59.57 percent) agreed that the existence of UiTM Melaka has influenced the surrounding development. It makes a huge impact on the opening businesses and services, mainly to cater the needs of staff of UiTM Melaka, specifically. The evidences of this statement (Q3) was proved by 25 respondents (53.19 percent), whilst 20 respondents (42.55 percent) were strongly agreed. Out of 52 respondents, 25 (53.19 percent) of them were agreed that public facilities have been improved and enhanced for residents' usage.

Not even that, majority of respondents (28 respondents; 59.57 percent) also agreed that the existence of UiTM Melaka has impacted the growth of business and many companies were depending on this institution. For teenagers and youths, the existence of UiTM Melaka has increased their intention to continue the education and gain knowledge. Also, 23 respondents (48.84 percent) agreed that UiTM Melaka has helped residents to increase their income by selling and offering products and services for the residents around the campus. Since many businesses and services were opened and built around the campuses, it directly increases many job opportunities. Almost half of respondents were agreed with this statement (22 respondent; 46.81 percent). Lastly, 12 respondents (25.23 percent) were not agreed that

UiTM students involved in the social problems. However, 14 of them were strong agreed and agreed that UiTM students involved in any form of social problems, whilst 9 respondents (19.15 percent) remained undecided. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of respondents' perceptions of the impact of UiTM Melaka on development of development of public transportations, facilities, business growth and job opportunities.

Table 5. Percentage of the Impact of UiTM Melaka on Community Development (*n*-52)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	DA (%)	SD (%)
Q1: The existence of UiTM has given a positive impact on the level of public transport services around the campus (bus, taxi, rental cars etc.)	15 31.91%	26 55.32%	5 10.64%	-	-
Q2: The existence of UiTM in general has influenced the development around the campus	18 38.30%	28 59.57%	1 2.13%	-	-
Q3: More businesses and services are opened to meet the needs of UiTM staff	20 42.55%	25 53.19%	-	2 4.26%	-
Q4: The public facilities provided have been enhanced to facilitate the use of residents here	17 36.17%	25 53.19%	2 4.26%	2 4.26%	-
Q5: The growth of business companies (commercial) around the residential areas originally depended heavily on the existence of UiTM/ITM	13 27.66%	28 59.57%	5 10.64%	1 2.13%	-
Q6: The existence of UiTM has increased the tendency of teenagers/youths in the surrounding area to increase knowledge	22 46.81%	21 44.68%	4 8.51%	-	-
Q7: The existence of UiTM has increased the income of the residents in this surrounding area	21 44.68%	23 48.84%	1 2.13%	1 2.13%	-
Q8: The existence of UiTM has increased the job opportunities in this surrounding area	21 44.68%	22 46.81%	2 4.26%	1 2.13%	
Q9: The social problems that occur in this area are mostly done by the UiTM's students	7 14.89%	7 14.89%	9 19.15%	12 25.23%	9 19.15%

Remarks: SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; U-Undecided; DA-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree

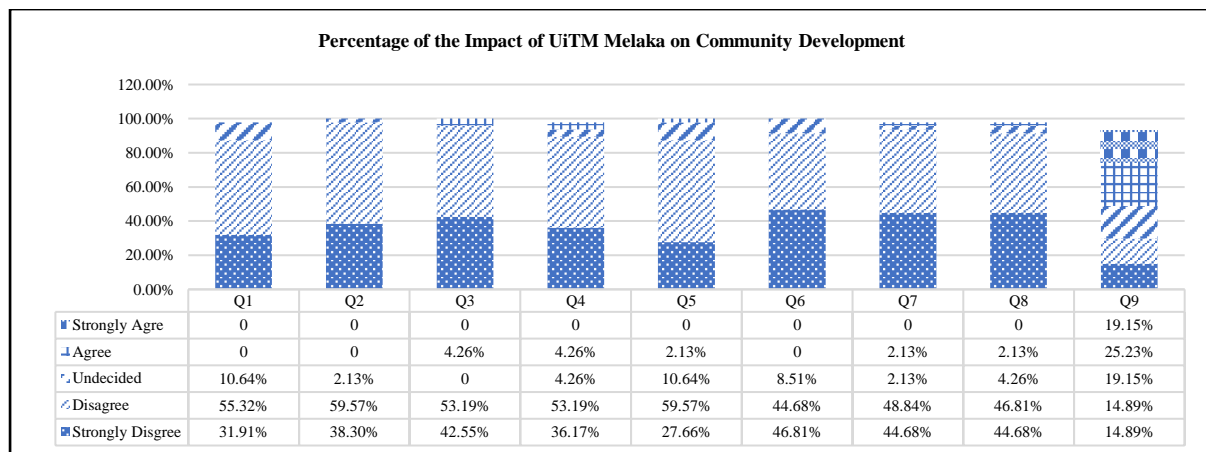


Figure 3. Percentage of the Impact of UiTM Melaka on Community Development (n=52)

The data were supported with the interview results from four respondents. Respondents in the structured interviews also confirmed this result, with community from three locations stating the following, for example:

“...UiTM has influenced the development around the campus such as housing, shops, mini market...”

Moreover, the quantitative findings confirm that the growth of business companies (commercial) around the residential areas originally depended heavily on the existence of UiTM. Most of respondents have reflected this idea:

“...students not in the campus...affect business especially restaurants, food stalls nearby campus...no one wants to rent my house.”

The above findings, be it from the questionnaire or interview, confirmed that the establishment of UiTM Melaka in three different locations have successfully generated multiplier effects to the development of the community. The development that cover the surrounding areas of UiTM Melaka, contributed to developing public transportation, enhancing business opportunities, improving income distribution in the community, as well as promoting youth to pursue higher education.

Conclusion

This research aims to examine the social impacts brought by UiTM Melaka to the communities, especially in the infrastructure and development of community as well as business opportunities. This research found that the existence of UiTM Melaka has increased the tendency of teenagers/youths in the surrounding area to increase knowledge, income of the residents in this surrounding area as well as the job opportunities. The findings also indicate that more businesses and services are opened in order to meet the needs of UiTM staff. Hence, this research has contributed to the body of knowledge by adding to the literature on university’s impact towards the community development, especially in the aspects of business growth, education and job opportunities.

The findings of this study in line with the study by Gittelsohn et al., 2020 that universities and community can collaborate in many ways toward a common goal which benefited others.

Moreover, the university's mission must have concerned also on community issues such as alleviating widespread poverty as well as enabling locally controlled economic development that surround the campuses themselves. Even though the findings of this research has translated the role of universities for the communities, however, the future research is suggested to look at the creation of a truly collaborative university-community development, particularly in UiTM Melaka, the surrounding communities and the policy maker. Positive findings on the impact towards business growth, education and job opportunities provide significant implications to the university's management and policymakers to redesign mission at specific strategies to further strengthen the university's engagements and community development in near future.

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