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The Effects of Urbanization towards social and cultural changes among Malaysian Settlers in the Federal Land Development Schemes (FELDA), Johor Darul Takzim

Noreen Noor Abd Aziz*, Wan Haslin Aziah Wan Hassan, Nur Adilah Saud

FPP, Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor, Segamat, 85009, Malaysia

Abstract

The Malaysian Government has brought changes in the rural region by creating agriculture projects and re-grouping landless families from rural as well as suburb areas in the planned FELDA scheme throughout the country. Four dimensions were studied, demographic, economic, social and psychological to determine any social and cultural changes due to urbanization in FELDA settlements. The economic dimension was believed to give significant change to settlers while demographic dimension gave little effect. Almost all respondents agreed that urbanization will change their social and cultural lives. Urbanization could benefit all FELDA settlers' current and future generations by improving their living status.

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Keywords: Urbanization; modernisation; social; cultural

1. Introduction

The Federal Land Development Authority (more commonly referred to as FELDA) is a Malaysian government agency handling the resettlement of rural poor into newly developed areas. It focuses on opening smallholder farms growing cash crops. FELDA's schemes are generally open only to ethnic

^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: 019-7777217; fax: 07-935 2277. *E-mail address*: noree974@johor.uitm.edu.my.

Malays, who form a majority of the Malaysian population. FELDA was formed on July 1, 1956 when the Land Development Act came into force. Its initial capital was RM10 million, and the first FELDA settlement, comprising 2946.88ha of land and focused on rubber, was opened at Lurah Bilut the following year. In 1958, five similar schemes were opened (Simeh et.al., 2006).

FELDA is the world's largest plantation operator, with 811,140 hectares (2,004,400 acres) of oil palms, mainly across Peninsular Malaysia while making less presence in Sabah and Sarawak (New Straits Times, 2009). It also operates plantations and oil mills in Indonesia. Although FELDA is mainly pre-occupied with alleviating rural poverty through resettlement, it reportedly holds a minority stake in some major Malaysian banks.

In the 1960s and 1970s, government policy began to emphasize crop diversification, in an effort to avoid being affected if the world price of rubber were to drop precipitously. In 1961, FELDA's first oil palm settlement opened, with 3.75 square kilometers (1.45 sq mi) of land. As of 2000, 6,855.2 square kilometers (2,646.8 sq mi) (approximately 76%) of the land under FELDA's programs are devoted to oil palms (Simeh et.al., 2006). Settlers are drawn from rural Malay poor (Ryter&Loren, 2005). They should be aged between 21 and 50 years, married, and physically fit. Priority was given to those who did not own any land to farm (Simeh et.al., 2006).

New settlers are assigned to a particular settlement, and are given 10 acres (4.0 ha), 12 acres (4.9 ha) or 14 acres (5.7 ha) (Simeh et.al., 2006) of land to cultivate usually either rubber or oil palms. All settlers must reside at the settlement itself, and are allotted .25 acres (0.10 ha) in a planned village, where their home — already built by FELDA — is located. Although basic infrastructure, such as piped water and electricity, used to be lacking (Massard&Josiane, 1988), nowadays such facilities are readily provided. Schools, medical centres, and places of worship are also provided.

Originally, FELDA schemes were designed as co-operatives, where instead of each settler owning a defined piece of land, each settler held an equal share in the ownership of the particular scheme. However, the settlers did not prefer this scheme, as workers who did not tend to the land properly still benefited (a sort of free rider problem). The government then set up a 3-phase plan, where in the first phase, the co-operative remained as a mechanism for the settlers to learn how to farm. In the second phase, each settler was given a specific plot of land to work, and in the third phase, he was given the land title to that plot (Simeh et.al., 2006). However, the settler was forbidden from selling the land without permission from FELDA or the federal government (Sbaran&Mohammad Shatar, 2001). The costs of acquiring, developing and allocating the land are borne by loans made to FELDA settlers. These loans are repaid in monthly installments deducted from the settlers' income over a 15-year period (Massard & Josiane, 1988).

Although settlers are supposed to focus on agricultural activities, it has been reported that a substantial number are also engaged in other activities, such as shop keeping. Some are even employed in jobs outside the settlement (Massard & Josiane, 1988). In recent years, the growth of urban areas has led to a substantial increase in the land value of some settlements. With permission, many settlers have sold their farms, becoming instant millionaires (Simeh et.al., 2006).

This study is to look into the effect of urbanization in the Malaysian Federal Land Development Scheme (FELDA) by focusing on FELDA in Johor only. As in August, according to the website of FELDA, a total of 27,641 FELDA settlers currently working on 73 land schemes with the majority working on oil palm plantations (24,248 settlers) and only 3,158 settlers are working on rubber plantations.

The Malaysian Government has brought about changes in the rural region by creating the agriculture projects and re-group landless families from rural as well as suburb areas in the planned FELDA scheme throughout the country. This entrepreneurial agriculture venture not only will upgrading livelihood for

settlers in the schemes but generating national economy from the export of palm oil and rubber, the two major mono-culture in the country.

Education programs are the most important area that FELDA has taken into consideration especially to the new generations. Programs that have been implemented in the FELDA areas are Community-Based Rehabilitation Center (CBR), Family Literacy Center, PERMATA program (2007), Semai Bakti Hostels (1975), FELDA Tuition Scheme (2008), Center for Science Study (2008) and FELDA Junior MARA Science College (2007). Program like CBR has helped to reduce the burden of settlers with children with special needs. Others programs mentioned above are meant to increase the levels of education and knowledge of the settlers' children. Even at the early age, they were prepared worth program like PERMATA and Family Literacy Center to tap on these very young generations of FELDA creativity, intellectuality, social and communication ability.

On top of education as the main priority, the social aspect of FELDA members was also taken in seriously. Infrastructure such as Community Sport's Complex, Halls and Open Sport's Court were also provided. With those facilities, the community was able to socializing among them besides building a good health. In all, FELDA is trying to equip them similar to what urban people are receiving.

On the economy side, they were many programs developed for them. They were SAWARI program developed in 2003 to help settlers with agriculture food-based industry and arts and craft industry under the brand name F Best. This program has helped settlers to increase their household income. Another program called Tunas Mekar was created to help children of settlers with university qualification (Diploma or Degree qualification) to develop their entrepreneur skills. Among businesses that these generations of FELDA have successfully set up were commercialized agriculture product like chili, lemon grass and oyster, cybercafé station, restaurant and boutique and spa. There were many training activities on business being held for this community and not to mention funds provided for them to help out with business start up.

Most of these programs were set up to promote settlers family members to upgrade their knowledge and to ease burden on having to pay high prices for those facilities. By implementing these programs in FELDA settlements, FELDA was able to bring in what the urban people are getting in a modern environment. This has helped to reduce the gap of facilities received by the urban and rural populations. The urbanization programs implemented in FELDA settlements and education for the second generation of FELDA schemes has seen a lot of cultural changes. The advisory panel of the FELDA management and participation of state and federal governmental agencies are crucial and certainly will have great influence in determining the level of achievement and economy generation. Demographic factors of FELDA settler from second generation are also taken into consideration in this study.

2. Related Literature

Urbanization is a process that leads to the growth of cities due to industrialization and economic development, and that leads to urban-specific changes in specialization, labor division and human behaviors. In that way, urbanization is a force and inevitable demographic movement and this process should not certainly be neglected. Previous study works mainly on a single field such as development, population and environment. In our research, we focused on the implication of urbanization towards Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim which this study is relevant to the Malaysian economy and it will give opportunity to FELDA to improve their management and operation strategy.

According to De Wang (1999) the process of urbanization can be the transformation of a rural area into an urban one. This process can be divided into two categories: one from the cities and another one from the diffusion of urban industry to outside areas and the construction of state-owned enterprises and key projects. In this case, The Malaysian Government has brought about changes in the rural region by

creating the agriculture projects and re-group landless families from rural as well as suburb areas in the planned FELDA scheme throughout the country. These programs bring a lot of changes in cultural and social among FELDA settlers.

Le Van Thanh (2007) stated that urbanization is taking place based on social changes in the city, rapid economic development and changing in people behaviour. In order to face some challenges, most of the government has made some efforts to take control over the situation. Recently, urban planning has been viewed as an important tool for urban management policies. Lee Van Thanh (2007) found that although there is more employment opportunities in the highly urbanized district, all the jobs require them with higher qualifications, skills and experience. Employment competition is also higher due to the level of urbanization.

According to M. Tayfun Turan and Asli Besirli (2008), urbanization is seeing as an old process and it was formed in parallel with industrialization, technology reforms and infrastructure services in developed countries. Meanwhile, this process is more recent and has been rapidly experienced in short time for developing and underdeveloped countries.

The economic factor is closely related to creation of a new job opportunity in the urban city. In addition people like to migrate to cities because they can earn more salary and achieving higher status than their parents are (Ashraf Ragab El-Ghannam, 2001). Settlers and its second generation move to urban centers to find better economic opportunities. The Industrializations and the subsequent shift from agricultural jobs to factory jobs made it profitable for companies to locate their factories in large cities with plenty of local workers. There often is a severe lack of resources in rural areas, such as medical technology, which further drives people to the cities. In developing countries, such as those in Africa, natural population increases and migration have been big factors in urbanization. People are driven out of rural poverty and into urban areas as they are less able to care for their growing families; cities offer employment, food, shelter and education.

Demographic factors include population growth rate of nature that relates to the annual rate of population growth of family size, total fertility rate, age dependency and migration. It is supported by Ashraf Ragab El-Ghannam (2001) stated that there is a positive relationship between change rate in urban population, expenditures on education and public health for urbanisation in Arab societies.

Urbanization makes people dependent on others for basic necessities; urban-dwellers must rely on the rural hinterland for agricultural production, for instance, because city residents do not have enough land to grow their own food. Urban-dwellers suffer the psychological degradation that comes from depending on other people to accomplish the activities of daily life, from transportation to education to entertainment. M. Tayfun Turan and Asli Besirli (2008) found that the social problems associated with urban societies, the traffic problems and the general anxiety about the future contributed to an increase in mental health disorders.

In another study, negative impacts in urbanization effects psychological. Most of the people think that big cities bring tension than happiness. Lifestyle differences between abandoned areas and destination areas emerge as a cultural conflict. Several models that explain the relationship between mental health and immigration to towns and environment are presented. One of them is the model described by Chu et al. That model contains five components which affect wellness status. There are control over internal environment, home design and care quality, important escape opportunities, crime and the fear crime and social participation.

In addition, urbanization has many adverse effects on the structure of society as gigantic concentrations of people compete for limited resources. Rapid housing construction leads to overcrowding and slums, which experience major problems such as poverty, poor sanitation, unemployment and high crime rates. Additionally, strains on important natural resources, such as water supply, leads to higher prices and general environmental sustainability problems.

3. Research Objectives

In defining this study, researchers have developed the following specific objectives:

- To determine the main factors that effect urbanization towards social and cultural changes among Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim
- To determine the main attribute that give the positive or negative impact towards urbanization among Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim
- To identify whether urbanization gives impact towards social and cultural changes among Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the foundation for the entire research project based. Meanwhile, there are four independent variables have been developed. There is the study about the demographic, economic, psychological and social which influence the effects of urbanization towards social and cultural changes among Malaysian Settlers in FELDA in Johor Darul Takzim

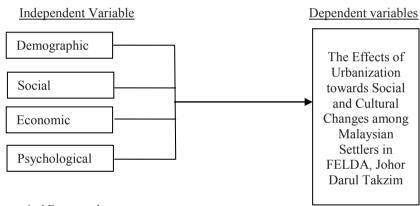


Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework

5. Research Methodology

The researcher has used a questionnaire to gather data for this study. The questionnaire was prepared in Malay Language as many of these respondents are poor or illiterate in English. The questionnaire was divided into three sections accordingly. Section A of the questionnaire was on the background of the respondent. Data collected was on gender, marital status, age, academic background, number of children and the monthly income. Questions were set using nominal and interval scales. Section B was on the variables researched. Four independent variables were used. The first variable was on economy factor with five questions related to it. Second variable was on demographic factor that comprised of three questions altogether. The third one was on social factor with four questions and the last variable was on psychology factor with three questions in it. A Likert 7 point scale (7- Strongly Agree, 6- Agree, 5 – Quite Agree, 4 - Neither, 3 – Quite Disagree , 2- Disagree and 1- Strongly Disagree) was used to gather the data. The last section uses nominal scale whereby respondents were asked whether they thought urbanization with change their social and cultural lives. This question helped the researcher to discover the answer to the third objective, that is, whether urbanization gives impact towards social and cultural

changes among Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim. In this question, respondents are required to answer either "yes" or "no".

Settlers of FELDA were chosen as the respondent. The researcher tried to gather data from respondents all over Johor state. Since Johor is a big state and there are many FELDA settlements, it was definitely taking so much time to gather the data if the researcher was to go to each settlement. In achieving that, the researcher used a method of distributing questionnaires to a hostel where the selected children of FELDA settlers from all over Johor who are good in their academic studies are placed and they go to schools around Johor Bharu, the capital of Johor state. The main location where the questionnaires were distributed was at Larkin, Johor where the hostel is placed. Reason choosing this location as the main questionnaires distribution place was because, during the weekend, parents of these children will come and visit their children. Therefore, the researcher was able to meet them and distribute questionnaires for their parents to answer. To add to the number of respondents, the researcher also went into settlements nearby the university namely FELDA Pemanis and Selancar to collect data. A total of 75 sets have been collected from respondents who came from Felda Ayer Tawar 2, Kota Tinggi, Felda Tenggaroh, Mersing, Felda Bukit Ramun, Kulai, Felda Air Hitam, Kluang, Felda Lok Heng Barat, Kota Tinggi, Felda Semenchu, Kota Tinggi and Felda Taib Andak, Kluang beside the two Felda mentioned earlier.

The data from these questionnaires were then analysed using SPSS 20.0. The reliability of the instrument is determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data obtained from section A were used to develop the profile of respondents. To obtain the first and second answers for these research objectives, mean and frequency were used. Data from section B were used to get those findings. The last part of the questionnaire was used to determine the answer to the third objective was obtained through a nominal question.

6. Results

Reliability of all fifteen questions using Likert -7 Point scales is tested using Cronbach Alpha. The value is found to be 0.781; therefore the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable.

Reliability Statistics				
Cronbach's	N of Items			
Alpha				
.781	15			

6.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1. Summary of respondents' characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	31	41.3
Female	44	58.7
Age		
31 -40	9	12.0
41 -50	32	42.7
51-60	30	40.0
> 60	4	5.3
Marital Status		
Married	70	93.3
Single Parent	5	6.7
Number of children		
0-3	13	17.3
4-6	46	61.3
7-10	13	17.3
>10	3	4.0
Education Background		
Primary	9	12
SRP/PMR	16	21.3
SPM	45	60.0
STPM	3	4.0
Others	2	2.7
Monthly income		
<rm2000< td=""><td>52</td><td>69.4</td></rm2000<>	52	69.4
RM2001-RM3000	19	25.3
RM3001-RM4000	3	4.0
>RM4000	1	1.3

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' characteristics. The total number of respondents is 75 settlers. There were 31 males (41.3%) and 44 females (58.7) and out of 75 respondents, 70 were married and only 5 are single parent. The distribution of age showed that majority of FELDA settlers were in the range of 40 - 60 years of age (62 settlers; 82.7%). Four settlers were above 60. This could be due to majority of respondents were met at the hostel during their children visiting day own children of age 13 to 17 years. Therefore, they were not from the young parents group. Most of them have between 4 to 6 children (61.3%). The rests, 9 settlers who were below 40 years old were met at their respective home. All of them had gone through formal education with 45 of them completed the secondary school with Malaysian

Certificate of Education (SPM). Sixteen managed to complete up to Form Three and only 9 did not continue to secondary school. Looking at their monthly income level, most of them earned less than RM2000 (69.4%) and only 23 settlers managed to earn between RM2000 – RM4000 (29%). This situation is considered not so good since costs of living are no longer cheap although they are not living in a big city.

6.2. Statistics

To determine the main factors that effects urbanization towards social and cultural changes among Malaysian settlers in FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim, the researcher has used mean of all questions in an individual independant variables. Total score of all questions are first summed up and using descriptive statistic, mean for individual variables were calculated.

Table 2. Independent variables means

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economy	75	10	35	26.41	3.738
Demographic	75	3	17	8.83	3.342
Social	75	7.00	28.00	18.7600	3.60870
Psychological	75	6.00	19.00	12.2933	3.46712
Valid N (listwise)	75				

The table above showed, economy is judged to be affecting settlers social and cultural most with the development of FELDA in Johor. This means, settlers regarded urbanisation will give positive impact on their economy whereby job opportunity, education and income will increase.

Table 3. Mean of each attribute

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Economy				
Good job opportunity	3	7	5.89	1.073
Good education facility	3	7	6.03	.870
Increase income level	2	7	6.08	1.160
Decrease Unemployment rate	1	7	3.72	1.729
Increase product price	1	7	4.69	1.294
Demography				
Family size increase burden	1	6	3.21	1.482
Increase income increase no. of child	1	5	2.72	1.192
FELDA Modernisation leads to migration	1	6	2.89	1.381
Social				
Modernisation leads to high lifestyle	2	7	5.39	1.314
High crime rate	1	7	3.95	1.777
Reduce FELDA settlers solidarity	1	7	3.55	1.803
Increase IT usage confident level	1	7	5.88	1.162
Psychological				
Increase pressure	1	7	3.67	1.588
Increase in price motivate to work harder	2	7	5.09	1.153
Diminish norms and beliefs in traditional customs	1	7	3.53	1.719

Based on Table 3, urbanisation is believed to increase income levels of FELDA settlers. This could be due to more opportunity to do business and the development of FELDA itself could add to their income thorugh increase in salary and bonus. Therefore, it can be said that modernisation leads to a positive impact on the settlers.

Based on the demographic factor, settlers believed that modernisation will have small impact on their micro family unit. The believe that modernisation increase their income level as stated earlier will have small change in having more kids, but they do believe that increase in number of children will increase their expenditures.

From social perspective, it was agreed that modernisation will increase settlers confident level and trust in using technology. They also somehow believe that their lifestyle might changed. This could be due to the believe that their income will increase. However, they somehow disagreed that the crime rate in their areas will increase and the solidarity among them will decrease.

Psychologically, expected increase in products prices will make them more motivated to work to increase their income. But they somehow do not belief that modernisation will not pressure their lives. They also belief that they are able to keep their norms and beliefs even though they will live in a modern live.

Finally, in the last section of the questionnaire, the researcher was able to identify whether settlers of FELDA, Johor Darul Takzim perceive urbanization as giving impact towards their social and cultural

changes. Based on the bar chart shown below, it can be said all respondents agreed that modernising their current place of living will give impact on their social and cultural status.

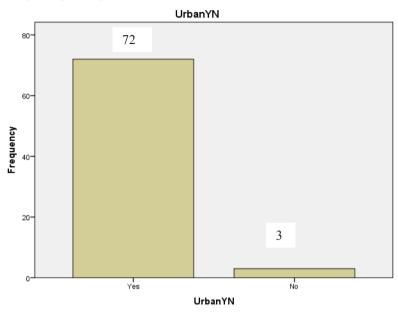


Fig. 2. Bar chart showing urbanization impact on social and cultural changes

7. Discussion

Four dimensions namely, demographic, economic, social, psychological were examined to see whether these dimensions have given any impact on social and cultural changes whether positively or negatively. It was found that those four dimensions at a certain percentage were believed to give impact towards social and cultural of FELDA settlers and its second generation due to urbanization.

In comparison between the four dimensions, it was found that economy factor was thought to give a significant impact to the effect of urbanization towards social and cultural changes among Malaysia settlers. This finding was based on its mean figure being the highest among the four dimensions.

Based on fifteen questions asked in the questionnaire, it is stated that increase income level in economic dimension, family size increase burden in demographic dimension, increase information technology usage and confident level in social dimension and increase in price motivate to work harder in psychological dimension contributed among the highest mean. Overall, all respondents agreed that urbanization would give impact towards their social and cultural changes among Malaysia settlers in Johor Darul Takzim.

In general, all factors stated above showed that settlers of FELDA were very positive with the government idea on modernizing their living. They believe it will bring good environment especially to their descendants. Not only that the opportunity to gain more income will be prepared, but their children will be living in a better environment especially in terms of educations. The urbanization program in FELDA scheme could be of beneficial not only towards the second and third generation of FELDA settlers' children but also the country as a whole. With more infrastructures and upgrading of facilities, these help settlers of FELDA to live better and work more productive. Sustainable economic and industrial with agro manufacturing technological based should be introduced more into the urbanization

program in the FELDA schemes to prosper rural vicinities. The initiatives and eagerness to be successful depend on the inter-relatedness of parties involved. The findings of this analysis can be implied on FELDA (Federal Land Development Scheme) in planning its management stategies and will help them in a future.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the rapid urbanization in the FELDA gives positive and negative impacts to all FELDA settlers. The upgrading of livelihood and economy generation of FELDA settlers' throughout the country is utmost important towards the contribution of national economy. Urbanization in FELDA schemes will definitely prosper the national monoculture sectors and the self containment in industrialization within the schemes will contribute to the equal spatial distribution of development in Malaysia.

This study provides further groundwork to assist existing and would be urbanization program in rural areas in the country that yield positive social and cultural changes among the Malaysian both in the urban and rural areas. Although the sample number was able to show significant mean on few attributes, but, the number of respondent is still small to represent the total population of FELDA settlers in Johor itself. More sample numbers need to be gathered in the future if this research was to be extended.

There are several opportunities to extend this study. For example, further studies in urbanization must focus on the issue of how different demographic variables perceive effects on urbanization. This can be done through making comparison between the second and third generation perception on urbanization or modernization of FELDA. It would be interesting to see how these two groups perceived modernization. In addition, it is also recommended that in the future research, researchers try to look into any gap between the Malaysian settlers in rural and urban areas.

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