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## Crime and Urbanization: Revisited Malaysian Case

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### Abstract

Urbanization is the social process whereby cities grow and their societies become urban. However, rapid urbanization contributes other affect and crimes in one of them. This paper aims to discuss the cause and effect between urbanization and crime, the type of crimes in urban area as well a discussion on how urbanization process lead to crime. Discussion on the suggestion to curb the crimes also becomes one of the themes in this paper. These seem to be fit with the effort to reducing crimes that become one of the main agenda in NKRA, introduced by our current administration.

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*Keywords:* Urbanization; crime; NKRA; Malaysia

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### 1. Introduction

Urbanization is the social process whereby cities grow and societies become urban. Urbanizations happen as the reason people move into urban to seek economic opportunities and to improve their living qualities. In rural people have to depend on changeable environmental conditions, and in times of drought, flood or pestilence, survival becomes extremely problematic. This is very different in urban where all the facilities are well build to make human life more comfortable and the main attraction of urban is easy access to wealth. This phenomenon developed rapidly in particular in Asian region (Ambe,

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2003). Urbanization always been refers as the modernization indicator, quality of live improvement among the developed or least developed countries and since then urbanization is the prerequisite to the modern and development countries (Clark, 1982).

According to the statistics from United Nations, the world population expected to reach 8.3 and 9.1 billion in 2030 and 2050 respectively, which is out of the figure 4.9 billion expected to settle down in urban areas in 2030 and 6.3 billion in 2050. In 2010 alone, about 3.5 billion from 6.9 billion or 71% of the world population live in urban areas with Asia (1.7 billion), Europe (0.5 billion), Latin America and Caribbean (0.4 billion), Africa (0.4 billion), Northern America (0.3 billion) and Oceania (0.02 billion) (United Nation, 2007). This lead to unprecedented trends: the urban dwellers increased from only 220 million in 1900 to 736 million in 1950 and now reached 3.5 billion in 2010 (United Nation, 2007).

The same scenario been witnessed in Malaysia especially after World War 2. As per 1950, they are only 1.2 million urban populations and unbelievably in 2010, these figures shoot up to 20 million. This mean from only 20% of population in 1950 live in urban, now the figures increase dramatically to 72% in 2010 and expected to grow at 82% in 2030, which been estimated that 28 million of Malaysian population will be settled in urban areas (United Nation, 2007). The ultimate effects from the rapid growth in urbanization seem to cause another problems and crime are one of them. This is in line with what been said by Knox (1994), whom described that the increase in crime problems are correlated with the rapid development in urbanism. McIlwaine (1999) on the other hand in the opinion that the crime rate increase, correlated with the increase in urban and industrialization process. Others scholar agreed that rapid growth in urbanization had a direct relationship with the increase in crime (Walmsley, 1988: 139-140: Gold, 2002:263-270).

## **2. Literature Review**

The rapid urbanization that is taking place has brought to the forefront the problems of urbanization. Of course, an early observer of city life saw immigrants from rural areas with stable family traditions turning to alcoholism, robbery, child abuse, and prostitution. Something about living in a large city, it was suggested, created social disorganization – broken families and broken lives – and this turn led to all sorts of urban problems.

There are few theories developed by the scholar about the urban problems and among the famous of course from Louis Wirth's essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life" and subsequent interpretations of this classic work from the Chicago School of urban sociology. Wirth believed that primary group relationship (among family and kin, for example) is replaced by secondary group relationships (among neighbors and coworkers) in urban society. Secondary relationship is based on temporary, superficial and impersonal interactions. As a consequence, urban life produces anonymity and distance among urban dwellers, which rarely get to know even those people with whom they interact daily, such as shopkeepers, fellow commuters, coworkers, and even neighbors. Wirth believed that secondary relations eventually lead to family breakup, alcoholism, crime, and other negative aspects of urban life (Wirth, 1938).

Claude Fischer (1975) claimed that the compositional view neglected the special role cities play in social interaction. Life in the city intensifies local culture and subculture. Although there is no intrinsic reason that urban life should produce social problems, cities might have a negative effect on individual behavior. All forms of deviance flourish within urban environments because there are more individuals who support this subculture. Urban life does not automatically lead to social disorganization, but it does increase the opportunities to be exposed to deviance and negative effects on one's behavior. Cities do not have an exclusive hold on divorce or family violence, and suburbs are now almost as likely as cities to be afflicted with family disorganization, deviant subculture, drug abuse and gang activity (Barbanel) (1992).

From old times to today's modern societies, crime has always been a hot subject and kept it places in every day agenda. In particular, as economic growth and development of countries increase, in general, from one year to another, it is expected that crime rate should decline over time. However, it does not decline, and it become more important in this new century. Becker (1968:172) pointed out that "Crime has probably become more important during the last forty years".

It is natural to ask why does one commit crime? What should be done to prevent the crime? We could list many related questions but the answers to all these crime-related questions are not simple. Because of this difficulty, there have been many academic disciplines that study the subject. As it "... requires multidisciplinary approach..." (Stevens, 1983). Each discipline of course, studies it from its own perspective. Sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, law, economics, urban studies, gender, geography are some of the disciplines that study this subject in various ways.

In a recent study, Gendrot (2001) tries to distinguish between crime and fear of crime in urbanized great cities of the United States, United Kingdom and France. She analyzed the issue in political perspective and notes that in each of the cities in her studies the local authorities, police department, educators, human services, non-profit organizations and the local housing and sport authorities work together to prevent crime. This shows that in preventing crime, local authorities from various departments should eventually cooperate to be successful. That is, different discipline should involve.

### **3. Crime and Urbanization in Malaysia: Types and Cause**

"Crime affects all Malaysian, irrespective of race, religion, gender or income levels...". This statement quoted from YB Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Minister of Home Affairs in his opening remarks of the chapter 6 on Reducing Crime in GTP Roadmap. The concern from Government about crime is valid since the crime rates in Malaysia have been record high. The overall index crime rate increased from 746 reported crime per 100,000 people in 2006 to 767 in 2007, a rise nearly 3% (PDRM, 2010). The figures remain at 767 in 2008. However, according to Inspector General Police, Tan Sri Musa Hasan in an interview with Utusan Malaysia on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, the national crime rate in 2009 has dropped by 3.53% or 721.33 reported crime per 100,000 population compared to the figure in 2008 (PDRM, 2010). On the detail note, in 2006, about 196,780 crimes been reported which consists of 163,372 in a categories of property theft and the remaining balance of 31,408 are under the violent crime. The numbers is on the rose in 2007 with a total reported case was 209,582 and property theft make it of 174,423 and violent crime recorded 35, 159 cases. Furthermore, the trend seems to be stable in 2008 when 211,645 crimes cases been report with property theft (173,828) and violent crime (37, 817). In 2009 (the figures available only up to October), shows that there are 211,184 crimes cases been reported and property theft consists of 169,914 which show some drop, however what most worrying part is that the violent crime cases are on the rose with 41,270 crime cases. Do remember that this figure only October 2009 (PDRM, 2010).

The Royal Malaysia Police Force in its administrative functions divides this into two broad categories of crime. The first type was property theft includes those offences involving the loss of property during which there is no use of violence by the perpetrators. Under this category there are seven types of crimes and they include housebreaking and theft by day, housebreaking and theft by night, theft of lorries and van, theft of motor car, theft of motorcycles and scooters, theft of bicycles and lastly others forms of theft (Sidhu, 2005). Secondly, violent crime which generally includes crimes of violence those is sufficiently regular and significant in occurrences which there are eight in all. These include among others murder, attempted murder, gang robbery with firearm, gang robbery without firearm, robbery with firearm, robbery without firearm, rape and lastly voluntarily causing hurt. (Sidhu, 2005) In Malaysia, car theft, house break-ins, and motorcycle theft contribute to 56% of the overall 211,645 reported crimes in 2008

(PDRM, 2010). On top of that, general theft (19%), snatch theft (4%), lorry theft (3%) and violent crime (18%) (PDRM, 2010).

How urban lead to crime? There are few reasons which cause this and the major one were an increasing population and migration. The present global urban population is greater than the entire global population of 1960 and is growing rapidly; it is expected to comprise half of humanity by 2008. Most forms of crime involve human interaction and the high population densities of cities ensure that almost every form of crime occurs there. Urban areas have become engines for economic growth and centers of diversity and change. As hubs in a web of global communication and transport, cities are focal points for both internal and international migration, transport, communications and economic activities. The rapid pace of change and other factors make it difficult to plan and manage the expansion of cities, and the rising demand for services often exceeds the tax bases, other resources and the substantive capacity of municipal and even national governments. Unpredictable crime also takes place when there are, high population densities, and rapid changes in social environments and poor living condition. Weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control bodies encourage more gangs and organized criminal groups take advantages on it. ACP Amar Singh Sidhu in his paper “The Rise of Crime in Malaysia: An academic and statistical analysis” which been presented during the Conference of the Commissioners of Police/Chief Police officers/Commandants/Commander Brigades on 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 highlight that this is one the factor of crime. He gives an example to strengthen the hypothesis that population increase may be a factor but not a major one fortified by the fact the states of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang and Johor display a higher index crime per 100,000 than the mean national crime index of 612 cases- this even though, except for Selangor and Johor. The less populated states such as Sabah, Sarawak, Perak and Kedah had showed a lower index crime per 100,000. These facts legitimate the research carried out by Miura in Japan which is show that urbanization and population density affects crime rate, rather than population per se as.

Many authorities in the field of criminal justice say that poverty is a major cause of crime. This is not of course to say that a person who wallows in health cannot be a criminal. Even the rich commit many crimes. However the urban poor are plagued by among others problems and issues such as, the high cost of living, and financial difficulties, unstable jobs, lack of capital, limited educational opportunities, inadequate health and sanitation, and inadequate housing. This all concomitant deprivations and hardships to them and appear to be the cause for the most of them to involve in crime. Crime rate appears to be notably higher in poorer neighborhoods and in areas with high population density, deteriorated living conditions and unemployment problems. Poverty is also caused by a refusal on the part of individuals to take responsibility for their own economic well being. Illegitimacy causes poverty because children born into single-parent households are more likely to become unwed parents and develop a dependence on government welfare. Most homeless people suffer from mental problems or drug and alcohol addictions and that many engage in criminal behavior.

In urban, the situation of youth is considered problematic, because young people can easily involve in negative acts. ‘Gangs’ can be anything from a small group of schoolchildren or a sophisticated organization. Gang operations provide a motivation for crime, both in support of the social and economic activities that sustain the group, and in competition with or defense from other gangs, other criminal groups, law enforcement or society at large. Many of the larger gangs in some countries have developed, becoming larger, better organized and more diversified in their criminal activities. Within Malaysian context, it been reported that there are total of 285 registered gangs of which 122 are from “*Ang Beng Hoay*”, 40 from “*Wah Kee*”, and 123 thug gangs of which 92 are Indian gangs (Sidhu, 2005). This definitely will increase the crime levels especially in urban areas.

Unemployment and crime are very closely interlinked. Studies in the West have shown that the economic situation in a country is closely linked to crime trends. This can be found from the study carried

out by Becker (1995), Raphael and Winter (1998), White and Witt (2001) Nilson, Agell, Y.Lee and Hansen (2003). When someone unemployed, psychologically they are tend to be violence in order to meet their need and that's why sometimes they involve in crime. This can be proved based on study by Nor-ina Kanyo and Norizan Hj Md Nor in their paper "*Pelakuan Jenayah dan Perspektif Geografi: Satu Kajian di Daerah Timur Laut Pulau Pinang*". This paper been presented at *Persidangan Geografi 2007 "Memperkasakan Geografi di Malaysia: Isu dan Cabaran"*, organized by Geography Department, Faculty Arts and Social Science, University Malaya from 21-22 August 2007. They relates that during economy crisis in 1997 where unemployment rates increases from 2.5% in 1996 to 2.6% in 1997 and furthermore to 3.2% in 1998 (Malaysia, 1999: Economy Report, 1999/2000; MAPEN II, 2001). As per comparison, during this crisis crime index at Daerah Timur Laut, Pulau Pinang increased from 40.9% in 1996 to 46.4% in 1997. This is truly because the hardship they face, force them to involve in crime.

Today as the country becomes more and more industrialized, there is an evident loosening of family ties- the family gets together less and as a group, with all members present, except during special events. Each members of the family has his own schedule of activities, his own interests, and his own friends. All these factors prevent family members from having opportunities for cooperative activity, preventing the developmental of strong personal relationship. Several family values that promote and nurture solidarity and love within the family, such as respect for and obedience to parents, have been eroded and polluted by modernization. Western culture is widely disseminated through the mass media has been rooted in society and this is clearly an impact in terms of crime. These lost family values result in many broken homes or families. As children are separated from their parents or reared single parents, they go wayward and become misguided. Many become addicted to prohibited drugs, unwed and/or separated parents and eventually become criminals or victims of crime.

Influx of illegal worker also can cause to the crime in urban areas. For example in Malaysia, the migration of labor from other countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Vietnam etc are based on contract labor migrants. They are low-skilled workers who are imported for a short duration on a contract basis to alleviate labor shortages in specific sectors. The number of migrant workers has hovered between 800,000 and 1.2 million and the illegal workers are about 500,000. According to statistics in 2002 crimes committed by migrants has increased three-fold from 1,333 in 1992 to 3,113 in 2002 and the Indonesians, by virtue of their larger presence committed the most number of crimes (about 62% of the total crimes committed by foreigners). We also can see that almost 30,000 foreigners are in Malaysia prison and this clearly shown to us that their presence to our country has effect to crimes. In particular, they occupied most spaces in urban areas.

The employment and exodus of women from the home where mothers have to be employed, some out of necessity others to augment the family income, have somehow contributed directly or indirectly to the commission of crime. At times, the frequent absence of the mother weakens the fundamental relationship with children resulting sometimes in feeling of insecurity and rejection that lead to maladjustments.

There are many of our citizens do not know many of our own laws and the repercussions they face once they commit violations thereof. They do not know many of their right and this all results in a "crisis" of citizenship characterized by widespread apathy, indifference, "spoon-feeding" syndrome, or lack of discipline and self-restraint. This we can witness our self in our today society on many problems on drug abuse by youth, gangsters and violate traffic offenses (*Mat rempit*). We must acknowledge that crime also committed because they become victims. Commit the crime is the way for them for revenge.

#### **4. Discussion: Effect and Prevention of Urban Crime**

From economic perspective crime in urban area can contribute a lot of consequences particularly in economic perspective. We are aware that when crime took place there should be a victim's that loss of



cash or property, even to the extent loss their live. This is a waste to a nation. At the same time crime also contribute to the damaged the property, increased property insurance claims, increased health and life insurance claims, higher workers compensation premiums, private legal costs increase and readjusting the lifestyle and involve cost to the victim when they need to moving house etc. The impact not only on micro levels i.e. to the macro level i.e. the nation as a whole. Government also must increase the expenditure on crime prevention measures and install an efficient public security system. This cost could be can be channeled to other important aspect if the crime is not an issue. When a country or cities had a high crime rate it will affect tourism and business and this can impact the economy of that cities. Money also will use to maintain the prisoner and prison, which not cheap.

Definitely those become a victim paid and suffer mentally and psychologically, experience a acute stress and depression, having problem to built relationship, low in a self confidence, the quality of life will drop. Crime will create uneasiness in society and this not good for the social development of the population in those cities. Crime also will create a lot of social problems and cause more effect to the younger generation where they are involved in crime and don't go to school. Without proper education attainments there certainly continue to live in a crime cycle and will create a lot of problem to the society. Crime also can lead to health problem for example who involved in drug abuse and prostitution exposes them to AIDS infection, which this explained the effect cause by urban crime from social perspective.

A measure to prevent or decrease an urban crime is not an easy task to do. The concerns from Government to reduce crime are shown through National Key Results Area (NKRA) when it has been selected as one of the six. Malaysian Government in September 2009 established a Crime Lab bringing together agencies from across the criminal justice system and from wider government such as Ministry of Home Affairs, RELA, PDRM, Attorney General Chambers, Federal Courts, National Anti-Drug Agency and so forth. This effort bring in over 30 representatives from relevant ministries and agencies as well as the private sector and NGO's to work together to strategize the effort to combat the crime in Malaysia (GTP Roadmap, 2010). According to the GTP Roadmap, Government among others already identified a few strategies in order to reduce the crime at least by 5% at the end of 2010. Among of the strategies been highlight in GTP Roadmap concerning the matters to reduce the crime are such as employing stakeouts for motorcycle and car theft and house breaks-in. Stakeouts method proven successfully especially in UK where 57% of police forces employ same tactics to reduce motor vehicle theft. Government also is going to improve security features for property to protect it from crime and a special lock known as U-locks (a technology from Japan) for motorcycles going to be introduce. Encouraging proportional insurance premiums, eliminating illegal workers and improve the availability and usage of mobile access devices and make it compatible between the PDRM and JPJ systems been working on.

Street crime is a major issue in Malaysia especially in urban areas. Four states include Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Selangor and Penang (the most states with urban dwellers in country) contributes about 70% of the street crime statistics. Due to this, Government is going to increase the police omnipresence, improve the facilities on CCTVs in hot spots, introduce courts for street crime and community sentences to deter reoffending, partnerships at local level to reduce street crimes, improving in-prison rehabilitation program and introducing post-release resettlement programs. Other than that transforming drug treatment and rehabilitation program, suppressing psychotropic drug supply and improving monitoring of "*Orang Kena Pengawasan*" are additional measures been mentioned (GTP Roadmap, 2010).

Increasing the public confidence on their safety is extremely important. Involvement from senior police officers in walkabout in commercial areas, street and residential areas are welcomes and should be a practice consistently. The follow up from the public about this effort are very important and a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of this program must be available. Stop and Talk which involve all mobile police vehicles (MPVs) and Community Police (*Polis Masyarakat*, POLMAS) to stop and talk on the ground for 10-15 minutes of every hour during regular patrols also shown an effort from

Government to show the “*Mesra Rakyat*” approach from the biggest law enforcement. The refinement and expansion of Feet on Street program which among others involve the support from other assistance team in the force also in a list to curb crime. The Police Volunteer Reserve (PVR), RELA, JPAM, SUKSIS and so forth are going to be involved (GTP Roadmap, 2010).

No doubt that the public are so much eager with the announcement made by Government to reduce crime rates in Malaysia using the approach and strategies been mentioned above. However, on top of that the most important is includes an assessment and education. A critical assessment has to done towards the social environment to address the connection between gangs and organized crime groups. We have identified the social problems that are link to crime and determining how this can be address. Education can creates employment and opportunities for the youth thus the intention to involve in crime become very less. In other word the better the education young people receive, the less likely they are to offend. The second suggestion were involves a criminal justice and local law enforcement. Criminal justice policies also form part of social prevention strategies. Justice towards criminal must be applying systematically. Local law enforcement is usually the link between the population and the rule of law, in particular criminal law and justice. The police perform key functions in deterring crime and in the arrest, investigation and prosecution of offenders, but the ultimate lesson given to the criminal is the punishment given to them by the Court. Patrolling by the police should be the primary task by the police to reduce the crime rate. While patrolling it does not involve using car, motorcycle, bicycle but even walking. It’s been prove that through this help a lot and according to the Democratic Action Party, FRU troops once undertake this duty at Skudai, Johor and the result are amazing. The frequency of patrolling must be increase and up to the extent police be a visible to the society. Police must perform these activities in an area where the tourist and people are concentrating most.

Training that will produce a police force that understands the conditions and social environment of the city and its neighborhoods. If such local knowledge and cultural understanding are lacking then it will weaken the relationship between police and population. Police force should be transparence and accountable to ensure that law enforcement is effectively administered. Close Circuit Television (CCTV) had proved to us that it could help a lot to prevent and reduce a crime. Nowadays CCTV is nothing new and already been introduced in all big cities such as London, New York, Tokyo and even shown a good result in Singapore. Government must emphasize on this need and allocate sufficient budget for it. The strategic place in the city and housing area must be considered for the purpose of installation the CCTV. The moves by Government to coordinate and streamline the CCTV owned by Police and others such as local council, highways, banks and so forth are much welcome, but the issue here is the implementation. Another effort would be among others proposed that strategic area in urban areas a police bit been built with an appropriate tools and operate at 24 hours basis. No doubt this has been implemented but it should increase and cover all other cities as well. The neighboring community should be divided into sector and each sector must have facilities of police bit that work on 24-hour mode. This system actually been implemented in Japan and Singapore and known to be a Neighborhood Post.

According to the IGP, Tan Sri Musa Hassan in a interview with Utusan Malaysia, the total police force in Malaysia are around 98,747 to take care the whole nation which consist of 27 million population. So from this ratio its clear to us that Malaysia had a shortage in police force because the ideal ratio at international level is 1:250. But of course this is not practical to do it. However, the announcement from Government to increase the police force for another 60,000 should welcome and the effort to achieve this must be execute well. Emphasize also must be given to meet the ratio at least at urban areas because we know this is a place where crime are most happen. Malaysia Government are very serious about this and to prove it in 2010 Budget police force been allocated RM1 billion. Government already does their part and now up to the police personnel to improve their quality of services to make sure that they are really performing the duties i.e. protect the society.

Every nation had their own law and without exception Malaysia. We actually had a good system of law but then the problem is with the enforcement. The effort must be well co-ordinate among the enforcement agencies to make sure this is happen. Enforcement suppose not only been carried out when something blow up in mass media or seasonal. The law enforcement is an on-going process and must been done continuously. The key aspects of crime prevention are the awareness among the general public. This is very important in making sure that the whole society understands their duties. We can do this through a campaign and *Rakan Cop* that introduce by Police actually one of the good effort and the society must take part in it.

This is the fact that we can't deny it. The media either print or electronic media play an important role to reduce the crime rate. If we can see TV3 for instance had a program such as Three Hundred Sixty Degree (360 Degree), 999, "*Kes Jenayah*" and so on. All of this help the enforcement agency to take up the action from their report and indirectly can help to reduce the crime rate. Same as media, there are lot of NGO's in Malaysia and they also must take part in crime prevention program. Awareness among them to include this program in their activities should be encouraged. So far this not well visible in Malaysia and a lot of thing need to be done in future to make it happen. But no doubt there are NGO's really serious in this such as *Yayasan Pecegahan Jenayah Malaysia, Pengasih, PEMADAM* etc but an ordinary NGO's for example those involve in education and consumerism also must organize the relevant activities and program relate to the crime. We already discuss in length about the strategies on crime prevention and in discussing this we already touch the role of government sector through their enforcement agency such as Police, Immigration, Custom, RELA etc. At the same time we touch on the public itself, NGO' s and mass media in helping to prevent the crime. But out of this, the private sector also must took a step and come in to help. They can contribute either in kind or money for instance to sponsor the crime prevention crime, crime education, build the Police Bit and so on.

Educating people from their early age is very important. Government should consider introducing back the Civic subject among the kids in school as it's been done before. This could help to give them a better understanding on crime and how to be a good citizen. As we had been discussing before, unemployment is one of the factors that linked to the crime. So in order to reduce or prevent crime we believe that the job creation is one of the way to prevent from those who are potential involve in crime not going to do so. When they had a job, they had an income and stable job, so this will help them to improve their life better and this help them not to involve in crime. Youth are the one of most vulnerable group that involves in crime and it has happened everywhere. In Malaysia the program such as *Rakan Muda, Program Latihan Khidmat Negara, sports activities, Sukan Malam for Mat Rempit* and so on been designed to cater the need of this group to prevent them from commit or involve in crime and other illegal activities.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, crime in urban areas has diverse causes and effects. The involvement and responsibility to reduce and prevent crime are not only should be under the government through their enforcement agencies, but also must involve others especially public, NGO's, private sector etc. The strategies to address this issue must been coordinated well so then it will create a success story. Crime prevention needs to be base on accurate information about the crime problem and existing initiatives, which could help in reducing crime. A key issue in information gathering is using as many sources from the community as possible. Crime audits enable an understanding of particular areas.



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