

## THE SOCIOECONOMICS SUPPORT ON INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

Muhammad Fuad Abdullah,<sup>1,2\*</sup> Badli Esham Ahmad,<sup>2,3</sup> Mohd Iqbal Mohd Noor<sup>2,4</sup>,  
Lindah Roziani Jamru<sup>5</sup> & Mohamad Pirdaus Yusoh<sup>6</sup>

\*First & Corresponding author

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam  
Campus, Selangor, Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup>Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, Universiti Teknologi  
MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup>Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Jengka Campus,  
Pahang, Malaysia.

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Raub Campus,  
Pahang, Malaysia.

<sup>5</sup>Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota  
Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

<sup>6</sup>Borneo Institute for Indigenous Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu,  
Sabah, Malaysia.

(fuad.abdullah@uitm.edu.my, badli@uitm.edu.my, mohdiqbalmn@uitm.edu.my,  
lindahroziani@ums.edu.my, pirdaus@ums.edu.my)

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### Abstract

The Malaysian community has been impacted by the government development programs that were put in place. The effects of development that have been changing the socioeconomic atmosphere of populations are not limited to mainstream races but also to vulnerable communities like Orang Asli. Many development programmes have been implemented to uplift the well-being of Orang Asli since before Independence Day in 1957. Thus, this study aims to investigate the efficiency of socioeconomic support programmes in the Orang Asli community to bring them out of multidimensional poverty. This study was done on the head of household (HoH) of the Orang Asli community living near the National Park in Pahang. SEM Amos analysis was used to validate all the hypotheses about dependent variables: education, health, the standard of living and wealth. Only the indicators in the health dimension have negative values. This indicates that both indicators, child mortality rate and nutrition, are good in all three Orang Asli settlements. Besides that, logistic regression shows that only the indicators in the health dimension have negative values, indicating that both indicators, child mortality rate and child nutrition, are good in all three

Orang Asli settlements. Therefore, any responsible bodies need to emphasise these particular deprivation matters to uplift the well-being status of the Orang Asli. In addition, serious involvement in the tourism sector is the better option to bring this community out of deprivation, as they live in an attractive and tourism-driven area, the National Park.

*Keywords: Socioeconomic support, Orang Asli, Pahang National Park, multidimensional poverty, tourism*

## **Introduction**

Malaysia is a multiracial country dominated by Malay, Chinese and Indians. However, along with these mainstream races, the Orang Asli, also known as the indigenous people in Malaysia, are recognised as part of the nation. The term Orang Asli is collectively referred to as the 'Original People' or 'First People', who can only be found in Peninsular Malaysia, and they predate the arrival of Malays. There are approximately 206,777 Orang Asli in Malaysia, representing 0.6% of the country's total population. As a heterogeneous society, there are three main tribes, recognised as Senoi, Negrito and Proto-Malay, and each of these tribes is further divided into six sub-tribes. Orang Asli has its own languages, belief systems, and linguistic structures (Department of Orang Asli Development [JAKOA], 2020).

Orang Asli often shares many characteristics with other marginalised groups, such as a lack of political engagement and representation, economic exclusion and poverty, an inability to obtain social services and prejudice. In addition, there is a population issue in the neighbourhood, which often causes people to overlook their health and basic requirements like appropriate clothes and nourishing meals for the whole family (Abdullah & Primus, 2021). The forest area and its settlements are getting smaller due to land clearing activities for development (Abdullah et al., 2020). Their traditional culture is also found to be increasingly eroded due to the increasing diffusion of cultural mix and growth. Since 1957, special efforts have been made in the form of the Five-Year Development Plan to bring about social and economic development in Peninsular Malaysia. For more than 50 years, Malaysia's socioeconomic development has been shaped through an evolutionary process from a low-income country that depends on the agricultural and commodity sectors to a country based on a diverse and open economy with strong ties with developed countries. The Malaysian government seeks to increase national unity through the Five-Year Development Plan by emphasising social integration and prioritising income distribution and equal employment opportunities (Rahman et al., 2022). This goal is achieved through sustainable economic growth and sharing the benefits of

socioeconomic growth with all levels of society to improve all members of Malaysian society (Khosro & Yew, 2015).

In an article published by the United Nations entitled 'Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities', it was stated that although most indigenous people around the world live in areas of the interior, increasingly they have moved to urban areas, either voluntarily or forced. Factors contributing to the indigenous community's migration to urban areas are land confiscation, poverty, the military, natural disasters, a lack of job opportunities, the degradation of traditional life and the prospect of better city opportunities. The limited economic opportunity has caused migration out of the indigenous villages. The migration is suspected to occur among the youth because they have been exposed to the outside world, which is more urban, in addition to having a more guaranteed income and lifestyle.

Locally, limitations on hunting and gathering forest products in the National Park have also worsened the situation for the indigenous people in the area. This may cause problems with the continuity of traditional culture in the long term. It is well known that the younger generation is the group that will inherit culture, economy and society in the future. The migration of the younger generation from the Orang Asli village may impede the continuity of their traditional cultures (United Nations, 2012).

The development programmes implemented have had an impact on the entire community in Malaysia. The indigenous community is included in embracing the temptation of development, transforming their socioeconomic status (Ramlee et al., 2021). These socioeconomic aspects include employment, demographics, formal organisations and complexity (Aziz, 2012). However, their development has often been debated in efforts to achieve universal human well-being. In addition, the socioeconomic, socioculture and socio-heritage of the Orang Asli community have drastically changed over the past two decades. The most significant aspect of producing better well-being and an interconnected society is the planning component of adequate, integrated and sufficient amenities (Abdullah et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the statistics demonstrated that infrastructure development still needs to meet the needs of the remote population. There may need to be more than the accommodation and facilities provided to meet the unmet needs of the indigenous community (Manaf et al., 2021).

The government plays a major role in developing the Orang Asli community. Any development plan implemented has caused changes, especially from the perspectives of social and economic aspects. This change can be described as social change. An issue that often attracts attention among researchers in the Orang Asli community is the transformational impact of the development

programme. The Orang Asli Batek ethnic group has been experiencing cultural changes because of ecotourism activities in the National Park. The changes are divided into four aspects of culture: language, food, clothing and handicrafts. Out of the four aspects, only clothing has experienced an immediate change without maintaining traditional culture. This differs from aspects of nutrition that only change partially and are still mixed with the original culture. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of socioeconomic support for Orang Asli in the National Park in Pahang.

## **Literature Review**

Various issues are often associated with the Orang Asli community, especially socioeconomics and poverty. The Malaysian government has conducted various development programs for the communities, and the Orang Asli are no exception. It has helped to transform their socioeconomic atmosphere. The development programmes for the Orang Asli community aim to close the socioeconomic gap with the mainstream population, especially in rural areas. The perception and acceptance of the Orang Asli community in accepting development is a key indicator of their social, economic and moral resilience to compete and to determine the programme's success. Hence, the development process can catalyse socioeconomic transformation while maintaining the cultural heritage practised for so long. Sadly, some of the development efforts put forth by the government to enhance the quality of life of the Orang Asli community still need to achieve their goals. New houses given to the Orang Asli community are mostly abandoned and neglected since they are embraced by the forest and ancestors' taboos (Krishnasamy, 2017). It is a problem that occurs because of ineffective or non-compliant development efforts. They include a lack of early participation in development processes, passive community engagement, the community's exclusion from decision-making and decision-making openness (Abdullah et al., 2019). Thus, it is sometimes claimed that the Orang Asli community's well-being remains low and far behind the mainstream races, especially regarding socioeconomic development.

The socioeconomics of Orang Asli are now found to have changed compared to 20 years ago, as their economic level is now more modern and no longer of a primitive type. The Orang Asli community can be seen to have developed with the existence of the National Park. Nevertheless, the development of Orang Asli is often used as an issue of debate in efforts towards achieving universal human well-being. The development process can harm them because it has been argued that it can erode their identity as Orang Asli. Changes towards the advancement of Orang Asli are happening, albeit at a rate that leaves much to

be desired. Poverty, dropout and migration issues remain among the Orang Asli community.

The studies conducted by various parties found that awareness arose in the Orang Asli community about the importance of development. Development for them covers aspects of convenience, basic needs and infrastructure such as roads, and an economy in the form of a new order, namely with the use of money as an intermediary. This can be seen in the study conducted on the Orang Asli of Senoi-Semai at Pos Telanok, Pahang (Baharuddin, 1972). The empirical evidence of the Orang Asli community in Parit Gong, Negeri Sembilan, found that most of the Orang Asli community there has assimilated into a market economy because of the development that has been planned by the government and concluded that society has integrated into the national economy (Choy et al., 2010). In Kampung Sungai Ruil, Cameron Highland, the majority of Orang Asli have low incomes. Only 1.5% of the community earns between RM1,500 and RM2,000, but most of the others earn less than RM1,500 (Noralida Hanim Mohd Salleh et al., 2012). Another study found that the Orang Asli in Melaka have an average monthly income of RM1165.33 (Khir et al., 2019). This situation shows that the poverty rate among the Orang Asli is still high, at 31.16% in 2010 (Department of Orang Asli Development [JAKOA], 2011). In addition, the Orang Asli community also belongs to the poor category economically and in terms of power and education (Abdullah et al., 2023).

### **Multidimensional Poverty**

Multidimensional poverty is an alternative method of measuring poverty other than using income as the main indicator. It is more likely to identify ‘who is poor’ in a society (Alkire et al., 2014). Alkire et al. (2014), believe the unidimensional approach to measuring poverty is inaccurate. Using only one variable (income and expenditure) to classify a person, whether the household is poor or not, it is felt that it does not accurately indicate poverty.

**Table 1: Multidimensional poverty dimension and the indicator used by UNDP**

| <b>Dimension</b> | <b>Indicator</b>        | <b>Deprivation Cut-Off</b>  |
|------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Education        | Years of schooling      | No household member has completed five years of schooling.                    |
|                  | Child school attendance | Any school-aged child is not attending school up to class 8.                  |
|                  | Child mortality         | Any child has died in the family.   |
| Health           | Nutrition               | Any adult or child for whom there is nutritional information is malnourished. |
|                  | Electricity             | The household has no electricity.   |

|                    |                 |  |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| Standard of living | Sanitation      | The household's sanitation facility is not improved, but it is improved but shared with other households.                                    |
|                    | Drinking water  | The household does not have access to improved drinking water or safe drinking water that is more than a 30-minute walk from home roundtrip. |
|                    | Flooring        | The household has a dirt, sand or dung floor.  |
|                    | Cooking         | The household cooks with dung, wood or charcoal.   |
|                    | Asset ownership | The household does not own more than one radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike or refrigerator and does not own a car or truck.              |

Source: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2016).

The importance of multidimensional poverty has led UNDP to adopt the concept of lack and ability triggered by Sen (1985) to be better adapted to the human poverty index (HPI). The human poverty index considers poverty based on three main dimensions: death rate (short life), knowledge and overall standard of living (access to public and private resources). The concept of poverty that Sen triggered was developed by Alkire et al. (2018) by introducing a multidimensional poverty index (MPI) using three basic dimensions along with 10 indicators of the human poverty index (Table 1). In July 2010, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), a replacement method for the Human Poverty Index to complement the Human Development Index (HDI).

### Socioeconomic Support

Social support means experiences related to appreciation, attention and love (Iversen et al., 2006). This social support contributes to positive development among individuals (Kaus et al., 2017). Strong support, acceptance and cooperation among community members are essential to helping the Orang Asli integrate with the majority community. Socioeconomic support is closely related to the meaning of daily life. In other words, a person has a better meaning in life if he receives social support from the surrounding community, and a person who has high meaning in life will positively gain pleasure in life (Rothon et al., 2012). The meaning of life is related to individual development, which is also closely related to other processes such as identity development, social relationships and goals.

Ryff and Singer (1998) stated that the meaning of life requires people to understand, give to or see the importance in their lives.

Socioeconomics is associated with social and economic elements or factors (Baharom & Zaki, 2020). Socioeconomic development is a process related to economic activities and the social life of a community. This process involves using theories and methods from various disciplines, such as sociology, economics, history, psychology, development, etc. However, most studies or research on socioeconomics focus on the social impact of changes in economic aspects. The Orang Asli issues are mostly discussed in the context of socioeconomic development to uplift their economic and social standard of living.

In the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, the Orang Asli were recorded as the poorest community, with a poverty rate of around 33.6% (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). This rate is seen in the economic context as a measure of the living conditions of the Orang Asli through the study of quality of life, or the human poverty approach. The quality-of-life approach is a combination of various functions, including physical and social functions (Sen, 1985). Functionality is a person's achievement, which is what he can do. This means that human poverty is a failure to achieve basic human capabilities at a minimum level. The quality-of-life approach considers aspects of material, physical and social well-being, safety, freedom of choice and action and psychological well-being as elements that determine the quality of human life (Narayan et al., 2000).

Research in the context of the psychology of Orang Asli has been minimal, but many studies have been conducted in anthropology and sociology. Social support and understanding of life are seen as important matters in a person's well-being and self-development. Therefore, this study intends to contribute to the individual's self-development while impacting the community. The continuous dropout in education among Orang Asli children has affected the community despite continuous support from authorities such as the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) through prepared programmes for self and community development. Thus, in the context of national development, the dropout rate in education for the Orang Asli community can be interpreted as a loss to the country because those who drop out fail to be formed to become useful and valuable members of society who can contribute to the development of a developed and capable society.

The Orang Asli in Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve demonstrated that subsistence economic activities were still sufficient to survive. However, advanced socioeconomic initiatives done by the government have changed the Temuan tribe in Bukit Lagong, whereas now they are not just looking for forest resources but also involved in the government and private sector (Er Ah Choy et al., 2010). This transition can also be seen in the Semaq Beri tribe in Terengganu, where most rely on the forest to survive and are also involved in commercial farming. Furthermore, their level of education has also increased. This positive vibe is the result of the efforts done by JAKOA, which has increased awareness of the importance of education (Abdullah et al., 2021).

There was a lot of socioeconomic support and action taken by the government to uplift the status quo of the Orang Asli community in Malaysia under the National Development Plan. The Orang Asli development programme is divided into the organised settlement programme, the economic development programme and the social development programme. The structured placement programme consists of several programmes, namely the regrouping plan (RPS), reorganisation village (PSK), natural disaster, new village plan (RKB) and land development. As for the economic development programme, JAKOA has prepared a Development Plan State Economy, Course Development Programme, Entrepreneurship Guidance, Land Development Phase II State, Business Space Construction and Rural Tourism. Under the social development programme, JAKOA (2008) has approved an allocation of RM 58,540,000.00 to implement social development for seven components, namely Poor People's Housing Program, Chief Housing Society, Infrastructure and Public Facilities, Health and Medicine, Family Development and Community, JAKOA Administrative Facilities and Mind Development Program. Health facilities, including as many as two rural clinics, were built in the states of Kelantan and Pahang, while two transit and administrative centres in Gerik, Perak, and Gua Musang, Kelantan, as well as several treatment centres, were built to improve the health of the Orang Asli (Department of Orang Asli Development [JAKOA], 2008).

### **Department of Orang Asli Development**

The Orang Asli Department (JOA) was established on 25 February 1954 under the Orang Asli Act 1954 [Act 134] to provide protection, well-being and progress for

the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia. The establishment of JOA at the initial stage was security-oriented, ensuring that the communist movement did not affect the Orang Asli community. In 1963, JOA changed its name to JHEOA (Department of Orang Asli Affair) until 2011, before becoming *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA), or Department of Orang Asli Development. JAKOA's role is expanded with a mission to implement inclusive development to improve socioeconomic standards and quality of life while at the same time preserving the heritage of the Orang Asli community.

One of JAKOA's main goals is to increase the income of the Orang Asli community and remove them from the poverty line, as well as expand the scope of infrastructure facilities in Orang Asli village. In addition, JAKOA plays a role in empowering the Orang Asli community by improving the level of education and the level of health for the well-being of the community.

JAKOA's strategic plan is based on vision and mission, which are then translated into a strategic core and programmes that guide the formation of action plans. The implementation of the action plan is designed for the achievement of the department's goals within seven comprehensive pillars, which are briefly described below:

#### *Land Administration*

The objective of this pillar is to improve Orang Asli's land administration. Thus, several programmes have been implemented, such as (a) the marking of Orang Asli settlement areas; (b) the membership of the working committee related to Orang Asli land rights; (c) the establishment of guidelines for Orang Asli involvement and (d) monitoring the status of Orang Asli land applications.

#### *Infrastructure Facilities*

This pillar emphasises providing infrastructure facilities in Orang Asli villages. The actions that have been taken are: (a) integrated development of Orang Asli villages in peninsular Malaysia; (b) integrated development of Orang Asli village; (c) resettlement of Orang Asli villages and (d) a treated water supply project in Orang Asli villages.

### *Human Capital and Youth Skill*

The focus of this pillar is to develop the human capital of the Orang Asli community and improve the skills of the Orang Asli youth. It is carried out by a few implemented programmes, such as (a) the early childhood education programme; (b) educational excellence programme (PKP); (c) student track programme (PJS); (d) human mind development programme (PPMI); (e) skills and career training programme (PLKK) and (f) empowering social institutions programme (PMIS).

### *Sustainable Economy*

For this pillar, the concentration is more on increasing the income of the Orang Asli community through sustainable economic activities. Many programmes have been implemented to achieve this pillar, such as (a) plantation projects; (b) hands-holding projects; (c) agricultural input assistance; (d) agricultural development courses; (e) empowering existing Orang Asli entrepreneurs; (f) increasing the involvement of Orang Asli in the field of entrepreneurship; (g) Empowering Orang Asli cooperatives and (h) expanding marketing opportunities for the products of Orang Asli entrepreneurs.

### *Arts, Culture and Heritage*

This pillar focuses on is preserving and promoting Orang Asli's art, culture and heritage. Few programmes are organised to prevent diminishing this vulnerable culture, such as (a) book publishing; (b) giving birth to Orang Asli book writers; (c) the Orang Asli culture carnival and (d) Orang Asli Museum as the main reference source.

### *Social Safety Net (Welfare)*

This pillar stresses strengthening the social safety net to help the Orang Asli community in the B40 group. The programmes that have been implemented are: (a) General Welfare Programme (PKA); (b) Health Welfare Programme (PKK) and (c) Synergy Partner Cooperation Programme (PKRS).

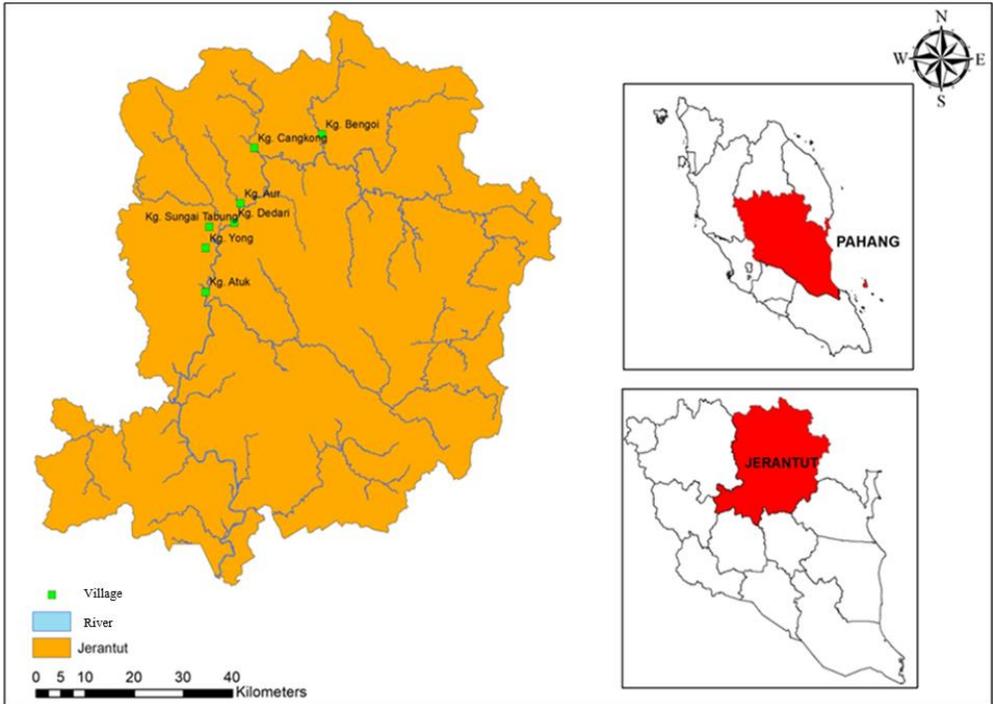
### *Service Delivery System*

This pillar aims to improve the service delivery system through organisational development and publicising JAKOA. The JAKOA takes four main actions under this pillar:

1. Organisational empowerment: Many programmes have been implemented under this goal, for example:
  - i. Financial management and departmental accounts
  - ii. Strengthening systems and work procedures
  - iii. Training Operation Plan (POL).
  - iv. Innovation and quality days
  - v. Strengthening service management
  - vi. Leadership development of JAKOA's members
  - vii. Appreciation and recognition to the people of the department
  - viii. JAKOA promotion and publicity
  - ix. The database system of indigenous peoples (i-Damak)
  - x. Governance and strengthening the integrity of the department
  - xi. Compliance with the Corporate Integrity Pledge (CIP) and rules in public service organisations
  - xii. Communicating information and improving the department's image
2. Coordination and strategic cooperation: Engagement with the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia has been made to fulfil the strategic plan.
3. Strategic planning: To meet this objective, strategic planning for Orang Asli's development and the strategy and direction of the department in five years has been planned.
4. International instruments were focused on human rights for Orang Asli.

### **Batek Tribe of Pahang National Park**

There are 18 Orang Asli tribes in Malaysia under three subgroups: Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malays. The Batek are one of the tribes under the Negrito subgroups. They mainly reside in the states of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. The Batek are considered *lowland forest people and among the last of the mobile hunter-gatherer societies in the Peninsula* (Lye, 2005, p. 251). They are hunter-gatherers, where the hunting and gathering of forest produce provide them with subsistence for their lives. However, they would also do labour work for local business people or villagers, including cleaning up land or collecting wood (Lye, 2002).



**Figure 1: Map of Orang Asli's village in Pahang National Park**  
(Source: Authors' research finding)

There are various subgroups within the Batek tribe, and the ones residing in Taman Negara Pahang are known as Batek *Hep*, where *Hep* means forest (Lye, 2000, 2005). Batek in other locations throughout the states of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan is known as Batek De', Batek Nong and Batek Tanum (Endicott, 1979, 1984; Lye, 2000; Tacey & Riboli, 2014). The differences between the subgroups focus more on the linguistic aspect of their language and cultural identities (Tacey & Riboli, 2014).

## Methodology

This study applied a fully quantitative approach to identify the relationship between socioeconomic support and the well-being of the Orang Asli in National Park, Pahang, Malaysia. Within this quantitative design, a cross-sectional study using a self-reported and self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect data. This population, unit of analysis and sample were among the heads of household (HoH) of the Batek tribe who live in the traditional villages with the highest population. Eight registered Orang Asli villages are near Pahang National Park (Department of Orang Asli Development [JAKOA], 2016). Among these

villages, Kuala Atok, Sg. Cangkong and Bengoi were selected due to their high population density. This study has 84 sample sizes out of 105 HoH from the three Orang Asli villages (Table 2).

**Table 2: Research respondents**

| Village      | Tribe | Head of Household<br>(HoH) | Respondent |
|--------------|-------|----------------------------|------------|
| Kuala Atok   | Batek | 35                         | 28         |
| Sg. Cangkong | Batek | 35                         | 26         |
| Bengoi       | Batek | 35                         | 30         |
| Total        |       | 105                        | 84         |

Source: Authors' research findings

When used with the quantitative design, a retrodictive method enables the three, economic, social and cultural, approaches to be operationalised and assessed to uplift the sustainable well-being of the Orang Asli Batek in the National Park, Malaysia. The retrodictive method seeks to uncover an underlying mechanism that may be used to explain a specific event or an observed pattern. It is used in this research to establish definitions of the topic under inquiry, which are subsequently backed by scientific references and interpretations of the findings.

The questionnaire was developed based on an assessment from the perspective of the Orang Asli through preliminary visits and focus group discussions. The questionnaire forms targeted responses from Orang Asli on the effectiveness of the development initiatives by the government to uplift their socioeconomic status. Developmental concerns are measured by examining whether the government considers their sustainable well-being to be the weight of any *in-situ* development programmes and projects. Thus, the survey instrument has three parts, with Section A asking for demographic information. Section B assesses the Orang Asli's multidimensional poverty by looking at education, health, the standard of living and wealth, while Section C assesses their socioeconomic support programmes. Respondents must express their views on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. Most items were adapted from related studies with minor wording changes to suit the current research's needs or objectives (Dana, 2015). Due to Orang Asli's literacy, the questionnaire was built in Bahasa Malaysia. The researchers assisted them. A pilot study was performed to ensure the items' reliability and validity.

First, the researchers were introduced to establish trust between them and the Orang Asli community. This resulted in the respondents being very cooperative and providing information freely and honestly. Focus group

discussions (FGD) were used to gather brief information and a problem statement. Then the respondents were chosen via the purposive method. To ensure data reliability, respondents must be the Orang Asli's head of household and permanent residents of the particular village. This study addressed any potential ethical issues, including safeguarding the respondents' identities. Respondents were told of their participation in the study and that they may resign at any moment, for any reason and without consequence. In addition, they were assured that the information they provided would be kept private.

## Analysis

### *Multidimensional Poverty Dimension and Indicators*

This study used multidimensional poverty dimensions and indicators as dependent variables. Researchers need to have their justification in mind when determining the dimensions and indicators to be used (Alkire, 2007). The multidimensional measurement of poverty also influences the selection of dimensions and indicators in this study by UNDP and some other additions according to the suitability of the studied population. This will make the selection of dimensions and indicators more accurate and appropriate for the Orang Asli community around the National Park. Therefore, this study places four dimensions with 12 indicators as a multidimensional measure of poverty in the Orang Asli community there (Table 3).

**Table 3: Multidimensional poverty dimension and indicator used**

| <b>Dimension</b>   | <b>Indicator</b>        | <b>Deprivation Cut-off</b>   |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Education          | Years of schooling      | No household member has completed five years of schooling.   |
|                    | Child school attendance | Any school-aged child is not attending school up to class 8.   |
| Health             | Child mortality         | Any child has died in the family.  |
|                    | Nutrition               | Any adult or child for whom there is nutritional information is malnourished.  |
| Standard of living | Electricity             | The household has no electricity.  |
|                    | Sanitation              | The household's sanitation facility is not improved, or it is improved, but shared with other households.                        |
|                    | Drinking water          | The household does not have access to improved or safe drinking water, which is more than a 30-minute walk from home, roundtrip. |
|                    | Flooring                | The household has a dirt, sand or dung floor.  |
|                    | Cooking                 | The household cooks with dung, wood or charcoal.   |
|                    | Road access             | Do not have any proper road (paved) access.  |

|        |                 |  |
|--------|-----------------|--|
| Wealth | Asset ownership | The household does not own more than one radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike, boat or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck. |
|        | Income          | Below the poverty line index determined by the government.   |

Source: Authors' research method

*Sem Amos Modelling (SEM)*

Sem Amos modelling was used at the beginning of the analysis, before the path analysis. The purpose of this method is to screen and validate the hypothesis. The model fit explicitly evaluates the study construct measures' quality, validity and reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the measurements produced. The measuring model for the multidimensional poverty indicators resulted in a p-value less than 0.001. The complete critical ratios for each item on the scale are higher than 1.96 at 0.05 or 0.01 levels. The average variances extracted were higher than 0.5, indicating sufficient convergence (Hair et al., 2006). The Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.70, indicating that the results exceeded the required acceptance and dependability threshold (Nunnally, 1978). The AVE value was greater than 0.50 in all four multidimensional poverty variables (Health = 0.732; Education = 0.731; Standard of Living = 0.687; Wealth = 0.693).

The measuring methodology for the intention in the socioeconomic supports underwent a similar procedure. The outcome displays statistical significance for the measurement model with a p-value of less than 0.001. The measurement model's crucial ratios, which also showed that the construct is unidimensional, are more than 1.96 at the 0.01 level. Factor loading and the critical ratio were also investigated to support the scale's unidimensionality. As a result, it is possible to say that convergent validity is achieved (Jansen, 2010).

*Logit Regression Analysis*

This type of statistical model (also known as the logit model) is often used for classification and predictive analytics. Logistic regression describes data and explains the relationship between one dependent binary variable and one or more nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio-level independent variables. Logistic regression is the appropriate regression analysis when the dependent variable is dichotomous (binary) and all the variables are bounded between 0 and 1. In logistic regression, a logit transformation is applied to the odds, that is, the probability of success divided by the probability of failure. This is also commonly known as the log odds or the natural logarithm of odds, and the following formulas represent this logistic function:

$$\text{Logit}(\pi) = 1 / (1 + \exp(-\pi))$$

$$\ln(\pi/(1-\pi)) = b_0 + b_1 \cdot 1 + b_2 \cdot 2 \dots + e$$

Thus, to study the relationship between Orang Asli poverty and factors that contribute to their deprivation based on the UNDP dimensions and indicators, the following logit model is used:

$$\pi = b_0 + b_1 \cdot 1 + b_2 \cdot 2 + e$$

Where the binary measurement recognises the independent variable as '1' (poor) and '0' (not poor) for each respondent.

## Result and Discussions

### *Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)*

Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.70, above Nunnally's (1978) threshold level of acceptance and dependability (Health = 0.732, Education = 0.731, Standard of Living = 0.687, Wealth = 0.693). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE for each concept should be at least 0.50 to ensure discriminant validity. Similarly, the measuring model for intention in mainstream business was developed. The measurement model demonstrates statistical significance with a p-value less than 0.001. The measurement model's critical ratios are higher than 1.96 at 0.01 levels. The scale's unidimensionality is supported by factor loading and the critical ratio. Thus, convergent validity is achieved (Jansen, 2010). The hand-computed composite reliability of 0.905 and AVE of 0.660 are satisfactory, confirming the presence of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Overall, the 10 Goodness-of-Fit Indices for both measurement models indicate that the data are adequately fitted to the models. This demonstrates the measuring model's unidimensionality, convergent validity and reliability. As a result, it has sufficient measuring characteristics and may be utilised in the logit regression analysis step of the analytical process.

### *Logit Regression Analysis*

The results of the logistic regression analysis show positive and negative values (Table 4). Positive logistic regression values indicate a high poverty indicator, and vice versa. Results show that only the indicators in the health dimension have negative values. This indicates that both indicators, child mortality rate and child nutrition, are good in all three Orang Asli settlements. Based on interviews with villagers and health officers, the health status of the Orang Asli community around

Taman Negara Pahang is gradually improving. This is due to their acceptance of modern medical methods. Furthermore, this results from regular visits and monitoring by the health clinic in Kuala Tahan to these Orang Asli villages. The 'mobile clinic' method is able to provide health services to the Orang Asli community living far inland. In addition, this approach is able to change their sceptical mindset towards modern medical methods and not just rely on traditional methods inherited from their ancestors.

**Table 4: Logistic regression analysis**

| Indicators              | Regression |       | Dif | Sig   | Exp (B)  |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|-----|-------|----------|
| Constant                | 10.327     | 0.105 | 1   | 0.000 | 1030.710 |
| Years of schooling      | 2.354      | 0.453 | 1   | 0.000 | 10.276   |
| Child school attendance | 2.257      | 0.236 | 1   | 0.001 | 10.142   |
| Child mortality         | -0.103     | 0.449 | 1   | 0.000 | 0.885    |
| Nutrition               | -1.365     | 0.235 | 1   | 0.000 | 0.696    |
| Electricity             | 2.013      | 0.708 | 1   | 0.001 | 11.457   |
| Sanitation              | 2.045      | 0.346 | 1   | 0.005 | 12.399   |
| Drinking water          | 2.132      | 0.026 | 1   | 0.002 | 10.353   |
| Flooring                | 2.163      | 0.674 | 1   | 0.001 | 10.475   |
| Cooking                 | 2.537      | 0.860 | 1   | 0.001 | 10.326   |
| Road access             | 2.187      | 0.679 | 1   | 0.050 | 10.642   |
| Asset ownership         | 2.011      | 0.687 | 1   | 0.052 | 13.242   |
| Income                  | 2.268      | 0.130 | 1   | 0.051 | 13.323   |
| Nagelkerke R Square     | 0.585      |       |     |       |          |

Source: Research results of this study

The analysis also shows positive regression values for all three measurement dimensions: education, living standard and wealth. Most of the Orang Asli children here do not receive a complete formal education, and they only finish standard six of their primary school education. This is due to several factors, including the remote location of the village inland, parents going into the forest for long periods to search for forest produces, a lack of interest in continuing schooling and parents' lack of awareness of the importance of formal education for their children's future.

Next is poverty in the standard of living dimension. The Orang Asli Batek community in Taman Negara, Pahang, still lives far inland. Therefore, the main access to their villages is through river transportation using boats. The difficulty of this access makes it challenging to provide various facilities and assistance to them, such as electricity supply, clean and treated water supply (piped water) and housing assistance. As a result, their livelihoods rely more on forest resources; for

example, houses made from natural sources such as bamboo, wooden logs and bark are used as walls and floors, while roofs are made from leaves. Additionally, there is no proper sanitation system. They obtain clean water from nearby rivers and still use wood as fuel for cooking.

The analysis also found that the Orang Asli community in Taman Negara Pahang is poor in the wealth dimension, as represented by income and asset ownership indicators. This is because the Orang Asli Batek community still practices the 'hunter and gatherer' tradition, where they only gather forest resources for their daily needs. If there is excess, it will be sold or exchanged with surrounding village residents to obtain other necessities such as rice and clothing. Therefore, it is quite challenging to determine the daily income of this marginalised community.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The JAKOA's efforts are in line with Malaysia Vision 2030 and the New Economic Policy. The guidelines of the Orang Asli community have been reviewed to accelerate the improvement of their socioeconomic status while maintaining their cultural heritage. The development process of Orang Asli can provide well-being and security and integrate them with other communities towards achieving the programme's goals, which are planned and implemented based on: (a) Act 134, Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (revised 1974); (b) Orang Asli Administration Policy 1961; (c) The 1977 Council of Ministers Decision regarding the plan to unite the Orang Asli community who remain scattered under the Regrouping Plan (RPS) and (d) A guide to the development of Orang Asli in modern society.

However, based on this study, the Batek community near the National Park is still far behind the mainstream, especially in terms of economic well-being indicators. Thus, capacity building by using surrounding resources is needed. Ecotourism, a subsection of the tourism industry, can help develop a country's economic, social and cultural systems and the local community. Ecotourism is also an effort to balance the economic exploitation of natural resources and the cultural heritage of indigenous communities without causing any damage or threatening their existence. In Malaysia, National Parks are one of the tourism assets capable of generating national income. The National Park in Pahang is a tourist attraction where many tourist activities can be done. Involvement in tourism activities will be able to smoothen and facilitate the process of transformation that is believed to contribute to better income and socioeconomic transformation.

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