



Social Impact of Foreign Immigrants on Urban Communities. Case Study: Taman Taming Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines the social impact of foreign immigrants on urban communities in Taman Taming Jaya, Selangor. The scope covers the overall social impact on the presence of foreign immigrants on urban communities, family relationship, the relationship among the local community, the relationship between locals and foreigners, the acceptance of foreigners by local residents, sense of belonging and the safety aspect. A total of 95 questionnaires survey were carried out among local respondents. Besides, direct observation was conducted to investigate the condition of the study area. The findings revealed that most of the respondents felt that the presence of foreign immigrants has negatively impacted their life.

Keywords: social, impact, urban, community

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1.0 Introduction

According to The Centre for Social Impact (2015), social impact can be defined as the net effect of an activity on a community and the well-being of individuals and families living together. It includes the impact on the family relationship, impact on local community, the relationship between locals and foreigners, impact on the sense of belonging and the safety level (Butcher *et al.*, 2015; Ling *et al.*, 2017; McCombes *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, social is relating to the position that someone has in society in relation to other people, relating to activities that involve being with other people, especially activities for pleasure. The social impact of migration increases the risk for the community because the local must share their place with other groups (Kahn *et al.*, 2003).

Due to rapid urbanisation, the employment opportunities in the construction sector, physical development, agriculture and industrialisation have attracted about 215 million people or 3 percent of the world's population to live outside their countries of birth (United Nations 2009). The employment opportunities, higher salaries and other benefits, compared with jobs in their country are the factors that fascinated foreign workers to migrate and cross-border to other countries. Rapid urbanisation has itself led to the continued rise of economic growth. Indeed, Malaysia has been experiencing rapid development since its independence in 1957, which has transformed its economic base that has driven population migration to the country.

Foreign immigrant or foreign worker is defined as a person who is employed in a country on a temporary basis other than the one he or she is a citizen (Mohamed *et al.*, 2012). The entry of foreign workers into Malaysia is certainly not a new phenomenon. In fact, it began during colonial rule when the British colony imported Chinese and Indian workers to work in the tin mines, plantations, construction

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business and infrastructure development. Peninsular Malaysia, previously known as Malaya, was the focus of migration from the area around the island to find job opportunities due to its strategic location and natural resources. It is reported by the Ministry of Human Resources (2010) that there are about 1.9 million foreign workers in various sectors such as manufacturing, construction, farming, domestic help, and service and with other countries in the field of agriculture. Among the countries of the immigrants are Indonesia (60%), Bangladesh (17.4%) and Myanmar (7.8%), (Ministry of Human Resources, 2010). Furthermore, a local construction worker generally receives a salary higher than the foreign worker (2012).

Reflecting this, the employer tends to recruit foreign workers particularly to reduce some of the legal requirements and other employee benefits to employers such as pension funds, medical and social benefits. Thus, the presence of foreign workers is often seen as a threat to the local workforce and not well received by most of the locals in Malaysia (Kassim, 2011). The flux of illegal immigrants in the country also causes problems such as illegally residential areas or squatter settlements. This illegal residential area will lead to many other social problems, in which making it difficult for governments to monitor their activities. In fact, the residential area that is occupied by the foreign immigrants often associated with crime cases and less safe for occupancy, lack basic facilities such as clean water supply, sewerage problems, and electricity. In addition, environmental pollution problems will also occur, especially in slum areas.

The flux of foreign immigrants always creates a social impact on the residents. For example, residents of Taman Perumahan Rakyat Lima Kedai, Johor Bharu raised concern as the foreign immigrants often caused chaos in their area such as drunk and fighting with locals (Utusan Malaysia, 2014). In fact, the presence of foreigners increased up to 500 people in Taman Perumahan Rakyat Lima Kedai because the house owner rented their house to the foreigners. Although the residents have no objection to the owners renting out their homes, however, the act of giving rent to foreigners always caused social problems in the area. Another so-called 'black area' is in Petaling Jaya known as Mentari Court apartment. Cases of crime and social problems are frequently reported. The criminal case associated with foreign immigrants includes rape, sexual harassment, robbery, or fighting with local people (Azhar, 2012). It also caused local residents to be scared to share the common facilities with them. Therefore, this study is vital to discuss the social impact of foreign immigrants on urban communities in Taman Taming Jaya. As such, the evaluations and analysis are focused on several aspects as delineates in the following section.

2.0 Methods

This study was carried out by using the method of the case study and observation. For the purpose of this study, the scope of social impact was limited to cover the following aspects: a) Overall impact of foreign immigrants on urban communities; b) Impact on family relationship; c) Impact on relationship between locals and foreigner; d) Acceptance of foreigners by local residents; e) Impact on sense of belonging; f) Impact on safety of the area.

2.1 Case Study

Taman Taming Jaya is located at Balakong within the administration of Kajang Municipal Council. It consists of 1,040 units of terrace houses, and twenty blocks of apartments in which each apartment has 150 units of houses (Kajang Municipal Council, 2016). The main surrounding land uses are the industrial and commercial area (Fig. 1). The study area is well connected with roads and public transportation networks. The study area is directly connected via major highways such as Lebuhraya Sungai Besi and Lebuhraya Cheras – Kajang. Serdang KTM Komuter is a commuter halt located in Serdang area and served by the Sungai Gadut - Tanjung Malim Route. The new Bus Rapid transportation also already operated across the study area. The nearest Bus Rapid station in Taman Taming Jaya is Bandar Tasik Selatan.

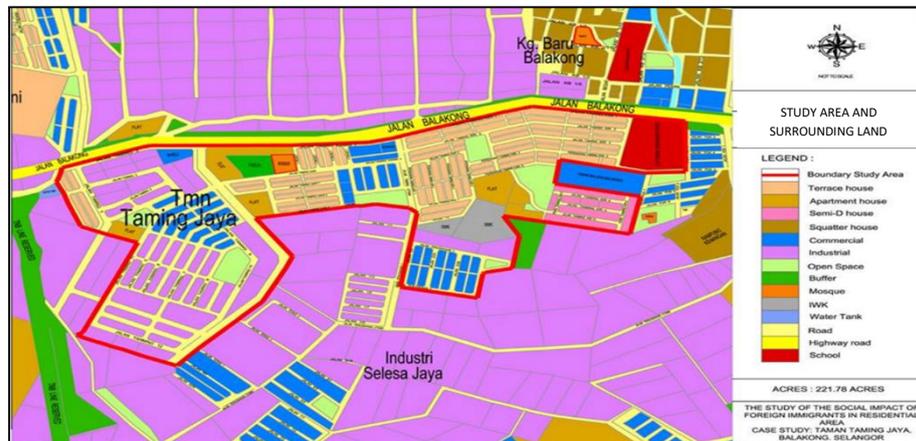


Fig. 1: Taman Taming Jaya and surrounding land uses

Based on the list of registered local residents with the JKKK Taman Taming Jaya in 2010, the majority of residents in this area are local residents, but in 2016, the area was in flux with foreign immigrants. One of the reasons is due to the location of Taman Taming Jaya near to the workplace such as factories and offices.

2.2 Questionnaire Survey and Sampling of Respondents

A total of 95 respondents were selected from the total local residents of 8,080 in the study area by using a simple random sampling method. The samples were determined with the confidence level of 95%. The samples included male and female, different ethnic groups, and different age groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Background of respondents

Variables	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	47.4
Female	52.6
Ethnicity	
Malay	66.3
Indian	12.6
Chinese	17.9
Others	3.2
Age	
< 20 years old	10.5
21-40 years old	43.2
41-65 years old	33.7
> 65 years old	12.6

2.3 Observation

The method of observation is used to investigate the 'real-life' condition of the foreign immigrants in the study area. Through observation, the data collected is often more appropriate and reliable due to the direct observation either from a distance or near from the study area. The observation focuses on the physical elements such as the provision of facilities, safety elements and condition of environment due to the presence of immigrants in the study area. The observation was conducted at the six areas during daytime (Fig.2).

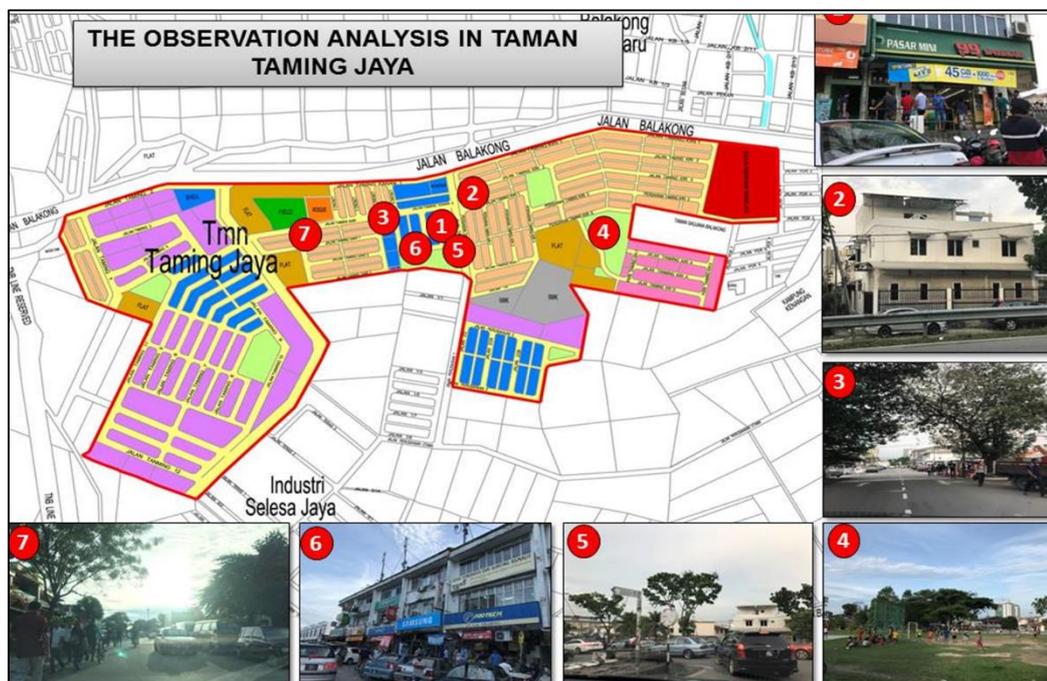


Fig 2: The distribution of site observation in Taman Taming Jaya

2.4 Method of Analysis

The data were analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The purpose of the analysis is to identify the impacts of the existence of foreign immigrants on the urban communities in Taman Taming Jaya.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 The overall impact of foreign immigrants on urban communities

From the questionnaire survey, 84.2% of respondents felt that the presence of foreign immigrants has a negative impact on them, their family and the housing area in general (Table 2). This is based on their perception and observation of the area that were associated with unpleasant activities by the foreigner such as drunk, robbery and vandalism.

Table 2: Overall Impact of Foreign Immigrants

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	15	15.8
Negative	80	84.2
Total	95	100.0

3.2 Impact on family relationship

Table 2 showed that 45.3% of the respondents felt that the presence of foreign immigrants in Taman Taming Jaya has negatively impacted in terms of family relationship (Table 3). Generally, this is referring to the family that has kids, teenagers or women that resulted in insecure feeling among the parents. Some of the respondents felt that the foreigner immigrants can influence their children to cause trouble between family members especially when their teenagers are having an affair with the foreigner. This is based on the real cases that happened in Taman Taming Jaya as informed by the respondents. It was directly affecting the family relationship. However, there were 21.1% of respondents that felt not all of the foreign immigrants will create problems in the study area. They believed that they need to give attention to their family members and always spend time with them to avoid problems occurring in the future. While 33.6% of the respondents did not answer because they live alone and were not associated with the family relationship.

Table 3: Impact on Family Relationship

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	20	21.1
Negative	43	45.3
No answer	32	33.6
Total	95	100.0

3.3 Impact on urban community

Table 2 showed that 45.3% of the respondents felt that the presence of foreign immigrants in Taman Taming Jaya has negatively impacted in terms of family relationship (Table 3). Generally, this is referring to the family that has kids, teenagers or women that resulted in insecure feeling among the parents. Some of the respondents felt that the foreigner immigrants can influence their children to cause trouble between family members especially when their teenagers are having an affair with the foreigner. This is based on the real cases that happened in Taman Taming Jaya as informed by the respondents. It was directly affecting the family relationship. However, there were 21.1% of respondents that felt not all of the foreign immigrants will create problems in the study area. They believed that they need to give attention to their family members and always spend time with them to avoid problems occurring in the future. While 33.6% of the respondents did not answer because they live alone and were not associated with the family relationship.

Table 4: Impact on the local community

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	27	28.4
Negative	68	71.6
Total	95	100.0

3.4 Acceptance of foreigners by local residents

Most of the respondents did not accept the foreign immigrants because of the differences in terms of culture and attitude. As shown in Table 5, 82.1% of the urban community did not accept the foreign immigrants in their society. However, there were some of the respondents (17.9%) that can accept the presence of the foreign immigrants in their area.

Table 5: Acceptance of foreigners by local residents

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Acceptable	17	17.9
Unacceptable	78	82.1
Total	95	100.0

3.5 Impact on the sense of belonging

The findings showed that the majority of the respondents (63.2%) felt that they did not belong to the area due to the presence of foreign immigrants (Table 6). The urban community also felt that the area has lost its Malaysian identity. This is because the influx of foreigners has created a different environment and caused an uncomfortable feeling in the community. However, 36.8% of the respondents did not care about their sense of belonging or sense of place despite the presence of foreign immigrants in the area.

Table 6: Impact on the sense of belonging

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Negative	60	63.2
Positive	35	36.8
Total	95	100.0

3.6 Impact on the safety of the area

Based on the analysis, 94.7% of the respondents were feeling unsafe with the presence of the foreign immigrants in Taman Taming Jaya (Table 7). Nevertheless, only 5.3% of the urban community felt safe with the environment. The respondents said that they felt unsafe due to the crime cases reported by the police in Taman Taming Jaya that involved foreign immigrants in crime activities such as raped, robbed and murdered.

Table 7: Impact on the safety of the area

Impact	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	5	5.3
Negative	90	94.7
Total	95	100.0

3.7 Observation

Based on the observation that has been conducted at Taman Taming Jaya, several issues have been identified due to the presence of foreign immigrants in the study area. As shown in Fig. 3, most of the foreign immigrants were gathered in the commercial area (photo 1 and 3 in Fig. 3). This condition caused the locals to feel afraid to go to the area. This area was once monopolized by the locals but has turned into an area for foreign immigrants to gather especially during the weekends. Furthermore, the influx of foreign immigrants in residential and recreation areas (photo 2 and 4 in Fig. 3) had caused traffic congestion, particularly after working hours when the immigrants gathered at the entrance of housing and recreation areas.



Fig. 3: The distribution of the foreigner gathering area based on observation in Taman Taming Jaya

4.0 Conclusion

The study indicated that most of the respondents felt that the presence of the foreign immigrants has caused a negative impact towards their social life. The urban community has to take additional security to patrol their surrounding area even if they are inside their housing area. The sense of belonging among the local residents was also affected as they did not feel they belonged to the area due to the influx of foreign immigrants. In fact, the local community felt that they have limited access to the recreational area and commercial area that has been conquered by the foreign immigrants.

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