

The Importance of Public Library for Youth Development in Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the usage of public library towards youth development. Generally, a public library offers information and educational resources to a community. Being that in the modern world, there are other modes in seeking information, the public library is often disregarded and being ignored of its existence. Factors that affect the use of public library such as accessibility, availability, comfortability and the maintenance of it plays an important role in determining its usage among youth. The paper will look into four research areas of the urban and rural areas involving 800 respondents (youth) in Malaysia as the base of this study to see whether the public library is used by the youth to gain information apart of other resources available.

Keywords: Public Library, Youth, Youth development.

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1.0 Introduction

A Public library is a place where people can get hold on knowledge, information or educational resources. As mentioned by Suhaila Sufar et al (2012), according to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), a public library is defined as the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. In the near future, few expect e-government to completely replace traditional methods of information and service provision, consultation, and public participation (Lourdes Torres, Vicente Pina, Basilio Acerete, 2005).

Moreover, Suhaila Sufar (2012) also mentioned a public library as an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment (IFLA - Institute Federal Library Association, undated). However, a research found that some differentiation between the library and the Internet is taking place, which may very well have an impact on consumer choices between the two. Longitudinal research is necessary to fully reveal trends in these usage choices, which have implications for all types of libraries in planning and policy development (George D'Elia, Corinne Jörgensen, Joseph Woelfel, Eleanor Jo Rodger, 2002).

Therefore a public library as a learning facility plays a strategic role for youth development. 'Youth' as defined by UNESCO are those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. However, "youth" is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of their interdependence as members of a community. Hence "youth" is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave

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compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment (UNESCO, 2016).

In Malaysian context, referring to Raja Suzana Raja Kasim et al. (2014), there are 13.3 million youth population ages between 15 - 40 represented 46% of the total Malaysian population. The youth populations have a great impact in the development of the country. They are the major contributor in shaping the future and community wellbeing. Therefore, a positive youth development ensures youth contributes to the development and improvement of the community. Hence, the public library a place which acts as an education centre helps the youth to become more productive and increases the overall quality of life for youth in Malaysia. For that reason, this study will examine the factors that affect the use of public library amongst the youth.

2.0 Research Background

This research is a part of a larger project (Social Environment and Infrastructure Sustainability towards Healthy and Quality Lifestyle) which focuses mainly on the use of public library among youth. The main objective of this paper is to examine the importance of public library towards youth development in Malaysia.

There are four (4) sites which are Kuala Lumpur, Pahang, Sarawak and Sabah that were chosen for the research which both cover the west and east side of Malaysia. The sites cover both on the urban and rural areas to ensure data gathered is balanced and no bias results regarding the importance of the public library to the youth development. A total of 800 respondents participated in the data collection. The number of samples were based on the different population sizes of selected study areas. The minimum requirement for Kuala Lumpur (Lembah Pantai) is 385 which has more than 10,000 population (Taro Yamane, 1967). The study decided to have 400 for Kuala Lumpur (Lembah Pantai) respondents. The breakdown is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of respondents

Location	No of Respondents		Total
	Urban area	Rural area	
Kuala Lumpur (Lembah Pantai)	400	0	400
Pahang (Felda Jengka)	0	130	130
Sarawak (Kota Samarahan)	0	130	130
Sabah (Kota Kinabalu)	140	0	140
Total	540	260	800

The respondents are focused mainly on the youth with ages between 15 to 25 years old and represent both female and male gender. They were also selected based on the main three (3) races in Malaysia which represents Malay, Chinese and Indian community. In gathering data for the research, a survey was conducted using 'snowball' sampling technique. This technique is used because the participants who are mainly youth were difficult to participate in the survey. They were either too shy or anxious when asked with the questions of the questionnaire. Therefore, this 'snowball' technique helps in increasing the number of participants and finding other participants through initial contact and connection made by the earlier participants.

The survey questionnaire was developed from the earlier four (4) focus group discussion (FGD) sessions of the main research which is the Social Environment and Infrastructure Sustainability towards Healthy and Quality Lifestyle. Issues and variables regarding the research highlighted during the FGD sessions helped in developing the questionnaire. This questionnaire was divided into two (2) parts mainly Part A for respondents' background and Part B for measuring the youth satisfaction level of the facilities provided in the housing community. The questionnaire was administered by the research team members for quality measures.

The questionnaire was structured to examine the utilization of public library in terms of its availability, comfortability, accessibility and maintenance. Questions were asked to determine whether public library has brought positive impact to the youth development. During the survey, the participants were encouraged to answer all questions on the survey, but were also reminded that their participation was voluntary. They were not required to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable.

Based on the questionnaire, quantitative data is collected and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analysis is applied to examine the usage of public library among youth. Results from the analysis were to support and provide more insight regarding the usage of public library.

3.0 Result and Findings

The research attempts to determine the importance of public library by measuring its usage amongst the youth by using quantitative assessment methods. The objective is to find the relationship between the importance of the public library towards youth development.

Table 2: Level of Respondents' Satisfaction

N	Variables				
	Availability	Comfortability	Distance	Accessibility	Maintenance
Mean	3.65	3.75	3.69	3.75	3.74
Std. Deviation	1.016	.971	1.058	1.044	.997
Variance	.971	.943	1.120	1.091	.994

According to the table, the level of satisfaction of the public library provided in the area was indicated scale between 3 to 4 which shows the level of respondents (youth) satisfaction using the public library is between moderate to satisfied with its current conditions in terms of its availability in the area, its accessible and distance to reach the facilities, as well as the comfort and maintenance provided by the public library when used.

The value of 'availability' and 'distance' of the public library shows 3.65 and 3.69 meaning the respondents (youth) felt moderate in using the public library as the location of the public library is either far from their home or not easily reachable in distance. Furthermore, the value of 'comfort ability', 'accessibility' and 'maintenance' shows 3.75, 3.75 and 3.74. The results indicate that the value of satisfaction when using the public library is reaching a satisfied level. It shows that the public library provided in the area is well maintained and give comfort ability to the respondents (youth) when using it. However, overall result shows that the usage of public library among youth did not achieve the highest value of satisfaction.

Table 3: Availability of the Public Library in the Study Area

Availability of the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	561	70.1
No	239	29.9
Total	800	100.0

Table 3 shows the availability of the public library in the surveyed sites. The results shows that 70.1 % of the respondents (youth) responded 'yes' while the remaining 29.9 % of the respondents (youth) responded 'no' when asked regarding the availability of the public library in their area. It shows that public libraries are provided in their area as a facility in a town or city for the public use. Referring to a study by Atsushi Ikeuchi et al. (2013), libraries and other information centres must justify their existence, so the benefits of their services, even if they seem rather nebulous, cannot be ignored in evaluative studies. The study shows that public library has a significant importance to a community development. The public library is seen here as a centre of education for empowerment of community development.

Table 4: Respondents Usage of the Public Library

Usage of the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	392	49.0
No	406	50.8
Total	798	99.8
Missing data	2	0.3
Total	800	100.0

Even though the public library is available in the area, results of analysis shows more than half (50.9%) of the total respondents being surveyed did not use the public library. It means that the public library is not being fully utilized by the youth. It is due probably to the easy access of the internet use at home or someplace else. With modern technology, youth can gain information without going to the public library.

A study by Yueh Min Huang et al. (2015) shows that e-resources and digital libraries are becoming increasingly important channels for obtaining information. A large number of libraries have consequently introduced mobile communication technologies into their library services, enabling users to search for information from anywhere and at any time.

Table 5: The Distance to the Public Library

The distance to the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very Unsatisfied	30	3.8
Unsatisfied	48	6.0
Moderate	125	15.6
Satisfied	259	32.4
Very Satisfied	130	16.2
Total	592	74.0
Missing data	208	26.0
Total	800	100.0

When respondents were asked regarding the distance of the public library available in their area, results shows that 43.8% and 22.0% of the respondents feel satisfied and very satisfied with its distance. It means that more than half (65.6%) of the respondents are pleased that the public library are reachable within walking proximity and located near their house. While 21.1% responded as

moderate for the distance to reach the public library and another 8.1% and 5.1% responded unsatisfied and very unsatisfied probably due to their houses in the rural area and far from the facilities in the town centres.

Table 6: Accessibility to the Public Library

Accessibility to the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very Unsatisfied	35	4.4
Unsatisfied	27	3.4
Moderate	123	15.4
Satisfied	272	34.0
Very Satisfied	135	16.9
Total	592	74.0
Missing	208	26.0
Total	800	100.0

Referring to the accessibility to the Public Library, result shows that more than half (68.7%) of the respondents were satisfied and very satisfied proving that the distance to the public library in the area are easily reachable and accessible whether by walking or using transport mode such as busses or bicycle by the respondent (youth). However, 10.5% of the respondents feel unsatisfied and very unsatisfied regarding the accessibility to the public library probably due to them living in the rural area and far from the town facilities such as the public library.

Table 7: Facilities provided in the Public Library

Facilities provided in the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very Unsatisfied	27	3.4
Unsatisfied	25	3.1
Moderate	136	17.0
Satisfied	288	36.0
Very Satisfied	117	14.6
Total	593	74.1
Missing data	207	25.9
Total	800	100.0

Table 7 shows the respondents (youth) level of satisfaction regarding the facilities provided in the public library when used. Results show that 48.6 % of the respondents (youth) were satisfied and another 19.7% were very satisfied with the facilities provided. It shows that more than half (68.3%) of the respondents feel that the facilities such as the computers, wireless internet access, study and training room, photocopying and printing provided in the public library is sufficient for the use of the public.

According to Kurtis McDonald (2015), by providing access to public use computers and training sessions geared around specific applications, libraries are now increasingly at the forefront of technological fluency development. Kurtis (2015) also added that if libraries are going to truly meet the needs of their patrons going forward, innovative information literacy training must be re-envisioned as a service priority in all library functions.

Table 8: Maintenance of facilities in the Public Library

Maintenance of facilities in the Public Library	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very Unsatisfied	30	3.8
Unsatisfied	27	3.4
Moderate	129	16.1
Satisfied	286	35.8
Very Satisfied	120	15.0
Total	592	74.0
Missing data	208	26.0
Total	800	100.0

When respondents were asked regarding the conditions of facilities provided in the public library when used, results show that 48.6 % of the respondents (youth) were satisfied and another 19.7% were very satisfied with the facilities provided. It shows that more than half (68.3%) of the respondents feel that the facilities provided in the public library is in good condition and properly maintained for the use of the public. While, 22.9% responded as moderate when asked regarding the facilities provided. Another 4.2 % and 4.6% of the respondents (youth) were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied regarding the facilities provided. It is probably due to the time when they were using the facilities provided, it is in bad condition or not properly maintained.

4.0 Conclusion

Public library today needs to embrace a more engaged role to meet the requirement of the user likely for daily, academic or professional use. It is important to understand the role of public library to community development especially the youth population. The role of public library helps contribute to the growth of education amongst youth and this in turns increase and strengthens the productivity of the community as well as enhances youth development. By understanding all of the influences on the perception and

expectation of the participants regarding the usage of the public library, future challenges which effects both directly and indirectly will helps in developing a positive youth development for the future. The government at all levels should review the requirement of having public libraries. New development guideline or planning standards is required for future development of public library.

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