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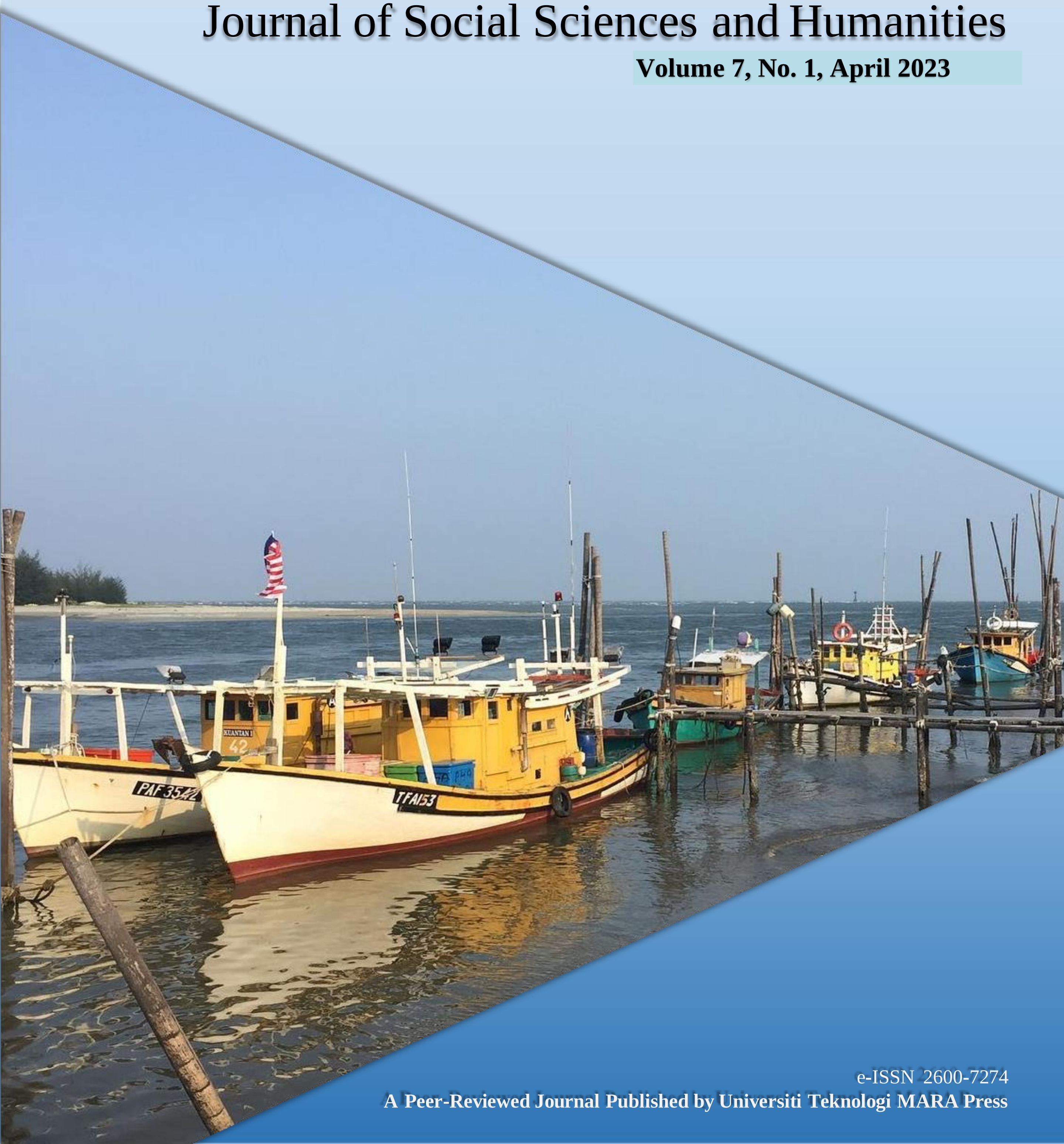
Volume 7, No. 1, April 2023



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Kampus Bertam

E S T E E M

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Journal Description

Introduced in 2017, ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities is an official journal of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang with a registered e-ISSN 2600-7274. It is an open-access journal that publishes articles in English and Bahasa Malaysia. Initially, it was published once a year, from January 2017 to December 2020, but changed its publication frequency to twice a year starting in January 2021 to accommodate the increasing number of manuscript submissions. The journal adheres to traditional standards of double-blind peer review with an average acceptance rate of 30%. Currently, the journal does not charge any article processing fees for manuscripts submitted personally or collaboratively by authors.

Aim and Scope

The ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities aims to serve as a platform for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to exchange new knowledge and ideas in social sciences and humanities areas. The journal provides an avenue for scholars and practitioners to document unpublished, original manuscripts related to emerging issues, developments, and trends that examine how people interact, integrate, behave and influence the world around them. Specifically, the journal aims to provide new knowledge on the relationships between individuals and societies and the operation and progression of organizations in the 21st century.

The key topics covered in the journal relate to emerging issues, trends, and challenges that shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors across societies, businesses, industries, and governments worldwide. As the journal covers two separate but interrelated areas of social sciences and humanities, authors are welcome to submit manuscripts that systematically investigate questions around humanities development, namely language, linguistics, culture, arts, religion, health, and wellbeing. For social sciences, the journal invites manuscripts related to human psychology and sociology in education, law, political science, business, and hospitality, among others.

Frequency of Publication

- January 2021 to present: ONE (1) volume TWO (2) issues per year, published in April and September.
- January 2017 to December 2020: ONE (1) volume ONE (1) issue per year, published in November.
- The publication frequency of the journal does not include special issues.

Duration of Publication Process

The publication process takes approximately 90 – 120 days, based on current practice. All manuscripts are processed accordingly:

- Review Process (within 30 days after the closing date)
- Notification of Acceptance (within 10 days after the review process)
- Revision (within 30 days after the manuscript acceptance)
- Copy Editing (within 10 days after final revision)
- Publication (within 10 days after the copy-editing process)

Peer Review Process

ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities relies on effective peer review processes to uphold the quality and validity of individual articles and the overall integrity of the journal. The journal practices a double-blind peer review consisting of a minimum of two peer reviewers per manuscript to maintain quality. All reviewers with diverse expertise serve voluntarily. Throughout the double-blind review process, the editors hide both reviewer and author identities from one another. To facilitate this, the editors need to ensure that the manuscripts are processed in a way that does not give away the identity of their authors. The editors make sure that the manuscript does not include the names or affiliations of the authors.This ensures the manuscript is judged fairly, keeping bias out of the equation. Both authors and reviewers also benefit from some degree of protection against criticism.

Abstracting and Indexing

EDITORIAL TEAM

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EDITORIAL NOTE

On behalf of the ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (EJSSH) Editorial Team, I am delighted to present Volume 7, Issue No. 1, September 2023. Out of 50 submissions received, only 17 manuscripts were accepted for publication after the stringent review process, representing a 34% acceptance rate. After multiple series of the double-blind peer review process, only 8 high-quality manuscripts met the standard empirical paper requirement and were successfully published.

For the next issue, we are looking forward for more insightful and thought-provoking articles from distinguished authors across various disciplines in social sciences and humanities. We welcome international-based papers across countries, regions, and continents that align with these important global objectives focusing on Sustainable Development Goals. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and our editorial team members for their invaluable contributions in bringing this edition to fruition. We hope you find this journal issue both informative and inspiring, and we look forward to your continued support and engagement.

Editor-in-Chief

Noor Ashikin Basarudin, Ph.D.
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Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang

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Preserving Malay Heritage: Basic Understanding of the Traditional Boats Making in Terengganu

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ABSTRACT

ARTICLE HISTORY

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Traditional ways of making boats are slowly fading because many things have changed since the modern age began. As technology improves worldwide, this study attempts to discover how traditional boats are made in Terengganu. It also suggests a way to keep future generations aware of how traditional boats are made. This study employed a depth interview with a shipwright and field observations at the Terengganu State Museum as part of a qualitative research method. They discussed the fundamental procedure used to make all different types of traditional boats from Terengganu. The findings of this study established a possible medium for preserving Malay Heritage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many aspects of culture, including customs, beliefs, and ways of life, are passed down from generation to generation. Despite this, many cultural components have been lost due to advances in technology and education, even if modernity is a transition that improves the quality of life in the context of human civilisation. In this sense, most aspects of Malaysian culture and heritage result from a long historical process. As such, they are dynamic and flexible enough to undergo and experience a change process.

The arts of carving, weaving, and metal works play an important role in Malaysia's cultural and historical traditions. For example, Malaysia has many ways to make traditional cultural artefacts. The production of these components was essential in the development of Malay civilisation within the state. Therefore, issues such as the majority of younger generations' lack of interest, the decreasing emands for traditional boats or wooden boats, and the reduction in the number of sailing activities in our contemporary day have pushed these arts to extinction. The preservation of our boat heritage involves allowing it to become material relevant to the study of history. Despite this, efforts need to be made to document all of the knowledge so that it can be used as a reference and source of inspiration for the heirs responsible for re-establishing the new Malay maritime civilisation.

There are two major objectives for this research. The first objective is to obtain a fundamental understanding of the process of producing traditional boats in Terengganu, and the second objective is to propose a possible medium for the long-term preservation of Terengganu's traditional boats for future generations.These objectives also accomplish the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is to ensure that future generations have access to quality education in which they may learn about their history as well as the glories of their country.

2. THE TRADITIONAL BOAT MAKING IN TERENGGANU

2.1 A Brief History

Before the 19th century, the Malay economic system depended heavily on agriculture and food crops. However, the economic participation of the Malay population in many Malaysian states, particularly Kedah, Perak, and Terengganu, is considerably distinct (Amarjit Kaur, 1985).

The Malays in Terengganu live in a society surrounded by the world sea and have a solid connection to boat culture. The most obvious link between Malay culture in Terengganu and boat culture is that the tools used in Malay culture have much to do with the sea and boats. People think of the boat as a tool and a sign of the maritime community's proximity to the sea. The deep boat society is so vital that the boat's influence is part of the community. So, the importance of boats to the martime community can be shownby using symbols from architecture and carving, such as handicrafts, house construction, and weapons.

Aside from helping fishermen make a living, boats also became a way for the ruling class to show their importance. In the past, the boat was one of the official vehicles for the royal group at certain events. (Hablinur et al., 2012).

2.2 Types of Terengganu Traditional Boat

According to Norazilawati Abd Wahab & Arba'iyah Mohd Noor (2013), during the 19th century, carpentry and handicraft activities began to be exploited to meet the needs of the upper class. This shows that coastal communities and the state government-owned and shared boat culture.

According to the history of Terengganu State, a traditional boat has been used for a long time to send gold flowers to the State of Siam. In an article written by Baharin Ramly (1993) titled ‘Malay Traditional Boat Building,’ there are various types of boat produced, and each type has a unique shape. “The Jong”, a large ship, is one of the most popular and often used for trade (Mohd Yusoff, 2015).

Traditional boats from Terengganu are also divided into two main groups based on their size: small boats (called *Perahu Kecil*) and sailing boats or big boats (*Perahu Besar*). According to Mohd Yusoff (2017), there are nine types of small boats and four types of big boats, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Boat

Small Boat *(Perahu Kecil)*	**Big Boat *(Perahu Besar)***
Perahu Setak	*Perahu Dogol*
Perahu Kajangan	*Perahu Bedar/Anak Bedar*
Perahu Kolek	*Perahu Pinis Gobel*
Perahu Payang	*Perahu Pinis Dogol*
Perahu Bedar	
Perahu Jalural	
Perahu Haluan Katup	
Perahu Gelibat	
Perahu Sekoci	

There are four (4) types of big boats made by artisans in Terengganu, *Perahu Dogol, Perahu Bedar* or *Anak Bedar, Perahu Pinis Gobel* and *Perahu Pinis Dogol*. The largest and most beautiful boat is the *Perahu Pinis Gobel*. The front of this boat looks like a bird's beak, and the back looks like a duck's back. The boat has three sails: a triangular sail called a jib, a large sail called a lopan sail on the front mast, and a large sail called a great sail. This boat can go between 5 and 6 knots per hour.

Perahu Pinis Gobel is different from *Perahu Dogol.* The front does not look like a bird's beak, but the back is the same as *Perahu Pinis Gobel,* which looks like a back duck. Size-wise, it is the same as *Perahu Pinis Gobel* in height, width, and length. Nevertheless, coffee is getting better, and the shape of the *Perahu Anak Bedar* is different. It is smaller than other boats and has a different shape, especially in the front.

Although each boat looks similar, it has unique features and a basic structure. Figure 1 shows how the basic parts of some small boats, which are the keel (*lunas*), body (*badan*), frame (*kun*), and floor (*lantai*), look different.

Perahu Barat

Perahu Bedar

Perahu Haluan Katup

Perahu Kolek

Figure 1: Basic parts of some small traditional boats with different looks of the keel (*lunas*), body (*badan*), frame (*kun*), and floor (*lantai*)

3. METHODOLOGY

In this empirical descriptive study, a qualitative strategy was used, which included reviewing contextual documents, conducting in-depth interviews, and employing the observation method. The researcher collected several reports, journals, and books that are related to Terengganu traditional boats as part of this study. The goals of this study are to understand the process of making Terengganu Malay traditional boats and to propose an effective medium to sustain the awareness of Terengganu traditional boats for future generations. The information obtained from the documents was combined into a large database, and the content analysis method was used to perform an in-depth analysis of the data. Next the researcher conducted interviews with five (5) experts in the field, among whom was a shipbuilder. After transcribed, translated, categorised into themes, and analysed. In addition to the data collected through interviews, an observation was carried out at the Terengganu State Museum to gain a basic understanding of the traditional boat-making in Terengganu, Malaysia. These three (3) data sources were compared to one another to further establish the findings of the research.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

According to the findings of the triangulated analysis, the researcher has successfully achieved the first objective, which was to understand the procedure used to make traditional boats from *Terengganu*. According to Wan Ramli Wan Daud (1993), a craftsman is a significant person in the production of traditional boats and plays an important role in the process. Craftsmen are those who are both technical people and engineers, and they are the ones who manufacture the product. They were able to obtain acknowledgement from the community due to the combination of these two duties, which was particularly important in traditional societies of the past.

It was discovered through an interview with five different boat builders in Kampung Duyung, Terengganu; most boat builders in Terengganu are well-known for their skills. These skilled artisans can construct boats from scratch without blueprints. They create boats using the knowledge passed down from generation to generation, and their elaborate designs are produced with great precision and attention to detail. This was claimed by two (2) of the boat's builders:

> *"I started just observing my late father building boats. After that, I moved on to help him with simple tasks like making wooden pegs to join the wooden planks. My skills grew gradually until I could build a boat from scratch".* (Participant 3)

> *"Early this year, my father passed away, so I am now the only one in my family who has inherited his skills. Doing this alone is the only way to go, as nobody else has the necessary skills or willingness to continue with the boatbuilding craft,".* (Participant 5)

The expertise of the boat builders is highly respected because of the meticulous attention to detail they pay when creating, which is solely led by pure memory and experience gained in the past. As was noted earlier, the first boat builders of the past relied on something other than plans, but the number of those boat builders needs to increase. In addition, the boat builder who took part in the interviews said that traditionally, the type of wood used to manufacture the different kinds of traditional boats in Terengganu come from the *Chengal* tree. The builder of the boat provided this information. According to the findings of the observations, the fundamental structure of any Terengganu traditional boat, regardless of its size, must include the keel (*lunas*), back and front stems (*linggi*), frame (*kun*), and *buaya dalam* as shown in the diagram below (Figure 2). In this case, regardless of which boat is small or large.

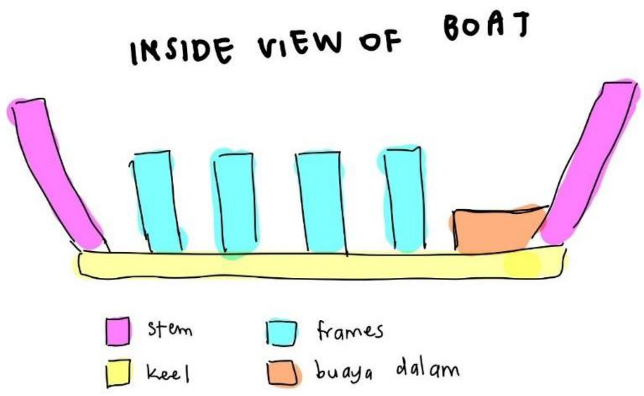

Figure 2: Basic structure of a Terengganu traditional boat.

Putting the keel in place as the vessel's foundation is the very first stage in the process of building a traditional boat from the state of Terengganu. After that, the front and back stems of the boat are attached to the keel at the respective ends of the stems. The angle at which the stems are tilted will be the defining factor in how the boat will be designed, and the stems will be joined to the keel in a nearly vertical position (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The process of shaping and blending the planks to the basic concave shape of a boat

When the keel and stems have been successfully attached to one another, the planks, known as *lepang*, will be attached to the sides of the keel. The *Lepang* planks are fastened to one another using a material known as Pasak by the natives (Figure 4). The Lepang board gets its distinctive concave profile when the individual planks are heated in pairs and then bent into the desired contours using heat.

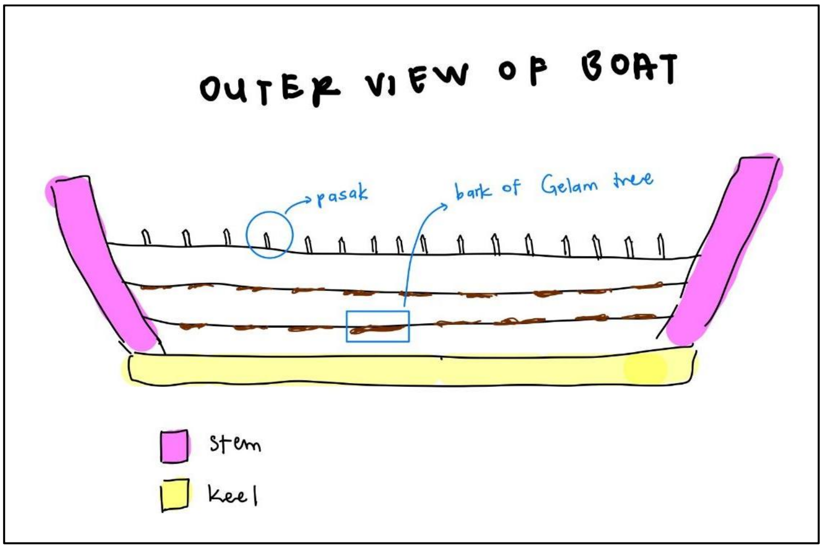

Figure 4: Sketch of the outer view of an unfinished boat

The *Penaga* tree yields the cylinder-shaped piece of wood known as *Pasak,* which measures five inches in diameter. After the holes in the *Lepang* have been drilled, *Pasak* will be placed in them to ensure that the *Lepang* can securely hold each additional *Lepang* that will be added to the body of the boat. The bark of the *Gelam* tree is placed between the planks of the *Lepang* structure so that there is no area for air to circulate between the planks (Figure 5). When this bark comes into contact with water, it swells up and blocks any entrance for water within the boats.

Figure 5: Image of a traditional boat showing cylindrical pasak fixed in the *Lepang* planks.

After the *Lepang* planks have been put together, completing the first half of the boat's body, the frameworks supporting its body will be put in place. The dimensions of the frames will be modified so that they are an appropriate fit for the boat being constructed. For boats of lesser size, the shipwright will set the frames in place by attaching them to the *Lepang* boards at every foot of the vessel's body. The boat's torso will have its frames secured first, followed by the construction of its sides. Following the completion of the framing, the'setel' and the *'Buaya Dalam'* will be attached together. The long timbers that unite the frames and are called "*Setel*" reinforce the frames' current position. The term "*Buaya Dalam*" refers to a structure located on the front side of the boat and holding the front structure against the strong current. The addition of the floor or roof, as well as painting, are examples of procedures that are considered accessories. The distinguishing characteristics of many traditional boats are the size, shape, and presence or absence of a roof. These fundamentals of how to design one traditional boat remain the same throughout the different styles of a traditional boat.

The study's secondary objective is proposing a potential medium for preserving the knowledge of Terengganu traditional boats for future generations. Based on the data analysis, a DIY assembly kit was proposed by taking one of the traditional boat models, *Perahu Kajangan* (Figure 6). Using the assembly model kit, children will have the opportunity to study the models of traditional boats, the structures of the boats, and the basic technique of making one. To ensure that the knowledge of Terengganu Malay traditional boats is preserved for future generations, the current generation will benefit in the long run from having access to a do-it-yourself traditional boat kit so that they can investigate and gain a better understanding of our traditional boats.

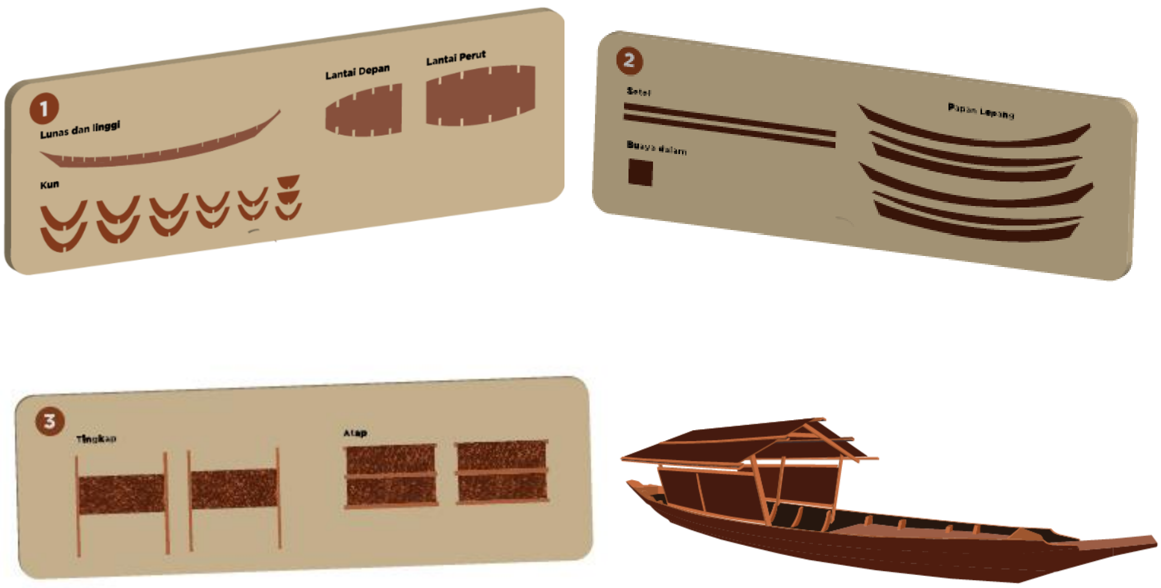

Figure 6: Example of DIY Assembly Kit

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A skilled craftsman constructed a boat using his exceptional ability, extensive knowledge, photographic memory, and unwavering dedication. The art of traditional boat building in Malaysia appears to be on the verge of extinction. Moreover, traditional boats are seeing decreased demand due to the increasing prevalence of land-based modes of transportation and the increasingly sophisticated nature of our technological capabilities. This scenario also impacted marine activity, including teaching young people how to construct boats. In addition, it is disheartening to see how younger generations are gradually forgetting or perhaps being ignorant of this period of history. Despite this, the research study consisted of a literature analysis and an interview, and the results showed that there is still a significant amount of interest in creating traditional boats. Replicas of boats are generally popular among adults, but there is room for improvement in reaching the younger generation with this concept.

Traditional Malay carpentry is known for producing works of art that focus primarily on usefulness, aesthetics, and ethics in their design and construction. As a result, to raise awareness among younger generations, this research advocated the creation of a collection of do-it-yourself kits for models of traditional Malay boats from Terengganu. These kits include ten different varieties of tiny boats. The younger generation will not only become more aware of traditional boats due to the assembly model kit, but they will also learn about the models of traditional boats, the structures of those boats, and the complex process of building one.

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Special thanks to an individual who participated and contributed to this study.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

NK and HR carried out the introduction and literature review sections. NK collected the data and performed the data analysis using NVIVO. HR wrote the data methodology section, the discussion and implication sections. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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Choice Overload: A Systematic Literature Review of Hospitality and Tourism

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ABSTRACT

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Choice overload or overchoice was initially introduced by the futurist Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock (1970), where he predicted (then) that consumers who yearn for choice will ultimately be burdened by it. Choice overload can be defined as the condition where the mind is expended by the number of options presented to the point where it is detrimental cognitively and affectively. This systematic literature review discussed the concept of CO in the hospitality and tourism field. Three main questions were developed to provide direction and guide the review which are: (1) What is the development of CO literature over the years?, (2) What were the research methods used in studying CO? and (3) How was CO investigated?. By utilizing PRISMA and adapting it to the protocol, the reviewer managed to retrieve 11 publications reporting 17 studies in total from Elsevier's Scopus and Web of Science databases on CO in hospitality and tourism, all of which serve as the basis for the current systematic literature review. This was achieved by following eligibility conditions utilized which were that the records should: (1) include studies on CO, (2) have CO as a variable of interest in the study. This review managed to uncover the development of CO throughout the period between 2013-2019. Having compared the number of publications in hospitality and tourism in CO, it has shown that there is limited publication; therefore, it brings opportunity and chance for future research to be conducted in the said field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Choice overload (CO) is defined as the condition where the mind is expended by the number of choices presented to the point where it is detrimental cognitively and affectively (Iyengar, 2006; Reutskaja et al., 2021). The concept of CO was brought to the forefront by the works of Sheena Iyengar and Mark Lepper in their “jam study” (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000) where it was reported in the study that large assortment – as compared to smaller ones – attracts more consumers but recorded only 30% of final purchases. It was further explained that although consumers find the variety in the extensive assortment category appealing, they face a decisional conundrum regarding the purchase. This phenomenon was described as the “paradox of choice” by Schwartz (2004), where in line with the traditional economist view that people value having more choices as it presents them with variety and increases the prospect of having each preference satiated by a large number of choices, but this adds to the cognitive effort of making a choice.

Prominent reviews of CO have been carried out by several authors (Chernev et al., 2015; McShane & Böckenholt, 2018; Scheibehenne et al., 2010). Scheibehenne et al. (2010) argued that based on their meta-analytical review of the literature on CO, studies that had been conducted on CO prior to their article had questionable results as the effect size, as they would put it, was “virtually zero” (Scheibehenne et al., 2010, p. 421). Chernev et al. (2010) commented on this, stating that CO as a concept should be studied in all its complexity rather than a simplistic view. This proceeded with their review of CO (Chernev et al., 2015). A review that highlights the many facets of CO from its antecedents, moderators, and right to their outcomes. Other authors (Guo & Li, 2022a; McShane & Böckenholt, 2018; Reutskaja et al., 2022) have built on this review developing the concept of CO further.

In the context of the hospitality and tourism industry – through the sheer amount of options provided to satisfy the consumer – choice overload is a problem. Although studies reported that the initial reaction to having a multitude of choices presented is attractive for the consumer but when making the actual choice from the said choices, it then becomes a burden (Thai & Yuksel, 2017b). For example, Malaysia alone has around 4,888 choices of accommodation varying in star ratings registered in the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture’s database (MOTAC) (Hafiz Hanafiah et al., 2021). Let's look at the product offered in the food and beverage sector – a subset of the hospitality and tourism industry - specifically Starbucks, at one given time. Their consumer are tasked to choose from 255 food and drink options (Jargon, 2014) which can be daunting to regulars and new consumers alike. Therefore, it is vital to understand CO’s effect on hospitality and tourism consumers.

At the time of writing, there is a gap in the literature on the study of CO in the field of hospitality and tourism, as evident in a search done by the reviewer on Google Scholar resulted in no reviews of the literature on CO in hospitality and tourism which presents an opportunity for the current undertaking. Besides the apparent CO hospitality and tourism literature gap, this study is different and unique compared to the general literature on CO. The general CO literature mostly studies retail and utilitarian products (Malone & Lusk, 2019; Nagar, 2016; Nagar & Gandotra, 2016; Turri, 2011). In comparison, the hospitality and tourism industry, through its many sectors, offers intangibles and hedonic products.

The current research aims to explore the development of literature on CO in the hospitality and tourism field, attempting to describe the trend of CO in hospitality and tourism. This review also investigates the various research designs utilized to explain CO further in hospitality and tourism. The current undertaking is hoped to provide identification of gaps in the body of knowledge that could serve as the basis for future research on CO in hospitality and tourism. In reviewing the literature on CO, this current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What has been the development of CO literature over the years?
2. What were the research methods used in studying CO?
3. How was CO investigated?

2. METHODOLOGY

The current systematic review of CO in hospitality and tourism will utilize the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to ensure that the systematic review's design is sound. PRISMA as a systematic review tool was extensively developed by 29 individuals comprising review authors, medical editors, clinicians, methodologists, and consumers to achieve transparency and enhance information reporting in systematic reviews (Liberati et al., 2009). The use of PRISMA for the systematic review is deemed acceptable due to the rigorous process of identifying literature and producing systematic reviews, as apparent in their 27-item checklist supported by previous researchers (Abelha et al., 2020; Page et al., 2021; Pérez et al., 2020). As the current undertaking is a systematic literature review and not a meta-analysis paper, the reviewer will adapt an altered PRISMA checklist that omits items 11-15 and 18-22 as it is more suited to meta-analytical studies (Pahlevan Sharif et al., 2019).

In preparation for the systematic review, initial articles were sourced from Elsevier's Scopus database. Scopus as a search database is deemed appropriate as it has been utilized by many systematic reviews across various disciplines (Booth et al., 2020; Pérez et al., 2020). The usage of the Scopus database is also deemed necessary as it provides a platform for the reviewer to search and gather numerous articles across various forms of publications, as supported by previous authors (de Bem Machado et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022) Scopus presents a large repository for researchers to source literature for their studies. Specific keywords were used in the search for literature related to the current review to produce results narrowed down to the scope of interest. The process of obtaining the final reports for review will follow the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al., 2021), as shown in Figure 1, following the flow for the "identification of new studies via databases and registers."

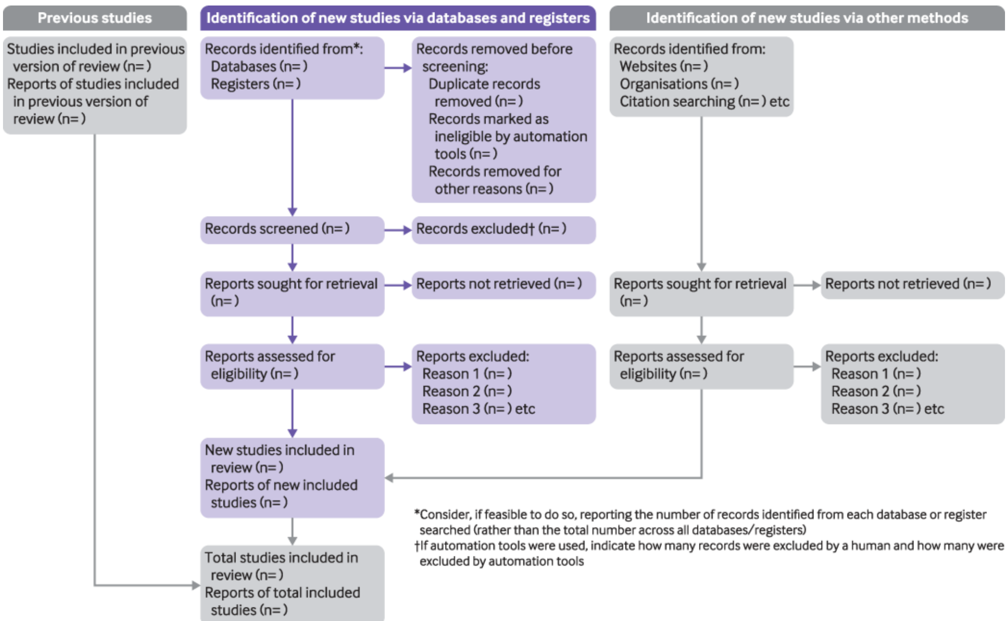

Figure 1: The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

In obtaining literature related to CO, the words ‘choice overload’ and ‘overchoice’ were keyed in. To encapsulate the hospitality and tourism literature, the words ‘hospitality’, ‘tourism,’ ‘travel,’ ‘hotel,’ ‘restaurant,’ and ‘café.’ Choosing keywords for hospitality and tourism ensures that the scope is covered. These selected keywords were searched on 21 July 2022 throughout the titles, abstracts, and keywords in the Scopus database for the initial literature search. The query string is as follows: “TITLE-ABS-KEY (("choice overload" OR "overchoice" OR "choice paralysis") AND ("hospitality" OR "tourism" OR "leisure" OR "travel" OR "hotel" OR "restaurant" OR "cafe")). This resulted in 20 records.

The reviewer deemed that 20 records may not be sufficient to develop a systematic literature review encompassing CO holistically; therefore, the reviewer decided to include searches from another source, Web of Science (WoS) by Clarivate. Including WoS as a database source is deemed suitable based on the previous systematic literature reviews that used WoS as their database (Chen et al., 2021; García-Holgado & García-Peñalvo, 2018).

The search was conducted last on 26 July 2022. The queries that were used for sourcing the literature are as follows: (("choice overload" OR "overchoice" OR "choice paralysis") AND ("hospitality" OR "tourism" OR "leisure" OR "travel" OR "hotel" OR "restaurant" OR "cafe")). The exact queries were searched in the title, abstract, and author keyword fields. The search resulted in 13 entries.

The search from Scopus and WoS resulted in 33 records, which were then exported to a Microsoft Excel table CSV format for further deliberation. Each of the 33 records’ titles, abstracts, and keywords was screened by a single reviewer independently and marked either 0 (reject) or 1 (accept), or 2 (maybe). This screening was done by rechecking the title, abstract, and keyword – although they might contain the searched keywords – whether they align with the review’s objective of CO in hospitality and tourism. Based on the retrieved records, 12 were marked ‘0’ and discarded as duplicates, while one record was discarded as a proceeding compilation entry that holds one of the records acquired by the search. 17 records were subsequently marked one and accepted as all 17 discussed CO, while three records were marked two as the reviewer feels that although the abstract does include the term ‘choice overload’ or ‘overchoice,’ further deliberation of the 20 records needs to be made on their eligibility to be included in the systematic review.

3. RESULTS

The reviewer retrieved and read all 20 reports to determine whether the said reports were eligible for the review process. In assessing each of the 20 reports for the current systematic review, the reviewer will implement several eligibility conditions to sift through and acquire relevant records. The conditions are that the records should: (1) include studies on CO and (2) have CO as the variable of interest in the study. Based on the prescribed eligibility conditions, four reports (Al-Ajlan et al., n.d.; Seo & Moon, 2016; Swartz, 2019) were discarded as the reports did not discuss CO, two reports (Oancea & Horga, 2018; Thai & Yuksel, 2017b) were subsequently discarded due to not performing studies on CO, three reports were discarded as the reports did not comply with the eligibility condition of having CO as a variable of interest. However, CO was identified in their study, but the nature of CO studied was limited to being a dimension of a more significant variable, for example, as one of the decision-maker styles (Ehsan Hoseinipor et al., 2019; McKercher & Prideaux, 2011; Peng et al., 2015). The final number of reports for the current systematic literature review stands at 11 reports (Denizci Guillet et al., 2020; Guo & Li, 2022b; Johns et al., 2013; Papadopoulou et al., 2019; J. Y. Park & Jang, 2013; S. Park & Kang, 2022; Song et al., 2019; Sthapit, Coudounaris, et al., 2019;

Sthapit, Kozak, et al., 2019; Thai & Yuksel, 2017a, 2017c) producing 17 studies. The summary of the whole process of selection is shown in figure 2.

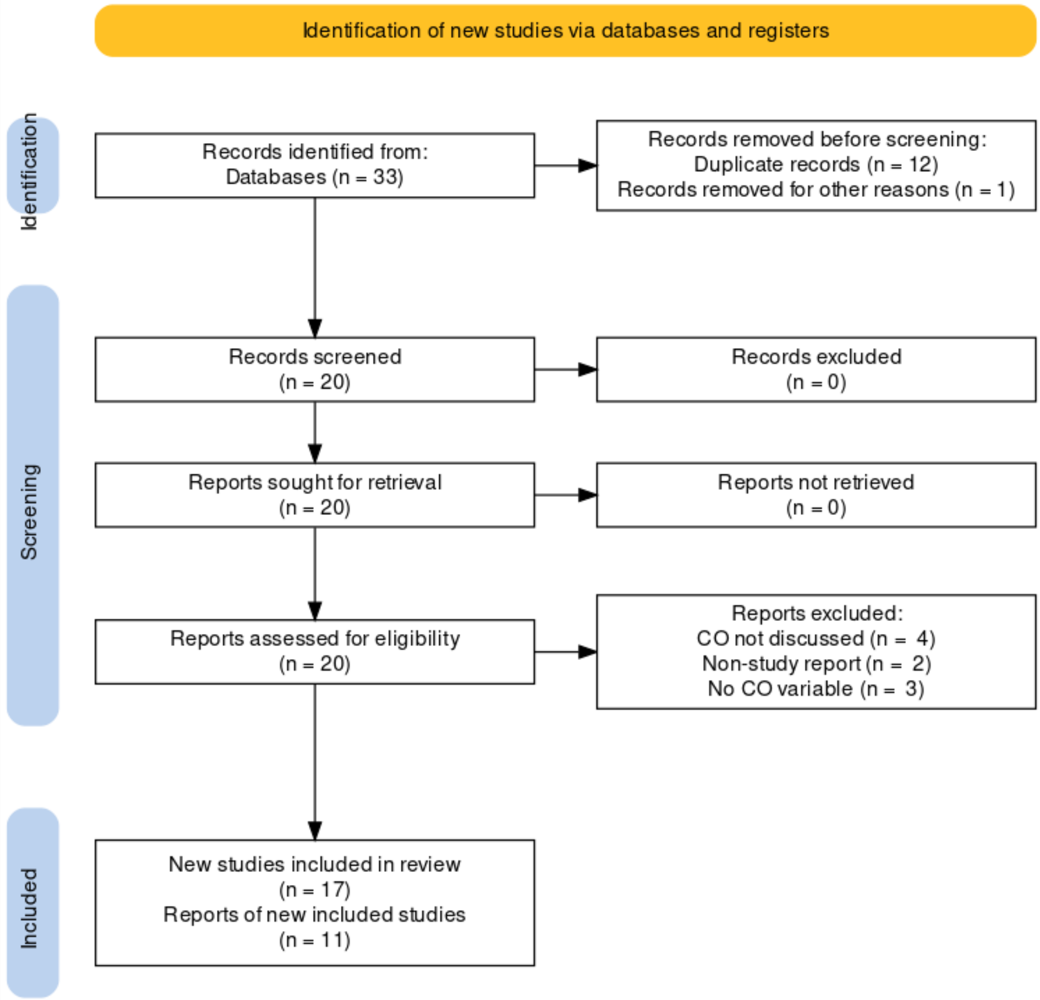

Figure 2: The Selection Flow Chart

In answering the questions set forth for the current systematic literature review on CO, the results section will present the findings on three main areas, which will describe the following: (1) development in CO publication, (2) study description, and (3) measurement of CO.

3.1 Development in CO Publication

Table 1 depicts the reviewed reports based on the year of publication and the name of the journals they were published in. The earliest entry was published in the year 2013, and the most recent was published in the year 2022. Most of the reports were published in recent years, with 83% (9) of them published in 2017 and later, while 17% (2) were published in 2016 and earlier. The year 2019 produced the most literature on CO, with four recorded publications, while the least amount of publication was shared between the years 2020 and 2021, with one publication each.

Table 1: Year of Publication

Year of publication	Quantity	Percentage
2022	2	18%
2020	1	9%
2019	4	36%
2017	2	18%
2013	2	18%

Eight reports – which translate to 67% of the total reports – were published in journals listed in the top 30 WoS Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) journals in the field of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, and Tourism based on their impact factor, which are namely (1) Tourism Management, (2) Annals of Tourism Research, (3) International Journal of Hospitality Management, (4) Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management, (5) Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, (6) Tourism Management Perspectives, (7) Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism. Each of the journals listed had one publication, except the Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, which bore two publications on CO. Table 2 depicts each journal's list and impact factor figure. In contrast, four reports (33%) were publications without impact factors.

Table 2: Journal title and impact factor based on SSCI Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism 2021

Journal title	Total	Impact Factor
Tourism Management	1	12.879
Annals of Tourism Research	1	12.853
International Journal of Hospitality Management	1	10.427
Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	1	9.821
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	1	8.178
Tourism Management Perspectives	1	7.608

Table 3 depicts the citation of each paper, with the highest citation being 74 (J. Y. Park & Jang, 2013), while two papers published recently had the least with one citation and another still yet to be cited – which is understandable as they were just published in 2022 (Guo & Li, 2022b; S. Park & Kang, 2022).

Table 3: Reports by citation

Report Title	Authors	Year published	Cited by
Confused by too many choices? Choice overload in tourism	(J. Y. Park & Jang, 2013)	2013	74
Extending the memorable tourism experience construct: an investigation of memories of local food experiences	(Sthapit, Coudounaris, et al., 2019)	2019	41
Too many destinations to visit: Tourists’ dilemma?	(Thai & Yuksel, 2017c)	2017	34
Choice overload in holiday destination choices	(Thai & Yuksel, 2017a)	2017	23
The effects of choice set size and information filtering mechanisms on online hotel booking	(Denizci Guillet et al., 2020)	2020	16

Menu Choice: Satisfaction or Overload?	(Johns et al., 2013)	2013	8
What am i going to do now? Examining choice overload in vacation activities using the familiarity concept	(Sthapit, Kozak, et al., 2019)	2019	6
Exploring effective price presentation format to reduce decision difficulty and increase decision satisfaction	(Song et al., 2019)	2019	4
Gifts as conduits in choice overload environments	(Papadopoulou et al., 2019)	2019	4
Can the amount of information and information presentation reduce choice overload? An empirical study of online hotel booking	(Guo & Li, 2022)	2022	1
More is not always better: determinants of choice overload and satisfaction with customization in fast casual restaurants.	(S. Park & Kang, 2022)	2022	0

3.2 Study Description

For this systematic literature review, the studies retrieved will be described by several criteria: the research method, the research setting, and the study participants.

3.2.1 Research Method

A review of all the studies revealed that 82% of the method used to discuss CO utilized an experimental design, and 18% were survey-based studies. In categorizing, the experimental design here is defined as studies that test CO on participants randomly assigned to conditions either in a lab or field setting, which is comparatively different from survey-based studies. Out of the 17 studies reported, 14 were experimental, and three were survey-based. Most of the 14 experiments were conducted as lab experiments, with 13 studies reported, while one report conducted a field study, as depicted in Figure 3.

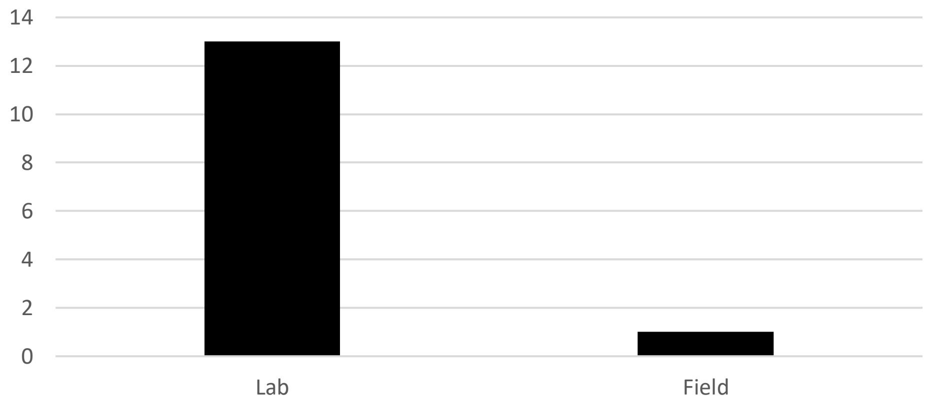

Figure 3: Distribution of Experiments

3.2.2 Research Setting

The research setting describes the background or research environment in which studies were conducted, bearing in mind that the hospitality and tourism industry is varied in its sectors, including hotels, restaurants, cafes, and travel. Based on the 17 studies, the majority studied CO in a travel setting, with eight studies on travel destinations, followed by hotels with four. Lastly, three studies investigate the food and beverage setting. This is summarized in Figure 4.

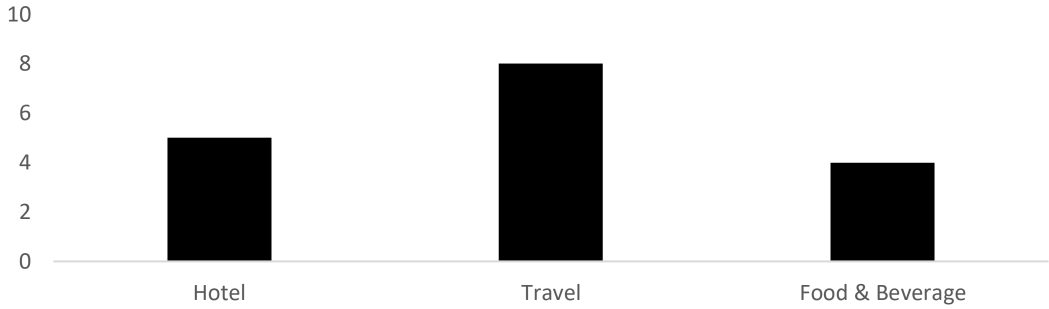

Figure 4: Distribution of Study Settings

3.2.3 Study Participants

Identifying the sample or participants of the studies is also integral in describing CO in recent studies. Participants are generally used to describe the unit of analysis in experiments, while samples are for non-experimental studies, which in this review's case, are survey-based. Seven of the 17 studies reviewed utilized varying online profiling and data collection service providers who are namely: (1) Amazon Mechanical Turk – three studies, (2) Qualtrics – two studies, and (3) WenJuanXing – two studies. In comparison, the remaining ten studies collected their data from students (7 studies), tourists (2 studies), and hotel guests (1 study).

3.3 Measurement of CO

In reviewing the measurement of CO in all 17 studies, the reviewer has determined three areas of interest which are namely (1) the number of choices studied, (2) category type, and (3) how CO was measured as a variable.

3.3.1 CO Description

CO is a concept where individuals are cognitively and affectively taxed in making choices among many assortments, the reviewer continued to review the various sizes of assortments discussed in the studies. Due to the design of each study, only 14 experimental studies were reviewed. The small assortment size was in the range of two to six choices, while in the extensive assortment size, the range was between five and 36. 50% (7 studies) of the studies utilized three choices to represent the small assortment size condition, while for the large assortment condition, 43% (6 studies) indicated seven choices to represent the said condition. Figure 5a highlights the distribution of the small category, while Figure 5b highlights the large category of assortment sizes

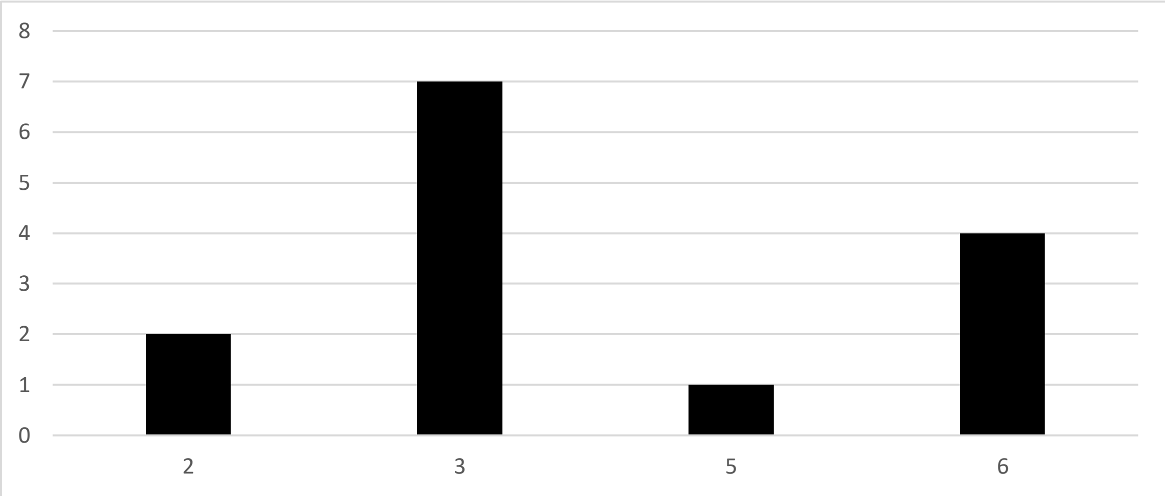

Figure 5a: Small Size Distribution

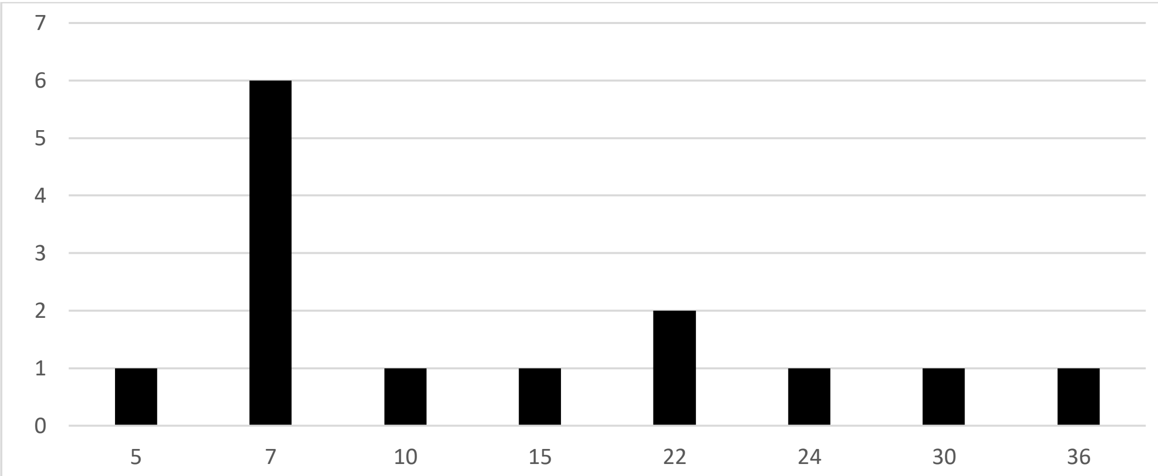

Figure 5b: Large Size Distribution

Based on the review of the 17 studies, there are four types of choices studied which are namely hotel selection (4 studies), food (4 studies), room service (1 study), and travel destination (8 studies). As listed, 47%, which translates to most studies, investigates CO in travel destination choices.

In the final description of CO, the reviewer reviewed the measures reported for CO in each study. Table 3 displays the measure used to investigate CO in all the studies. In the reports published before 2019, no precise CO measuring scale was developed to study CO reliably, and CO was attributed to the outcomes of making choices such as post-choice satisfaction, regret, or even the perception of the choices presented to the subjects. Moving forward, post-2019, it was found that researchers developed scales that were designated to test the experience of CO with five reports utilizing an assigned CO scale.

Table 4: Journal articles and their measure for CO

Reports	Author	Moderator / Mediator	CO measure
Can the amount of information and information presentation reduce choice overload? An empirical study of online hotel booking	Guo R. & Li H. (2022)	Moderator Amount of information Presentation of information Mediator Uncertainty Decision difficulty	3-item CO scale
More is not always better: determinants of choice overload and satisfaction with customization in fast-casual restaurants.	Park S. & Kang J. (2022)	Moderator Customer value: hedonic, utilitarian	4-item CO scale
The effects of choice set size and information filtering mechanisms on online hotel booking	Denizci Guillet B., Mattila A. & Gao L. (2020)	Moderator Presentation Format	7-item CO scale
Exploring effective price presentation format to reduce decision difficulty and increase decision satisfaction	Song M., Lee W.S. & Moon J. (2019)	Moderator Decision difficulty	Decision satisfaction
Extending the memorable tourism experience construct: an investigation of memories of local food experiences	Sthapit E., Coudounaris D.N. & Björk P. (2019)	Moderator Demography: gender, age, first-time vs. repeat tourists	2-item CO scale
Gifts as conduits in choice overload environments	Papadopoulou N., Raïes K., Mir Bernal P. & Woodside A.G. (2019)	Moderator Demography: gender, age, length of stay	Actual purchase/use comparison between high and low choice conditions
What am i going to do now? Examining choice overload in vacation activities using the familiarity concept	Sthapit E., Kozak M., & Coudounaris D. (2019)	None	2-item CO scale
Choice overload in holiday destination choices	Thai N.T. & Yuksel U. (2017)	Mediator Uncertainty Confusion	Post-choice satisfaction and regret
Too many destinations to visit: Tourists' dilemma?	Thai N.T. & Yuksel U. (2017)	Mediator Uncertainty	Post-choice satisfaction
Confused by too many choices? Choice overload in tourism	Park J.-Y. & Jang S.S. (2013)	Moderator Familiarity Choice decision	Choice vs. no choice
Menu Choice: Satisfaction or Overload?	Johns N., Edwards J.S.A., & Hartwell H.J. (2013)	None	Number of choice perception

Table 4 also highlights the moderator and mediator applied to the studies on CO in hospitality and tourism. Only two of the 11 reports studied CO without applying any moderating or mediating variables. Uncertainty is the variable that has been factored in most of the 11 reports, with three reports, while decision difficulty comes in second with two reports.

4. DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review discussed the concept of CO in hospitality and tourism based on the publications retrieved. Three main questions were developed to provide direction and guide the review which are: (1) “What is the development of CO literature over the years?”, (2) “What were the research methods used in studying CO?” and (3) “How was CO investigated?”. In discussing all of the results, this systematic literature review will compare some results with the other central literature review on CO and discuss the directions forward.

The systematic literature review answers the question “what is the development of CO literature over the years?” by extracting the descriptions of journals that present the reports and studies retrieved in terms of the year of publication and the impact factor of the journals that published them. Having retrieved reports from the field of hospitality and tourism, it was found that the study of CO in hospitality and tourism – based on the databases in Scopus and WoS – was initially discussed with the earliest entry in 2013, where the report produced an early investigation to CO. This can be seen in the study presented where the objective of the researcher was to explore whether the concept of CO does exist citing the dissonance in literature where there is a contradictory view on CO in restaurant menu offerings (Johns et al., 2013). Fast forward to 2022, and the literature on CO is still readily available in hospitality and tourism with the entry by researchers (Guo & Li, 2022b; S. Park & Kang, 2022) where in comparison with the study conducted in 2013, the investigation on CO is more detailed, structured and addresses multiple variables in connection to CO.

Even though CO is still being researched, the retrieval of these 11 reports from 2013 to 2022 is considered limited compared to the general literature on CO. A quick search using Scopus on literature about CO alone produced 288 entries at the time of writing, highlighting that the hospitality and tourism literature is only 7% (based on the initial Scopus search that yielded 20 entries). In addition, there is potential for CO article publications as, based on the result of the review, pieces of literature on CO managed to be accepted and published in journals with high impact factors, as highlighted in WoS SSCI for Hospitality, Leisure, Sports, and Tourism which includes Tourism Management (impact factor = 12.879), Annals of Tourism Research (impact factor = 12.853), and International Journal of Hospitality Management (impact factor = 10.427) among others listed in Table 1.

The next question to be answered in this systematic literature review is “what were the methods used in studying CO?” this is subsequently answered by the review’s description of the studies collected on CO. In terms of the description of studies conducted on CO, the review found that most of the reports highlight the use of experiments as the means to investigate the variable of CO, with 14 studies (67%) out of the 17 studies utilizing an experimental design. Lab experiments were predominantly used throughout the 14 experiments, with only one recorded study using an unobtrusive field experiment (Papadopoulou et al., 2019). This is comparable to research conducted by several authors (Chernev et al., 2015; McShane & Böckenholt, 2018; Scheibehenne et al., 2010), wherein the general CO literature, the experimental design was used primarily to test CO. In studying the variable of CO with the number of choices, the utilization of experiments is considered appropriate as it enables researchers to gather data on a specific variable's cause and effect. However, as experiments are high in internal validity, more studies could be done to complement these findings.

The final question set out by the current undertaking is to answer, "what were the studies conducted on CO?". In this part, the review will describe, according to the studies published, at which point or choice size the studies report CO and how CO was measured. Based on the recorded studies, the small choice sizes varied from two to six, while the large choice category is from five item choices to 36 choices. The small choice category is comparably smaller in range compared to the large choice category. This could be explained by the fact that all the studies are guided by the notion that large amounts of choice induce CO hence the investigation of more varied points representing the large choice size.

In measuring CO, initial research began with identifying the aftereffects of choosing from a large assortment. This could be seen in the three studies by Iyengar and Lepper (2000), where CO is tested and represented by the participants' decisional satisfaction and the actual purchase or deferral of choice. This was also followed in turn by the hospitality and tourism research community and is evident by the studies reviewed spanning the years 2013-2019 whereas highlighted in Table 3 indicated CO through choice perception (Johns et al., 2013), choice vs. no choice (Papadopoulou et al., 2019; J. Y. Park & Jang, 2013), and post choice indicators such as satisfaction or regret (Song et al., 2019; Thai & Yuksel, 2017a, 2017c). This was in line or comparable with the studies on CO that were produced during that period, as reviewed by Chernev et al. (2015) for the period between 2000 and 2014. This trend of measuring CO – as reviewed – subsequently shifted to several research developing a stand-alone measure for CO from the year 2019 to 2022 (Denizci Guillet et al., 2020; Guo & Li, 2022b; S. Park & Kang, 2022; Sthapit, Coudounaris, et al., 2019; Sthapit, Kozak, et al., 2019).

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

CO was initially a term introduced by the futurist Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock (1970), where he predicted (then) that consumers who yearn for choice will, in the end, be burdened by it, as depicted in the following excerpt, "Ironically, the people of the future may suffer not from an absence of choice, but from a paralyzing surfeit of it. They may be victims of that peculiarly super-industrial dilemma: overchoice." (p. 263). The concept prompted several studies to be conducted on CO (Chan, 2014; Kinjo & Ebina, 2015; Mohan, 2020; Murphy & Cotteleer, 2015). This systematic literature review was guided by the notion of exploring the studies conducted on CO but specifically in the hospitality and tourism setting. By utilizing PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) and adapting it to the protocol set by Pahlevan Sharif et al. (2019), the reviewer managed to retrieve 11 publications reporting 17 studies in total on CO in hospitality and tourism, all of which serve the basis for the current systematic literature review. The systematic literature review is limited to the scope set by the reviewer; therefore, future reviews of CO in hospitality and tourism might consider expanding the review, such as conducting a meta-analytical review.

This review managed to uncover the development of CO throughout the period between 2013-2019. Comparing the number of publications in hospitality and tourism in CO has shown limited publication; therefore, it brings about the opportunity for future research to be conducted in the said field.

Another finding discussed is that most of the CO studies are experimental in nature and design, thus shedding light on CO from a particular angle. However, it offers an opportunity for future research to be conducted in non-experimental design to extend the knowledge of CO further and reduce the gap, particularly in hospitality and tourism. This would also increase the external validity of CO studies.

Lastly, in terms of the measurement of CO based on the review, recent publications have begun to measure CO with their dedicated scale. It enables the collection of data on the experience of CO solely without being mistaken for its antecedents or its aftereffects. In this aspect, there is this potential for future research to develop a robust and replicable measure for the investigation of CO, as no measure has been agreed upon, especially in the hospitality and tourism field, to test CO reliably. The review also recommends future research to test CO with additional moderators to investigate further the concept of CO, specifically in hospitality and tourism.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

RIPRM wrote the article in its entirety.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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Contemporary Interpretation of the Construction of Adab Through Tahfiz Al-Qabisi's Theory of Education in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

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In general, tahfiz education is the process of memorising letters, verses, and chapters of the Qur'an in a person's memory. The tahfiz education has been applied in the teaching and learning process of the Quran among the companions of the Prophet PBUH. According to al-Qabisi, tahfiz education is in line with the development of manners. The manners development in the process of memorising the Quran, which is implemented based on al-Qabisi's tahfiz education theory, includes a sequence of concepts: (a) al-talqin (the teaching), (b) al-tikrar (the training), (c) al-ma'il (the love for the Quran), and (d) al-fahm (the comprehension). Nevertheless, the manners development based on al-Qabisi's tahfiz education theory needs to be refined in detail and in-depth to fit the contemporary aspect. The objective of this study is to interpret in a contemporary way the concept of manners development in al-Qabisi's tahfiz education. This study uses a content analysis approach to secondary data, which are scholarly documents such as journal articles and research books that analyse al-Qabisi's work. The interpretation was made by giving contemporary meaning to al-Qabisi's tahfiz education concept based on the usual practises of tahfiz students. The theory presented by al-Qabisi related to manners education in the tahfiz education process is believed to be able to be practised and adapted in the tahfiz education system. Interpretation of manners development in education encompasses manner values such as: (a) respect, from al-talqin; (b) intensity, from al-tikrar; (c) consistency, from al-ma'il; and (d) practise, from al-fahm. In conclusion, the suggestion of this study, which is a contemporary interpretation of manners development based on al-Qabisi's tahfiz education theory, can be expanded to other Islamic educational institutions. A cross-sectional study approach is recommended to be carried out on tahfiz students to understand the level of appreciation of manners development through al-Qabisi's tahfiz education theory for future studies. The cross-sectional study approach is believed to be more thorough and comprehensive in terms of data accuracy and more practical in evaluating the effect of the Quran memorization technique used.

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Interpretasi Kontemporari Pembinaan Adab Menerusi Teori Pendidikan Tahfiz Al-Qabisi di Malaysia

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Adab
Pendidikan tahfiz
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Pendidikan al-Quran

Secara umum, pendidikan tahfiz merupakan proses menghafaz huruf, ayat dan surah al-Quran ke dalam memori seseorang. Pendidikan tahfiz telah diaplikasi dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran al-Quran dalam kalangan para sahabat Rasulullah SAW. Pendidikan tahfiz menurut al-Qabisi adalah seiring dengan pembinaan adab. Pembinaan adab dalam proses hafazan al-Quran yang dilaksanakan berdasarkan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi merangkumi turutan konsep: (a) al-talqin (pengajaran); (b) al-tikrar (pelatihan); (c) al-ma'il (kecintaan terhadap al-Quran); dan (d) al-fahm (kefahaman). Namun begitu, pembinaan adab berdasarkan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi tersebut perlu diperhalusi secara terperinci dan mendalam supaya sesuai dengan aspek kontemporari. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menginterpretasi secara kontemporari mengenai konsep pembangunan adab dalam pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis kandungan terhadap data-data sekunder, iaitu dokumen-dokumen kesarjanaan seperti artikel jurnal dan buku penyelidikan yang menganalisis karya al-Qabisi. Interpretasi dibuat dengan memberikan maksud yang bersifat kontemporari terhadap konsep pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi berdasarkan amalan lazim pelajar tahfiz. Teori yang dikemukakan oleh Al-Qabisi berkaitan pendidikan adab dalam proses pendidikan tahfiz dipercayai mampu dipraktikkan dan diadaptasi dalam sistem pendidikan tahfiz. Interpretasi pembinaan adab dalam pendidikan merangkumi nilai adab seperti: (a) respek, daripada al-talqin; (b) intensiti, daripada al-tikrar; (c) konsistensi, daripada al-ma'il; dan (d) praktis, daripada al-fahm. Kesimpulannya, cadangan kajian ini adalah interpretasi kontemporari pembinaan adab berdasarkan teori al-Qabisi dalam pendidikan tahfiz dapat dikembangkan ke institusi-institusi pendidikan Islam yang lain. Pendekatan kajian keratan rentas dicadang agar dijalankan terhadap pelajar tahfiz untuk memahami tahap penghayatan pembinaan adab menerusi teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi bagi kajian masa hadapan. Pendekatan kajian keratan rentas diyakini lebih menyeluruh dan komprehensif dalam kejituan data serta lebih bersifat praktikal dalam menilai kesan teknik hafazan al-Quran yang digunakan.

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1. PENGENALAN

Al-Quran ialah kitab suci bagi umat Islam. Pendidikan al-Quran merupakan pendidikan yang utama dalam kehidupan umat Islam bagi mencapai kesejahteraan di dunia dan akhirat. Pendidikan al-Quran ini bermula dengan mempelajari ilmu tajwid, makhraj huruf dan sifat huruf. Lazimnya, ilmu-ilmu tersebut dipelajari sebagai prasyarat sebelum memasuki pendidikan tahfiz. Pendidikan tahfiz merupakan salah satu cabang daripada pendidikan al-Quran (Mohd Nawi et al., 2020). Secara umum, pendidikan tahfiz merupakan proses menghafaz huruf, ayat dan surah al-Quran dan menyimpannya ke dalam memori seseorang. Pendidikan tahfiz telah diaplikasi dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran al-Quran dalam kalangan para sahabat Rasulullah SAW (Ramli, 2018). Selaras dengan pendidikan tahfiz, pendidikan al-Quran sangat menitikberatkan pembinaan adab. Sejajar dengan ini, umat Islam perlu memahami bahawa al-Quran bukanlah sebuah kitab yang hanya dibaca, namun perlu difahami dan diadaptasi dalam kehidupan seharian. Proses pembangunan personaliti dan peribadi sentiasa berlaku melalui pembacaan mahupun semasa menghafaz al-Quran (Latipah, 2022). Dalam maksud sebuah hadis, orang beriman yang membaca al-Quran dan mengamalkannya diumpamakan seperti buah limau yang rasanya sedap dan berbau harum. Keadaan ini menggambarkan wujudnya proses pembinaan adab dalam pendidikan al-Quran.

> "*Diriwayatkan oleh Abi Musa, bahawa Nabi SAW bersabda: Perumpamaan orang mukmin yang membaca Al-Quran dan mengamalkannya, seperti buah limau yang rasanya sedap dan berbau harum...*" (Riwayat al-Bukhari)

Lazimnya, institusi-institusi tahfiz di Malaysia secara rasmi mengaplikasi teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi. Pendidikan tahfiz menurut al-Qabisi adalah seiring dengan pembinaan adab (Jaafar et al., 2018). Pembinaan adab dalam proses hafazan al-Quran yang dilaksanakan berdasarkan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi merangkumi turutan konsep (Al-Qabisi, 1986): (a) *al-talqin* (pengajaran); (b) *al-tikrar* (pelatihan); (c) *al-ma'il* (kecintaan terhadap al-Quran); dan (d) *al-fahm* (kefahaman). Namun begitu, pembinaan adab berdasarkan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi tersebut perlu diperhalusi secara terperinci dan mendalam supaya sesuai dengan aspek kontemporari. Keperluan ini adalah berdasarkan jangkaan potensi pengembangan teori al-Qabisi dalam pendidikan tahfiz ke institusi-institusi pendidikan Islam yang lain. Pendekatan ini dijangka dapat meningkatkan tahap penghayatan para pelajar tahfiz terhadap pembinaan adab. Kajian ini dianggap signifikan apabila pencapaian seseorang pelajar dalam pendidikan bukan sahaja dinilai daripada aspek pencapaian akademik, malah dinilai daripada aspek pencapaian adab. Hal ini selari dengan matlamat pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi iaitu membentuk adab yang dijangka dapat dicapai melalui pendidikan al-Quran yang lazimnya bermula pada peringkat kanak-kanak (Jaafar et al., 2018).

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menginterpretasi secara kontemporari mengenai konsep pembangunan adab dalam pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi. Interpretasi kontemporari terhadap pembinaan adab dibuat agar dapat disesuaikan dengan anjakan paradigma semasa yang menggunakan banyak teknologi kecerdasan buatan (*artificial intelligence*) (Ahmad@Mohamed et al., 2019). Al-Qabisi merupakan antara tokoh pendidikan yang disegani dalam bidang pendidikan terutamanya pendidikan tahfiz (Rinjani & Amelia, 2022). Beliau cenderung untuk membahaskan proses pendidikan secara terperinci merangkumi kaedah pengajaran, kurikulum, tahap akademik, peralatan dan bahan dalam pendidikan (Ahmad et al., 2020). Menurut al-Qabisi, sewajarnya dunia pendidikan perlu meletakkan adab sebagai matlamat dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Malah, dalam konteks pendidikan tahfiz, pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam menghafaz al-Quran yang ditekankan oleh beliau adalah bersifat holistik

(Ghazali & Hamzah, 2021). Matlamat pendidikan al-Quran menurut al-Qabisi adalah untuk mengenal agama dan membina adab (Imam, 2021). Gelaran *al-hafiz* atau *al-hafizah* bagi individu yang menghafaz al-Quran perlu seiring dengan pemahaman agama dan terbangun sebagai individu yang beradab (Salleh, 2020).

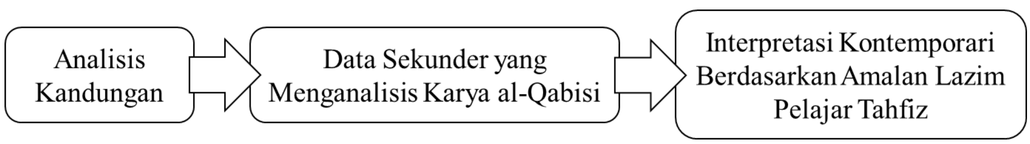
2. PERKEMBANGAN PENDIDIKAN TAHFIZ DI MALAYSIA

Pendidikan tahfiz di Malaysia berkembang dengan tertubuhnya institusi-institusi tahfiz al-Quran secara rasmi, yang dikenali sebagai maahad tahfiz. Maahad tahfiz merupakan institusi pengajian al-Quran yang dikendalikan oleh Bahagian Hal Ehwal Agama Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri. Penubuhan Maahad Tahfiz al-Quran wal Qiraat sebagai maahad tahfiz pertama pada 1966 di Masjid Negara, dibuat atas cadangan Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj. Kemudian, Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam (INDAH) mengambil alih pengurusan maahad tahfiz tersebut (Hameed et al., 2003). Idea penubuhan maahad tahfiz ini muncul daripada Ujian Tilawatul Qur'an peringkat kebangsaan pada 1960. Hasrat Tunku ini dinyatakan dalam majlis perasmian Masjid Negara pada 1965 (Mohd Noor, 1993). Penubuhan Maahad Tahfiz al-Quran wal Qiraat diikuti dengan penubuhan maahad tahfiz di setiap negeri. Penubuhan maahad tahfiz di peringkat negeri di seluruh Malaysia bermula pada 1970 di Kelantan, diikuti Perak, Kedah, Terengganu, Perlis dan Selangor pada tahun 1980-an. Sabah, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang dan Melaka membuat perkara yang sama sepanjang 1990-an (Hameed et al., 2003).

Pada 1983, Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA) mengiktiraf sijil tahfiz yang dikeluarkan setaraf dengan diploma di ITM (Institut Teknologi MARA). Sijil tahfiz tersebut juga diiktiraf oleh institusi pengajian tinggi Malaysia seperti Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia dan Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia. Maahad-maahad tahfiz tersebut yang secara rasminya dinaungi kerajaan-kerajaan negeri telah menggunakan kurikulum Maahad Tahfiz Darul Quran (MTDQ), JAKIM sejak 1997 (JAKIM, 2003). Dengan pengiktirafan tersebut, graduan maahad tahfiz dapat melanjutkan pengajian ke peringkat sarjana muda (Hameed et al, 2003). Kaedah pendidikan institusi pendidikan tahfiz di Malaysia secara umumnya mengaplikasikan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi (Mahdi Yusuf et al., 2019).

3. METODOLOGI KAJIAN

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis kandungan terhadap data-data sekunder, iaitu dokumen-dokumen kesarjanaan seperti artikel jurnal dan buku penyelidikan (Idris Awang, 2009) yang menganalisis karya al-Qabisi. Kajian menggunakan enjin gelintar dokumen kesarjanaan (contoh: https://scholar.google.com.my dan https://scopus.com) sebagai instrumen pengumpulan data. Beberapa kata kunci tertentu (contoh: al-Qabisi, pendidikan tahfiz, kaedah hafazan, dan teknik menghafaz) digunakan dalam proses gelintaran. Dokumen kesarjanaan yang paling menepati konsep dan objektif kajian dikenal pasti dan digunakan sebagai dokumen utama analisis kandungan. Interpretasi dibuat dengan memberikan maksud yang bersifat kontemporari terhadap konsep pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi berdasarkan amalan lazim pelajar tahfiz (Rajah 1):



Rajah 1: Kerangka Analisis Kandungan.

4. DEFINISI DAN KONSEP PENDIDIKAN TAHFIZ AL-QABISI

Islam meletakkan adab kepada suatu kedudukan yang tinggi. Secara umum, Rasulullah SAW dijadikan teras dalam sesebuah pembangunan adab. Al-Quran menerangkan hal tersebut menerusi maksud ayatnya berikut:

> "*Demi sesungguhnya, adalah bagi kamu pada diri Rasulullah itu contoh ikutan yang baik, iaitu bagi orang yang sentiasa mengharapkan (keredaan) Allah dan (balasan baik) hari akhirat, serta ia pula menyebut dan mengingati Allah banyak-banyak (dalam masa susah dan senang)*" (Qur'an 33:21).

Pembinaan adab dalam kalangan pelajar tahfiz diyakini dapat mengembangkan sahsiah mereka (Ahmad & Iksan, 2021). Pembinaan adab perlu diambil berat oleh ibu bapa, guru serta masyarakat berdasarkan kepentingan untuk memantapkan jati diri pelajar tahfiz dalam mendepani cabaran globalisasi dalam pendidikan tahfiz (Ahmad Fisol & Samuri, 2020). Teori yang dikemukakan oleh al-Qabisi berkaitan pendidikan adab dalam proses pendidikan tahfiz dipercayai mampu dipraktikkan dan diadaptasi dalam sistem pendidikan tahfiz.

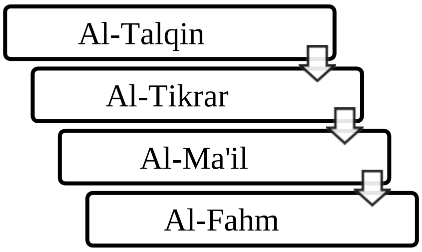
Al-Qabisi merupakan antara pelopor pendidikan tahfiz. Penulisan al-Qabisi bertajuk *"Al-Risalah al-Mufassolah li Ahwal al-Mua'allimin wa Ahkam al-Mu'allimin wa al-Muta'allimin"* (kitab hal ehwal pelajar dan guru serta hukum-hukum) membincangkan secara lengkap persoalan pendidikan tahfiz. Perbincangan tersebut juga meliputi beberapa aspek dalam pendidikan Islam secara umum, seperti pembinaan kurikulum, matlamat pendidikan, kaedah pengajaran, penilaian, sistem persekolahan, dan hukuman (Al-Na'miy, 1995; Mohd Nor & Mohd Nawi, 2021). Kaedah pendidikan al-Qabisi sebahagian besarnya menumpu kepada pendidikan al-Quran, terutama dalam pendidikan tahfiz. Bagi al-Qabisi, aspek pendidikan al-Quran merupakan teras kurikulum dalam pendidikan tahfiz. Manakala aspek pendidikan lain merupakan pelengkap dan penyokong kepada pendidikan tahfiz tersebut (Al-Ahwani, 1955).

Dalam teori al-Qabisi (1986), pendidikan tahfiz merangkumi kaedah pengukuhan ingatan dalam proses hafazan al-Quran. Beliau telah meletakkan pendidikan tahfiz sebagai kaedah dalam pembinaan adab menerusi dua matlamat. Matlamat pendidikan tahfiz yang pertama adalah untuk menjadikan pelajar tahfiz itu berkemahiran dalam memahami isi kandungan al-Quran untuk diamalkan. Matlamat kedua pula adalah untuk membina adab dalam kalangan pelajar tahfiz (Ikhwan et al., 2020).

Untuk mencapai kedua-dua matlamat ini, pendidikan tahfiz perlu diutamakan kerana banyak kelebihan dalam mempelajari dan mengajar al-Quran berdasarkan maksud hadis berikut:

> "*Daripada Uthman RA meriwayatkan bahawa Nabi SAW bersabda: Orang yang terbaik daripada kamu semua ialah orang yang mempelajari al-Quran dan mengajarkannya kepada orang lain*" (Riwayat al-Bukhari).

Pendidikan tahfiz juga merupakan kemahiran pembacaan atau sebutan yang bergantung sepenuhnya kepada ingatan. Beliau menyatakan bahawa pelajar tahfiz perlu dilatih ingatannya supaya dapat menghafaz mengikut struktur sebenar ayat al-Quran. Oleh itu, beliau menyatakan terdapat objektif yang perlu dicapai dalam pendidikan tahfiz ini, iaitu: (a) *hifz*, iaitu kemahiran menghafaz al-Quran dengan baik tanpa melihat mushaf; (b) *wa'iy*, iaitu kemahiran dalam memahami dan mengamalkan isi kandungan ayat yang dihafaz; dan (c) *istirja'*, iaitu kemahiran membaca semula ayat yang dihafaz dengan sebutan yang jelas dan bertajwid (*tartil*) merangkumi susunan ayat, sifat huruf, dan tanda baris tanpa melihat mushaf. Proses ini dilaksanakan dalam dua bentuk iaitu lisan (*syafawi*) dan tulisan (*tahriri*). Proses ini merangkumi tahap pembinaan adab berikut (Rajah 2): (a) *al-talqin* (pengajaran); (b) *al-tikrar* (pelatihan); (c) *al-ma'il* (kecintaan terhadap al-Quran); dan (d) *al-fahm* (kefahaman).



Rajah 2: Tahap Pembinaan Adab al-Qabisi.

4.1 Konsep al-Talqin

Hafazan al-Quran dengan cara *al-talqin* adalah sebaik-baik kaedah dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran tahfiz al-Quran (Ali et al., 2022). Menurut Al-Qabisi (1968) konsep *al-talqin* ialah peringkat pengulangan dengan cara mengulang bacaan sambil mendengar guru mengajar dan disertai dengan hafazan menerusi perenggan-perenggan yang disebutkan oleh guru sehinggalah dia dapat menghafaznya sehingga guru tidak perlu menghuraikan maksud disebabkan ketidakmampuan kanak-kanak untuk memahaminya. Proses pengaplikasian konsep ini dilaksanakan secara individu mahupun berkumpulan. Ayat hafalan baru atau lama mestilah sentiasa disemak dan diperbetulkan bacaanya dengan cara membuka mushaf di hadapan guru. Menurut Ibnu Khaldun, kaedah ini dapat difahami dengan guru mengarahkan pelajar untuk menghafaz suatu pelajaran terlebih dahulu. Selain itu, tahap *al-talqin* menurut Ibnu khaldun adalah meniru bacaan guru (Zainal Abidin, 2017). Sebagai contoh dalam pengajian al-Quran, pelajar atau kanak-kanak mesti menghafaz sesuatu ayat al-Quran sebelum mereka diajar intipati yang terkandung di dalam ayat al-Quran tersebut. Proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran al-Quran melalui kaedah ini juga berlaku pada Rasulullah SAW ketika didatangi oleh malaikat Jibrail, sebagaimana firman Allah SWT yang bermaksud:

> "*Janganlah kamu gerakkan lidahmu untuk (membaca) Al-Qur'an karena hendak cepat-cepat (menguasai)nya. Sesungguhnya atas tanggungan Kamilah mengumpulkannya (di dadamu) dan (membuatmu pandai) membacanya. Apabila Kami telah selesai membacakannya, maka ikutilah bacaannya itu. Kemudian sesungguhnya atas tanggungan Kamilah penjelasannya*" (Qur'an 75:16-19).

Tambahan pula, pendidikan al-Quran merupakan tahap terpenting sebagai peringkat pengajian pertama. Justeru itu, kanak-kanak atau pelajar diwajibkan untuk menghafaz al-Quran dan perkara-perkara yang disampaikan kepadanya. Ibnu Khaldun menyatakan bahawa apabila pelajar telah memahami dan menguasai sesuatu ilmu walaupun menghadapi sedikit kerumitan, maka mereka akan diberi kemudahan untuk menghafaz sesuatu pengetahuan (Mad Soh, 2021).

4.2 Konsep al-Tikrar

Tahap yang kerap diamalkan oleh pelajar tahfiz adalah *al-tikrar*. Tahap ini juga telah diaplikasikan sejak zaman Rasulullah SAW (Habibullah & Arafah, 2020). *Al-tikrar* adalah sebuah proses latih tubi dan pengulangan. Menurut Ibnu Khaldun, tahap ini juga disebut sebagai pengalaman lalu kerana proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran perlu melalui tiga peringkat pengulangan. Dalam satu sesi pengulangan, dianjurkan untuk dilakukan sebanyak tiga kali. Namun, terdapat juga pengulangan ayat atau kalimah sebanyak empat kali dan sehingga 24 kali

(Nurzannah & Estiawani, 2021). Selain itu, membaca ayat al-Quran secara berulang-ulang dan tersusun adalah cara yang terbaik untuk mengekalkan hafazan dalam jangka masa panjang (Gade, 2014). Pada tahap ini, terdapat keperluan untuk saling membantu sesama pelajar tahfiz untuk mengukuhkan hafazan. Keadaan ini menuntut pelajar tahfiz supaya berterusan mengulangi ayat yang dilafazkan supaya tidak hilang daripada ingatan (Bangsawan et al., 2022). Oleh yang demikian, kaedah pengulangan merupakan salah satu kaedah hafazan yang berkesan dalam kalangan pelajar tahfiz (Mohd Fakhruddin et al., 2020). Kepentingan tahap *al-tikrar* ini juga berdasarkan sabda Rasulullah SAW:

> "*Sesungguhnya perbandingan antara al-Quran dan penghafaznya seperti unta yang bertali. Apabila tuannya menambatkan ia dapat memegangnya, apabila ia lalai daripada menambatnya maka unta itu akan pergi. Apabila orang yang menghafaz al-Quran membacanya di waktu siang dan malam dia akan mengingatnya dan apabila dia tidak membacanyanya ia akan terlupa*" (Riwayat al-Bukhari)

4.3 Konsep al-Ma'il

Konsep seterusnya di dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran tahfiz al-Quran al-Qabisi ialah *al-ma'il*. Menurut pandangan al-Qabisi, *al-ma'il* membawa maksud cinta kepada al-Quran (Al-Ahwani, 1955). Konsep *al-ma'il* terhasil daripada kaedah menghafaz al-Quran dan memahami al-Quran (Nasrullah, 2015). Al-Qabisi berpandangan bahawa dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran tahfiz, pelajar tahfiz seharusnya mencintai al-Quran dengan sentiasa memberi sepenuh komitmen terhadap bacaan dan hafazan al-Quran. Pengulangan bacaan diamalkan sehingga dapat membayangkan ayat-ayat al-Quran dalam fikiran mereka. Beliau memetik kata-kata Muaz bin Jabal kepada Abu Musa al-Asy'ari yang bermaksud:

> *"Muaz bin Jabal bertanya: Bagaimana kamu menghafaz al-Quran? Abu Musa Al-Asy'ari menjawab: Aku menghafaz al-Quran sama ada ketika berdiri, duduk atau di atas tunggangan dan aku berjaya menghafazkannya dengan baik. Muaz bin Jabal berkata: Aku pula mengulangi al-Quran sebelum tidur dan aku akan muhasabah bacaan ku seperti mana aku bermuhasabah bagi kaumku. Mereka memberitahu dan berkongsi pandangan terhadap amalan mereka tentang bacaan al-Quran." (Al-Qabisi, 1986)*

Selain itu, menyemai perasaan cinta kepada al-Quran, aspek kurikulum yang perlu diterapkan hendaklah berpaksikan kepada dua matlamat iaitu: (a) pengetahuan agama (*ma'rifatuddin*); dan (b) pendidikan adab (*ta'dib*). Menurut al-Qabisi, dalam mencapai matlamat pengetahuan agama, penekanan tertumpu kepada kurikulum yang berasaskan *ijbari* dan *ikhtiyari*. Kurikulum *ijbari* merupakan mata pelajaran yang wajib diberi perhatian oleh ibu bapa secara khususnya. Manakala kurikulum *ikhtiyari* pula merupakan pelengkap kepada *ijbari*. Penekanan ini merangkumi tanggungjawab ibu bapa mendidik anak-anak mengenali huruf-huruf al-Quran, memberikan pendidikan secara formal seawal umur lima tahun. Beliau juga menegaskan bahawa jika ibu bapa tidak mampu memberikan pendidikan al-Quran dengan sempurna, hendaklah mendapatkan guru untuk mengajar anak-anak mereka. Malah juga penekanan ibubapa memberikan upah kepada guru yang mengajarkan al-Quran kepada anak-anak mereka.

4.4 Konsep al-Fahm

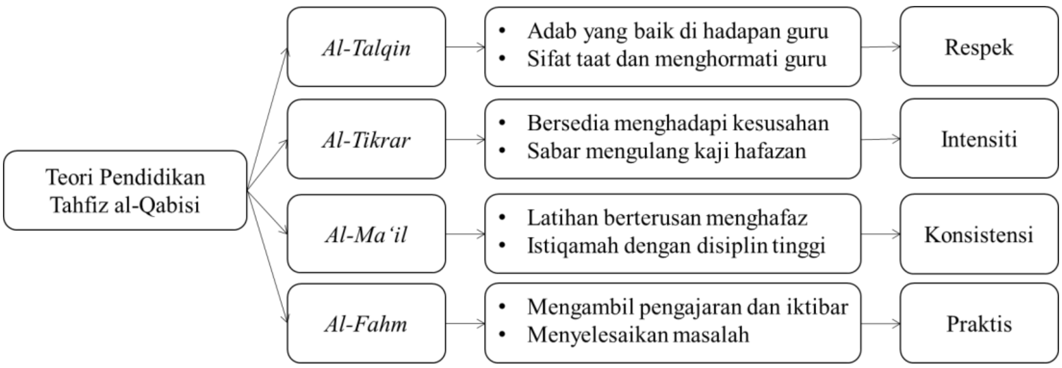
Memahami makna kandungan al-Quran merupakan satu kaedah yang dapat membantu pembangunan adab dalam kalangan pelajar tahfiz. Proses ini berlaku menerusi konsep *al-Fahm* iaitu memahami dan menghayati kandungan al-Quran dalam kehidupan seharian. Kefahaman dan penghayatan kandungan al-Quran dituntut bagi melahirkan generasi yang mempunyai adab yang mulia seperti para sahabat Rasulullah (Mothar Rijan et al., 2021). Al-Qabisi (1986) memetik maksud ayat al-Quran yang menjelaskan masa yang sesuai untuk memahami dan menghayati al-Quran di tahap yang terbaik:

> "*Sebenarnya sembahyang dan ibadat malam lebih kuat kesannya (kepada jiwa), dan lebih tetap betul bacaannya*" (Qur'an 73:6).

Berdasarkan ayat di atas, al-Qabisi menafsirkan "*wat'an*" sebagai memberi pengertian bahawa al-Quran lebih memberi kesan dengan mendengar, membaca dan memahami al-Quran. Bacaan al-Quran dengan *tartil* ialah bacaan yang mengikut hukum tajwid serta memahami makna al-Quran. Bacaan dengan *tartil* ini dapat mendorong pembaca untuk mendalami, menghayati dan beramal dengan kandungan al-Quran. Beliau menegaskan bahawa bacaan al-Quran seperti ini merupakan bacaan menjadi sunnah Rasulullah. Menghafaz al-Quran dengan memahami maknanya dapat memudahkan hafazan dan mengekalkannya dalam ingatan (Al-Ahwani, 1955). Untuk mencapai kefahaman terhadap kandungan al-Quran dengan lebih sempurna, beliau menekankan kemahiran *i'rab* al-Quran dan kaedah penulisannya dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran tahfiz al-Quran. Beliau juga menyatakan konsep *al-fahmu* atau memahami ayat yang dihafaz ialah satu kaedah untuk membantu pelajar tahfiz memahami ayat *mutasyabih* (ayat samar-samar), ayat *wahm* (sukar difahami) dan ayat *tikrar al-lafzi* (pengulangan kalimah) (Mohd Fakhruddin et al., 2020).

5. PERBINCANGAN DAN KESIMPULAN

Pembinaan adab dibentuk menerusi pemikiran al-Qabisi yang kemudian disokong oleh kajian-kajian terdahulu dan pandangan sarjana berkaitan hasil teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi. Berdasarkan teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi maka telah dibahagikan kepada empat konsep utama iaitu *al-talqin*, *al-tikrar*, *al-ma'il*, dan *al-fahm* (Al-Qabisi, 1986). Empat konsep utama tersebut dijangka dapat diinterpretasi kepada pembinaan adab kontemporari dalam pendidikan tahfiz (Rajah 3). Interpretasi pembinaan adab dalam pendidikan merangkumi nilai adab seperti; (a) respek, daripada *al-talqin*; (b) intensiti, daripada *al-tikrar*; (c) konsistensi, daripada *al-ma'il*; dan (d) praktis, daripada *al-fahm*.



Rajah 3: Kerangka Interpretasi Kontemporari Pembinaan Adab al-Qabisi

Nilai "respek" yang dapat diambil menerusi teori al-Qabisi *al-talqin*, diinterpretasikan dengan pelajar tahfiz yang sentiasa menunjukkan adab yang baik di hadapan guru. Sama ada dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran berlangsung mahupun luar proses pembelajaran (Syahrir, 2021). Pengamalan adab yang baik di hadapan guru dapat dipraktikkan dengan menjaga diri daripada bertingkah laku negatif seperti membantah teguran dan nasihat daripada guru, mengganggu sesi pembelajaran, dan berbual bersama rakan semasa proses pengajaran sedang berjalan. Hal ini dijangka mengakibatkan matlamat pengajaran dan pembelajaran sukar dicapai melalui pemindahan ilmu pengetahuan daripada guru kepada pelajar. Nilai “respek” memupuk sifat taat dan menghormati guru. Lazimnya, pelajar tahfiz menghormati dengan mempraktikkan amalan bersalaman dan mencium tangan guru-guru (Ariffin et al., 2016). Prestasi pelajar tahfiz bukan hanya bergantung keputusan akademik sahaja malah prestasi pelajar juga perlu dinilai dari aspek adab dengan menghormati guru (Khaled, 2018). Jadi, definisi kejayaan dalam konteks pelajar tahfiz tidak hanya berdasarkan kuantiti ayat al-Quran yang dihafaz, tetapi juga dinilai menerusi kemenjadian pembentukan adab. Pembentukan adab memerlukan penghayatan berterusan dalam mengamalkan nilai “respek” dalam proses penghafazan al-Quran. Nilai “respek” ini dapat dilihat dalam sebuah hadis:

> “*Daripada Ubadah bin al-Samit, bahawa Rasulullah SAW bersabda: Bukanlah dikalangan umatku mereka yang tidak memuliakan orang yang lebih tua dalam kalangan kami, mereka yang tidak menyayangi anak-anak kecil dalam kalangan kami dan mereka yang tidak memberikan hak kepada orang alim dalam kalangan kami.*” (Riwayat al-Tirmidhi).

Maksud hadis di atas memperlihatkan penterjemahan konsep pembentukan peribadi dan akhlak yang baik dapat dilihat hasil didikan hati melalui ilmu yang dipelajari. Jadi, pendidikan tahfiz dijangka dapat memupuk sifat respek dalam diri pelajar apabila dapat memperbaiki setiap kesalahan berdasarkan teguran daripada gurunya.

Hasil nilai adab yang dijangka dapat diperoleh daripada teori al-Qabisi, *al-tikrar* adalah “intensiti”. Menurut Ahmad Termizi et al. (2022), pelajar seharusnya bersedia menghadapi kesusahan dan kesulitan ketika menghafaz, serta sabar mengulang kaji hafazan. Malah mengingat kembali ayat yang telah ditasmik oleh merupakan cabaran yang paling besar. Oleh itu, pelajar tahfiz perlu ditasmik (disemak bacaannya) secara berkala selepas ujian tasmik pertama bersama guru (Salihin et al., 2022). Antara keutamaan para pelajar tahfiz adalah menjadi imam dalam ibadah solat, dan diberi ganjaran pahala kerana membaca dan mengkaji al-Quran. Ibu bapa kepada pelajar tahfiz juga akan dimuliakan (Masduki, 2018). Nilai “intensiti” dijangka dapat memupuk sifat ketekunan dalam menghafaz al-Quran bagi mengelakkan kelupaan terhadap ayat al-Quran yang telah dihafaz. Sifat ini dianjurkan dalam maksud sebuah hadis:

> “*Daripada Abdullah, bahawa Rasulullah SAW bersabda: Celakalah bagi sesiapa yang berkata “aku lupa ayat al-Qur’an sekian-sekian”, bahkan hendaklah dia berkata “aku telah dilupakan darinya”. Sentiasalah membaca dan mengingati al-Qur’an, kerana ia lebih mudah terlepas daripada dada dan ingatan manusia daripada unta terlepas daripada talinya*” (Riwayat al-Bukhari dan Muslim).

Jadi, pendidikan tahfiz dijangka dapat memupuk sifat ketekunan bagi menyiapkan diri pelajar dengan jiwa yang kental dan tidak mudah berputus asa.

Seterusnya, nilai “konsistensi”, daripada *al-ma‘il,* mempunyai fungsi tersendiri dalam membentuk adab. Dalam konteks ini, peranan ibu bapa dalam menyediakan medium pendidikan al-Quran kepada kanak-kanak dianggap sangat signifikan. Penekanan pendidikan al-Quran pada usia kanak-kanak sangat penting untuk menerapkan nilai “konsistensi” dan dijangka dapat memberi dorongan dan latihan berterusan menghafaz al-Quran (Sabri, 2020). Nilai "konsistensi" ini terbit daripada pendidikan tahfiz menerusi teori al-Qabisi. Nilai adab ini menerapkan normalisasi dalam mempelajari al-Quran sejak kecil dan sifat istiqamah dalam mengamalkan sesuatu pekerjaan dengan disiplin yang tinggi. Hal ini dinyatakan dalam maksud hadis berikut:

> "*Daripada Aisyah yang berkata bahawa amalan yang paling dicintai oleh Rasulullah SAW adalah amalan yang dilakukan secara berterusan dan teratur*" (Riwayat al-Bukhari).

> "*Daripada Aisyah yang berkata bahawa amalan yang paling Allah sukai ialah amalan yang dilakukan secara berterusan walaupun sedikit*" (Riwayat Muslim).

Seterusnya, hasil nilai adab yang dijangka dapat diperoleh daripada teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi adalah nilai "praktis", daripada *al-fahm*. Nilai "praktis" dalam pendidikan tahfiz dapat diperoleh apabila memahami kandungan al-Quran semasa menghafaznya. Menurut Zaedi (2019) memahami al-Quran mampu menaikkan motivasi pelajar dalam menghafaz al-Quran dan mengambil pengajaran daripada kandungan al-Quran. Sebagaimana maksud firman Allah SWT:

> "*(Al-Quran ini) sebuah Kitab yang Kami turunkan kepadamu (dan umatmu wahai Muhammad), -Kitab yang banyak faedah-faedah dan manfaatnya, untuk mereka memahami dengan teliti kandungan ayat-ayatnya, dan untuk orang-orang yang berakal sempurna beringat mengambil iktibar*" (Qur'an 30:29)

Maksud ayat al-Quran di atas memperlihatkan pemahaman terhadap kandungan al-Quran membantu pembacanya mengambil pengajaran dan iktibar. Tambahan pula, prinsip al-Quran itu sendiri sememangnya untuk membimbing manusia berfikir, mencari jawapan dan menyelesaikan masalah (Jarawi & Zulkifli, 2020). Berdasarkan nilai "praktis" ini, dapatlah difahami bahawa amalan yang baik adalah berasaskan kefahaman yang baik. Jadi, dijangka nilai "praktis" ini dapat menimbulkan sifat memahami orang lain dan mampu memahami isu sebelum memberi pandangan dan komentar. Pelajar tahfiz dijangka mampu memanifestasi nilai "praktis" dengan menanamkan pemikiran kritis dan berupaya menangani masalah dalam kalangan masyarakat berlandaskan kefahaman terhadap al-Quran (Hashim et al., 2021).

Kesimpulannya, kajian ini mencadangkan interpretasi kontemporari pembinaan adab berdasarkan teori al-Qabisi dalam pendidikan tahfiz dapat dikembangkan ke institusi-institusi pendidikan Islam yang lain. Walaupun teori ini banyak mempengaruhi pembinaan adab dalam pendidikan tahfiz, namun ia didapati sesuai untuk diterapkan dalam sistem pendidikan Islam secara umum. Selain itu, interpretasi kontemporari ini membolehkan tahap penghayatan pelajar tahfiz terhadap pembinaan adab dapat dinilai dan ditambah baik. Pendekatan kajian keratan rentas disyorkan agar dijalankan terhadap pelajar tahfiz untuk memahami tahap penghayatan pembinaan adab menerusi teori pendidikan tahfiz al-Qabisi bagi kajian masa hadapan. Pendekatan kajian keratan rentas diyakini lebih menyeluruh dan komprehensif dalam kejituan data serta lebih bersifat praktikal dalam menilai kesan teknik hafazan al-Quran yang digunakan.

PENGHARGAAN

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SUMBANGAN PARA PENULIS

FRM merupakan penulis utama di samping menjalankan pengumpulan dan analisis data. MAT dan MZHZA menyusun kerangka utama penulisan, membuat semakan, pemurnian teks dan meluluskan manuskrip akhir.

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Tiada.

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Food Handlers' Food Safety Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices in Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan

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ABSTRACT

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Foodservice businesses play a pivotal role in the hospitality and tourism industry. Travelers will usually frequent restaurants as part of their stay in any destination. Thus, food preparation should prioritize measures to ensure food safety and preservation of the wholesomeness of food, especially when it is handled by locals. Taman Negara, which is popular among international travelers, is one of the gateways to Malaysia's many forest reserves. However, with the Covid-19 endemic, encouragement for domestic tourists to travel in Malaysia has also been made visible. Tourists from overseas and urban areas usually have higher standards for hygiene. Thus, this study aims to determine food handlers' knowledge of hygienic practices at restaurants in Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan. Data were analyzed using SPSS IBM version 22. Results show that knowledge of food hygiene among food handlers at Kuala Tahan restaurants is good with a mean score of above 4.50. The respondents strongly agree with the importance of sound knowledge of food hygiene practices. There is a good relationship between age, level of education, and training received with the food handlers' food safety knowledge. It is found that certified food handlers have a very strong significant relationship with food safety knowledge(P<0.10). Through observation, the food handlers apply Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and provide a proper hand washing area. There are no signs of pests in their facilities; however, the kitchen floor is below par for hygienic standards. There is still area for improvement in the overall cleanliness of the restaurants in Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The foodservice industry is one of the largest industries in Malaysia (Sia and Shantons, 2009). It covers a very broad spectrum from institutional catering on one end to business kiosks on the other. Food services include restaurants, institutional catering, central kitchens and manufactured food businesses. As the tourism industry relies heavily on food businesses and restaurants therefore, food handlers cannot neglect the cleanliness and safety of the food served to customers. They must serve food that is clean and safe to eat to prevent any problems such as poisoning and foodborne illnesses. According to Zeeshan, Shah, Durrani, Ayub, Jan, & Shah, 2017), the level of knowledge food handlers possesses depends on their specific tasks and their participation in food preparation.

In line with the above, food could be contaminated at any point in the process of slaughtering, harvesting, processing, storing, distributing, transporting, and during preparation. According to Lues and Van Tonder (2007), food safety issues due to foodborne illnesses have led to increasing global concerns. Foodborne illnesses could happen due to cross-contamination between hand hygiene and food handlers' aprons which happened in South African grocery groups (Lues & Van Tonder, 2007). Even with the growing number of food handlers who receive training on food hygiene, most foodborne illness still occurs due to improper practices of food handling (Clayton, Griffith, Price, and Peters (2002). In Malaysia, food poisoning cases is further facilitated by the hot and humid climate which is suitable for the growth of foodborne bacteria (Abdul-Mutalib et. al., 2015).

The restaurants at Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan are the only accessible restaurants before visitors enter the forest reserve. The restaurants are situated near the jetty before visitors embark on their adventure into the many activities in the national park. Once visitors enter the park, there will be no more access to food outlets. The restaurants operate under the Jerantut, Ministry of Health, and they are always being reviewed periodically. The restaurants sell local food operated by local business owners. The objectives of this study include examining the level of food handlers' knowledge and their hygiene practices. In comparison, knowledge, attitudes and practices of Sarawak food vendors showed that young food vendors have less than optimum food safety information and safe food production (Jores et. al.,2018). The restaurants in Kuala Tahan have similar business operation. Thus, it is the intent of this study to determine the knowledge, attitudes and hygiene practices of Kuala Tahan food vendors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitude at the workplace influences everyone within the organization, from workers to customers and even business owners. Attitude helps to develop a successful work environment that determines employee productivity, morale, efficiency, and ability to construct (Boundless, 2016). Another objective of this study includes identifying the relationship between the food handlers' attitudes and their hygiene practices. According to the model of knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP), humans change their behavior through three steps i.e. acquiring knowledge, generating belief, and developing attitude, and later transpires into action or practices (Bandura, 1976). Thus, in this study, the researcher would like to quantify the level of knowledge of the food vendors, have they formed their attitudes to hygiene, and whether that has transpired into practices when handling food. Therefore, attitudes were scrutinized using an observation method. Individuals who believe that it is important and essential that food be handled hygienically are most likely to adopt such practices in their daily routines (Aziz & Dahan, 2013). Reports have stated that although food hygiene training can improve food safety knowledge, it is not the main element in influencing attitudes and behaviors toward food handling (Akabanda et al., 2017).

It is interesting to note that due to Covid-19 pandemic, the new normal has emphasized on social distancing, and periodicals closure of food outlets to curb the spread of the virus. However, the sales from restaurants are still possible to maintain economic sustainability. Therefore, customers are allowed to buy take away food. Additionally, according Nazila et. al. (2022), knowledge and attitude will influence the behavior. The findings from this study may contribute to the government health agencies monitoring and enforcement to control the cleanliness and hygiene factor in the restaurants especially those restaurants that the customers have no choice (due to none available). New normal from Covid-19 standard operating procedures has led to new concerns for customers' safety. The hygienic measures have to be improved to protect consumers because to-date, Covid-19 has no cure.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sample Study

The sample population are the operators in the restaurants in Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan. There are only seven restaurants operating in Kuala Tahan and the restaurants sell local food and beverages. They were operated by local food business owners thus the delicacies are mainly found in Malay type restaurants. The operating hours are between 9.30 a.m to 12.00 midnight. All restaurants are floating rafts that can accommodate the kitchen area and a seating capacity for 20 to 30 people. Each restaurant has a total of three to five food handlers who prepare and serve the food. Therefore, total population purposive sampling was used due to the limited number of restaurants available in the area.

3.2 Questionnaire Method

Questionnaires were utilized to engage responses from the food handlers. The instrument was developed based on previous studies by Shuvo (2017); Tournas, Stack, Mislivec, Koch, & Ruth Bandler (2001); Newgent, 2020); and Sani & Siow (2014). The questions were in dual languages i.e. Bahasa Malaysia and English. They were prepared in English and translated into Bahasa Malaysia before being translated again to English by an English language expert to ensure accurate meaning.

The questionnaire contains four main sections namely Part A, B, C, and D which consist of food handlers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices respectively; while Part D focused on the demographic profile. There were 44 items altogether which were classified into two research sections. The Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to determine respondents' agreement to the statements in the questionnaire. The instrument checked for reliability and consistency with Cronbach's alpha value above 0.77. Observation method Observation is one of the oldest methods in qualitative study. According to McKechnie (p.573, 2008), observation involves the collection of data through looking and listening using a systematic way. The observation was done to validate the data gathered from the quantitative survey. The process was made using a checklist prepared earlier and validated by expert panels.

3.3 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22. Non parametric analyses were used to described the data collected. Demographic profiles were summarized in Table 1. Mean score for the knowledge, attitudes and practices on food safety in Table 2. Kruskal Wallis test with p < 0.10 significant level was applied to evaluate the significance difference in attitudes of respondents with their knowledge on food safety.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thirty respondents participated in the study. All respondents, aged between 18 to 48 and above were food handlers at the restaurants. Data showing respondents' profile are in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Food Handlers in the Restaurants at Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan.

No	Categories		Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Gender	Male	9	30
		Female	21	70
2	Age	18-27 years	11	36.7
		28-37 years	5	16.7
		38-47 years	9	30.0
		48 and above	5	16.7
3	Race	Malay	30	100
		Chinese	0	0
		Indian	0	0
		Indigenous	0	0
4	Typhoid Injection	Taken	22	73.3
		Not taken	8	26.7
5	Level of Education	Primary School	7	23.3
		Secondary School	19	63.3
		Diploma	4	13.3
6	Food Handlers Certificate	Have	17	56.7
		Not in Possession	13	43.3

Female food handlers, mostly in the age group between 18 to 27 years (36.7%), make up the majority (70%) of the respondents in this study. Although it is compulsory for food handlers to take the typhoid injections, 8 persons (26.7%) were not vaccinated compared to the other 22 who were. The standard requirement set by the Ministry of Health requires all food handlers to be in possession of the Food Handlers' Certificate (*Sijil Pengendali Makanan*), however only 17 persons possess this certificate issued by the Ministry of Health. This certificate is a compulsory requirement by the Ministry of Health before food handlers can operate their business.

The mean score of this study was used to measure respondents' degree of agreement and disagreement with each question. A mean score of between 1.00 to 2.33 represents a "low" agreement level (disagree) while a mean score of between 2.34 to 3.66 indicates a "moderate" agreement level and a mean score of between 3.67 to 5.00 is categorized as a "high" agreement level.

The data in Table 2, shows the mean score for food handlers' safety knowledge and their practices at Kuala Tahan restaurants. There are 31 statements to gauge respondents' knowledge and practices at the Kuala Tahan restaurants. Most of the respondents have a mean score above 4.00, which indicates they have a high level of understanding of food safety.

Table 2: Food Handlers' Food Safety Knowledge and Practices in the Restaurants in Taman Negara, Kuala Tahan

Dimensions / ***Knowledge***	**Mean score (M)**
Washing hands regularly before and after work is one part of personal hygiene	4.77
Each time I prepare food, I measure the cooking temperature with a thermometer	3.53
Cook all raw beef and lamb at an internal Temperature of 160 °F (71.1 ºC) as measured with a food thermometer	3.67
Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be securely wrapped to maintain quality	4.23
If the cans look ok, they are safe to use	4.47
It is dangerous if dented cans are used	4.33
Food inside rusty tins may be contaminated	4.53
The swollen canned food might be contaminated	4.60
The best way to prevent food poisoning from fresh fruits and vegetables is to wash them with cool running water	4.37
Inspection of raw materials involves the use of the sense of sight, smell and touch	4.60
If the raw material looks moldy (or has an abnormal color) or smells moldy, do not accept delivery of the raw materials	4.53
Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator	4.50
The premises need to have a disposal system for garbage, sewage and wastewater	4.43
The disposal of food waste through a coordinated disposal system	4.47
A clean cooking environment is a good way to control food safety	4.67
If the kitchen worker is suffering from flu, diarrhea, influenza or other illnesses, there is no problem working in the kitchen	2.43
I will take medical leave when I feel sick	4.27
The wastewater is drained via a good drainage system from food preparation premises	4.17
This premise uses grease traps to prevent the flow of residual oil into the ditch.	3.87
Cleaning the premises with a disinfectant.	4.07
Practices	Mean Score (M)
I use a clean and washed plate for ready-to-eat foods	4.53
I remove rings, watches and bracelets before starting work	4.40
I always ensure food purchased is clean and fresh	4.67
I wash vegetables and fresh fruits with tap water before serving	4.53
I wash my hands with soap and water after using the toilet	4.70
Poor quality of raw materials can still be used to produce edible foods	2.67
I wear an apron during food preparation	4.30
When preparing food, I use gloves	3.63
For the preparation of food, I wear a head cover or a hat	4.00
I find it hard to prepare food using an apron, gloves and hair net	2.27
I clean up the food preparation premise every time before going home	4.50

The respondents agreed that a clean cooking environment is a good way to control food safety (4.67). They know that swollen canned food might be spoiled (4.60) and the inspection of raw materials involves the use of the sense of sight, smell, and touch. They also understand that food inside rusty cans may be contaminated (4.53) and not accept raw materials if they look moldy (or has an abnormal color or smell). Respondents agreed that the premises need to have a disposal system for garbage, sewage, and wastewater (4.43). They agreed that the best way to prevent food poisoning from fresh fruits and vegetables is to wash them with cold running water (4.37). Respondents agreed that it is dangerous to use dented cans (4.33). They understand that they have to take medical leave when they feel sick (4.27). Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be securely wrapped to maintain quality (4.23).

Respondents agreed that wastewater should be drained via a good drainage system from food preparation premises (4.17) and cleaning the premises with a disinfectant is necessary (4.07). However, respondents seem to be less in agreement (2.43) when asked whether it would bother them if they were to know of workers suffering from flu, diarrhea, influenza, or other illnesses and are still working in the kitchen. This shows that the food handlers may have assumed that these illnesses are mild and pose no threat to food preparation activities.

The mean score for food handlers' hygiene practices were also analyzed. The respondents strongly agreed (4.70) on the importance of washing their hands with soap and water after using the toilet. And food purchased must be clean and fresh (4.67). They were also in agreement with washing vegetables and fresh fruits with tap water before serving (4.53) and the use of clean and washed plates for ready-to-eat foods (4.53). The respondents also agreed that the food preparation area be cleaned each time after closing the restaurant (4.50). They understand that rings, watches, and bracelets should be removed before starting work (4.40) and aprons should be worn during food preparation (4.30). The mean score for always wearing head covers when preparing food was 4.00 while wearing gloves was 3.63. Lastly, the mean score for using poor-quality raw materials was recorded as the lowest, with a score of 2.67. This showed that food handlers may have produced food using low-quality raw materials.

4.1 Interconnection of Food Handlers' Food Safety Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices

The food safety knowledge of food handlers depended on their age, level of education, and training that they received. Basically, the food handlers understand and are knowledgeable about food hygiene. They know the importance of washing their hands regularly before and after work and the disposal of food waste through a coordinated disposal system. They also understand the impact a clean cooking environment has on food safety and the reasons for covering marinated meat or poultry when kept in the refrigerator. These questions received a higher score, indicating that they understand and practice food hygiene and food safety when handling food. They also understand the protocols to be followed when washing their hands before and after work to avoid cross-contamination. All the trash bins in the restaurants visited were closed trashed bins with their lids properly in place and lined with disposable plastic bags. This shows the effort taken and the importance placed on protecting their restaurant from pests like flies, especially at the garbage bins. They also ensure that the workstation or dining table was cleaned and mopped regularly after use. The knowledge on food hygiene depends on the food handlers' age. The education that they received is sufficient to indicate their level of understanding of food hygiene. Training has provided a good knowledge foundation in food hygiene and handling of food safely. Certified food handlers are significant in maintaining the high level of knowledge in handling the food (0.079) at a 10% level of significance.

Table 3: Hypotheses for Food Safety Knowledge of Food Handlers in Taman Negara

Hypotheses	**Sig.**	**Decision**
There is a relationship between age and food safety knowledge	0.526	Supported
There is a relationship between level of education food safety knowledge	0.195	Supported
There is a relationship between training and food safety knowledge	0.79	Supported

* Correlation is significant at 0.10 level (n=30)

4.2 Insights on the Overall Cleanliness of the Restaurants in Taman Negara

Observations were done to validate the degree of cleanliness of the restaurants. The observations were carried out according to a checklist prepared earlier. Elements noted in the observation include practices relating to time and temperature, food preparation and services, storage, food handling practices which include good hygiene practices, utensils, and equipment. All the restaurants are floating rafts, converted from boats but with restaurant facilities. The kitchens for these boat restaurants are located at the back of the boat. The restaurants can accommodate 15 to 20 customers at any one time.

The observation was carried out using "mystery shopping" style. The restaurant owners were not aware that their premises were being observed and evaluated, however, researchers asked for permission to visit the back portion of the restaurants housing the kitchens. It was noted that all the restaurants did not place emphasis on time and temperature while preparing food because the food was made to order. There was no food left at closing time; thus food handlers need not worry about storing the food. The storage freezer was tidy with all items cleaned and kept according to the levels designated for storing raw and cooked items. Nevertheless, the ingredients were not labeled and thus could pose a risk to food preparation. All utensils and equipment were kept clean when not in use. However, the overall cleanliness of the kitchen could be improved in terms of better utensil storage and closed shelves.

It was observed that tables are clean and disinfected with sanitizing agents in between customers eating in, though this protocol was not carried out every time. The food handlers use a separate cutting board for raw ingredients and cooked items. All bins have lids on, thus fulfilling the requirements by MOH and at the same time avoiding cross-contamination caused by flies. When asked whether they have a schedule for regular disinfection of pests, the food handlers reported they only have fly traps but have not engaged the service of any pest control companies.

The food handlers use aprons when preparing food but only some of them wear gloves. However, they wash their hands between tasks and their nails are clean with no jewelry. Overall, they have good personal hygiene and they do not smoke while preparing food for customers. All restaurants have hand-washing basins for customers' use and the sinks were kept moderately clean. On the whole, the food serving area is clean with proper sanitation although plans should be made to provide patrons with a better dining environment. Another observation was the restaurants do not have waste management systems; thus this issue needs to be addressed and the necessary precautions taken in the meantime because any waste leaking into the river, would pose another threat to the environment.

4.3 Discussion

The World Health Organization (2020) states that food hygiene is required to ensure food safety from the stage of production to consumption. At any point in the process of slaughtering, harvesting, processing, storing, distributing, transporting and preparation, food could become contaminated. According to researches, (Clayton, Griffith, Price, & Peters, 2002; Ismail, Chik, Muhammad & Mohd Yusoff, 2016), although an increasing number of food handlers receive training on food hygiene, food poisoning illnesses are still occurring due to improper hygiene practices by food handlers. Food handlers typically know the right safety measures, but there are many barriers to their implementation. These barriers include time constraints, lack of staff, and lack of facilities. Generally, food handlers have some knowledge of food safety, but they still need to go for proper food safety training. The minimum certification should include the *Sijil Pengendali Makanan* as indicated by the Ministry of Health. Failure to closely monitor staff health and allowing any staff who may be down with a simple health issue like flu could pose a greater threat to safe food production than anyone could imagine. For example, typhoid fever which causes intestinal tract infection resulting in bleeding starts from a simple ailment, flu, and flu is very common among food handlers employed in commercial food production. Food handlers can improve their knowledge levels through participation in training programs (Young et. al. 2019). Food handlers who lack awareness or skills in food hygiene practices, maybe the cause of foodborne illnesses and even death (World Health Organization (WHO, 2020).

Consumers are also aware of the importance of consuming safe food and visiting hygiene restaurants. Customer value includes customer perception of the experience they had at the restaurants and this includes their preference (Ha and Jang, 2010). However, Woonseok, Minwoo & Ki-Joo (2020) mentioned that price could also influence customers' value of restaurants. While, some customers may choose restaurants based on their menu price, others do not care for the price but put emphasis on other factors such as cleanliness, hygiene, and aesthetic value. According to Omar, Juhdi, Ahmad & Nazri (2014) customers value food quality, however, price influences their choices of restaurants.

According to the Food Standard Agency (2020) cleaning will prevent bacteria and viruses from spreading. Furthermore, regularly disinfecting surfaces, equipment, and premises can also ensure a high level of environmental hygiene and prevent illnesses caused by food (Food Standard Agency, 2020). In addition, regular cleaning can increase the shelf life of the equipment and they will not be easily damaged. Regular cleaning can also reduce the growth of microbes, viruses, and control the presence of pests (Food Standard Agency (FDA), 2020). Nowadays pest control services are a more popular and easy way to reduce the presence of pests (Rentokil, 2020).

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, customers prefer restaurants with open-air environments. According to Ministry of Health, exposure to someone with Covid-19 in a closed area for more than 2 hours increase the risk of contagion, if the standard operation procedure of physical distancing and wearing a mask was not followed. Food safety knowledge among customer has been known to influence their choices in restaurants (Abdul Latip, Newaz, Ramasamy, Tumin, & Noh, 2014) thus it is important for food handlers to maintain hygiene in their restaurants and their staffs because they are the ones being the front liners serving the customers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, food handlers' knowledge and their attitudes towards the practice of food hygiene are crucial in ensuring that every food handler ~~follows~~ the food safety rules and, prevent any contamination. Food handlers who are equipped with sufficient knowledge of food safety measures will observe personal hygiene, ensure clean workstations and prevent cross contamination which normally takes place in the kitchen. Knowledgeable food handlers will exercise food hygiene practices from the purchasing process right until serving meals to customers. Kwol et al. (2020) state that food handlers' knowledge of hygiene positively affected their attitudes and practices. Employees who are good in terms of knowledge and have good attitudes in observing food hygiene practices can be an example for other employees to follow.

There are many seminars, campaigns, certified food handlers, and food safety classes that can increase the level of knowledge of food handlers and indirectly improve their practices in safe food handling. The government can support in terms of providing effective food hygiene practice training programs for food handlers to improve overall hygienic practices. Training programs need to be designed based on observations following assessment of food safety knowledge, attitudes, and practices for different age groups, religious groups, genders, educational levels, and different income levels (Hashanuzzaman, Bhowmik, Rahman, Abu Zakaria, Voumik & Al Mamun, 2020). The current training content designed by MOH is generic and used across the board for all types of food handlers. The three-hour content program is being used extensively to train food handlers regardless of their origin (locals or foreigners), education levels, or language abilities (eg. dual language speakers) (Mukhtar, Chik, Ariffin & A.Rais (2021). Thus, future studies need to address this issue and come up with a more effective program enabling better comprehension of and practices in safe food production.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

CTC prepares the article and oversees the whole research process. NS vetted the methodology, while, NSMS prepare the checklist for observation. SB helps in the data collection. AMS refined the data analysis and vetted the draft article.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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Millennial Perceptions of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

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ABSTRACT

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Over the years, a peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation service known as Airbnb has grown significantly in Malaysia. Airbnb has unique features that distinguish it from existing markets, such as traditional hotels, as it purchases and exchanges goods. Airbnb allows visitors from all over the world to make reservations from a list of registered hosts. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies done related to millennial perceptions of the existence of Airbnb. Therefore, this study highlighted the relationship between authentic experience, social benefits, trust in Airbnb, and relative attractiion with millennial perceptions of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. A descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was used to collect the data and the study focused on the millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah within the age range of 25 to 40 years of age as the population representative of millennials. The data collected through this online survey questionnaire is tabulated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). According to the results of the tests, all hypotheses were found to have a positive impact on the millennials' perception to use Airbnb services. Based on the data, it can be inferred that millennials in Kota Kinabalu are likely to continue and use Airbnb services in the future because their impressions of the service are extremely positive.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been identified as one of the most important service industries in today's world. This is demonstrated when Sabah tourism positively impacted the Malaysian economy by increasing foreign exchange earnings and job opportunities (Tarmudi et al., 2014). Recently, a new peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation service known as Airbnb has grown significantly in Malaysia (Razli et al., 2017). Airbnb has unique features that distinguish it from existing markets, such as traditional hotels, as it purchases and exchanges goods. Airbnb allows visitors from all over the world to make reservations from a list of registered hosts. Hosts can post their listings for free. It brings advantages to the guest because guests can select their preferences using a customised user interface designed to their search results, just like any other online hotel reservation (Razli et al., 2017).

Airbnb is a popular choice and a trend among Millenials who were born in between 1980 to 2000 (Citizen, 2016; Smith & Nichols, 2015; Cavagnaro et al., 2018). In Visit Malaysia 2014, the Malaysian government began to promote Airbnb, encouraging guests to book accommodation through the platform to stimulate the tourism industry and the local real estate market (Tourism Malaysia, 2016). The actual mission of Airbnb is to help people to travel to different parts of the world. Kong et al. (2020) stated that Airbnb is offering unique services to their customers; hence, the percentage of millennials choosing Airbnb for travelling has increased from 60% to 120% in recent years. Different factors affecting the millennial percentage regarding travelling with Airbnb. The enjoyment of staying in different places and regions is the reason for all the recognitions for Airbnb to most of these millennials. In addition, they want to interact with and learn about the local culture, which will make them feel like they are a part of the community (Airbnb, 2016). As one of the world's largest populations, this could be a significant situation in which millennials provide more benefits to Airbnb. Oxford Economics stated short-term rental accommodation company Airbnb contributed RM3.98 billion to Malaysia's GDP and supported 52,100 local jobs as of 2019. Airbnb guests spent a total of RM11.8 billion, expanding at an annual pace of 79.6 percent in Malaysia**.** In addition, according to an article from Property Hunter (2020) most Airbnb listings in Kota Kinabalu are in coastal locations or close to the city centre, providing convenience and attractive views during guest stays. According to the official website of Airbnb (2020), there are over 300 Airbnb's in Kota Kinabalu with rental sizes ranging from one to three bedrooms, with 78 percent offering the complete property. Surprisingly, it has been a huge success, as more and more tourists prefer to stay with Airbnb, even though it only offers a minimal service. In fact, 60% of all Airbnb guests are all millennials, with a 128 percent year-over-year growth rate (Airbnb, 2016). This is the average daily rate, monthly occupancy rate, and monthly revenue of Airbnbs in Sabah as of September 2020, according to AIR DNA.

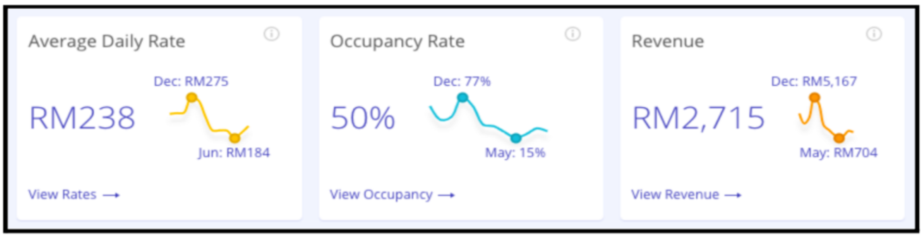

Figure 1: Overview of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu Sabah (AIRDNA, September 2020)

The influence of millennials are considerably crucial since they are the generation that defines the trend of business, "They have grown up with technology, and are addicted to technology so much so that half of them would sooner or later give up their sense of smell than a critical device." (Gibson et al., 2014). They are the next generation that will be prepared with tools and move onward for the benefit of the future in terms of economic, geopolitical, and environmental issues (Hershatter et al., 2010). There has been a great amount of research on the Airbnb service for years. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies carried out related to millennials' perception of the existence of Airbnb. Therefore, new information can be acquired as a result of this study, and that knowledge can then be added to the literature. Considering the significance of Airbnb services and changing customer behaviour in Malaysia, studies that examine the contributing variables to Airbnb services among Millennials are still scarce in the literature. As a result, the aim of this study is to examine the perception of millennials using Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The following are the objectives of the study.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the authentic experience and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
2. What is the relationship between the trust in airbnb and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
3. What is the relationship between the social benefits and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
4. What is the relationship between the relative attraction and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between the authentic experience and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
2. To determine the relationship between trust and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
3. To determine the relationship between social benefits and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
4. To determine the relationship between relative attractiveness and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The goal of this study is to examine the millennials' perceptions of accessing Airbnb services. Information gathered from the study will be useful to the Airbnb companies to improve their services and management. The Airbnb organisation must fully appreciate how clients viewed this internet booking application, which necessitates assessing the quality of the service given by Airbnb. As a result, analysing millennials' purchase intent is crucial for service companies' efforts to develop client loyalty to survive and thrive in this highly competitive market. Also, Airbnb will be able to understand more about the factors that influence customers' decisions to utilise their online booking services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Airbnb started in Malaysia in the year of 2012 and continues to grow but the effect of Airbnb growth only arose in 2013. Razli et al., (2017) stated that although Malaysia's online short-term rental platform such as Airbnb began relatively late, its popularity has grown significantly in recent years because of aggressive marketing and brand awareness from other regions. In the year of 2013, Airbnb Malaysia has gained a 500 percent growth (Razli et al., 2017). Seeing the growth of Airbnb in Malaysia makes Malaysia one interesting market for Airbnb. Airbnb is mostly popular in big cities such as Kuala Lumpur which is a tourist destination. In Sabah capital city, Kota Kinabalu, which is a sub-urban city (Pawan et al., 2014), Airbnb also exists to accommodate tourists.

Table 1: Summary of Studies related to Airbnb Services

Authors	Theories	Studies	Variables
Kim, B., & Kim, D. (2020)	Affective events theory (AET) Social exchange theory	Attracted to or Locked In? Explaining Consumer Loyalty toward Airbnb	• Authentic experience • Trust in Airbnb • Social Benefits • Relative Attractiveness • Price Fairness
Sung, E., Kim, H., & Lee, D. (2018)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Why Do People Consume and Provide Sharing Economy Accommodation?	• Economic benefit • Sustainability • Perceived enjoyment • Social relationship • Attitude
Jung, J., Park, E., Moon, J., & Lee, W. S. (2021)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Exploration of Sharing Accommodation Platform Airbnb Using an Extended Technology Acceptance Model	• Network externalities • Interactivity • Trust • Ease of use • Usefulness • Repurchase intention
Nathan, R. J., Victor, V., Tan, M., & Fekete-Farkas, M. (2020)	Extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2)	Tourists' Use of Airbnb App for Visiting A Historical City	• Effort expectancy • Performance expectancy • Habit • Social influence • Price value • Facilitating conditions
Wang, Y., Asaad, Y., & Filieri, R. (2020)	Socio-technical theory	What makes hosts trust Airbnb? Antecedents of hosts' trust toward Airbnb and its impact on continuance intention.	• User experience • Social utility of sharing • Social value orientation • System quality • Service quality • Information quality • Extrinsic reward • Perceived effectiveness of privacy policy • Perceived effectiveness of industry self-regulation • Continuance intention
Garg, A. (2020)	Generational theory	Factors influencing generation Y to choose Airbnb	• Socio-Economic Factors • Technological Factors • Social Media Influence • Environmental Factors

2.1 Authentic Experience

In recent times, it has been identified that people, especially millennials, look for some authentic experiences while on vacation or travelling around. However, millennials' perception of an authentic experience engages a link with the local communities and comes into prominence with the idea of staying in someone's home instead of a hotel (mody & hanks, 2020). Authentic experience can be considered a significant independent variable as it can affect the entire concept of sharing economy, the corporation's brand, and millennials' perception about this exclusive experience. It has been identified by various researchers that authenticity plays a predominant role in promoting the repurchasing attitude of airbnb customers. The accommodation strategy of airbnb offers an exclusive and authentic experience in the form of household benefits not usually provided in hotels.

2.2 Trust in Airbnb

Trust indicates a versatile psychological inclination that seems to have been engaged in the interactions between two parties. Trust plays a key role in constructing an emotional relationship between a brand and its customers (Kong et al., 2020). Airbnb tends to initiate a worthy interaction among its hosts and consumers, encouraging the development of a high level of trust in the sharing economy. However, Airbnb offers P2P accommodation and dominantly motivates guests to develop Airbnb and its hosts (Chua et al., 2019). Airbnb considers the public review system for facilitating trust between hosts and customers. Consequently, it drives Airbnb customers to develop an effective commitment while considering Airbnb as reliable and trustworthy. The study attempts to find out how customer's trust in Airbnb affects millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.3 Social Benefits

Social benefits are associated with an expansion of meaning belonging to social identity and identity-seeking behaviour and suggest involvement with the respective members of a particular community. Social benefits have been considered significant antecedents of customer involvement, particularly in the sharing economy (Zervas et al., 2017). Airbnb helps to enhance customer's sense of social identity through interactions as well as provides a stimulating experience of society and community. It also helps to derive social benefits and encourages the customers to choose Airbnb. The study attempts to find out how Airbnb's social benefits affect millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.4 Relative Attractiveness

Relative attractiveness is associated with the entire perception of a consumer's subjective evaluation of a particular product or service. In this case, customers are given a choice of comparing a product or service with potential alternatives based on their record, current situation, and probable future scopes, along with a measurement of its value. Airbnb allows its customers to compare with others before choosing them, hence adding positively to their perceptions (Kim & Kim, 2020). The study attempts to find out how Airbnb's relative attractiveness affects millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.5 Millennials Perception

Along with time, the services of Airbnb are becoming popular among people for its exclusive services. As the millennials are more likely to travel, the tourism sector of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah considers them as the key customers of Airbnb (Sabah Tourism Board, 2017). It has been identified from various sources that the millennials are well concerned about the travel attributes of Airbnb, and their perception towards it depends on various factors (Garg, 2020). Authentic Experience, Trust in Airbnb, Social Benefits, and Relative Attractiveness are the predominant factors that have a strong impact upon the millennial's perception towards Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

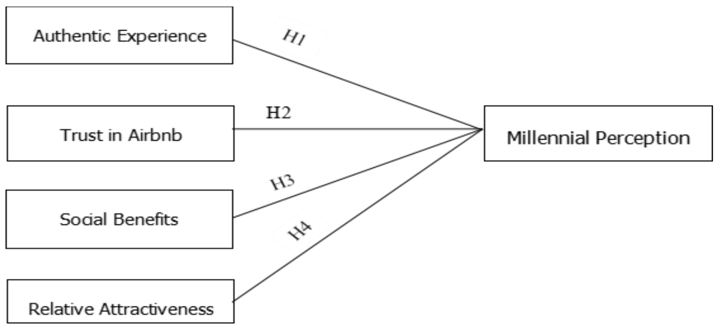

Figure 2: Travel Attributes Influencing Millennial Perception

(Adapted from: Kim & Kim, 2020)

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, quantitative methods are used for the research design. This study used a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach to collecting data. The unit analysis for this study are millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah within the age range of 25 to 40 years old. According to Sabah Tourism (2021), the majority of tourists visiting Kota Kinabalu from January to September 2019 are in the age range of 21 to 30 years old, accounting for 36%, followed by the age group of 31 to 40 years old, accounting for 26%, indicating millennials.

Aside from that, Green's (1991), formula was used in this work to establish the sample size based on the number of targeted populations: $N > 50 + 8p$, where p is the number of predictors. As a result, the sample size is $50 + 8(4) = 82$ people. As for the sampling method, a convenience type of sampling is considered in this study. The study used a questionnaire to accumulate the data from the respondents and this includes an only online instrument which is an online questionnaire created using Google form. The online questionnaires were distributed through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram as millennials actively engage with an online platform. The data collected through this online survey questionnaire were tabulated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

In January 2022, a pilot test with nine samples was done to ensure the study's dependability. The Cronbach's Alpha test yields a result range from 0.899 to 0.978. It means that the internal consistency reliability of the set of responses has been reached. Then, using Google Forms, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, via social media such as Facebook and Instagram because both social media reached the audience faster and effectively. The reliability of the questionnaire, as well as the mean, frequencies, and standard deviation of the variables, were examined using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Finally, to assess the relationship between the variables in this study and to test the hypotheses, a multiple regression test was used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two types of analysis which are descriptive analysis and multiple regression analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 shows the minimum and maximum responses, mean and standard deviation for all items under the study. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test the variables' internal consistency reliability. The results in Table 3 reveal that all Cronbach's Alpha values are in the range of 0.702 to 0.869 and all exceed 0.70 (Saunders et al., 2009), indicating eligible construct reliability.

Table 2: Variable's Descriptive Analysis (N=96)

Variables' Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
a) Authentic Experience (AE)				
I chose Airbnb to have an authentic local experience.	2	5	3.80	0.947
I would like to get to know people from the local neighbourhoods.	2	5	3.68	0.923
I chose Airbnb to understand the local culture.	2	5	3.76	0.981
Living in an Airbnb place represents a local way of life.	2	5	4.07	0.874
Cronbach Alpha Value		0.830		

b) Trust in Airbnb (TIA)				
Even if not monitored, I would trust Airbnb to do the job right	2	5	3.80	0.947
I have assurance that Airbnb's hosts are trustworthy people	2	5	3.68	0.923
I feel Airbnb is generally reliable.	2	5	3.76	0.961
I believe Airbnb is honest.	2	5	4.07	0.874
Cronbach Alpha Value		0.869		
c) Social Benefits (SB)				
I belong to a community of people who share the same values.	2	5	3.91	0.822
I feel close to Airbnb.	2	5	3.66	0.938
I feel I share the same values as Airbnb.	2	5	3.69	0.910
Cronbach Alpha Value		0.859		
d) Relative Attractiveness (RA)				
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb is cheaper.	2	5	3.85	0.882
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb is more convenient.	2	5	3.82	0.894
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb has more amenities and space.	2	5	4.19	0.837
Cronbach Alpha Value		0.811		

4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

This study was conducted to determine if authentic experience, trust in Airbnb, social benefits, and relative attractiveness can influence millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. It was hypothesised that all the four independent variables will positively affect millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The result shows that 52.6% of the variance in millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah can be accounted for by the four attributes, collectively, $F(4,94) = 48.408$, $P<0.000$ (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726[a]	.526	.506	.49586

Table 4: ANNOVA Summary

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1Regression	24.870	4	6.217	25.287	.000[b]
Residual	22.375	91	.246		
Total	47.244	95			

a. Dependent Variable: MP

b. Predictors: (Constant), RA, SB, TIA, AE

Looking at the unique individual contributions of the attributes (Table 6), the result presents that authentic experience (β=.542, t=6.958, p=.000), *trust in Airbnb* (β=.658, t=7.656, p=.000), *social benefits* (β=.624, t=9.42, p=.000) and relative attractiveness (β=.531, t=6.544, p=.000) positively affects millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Thus, all the hypotheses were supported. This suggests that all the four attributes are useful to study millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	B	T	P- Value	Hypothesis Supported
H1	AU -> MP	0.542	6.958	.000b	Supported
H2	TA -> MP	0.658	7.656	.000b	Supported
H3	SB -> MP	0.624	9.427	.000b	Supported
H4	RA -> MP	0.531	6.544	.000b	Supported

According to the results of the tests, hypothesis H1, which is authentic experience, was found to have a positive impact on the millennials' perception to use Airbnb services. The result is aligned with the studies by Kim and Kim (2020). It has been discovered through this research project that authentic experience has a substantial impact on affective commitment. In a research, Cohen, E. (1988) found that authentic experience is widely considered as a crucial aspect in motivating customers to travel to new areas, and that customers who have had authentic interactions through Airbnb are more favourable and satisfied with the service overall. Therefore, Airbnb providers should emphasize in their marketing campaigns how much convenience their services can bring to potential users of their services.

Trust in Airbnb was found to influence millennials' perception on using Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, thus hypothesis H2 was supported. The result supports the claim by Wang et al. (2020) where they stated that they had discovered several factors that enabled people to trust in Airbnb, which in turn had an impact on their continuous usage of these lodgings. Möhlmann (2015) discovered that familiarity was a predictor of choosing a sharing option again in an Airbnb study. Another study by Mittendorf (2016), discovered that familiarity with the website (i.e., Airbnb) is an important predictor of trust. Indeed, for first-time users, trusting in Airbnb might be hard. It may take time for trust to grow. While prior tourism and hospitality research has focused on consumers' (i.e., visitors') perspectives on trust and the requirement for familiarity with the platform to engage in sharing, the need for familiarity is even greater in the case of hosts. However, based on the survey we did, the result suggests that millennials' perception on Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu has an exceedingly positive result for trust in Airbnb.

As indicated in the results, social benefits have a positive impact on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services. Social relations not only create psychological or emotional losses, but also substantial economic losses in this increasingly tech-savvy world. According to the findings of a study conducted by So et al. (2018), which aligned with our findings, social benefits and social encounters are powerful predictors in customers' decisions to use Airbnb services. Users in sharing economy platforms have stated that the social benefits and the experience they have while on the platform are more significant to them than the economic and financial advantages they receive from participating in the platform. Thus, it can be observed that social benefits have a significant impact on millennials' perception of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, as evidenced by the findings of this study.

In addition, the researchers discovered that relative attractiveness (hypothesis H4) had a statistically significant positive effect on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Calculative commitment is greatly influenced by relative attractiveness. The findings of Shukla et al. (2016), which are in line with our findings, indicated that relative attractiveness is a significant component in facilitating consumers' calculative commitment in the service industry. According to the findings of the study, consumers' perceptions of pricing fairness are not significantly connected with their calculative commitments when it comes to purchasing decisions. Consequently, pricing fairness is not the most important predictor when it comes to describing a customer's calculative commitment. As a result of this study, it can be concluded that relative attractiveness also has a substantial impact on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The four criteria (authentic experience, trust in Airbnb, social benefits, and relative beauty) were found to have a major influence on millennials' perception of Airbnb, according to the results of multiple regression analysis. The results concur with previous studies in relation to intention to use Airbnb services (Kuzmanović, & Langović, 2018; Garg, 2020; Dogru, 2021).

According to the findings, residents in Sabah are highly aware of the existence of Airbnb service. Surprisingly, it has become one of the most popular lodging options due to its numerous advantages. Social media, where users may read reviews and comments, as well as the use of smartphones to download Airbnb applications, have encouraged the expansion of Airbnb services. Based on the data, it can be inferred that millennials in Kota Kinabalu are likely to continue and use Airbnb services in the future because their impressions of the service are extremely positive.

This study has limitations because it only focuses on millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and hence the findings may not be generalised and applicable to other parts of Malaysia. Furthermore, this study only used four attributes, even though there are other possible attributes that are important to this study. Other attributes not utilised in this study, such as convenience motivation, time-saving motivation, price-orientation motivation, and so on, should be included in future research. Future research might be undertaken in other parts of Malaysia to acquire a greater knowledge of millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services, as this demographic is tech-savvy, and according to a Deloitte report, 43% of Malaysia's population are millennials (25-40 years old) as of 2021. As a result, it's critical to look at how these localised and specialty Airbnb services are viewed by current and potential users. Because of the present COVID-19 epidemic, the usage of mobile applications is no longer only a trend for millennials, but rather a need for all individuals. Hence, studies on other consumer categories will also have a lot of potential.

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AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTION

All authors took part in the process of completing and refining the manuscript. NFIA and NINA carried out the introduction and literature review. Amf also contributes in the literature review and methodology part. NFIA is in-charge of heading the data collection process and analysing the data by using SPSS. NMMZ, NMM and AG helped out in refining the overall manuscript including the content structure and language NFIA, AMF and NINA brainstorming on the discussion part with the assistance of NMMZ. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Reception of the Ombudsman in Malaysia and Its Application in Local Universities as An Alternative Dispute Resolution

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ABSTRACT

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Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has become a popular referred medium due to inherent drawback of the litigation process. One of the ADR methods that is being adopted by most countries worldwide is ombudsman. In Malaysia, the first ombudsman established among higher education institutions was the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Ombudsman Office in 2011. It is the university initiative in ensuring good governance and improving the integrity of the university ecosystem. In the university environment, conflicts among stakeholders; students, staffs, administration, and public are inevitable. The needs of having a confidential, independent, impartial, and informal dispute resolution become an outset for ombudsman to be established in higher education institutions. Each complaint is valuable because it can contribute to the improvement of policies, procedures, existing practices, and the university governance. By applying doctrinal research methodology, this study aims to give an overview of the ombudsman concept and how it can be tailored into an effective dispute resolution medium in universities with special reference to some local universities that practiced ombudsman. This study found that university ombudsman needs to be established as most of the existing dispute resolutions available in the universities are still unable to cater conflicts transparently and independently of the administrative influence like the ombudsman, despite they are resolved by addressing both interests and concerns of the parties in general. This study proposes that detailed and comprehensive legal provisions of university ombudsman to be drafted as the government effort in facilitating the strengthening of the universities management and governance.

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Penerimaan Ombudsman di Malaysia dan Pemakaiannya di Universiti Tempatan Sebagai Penyelesaian Pertikaian Alternatif

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Pentadbiran Universiti
Undang-Undang Pentadbiran

Penyelesaian pertikaian alternatif (ADR) menjadi satu medium popular yang dirujuk akibat kelemahan yang wujud dalam proses litigasi. Salah satu kaedah ADR yang mula diterima pakai oleh hampir kebanyakan negara di dunia adalah ombudsman. Di Malaysia, ombudsman pertama diwujudkan dalam kalangan institusi pengajian tinggi adalah Pejabat Ombudsman Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) pada tahun 2011. Ia merupakan inisiatif universiti dalam memastikan tadbir urus yang baik dan meningkatkan integriti ekosistem universiti. Di dalam persekitaran universiti, konflik di kalangan pemegang taruh; pelajar, warga kerja, pentadbiran bahkan orang awam tidak dapat dielakkan. Keperluan untuk mempunyai penyelesaian pertikaian yang rahsia, bebas, tidak berat sebelah dan tidak formal menjadi satu titik tolak untuk ombudsman ditubuhkan di institusi pengajian tinggi. Setiap aduan bernilai kerana ia mampu menyumbang kepada penambahbaikan dasar, prosedur, amalan sedia ada dan tadbir urus universiti. Dengan mengaplikasikan kaedah kajian doktrinal, kajian ini bertujuan memberi gambaran konsep ombudsman dan bagaimana ia dapat disesuaikan menjadi satu medium penyelesaian pertikaian yang efektif di universiti dengan rujukan khas kepada beberapa buah universiti tempatan yang mengamalkan ombudsman. Hasil kajian mendapati ombudsman universiti perlu ditubuhkan kerana kebanyakan penyelesaian pertikaian sedia ada yang wujud di universiti masih belum mampu menangani konflik secara telus dan bebas daripada pengaruh pentadbiran sepertimana ombudsman, walaupun ianya diselesaikan dengan mengambil kira aspek kekhawatiran dan kepentingan pihak-pihak secara umum. Kajian ini mencadangkan peruntukan undang-undang berkaitan ombudsman universiti perlu digubal secara terperinci dan komprehensif sebagai satu usaha kerajaan dalam membantu memperkasakan pengurusan dan pentadbiran universiti-universiti.

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1. PENDAHULUAN

Lazimnya, individu yang terjejas dengan keputusan dan tindakan pentadbir awam daripada mana-mana badan awam boleh mencabar perkara tersebut dan menuntut haknya dipulihkan atau memohon relif melalui kaedah tertentu menurut undang-undang. Ia boleh dilakukan melalui dua kaedah; semakan kehakiman dan semakan bukan kehakiman. Semakan kehakiman dapat ditakrifkan sebagai *"…the process by which the High Court exercises its supervisory jurisdiction over the proceedings and decisions of inferior courts, tribunals, and other bodies or persons who carry out quasi-judicial functions or who are charged with the performance of public acts and duties"* (Halsbury Laws of Malaysia, Vol.9, para. 160.059). Semakan kehakiman adalah satu proses Mahkamah dimana hakim Mahkamah Tinggi menyemak/menyelia/mengkaji semula kesahan keputusan dan tindakan pentadbir awam yang menjalankan fungsi awam, sama ada wujud pemakaian undang-undang yang tepat, penggunaan kuasa yang dibenarkan dan prosedur yang betul dalam mencapai keputusan dan tindakan tersebut (Mokhtar & Alias, 2011). Jika hakim bersetuju bahawa kesemua ini wujud dan diamalkan dengan betul, maka keputusan dan/atau tindakan tersebut akan dikekalkan dan permohonan semakan kehakiman akan ditolak. Jika terdapat unsur *ultra vires* di dalam pelaksanaan kuasa dan tugas pentadbir awam yang membawa kepada keputusan dan tindakan yang dianggap melanggar hak individu, maka relif akan diberikan oleh Mahkamah kepada pemohon. Kawalan kehakiman terhadap pentadbiran awam dilaksanakan bertujuan untuk memastikan badan yang menjalankan fungsi undang-undang awam bertindak secara sah dalam batasan kuasa yang diberikan (Masum, 2010).

Hakim Mahkamah Rayuan Gopal Sri Ram di dalam kes *Syarikat Kenderaan Melayu Kelantan Bhd v Transport Workers' Union* [1995] 2 MLJ 317 menegaskan:

> *… an inferior tribunal or other decision-making authority, whether exercising a quasi-judicial function or purely an administrative function, has no jurisdiction to commit an error of law. Henceforth, it is no longer of concern whether the error of law is jurisdictional or not. If an inferior tribunal or other public decision-taker does make such an error, then he exceeds his jurisdiction. So too is jurisdiction exceeded, where resort is had to an unfair procedure (see Raja Abdul Malek Muzaffar Shah bin Raja Shahruzzaman v Setiausaha Suruhanjaya Pasukan Polis [1995] 1 MLJ 308), or where the decision reached is unreasonable, in the sense that no reasonable tribunal similarly circumstanced would have arrived at the impugned decision.*
>
> *… Since an inferior tribunal has no jurisdiction to make an error of law, its decisions will not be immunized from judicial review by an ouster clause however widely drafted…* (petikan kes)

Semakan kehakiman disebut oleh Ahmad & Nik Mahmod (2006) sebagai senjata paling ampuh untuk individu yang terjejas mencabar kesahan keputusan pihak berkuasa awam. Pihak berkuasa diberikan mandat menjalankan tugas dan fungsi awam mengikut perimeter kuasa yang dibenarkan menurut Kedaulatan Undang-Undang. Sekiranya ia bertindak menyalahi dan melebihi kuasa yang diperuntukkan, maka Mahkamah mestilah memperbetulkan kesalahan tersebut. Walaubagaimanapun, menurut Ahmad & Nik Mahmod (2006) lagi, fungsi Mahkamah di bawah bidangkuasa semakan kehakiman adalah untuk menentukan samada keputusan pentadbir awam selari dengan undang-undang yang ditetapkan mengikut proses dan tatacara yang betul, bukannya untuk menggantikan keputusan tersebut dengan keputusan Mahkamah itu sendiri.

Walaupun Perlembagaan Persekutuan memberikan jaminan berhubung dengan hal ehwal kehakiman di samping menjamin kebebasan kehakiman di Malaysia berasaskan Bahagian IX, kuasa kehakiman yang kebiasaannya dimonopoli oleh Mahkamah dilihat sebagai tidak lagi mutlak kerana badan kehakiman perlu berkongsi kuasa dengan badan pentadbiran untuk membuat keputusan sama ada melibatkan persoalan undang-undang atau fakta (Romli & Abdul Wahab, 2020:225).

Selain daripada semakan kehakiman, penelitian terhadap keputusan dan tindakan badan-badan awam boleh dimajukan kepada mekanisma semakan lain yang kurang formal seperti Biro Pengaduan Awam Malaysia. Kebelakangan ini, Malaysia dikatakan sedang menuju ke arah penubuhan *ombudsman* bagi menggantikan Biro Pengaduan Awam yang mana pada sebelumnya, idea ini pernah diketepikan atas beberapa alasan yang bakal dibincangkan di dalam kajian ini.

2. SOROTAN LITERATUR

Menurut Gvaramadze (2020) *ombudsman* telah dianggap sebagai mekanisma alternatif dalam melindungi hak asasi manusia di dalam bidang pentadbiran awam sejak 1970-an. Dalam demokrasi, hak asasi manusia dijamin oleh perlembagaan sesebuah negara dan dilindungi oleh badan judisiari. Walaubagaimanapun, dalam negara demokrasi kini, adalah penting untuk mempunyai sistem penyeliaan hak asasi manusia secara *non/quasi-judicial*. Institusi *ombudsman* dianggap sebagai mekanisme alternatif yang mana pada hari ini mewakili bahagian penting dalam kedaulatan undang-undang dan dikaitkan secara langsung dengan penyeliaan pentadbiran awam negara.

Ombudsman ialah institusi yang diiktiraf oleh perlembagaan atau oleh undang-undang yang diluluskan oleh badan legislatif, dikendalikan oleh orang bebas yang bertanggungjawab atas tindakan sendiri di hadapan Parlimen. Sebagai institusi, *ombudsman* bertugas menyiasat tindakan badan kerajaan sebagai respon kepada aduan yang dikemukakan oleh ahli-ahli masyarakat (Stoicu & Morostes, 2017).

Glusac (2019), walaupun matlamat utama *ombudsman* bukanlah untuk meningkatkan dan memulihkan keyakinan rakyat terhadap pentadbiran awam, tetapi ianya adalah hasil positif secara tidak langsung yang boleh dilihat daripada pelaksanaan *ombudsman* yang berkesan. Oleh itu, tidak hairan ramai ilmuwan dan pembuat dasar beranggapan positif bahawa *ombudsman* boleh memainkan peranan penting dalam membina keyakinan rakyat terhadap pentadbiran awam. Keyakinan orang awam terhadap kerja yang dilakukan oleh *ombudsman* itu sendiri menjadi prasyarat untuk *ombudsman* berfungsi sebagai ejen perubahan kepercayaan orang awam terhadap pentadbiran awam. Oleh itu, empat perkara utama yang harus dititikberatkan untuk menyumbang keyakinan orang awam terhadap *ombudsman* itu sendiri adalah kebebasan *ombudsman* dalam menjalankan fungsi dan kerjanya, perkhidmatan bukan sahaja kepada pegadu malahan orang awam secara meluas, membangunkan budaya pematuhan piawaian yang kuat, dan mewujudkan kepercayaan dengan tingkah laku yang boleh dipercayai. Adalah penting untuk *ombudsman* boleh diakses dengan mudah oleh setiap lapisan masyarakat terutamanya oleh golongan sosial yang kurang berkepentingan.

Kini, *ombudsman* bukan lagi hanya digunakan di dalam sektor pentadbiran awam negara, ia juga telah berkembang dan disesuaikan sehingga digunakan secara meluas merentasi kedua-dua sektor awam dan swasta.

3. KAEDAH KAJIAN

Kajian undang-undang dapat dibahagikan kepada dua kategori umum; kaedah kajian doktrinal dan kajian sosio-perundangan (Yaqin, 2007). Artikel ini mengaplikasikan kaedah kajian doktrinal dengan menggunakan pendekatan metod kajian kepustakaan. Pendekatan ini merupakan antara salah satu kaedah yang sering digunakan untuk mendapatkan bahan literatur seperti buku-buku ilmiah, artikel jurnal, kertas persidangan, peruntukan undang-undang, keratan akhbar dan sebagainya. Bahan literatur ini kemudiannya dianalisa untuk membolehkan pengkaji membuat ulasan mengenai konsep *ombudsman* secara umum dan pemakaiannya di Malaysia serta di beberapa institusi pengajian tinggi seperti Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia dan Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia.

4. *OMBUDSMAN* DI MALAYSIA

4.1 Latar Belakang

Idea penubuhan *ombudsman* pernah dibawa ke Malaysia pada tahun 1967 dan kajian kebolehlaksaannya telah dijalankan oleh Sir Guy Powles, seorang *ombudsman* dari New Zealand (Jain, 1997). Malangnya, idea ini gagal dilaksanakan kerana antara alasannya, *ombudsman* dikatakan hanya efektif terhadap kerajaan yang mengamalkan corak pemerintahan berbentuk kesatuan (*unitary-type state*) sedangkan Malaysia mengamalkan corak pemerintahan persekutuan (*federalism*) (Jain, 1997). Selain itu, biarpun terdapat pengasingan kuasa antara tiga badan kerajaan; legislatif, eksekutif, dan judisiari namun masih berlaku pertindihan kuasa. Pihak eksekutif yang mengendarai pentadbiran kerajaan turut mempunyai kuasa dan penglibatan di peringkat legislatif (Ismail, 2009). Sedangkan *ombudsman* adalah pegawai bebas yang dilantik oleh badan legislatif dan bertanggungjawab kepadanya untuk menangani aduan terhadap badan eksekutif (Batalli, 2015; Seneviratne, 2000; Stoicu & Morostes, 2017).

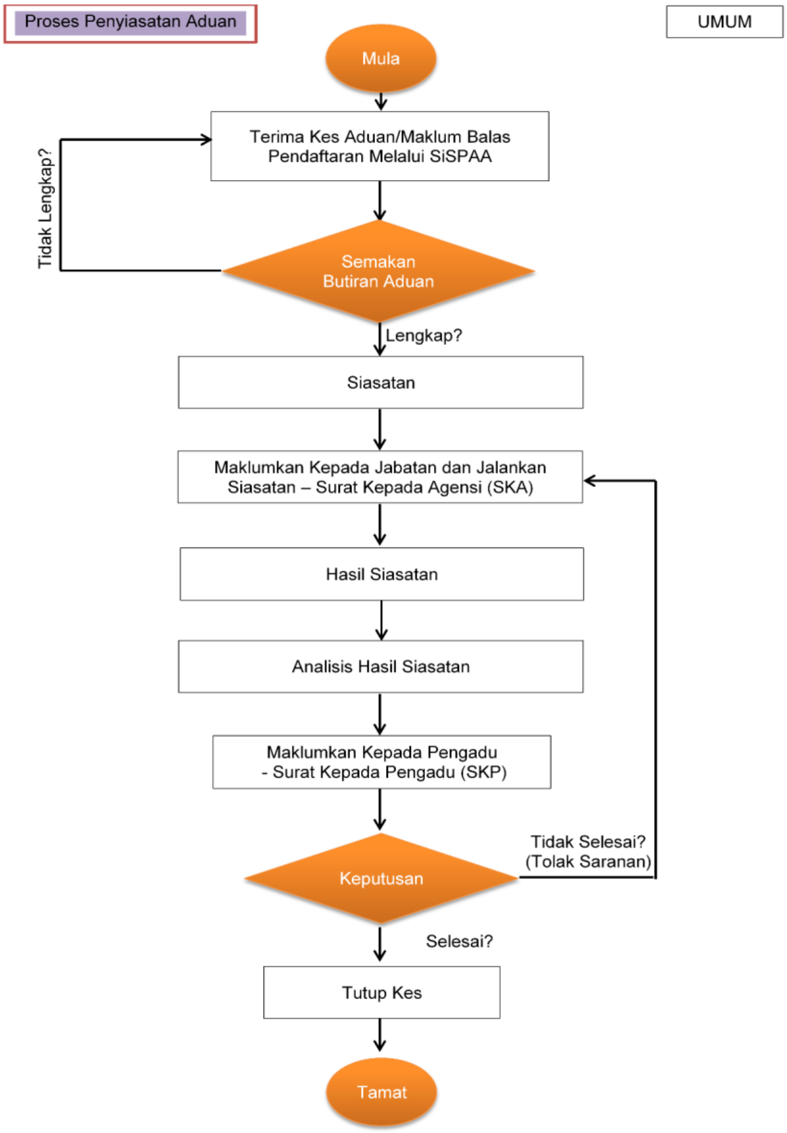
Sungguhpun begitu, negara perlu mewujudkan satu sistem pengendalian aduan awam terhadap pentadbiran kerajaan. Maka, terbentuklah Biro Pengaduan Awam (BPA) yang memiliki matlamat yang serupa dengan institusi *ombudsman* walaupun rangka kerja yang berbeza. Perdana Menteri Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein pada 23 Julai 1971 mengumumkan penubuhan Biro Pengaduan Awam di bawah Jabatan Perdana Menteri ini bertujuan untuk merapatkan perhubungan di antara kerajaan dengan orang awam dan mewujudkan satu saluran yang akan membolehkan orang awam mengemukakan kesulitan-kesulitan mereka mengenai perhubungan mereka dengan perkhidmatan-perkhidmatan kerajaan atau pengaduan terhadap sesuatu tindakan pentadbiran kerajaan yang dirasai tidak adil (Jain, 1997). Biro ini tidak berdiri sendiri tetapi adalah salah satu bahagian unit perancangan am kepada Jabatan Perdana Menteri. Dalam erti kata lain, BPA sebahagian daripada eksekutif. Oleh yang demikian terdapat beberapa kekangan di dalam pengurusan aduan oleh Biro Pengaduan Awam. Aduan-aduan yang melibatkan dasar-dasar kerajaan yang telah ditetapkan, Jawatankuasa Kira-Kira Awam (PAC), Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia (SPRM), Jabatan Bantuan Guaman, masalah keluarga atau peribadi, tuntutan berbentuk sivil antara individu atau syarikat tidak boleh disalurkan kepada BPA (Teck, 2007).

4.2 Bidangkuasa Biro Pengaduan Awam (BPA)

Biro Pengaduan Awam akan menyemak aduan orang ramai mengenai ketidakpuasan mereka terhadap semua aspek pentadbiran kerajaan termasuk agensi-agensi kerajaan yang diswastakan (Teck, 2007). Terdapat dua saluran utama aduan awam BPA iaitu Sistem Aduan Pengurusan Aduan Awam (SISPAA) dan aplikasi telefon pintar ‘Respons Rakyat’. BPA hanya menerima aduan tentang, antaranya; kelewatan atau tiada tindakan, tindakan tidak adil pentadbir awam, kekurangan kemudahan awam, kepincangan perlaksanaan dasar dan kelemahan undang-undang, salah guna kuasa dan salah laku oleh pentadbir awam, kegagalan mengikut prosedur yang ditetapkan, kualiti perkhidmatan yang tidak memuaskan dan kegagalan penguatkuasaan. Walaubagaimanapun, sebelum mengadu kepada BPA, pengadu digalakkan untuk membuat aduan kepada agensi yang berkaitan terlebih dahulu (Portal Rasmi Biro Pengaduan Awam, 2022).

BPA bertanggungjawab menjalankan siasatan terhadap aduan yang diperolehi daripada rakyat dan melaporkan dapatan siasatan kepada Jawatankuasa Tetap Pengaduan Awam (JKTPA) yang mana JKPTA berkuasa menentukan dasar-dasar mengenai sistem pengurusan pengaduan awam, menimbangkan dan membuat keputusan mengenai laporan yang dikemukakan oleh Biro Pengaduan Awam mengenai pengaduan awam dan mengarahkan jabatan atau agensi kerajaan yang berkenaan supaya mengambil tindakan pembetulan dalam menyelesaikan sesuatu aduan yang dirujuk kepadanya. JKPTA dipengerusikan oleh Ketua Setiausaha Negara dan dianggotai oleh Ketua Pengarah Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA), Ketua Pengarah Unit Pemodenan Tadbiran dan Perancangan Pengurusan Malaysia (MAMPU), Ketua Pesuruhjaya Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia (SPRM), Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha Kanan Jabatan Perdana Menteri (JPM) dan Ketua Setiausaha Perbendaharaan, Kementerian Kewangan (Portal Rasmi Biro Pengaduan Awam, 2022).

Sebagai contoh pada Februari 2018, Biro Pengaduan Awam telah berjaya menyelesaikan satu aduan awam berkenaan kerosakan berulang lampu jalan di Alam Impian, Shah Alam akibat perbuatan *vandalisme* individu tidak bertanggungjawab yang mencuri pendawaian di dalam peti pengagih *(feeder pillar)* bekalan elektrik. Walaupun jalan raya tersebut masih berada di bawah tanggungjawab pemaju kerana pembangunan projeknya masih di peringkat awal, tetapi BPA telah meminta Majlis Bandaraya Shah Alam untuk mengambil tindakan pembetulan dan untuk mengelakkan kejadian ini berulang, peti pengagih yang dilengkapi dengan *monkey bar* perlu dimasukkan dalam syarat kelulusan pelan lampu jalan pihak berkuasa tempatan (PBT) kepada pihak pemaju untuk projek pembangunan yang baharu (Portal Rasmi Biro Pengaduan Awam, 2022).



Rajah 1: Proses Penyiasatan Aduan melalui Sistem Aduan Pengurusan Aduan Awam

4.3 Cadangan Pelaksanaan Ombudsman di Malaysia

Pada 21 September 2018, satu harapan baru telah menyinari kredibiliti sistem penyampaian perkhidmatan awam apabila Perdana Menteri Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad semasa sidang media selepas mempengerusikan Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Khas Kabinet Mengenai Anti Rasuah (JKKMAR) di Bangunan Perdana Putra mengumumkan kerajaan bersetuju menukar status Biro Pengaduan Awam kepada '*Ombudsman* Malaysia' sebagai usaha memastikan tindakan ke atas aduan berkaitan kementerian dan agensi dapat ditangani dengan lebih efektif dan *non-partisan.* Bagi memastikan penubuhan badan itu dapat dilaksanakan, satu akta dikenali sebagai Akta *Ombudsman* Malaysia akan digubal dan dibentangkan di Parlimen (Azil, 2018). Setakat kini, rang undang-undang *Ombudsman* Malaysia berada di peringkat terakhir penyediaan draf sebelum dimuktamadkan (C4 Center, 2022). Orang awam bakal melihat sama ada pelaksanaan kuasa oleh *ombudsman* ini disifatkan sebagai mempunyai kuasa melaksana, penasihat atau pemantau sahaja dan bagaimana *ombudsman* ini bebas dan tidak bercanggah dengan bidang kuasa badan-badan lain seperti Suruhanjaya Sekuriti (SC), Jabatan Peguam Negara, SPRM dan polis kerana badan-badan ini juga mempunyai kuasa menyiasat.

Malah sebelum pengumuman tersebut, kerajaan negeri Sarawak telah terlebih dahulu mengambil langkah proaktif menubuhkan Unit Integriti dan *Ombudsman* Negeri Sarawak (UNIONS) pada Februari 2018. UNIONS sebagai perintis dalam kalangan kerajaan negeri-negeri dan persekutuan komited dalam memperkemas urusan pentadbiran negeri Sarawak di samping mengurus aduan yang berkaitan pentadbiran awam dengan efektif tanpa campur tangan pihak luar (Portal Rasmi Jabatan Premier Sarawak, 2022). Kini, *ombudsman* bukan lagi hanya digunakan di dalam sektor awam untuk melindungi rakyat daripada *maladministration* birokrasi kerajaan, ia kini juga telah berkembang dan disesuaikan sehingga digunakan secara meluas merentasi kedua-dua sektor awam dan swasta. Di Malaysia contohnya, *Ombudsman for Financial Services* (OFS) telah diperkenalkan sebagai penyiasat terhadap aduan pengguna terhadap keputusan dan tindakan tidak wajar institusi kewangan.

5. INSTITUSI *OMBUDSMAN*

5.1 Definisi dan Latar Belakang

Ombudsman, ombudsperson atau *ombuds* merujuk kepada individu, badan atau organisasi bebas yang ditubuhkan untuk mengendalikan sesuatu isu, masalah atau konflik antara individu dan kumpulan. *Ombudsman* di dalam bahasa Swedish bermaksud agen atau wakil (International Ombuds Association, 2022). *International Bar Association* pada 1974 menyatakan *ombudsman* adalah:

> *"An office provided for by the constitution or by an action of the legislature or parliament and headed by an independent, high-level public official who is responsible to the legislature or parliament, who receives complaints from aggrieved persons against government agencies, officials, and employees or who acts on his own motion, and who has the power to investigate, recommend corrective action, and issue reports"* (Haller, 1988:29)

Tahun 1809 menyaksikan Sweden muncul sebagai negara Scandinavia pertama memperkenalkan *ombudsman.* Idea ini kemudiannya tersebar dan turut diterima pakai di negara-negara Scandinavia lain; Finland pada tahun 1919, Denmark pada tahun 1953 dan Norway pada tahun 1963. Manakala di negara-negara *common law*, New Zealand dan England telah mengambil langkah menubuhkan *ombudsman* pada tahun 1962 dan 1966 (Jain, 1997). *Ombudsman* turut diraikan dan diamalkan di serata dunia walaupun penggunaan namanya berbeza. Misalnya, Mediateur (Perancis), Defensor del Pueblo (Sepanyol dan Puerto Rico), Protecteur du Citoyen (Quebec), Volksanwalt (Austria), Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (United Kingdom), Provedor de Justica (Portugal) Wafaqi Mohtasib (Pakistan) dan Ayukta (India). Walaupun *ombudsman* dikenali dengan nama yang berbeza, kesemua ini merujuk kepada fungsi dan konsep yang sama (Owen, 1990). Institusi *ombudsman* kini wujud sekurang-kurangnya pada satu peringkat kerajaan di kebanyakan negara di dunia dan bagi rakyat, *ombudsman* adalah satu alternatif kepada prosedur kehakiman yang rumit dan mahal (Van Roosbroek & Van de Walle, 2008:288).

5.2 Fungsi Ombudsman

Pada awal penubuhan, *ombudsman* mensasarkan matlamat untuk meningkatkan akauntabiliti, kecekapan dan ketelusan pentadbiran awam negara. Kuasa pentadbiran yang luas menyebabkan kebarangkalian salah guna kuasa oleh pihak pentadbir seperti *maladministration* boleh terjadi. *Ombudsman* menjadi satu institusi yang mengawal selia tindak tanduk dan aktiviti pentadbir awam demi memastikan tiada penyalahgunaan mahupun kepincangan kuasa berlaku seterusnya melindungi hak-hak individu daripada ketidakadilan pentadbiran awam (Batalli, 2015). Mereka yang mempunyai kuasa bertanggungjawab menggunakannya secara tepat dan tidak bercanggah dengan hak asasi rakyat. Fungsi *ombudsman* dapat dilaksanakan melalui siasatan yang dijalankan terhadap aduan yang diterima daripada rakyat berkenaan tindakan pentadbir awam yang dianggap tidak wajar, *bias*, cuai dan tidak adil. Menurut Hill (2015), enam objektif penting institusi *ombudsman* adalah:-

a. Untuk membetulkan kesalahan individu.
b. Untuk menjadikan birokrasi lebih berperikemanusiaan.
c. Untuk mengurangkan pengasingan daripada kerajaan.
d. Untuk bertindak sebagai badan pemerhati dalam mencegah penyalahgunaan kuasa.
e. Untuk membela pentadbir awam apabila dituduh tanpa adil.
f. Untuk memperkenalkan reformasi pentadbiran.

O*mbudsman* bukan sahaja menyediakan penyelesaian aduan individu, malah ia juga bertanggungjawab menambah baik piawai dan kualiti pentadbiran (Drewry, 1997). Berdasarkan siasatan yang dijalankan, kelemahan-kelemahan yang terdapat di dalam amalan dan peraturan sedia ada dapat dikenalpasti dan penemuan tersebut amat berguna kepada masyarakat dan pentadbiran negara kerana penambahbaikan yang terhasil di kemudian hari akan memberi manfaat sejagat selain aduan masa hadapan dapat diminimumkan (Seneviratne, 2000). Walaupun keputusan yang dikeluarkan terhadap pihak yang diadu mungkin tidak memihak kepada pengadu dalam kes tertentu, hakikat bahawa *ombudsman* telah menyiasat dan bertindak atas aduan yang dikemukakan serta memberi alasan keputusan yang diambil, sedikit sebanyak dapat menghapuskan ketidakpuasan hati dari fikiran pengadu dan masyarakat terhadap pentadbiran awam.

Justeru, *ombudsman* membantu dalam menghapuskan krisis keyakinan dan merapatkan jurang antara pihak pentadbiran dan orang awam. Sekiranya masyarakat tidak dibekalkan dengan saluran yang bersedia menerima aduan mereka berkaitan ketidakadilan yang dihadapi, masyarakat mudah untuk mengambil alternatif lain seperti berdemontrasi, mensabotaj kepentingan kerajaan atau menggunakan mana-mana pentas media untuk menunjukkan perasaan. Oleh itu, *ombudsman* amat penting sebagai petugas baris hadapan yang bertindak sebagai pelindung kepada satu pentadbiran yang baik.

5.3. Ciri-ciri Ombudsman

Pencapaian *ombudsman* dalam melaksanakan fungsi mereka tertakluk kepada beberapa ciri penting. *Ombudsman* memiliki ciri-ciri kebebasan, adil dan saksama, kerahsiaan, bidangkuasa yang luas serta mempunyai akses kepada dokumen pentadbiran dalam menyelesaikan aduan (Gottehrer, 2009). Ia adalah penyiasat yang mempunyai kuasa autonomi serta bebas daripada mana-mana badan berkuasa yang lain (Stoicu & Morostes, 2017). Ia bertindak sebagai orang tengah antara kerajaan dan rakyat. Tujuannya untuk memberi perlindungan kepada hak-hak individu. Ia mempunyai kuasa menyiasat, kuasa untuk membuat pembaikan terhadap kes-kes yang telah disiasat tetapi tidak mempunyai kuasa membuat keputusan terhadap *legally binding force*. *Ombudsman* hanya menangani aduan pentadbiran yang tidak bersangkutan dengan prosedur formal Mahkamah. Misalnya, *ombudsman* boleh memberi relif kepada individu kerana kelewatan dalam tindakan pentadbiran atau apabila individu mengadu terdapat *bias* dalam sesuatu tindakan dan keputusan pentadbir awam (Jain, 1997). *Ombudsman* terdiri daripada mereka yang berpengalaman dan pakar dalam bidang-bidang tertentu untuk berbincang dalam memutuskan sesuatu perkara yang dianggap tidak adil dan dijadikan alasan untuk menuntut atau membantah keputusan birokrasi.

Menurut Jain (1997) lagi, keistimewaan *ombudsman* ialah ia mempunyai autoriti untuk mendapatkan akses kepada dokumen dan fail pentadbiran. Apabila aduan dilaporkan, pengadu tidak perlu memberi bukti sebagaimana di Mahkamah untuk mengesahkan aduan, *ombudsman* akan menentukan sama ada terdapat *biasness* dan/atau *injustice* selepas menyiasat dengan menyemak dokumen atau fail-fail jabatan berkaitan. Perkhidmatan *ombudsman* adalah percuma dan tiada lantikan peguam diperlukan daripada pihak pengadu kerana *ombudsman* adalah peguam pengadu. Aduan yang dibuat tidak akan didedahkan kepada umum bagi membolehkan *ombudsman* menjalankan siasatan secara rahsia tanpa diketahui pegawai dan jabatan berkenaan. Ini penting supaya pegawai berkenaan tidak cuba melindungi kesalahannya dengan memusnahkan bukti-bukti ketidakcekapan pentadbiran yang ada. Juga, siasatan yang dilakukan oleh *ombudsman* tidak memakan masa yang lama seperti di Mahkamah kerana ia tidak perlu mematuhi prosedur yang ketat yang diamalkan oleh Mahkamah. Bradford & Creutzfeldt (2018), *ombudsman* menyediakan cara untuk menyelesaikan pertikaian yang tidak melibatkan proses undang-undang formal, yang mungkin panjang, mahal dan selalunya di luar jangkauan kebanyakan orang biasa.

6. *OMBUDSMAN* DI UNIVERSITI TEMPATAN

6.1 Universiti Sains Malaysia

Pejabat *Ombudsman* USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) merupakan *ombudsman* pertama diwujudkan dalam kalangan institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia. Ia telah ditubuhkan pada tahun 2011 selaras dengan penguatkuasaan Perlembagaan Baru universiti tersebut sebagai inisiatif dalam memastikan tadbir urus yang baik dan meningkatkan integriti ekosistem universiti. Pejabat *Ombudsman* USM kini merupakan ahli diiktiraf Persatuan *Ombudsman* Antarabangsa (IOA) yang berpangkalan di Seattle, Amerika Syarikat. Hakikatnya, apabila idea penubuhan *ombudsman* dicetuskan, terdapat banyak halangan yang dihadapi pihak universiti kerana konsep dan prinsip *ombudsman* masih baru kepada masyarakat. Bagi sesetengah pihak yang berkuasa, perkataan itu sendiri adalah *taboo* dan oleh itu, ia tidak diterima dengan baik. Namun, dengan kesungguhan Naib Canselor USM ketika itu, USM telah berjaya meyakinkan Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi bahawa *Ombudsman* USM adalah medium yang relevan untuk memastikan universiti awam Malaysia mencapai tahap kebebasan dan ketelusan pentadbiran yang signifikan. Oleh yang demikian, apabila cadangan penjenamaan semula Biro Pengaduan Awam (BPA) sebagai *Ombudsman* Malaysia diumumkan pada 2018, USM merupakan antara pihak terawal berbesar hati meraikan cadangan tersebut.

6.2 Lain-lain Universiti

Selain USM, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) turut mengambil pendekatan yang sama apabila Unit Integriti UKM yang ditubuhkan pada 2013 dijenamakan semula sebagai Unit Integriti & *Ombudsman* UKM pada 2021. Pelantikan *Ombudsman* UKM bertujuan memperkasakan peranan Unit Integriti dan mencerminkan komitmen pengurusan universiti ke atas agenda integriti organisasi dan warganya. Ini dizahirkan dengan peranan *ombudsman* yang mengikut prinsip kebebasan, kerahsiaan, neutral serta tidak formal. Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) juga tidak ketinggalan dalam usaha memperkasakan tadbir urus universiti yang baik. Penubuhan Pejabat *Ombudsman* (OMBUDS) telah diluluskan oleh Lembaga Gabenor (BOG) UIAM pada November 2019 selaras dengan Fasal 35 Perlembagaan UIAM.

Tidak seperti *ombudsman* di negara-negara luar yang mana mempunyai penggunaan nama yang pelbagai mengikut bahasa tersendiri, kerajaan dan universiti-universiti di Malaysia memilih berpegang kepada frasa '*ombudsman*'. Namun begitu, penggunaan nama bukanlah satu aspek yang wajar diberi perhatian selagi mana institusi ini memperjuangkan prinsip dan matlamat yang sama. Di universiti, pensyarah dikehendaki menyampaikan pengajaran yang berkualiti. Apabila perkhidmatan yang diberikan dianggap tidak mencukupi oleh pelajar, pelajar berhak mengadu. Begitu juga, kakitangan akademik dan bukan akademik mungkin mempunyai alasan untuk mengadu tentang prestasi warga kerja dan perkhidmatan universiti yang dikira tidak memuaskan. Oleh itu, untuk membantu pengurusan tertinggi universiti melayani aduan dan rungutan yang timbul sekaligus memastikan ia ditangani dengan efektif, satu medium penyelesaian pertikaian yang mengamalkan prinsip *ombudsman* perlu diwujudkan. Mengikut Gottehrer (2009) o*mbudsman* menganjurkan etika kerja yang berpaksi kepada prinsip kebebasan, kerahsiaan, tidak memihak dan adil.

6.2.1 Kebebasan

Ombudsman bertindak atas prinsip yang bebas dari campur tangan mana-mana pihak universiti dalam melaksanakan tugasnya. Untuk memastikan tiada campur tangan luar, *ombudsman* universiti perlu diberikan ruang dan kuasa untuk menyiasat sesuatu aduan secara tidak formal dan rasmi serta tanpa pengetahuan umum supaya proses penyiasatan dapat berjalan lancar tanpa gangguan pihak berkepentingan. *Ombudsman* hendaklah bebas memperolehi fail, rekod, laporan, dokumen dan maklumat yang diperlukan daripada jabatan dan pusat tanggungjawab untuk memenuhi fungsi-fungsinya. Maklumat yang dikehendaki oleh *ombudsman* mestilah dikendalikan dengan cepat dan mudah oleh pihak yang terlibat.

6.2.2 Kerahsiaan

Ombudsman universiti hendaklah berusaha mengekalkan kerahsiaan komunikasi bersama pengadunya dan mengambil langkah-langkah munasabah untuk menjaga kerahsiaan. *Ombudsman* universiti perlu sedaya upaya mengekalkan kerahsiaan pendedahan tertentu, tetapi tidak termasuk pendedahan yang melibatkan keselamatan awam, pelakuan jenayah, kemudaratan kepada diri sendiri atau orang lain, atau perkara yang melibatkan pelanggaran undang-undang negara atau diskriminasi kaum. Segala urusan dengan *ombudsman* hanya boleh didedahkan dengan keizinan daripada pengadu, atau sebagaimana yang dikehendaki oleh undang-undang. Selain itu, rekod aduan dan segala maklumat siasatan yang diperolehi hendaklah untuk kegunaan eksklusif *ombudsman* sahaja dan tidak boleh dilepaskan kepada orang lain bagi apa-apa maksud, melainkan jika dipaksa oleh undang-undang. Dasar perlindungan pemberi makumat perlu digubal selaras dengan Akta Perlindungan Pemberi Maklumat 2010 untuk melindungi pengadu yang membuat laporan sekaligus menggalakkan warga universiti mendedahkan apa-apa kelakuan tidak wajar yang sampai ke pengetahuan mereka tanpa risau.

6.2.3 Tidak Memihak dan Adil

Ombudsman universiti mestilah berkecuali dan tidak boleh memihak kepada mana-mana pihak dalam pertikaian atau konflik. Siasatan yang dilakukan tidak boleh dilihat berat sebelah. Ia hendaklah adil dalam mempertimbangkan kepentingan dan kebimbangan semua pihak yang terlibat agar dapat mencapai penyelesaian yang boleh diterima dengan adil sejajar dengan misi dan dasar universiti, di samping mencari peluang untuk memberi cadangan yang akan menghasilkan penambahbaikan kepada sistem pentadbiran universiti. *Ombudsman* universiti juga perlu sentiasa berhati-hati agar tidak terlibat dalam perkara yang mungkin terdapat konflik kepentingan (*conflict of interest*) semasa menangani aduan yang diterima. Sekiranya konflik kepentingan berlaku, *ombudsman* harus mengambil langkah mendedahkannya dan mengundurkan diri daripada kes di mana beliau mungkin mempunyai konflik kepentingan. Dalam kes sedemikian, pengurusan tertinggi boleh melantik individu lain untuk bertindak secara sementara sebagai *ombudsman*.

6.2.4 Tidak Formal

Ombudsman universiti juga memberi tumpuan menyelesaikan pertikaian sepantas yang mungkin secara tidak formal atau rasmi dan tidak menjalankan proses pengadilan seumpama perbicaraan di Mahkamah. *Ombudsman* tetap menjaminkan kualiti dan integriti kerja di tahap yang tinggi walaupun mengekalkan cara kerja yang tidak formal. Ini bagi mengelakkan warga universiti merasa takut mahupun segan untuk melaporkan sebarang perkhidmatan universiti yang kurang baik kepada *ombudsman*. Penubuhan *ombudsman* tidak akan mengganggu gugat peranan unit integriti dan/atau pejabat undang-undang sedia ada universiti di dalam pengurusan dan siasatan aduan berkaitan kes antaranya salahlaku, tatatertib dan jenayah melibatkan warga kerja dan pelajar univesiti. *Ombudsman* hanya menguruskan aduan-aduan seperti berikut, antaranya:

i. Ketidakadilan dan/atau kelewatan dalam pengurusan dan pentadbiran.
ii. Prestasi perkhidmatan, fasiliti dan kemudahan yang tidak memuaskan.
iii. Masalah pelaksanaan dasar dan undang-undang di pusat tanggungjawab.
iv. Masalah berkaitan pengajaran dan pembelajaran.
v. Konflik antara warga universiti, orang awam dan universiti.
vi. Lain-lain perkara yang berkaitan.

Untuk memastikan adanya *check and balance* terhadap aktiviti-aktiviti *ombudsman*, *ombudsman* dikehendaki menyerahkan laporan tahunan pejabatnya kepada pengurusan tertinggi universiti. Jika *ombudsman* didapati telah melanggar prinsip dan kod etika oleh mana-mana warga universiti, maka dia boleh mengemukakan aduan bertulis kepada pihak pengurusan. *Check and balance* perlu ada untuk memastikan bidangkuasa yang dimiliki *ombudsman* tidak disalahgunakan dan tiada pencerobohan kuasa ke atas jabatan lain berlaku.

7. KESIMPULAN

Dari satu sudut, ia telah dipersetujui bahawa *ombudsman* menjadi satu instrumen pengendalian rungutan yang efektif khususnya dalam membantu memperbaiki pentadbiran sesebuah negara dan institusi yang terdapat di dalamnya. Secara tidak langsung, *ombudsman* juga bertindak selaku *check and balance* ke atas perkhidmatan jabatan-jabatan awam. Di peringkat universiti, *ombudsman* terlibat dalam membantu untuk memastikan para pelajar mendapat pengalaman yang positif sepanjang berada di institusi pengajian tinggi, dan warga kerja mendapat persekitaran kerja yang kondusif dan sihat. Persekitaran kerja yang kondusif menjadi pemangkin produktiviti pekerja, seterusnya dapat menjadi faktor dalam peningkatan kecemerlangan universiti. Kewujudan *ombudsman* memberi mesej bahawa institusi itu mengambil berat tentang warganya dan mengiktiraf kepentingan menyediakan penyelesaian pertikaian tidak formal untuk ahli kampus.

Dari sudut yang lain, *ombudsman* masih belum diterima secara meluas di institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia yang lain, barangkali mereka melihat masih belum ada keperluan untuk menubuhkan pejabat *ombudsman* kerana unit fasiliti, unit integriti dan pejabat undang-undang universiti contohnya telahpun wujud dan dirujuk oleh warga universiti sejak sekian lama untuk melaporkan aduan yang berkaitan. Jadi mengapa perlu adanya *ombudsman?* Hakikatnya, *ombudsman* berfungsi sebagai pihak penyelesai aduan peringkat kedua. Misalnya, bilamana keputusan/tindakan yang diambil oleh jabatan dalam universiti berkenaan terhadap aduan yang dibuat dirasakan tidak munasabah dan berat sebelah oleh pengadu, pengadu boleh melaporkan perkara ini kepada *ombudsman* pula. *Ombudsman* akan menyiasat kesahihan aduan tersebut dan membuat cadangan penyelesaian yang dianggap sesuai bertepatan dengan kepentingan pihak-pihak, dan sekiranya perlu, memaklumkan pengurusan universiti tentang sebarang jurang dan kekurangan dalam mana-mana prosedur, tatacara dan dasar sedia ada untuk penambahbaikan.

Sama ada *ombudsman* mampu mencapai matlamatnya untuk menyediakan penyelesaian pertikaian yang adil, rahsia, bebas dan efektif masih dipersoalkan kerana ia masih baru dan tidak banyak diamalkan di Malaysia. Namun, dengan adanya penggubalan peruntukan undang-undang berkaitan *ombudsman* universiti yang terperinci dan rangka kerja yang komprehensif serta sokongan penuh daripada pihak kerajaan, kementerian dan institusi pengajian, diharapkan *ombudsman* dapat membantu pihak-pihak dalam pertikaian mencapai penyelesaian terbaik sesuai dengan hasrat dan objektif pelaksanaannya sekaligus mampu memperkasakan tadbir urus universiti.

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BIOGRAFI PENULIS

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A Study of the Influence of Talent Management Practices on Employee Performance Among State Government Employees in Kelantan

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ABSTRACT

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Managers of global organizations and businesses now consider talent management (TM) as a vital strategic area. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the impact of talent management practices, such as talent acquisition, talent development and talent retention on the job performance of State Government employees in Kelantan. This study gathered data from 385 employees using a self-administered survey questionnaire and applied a convenience sampling approach. This study tested its hypotheses through tests of validity and reliability and multiple regression analysis. The study found that talent management has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. However, contrary to previous research, the study concluded that developing employees does not have a significant effect on employee performance. Additionally, the research found a significant statistical correlation between acquisition, retention, and employee performance. Furthermore, this study focused on talent management practices and job performance among employees of the Kelantan State Government, which provides a valuable contribution to this area of study. The study can serve as a resource for public sector managers, providing suggestions on how to enhance employee performance through implementing talent management practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, scholars have become increasingly concerned with the topic of employee performance. This refers to the quantity and quality of work produced by employees in performing their task, duties and responsibilities (Suardhita et al., 2021). Employee performance is vital in employee performance and is crucial for government organizations (Barokah et al., 2023), as it directly affects their success or failure (Nguyen et al., 2019). One of the main drives impacting employee performance is talent management (Sopiah et al., 2020) , which involve talent acquisition, talent development, talent deployment, and talent retention of talented employees who are valuable to the organization (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Shifting workforce demographics have also highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion as a business imperative, and organizations are realizing the worth of acquiring and sustaining employees from a variety of demographic backgrounds to boost employee performance and compete effectively (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). In Malaysia, there are issues related to bureaucratic meddling, ineffective performance management systems, talent retention, and talent insufficiency (Li Qi & Jia Qi, 2021), which have led to the execution of talent management techniques by the state government to manage human capital and stay competitive (Ramli et al., 2018). Although there is an increase in labor productivity of 3.6% for the fourth quarter of 2022 with a total value added of RM24,915 (DOSM, 2022), it is still unable to compete with other countries such as China and Vietnam which recorded higher rates with 4.83 and 15.12 respectively (CEIC, 2023). As the job landscape continues to evolve rapidly in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution (IR4.0), the demand for highly competent talent is on the rise. However, the current situation reveals a concerning gap between the skills possessed by most graduates and working professionals and those required to meet the demands of IR4.0 (Ismail & Hassan, 2019). This calls for a restructuring of the approach to talent development and education to bridge the competency gap and ensure a skilled workforce for the future.

Organizations have come to realize that acquiring and retaining employees from diverse backgrounds can enhance their performance and competitive edge (Torrington et al., 2009). According to Lesser's (2006) view, workforce demographic changes are among the factors that can significantly affect organizations across various sectors and locations. The shifting demographics of the workforce across various sectors and regions have necessitated changes in how organizations hire, train, and keep their employees, making diversity and inclusivity a business imperative (Derven & Gundling, 2014). Talent management practices, which can create and maintain a competitive advantage over competitors, have gained attention but have not been widely discussed among various organizations. Malaysia faces issues with bureaucratic interference, inadequate performance management systems, talent retention, and talent shortages, prompting the government to implement talent management techniques to stay competitive (Li Qi & Jia Qi, 2021). As public sector personnel constitute the foundation of effective public service delivery, taking actions at the individual level could improve overall organizational performance (Kim, 2006; Lee et al., 2006). However, research on public service employees' performance has been relatively scarce, despite its importance (Johari et al., 2018). Taylor and Wright (2004) and Sandhu et al. (2011) argue that developing state government staff with the core competencies necessary for effective public service delivery is crucial, as decisions made in the public sector impact the credibility of the government and the population. This study aims to aid policymakers in talent management, particularly among state government managers, as Malaysia struggles to retain talent (EPU, 2016).

Several studies (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Abdullahi et al., 2020 ; Hasibuan et al., 2019; Rinaldi et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018) have found a relationship between talent management practices and employee performance . However, little research has examined this relationship among employees of the Malaysian state government. While previous research has separately investigated talent management and employee performance, very few studies have focused on the relationship between these constructs in the context of the Malaysian state government. Therefore, the aim of this study is to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the level of talent management practices among the Malaysian state government employees? 2) What is the influence of talent acquisition, talent development and talent retention as talent management practices on employee performance? Therefore, this study initiates to provide a solution to the problem.

In terms of its importance and originality, this paper focuses on the idea that improving job performance is a key priority for employees to enhance their skills and abilities. Although previous research has explored the connection between human capital theory, talent-based theory, talent management practices, and job performance among employees in state government employees, few studies have examined talent management practices as an independent variable and job performance as a dependent variable.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research is to evaluate how talent management strategies impact the work effectiveness of employees in the Malaysia's state government, and the way this is connected to their gender. This study has identified the following specific goals:

1. To identify the level of talent management practices among Malaysian state government employees.
2. To measure the impact of talent acquisition on employees' performance in the Malaysian state government.
3. To examine the influence of talent development on employees' performance in the Malaysian state government
4. To identify the influence of talent retention on employees' performance in the Malaysian state government

3. UNDERPINNING THEORIES

This study draws on three key theories for support: Human Capital Theory, Talent-Based Theory, and Social Identity Theory. Each theory has been meticulously incorporated into the research to maximize its contribution, as they all offer distinct arguments that bolster the study's framework. The integration of these three theories has been carefully orchestrated to harness their collective strengths and provide a solid foundation for the research. According to Human Capital Theory, employees possess valuable skills and expertise that give their employers an advantage over competitors, making them valuable resources in formal jobs (Oliinyk et al. 2021; Pogodayev 2013). As proposed by Mkamburi and Kamaara (2017), the Talent-Based Theory posits that the individual talents possessed by employees serve as a valuable form of intellectual capital for organizations. Talent-based Theory, on the other hand, argues that talent is the sole resource that can provide an organization with the ability to compete effectively with other organizations (Rabbi et al., 2015). Therefore, businesses must focus on attracting and retaining a talented workforce (Tajfel & Turner, 1982). Finally, Social Identity Theory, as proposed by et al. (1982) asserts that a person's social identity is formed through their perception of themselves as part of a group. Demographic factors such as gender, ethnicity, and culture have a significant impact on social identity as they promote the formation of these identities through socialization and internalization (Korostelina, 2007).

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Employee Performance

Roa (2004) defines "employee performance" as the anticipated results that an individual or team is responsible for producing within a specified time-frame. Employees' actions in carrying out their assigned duties have a direct or indirect effect on organizational success or failure, as highlighted by Kamaruddin et al. (2021). There are various factors that contribute to employee performance, such as compensation, performance-based appraisal practices, promotion, and talent management (Evangeline and Thavakumar, 2015; Krishnan et al., 2020; Wadhwa & Tripathi, 2018). While some studies have shown that talent management has a positive impact on employee performance (Sopiah et al., 2020; Damarasri & Ahman, 2020; Kaleem, 2019), research on the performance of state government employees is still needed. Coaching can benefit all employees, regardless of their career level, by enhancing their performance. An organization's reputation depends heavily on the quality of its services, and the role of employee performance is also crucial in meeting this objective.

4.2 Talent Management

Researchers, including Obeidat et al. (2018) and Dagogo and Ogechi (2020), have explored the relationship between talent management practices and organizational effectiveness from a business perspective. Their findings propose that talent management can improve the effectiveness of human resource activities within companies. Al Mannai et al. (2017) studied on the influence of talent management strategies on competitive advantage in Bahrain Post and discovered that such strategies can enhance competitive advantage. Similarly, Al Aina and Atan (2020) analyzed the impact of talent management on organizational performance sustainability and observed that only learning, development, and career management practices have an effect. With reference to Byham (2001), Mercer (2005), and Olsen (2000), they consider talent management as a collection of standard practices, functions and activities of the human resource department, such as selection, recruitment, development, and career and succession management. According to Noe and Kodwani (2018), the significance of talent management has increased due to changes in job demands, the required skills, and the retirement expectations of the baby boomer generation, as well as the necessity of developing the next generation of business leaders. Sanjeev and Singh (2017) defined talent management as the acquisition, grooming, and retention of employees, as well as attracting qualified and experienced people to work for the organization. The purpose of talent management is to ensure high performance and sustainability of organizations that meet strategic goals and objectives (Massie, 2015).

Research conducted by Massie et al. (2016) revealed a significant association between talent management and organizational performance. Further investigations have suggested that a conducive climate that fosters creativity may serve as a mediating factor in this relationship (Ingram, 2016). Conversely, other studies have demonstrated a direct positive correlation between talent management and organizational performance (Latukha & Veselova, 2019). Additionally, scholars have found that talent management have a positive effect on employee performance in healthcare organizations in Pakistan (Bibi, 2018). In the context of Lebanon, researchers have identified a general agreement on talent philosophical system across various business (Tlaiss, 2020).

4.2.1 Literature Gaps

The majority of research on this topic has been outside of Malaysia and did not specifically address state government. Furthermore, the findings of earlier studies differed across industries and were not consistent. Therefore, since this study is concentrated on the state government in Malaysia, the outcomes of prior research cannot be directly applied to the current issue. To identify literature gaps, a systematic approach was employed, utilizing predefined criteria to search and select studies from diverse databases and sources, including academic journals, conference proceedings, and relevant research repositories. The criteria for study selection encompassed factors such as relevance to the research topic, sample size, research design, and methodological quality. The databases and sources were chosen based on their relevance to the research area and the availability of peer-reviewed and reputable publications. The process of deriving the table involved a systematic review and analysis of the selected studies to identify common themes, trends, and patterns related to the literature gap addressed in the research study. Thus, the gaps in the literature review are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Literature gaps

Authors	Identified gaps
Othman and Sumardi (2014).	This case presents the talent management practice used by Steelcase Manufacturing in Malaysia, which focuses on managing high performing employees.
Luna–Arocas and Morley (2015)	Previous studies, conducted in both public and private sectors, have found that talent management practices have an impact on job performance, but through job satisfaction acting as a mediator.
Mensah (2015)	The study offers a conceptual framework that explains how talent management practices affect different aspects of employee performance.
Rani and Kumar (2018)	A study conducted in India located in the National Capital Region of six IT companies identified a positive and significant relationship between talent management practices and employee effectiveness.
Alruwaili (2018)	This study in a Saudi Arabian company operating in Al Jouf and Northern Frontier Province found that talent management can be a strategic plan to improve organizational performance.
Masri and Abubakr (2019)	A study in Qatar and the Middle East analyzed how talent management and employee recognition affect employee performance in research institutions.
Dalal and Akdere (2021)	This study examined how talent management affects employee job outcomes in the manufacturing sector of India with organizational culture moderated the relationship between talent management and employee job-related outcomes.
Siswanto et al. (2021)	A weighted function technique was introduced in the study to simulate talent management strategy design and objectively recognize outstanding civil servants in the Government of West Java Province, Indonesia.
Abdullahi et al. (2022)	A study of Malaysian private universities investigates the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between talent management practices and employee performance, as well as the impact of talent management practices on employee performance.
Jimoh and Kee	This study explored the Nigerian banking sector on how employee performance is

(2022)	affected by talent management.
Bohórquez et al. (2022)	The study provided a diagnosis of the state of strategic management of human talent and existing work performance in the company "Stone Distributor".

4.3 Talent Acquisition and Employee Performance

The demand for highly skilled and internationally mobile workers, known as intellectual capital, is higher than the available supply (Ployhart, 2006; Ewing et al., 2002), resulting in a tight labor market. Tight labor market can be characterized by a scarcity of available talent and high competition for skilled workers, has become a prevalent challenge in the current employment landscape. This benefits competent workers with many job options (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008), particularly in professional, information, knowledge, technical, and service industries (Ewing et al., 2002). Furthermore, job seekers prioritize finding the right organization and job fit (Rynes & Cable, 2003), causing organizations to focus on increasing their attraction to potential employees (Highhouse et al., 1999). This poses a significant challenge for recruitment organizations (Rynes, 1991) who struggle to attract skilled and competent individuals who will also align with the organization's needs and culture (Srivastava et al., 2008). Based on these factors, the study presents the following hypothesis:

H_1 There is a statistically significant relationship of talent acquisition on employee performance.

4.4 Talent Development and Employee Performance

According to Boštjančič and Slana (2018), talent development is an essential component of the talent management process. To maintain their performance in today's competitive environment, employees need to engage in continuous learning and development, as stated by Mohammed et al. (2019). Therefore, providing learning and development opportunities for employees are critical to upgrade their skills and meet the ever-changing business environment's demands, as suggested by Bibi (2018) and Al Aina and Atan (2020). Talent development encompasses planned efforts aimed at helping employees acquire job-specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours necessary for both employee and organizational success, as highlighted by Collings and Mellahi (2009) and Dalal and Akdere (2018). Planned efforts include proactive measures such as recruitment and selection strategies, talent development programs, succession planning initiatives, and retention strategies aimed at attracting, retaining, and nurturing top talent within the organization. Companies can use various talent development strategies, such as training, seminars, tutoring, counselling, or further education, to enhance their employees' skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes in order to improve performance (Masa'deh et al., 2018; Dalal et al., 2018). According to Al Mamun and Hasan (2017), providing employees with training and development programmes can increase job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Paposa and Kumar (2019) discovered that job satisfaction has a positive relationship with the effectiveness of training and development programs. In the current business landscape, creating a learning culture is crucial for organizations, where training and development, coaching, mentoring and succession planning are utilized as means to foster a learning organization. These talent management practices have the potential to result in improved organizational performance (Rawashdeh, 2018). Given the aforementioned arguments, the following hypothesis is posited:

H_2 There is a statistically significant relationship of talent development on employee performance.

4.5 Talent Retention and Employee Performance

Retaining skilled employees is the primary objective in the competition for talent, as it aims to keep them in the organization for longer periods of time (Al Aina & Atan, 2020; Szkudlarek et al., 2021). High employee turnover can have negative effects on a company's productivity and result in substantial acquisition costs (El Dahshan et al., 2018). Such costs may be direct, such as those associated with turnover, replacement, and transition, or indirect, such as production waste, decreased performance, irrelevant overtime, and low employee morale (Rawashdeh, 2018). In the current competitive business environment, retaining highly talented employees is essential for increasing organizational productivity, and reducing employee turnover is critical for improving employee job satisfaction (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017).

Deery and Jago (2015) identified various organizational causes that influence talent retention, such as work schedules, remuneration, competency requirements, educational compatibility, and career progression, resulting in enhanced job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and staff retention. The study by Hafez et al. (2017) on talent management at a public university in Egypt revealed that talent management components significantly impacted job satisfaction and employee retention. In addition, Kehinde (2017) and Hamidi et al. (2014) found a positive correlation between talent retention and job satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H_3 There is a statistically significant impact of talent retention on employee performance

5. METHODOLOGY

This study followed the Saunders' Research Onion methodological framework (Saunders et al., 2015) and established behavioral modeling studies (Leong et al., 2020a, b). It employed a positivist research philosophy that seeks to establish causal links through quantitative analysis, using a deductive approach to understand theories and notions that have received prior approval. Data was collected through a cross-sectional survey of employees working for the state government in Kelantan, Malaysia. This study employed a sample size of 385 employees, surpassing the minimum threshold recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to ensure adequate statistical power and representativeness in the research findings. The total number of employees in the Kelantan state government is estimated to be around 4,120 (SUK Kelantan, 2021).

Lehdonvirta et al. (2021) noted that many internet research studies nowadays use non-probability convenience sampling methods that are affordable and easily accessible. In accordance with their recommendation, this study utilized convenience sampling by distributing questionnaires to employees via WhatsApp. However, it should be noted that convenience sampling may introduce sample bias and limit the generalizability of the study's findings. Therefore, this study falls in between single-subject technique and randomized control group strategy in terms of methodological rigor. Despite employing a large sample size, the use of convenience sampling still has limitations in terms of generalization. The findings of this study can only be generalized to state government employees in Kelantan.

To ensure that the research question was effectively communicated and comprehended by the participants, the decision was made to utilize the Malay language, which was the native or commonly used language of the target population. This approach aimed to minimize language barriers and enhance the clarity and accuracy of data collection and interpretation. Respondents were asked to rate their answers on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree." It has been found that a 7-point scale produces a slightly higher mean score than a 10-point scale when compared to the highest possible score (Dawes, 2008). Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire, which was adapted from Kaleem's (2019) research instrument with some modifications, and converting them into an online survey tool. Kaleem's (2019) study focused on examining the impact of talent management strategies on employee performance in chosen public sector organizations in the UAE. By adopting the self-assessment survey method used in the UAE and applying it in Malaysia, not only does this study make the method more adaptable, but it also enhances the diversity of the research approach. This study achieved a response rate of 67%, which is considered good. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% is acceptable for analysis and publication, 60% is considered good, and 70% or more is regarded as very good. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.

To ensure internal consistency, the reliability of each construct was assessed. As these constructs have not been previously explored in the context of talent management among employees of the state government in Malaysia, specifically Kelantan, the primary concern was to establish internal consistency or the extent to which the items within each construct are coherent. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test for internal consistency. Following the recommendation by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of above 0.7 is considered appropriate for internal consistency, while items with ratings below the recommended alpha level of 0.7 should be removed to improve construct reliability. It is worth noting that all constructs used in this study have achieved an acceptable level of reliability. This study also conducted a multiple regression analysis, using employee performance as the dependent variable and talent management practices (talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention) as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis is a commonly used statistical procedure in both scholarly and applied marketing research (Mason & Perreault Jr, 1991), due to its versatility in handling different types of data and problems, ease of interpretation, resilience to violations of underlying assumptions, and widespread availability.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Demographic Data

The demographic data of the respondents, including gender, age, education level, and work experience, can be used to determine their primary characteristics. Table 2 presents an overview of these characteristics.

Table 2: Demographic Data for Respondents

	Percentage %
Gender	
Male	59.0
Female	41.0
Age	
20-30 years old	24.9
31-40 years old	36.1
41-50 years old	33.2
51-60 years old	5.8
Education Level	
PhD	2.1

Master's degree	4.7
Bachelor's degree	47.0
Diploma	32.7
SPM	11.9
PMR	1.6
Working Experience	
Less than 2 years	27.8
3 - 5 years	17.9
6 - 8 years	17.7
9 years and above	36.6

Among the total respondents, 158 or 41% were identified as female, while 227 or 59% were identified as male. The largest proportion of participants, accounting for 36.1%, fell within the age range of 31-40 years old. The age distribution of the sample population consisted of 24.9% between 20-30 years old, 36.1% between 31-40 years old, 33.2% between 41-50 years old, and only 5.8% between 51-60 years old. The educational profile of the participants in the study revealed that 32.7% held a diploma, 11.9% possessed an SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) qualification, 47% had obtained a bachelor's degree, 4.7% had a master's degree, 2.1% held a PhD, and 1.6% had a PMR (Penilaian Menengah Rendah) qualification, which is the minimum entry requirement for the Malaysian state government positions.

The working experience of the respondents shows that 141 or 36.6% of them had more than 9 years of experience, while 107 or 27.8% had less than 2 years of experience and 69 or 17.9% had 3-5 years of experience. Lastly, only 68 or 17.7% had 6-8 years of experience. The predominance of mid-level and senior-level employees in the state government workforce suggests a strategic focus on retaining experienced personnel by the government. The mid-level positions involve managing a department in the organization, while the senior level positions involve setting goals for the organization and framing its policies.

6.2 Reliability Test

According to the reliability testing, all the variables in the study met the recommended criteria, indicating good internal consistency. The alpha value, which measures the reliability of the questionnaire, was found to be close to 1, which is considered desirable. Values lower than 0.60 are considered undesirable, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016). The detailed results of the reliability testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability result

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee performance	0.849
Talent acquisition	0.810
Talent development	0.901
Talent retention	0.830
Talent management	0.866

6.3 Descriptive Analysis

The mean and standard deviation for each dimension of both the dependent and independent variables were calculated. The standard deviation indicates the extent to which the data points are scattered or varied, while the mean indicates the central tendency of the data. Table 4 summarizes the mean values and standard deviation of the variables studied in the research.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the research's variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
Employee performance	5.59	0.89	1
Talent acquisition	4.81	1.14	4
Talent development	5.08	1.21	3
Talent retention	5.34	1.03	2

Table 4 shows that the Malaysian state government sector in Kelantan places significant emphasis on employee performance, as evidenced by the mean score of 5.59. This high value suggests that employee performance is considered essential, and the respondents have a positive attitude towards it. In addition, talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention also received high mean scores, indicating that the Malaysian state government is actively engaged in attracting, training, and retaining talent to maintain superior performance.

6.4 Multicollinearity

The extent of correlation among independent variables used in multiple regression analysis is known as multicollinearity (Ramadan et al., 2017). Multicollinearity influences the ability to assess the exact significance of each independent variable. A strong predictor of the result might be overlooked and removed from the model when multicollinearity is high (Hair et al., 2010).

Multicollinearity is evaluated using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) measures. VIF is computed as:

$$VIF = 1 / tolerance$$

If VIF = 1, it implies that there is no correlation between independent variables. If 1<VIF<5, it suggests that variables have moderate correlation. When VIF>10, it indicates weakly estimated regression coefficients and the presence of multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020).

$$VIF = \frac{1}{1 - 0.633} = 2.72$$

For this study, the VIF is 2.72, implying that variables are moderately correlated and within acceptable range.

6.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

The purpose of hypothesis testing is to determine whether the alternative hypothesis is supported and the null hypothesis is rejected. The null hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted, indicating a positive effect, when the significance level p-value is less than 0.05. However, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted instead (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The outcomes of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple Regression of Talent Management Practices on Employee Performance

Variables	Model coefficients	p-value
(Constant)	1.935	0.000

Talent acquisition	0.257	0.000
Talent development	-0.065	0.271
Talent retention	0.609	0.000
Talent management	-0.110	0.004
R	0.795	
R^2	0.633	
Adj. R^2	0.630	

A multiple regression analysis was presented in Table 5 in order to examine the relationship between talent management (independent variable) and employee performance (dependent variable). The correlation value (R) between talent management and employee performance was found to be 79.5%, indicating a strong positive relationship between the two. The R^2 value of 63.3% indicates that 63.3% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by the independent variables of talent acquisition, talent development and talent retention.

The results of the analysis revealed that talent acquisition ($\beta = 0.257$, $p = 0.000$, <0.05) and talent retention ($\beta = 0.609$, $p = 0.000$, <0.05) significantly and positively affect employee performance, providing support for hypotheses H_1 and H_3. However, talent development was found to have a non-significant negative effect on employee performance ($\beta = -0.065$, $p = 0.271$, >0.05), leading to the rejection of hypothesis H_2. These findings highlight the significance of talent acquisition and talent retention as important factors influencing employee performance in the Malaysian state government sector.

6.6 Discussion

The statistical analysis conducted in the study unveiled that talent management practices explained a substantial proportion of the variance in employee performance, accounting for 63.3% of the observed variation. However, it was also determined that there were other factors, not accounted for in the study, which contributed to 33.7% of the variability in employee performance. Furthermore, the results indicated a positive and significant correlation between talent management practices and employee performance, which is consistent with previous research suggesting that such practices can enhance employee performance in the Industry 5.0 era by fostering innovation, creativity, and engagement (Bibi, 2019; Nagi & Mohammed Ali, 2020; Omotunde & Alegbeleye, 2021; Lydia, 2022; Panday & Kaur, 2023).

From the findings, the statistical analysis showed that talent acquisition and talent retention have positive and significant effects on employee performance. However, talent development did not show a significant effect on employee performance. To address this, the Malaysian state government should develop a comprehensive talent development strategy that focuses on attracting, engaging, developing, and retaining employees in the organization. This strategy should emphasize long-term development and allow employees to take ownership of their own development while aligning with the organization's overarching goals. In addition, the number of training hours provided to each employee should be carefully planned based on their seniority and job requirements.

Regarding talent acquisition, the Malaysian state government should continue implementing a talent acquisition strategy to locate, attract, and hire top talents. Although taking the first step is important, it is not enough, and it is crucial to provide ongoing training to ensure that the employees' skills are current with the latest technology and service advancements. Additionally, as a last resort, the government should provide competitive direct and indirect compensation packages to retain talent. By prioritizing these areas, the state government of Malaysia can advance their talent management practices and enhance employee performance, which will ultimately contribute to the organization's growth and success.

7. CONCLUSION

The study reveals the impact of talent management practices on employee performance and recommends that the Malaysian state government implement talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent to adapt to changing requirements and improve organizational performance. Talent management is crucial for organizations to recruit, retain, and develop people to meet their present and future needs and gain a competitive advantage through the performance of talented employees. The study also suggests new directions for future research and encourages scholars to replicate and expand on the findings. Further research on talent management approaches is also recommended.

For the practical implications, the results of this study can provide valuable guidance to public sector managers. Specifically, managers are advised to place greater emphasis on recognizing employees with excellent performance on a regular basis. Additionally, more attention should be given to acquiring, developing, and retaining talent, as low levels of employee performance can lead to reduced productivity.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The introduction and literature review sections were authored by NSNMS and SMZ. The methodology section, data collection, and data analysis were carried out by SMZ and IHTA. NSNMS and WATWS contributed to the data analysis, findings, and conclusion sections. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Technology Usage in Time of COVID-19 Pandemic among University Students: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

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The world is going through a difficult time due to the presence of COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has necessitated the use of online, virtual classrooms in place of face-to-face ones. This raises concerns about students' ability to adjust to the transition to online learning, considering their diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, it is critical to assess students' experiences with technology adoption in the current learning environment during a pandemic. The purpose of this study is to elicit information about students' experiences with gadgets, internet access, online tools, online class engagement, and online learning material during open and distance learning in times of pandemic COVID -19 via the crosstabulation analysis. This study involved students from two universities and three levels of study: foundation, diploma, and bachelor. Most foundation students were living in campus while most diploma and degree students were living off campus. This situation affects the experience faced by students in online learning in terms of their engagement, ease of using online tools and how they access materials. This study suggests that with good internet connectivity, students' satisfaction with online learning may rise when they can easily access all course materials, rewatch online lectures and become actively engaged with learning materials without lag. Thus, sustaining the quality of online education requires a strong internet connection that will lead to students satisfactory in online learning especially to those who are remotely learning online from home.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Countries around the world, including Malaysia, have responded to the strain of COVID -19 by implementing various containment measures. The educational sector was one of the first few sectors to experience a complete shutdown for all operations. Multiple schools, colleges, and millions of students were affected by the lockdown, as the educational sector's initial response was to completely cease operations.

In the COVID-19 scenario, where traditional classroom-based education is not possible, the only alternative means of acquiring knowledge and developing new skills is through online learning. Online learning environment enables knowledge to be transferred and acquired virtually through the use of various platforms. Because of the absence of a physical classroom, an online educator must strive to create a conducive environment for their students. Communication happens virtually in an online environment using email, Whatsapp, Telegram and video-conferencing through Google Meet, Skype or Webex. Whatsapp group was utilized as a means to tackle challenges in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Makruf & Tejaningsih, 2023). Morever, video conferencing can also serve to help create a sense of unity among learners, and to some extent, replace face-to-face communication in online learning (Jena, 2020). Nevertheless, in the post-pandemic period, both lecturers and students are still actively engaged in teaching and learning activities through online learning platforms such as video conferencing technologies and learning management systems (Prabawangi et al., 2021).

People have to admit that online learning has significant advantages like adaptability, mobility of knowledge despite locale, abundance of applications, knowledge, user-friendliness, affordability, and universal accessibility (Ngampornchai & Adams, 2016). But, the transition from offline to an online learning can be detrimental to students, who face greater difficulty adjusting to their new learning environment. The majority of issues with online learning environments stem from students' communities' lack of relevant digital learning resources (e.g. laptop/computer, broadband internet connection), a conducive home learning environment (e.g. a quiet study area or their desk), and parental support. This can lead to feelings of futility among students and may affect future learning.

Since online learning was implemented unexpectedly in Malaysia, it is critical to assess students' experience in adopting technology in the new learning environment during the pandemic. Thus, this study can help to guide the post-pandemic educational landscape and ensure that students are equipped to succeed in a world where technology is increasingly prevalent.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Online Learning

Online learning is synchronous and asynchronous learning that takes place over the internet, allowing students the ability to engage with resources in the online learning environment and with other learners and peers, respectively (Dong et al., 2020). Online learning enables students to exchange ideas, grow as an individual without regard for time constraints, and access to a more resilient learning environment (Hwang et al., 2020; Lage-Cal et al., 2020). Online learning requires educators and students to be technologically savvy, as this ability will significantly aid in creating a more conducive learning environment leading to good social interactions (Andel et al., 2020). In addition, online learning must consider students' financial circumstances, as well as the facilities and infrastructure that support online learning (Rusli et al., 2020). Limited access to the Internet as well as technical and financial issues contributed to an underwhelming online learning outcome (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). This is especially prevalent in underdeveloped countries. Additionally, students identified responsiveness, an inadequacy of face-to-face interaction, and a lack of social interaction as online learning challenges (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Zhong, 2020). Nonetheless, the demand for online education has increased as a result of its impressive characteristics, including its capacity to reach global audiences (Paul & Glassman, 2017), as well as its unique functionality (Picciano, 2009), accessibility (Kintu et al., 2017), and flexibility (Gilbert & Fisher, 2015). Online education is believed to be a valuable supplement not only to traditional classroom instruction, but also to instil the concept of lifelong learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

2.2 Factors of Students Success in Online Learning

Education industries are increasingly embracing emerging technologies such as video conferencing tools (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Hangout) as tools for distance learning (Martin, 2005). However, the process of transitioning from the traditional mode of instruction to the online mode should be carefully planned by higher education institutions. Students who are comfortable with a structured and primarily teacher-centered education may find the transition to Online Distance Learning (ODL) environment a more unstructured, student-centered learning environment extremely challenging (Banna et al., 2015). Hence, human-technology interaction is critical for establishing the necessary connections in online learning environments (Tirri et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). The technology system should be viewed as an environment that enables students to participate in educational activities at any time and from any location (Bouhnik & Carmi, 2014).

In an online environment, students frequently face difficulties and stress (Fauzi et al., 2021). One such difficulty is that, while frequent interaction is desirable, it may not always be possible, particularly for students who live outside of urban areas and do not have regular access to computers or the internet. The primary obstacles of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic were connected to weak internet connection, difficulties with time management, staying motivated, managing distractions, adjusting to unfamiliar technology, and experiencing a lack of social interaction (Yahaya et al., 2022). The requirement for skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) are also an important factor for a successful ODL. Student's success in online learning depends on their proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and their ability to find and post relevant information (Hillman et al., 1994), while both Dzakiria, Mohd Idrus and Atan (2005) and Weidlich and Bastiaens (2018) point out that in the digital age, students who don't possess the requisite skills may inadvertently be left behind. In addition, ICT skills are an important factor affecting students' learning (Callum & Jeffrey, 2013), especially for female students (Jiménez-Cortés et al., 2017; Mokiwa & Phasha, 2012).

Besides ICT, other challenges which hinder an effective online learning from occurring include the absence of training, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as students' ability to prepare and learn using learning tools (Munezero et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that adequate learning resources are made available online to ensure its success (Asmawati Ismail et al., 2020). Students must possess exceptional self-discipline when it comes to time management, as there are no instructors present to guide students face-to-face. Instructors must also go through adequate training to help them create suitable teaching materials for the students (Kumar & Owston, 2016). In addition, majority of students are unprepared for online learning, with the primary barrier being a lack of internet access (Ismail et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the demand for online education has increased as a result of its impressive characteristics, including its capacity to reach global audiences (Paul & Glassman, 2017), as well as its unique functionality (Picciano, 2009), accessibility (Kintu et al., 2017), and flexibility (Gilbert & Fisher, 2015). To succeed in online learning, which is becoming more popular and expected to adapt to future challenges, students must possess creativity, initiative, self-motivation, focus, and self-discipline (Al-Shamaileh et al., 2022). Online education is believed to be a valuable supplement not only to traditional classroom instruction, but also to instil the concept of lifelong learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

3.1 Sampling Technique

The data was obtained from 323 respondents who had completed a self-administered questionnaire using the non-probability convenience sampling technique. The samples were from second semester foundation students in March-July 2021 semester from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT). This study also involved second semester students from Diploma of Accounting program and fifth semester students from Bachelor of Accounting from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Terengganu who enrolled in March - July 2021 semester. The reason for applying this sampling technique was two-fold. Firstly, it facilitated the acquisition of raw data for further analysis. Secondly, it saves time and money by randomly selecting responses.

3.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and the link for the form was distributed among target students in the class via a WhatsApp group. Survey items were classified using the Likert Scale, with 1 representing strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.

3.3 Instrument

A survey was conducted to assess students' experiences with technology adoption in a new learning environment during a pandemic. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: demographic information and technical experience in online learning. Table 1 shows four items from the demographic section.

Table 1: Items for Demographic Section

ITEMS	
Gender	Female Male
Level of Education	Degree Diploma Foundation
Where is your location during online learning?	Home Institution
Gadget that you use the most for online learning	Computer Handphone Laptop Tablet

As indicated in Table 2, we generated seven relevant and appropriate items for technology usage experience in the online learning section of the survey for the purposes of this research study.

Table 2: Items for Technology Usage Experince in the Online Learning Section

ITEMS	
How would you describe the ease of accessibility of network and internet?	Depending on the situations Easy Hard
How would you describe the ease of using online tools?	Depending on the situations Easy Hard
How would you describe the ease of accessing online learning materials?	Depending on the situations Easy Hard
Do you find virtual class engaging?	Yes No
What education method that you prefer the most?	Face to Face Virtual All above Lecture video from other instructor accessible on YouTube
Which of the following materials would you mostly prefer to study for virtual classes?	Materials from internet Power point Slide Reading forms the reference book Summarized handout by instructor Watching the video record of the lecture
Do you think virtual classes save time?	Yes No

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Analysis

This research surveyed a total of 323 students from UiTM Terengganu and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. Students' information for all the sample in this study is shown in Table 3. The majority of students are female with a portion of 71.5%, while 28.5 percent are male .In terms of education levels, 25.7% of all samples are degree students, 30.3% are diploma students and 44.0% are foundation students. 191 students (59.1%) are at home during online learning while the remaining 132 students (40.8%) are in their institution. Most of them live away from campus and study online learning remotely.

Gadget that students use during online learning was also investigated. It was discovered that 247 students (76.5%) use laptops for online study, which accounts for most students. 66 students (20.4%) use their handphones followed by 9 students (2.8%) who use their tablet and only 1 student (0.3%) uses computer in online learning.

In terms of network and internet's accessibility, 228 students (70.6%) comprise the majority who responded that the ease of network and internet depends on the situation. Students may occasionally have convenient access to the internet when the connection is good and strong, but when there is a problem, such as home network traffic, external network congestion, weak Wi-Fi, latency and throttling, the internet connection may be slow and unstable, making it difficult for students to be connected. 89 students (27.6%) have an easy accessibility of network and internet while 6 students (1.9%) have a hard accessibility of network and internet.

176 students (54.5%) reported that the ease of using online tools also depends on the situation which makes up majority of the respondents. To use online tools, internet connection must be strong and stable. Since majority of the students reported that the ease of accessibility of network and internet depends on the situation, thus it can be arguable that the ease of using online tools also depends on the situation. 134 students (41.5%) stated that it is easy to use online tools while 13 (4.0%) stated that it is hard to use online tools.

Students that participate in online learning are required to access online learning materials. So, it is important to assess the ease of accessing online learning materials. 161 students (49.8%) agreed that it is easy to access online learning materials followed by 148 students (45.8%) stated that the ease of accessibility to online learning materials depends on the situation. 14 students (4.3%) reported that it is hard to access online learning materials.

Interestingly, despite the difficulties students encounter during online learning, the majority of respondents (208 students, 64.4%) believe that virtual classes are engaging while the remaining 115 students (35.6%) views virtual classes are not engaging. Though most of the students find that virtual class is engaging, only 115 (35.6%) students prefer virtual education.

Most students, 144 (44.6%), prefer to watch a video recording of the lecture. This is possibly because students may repeatedly watch the video content if they do not comprehend a certain concept. Moreover, most students think that virtual classes save time, with 248 students (76.85%) agreeing.

Table 3: Demographic Analysis

Variables	Sample, (%)
Gender	
Female	231 (71.5)
Male	92 (28.5)
Level of Education	
Degree	83 (25.7)
Diploma	98 (30.3)
Foundation	142 (44.0)
Where is your location during online learning?	
Home	191 (59.1)
Institution	132 (40.8)
Gadget that you use the most for online learning	
Computer	1 (0.3)
Handphone	66 (20.4)
Laptop	247 (76.5)
Tablet	9 (2.8)
How would you describe the ease of accessibility of network and internet?	
Depending on the situations	228 (70.6)
Easy	89 (27.6)
Hard	6 (1.9)
How would you describe the ease of using online tools?	
Depending on the situations	176 (54.5)
Easy	134 (41.5)
Hard	13 (4.0)
How would you describe the ease of accessing online learning materials?	
Depending on the situations	148 (45.8)
Easy	161 (49.8)
Hard	14 (4.3)

Do you find virtual class engaging?	
No	115 (35.6)
Yes	208 (64.4)
What education method that you prefer the most?	
Face to Face	208 (64.4)
Virtual	115 (35.6)
Which of the following materials would you mostly prefer to study for virtual classes?	
All above	5 (1.5)
Lecture video from other instructor accessible on YouTube	24 (7.4)
Materials from internet	9 (2.8)
Power point Slide	89 (27.6)
Reading forms the reference book	8 (2.5)
Summarized handout by instructor	44 (13.6)
Watching the video record of the lecture	144 (44.6)
Do you think virtual classes save time?	
No	75 (23.2)
Yes	248 (76.8)

4.2 Crosstabulation Analysis

A subsequent study is conducted to determine the difference in student technology usage amongst students with varying levels of education by means of crosstabulation analysis which can be seen in Table 4.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, the most effective way of education is virtual. The majority of foundation students (88.7%) lived within the institution, while only 11.3% were at home. Foundation students were among those who were exposed to online learning from the beginning of their study and did not have experience in face to face learning. Foundation students were encouraged to stay in campus. Although foundation students lived in campus, instructional sessions continue to be conducted remotely. Foundation students expressed an equal preference for face-to-face and virtual education, with 48.6% preferring face-to-face and 51.4% preferring virtual. There is a possibility that good internet connectivity played an important role in the preference to virtual class since only 2.1% of foundation students finds it hard to access the internet. With degree and diploma students, the situation is partly reversed. The university provided flexibility for diploma and degree students who were unable to be present at the institution to continue learning sessions from home. Degree and diploma students were not permitted to return to their respective universities unless the university directs so. 97.6% degree students and 95.9% diploma student learnt from home. This shows that the majority of diploma and degree students studied online at home. The majority of degree and diploma students were second-year students who have experienced the university's face to face learning environment. As a result, diploma and degree students prefer to study in a physical classroom rather than a virtual one since they already encountered the convenience of learning in campus. When the lesson is conducted remotely, there are limits to learning from home such as internet connectivity, time constraints, and inappropriate device tools which probably was what the diploma and degree students experienced.

In terms of class engagement, 60.2% of diploma students and 76.8% of foundation students rated the virtual class as engaging, while 71.4 % of diploma students and 94.4 % of foundation students rated the virtual class as time-saving. This is because students do not have to spend much time preparing for class, can listen repeatedly to video recordings anywhere and at any time or read the lecturer's notes if they are confused about a subject. Only 48.2% of degree students considered virtual classes engaging, while the remainder found them unappealing. 53% of the degree students, on the other hand, felt that virtual classes can save time. This is likely related to the fact that degree students did not enjoy virtual learning, thus they will not view virtual learning as engaging or time-saving.

With respect to the convenience of network and internet connection during online learning, 71.1% degree students, 79.6% diploma students and 64.1% foundation students makes up the majority of students who stated that it depends on the situation. It is assumed that students will occasionally have convenient internet access when the connection is strong and stable, but when there is a problem, such as home network traffic, external network congestion, weak Wi-Fi, latency, or throttling, the internet connection may be slow and unstable, making it difficult for students to connect.

Internet connectivity is important in determining the ease of using online tools in an online learning environment. Most degree and diploma students agrees that the convenience of using online tools depends on their situation. Since most of them are at home, they will be unable to use online tools for learning if there is an internet problem. On the other hand, 55.6% of foundation students indicated that it was easy to use internet tools for educational purposes. Most of them are in campus, and given the fact that internet connectivity are good at campus, they will have an easy access to online tools. The students location will also indirectly affect the ease of obtaining online learning material. It can be seen that most foundation students have an easy access to online learning materials.

Table 4: Crosstabulation Analysis

	Level of Education		
	Degree	Diploma	Foundation
Where is your location during online learning?			
Home	81 (97.6)	94 (95.9)	16 (11.3)
Institution	2 (2.4)	4 (4.1)	126 (88.7)
Gadget that you use the most for online learning			
Computer	0 (0.0)	1 (1.0)	0 (0.0)
Handphone	27 (32.5)	21 (21.4)	18 (12.7)
Laptop	55 (66.3)	74 (75.5)	118 (83.1)
Tablet	1 (1.2)	2 (2.0)	6 (4.2)
How would you describe the ease of accessibility of network and internet?			
Depending on the situations	59 (71.1)	78 (79.6)	91 (64.1)
Easy	22 (26.5)	19 (19.4)	48 (33.8)
Hard	2 (2.4)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.1)
How would you describe the ease of using online tools?			
Depending on the situations	46 (55.4)	67 (68.4)	63 (44.4)
Easy	31 (37.3)	24 (24.5)	79 (55.6)
Hard	6 (7.2)	7 (7.1)	0 (0.0)
How would you describe the ease of accessing online learning materials?			
Depending on the situations	36 (43.4)	61 (62.2)	51 (35.9)
Easy	37 (44.6)	33 (33.7)	91 (64.1)
Hard	10 (12.0)	4 (4.1)	0 (0.0)
Do you find virtual class engaging?			
No	43 (51.8)	39 (39.8)	33 (23.2)
Yes	40 (48.2)	59 (60.2)	109 (76.8)
What education method that you prefer the most?			
Face to Face	67 (80.7)	72 (73.5)	69 (48.6)
Virtual	16 (19.3)	26 (26.5)	73 (51.4)

Which of the following materials would you mostly prefer to study for virtual classes?			
All above	1 (1.2)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.1)
Lecture video from other instructor accessible on YouTube	3 (3.6)	13 (13.3)	8 (5.6)
Materials from internet	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	8 (5.6)
Power point Slide	13 (15.7)	13 (13.3)	63 (44.4)
Reading forms the reference book	4 (4.8)	2 (2.0)	2 (1.4)
Summarized handout by instructor	6 (7.2)	8 (8.2)	30 (21.1)
Watching the video record of the lecture	55 (66.3)	61 (62.2)	28 (19.7)
Do you think virtual classes save time?			
No	39 (47.0)	28 (28.6)	8 (5.6)
Yes	44 (53.0)	70 (71.4)	134 (94.4)

5. CONCLUSION

Learning sessions have been held in Malaysia for more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The students faces a variety of obstacles when it comes to obtaining knowledge from the lecturers. Classes are taught in a variety of methods, including by posting video lectures on YouTube, as well as power point notes, summary handouts, video links, and other online resources that the lecturers may provide. Thus, it is important to evaluate students experience of using and apprehending online learning tools during the pandemic.

Interestingly, this study revealed that though majority of diploma and degree students believe that virtual classes save time and provide an engaging learning environment for open and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, they continue to prefer face-to-face instruction. This is most probably due to the difficulties of university students experience during the pandemic, such as limited internet access, unsuitable learning settings, difficult-to-find learning resources for reference, and equipment and gadgets that are very limited. This is in contrast to the preferences of foundation students, the majority of whom prefers online learning. It is hypothesised that since foundation students are on campus, they have easy access to the internet and so have no difficulty learning online, resulting in a preference for online learning..

It is conclusive that an internet connection is critical for maintaining the quality of online education. This survey discovered that the majority of foundation students had a favourable attitude about using online tools and gaining access to online learning materials compared to diploma and degree students. This is related to the students' location. The majority of foundation students live on campus, where internet access is plentiful, whereas degree and diploma students live in their homes, where internet access is very limited.

6. LIMITATION

There are several limitations to this study. The sample size is relatively small, and convenience sampling was used, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population. Regarding the level of maturity, it is important to acknowledge that maturity levels vary from person to person and cannot be generalized based solely on academic levels. However, typically, diploma and bachelor students are expected to have a certain level of maturity as they have completed their previous education and are pursuing more specialized or advanced programs. On the other hand, foundation students may need more support in developing their maturity levels because they are new to higher education. However, it's essential to acknowledge that maturity is a complex concept influenced by various factors, including personal experiences and upbringing, and not solely determined by academic level and that it may influence the result of this study.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

NHMN carried out the introduction and literature review sections. NSAB collected and refined the data and NS performed the data analysis. NHMN and NSAB also wrote the methodology section. NHMN, NSAB, NS and AAA finalized the findings and discussion section. AAA coordinates and helped draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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