

Effectiveness of *Kami Prihatin* Charity Programme During the COVID-19 Outbreak

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ABSTRACT

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The standard of living has a significant impact on one's quality of life. However, as the standard of living rises, so will consumer spending on products due to rising commodity costs. As a result, low-income households (B40) and needy people face difficulties. The government and non-governmental organizations have established many charity programmes to address this issue. Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of a charity programme, Kami Prihatin 4.0, in assisting people in need during the COVID-19 outbreak. In total, 143 respondents participated in the study. A set of questionnaire was prepared to collect all of the essential data. The questionnaire was adapted from previous study which originally used to gauge the perception of charitable giving in general. The questionnaire is divided into five sections. The sections comprise of demographic profile of the respondents, general perception, programme's donation, programme's flow and regarding the understanding of speech about COVID-19. Before the programme began, each participant was handed one per individual, which was subsequently collected when the session ended. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants have positive feelings about the programme because it benefits not only them but also the organizer. Furthermore, the participants agreed that this programme should be held even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of them would be more likely to attend the programme even during a crisis. This study demonstrates that charity programmes have a positive influence on low-income families. As a result, efforts to aid poor people during a crisis are critical to alleviating their suffering.

1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is one of the developing countries in South East Asia. As the country thrives to become more modernised, it will affect the standard of living. According to Wawrzyniak (2016), standard of living defined as the entirety of people's actual living conditions, as well as the degree to which their material and cultural requirements are met through the flow of chargeable goods and services, as well as those provided by social funds. As a country is developing over time, the standard of living will also increase. According to Aqmin et al. (2018), while the income growth of Malaysia outpaces inflation year after year, the standard of living increases at a surprisingly fast rate, as demonstrated by high expenditure elasticities for a variety of products for the B40 group. According to Che Rose and Mutsamy (2020), the B40 group known as the Bottom 40 is the lowest income group of households with an average monthly household income below RM3860. As the price of goods increases, this group will receive a heavier impact than the higher income group. As expenditure towards goods become higher, it will affect the price of goods due to higher demands. This can be proven as according to Mahidin (2021) in the Department of Statistics Malaysia Press Release Consumer Price Index (CPI) January (2021); Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages price index rose by 1.5% to 136.1 compared to 134.1 in January 2020. In comparison to December 2020, the CPI increased by 1.2% every month. The increment was due to transportation (3.7%), housing, water, electricity, gas & other fuels (2.6%), furnishings, household equipment & routine household maintenance (0.3%), and food & non-alcoholic beverages (0.2%).

As such, the increment of goods has negative impacts on the population's wages. Their buying power declines, living conditions suffer, and society's real income decreases because of increased spending (Che Rose & Mutsamy, 2020). On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic makes the situation even worse. The pandemic has had a direct impact on income due to premature fatalities, workplace absenteeism, and productivity losses, as well as a negative supply shock, with manufacturing activity stalling due to worldwide supply chain disruptions and factory closures. Since the Nationwide Movement Control Order began, both Penang City Council and Seberang Perai City Council local authorities have ordered the temporary closure of about 1,600 premises, including factories, restaurants, food courts, markets, and others, according to the Executive Councillor of Penang state government Jagdeep Singh Deo (Astro Awani, 2021). As the supply of goods declines and the demand for the items keeps rising, it also becomes another factor in the price of the goods. These problems become more excruciating for those who belong in the *Asnaf* group. *Asnaf* refers to eligible people to receive the Muslim tithe or "zakat" assistance collected from Muslims.

To curb this issue, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh Campus held a charity programme called *Kami Prihatin 4.0* in 2021 to give donations in the form of daily necessities in the area of Permatang Pauh, Penang, Malaysia. As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to run its course in the same year, *Kami Prihatin 4.0* also donated the COVID-19 kit along with a talk regarding COVID-19 prevention measures, health procedures as well as new normative practices. *Kami Prihatin 4.0* programme was held on 24 April 2021. This programme aims to help some people who have problems in obtaining necessary needs. Another purpose of this programme is to help some Muslims in Penang to prepare for Ramadan and Syawal celebrations, especially the elderly and individuals who have no source of income due to health problems and others.

Every participant will get donations such as a pack of rice, cooking oil, flour, eggs, sugar, coffee, among others. Cash was also given based on the situation and circumstances of the family during the visit. This programme will also help strengthen the relationship between the

industry and alumni as one of the collaborations to create a caring community and instil a culture of helping each other among UiTM residents, especially among Muslims, when celebrating the month of Ramadan. The programme donates to single mothers, cleaning and landscaping contract staff, senior citizens around the campus in Permatang Pauh, retired UiTM and B40 staff, B40 Pre-Higher Education students and UiTM Penang Branch students who belong to the B40 group. The study's main purpose is to identify the effectiveness of *Kami Prihatin 4.0* in helping needy people located at Permatang Pauh, Penang, Malaysia. The study becomes more crucial as the COVID-19 outbreak affects the local community within the vicinity. Thus, this study aims to describe the local community perceptions towards the *Kami Prihatin 4.0* program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Standard of Living

Often, the level of life is conceived in strictly material terms such as the commodities and services at one's disposal early in the post-World War II period. As a result of this approach, real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita became the fundamental indicator of standard of living (Easterlin, 2000). However, Wawrzyniak (2016), defined it as the entirety of people's actual living conditions, as well as the degree to which their material and cultural requirements are met through the flow of chargeable goods and services, as well as those provided by social funds. According to Njiru and Letema (2018), the standard of living refers to the level of welfare that an individual or a group of people can have. Often, the standard of living involves the goods and services that people buy or use and their resources. Several factors influence one's standard of living, including wages, poverty rate, housing quality and affordability, gross domestic product, inflation rate, affordable healthcare, education quality and availability, and life expectancy.

Although the standard of living increases from time to time, the level of standard is different in each country or state. According to Wawrzyniak (2016), who studied the standard of living in each country in the European Union found that Austria, Finland, Germany and Sweden have the highest standard of living. In contrast, Spain, Malta, Croatia and Romania have a lower standard of living. Meanwhile, Poland ranked 20th place in terms of standard of living in the European Union. This research showed that although these countries belong to Europe, each country has their standard of living. Likewise, the same can also be said for Malaysia. According to Booth (2019), the Human Development Index (HDI) was used to assess the standard of living in Southeast Asia. The HDI is a weighted average of GDP per capita, life expectancy, adult literacy, and years of schooling. In 2015, Singapore was ranked fifth globally by this measure, Malaysia was ranked 59th, and Myanmar was ranked 145th. According to Bahari and Ismail (2018), the basic needs budget is slightly different in Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baharu and George Town.

Furthermore, there is a difference in the basic needs budget between single adults in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru and two working parent families among the three major cities. The basic needs budget refers to the cost of living. It is mentioned because it is a good indicator of the standard of living as living standards often involve the expenditure of goods and services. According to Latimaha et al. (2020), there is evidence of unidirectional Granger causality between the cost of living and the quality of living. Additionally, the study discovered that the lagged values of the cost of living could be used to estimate better the standard of living rather than using the lagged values of the standard of living.

2.2 Asnaf Group

In Islam, the aspects of development and poverty eradication are also topics of concern. The allocation of charitable funds to the poor and vulnerable is one of the steps to ensuring the agenda's progress. The teachings of Islam also require that efforts to eradicate poverty be a responsibility of the entire person, the private sector, and even the government. The act of helping someone in need is encouraged in Islam as expressed by Allah SWT through his words in surah at-Taubah:

"The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and (for) the wayfarers; a duty imposed by Allah. Allah is knower, Wise". Surah at-Taubah 9:60

In Islam, a group that needs to get help is called *Asnaf*. The *Asnaf* is a group of eligible people to receive the Muslim tithe or "*zakat*," assistance collected from Muslims. Surah at-Taubah above explains that there are eight groups in *Asnaf* identified as the *faqr* (poor), *miskin* (needy), *amil* (Zakat administrator), *muallaf* (newly Muslim converts), *riqab* (slave), *gharimin* (those in debt), *fisabilillah* (those striving to maintain and increase appreciation of Islam) and *ibnussabil* (the wayfarer) of whom Muslim should help (Abdullah & Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2007). One of the practices to help this group is through Zakat distribution. In 2019, Lembaga Zakat Selangor (LZS) distributed RM829.9 million compared to RM616.5 million in 2018 (NST Leader: Finding Asnaf, 2019).

2.3 B40 Household

In Malaysia, the B40 group of households is likely to face a financial crisis. According to Che Rose and Mutsamy (2020), the B40 group known as the Bottom 40 is the lowest income group of households with an average monthly household income of less than RM3860. As a result of the financial crisis, they will become more indebted, which will affect their financial management in the future due to their low salaries (Dicky et al., 2019). Chamhuri et al. (2019) stated that urban areas had a higher concentration of B40 homes, with a percentage of 65%, compared to rural areas, which had just 35%. In addition, the priority in achieving zero poverty from various dimensions is given to the B40 household to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030 (United Nations, 2016).

2.4 Daily Necessities Food

Food is one of the basic human survival needs. A diversified and balanced diet can give a variety of energy and nutrients and aid in preserving general health and providing enough energy for everyday functions. A diet rich in grains, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, legumes, and dairy products provides the human body with the required proteins, carbs, lipids, vitamins, and minerals. A nutritious diet can help prevent malnutrition in all of its manifestations and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer (Healthy Diet, 2020).

Nevertheless, diets vary from place to place. According to Ramli and Jamaludin (2011), society's diet is related to previous generations' experiences, passed down from generation to generation. Europeans, for example, eat a lot of wheat-based foods like bread, pies, and pizza, but Asians prefer rice-based cuisine like rice, laksa, and so on.

2.5 Standard Operating Procedure

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is mandatory in holding any events. The SOP must provide clear, precise, and logical instructions, which include enough details for a person unfamiliar with the technique to understand and perform it in a consistent manner. Ideal SOPs are like recipes that are simple to follow once the necessary ingredients or resources are available. They should not be teaching or be treated as "laboratory" guides that include substantial theory discussions and directions but rather concise step-by-step instructions (Tuck et al., 2008).

As COVID-19 shook the world, certain instructions must be upheld to ensure that the government and non-government sectors operate during this outbreak. The Malaysia Government Movement Control Order (MCO) is a set of nationwide quarantine and cordon sanitaire measures enacted by Malaysia's federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which began on 18 March 2020. The directives was introduced to combat the spread of COVID-19 which include limitations on mobility, assembly, and international travel, as well as the closure of businesses, industries, government, and educational institutions (Malaysian Movement Control Order, 2021).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Sample

A total of 350 participants participated in the *Kami Prihatin 4.0* programme. The sample size obtained for this study was calculated using a formula introduced by Wan Husin and Nordin (n.d.). The formula was used to obtain the minimum sample size for the given study. The sample size was calculated with a 0.1 level of significance and a 7% margin of error as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}n &= \frac{z_{\alpha/2}^2}{4e^2} \\n &= \frac{z_{0.1/2}^2}{4(0.07)^2} \\n &= \frac{z_{0.05}^2}{0.0196} \\n &= \frac{(1.6449)^2}{0.0196} \\n &= \frac{2.7057}{0.0196} \\n &= 138.046 \approx 139\end{aligned}$$

n = the minimum sample size
z = the *z* – score corresponding to
the selected level of confidence
e = allowance error

Based on the sample size calculation, this study required a sample size of at least 139 respondents. On the day of the programme, only 150 of the total participants came to the initial ceremony of the programme due to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the COVID-19 outbreak. In contrast, the rest of the participants had their donations delivered to them. Hence, the 150 participants acted as the sample size for this study. However, seven respondents did not answer the questionnaire completely; thus, only 143 respondents were used in this study. Table 1 shows the socio-demography profile of the respondents.