

## Strategic Planning to Build Social Trust in Technical Vocational Education Training (Tvet) for Indigenous Youth in Kelantan, Malaysia

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### Abstract

*The thrust of this study is to explore the social trust of Orang Asli youth in educational training and vocational study. Using a qualitative approach, this study was carried out in six Temiar indigenous villages in Gua Musang, Kelantan. Data were collected using interview techniques, focus group discussions and document analysis. A total of 32 indigenous youths were selected from six villages as study informants. The collected data was analysed using QSR NVivo software. The findings of the study show that social trust is an important element in influencing and gaining the confidence and submissiveness of Orang Asli youth towards vocational training and education. Findings also show that earning the social trust of Orang Asli youth in this training and vocational adventure is very germane to guarantee the effectiveness of this educational program. Thus, the study recommends that efforts should be intensified to improve the perception and confidence of the Orang Asli youth in educational institutions and there is a need to integrate the Orang Asli community into the decision-making process. Also, it is imperative to provide learning opportunities that are relevant to host culture and traditions along with allowing collaboration among various relevant stakeholders including the government, educational institutions and the Orang Asli community to ensure effective training and vocational education are disseminated to the Orang Asli youth.*

**Keywords:** *Social Trust, Empowerment, Training, Vocational Skills, Indigenous.*

### Introduction

Social trust is one of the cardinal points of social capital that helps in implementing development in a society (Xu et. al, 2022; Sieczko et. al, 2021; & Lister & Joudrey, 2022). Elements of social capital such as responsibilities and obligations, norms, values, networks, and trust among members increase group cooperation in achieving set goals and aspirations (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000; & Moscona et. al, 2017). Social trust is the basis of formidable relationships between individuals, groups and other components of society (Asadullah, 2017; Kwon, 2019). When there is distrust in other people's actions, an individual may have to weigh many contingencies and uncertainties to take action (Kwon, 2019). Case in point, without trust from community members, youth empowerment in such a locale will be less achieve and be at a slow pace.

Be that as it may, through social trust, community members can gain self-reliance and get empowered. A myriad of studies emphasized that when individuals trust each other, they will accomplish more success be it in social and political institutions, or economic activities and the results will lead to positive economic and social growth in society as well sustainable development (Alesina, & La Ferrara, 2002; Fukuyama, 1995; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Zak & Knack, 2001; & Quinn, McKitterick, Tregear, McAdam, 2021). Moreover, having been the basis of relationships, social trust has been described as a cultural trait (Ramle et al., 2014; Alesina & Giuliano, 2015). Consequently, culture is defined as traditional beliefs and values that are inherited by ethnic, religious, and social groups without change from generation to generation (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2006).

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In the context of the Orang Asli community, they are one of the indigenous communities in Malaysia with novel cultural elements such as beliefs, values, norms and customs that are related to their living environment. Their lifestyles are heavily influenced by their natural environment which in turn leverages their socio-cultural horizon. Those influences shaped their behaviour, perspective and thinking in all life prospects and situations. As emphasized by Ramle (2014) members of the Orang Asli community adapt to the environment and subsequently have pattern behaviour, patterns of thoughts, values and social beliefs that are in line with their local ecological environment (Tun Ismail, Amin, Kamarudin, Ibrahim and Nik Md Salleh, 2023 & Ramle, Mamat, Amir Zal, Ibrahim, 2013). In addition, the Orang Asli community belongs to a small community and its members have the same background and life experience, know each other, and are close in their social interactions. Mechanical solidarity forms their relationships which have been built from generation to generation, thus and so making social trust the main emphasis in their every action, especially involving family members and relatives.

### *Baseline Research*

The issue of social trust crops up due to the mistrust or doubt that exists among the Orang Asli community towards the education system introduced by the Government. Factors such as local culture, school environment, teachers, and previous community experiences can cause low social trust in formal education (Ramle et al., 2013 & Ramle et al., 2016; Asmawi et al., 2023). This may not be unconnected to the feeling of incompatibility between the traditional values of the Orang Asli and the constituents that are being taught in the conventional education curriculum. As such, this imbalance may result in a lack of motivation or interest in learning. This is because students feel that the education is not relevant or does not respect their cultural heritage.

Additionally, the concern of social trust also includes challenges in developing educational programs that are sensitive to the needs and realities of the Orang Asli community. Inadequate support from educational providers or training providers to bankroll the educational and training programs can also dampen the interest of the Orang Asli students and youth in taking an active part. It has also been proven by many studies that failure to involve the community actively in the process of planning those programs, especially among the Orang Asli youth, can impair social trust and result in failure in achieving the educational goals that are to be achieved (Ramle et al., 2013; Ibrahim, 2013; Ariffin et al., 2023b). This may have been the reason why Ibrahim (2013) their studies outlined several factors that causes Orang Asli youth to be less interested in participating in skills and vocational training programs that have been organized by relevant agencies and organizations.

Interestingly, factors such as placement being far from the training centre, lack of knowledge/information about the opportunities the training can bring about, not being able to read/write, and non-compatibility of training with the settlement area were identified as the main obstacles that hindered the Orang Asli youth for them not to take part in the organized training course and skills. Added to the above are the problems of time variance, already working/employer hindrance, indecisive in getting support after training along with the issue of communication barrier with other races which all contributed to their failure of them to make headway in the organized knowledge and skills programmes.

All these aforementioned situations bring about deterioration to the human capital and educational attainment among the Orang Asli workforce between the ages of 15-60. For instance, iDamak (2020) found out that almost 30% of the Orang Asli workforce in this age group are reported to have never attended school; 20% do not finish or drop out before finishing primary school; Another 20% drop out before completing their studies up to form 5 and less than 1% successfully continue their studies to the highest level (iDamak, 2020). The analysis further revealed that as par the highest certificate held, the majority (58%) of the Orang Asli workforce aged 15-60 were found not to have any certificate.

This phenomenon is particularly noticeable among the workforce in the countryside, followed by the suburbs and cities. For those who have a school-leaving certificate, almost one-fifth (21%) have a UPSR/primary school-leaving certificate only. Each of the other 10% has a Certificate of Secondary Examination (PMR) and Malaysian Examination Certificate (SPM). Less than 2% of the Orang Asli

workforce has high-level academic certificate qualifications from STPM to a Degree. The lack of academic qualifications among the Orang Asli workforce has resulted in many not having the opportunity to be absorbed or obtain permanent or more secure salaried jobs in either the public or private sector (iDamak, 2020 & Rami, Ibrahim, Ismail, Nazuri, Olaitan, 2023). Hence this study aims to explore the social beliefs of Orang Asli youth in educational training and vocational study. Accordingly, this study hinge on two objectives namely: (i) to explain the elements and importance of social beliefs of Orang Asli youth in educational training, vocational study and empowerment programme; (ii) to evaluate efforts that can be implemented to influence the social beliefs of Orang Asli youth in educational training, vocational study and empowerment programme.

### *Dimension of Conceptual Issues*

Trust encompasses the expectation that arises in society for having regular, honest and cooperative behaviour based on shared norms with other members of society (Fukuyama, 1995). Social trust is built when an individual has the same behaviour and expectations about each other to achieve certain goals and needs. Social trust is built indirectly to form cooperation among members of society to achieve their set goals (Borgonovi, 2012 & Fukuyama, 1995; Amat Simin et al., 2015). Based on the description of Putnam (2000) and Morrone, Tontoranelli & Ranuzzi (2009) there are two components of social trust which are interpersonal trust and institutional trust.

Interpersonal trust refers to trust among individuals while institutional trust refers to trust built not only on individuals but also on institutions and organizations such as government, police, doctors, businesses and trade unions. These two components are interrelated with each other. Interpersonal trust exists when an individual has direct experience with other individuals while institutional trust is the people's trust in the institution in performing tasks efficiently, effectively, fairly and ethically by the role given to them by the law or with social norms in the eyes of the people (Newton, 2006; Kelleher and Wolak 2007; & Warren, 1999).

Empowerment is defined as increasing the ability of a group or individual to make choices about an action that will affect their lives (Brady, Lee, Gibbons, and Bogossian, 2019; Asmawi et al., 2023a). This concept was expressed by Freire (1973) when he proposed a plan to liberate oppressed people in the world through education (Hur, 2006). Rappapon (1984) and Asmawi et al. (2023b) see empowerment as a mechanism process in which individuals, organizations, and communities have control over their lives. He also explained that the essence of the process is diverse and infinite where the course of the process that takes place among different individuals and settings and the results obtained will vary and even be inconsistent with each other. Recently, Zulfiqar (2017) states that empowerment can be gained by several factors like access to educational opportunities, participation in the political process and dispensation of economic opportunities and micro-credit programs. Moreover, empowerment is considered a multidimensional social process that helps people to take control of their own lives.

Just as the Orang Asli community, especially the youth group, has received a lot of attention from the government to improve their living standards and raise them above the poverty line they have been immersed for so many years. Among the efforts made is to empower the Orang Asli youth through education and relevant skills. This process requires power, which is the capacity to act in their own lives and members of society in response to an issue or matter that they define as important (Page and Czuba, 1999 & Ramle, 2001; Ariffin et al., 2023a). Therefore, in this study the definition of youth empowerment is defined as the process of improving the capabilities of Orang Asli youth through educational skills and training.

### **Research Methodology**

A qualitative research approach was used to conduct this study. Qualitative research enables the researcher to obtain comprehensive, more accurate, clear data and allows the researcher to make descriptive about the aspects being studied (Ramle, 2001; Ramle et al., 2016). It entails analysing data (in the form of words or pictures) collected inductively thereby focusing on the meaning given by the study informants. The selection

of this approach is because it not only affords to conduct research in a natural setting to understand the people as related to their given domain but also enables informants to express and explain themselves genuinely (Lebar, 2017).

The study was carried out by applying a case study design. A case study is an observation of a phenomenon that is specific to an individual or a certain group of individuals or studying a group of collected texts. Case studies are also suitable when researchers want to answer research questions in the form of "why" and "how" [38]. Therefore, a case study was chosen to find out why social trust is emphasized in the Orang Asli community of Temiar on how the empowerment process of Orang Asli youth takes place.

Using a qualitative approach, this study was carried out in seven Temiar indigenous villages in Gua Musang, Kelantan. This includes three suburban settlements namely Kuala Betis, Pos Hendrop and Pos Brooke and three rural villages including Pos Tohoi, Pos Bihai and Pos Balar. The target population are all the Orang Asli youth. Data were collected using interview techniques, focus group discussions and document analysis. A total of 32 indigenous youths were selected from six villages as study informants. The collected data was analysed using QSR NVivo software. The data collected is divided into two sources, namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are original data obtained as a result of fieldwork while secondary sources consist of printed sources whether published or unpublished. Next, the collected data is analysed using QSR NVivo software. The use of this software helps the researcher analyse the collected data in an organized manner in addition to helping to store, coordinate, transcribe, code (coding) and make themes systematically because most of the data collected is nominal and narrative (Ibrahim, 2019).

## Result and Discussion

Participants divulge their views on the absoluteness and prominence of social trust in spurring and encouraging the youth to make decisive decisions on technical and vocational training. In the meantime, social trust forms the nucleus in shaping their thought to forge ahead and accomplish their goals in participating in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

### *Importance of Social Trust in TVET*

#### *Inclusiveness and Sense of Belonging*

Social trust was found to play a major role in encouraging Orang Asli youth to participate in technical, vocational, educational training and as well as help in building a solid foundation for their social, economic, and cultural development.

*“...It helps youth develop self-confidence, good social relationships, and support networks that are useful in their career development...” (Informant)*

*“...Having social trust in education and training has engendered the development of this community in an integrated and inclusive manner...” (Informant)*

These viewpoints suggest that informants reckon highly the importance of social trust in encouraging participation in any empowerment program or vocational training and giving rise to development.

#### *Quality of Life and Standard of Living*

Social trust in TVET helps eliminate deficiencies in economic development and ensure quality human resources. The TVET help indigenous youth acquire the knowledge and skills needed to overcome challenges in everyday life, such as poverty and economic instability.

*“...will open up opportunities to improve the quality of life for them and their families...” (Informant)*

*“...The skills and knowledge gained can leverage and open up new opportunities, create their income and become agents of change in their communities...” (Informant)*

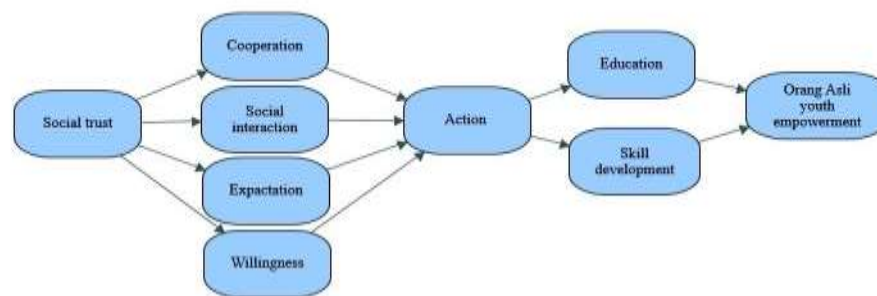
Then with the capabilities acquired through education, training, and vocational training, Orang Asli youth can contribute more to the economic development of their communities.

#### *Motivation and Self-Confidence*

Social trust gained through social support and recognition motivates youth to keep trying and do better. This can increase the youth's motivation to study hard, achieve their educational goals, and develop the necessary vocational skills.

*“...Social trust helps youth build high self-confidence and their abilities. They feel encouraged by other individuals around them and they feel that their efforts are appreciated...” (Informant)*

Orang Asli youth are confident that they have the potential to succeed in the training and vocational training they follow. This confidence is important to overcome challenges and obstacles during the learning process and develop a positive attitude towards their achievements.



**Figure 1.** The Importance of Social Trust in Orang Asli Youth Empowerment

#### *Building Social Support*

Social trust brings about social support. Participants believe social support helps the youth to overcome uncertainty and stress in the learning process and provides them with the support resources needed to achieve success.

*“...This is because...we get emotional support and instruction from peers, teachers, mentors, and community members...” (Informant)*

Social trust increases positive relationships of the youth with other individuals in the education and training environment.

#### *Professional Networking*

Social trust builds positive relationships between indigenous youth, local communities, and authorities. As such, this fosters a spirit of cooperation and unity within the community, which is essential for sustainable development and social empowerment. Social trust also helps youth build professional networks that are useful in their training and vocational fields. As one of the informants stated:

*“...This network provides access to job opportunities and gives us an advantage in the labour market...” (Informant)*

This points to the fact youth can leverage relationships built with mentors, supervisors, or colleagues to obtain information, career opportunities, and support in their professional development.

#### *Recognition and Appreciation*

Social trust also plays an important role in giving recognition and appreciation to youth in the field of training and vocational. This recognition and appreciation increase their self-confidence.

*“...It bestows confidence...since their efforts are appreciated, and motivates them to achieve the set goals...” (Informant)*

By this, it is clear that social trust also builds a positive image of their skills and achievements, and it potentially opens up better opportunities in their careers.

All in all, from the foregoing findings it lay bare that social trust is of great benefit to youth in training and vocational education. It helps strengthen the self-confidence, motivation, and social support necessary for youth to achieve success in their career development. In addition, it helps youth build useful professional networks and gain recognition and appreciation that drive better performance. Therefore, educational and training institutions need to create an environment that fosters social trust to empower youth in the training and vocational education of Orang Asli youth.

#### *Building Process of Social Trust in TVET*

Increasing social trust in empowering Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) among indigenous youth is a crucial endeavour to ensure their active participation in the socio-economic sector and the broader society. To achieve this goal, several methods are identified in this study. They are inclusive of the following:

##### *Community Involvement*

Building trust through community involvement is essential. Engaging indigenous people in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of TVET programs helps them have a sense of belonging and ownership as well as having a stake in the education and training provided.

##### *Cultural Approach*

Incorporating indigenous cultural elements into TVET education will help them see its value and relevance. This can involve curriculum design, selecting supervisors who understand their culture, and creating a stimulating learning environment. Recognizing the cultural contributions of indigenous people to society and the economy can build pride and boost their self-confidence. It can also encourage the development of TVET programs that focus on cultural preservation and the enhancement of traditional skills.

##### *Knowledge Exchange and Development Programs*

Facilitating knowledge exchange between indigenous individuals and TVET professionals can help build trust. This can be done through workshops, mentor-mentee programs, or exposure programs where both parties can share experiences and knowledge. Added to this is offering skills and development programs that align with local economic needs and the job market will help indigenous youth acquire valuable skills. This enhances their confidence in the employability of their training outcomes.

### *Ensuring Collaboration and Holistic Support*

The involvement of relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector in delivering TVET education in dishing out employment opportunities and practical training to indigenous youth will long the way in making the training worthwhile. It also builds a broader support network for them. Moreover, providing support not only in academics but also in emotional, mental, and social aspects is crucial. This can include counselling services, mental health support, and personal development programs.

### *Continuous Monitoring and Assessment*

Ongoing monitoring and assessment of TVET programs for indigenous youth are important to ensure performance and quality. It also builds trust that their efforts are valued and yield positive results. This will also make sure the training is fully implemented as planned in the first instance.

In conclusion, a holistic approach involving community engagement, cultural understanding, continuous support, and a focus on skill development aligned with the job market is essential for increasing social trust in empowering TVET education among indigenous youth.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The process of empowering Orang Asli youth is closely related to the social beliefs of the Orang Asli community. The social trust that is built will help launch the process of empowering community members, especially the youth because they cooperate with institutions and individuals who are appointed to achieve the goal of removing the Orang Asli community from the poverty line. Therefore, the relevant individuals, organizations, institutions and agencies need to take care of the social trust that has been given by the Orang Asli community by carrying out their responsibilities well and honestly so that they continue to cooperate and work together in empowering the Orang Asli youth and gradually will change their lives to be more prosperous.

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