

# Issues And Challenges in Sustaining Community-Based Societies

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**Abstract:** *Community-Based Societies (CBS) serve multiple roles in community development, such as addressing local concerns, fulfilling communal requirements, and enhancing the overall welfare of the community. The CBS serve as a means of assisting the government in addressing societal problems and fulfilling the needs of particular population groups. The establishment of societies enables the execution of initiatives designed to tackle the difficulties encountered by the specific group, while also promoting improved cooperation between the community and the society. However, there is a growing trend of societies inactivity and dissolution inside numerous establishments. Hence, this study was conducted to address the concerns and obstacles encountered by the societies in sustaining their operational vitality. The present study employs a qualitative research methodology. A total of 17 individual participated in two Focus Group Discussion sessions. The results obtained from thematic analysis using Atlas.Ti were categorized into three distinct themes: 'the availability of financial resources prerequisite for the implementation of community program', 'requires dedication and participation more appropriate for volunteering' and 'leadership and personal qualities'. The study's findings indicate that the society plays a crucial role in enhancing community well-being. Nevertheless, it is crucial to address internal issues related to the organization of society expeditiously.*

**Keywords:** Community, Leadership in Society, Volunteerism, Focus Group Discussion, Community-Based Society

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## 1. Introduction

The governance of a nation is often overseen by the Government, which is comprised of various administrative tiers including the federal, state, and district levels. Nevertheless, despite the diminished administrative powers aimed at prioritizing the welfare of the populace, numerous unresolved issues and challenges persist, necessitating assistance and support from locally-formed society to address community-based problems.

Simultaneously, there is an observable trend towards the proliferation of societies entities. This phenomenon may arise as a result of individuals feeling a sense of duty to enhance the well-being of the community they are serving. The term "societies" in this study pertains specifically to non-governmental organizations that have been officially registered. The expansion of growth presents a favorable outcome, albeit necessitating measures to mitigate the dissemination of detrimental aspects introduced by the societies within the community.

The regulation of society formation in Malaysia is overseen by the Registration of Society (RoS). The department is responsible for registering all groups and monitoring their activities to ensure they comply with legal requirements and conform to the standards set by the Malaysian government. The Registrar of Societies (RoS) has officially registered a total of 189,000 societies. However, it has been observed that not all of these groups demonstrate active involvement, and a portion of them has started the process of disbandment. This study aims to examine the dissolution of the society by focusing on two main objectives: (1) Investigating the initiatives undertaken by the society to maintain its operational status, and (2) Identifying the issues and challenges encountered by the society in fulfilling its functions.

## **2. Literature Review**

The composition of the society's membership consists of group of people residing within a given locality. The individual's appointment stems from their affiliation with a community group, since it is believed that their involvement will contribute to the enhancement of the community's overall welfare. The society implements numerous initiatives and strategies following the appointment in order to maintain its operational status. These initiatives are focused on fulfilling the requirements of the community it caters to and enabling local inhabitants to actively engage in activities based in the community. The program addressing environmental challenges encountered by the local community encompasses not only the involvement of the local government or agencies, but also the active engagement of the local community in environmental monitoring. This is led by the designated society committee (Khair et al., 2020). The members of society play an indirect role as responsible participants in promoting the society's need to understand their interactions in terms of creating shared value and collective well-being (Civera & Freeman, 2020).

The concept of empowering organizations as stakeholders has long been introduced. The concept encompasses the procedural aspects of enabling, enhancing capabilities, and engaging key stakeholders within a given system, program, or effort (Kasmel & Andersen, 2011; Parmar et al., 2011; Rolfe, 2016). In the present context, stakeholders are defined as society that possess interests or influence within a given environment or community. These stakeholders regularly plan and carry out various projects with the goal of improving the general well-being of the community, raising the quality of life, advocating for their interests, and promoting the community's competitiveness (Usadolo & Caldwell, 2016).

According to Stakeholder Theory, society has the ability to utilize several techniques in order to increase their empowerment. For example, Parmar et al. (2011) propose organizing training sessions to enhance the knowledge and skills of committee members within the society. Consequently, societies can actively participate in community development projects and programs, as suggested by Laverack & Wallerstein, (2001). According to Cécile et al., (2016), stakeholders can indirectly expand their network and obtain the required support and resources for community projects by leveraging the societies they manage.

The empowerment of organizations in the community requires dedicated involvement and collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders. By enhancing the capabilities and capacities of committee members inside the society, they can assume a more proactive and impactful role in fostering community development. However, in order to enhance the society's effectiveness, it is imperative for the society to possess social integration (Goodwin et al., 2007). Individuals selected for positions inside the organization are required to exhibit a high level of engagement and dedication. According to the research conducted by Usadolo and Caldwell (2016), it is typically necessary for individuals within a society to possess diverse backgrounds, while also disregarding social and political disparities (Uzelac, 2021). Additionally, it is important for these individuals to cultivate a sense of ownership (Usadolo & Caldwell, 2016) and work towards a shared aim. The participants will collaborate in order to engage in a collective dialogue regarding the efficacy of community-based programs (Khair et al., 2020) and the implementation of collective or joint efforts in program management. Typically, the program incorporates considerations pertaining to the rights, welfare, and well-being of the community. Community-based programs are characterized by their ongoing implementation and their effectiveness is evaluated based on the accomplishments of the community. Consequently, it is imperative for organizations to recruit committee members who can offer sustained volunteer engagement.

### **3. Methodology**

The study utilized a qualitative approach, specifically adopting the method of Focus Group Discussion. The utilization of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is highly appropriate for gathering data pertaining to the operational dynamics and managerial challenges encountered by organizations. FGDs involve the researcher convening a group of individuals to engage in a structured discussion on a specific topic. This technique facilitates the exploration of participants' multifaceted personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes through a moderated interaction. Priority is given to participants who possess extensive expertise and experience in the research field. The study utilized purposive sampling, which is consistent with the practice of focus group discussions, which heavily relies on the participants' capability and capacity to offer pertinent information. Researchers engage with the RoS in order to obtain suitable participants for this study.

The researcher developed a comprehensive set of questions and a protocol to serve as a guideline for conducting each session of the FGD. RoS has issued an invitation letter to the participant, taking into consideration the specific group of people needed for the study. According to a study conducted by Nyumba et al. (2018), it has been suggested that an adequate number of participants for a FGD session falls within the range of six to eight individuals. However, a larger group consisting of ten participants is considered appropriate as it enables a wide range of opinions, while still maintaining order and preventing disintegration. This argument was also addressed by van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, (2017), who posited that the customary magnitude of a focus group discourse ranges from 6 to 12 people. The invitation letter provided by the RoS was extended to a total of 30 organizations. However, only 17 people from various societies were able to attend. Consequently, the FGD session was split into two separate sessions.

During the FGD all the participants were asked questions related to the research objectives. The participants were given the opportunity to answer and give explanations, as facilitated by the researcher. In order to prevent the restriction of information, researchers take the position of a "facilitator" or a "moderator" (Nyumba et al., 2018). The researcher's role involves

facilitating or moderating a group conversation among participants, rather than directly interacting with them (van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). Given the diverse backgrounds of the participants, the utilization of the FGD approach is indeed appropriate. As stated by van Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017), this method capitalizes on individuals' capacity to narrate stories. This session lasts between 1 hour and 30 minutes to 1 hour and 50 minutes. The conclusion is reached when it reaches the saturation point, which is defined as the moment at which no additional growth in information takes place. This concept is supported by Nyumba et al. (2018) and van Eeuwijk & Angehrn (2017), who state that the session should continue until a clear pattern emerges and subsequent groups do not contribute any new information. At this juncture, the team of researchers diligently scrutinizes all acquired material in order to ascertain its comprehensiveness and adequacy.

Researchers have been transcribing recorded statements so that a detailed, written document is available. Next Coding the transcription using 'codes' to be more structured. Next, the analysis process is carried out using Atlas Ti. Software. The content analysis that was carried out formed the theme that came from the agreeing statement and received consensus from all the participants. The conducted content analysis produced the theme derived from the participants' consensus on the agreeing statement. Statements that fail to achieve consensus are excluded. The observed pattern is emerged from the analysis conducted.

#### **4. Findings**

A number of themes emerged that offer valuable insights pertaining to the issues and challenges for societies to remain active:

##### **4.1 Availability of Financial Resources Prerequisite for The Implementation of Community Program**

Obtaining of financial resources is of utmost significance for societies to sustain their operations, particularly in the execution of initiatives aimed at fostering community empowerment. The allocated funds are utilized for the purpose of overseeing administrative operations within the organization, facilitating the necessary infrastructure and facilities, and executing community-oriented initiatives in alignment with the needs of the served community. The group acquires financial resources through diverse channels, including regular contributions from members, donation from charitable organizations and prominent individuals, as well as grants provided by government agencies.

RoS has played a vital role in encouraging societies to continue active by granting MyICE funding to undertake community empowerment projects equal to RM10,000 or the equivalent of USD2,500. The society's capacity to design programs in accordance with the approved allocation from RoS is contingent upon various factors. Many societies not only perform projects using current finances, but also acquire extra cash through the collection of donations.

It has been observed that the society is in need of financial resources in order to effectively execute community programs. The allocated funds are utilized for the purpose of covering speaker payment expenses, food expenses for program participants, hall rental fees, and other related expenditures. Numerous challenges arise for groups seeking financial resources, particularly in the realm of soliciting and securing donations. Nevertheless, a few organizations have taken the initiative to collaborate with government agencies such as BOMBA, PDRM, and other enforcement teams to implement security-oriented programs. By doing so, they are able to partially mitigate their primary expenditure on speaker fees. This particular type of

program has garnered a positive response from the community, especially when the talk focuses on raising awareness about safety and security.

#### **4.2 Requires Dedication and Participation More Appropriate for Volunteering**

Societies are established due to the convergence of individuals who share common interests and aspirations. The analysis of the themes reveals that the composition of the society's membership predominantly comprises individuals of senior age. This demographic primarily consists of retirees who engage in the society's activities as a hobby effectively occupying their free time. For the society to sustain its activity and maintain relevance, it is imperative that its members demonstrate a high level of commitment in terms of time and energy, as well as a consistent willingness to engage in voluntary activities. This is essential for the successful execution of planned programs, which are carried out without any form of monetary compensation.

Hence, it is evident that the composition of the committee members consists of individuals who engage in their duties on a voluntary basis. The volunteers demonstrate a willingness to make a commitment and dedicate their time, energy, and skills to help the society and its implemented program. The significance of volunteerism lies not only in individuals' personal interest, but also in their willingness to actively contribute to the betterment of the community. It is evident that the majority of committee members do not fall under the younger demographic, since they are preoccupied with professional obligations and exhibit varying levels of disinterest towards engaging in social initiatives. Consequently, in order to attain membership within the organization, individuals must demonstrate a strong commitment and suitability for the volunteer group.

#### **4.3 Leadership and Personal Qualities**

The significance of effective leadership within the society should not be overstated, as it exerts a profound influence on the society's achievements, productivity, and overall performance. The selection of the Chairman and Committee Members within the society is typically carried out through a collective decision-making process, wherein all members reach an agreement. The electoral process for this election is conducted by means of both vote and appointment during the society's Annual General Meeting. According to the findings of the FGD, participants from the organizations elucidated that the appointment of the chairman is contingent upon the presence of leadership traits inside an individual. The society's representatives elucidate several attributes of effective leaders, including the ability to provide concise instructions, foster trust among team members, make sound decisions, and exert influence to promote collaboration within a group. The presence of effective leadership within an organization has an indirect impact on the direction and execution of activities and programs. Responsive leaders play a crucial role in guiding the society towards its desired vision and goal. However, certain society frequently encounter challenges in retaining their members. Certain individuals inside the society express a reluctance to sustain their involvement, not due to a deficiency of dedication, but rather as a consequence of the prevailing miscommunication between the younger and older members.

### **5. Discussion**

It is observed that the basis of the establishment of the society is to help the community in improving their well-being. However, to ensure that the society remains active, various initiatives such as the implementation of programs in accordance with the current needs of the community have been implemented. The implemented program requires funds and

commitment by the committee that has been appointed. There are various methods to obtain funds and observed funds given through grants by RoS such as MyIce is a good method especially for new organizations as a way to kick start. In order to ensure that society can continue their community program plans, they need to find funds from various other sources. In addition, it is observed that the activity of an organization depends not only on the funds obtained but also on the human resources that are the committee members who are members of the society. The appointed committee members must be people who can commit in terms of time and effort. Due to the financial limitations of the organization, the committee members are not remunerated and instead contribute their services on a voluntary basis. Therefore, it can be seen that most of the appointed committee members are relatively senior members because they are pensioners who have free time to carry out an activity.

The presence of senior volunteers in the society may result in a leadership style that is not well-received by certain members, leading to attrition within the group. Furthermore, the presence of an age gap among members can also contribute to misunderstandings, which subsequently leads to lower motivation among members to continue putting their efforts into the society.

## 6. Conclusion

The societal function is regarded as highly significant in enhancing well-being and uniting the community. The programs that are implemented give added value to the community in addition to the community always being exposed to the latest information. However, in order to ensure that the community can receive these benefits continuously, the challenges faced in the management of the society need to effectively address. The internal issues faced need to be resolved immediately. This is to ensure that the society remains active and can indirectly reduce the problem of dissolution of societies that have been formed for a long time due to trivial issues faced by the society.

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