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RESEARCH ARTICLE

QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL) AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF CHILDREN SCHOOLING IN AN ISLAND

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Abstract

Good quality of life (QoL) may provide conducive environment for school children to study and perform better. Studies indicate that school children residing in isolated areas with discontented quality of life did not perform academically. However, the issue of QoL and its relation to academic performance in a secluded island of Pulau Tuba is interesting to study. This is because, while Pulau Tuba is an isolated island, being part and partial of tourism industry in Langkawi had caused for the island to be unique and different. Therefore, this study investigated the possible relation between the residents' QoL and the academic performance of their children. An adapted questionnaire was used to collect the required data for the study. Several interviews with the local residents were also conducted to acquire the necessary data in order to support the findings of the study. The study found that the villagers are enjoying their good quality of life. Nevertheless, that could not contribute much in better academic performance of the school children. Tri-angulation using interviews was conducted to validate the findings and dig out the answers to the anomaly. Recommendations were figured out as the ways to improve the academic performance of the school children.

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Introduction:-

Education is highly essential in the era of advanced technology where a person equipped with knowledge and skill is having competitive advantage compared to those who are unskilled and having low education. As the popular saying goes, knowledge is power thereby a person who excel academically could become more powerful and successful in life hence greater opportunities for better living. A person may become excel academically due to many factors. Among the factors is the person's quality of life (QoL).

Quality of life (QoL) is the general well-being of individuals and societies that outline positive and negative features of life. Measurement of QoL is comprehensive as it covers the wellbeing of multiple domains (WHO, 1948). It observes life satisfaction, including everything from physical health, family, education, employment, wealth, safety, security to freedom, religious beliefs, and the environment (Barcaccia, 2013). It is indeed indicators to measure a nation's development status, economic growth and political stability (Noor Suzilawati, Mariana, Syahirah & Alias, 2017).

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Good quality of life could provide conducive environment for the schooling children to study and perform better in school. A study by M. S. Farooq et al. (2011) indicated that children with better socio-economic status perform better in school compared to those who are at a lower socio-economic status. A recent study implied that the QoL of children reflects their desires, hopes, and expectations concerning their present and future life (Fatemeh Parvizi, 2021). Children with conducive living environment have greater self-awareness to achieve their target in life (Michael Ewela, 2016) and therefore struggling more in getting better grades and excellence in performance. On the other hand, children with poor living condition often fall lagged behind their peers from richer families due to their limited access to academic and social supports, limited supply of nutritious food and health-care, and parents' financial difficulty (Noguera & Wells, 2011).

Realizing the importance of good life quality on academic performance of school children, this study aimed at investigating the relationship between the two. Specific focus is given to those children who are schooling at an island where access to outside world is rather limited and most of their families are making a living traditionally in farming and searching the bounties of the sea.

Review of Literature:-

Numerous research has been done on the relationship between quality of life and academic performance of students. Some of the study provide evidences on the contribution of QoL in improving academic performance. Others give no evidence on the significant impact of QoL on academic performance. A study by Christina A. Spivey et al, (2020) on health dimension of QoL indicates that it could enhance education and academic performance. This study focused on the relationship between health-related quality of life among first-year and second-year pharmacy students, and their academic performance. The researchers suggested a better understanding of quality of life among students is important to enhance their education and academic performance. This findings emphasised the previous study by Shahid Sarwar, Abdul Aleem, and Muhammad Arif Nadeem (2019). The difference is this study focused on the mental health. The finding showed that mental health of students is suboptimal, especially among female students. Students with better mental and physical health have better academic performance. The points were also supported by another study carried out by Inta Zile et al, (2022). In this study it was revealed that the level of anxiety significantly positively correlated with the academic achievement in all subject matters assuming better academic performance for more anxious children. Thus, psychological aspect is very important for the quality of life and this will enhance their education and academic performance.

A more recent study by Ramli, A. (2021) examined the impact of the environmental well-being on student's academic performance at the University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) city campus. It consists of infrastructure and services, pollution and healthy environment and environmental hazard. The study used the regression and correlation analysis to analyse the data. The result of the study shows that all variables significantly impacted academic performance of students. The result also indicates that all the variables were consequential in affecting the students' quality of life (QoL). The findings of this study offer useful inputs into the causes so that UMK and other academic institutions can take actions to provide a better environment and QoL for students in order for them to reach their fullest academic performance potential.

Socio-economic well-being and status of the family is also important factor contributing to QoL and the academic performance of the school children. The study of Chaudhry, M. Shafiq, G. Berhanu. (2011) was conducted to examine different factors influencing the academic performance of secondary school students. The results of the study revealed that socio-economic status and parents' education have a significant effect on students' overall academic achievement. The high and average socio-economic level affects the performance more than the lower level.

The study on the emotional wellbeing which is also an important element of QoL and its relation with student academic achievements was conducted by Michael E.E. and Ismail Nizam (2016). The study found that only the independent variable of empathy and motivation has a strong influence on academic performance of students in Malaysian tertiary institution. Considering the low level of emotional intelligence among students and the meaningful relation between total and some components emotional intelligence with academic performance, it is necessary to take emotional intelligence into consideration which will help students to perform very well in their academics.

Contrary to the preceding discussion, some studies proved that QoL contribute insignificantly to the academic performance. A study by Henning (2015) for example investigated the connections between religious affiliation, quality of life (QoL) and measures of academic performance of students. The main findings of the study indicated that participants from different religious affiliations expressed different spiritual QoL perceptions. However, these different expressions did not translate into their perceptions related to hours of study and academic achievement. In addition, the QoL measures did not relate to academic achievement estimation but did predict hours of study. Greater hours of study were related to greater physical health but lower psychological health and poorer engagement in developing social relationships.

One of the important elements in ensuring the quality of life especially for the children is the existence of family especially the mothers. A very interesting study by Fatemeh Parvizi, (2021) on the relationship between quality of life (QoL) and the academic achievement of pupils with the employment status of their mother proved that there was no significant difference between students who have employed and housewife mothers about the student's academic achievements. According to the results of multivariate analysis, none of the variables was a significant predictor of the QoL and academic achievement in the students. However, in spite of lack of association between the quality of life and academic achievement of students with their mothers' occupation but it should be regarded that more attention to students and spent more time by students can be very helpful in the academic achievement of students.

As most studies done in the past relating to academic performance used correlation and regression analysis, a study by Zainordin (2018) used classification analysis. The study aims to classify students based on quality of life and academic performance. Students' quality of life was measured by using WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire which consists of five quality of life domains namely physical health, psychological health, social relationship, environment and overall quality of life whereas the academic performances were represented by cumulative grade point average (CGPA). This study applied support vector machine (SVM) method for classifying the students. The results for each quality-of-life domain showed that students with both low and high academic performance were classified into high academic performance class. The same result was obtained when all domains were combined. All models showed high accuracy which implied that the classification made by SVM were strongly correct. The findings of this study demonstrated that quality of life plays an important role in students' academic performance.

Research Methodology:-

This study adopts mixed method comprising of qualitative and quantitative method through survey. The survey was used to collect data relating to the respondents' quality of life and their response on the academic performance of their children at school. The outcomes of the data were tri-angulated with interviews to verify the findings of the study. The population of the study comprises of parents and custodians of the school children who are settling at Pulau Tuba Langkawi. Pulau Tuba is selected as sample for the study as the island is unique. It is an isolated island with around 5,000 rural communities who make their living from the resources in the land and the sea that they have (Muhammad Yusof, 2021). It is considered unique as the island is close to crowd-pulling tourism attraction of Pulau Langkawi. A proper sampling technique is important in order to have a precise and unbiased sample that represents the whole populations. Since the respondents are scattered in several villages at the island, simple random sampling was used to draw the samples.

Questionnaire was used as the main instrument for the study. Several sets of Likert-scale statements were posed to the respondents to get their self-reviewed assessment on their quality of life and their children's academic performance. Several dimensions of QoL comprising physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, social wellbeing, environmental wellbeing, financial wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing were expected to be responded by indicating the chosen scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree up to 5 = Strongly Agree. The dimensions of QoL were adopted from WHOQOL with adjustments in certain parameters and addition of spiritual dimension. The academic performance was measured by asking the respondents on the overall status of their children's performance. The internal consistency and reliability of the instrument used in this study is good as Cronbach Alpha value of all the items is 0.862 and therefore acceptable for the study.

Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents via self-administered method. A total of 220 were managed to be distributed and collected for the purpose of data analysis. Nevertheless, only 203 questionnaire sets were useable for

the study. Tri-angulation using interviews was then conducted to dig out the details on the study findings. A total of seven respondents among the villagers were interviewed for the details.

Results and Discussion:-

The following sub-sections present the demographic profile of the respondents and discuss the analysis of the study's findings in relation to the respondents' quality of life and academic performance of the school children.

Respondents' Demographic Profile

A total of 203 questionnaires were completely filled and useable for the study. Data were analysed descriptively in order to assess the QoL of the respondents. Sections below are the discussion on the analysis of the results.

Table 1:- Respondents' Demographic Profile (N = 203).

	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	Male	179	88.2
	Female	24	11.8
2.	Age		
	Under 20	2	1
	20 – 29	3	1.5
	30 – 39	5	2.5
	40 – 49	53	26.1
	Above 50	140	69
3.	Marital Status		
	Married	169	83.3
	Divorced/Widow	34	16.7
4.	Occupation		
	Self-employed	163	80.3
	Private sector	23	11.3
	Public Sector	10	4.9
	Retired	2	1.0
	Unemployed	5	2.5
5.	Monthly Income		
	Below RM3000	136	67
	RM3001 – RM6000	52	25.6
	RM6001 – RM9000	9	4.4
	Above RM10,000	3	1.5
	No Income	3	1.5
6.	Number of Dependents		
	1 – 3 persons	94	46.3
	4 – 6 persons	61	30.1
	More than 6 persons	48	23.6
7.	Type of Resident		
	Own House	191	94
	Rented House	6	3.0
	Inherited House	5	2.5
	Others	1	0.5
8.	Owning Private Vehicle		
	Only 1 vehicle	26	12.8
	More than 1 vehicle	176	86.7
	No private vehicle	1	0.5

Out of the total 203 respondents for this study, the majority of them (88.2 percent) are male and they occupied different designation comprising of those working in private firms (11.3 percent) and public sector (4.9 percent). Very few of them are retired (1.0 percent) and unemployed (2.5 percent). Nevertheless, of all the designations, the majority of them are self-employed in fishing or farming (80.3 percent). This is understandable due to the fact that they are staying in an island where industrial plants and business offices are remote. In short, many are sustaining their life using their hard-earned income from farming and/or fishing. With regards to their income, the study found

that 67 percent of the respondents earn a monthly income of less than RM3,000. A considerable number (25.6 percent) is earning between RM3,001 to RM6,000 and only 4.4 percent earn more than RM6,000 but less than RM10,000 a month. The remaining respondents are either earning more than RM10,000 (1.5 percent) or earning nothing at all (1.5 percent).

In terms of age, most respondents are considered elderly with 69 percent of them aged more than 50 years old. Quite a significant number of the respondents are aged between 40 to 49 years old (26.1 percent). The remaining few are considered young with their age below than 40 years old. The majority of respondents (83.3 percent) are married while 16.7 percent of them are either divorced or widow.

The respondents were also asked on their dependents whom they need to maintain financially. Almost half of the respondents (46.3 percent) are having less than three dependents. This is consistent with the respondents' age whose children are already grown up and some might have been married and earning their own living. As far as their dwelling is concerned, fortunately almost all of them (94 percent) are accommodating their own house. Only 3 percent are staying in rented house while 2.5 percent of them are occupying inherited house. One respondent is considered homeless (0.5 percent) as he has to stay in his relative's house in order to have roof over his head.

Respondents' Quality of Life

Respondents were asked to give their agreement or disagreement on the statements that capture the measurement of each QoL dimension. The variables; comprising of physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, social wellbeing, environmental wellbeing, financial wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing. Mean output of each QoL dimension is analyzed based on the following measurement (Table 2):

Table 2:- Interpretation of Mean.

Mean value	Interpretation
1.01 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate
3.68 – 5.00	High

High value of mean score between 3.68 to 5.00 indicates the high standard of QoL as perceived by the respondents. Table 3 below displays the mean output for each dimension of QoL of the study.

Table 3:- Mean Output of the QoL Dimensions.

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Physical Wellbeing	3.9094	.44194	203
Psychological Wellbeing	4.1990	.44254	203
Social Wellbeing	4.2867	.61786	203
Environmental Wellbeing	4.3527	.45001	203
Spiritual Wellbeing	4.3448	.43613	203
Financial Wellbeing	4.1606	.48012	203

Based on the output as shown in Table 3, the study found that the respondents have high quality of life in all the QoL dimensions. As what they perceived, the top three dimensions of QoL comprised of environmental wellbeing (mean = 4.3527; sd = 0.45001), spiritual wellbeing (mean = 4.3448; sd = 0.43613) and social wellbeing (mean = 4.2867; sd = 0.61786). Environmental wellbeing is measured by looking at the safety of the neighbourhood, the comfort and safety of the accommodation, the clean air and sound surrounding amenities. Being perceived at the top of the list is considered reasonable to the respondents as they are staying in an island with the neighbours are close to one another. Spiritual wellbeing is placed second by the respondents and this is again reasonable owing to the fact that they are still performing their religious duties and practicing good conducts in life. Social wellbeing relates to good relation among family members and neighbours. Staying in villages with a close-knit community is indeed a factor that contribute to the soundness of social wellbeing among the respondents.

The remaining QoL dimensions of financial wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and physical wellbeing are placed at the bottom three of the QoL. Physical wellbeing is captured by looking at the health status of the respondents, their dependency on medicine as well as their ability to conduct daily activities. In this study, physical wellbeing is placed the least (mean = 3.9094; sd = 0.44194) and this is consistent with the nature of the respondents themselves who are

mainly elderly and incapable of doing much like the younger generation. As for financial (mean = 4.1606; sd = 0.48012) and psychological wellbeing (mean = 4.1990; sd = 0.44254), the respondents perceived the two dimensions to be moderately high. This could imply that they are happy with their lives even though they might not have luxury and material indulgence. The tranquillity and serenity of their surrounding could be precious enough for them to have good quality of life amid the remote village of an island.

Quality of Life (QoL) and Academic Performance

In this study, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used in order to assess the relation between the quality of life and academic performance. Table below displayed the outcomes of the coefficients.

Table 4:- Pearson's Correlation Coefficients.

		KF	KP	KS	KE	KSP	KK	KA
KF	Pearson Correlation	1	.425**	.302**	.280**	.220**	.157*	.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.002	.026	.064
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KP	Pearson Correlation	.425**	1	.379**	.294**	.322**	-.051	-.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.474	.098
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KS	Pearson Correlation	.302**	.379**	1	.372**	.526**	.132	.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.060	.732
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KE	Pearson Correlation	.280**	.294**	.372**	1	.324**	.142*	.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.044	.691
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KSP	Pearson Correlation	.220**	.322**	.526**	.324**	1	.005	-.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000	.000		.947	.188
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KK	Pearson Correlation	.157*	-.051	.132	.142*	.005	1	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.474	.060	.044	.947		.098
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203
KA	Pearson Correlation	.130	-.117	.024	.028	-.093	.116	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064	.098	.732	.691	.188	.098	
	N	203	203	203	203	203	203	203

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Six dimensions of QoL comprising physical wellbeing (KF), psychological wellbeing (KP), social wellbeing (KS), environmental wellbeing (KE), financial wellbeing (KK) and spiritual wellbeing (KSP) were tested in terms of their relation to academic performance (KA). The outcomes of the study indicated that none of the QoL dimensions are having significant relation to academic performance at either 1 percent or 5 percent significance level. Only a very weak relation is found between physical wellbeing (KF) and academic performance ($r = 0.13$) as well as financial wellbeing (KK) and academic performance ($r = 0.116$) at 10 percent significance level. Contrary to the general belief as found in previous studies, this study implied that quality of life (QoL) is having very little or no contribution to the academic performance of the school children who reside at an island such as Pulau Tuba, Langkawi. The findings posed a question of why the students could not perform well academically at school even though they have good quality of life as perceived by their parents and/or guardians. Triangulation using interviews was conducted to find the detail answers on the anomaly. Section below discusses the qualitative findings of the study.

Qualitative Validation of the Findings

Quantitative findings of this study implied that good quality of life, as perceived by the respondents, did not contribute much to the academic excellence of the school children. In finding the answer to the glitch, interviews with the villagers who are parents or guardians of the school children were conducted. Responses from the

interviews revealed that there are many factors that affect the academic performance of the children. Among the main factors are:

Lack of school activities and additional classes/tuitions:

It was reported that most of the teachers are attending school only during official school hours. Hence, any school activities such as extra-curricular activities, additional classes or tuition, sports, club activities and as such are hardly scheduled. This is because many of the teachers are residing at Langkawi Island even though quarters are provided to them. They have to commute everyday using boat that would take them back and forth to and from school at a specific schedule. This has limited their movement beyond the return schedule of the transport thus restricting them from staying late after school to conduct the said activities. Thereby, the students have to rely solely on what the teachers are teaching during school hours and they have no one to turn to if they face difficulties in comprehending their lessons. Teachers play a very important role in improving students' excellence. In fact, teachers' collaborative effort in educating students is highly deprived (Adewale, 2021). In this regard, the presence of teachers beyond formal school hours is indeed necessary.

Lack of motivation and self-awareness among the children:

Another reason, as reported by the respondents is the lack of motivation and self-awareness among the school children to pursue their academic excellence further. Self-awareness is to inform oneself of the interest to identify feelings and how it affects performance. It is the key to alert a student or anyone about their strength and weakness. Possessing self-awareness would make the students to obtain self-confidence and to have an understanding of how to learn (Michael Ewela, 2016). Whenever the children are lacking of self-awareness, they have less motivation to learn and striving hard to get better grades. Adding to the challenge is an easy opportunity for cash money to come by even though they are not having high education. They can make a living by becoming tour guide, working at the hotels in the main island, renting motorbikes to tourists or following the footsteps of their parents as farmers or fishermen.

Lack of coaching and support from parents or guardians:

Previous studies indicate that academically resilient students can perform well in school even though they are poor. These are students who can be successful academically despite coming from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Waxman et al., 2003). One of the main factors to have such students is the care and support from the family (Martin & Marsh, 2009). Less attention and support given by parents or guardians to the students had caused them to care less on academic achievements. The matter is getting worse when the students are getting obsessed on gadget particularly during the pandemic. Parents have to give each of their schooling children a gadget to enable them to participate in an online learning, and this had become a nightmare to the parents as they have difficulty in controlling their children obsession to online games and other "not so good" materials in the internet.

Since education is essential for a sustainable future development and civilization of the country, necessary measures need to be taken in promoting better academic excellence to the children. A study by Joseph et al., (2016) highlighted the factors that contribute to academic success of students in school. The factors include:

1. Positive and supportive relationship from adults particularly teachers through the teachers' caring behaviour, inspiring the students and enhance the students' commitment to school.
2. Positive peer relationships and the assistance gained through these relationships. This could be gained through extra academic support and activities outside formal classes.
3. Family and community assets to support the students' academic aspiration and efforts. This could be derived from the families and communities' encouragement, financial support, moral support, academic assistance and guidance beyond the school walls.

This study proposed that the above factors are very much relevant for the respective parties in the island to look into considerably in order to achieve better academic achievements of students living in an island like Pulau Tuba, Langkawi. In addition, school-community partnership is essential in providing environment for students' development, increasing attendance and education, in improving school curricula, and in helping students to succeed at school and in later life (Thikryat, 2021).

Conclusion:-

There are of course internal and external factors that contribute for the quality of academic performance of students. This study focused on the possible influence of QoL that the students have with their academic performance in

school. The study found that a good quality of life experienced by the students is not a significant factor for better academic performance. This study concluded that the students' life quality alone did not contribute much to their performance in school. There are many other factors such as the commitment and dedication of the educators in school, the parents' role in coaching their children to complete school tasks at home and the extra school activities beyond the formal school sessions. Above all, the students' self-awareness in targeting for a better future through education is essential in ensuring that they have high motivation and greater momentum to excel academically. The challenge that many parents faced is the obsession of their children in using gadget for gaming and surfing not-so-good materials in the internet. This scenario is worsened after the MCO when parents have to buy gadget to each of their schooling child for online learning sessions. Perhaps, post-MCO study on the association between the benefit of gadget on academic performance of student is necessary.

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