

## GENDER AND VULNERABLE TYPES AMONG VULNERABLE MEMBER IN MALAYSIA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of this paper is to explore any different on vulnerability type (VuT) by sex of vulnerable community member (VCM) among aquaculture and fisheries households in Malaysia. There were qualitative and quantitative methods used in this paper – Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and survey. Initially, eight conceptual definitions obtained in literatures on economically vulnerable due to poverty and disable to work and earn income – i) older person, ii) poor single mother/father, iii) handicapped person, iv) career of bed ridden patient, v) suffering of serious illness (diabetic, heart problem, kidney failure, hypertension, and cancer), vi) poor and living alone, vii) child labor, and viii) others. A questionnaire was specially developed for this study and was distributed to 60 community leaders (CL) (the head of the village - JKKK) to give the profiles of 5-6 VCMs from different household in his village. These CLs are the informant of the FGD session. There are three sub-districts in this study – Kuala Kedah, Alor Star, Kuah and Air Hangat, Langkawi Kedah. These three sub-districts were purposely sampled to differentiate between 2-background of Fisheries and Aquaculture communities (FAC) – a mainland (Kuala Kedah) and an island (Langkawi). There are 42 males and 99 females VCMs had suggested by 60 community leaders in the questionnaire. Beside the questionnaire, 12 FGD sessions were conducted in 6-session for male JKKK (33 males) and 6-session female JKKK (27 females) in two different places in order to capture VuT. The 6-VuT are significant with the sex of VCM ( $p < 0.05$ ) through Chi Square test after the 8-VuT was regrouped. There are high percentage among male VCM is the disable male (38.1%) than disable female (14.1%); and high percentage among female VCM is single mother (37.4%) as only 9.5% single father. Second high percentage among male VCM is 'others' category (21.4%) and for female VCM is poor older person (15.2%). The FGD discussion obtained the answer of the 'others' category which may refer to drug addict and refugees. This may answer the second high percentage of male VCM in 'others' category of VuT.*

Keywords: Gender, Vulnerable Person, Poor, Fisheries and Aquaculture

### INTRODUCTION

Fisheries and aquaculture industry (FAI) in Malaysia supports a crucial livelihood in many coastal communities. There are an estimated 111,000 Malaysians involved in FAI excluding those working in the secondary and supporting sector (DFM, 2012). In 2008, fisheries, together with agriculture and forestry contributed 10% to Malaysia's GDP. The importance of agriculture and FAI had been recognizing by many developing countries (Bahaman et al., 2009) especially for national food security. Thus each member of the fisheries and aquaculture community (FAC) deserves good life wellbeing. There are 42 fisheries districts where 22 of the districts (52.38%) and are located at the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia (Musa Abu Hasan et al., 2011).

Vulnerable individual is someone with absent ability to do something. For this paper the context of ability is to carry out the economic activities in FAI environment. The subject of this paper is the vulnerable individual whom had disruption in ability to work and earn income. Despite this vital role especially in supporting national food security and providing healthy protein, the coastal community is still poor (Musa et al., 2011) especially the vulnerable community members (VCMs). There are various activities and programs which can be designed to assist these VCMs in FAC such as through fish based food processing enterprise, agro-tourism (Patricia and Julia, 2008), and recreational fishing. Indeed the socioeconomic activities of this VCM can provide significant contribution to FAI (Kaitlin and WFC, 2012, Musa et al, 2011). Nevertheless details typology of this group has to be firstly identified and developed, so then this vulnerable group can be assisted. This study aims to answer 'who and what the types of VCM in FAC by sex disaggregated are? Thus, the objective of this paper is to identify and differentiate types of vulnerability among male and female VCM in FAC. The Ho tested was – no relationship between sex and vulnerability types in FAC.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia has extensive fishery resources through Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 418,000km<sup>2</sup>, a coastline of over 4,809 km<sup>2</sup>, and a shelf area of 450,000 km<sup>2</sup> are the place of coastal community with fishing and aquaculture are the major economic activity (Siti Zobidah et al., 2013). Observations and empirical studies show that Malaysian women in small-scale fisheries are working long hours daily in self-employed and income generating activities but their contribution to their families has been neglected or taken for granted. As a result, women's economic contributions are underestimated, and they themselves have no social protection at old age. There are needs to acknowledge and stimulate women's economic contribution and participation in development especially for rural poverty eradication (Zumilah, 2010) and to assist other VCM.

Gender is a social construct terminology of what males and females should do, behave and interact in the community (Hofstede, 2001). One can change gender identity as what the community wants or as what he/she wants, but not the sexual identity because sex is biological characteristic, while gender identity is ideological characteristics. Popular gender terms are masculine and feminine to respectively present male and female characters (Linda, 2004; Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, 2000; Burke, Stets and Pirog-Good 1988; Rhode, 1997). Masculine represent males whom associate with strong and energetic individual, strong feeling and less emotional. Feminine represent females whom associates high emotional individual, sensitive and prefer routine job. Thus, FAI is termed as masculine industry due to hard work and masculine activities associated with it. Event for men, they must fit to work with strong and stable emotion to face the unexpected challenges during the open-sea fishing. Fishermen must have strong will and capacity to face high work risk.

There are many definitions of vulnerable people, and socio-economic vulnerability is most often associated with poverty. Conceptually the vulnerable is due to the absent of individual ability to protect him or herself from maltreatment. Nevertheless 'the absent of ability' itself may due to several factors and these factor may varies according to the context of discussion such as economy, social, spiritual, legal and etc. For this paper the context is economy and the environment is FAI. In short what factors challenge individual from earning income in certain type of industry? One of the factors may due to he or she is a vulnerable adult or a child.

In economic context one may vulnerable in A type of industry but not vulnerable in B type of industry. As a whole there are people whom are economically vulnerable in all type of industry due to his or her disability to work and earn income such as suffer of serious illness, older person, and single mother with dependent etc. As masculine industry not everybody can earn income in FAI. They have to be healthy, able and fit to work in this masculine environment and have stable emotion to face the challenges.

As for example women had vital role in poverty eradication due to the fact that women constitute a large and diverse social group and at the same time they have many dependents. Poor rural women contribute 30% of the household income (Jarrah & Laily, 1997). These poor women if they are household heads, single mother with many dependents or older person, they are actually vulnerable. The social gender roles of a woman in the household such as household chores and caring dependents or bed ridden family member may reduce their capacity to work and earn income.

According to Tengku Aizan et al. (2013), the average life expectancy at birth for Malaysia in 2008 was 71.6 for males and 76.4 for females. Due to that there are many poor old females than poor old male in rural areas (DFM, 2012). Furthermore the rural migration to the urban areas had added on to the ageing of rural population. According to the Malaysia Labor Force Survey (2008), there were 122,100 people working in the fishing sector compared to 130,500 in 2004. This phenomenon may due to the aged population in rural areas and based on life expectancy, this population may consist of many old females. In many cases women are in charged in caring the aged, the unable, as well as children from poor family and these children are always been associated with child labor in FAC.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper uses two methods – qualitative and quantitative method for data collection. A special questionnaire was developed for quantitative method which comprises three parts:

- a) Part A – The background has 16 questions about the JKKK - name of the village, name of the respondent, identity card number, mobile phone, home address, age, sex, residence, religion, marital status, period of marriage, educational background, occupation, position in current organization, other position in organization, the satisfaction as a JKKK member.
- b) Part B has one question (on who and what are 5-6 VCM) - name head of household, number of household members, number of VCM, sex of VCM, types of VCM, when the VCM started vulnerable, health status of VCM, and VCM's incomes.
- c) 20 question on leaders' perception on handicapped community members' inclusiveness in local community programs.

These questionnaires were distributed to male and female community leaders (CL) whom attended the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for qualitative methods of data collection. The CL is actually member of the Village Development and Safety Community (JKKK). The FGD were conducted in two places which were at Kuala Kedah and Langkawi Island. The participants of this FGD sessions are the JKKK which were sampled by the local expert from Kota Setar (for Kuala Kedah sub-district) District Officers Office (DOO) and DOO Langkawi which were sampled JKKK from Air Hangat and Kuah sub-district to represent Langkawi Island. The heads of sub-district the *Penghulu* in each sub-district were was also involved in the sampling the CL.

One male (usually the Chairman) and one female (usually the Secretary) of the JKKK were invited to participate in the FGD session from all villages in Kuala Kedah, a sub district of Kota Star Kedah, and from Kuah and Air Hangat the two sub districts of Langkawi Island and the Langkawi was chosen to represent FAC from an island, and Kuala Kedah was chosen to represent a similar community from main land. There are 27 villagers in Kuala Kedah, 23 villages in Kuah and 10 villages in Air Hangat. Two JKKKs (the samples) were invited to represent male and female CL respectively in each village.

There were three FGD sessions of male and female JKKK respectively at each place. In total there were 6-FGD sessions among male and 6-FGD sessions among female JKKK. All the FGD sessions were conducted by three moderators and three rapporteurs in 90 minutes session. The Kuala Kedah FGD sessions were conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016, at Dewan Orang Ramai, Taman Desarina Kuala Kedah. The male FGD sessions were during the morning hour from 10:00 am to 11:30 am and the female FGD

sessions were during the afternoon hour from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm. The FGD sessions at Langkawi Island were conducted on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017, at Dewan Orang Ramai Kelibang, Kuah, Langkawi with similar male and female session's hour as at Kuala Kedah.

The 3-FGD sessions in each male and female group at both places are according to the profession of the CLs – 1<sup>st</sup> session was for the fisherman, 2<sup>nd</sup> session was for the pensioner and the 3<sup>rd</sup> session was for the entrepreneurs (Table 1). The question asked was 'who and what the vulnerable members in your village are?' The discussion was recorded with the permission of the participants and then was transcribed. The content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Only Part (iii) of the questionnaire was selected and analyzed for this paper on who and what are 5-6 VCM in your village are? The profiles of the VCM listed by the CLs then were transferred to a SPSS file. The descriptive and cross tabulation statistics between sex and type of vulnerabilities analyses were used to describe about the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In total there were 12-FGD sessions participated by 60 CLs both at Kuala Kedah and Langkawi Island. The categories of CLs attended are as in Table 1. The majority attended are pensioners (43.33%), then are followed by entrepreneurs (30%) and the fishermen (26.67%). For female CLs the fishermen means that they are wives to fisherman, as well as pensioner and entrepreneur categories.

**Table 1: Category of JKKK at Kuala Kedah and Langkawi**

| Category of JKKK          | Kuala Kedah |        | Langkawi |        | Total |        |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|--------|
|                           | male        | female | male     | female | male  | female |
| 1. Fishermen (26.67%)     | 4           | 4      | 4        | 4      | 8     | 8      |
| 2. Pensioners (43.33%)    | 7           | 6      | 8        | 5      | 13    | 13     |
| 3. Entrepreneurs (30.00%) | 5           | 7      | 2        | 4      | 12    | 6      |
|                           | 16          | 17     | 14       | 13     | 33    | 27     |

These 60 CLs had listed 141 VCM in total in the questionnaires. High majority of female (70.2%) than only 29.8% males are reported as VCM by CLs. High percentage of male VCM is handicapped (38.1%), and second highest percentage is 'others' category at 21.4%. High percentage of female VCM is single mother (37.4%), and second highest percentage is older person category at 15.2%. Table 2 tabulates sex of VCM and VuT.

**Table 2: Vulnerability and Sex**

| VuT                                | Male VCM         |       | Female VCM       |       | total<br><i>n</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------|
|                                    | <i>n</i>         | %     | <i>n</i>         | %     |                   |
| 1. Handicapped                     | 16               | 38.10 | 14               | 14.14 | 30                |
| 2. Single mother/father            | 4                | 9.52  | 37               | 37.37 | 41                |
| 3. Older person &<br>Staying alone | 6                | 14.29 | 19               | 19.20 | 25                |
| 4. Bed ridden career               | 2                | 4.76  | 4                | 4.04  | 6                 |
| 5. Serious illness                 | 5                | 11.90 | 12               | 12.12 | 17                |
| 6. Others                          | 9                | 21.43 | 13               | 13.13 | 22                |
|                                    | 42               | 100   | 99               | 100   | 141               |
|                                    | (29.8% from 141) |       | (70.2% from 141) |       |                   |

Notes: VuT – Vulnerable Type

There are eight types of vulnerabilities listed in the questionnaire, and the CLs have to tick the VuT of each VCM suggested by them – handicapped, older person, single mother/father, child labor, staying alone, bed ridden career, serious illness and others. Due to more than 20% of cells have less than five counts, two adjustments had been done – merge staying alone with older person, and merge others with child labor. Then, 6-category of VuT had obtained (Table 2). Consequently, the Chi Square test between sex and 6 VuTs obtained significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ), and  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is relationship between sex and VuT. Since males and females require different attention and needs, this paper would like to call attentions on gender issues in preparing policies and programs related to VCM.

Obviously the finding is supported by Tey Nai Peng and Tengku Aizan (2013) that there are many old women than old men due to the life expectancy of women are more than men. When the husband passed away there are single mothers. In addition there are also death incidents among fishermen which then left behind single mothers. The FAI is a masculine as well as a high risk industry to the 'workers'. In addition to divorce, they are many single mothers in FAC, and if they are old or poor women with many dependents, then they are vulnerable (Nor Fairani, Mariani and Laily, 2016).

Consequently, qualitative data was analyzed on conceptualizing the VuT. The content analysis found that the FGD participants agreed that there is no child labor in their community as the following verbatim statements:

*'buruh kanak-kanak tak nampak dah.. (cannot see the child labor anymore...).'*

(Aina, Langkawi)

*'Buruh kanak-kanak di sini tak de.. (no child labor here...).*

(Fara, Langkawi)

*'tak pernah dengar pasal buruh kanak-kanak tu.. (Never heard about the child labor ...)*

(Khadijah, Kuala Kedah)

Due to the qualitative findings child labor VuT is not listed in this paper. In addition the FGD discussion had saturated and agreed that there are two other VuT– drug addict and refugees from Rohingya Myanmar. The drug mentioned in the FGD was inclusive Kratom leave – local herb taken as alternative to drug by local people. The drug addicts are vulnerable from the view of CLs because they need attention and help to assist them to find way out of their drug addiction problems. There seems no future for them socially and economically because they serve the FAI not more than as part time labor waiting for the fishermen coming back from the sea. As few verbatim statements in the FGD mentioned as follows:

*" dia orang kerja lagu tulah.. tunggu nelayan balik angkut ikan,..itupun bukan kuat sangat.. (they are like that, waiting for the fishermen to come back... and they are not that strong...)"*

(Osman, Kuala Kedah)

Kratom leave is easy to get around the village, therefore according to the FGD informants Kratom addict is having severe problem to get away from the addiction than the normal drug addict. One more point the Kratom leave is much cheaper than the normal drug:

*"Ketum lagi bermasalah dari dadah (Kratom leave is more problematic than drugs)"*

(Ali, Langkawi)

The FGD informants shared that the problem of drug addict and Kratom addict are serious as they said:

*"Bangun tidur ketum...celik mata ketum hee... (Wake up kratom and open eyes then remember Kratom hee...)"*

(Fuad, Langkawi)

*"Penagih banyak sungguh..uuu (there are too many drug addict..uuu...)"*

(Fadhilah, Kuala Kedah)

The FGD also underlined the issue of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. They occupied coastal land areas at Kuala Kedah and they are really do hard work for their survival. Consequently, they are taking local people working opportunities in FAI. Nevertheless due to the survival spirit and as refugees they break many Malaysian government rules and regulation especially regarding placement issues. Laterally they are not economically vulnerable because they fit to work in FAI, but they are legally vulnerable and making local people economically vulnerable due to less job opportunities especially for VCM. Special attention has to be given to these refugees, so that they can legally settled in Malaysia for certain period of time and are not disturbing the economic opportunities of the local people. The FGD informants described the refugees' issues as:

*"semua kerja dia buat...yang keci-kecik pun....(all job they do, even the small one..)"*

(Zaki, Kuala Kedah)

*"payah nak lawan mereka kuat kerja (hard to compete, because they are hardworking)"*

(Hasnah, Kuala Kedah)

*"kalau tegur mereka lawan dan bawak geng...(if we advise them, they will against us and they will bring their group members)"*

(Haki, Kuala Kedah)

Therefore, this paper concluded refugees and drug (as well as Kratom) addicts as additional VuTs for further discussion and recommendations especially in conceptualizing VuT as well as policy and program implication.

## CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The objective of this paper is to explore any different between VuT and sex of VCM among family members of aquaculture and fisheries households in Malaysia. Quantitative data findings initially underlined 8-category of VuT - i) older person, ii) poor single mother/father, iii) handicapped person, iv) career of bed ridden patient, v) suffering of serious illness (diabetic, heart problem, kidney failure, hypertension, and cancer), vi) poor and living alone, vii) child labor, and viii) others. With the absent of Child Labor VuT, this paper is initially concluded 7-VuT under quantitative findings as follows:

- i) disable person (handicapped)
- ii) poor single mother/father with many dependents
- iii) older person

- iv) staying alone
- v) individual whom taken care of bed ridden/serious illness/aged family member (which make him/her disable to work)
- vi) individual with serious illness (which make him/her disable to work)
- vii) Other categories

However the 7-VuT had been regrouped to 6-VuT by regrouping older person and staying alone groups as to achieve significant relationship between VuT and sex of VCM statistically as follows:-

- i) handicapped
- ii) single mother/father
- iii) combined older person and staying alone groups
- iv) bed ridden career
- v) serious illness
- vi) other category

In addition to quantitative findings is another 2-VuT deduced from qualitative findings which was also representing 'other category' of VuT as follows:

- i) drug addict
- ii) refugees

In conclusion there are 7-VuT reported in this paper. This paper aims to answer who and what the types of VCM in FAC by sex disaggregated are? The findings obtained that the relationship between 7-VuT and sex of VCM is significant. High percentage of VCM males are in category of disable and 'others' category of VuT; and high percentage of females VCH are single mothers and older person. Therefore the Ho – no relationship between sex and VuT in FAC is rejected.

All 6-VuT had significant relationship with sex of VCM. Each VuT need special attention as well as policy and program implication. For example older person need different program than the single mother. At the same time this paper concluded that VuT is gender related issues. As for instance female older person has different need and facilities as male older person. Therefore in each VuT need gender sensitive policy and programs. Future study needed for each VuT, so that real pictures and issues of VuT can be explored and identified. Similar study can be done in different industry in order to observe the pattern. This findings and conclusion is limited to FAI and FAC only.

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