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Qualitative Research Approaches in Assessing Challenges During the Pandemic Covid-19



Abstract: - A prosperous family refers to a situation in which a family has adequate access to the physical, economic, social and health resources needed to meet basic needs and improve the quality of life. This article discusses the findings from qualitative data on the new normal life among Malaysians after the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology used is in line with the objective of building a New Norm Life Model after the COVID-19 pandemic. Round table discussion which involved representatives from several ministries like Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Ministry of Digital Communications Malaysia, the Ministry of Finance Malaysia, and the Ministry of Health Malaysia. As a result, the government can come out with a better strategy and respond to future public health threats by streamlining physical and digital infrastructure and an adequate and efficient workforce. The government plays a significant role in creating an environment that supports the creation of a prosperous family through policies, social programs, and community empowerment.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, New Norm, Qualitative, Prosperous.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed various aspects of human lives. The concept of "new normal life" refers to the new way of life that emerged after the pandemic when society had to adapt to changes in actions, thoughts, and social interactions to maintain overall health and safety (Fisher & Heymann, 2020). More attention is paid to personal hygiene, such as washing hands often and using a face mask. 'Minimum contact' was practised in various aspects of daily life to reduce physical contact (World Health Organization, 2020).

The use of online technology for the purpose of distance learning and working from home was increasingly possible to practice. Stable internet access is needed to support this situation (Dingel & Neiman, 2020). Video conferencing and other social media platforms are widely used to communicate. The use of e-commerce through food delivery services also seems to be expanding (Chew & Eysenbach, 2020).

Families have access to education, decent work, adequate housing, sufficient and nutritious food, and access to adequate health services. Family members can live in a safe and supportive environment and could develop their potential and participate actively in society. A prosperous family is not only about material aspects, but also involves harmonious relationships between family members, emotional support, and the ability to cope well with life's challenges. The government and society play a significant role in creating an environment that supports the creation of a prosperous family through policies, social programs, and community empowerment.

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The transmission of the Covid-19 pandemic is a test from God, and it is an indicator of faith in Him. Allah SWT has explained that this test is the field of determining whether one of His servants is truly a believer or otherwise. Allah SWT has said in Al-Quran surah al-Ankabut verses 2-3:

Should people think that they will be left with only saying: "We believe", while they are not tested (with any trial)? And indeed! We have tested those before them, so (with such a test), it is clear what God knows about those who truly believe, and it is also clear what He knows about those who lie.

al-Ankabut verses 2-3

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, people all over the world, including in Malaysia, have had to adapt to a different life than before. The way and lifestyle of people changed so suddenly. Face-to-face meetings have been limited and it is best to do them online including meetings, teaching, and learning activities, banking and so on. The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact and invited various challenges covering various aspects of human life, especially economic, social, emotional and health.

As of today, there are still no signs that the Covid-19 virus will be completely eradicated from the face of the earth. However, the spread of the epidemic is now considered to be accepted as a post-pandemic or endemic phase, where it will continue to live and be part of human life today and forever. The process of adapting oneself to various Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) was introduced by the Malaysian government to contain the spread of this epidemic. The reopening of business premises to continue economic activities in Phase One of the National Recovery Plan (PPN) in August 2021 is the beginning of the community returning to its previous life but in a new normal state.

The Covid-19 pandemic apparently has an impact on the economy (Sacco & De Domenico, 2021). Many people have lost their jobs, been laid off with no clear prospect of returning to work (Zahra, 2021). Many companies, shops and factories were closed because they could not operate and had to bear the burden of debt and losses. The whole world including Malaysia is in transition to the Industrial Revolution 5.0 phase and at the same time subject to movement restrictions to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, online transactions are increasingly becoming the choice of users and it simultaneously affects many job opportunities (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

But now, after almost two years of the country and the whole world being hit by the Covid-19 Pandemic, cases of infection and death are decreasing because of a large-scale vaccination program and medicines have been produced. The transition from the pandemic to the endemic phase has implications for human life due to the transition from old traditions to new norms, then it is necessary to adapt again with the combination of among the old traditions that are still relevant to the new norms.

CHAPTER 2

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was used for this study as it is especially helpful in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of populations. Several officers as representatives of related ministry as such is particularly suitable for using exploratory research as open-ended questions can be used and we can get realistic answers from the informants in their own words which are meaningful, rich, and exploratory in nature. Qualitative research is used to comprehend a research problem from the perspectives of the local population it involves. The limitations of this methodology include no objectively verifiable result, adapt interviewing skills for interviewers, slow and time consuming during interviewing process and intensive category process also as qualitative inquiry is normally open-ended, the participants have more control over the content of the data collected (Yauch and Steudel, 2003, pp. 472-473).

The study is a part of a wider study on ministry perceptions on quality education which adopted a qualitative exploratory approach. In this context, a qualitative approach allowed the researchers to explore ministries' lived experiences with their tertiary provider through a rich and informed phenomenological approach. In doing so, it also assisted the researchers to establish the validity of the diverse types of expectations identified. Structured focus groups via round table discussion were selected as the primary method for this study as they allow for an analysis of the meanings, processes, and normative understandings of the participants (Merriam, 2008). The round table discussion were included six ministries and eight participants as follows: Ministry of Health Malaysia involved two participants (KKM1 and KKM2), Ministry of Education Malaysia involved one participant (KPM), Ministry of Finance Malaysia involved one participant (KW), Ministry of Women's Development, Family and Society involved one participant (KPWKM), Ministry of Digital Communications

Malaysia involved two participants (KKD1 and KKD2) and Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology and Innovation involved one participant (KSTI). Objective of the research is to explore the challenges faced by Malaysia government during the pandemic of COVID-19.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of the research were analyzed in a case or 'within case analysis' when we discussed according to the theme such as challenge faced by the ministry. The findings of interviews with representatives of the ministry on challenges were triangulated with other views from different ministries.

3.1 Infodemic Influence

Infodemic is a phenomenon described as an over-abundance of information (some accurate and some not) that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it (WHO, 2020). The main challenge that the Malaysian Ministry of Health (KKM) must face during the COVID-19 pandemic is the infodemic threat when a lot of false information is widely spread which cause panic in the community.

"During the pandemic, we have a lot of fake information that we have to stop immediately, so that people don't panic... for example, we don't announce that we want to do MCO, but people already panic buying what to buy."

Informant KKM1 (5:00-5:14)

The World Health Organization declared that besides the pandemic threat originated by the COVID-19 virus, an infodemic has been generated by a large amount of information available on the matter, as well as by the difficulty to sort the veracious information from the false.

"An infodemic is one of the big ones that caused the people to say that we are the government ministry. Then when there is a lot of fake news. People have started to argue why the government has to do this."

Informant KKM1 (5:14-6:17)

While government and related ministries made efforts to control the inaccurate information spreading online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the infodemic influence caused by the overload of accurate information were almost or completely ignored, and this will hinder the control of infodemic in future public health crises.

"We are dealing with a flood of fake news; we have a denial that must be issued within 24 hours and there is a committee at the ministerial level and the ministry of legislative action on the PDRM MCMC act from the regulatory aspect."

Informant KKD1 (17:00 – 20:56)

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO has been supporting the Ministries of Health in Malaysia with the collection and analysis of infodemic insights. An infodemic is a major public health issue because it causes confusion and shapes risk-taking behaviors that can harm the health of individuals and communities and erode trust in health authorities (WHO, 2020). It can also intensify or lengthen outbreaks when people are unsure about what they need to do to protect their health and the health of people around them. Social media is considered a powerful tool for sharing health information related to pandemic risks (Ahmad & Murad, 2020). Infodemic causes a state of panic about health in the community and may even lead to chaos. This is why managing the infodemic is crucial to helping populations make safe and informed choices backed by science, evidence, and facts.

3.2 Technology and Digitalization

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused people all over the world to turn to the use of digital elements to ensure that daily life remains relevant. Higher education institutions including schools in Malaysia involving management, teachers, lecturers, students and even parents must struggle to adapt to the use of digital technology in the teaching and learning process.

"Our main challenge at KPM is that we have never had PdPR experience, we always face each other. "

Informant KPM (7:55 – 9:15)

Learning activities are not easy to continue in a pandemic situation. To ensure that the teaching and learning process can continue even from home (PdPR), teachers need to be adept at using technology in the delivery of lesson content.

"The teachers still don't know what form we want to make, so we prepare a manual for the PdPR that is a guide for teachers and ensure that students can access education."

Informant KPM (9.18 – 9:23)

The digital skills of every level of society can be nurtured and sown so that the workforce in Malaysia in the future has high competitiveness. The government is always trying to bring progress to all levels of society. The Malaysian Family Principle so that no one is left behind to enjoy a more inclusive and equitable opportunity for shared prosperity and the government remains focused on its main goal, bridging the digital divide and improving the quality of life of the people. The strengthening of the technology sector and innovation in the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMK-12) is prioritized when the ability to access the internet throughout Malaysia is expected to be improved.

The presence of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to urge the world community to switch to a more comprehensive use of digital technology which indirectly causes a digital surge in Malaysia.

"KKM doesn't digitize everything, there are manual ones that have to be coordinated and shared with all parties. When there is a lot of information coming in, we have a manual problem. Digitization is very critical. The agency creates a digitization system."

Informant KKM2 (6:24-7:51)

The COVID-19 pandemic has also indirectly opened a space for renewal through the practice of new norms when digital transformation becomes another method to guarantee an efficient and effective delivery system. Now, the use of digital technology such as cashless transactions or online appointments has become part of the way of life which requires the Ministry of Health to change the way it works to be more creative, productive, and responsive.

Strengthening the digitization process will be able to bring transformation to the country's health care system and services which in turn will be able to change the culture of the community in daily dealings with the Ministry of Health.

Therefore, the use of technology and digital skills that are more widespread and comply with the new norms of life are very necessary. The Ministry of Health's digitization plan and strategy must be able to meet the grand expectations of the community in providing benefits and favorable effects to the country's economic development and competitiveness, especially from a health perspective.

"There is no social protection data database."

Informant KPWKM (10:04 – 13:45)

This statement is also supported by KPWKM informant when at the Ministry of Women's Development, families, and communities themselves find it difficult to channel aid to the target group because there is no accurate information. However, this problem becomes more difficult when the target group is in large numbers.

"The diverse target groups. Our wide range really meets the basic needs for survival. The new program we have to create is like a food basket with delivery restrictions, challenging locations, stratified flats, declare the head of household, one more than one non-citizen, who is the resident."

Informant KPWKM (14.00 – 14.06)

Screening for COVID-19 is one of the types of protection and assistance given to the elderly who appear to be at substantial risk of contracting the epidemic. Guidelines for the prevention and control of the COVID-19 disease were also created for the same purpose.

"When doing a home visit, Method changes the service at "e"... Even the payment is difficult for our clients. Who are difficult for us to help."

Informant KPWKM (14.07 – 14.22)

Constraints are faced when during the MCO many business deals and transactions are online.

"Digital inclusion. The previous government focused a lot on digital economy infrastructure. But a more comprehensive aspect is the measurement of the people who receive the benefits. For people with disabilities who cannot see etc."

Informant KKD1 (1:05:02 – 1:07:15)

"Regarding digitization, the inculcation of new norms in education in the aspect of digitization for non-critical services can be implemented at home. But in the end, we return to the original. The best practice is that the future is not continued. So, things like this need to be seen."

Informant KKD1 (2:11:40: – 2:15:27)

Poor Accessibility

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students are not allowed to meet face-to-face and only learn virtually or online. However, there are still a few students who are unable to receive the benefits of the latest telecommunications technology network infrastructure. It is especially important in facilitating connectivity to hard-to-reach communities, at the same time improving the standard of daily life and further increasing their digital footprint.

"During PdPR the issue of devices, most of our students share devices that most mobile phones are not suitable for use for PDPR. We have a smart fund complete with B40 data under the Hasanah Foundation to deal with the problem of student dropouts."

Informant KPM (41:30 – 42:50)

Teaching and learning at home (PdPr) were created to ensure that the teaching and learning process can continue so that students do not miss getting an education. PdPr is teaching and learning (PdP) that is implemented at home.

"The availability of internet gadgets, otherwise the boys can't learn. Sometimes a low-income family. PdP at home. How difficult it is, to share with. "

Informant KKD1 (21:09 – 26:34)

"PPD and JPN already have teachers who will help these teachers and there are guidelines in dealing with disasters. JPN and PPD are given permission to go to school without having to wait for instructions from the MoE to implement smoothness and learning for PPD to provide an alternative from the point of devolution."

Informant KPM 46:28 – 47:30)

Students need to study from home and need to prepare electronic equipment such as a laptop, smartphone, Wi-Fi, or a fast internet network to continue learning online. For those who can afford it, the provision of such equipment is not a problem but not for those who live in rural areas and face financial problems that are pressing in their daily lives. As a result, the community does not get proper education like the rest of them.

KPWKM works closely with KKM to provide awareness and appropriate protection to the elderly. However, the problem faced by KPWKM is when these target groups are far away or outside of the designated institutions.

"Services outside institutional services that do not stay in the homes of the elderly, OKU, and children in the legal conflict rehabilitation home are running a normal process when this COVID happens."

Informant KPWKM (10:04 – 13:45)

KPWKM helps provide basic needs to those who are already under the care of vulnerable institutions through the delivery of special packages of food baskets and cash.

"What is most important is humanitarian service (meeting needs, wishes and survival at that time). What we need to assist provide is to provide the most important food and shelter. The main product that is visible is a branded food basket to reach out to clients in need. Whether it is the group affected by COVID, the vulnerable group or existing clients."

Informant KPWKM (54:35-1:00:37)

KPWKM provides various forms of support programs to front-line workers who are faced with the pressure to conduct tasks during COVID-19.

"Digital content if a production runner or person who prepares food affects the creative industry so we can revive the private sector and the associations that represent it do not notice the creative industry buskers in a pandemic situation no one wants to see."

Informant KKD1 (21:09 – 26:34)

Mental Health Problem

School and university students experienced a shock due to the ongoing MCO which has stopped all face-to-face PdP activities and replaced them with online PdP. This sudden change certainly requires an adaptation process and invites anxiety among students. Mental health problems exist in all levels of society, especially students, and they need to be addressed together.

"We also emphasize the healthy mind of the students when they are at home and do not see their friends, the teacher counsels with a group of student teachers who teach how to deal with the emotions of the students, the teacher has to ask about the students' news, we have to prioritize that first to ensure that our students are not only academic but also have a healthy mind and emotions of the students as well need to take care."

Informant KPM (42: 54 – 43:56)

"The product is very synonymous with the love line 15999 during the pandemic, many use it to report actual aid requests. 70% of callers need help, not abuse help. In the beginning, many need sick for health help. The second phase of the suicide attempt transition. We take the initiative of telecounseling."

Informant KPWKM (54:35-1:00:37)

"Establishment of PST. Psychological Support Team. The power registered under their counsellor can be a volunteer service to the client."

Informant KPWKM (54:35-1:00:37)

"The cabinet's mental health is also an issue of suicide cases among Muslim Malays. If it is correct, the small group committee has a health minister, a minister of communication, a women's minister in terms of filling in for mental health, filling in models of the Bitfender network of depressed people. There is no access to psychosocial health. tendency to commit suicide."

Informant KKD1 (21:09 – 26:34)

4. CONCLUSION

The challenges that have arisen from the pandemic COVID-19 have become a solid foundation to the formation of strong self-strength, resistant to testing and persevering currents of change. If aspects of positive thoughts and emotions such as happiness and calm in driving personal well-being are achieved. Every individual should take lessons and lessons from what happened during the presence of the pandemic COVID-19 and try to appreciate and ensure the emotional aspects, thoughts, action and spirituality as well as the whole way of life is in a state that good to go through the difficult phase of this epidemic successfully at once a person has a strong identity, internal and external resilience which is strong, elements of adaptation (adaptability) and dynamics with changes so not easily affected by any situation or misfortune that occurs.

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