Unearthing Social Issues Due to Rapid Development of Iskandar Malaysia Region Using Exploratory Interview

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This paper presents in-depth interviews that were conducted to uncover the social issues faced by residents due to the rapid development of the Iskandar Malaysia economic region.

Research Method: Five social experts in the region were involved in the exploratory in-depth interview sessions. The interviewees were free to express their opinions based on open-ended questions with a minimal guide to ensure that their opinions are within the main theme of this study. The interviews were recorded and transcript, and then, the pertinent points were extracted using thematic analysis.

Findings: The analysis of the transcripts uncovered 36 social issues that have been highlighted by the Iskandar Malaysia social experts. Based on the interview, the most emphasized issues were employment and housing.

Originality: Thematic analysis of social issues present in Iskandar Malaysia as described by experts.

Keywords: exploratory interview, thematic analysis, social issues, Iskandar Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Iskandar Malaysia's population was 1.8 million and is expected to increase to 3 million by 2025. Its ethnic background can be broken down to 60% Malay-Muslim, 30% of Chinese origins with Buddhists, Taoists or Christian, and fewer than 10% with Tamil-Hindu roots. Iskandar Region Development Authority (IRDA), the body that monitors the development in the region predicted that there will be around 4.5% of population growth in Iskandar Malaysia each year. From 2006 to 2015, as many as 682,169 jobs have been created, many of which were in manufacturing, hospitality, food & beverages, and education. It is predicted to increase to 817,500 job opportunities by 2025 (IRDA, 2015). As the recognized economic growth driver for Johor and one of the prominent economic corridors in Malaysia, Iskandar Malaysia's primary focus is not just on economic development alone, it additionally focuses on social development for its people. This is because the regional authority board that oversees Iskandar Malaysia's development has highlighted that they want a synergy of development that is not just from the economic side but also on the social side. Inevitably, there is a need to assess the social implications inherited from the developments to determine what the people are feeling and thinking regarding current development.

Along the same line, one of the main goals of Iskandar Malaysia, which is to incorporate social aspects around the rapid development to support the sustainability and prosperity of the development (Roseland, 2000), emphasizes the idea to gauge the communities' perception towards Iskandar Malaysia development. The study of social impact is one way to discover what happens to people due to an intervention and

become aware of needs and changes that require attention (Esteves & Vanclay, 2009). According to Vanclay (2012), even in situations where people are aware of projects and their implications, the research undertaken for impact assessment can lead people to think more seriously about what the projects might mean. This could increase the concern or opposition that might not have been previously addressed. Increased impacts may lead many people to reconsider their opinions, leading to a considerable discussion at a local level (Voort & Vanclay, 2015).

Previous work by Langub (2012) indicates that development appears to change the lives of communities significantly, which correlated with the economic theory of social change proposed by Karl Marx. Alternatively, some developments may fail and be abandoned because of socioeconomic conditions and it should be studied on their social failure points (Drummond & Taylor, 1997). This kind of failure arouses decision-makers on the necessity of having a clear picture of the social consequences of development (Iswandi, Rianse & Sidu, 2014). The increase and severity of the impact of the development in the region are vital for the social aspect of people in the region. The impact could bring about positive and negative changes to the people in the region. It should also be carefully analysed to help future developments be mitigated and given careful planning exhaustive to the people in the region to promote a positive socio-economic environment. Nevertheless, this study focuses on discovering social issues from Iskandar Malaysia's developments, especially on the residents. This study was carried out through exploratory interviews to uncover the issues.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Every nation's social structure evolves. Social progress or sociocultural evolution, the philosophical idea that society moves forward or backwards through dialectical or evolutionary means, are examples of social change. It could refer to a paradigm shift in the socioeconomic structure (e.g. a shift away from feudalism and towards capitalism). Macionis (1996) defines social change as having four main characteristics: To begin with, it occurs everywhere, but the rate of change varies by location. Second, social change is sometimes deliberate but often unintentional. Third, social change frequently sparks debate. Finally, some changes are more important than others. There are several causes of social change, including some for cultural change, which can be classified into three primary sources. The first source is an invention, which results in new products, ideas, and social patterns. In comparison, the second source is discovering something new or discovering something new in something that already exists. Finally, the spread of ideas and objects to other societies is accomplished through trade, migration, and mass communication (McQuail, 2010).

According to Endres, Sprain, and Peterson (2009), social change occurs in response to the need to adapt to changing perceptions of tradition. The direction of social change is inextricably linked to the traditions of those involved. While Boswell (1992), Jamrozik, Boland, and Urquhart (1995), Roberts and Hite (2000), and Heaphy (2007) proposed that social change creates a new elite society with different perceptions of social system rules. There are various levels at which social changes take place. People's way of life, culture, and community, including their cohesion, stability, character, services, and facilities, were identified as social change factors by Armour (1990). Expanding on Armour's list, Vanclay (1999) identified social change factors as a way of life, culture, community interaction, political systems, environmental quality, health and well-being, personal and property rights, fears and aspirations.

Social issues are any conditions or behaviours that have a negative impact on a large number of people and must be addressed. Social issues with negative consequences are not a social problem unless policymakers, large numbers of lay citizens, or other segments of our society recognize them as such (Barkan, 2013). It is critical to identify social issues in order to understand the problems that people face. By correctly identifying the issues, decision-makers will have an opportunity to reflect

and try to mitigate the issues or lessen the impact of the problem. This research focuses on the social issues of Iskandar Malaysia. Malaysia has established five (5) economic growth corridors to promote free trade and business incentives in Malaysia's strategic investment regions. Iskandar Malaysia, NCER, ECER, SDC, and SCORE are Malaysia's five corridors (MIDA, 2013). According to Rostam et al. (2011), the Iskandar Malaysia development has resulted in the taking of villagers' lands for development. According to them, the most affected agricultural lands are in the traditional villages of Gelang Patah's Kampung Baru, which required the evacuation of 400 households. Other families affected include those from TiramDuku, Pekajang, TanjungAdang, Kampung Pok, TanjungKupang, Ladang, PedasLaut, and Paya Mengkuang, which were asked to relocate. Some families were relocated to the new settlement, such as Taman Perintis I. According to Rizzo and Glasson (2012), villagers and aboriginal fishermen communities were also relocated elsewhere in Johor Bahru, including to the metropolitan region's outskirts, to facilitate Iskandar development. The aboriginal community's economic resources have been disrupted as a result of this relocation.

Nor et al. (2009) conducted another study on the social impact of the aboriginal fisherman community on the construction of the Second Link bridge (connecting Johor and Singapore), which included Kampung SimpangArang, Kampung Bakar Batu, and Sg. Temun. The fisherman communities of Kampung SimpangArang are seeing a decrease in their catch, which has resulted in a continued decline in their income. Fishermen are unable to capitalise on the increasing population in Gelang Patah and Nusajaya on the demand for fish, thereby affecting the market price of sea produce. To make matters worse, the residents of the affected areas have a low level of education and a lack of working skills, making it difficult for them to find alternative or better jobs. Only a small number of them can work as plantation labourers or restaurant workers. The admission and recruitment of foreign workers in the industrial sector near their village have made it even more difficult for them to find work.

Following a study on the gentrification of Iskandar Malaysia by Sabri et al. (2012), which involved processes such as urbanisation, housing development, and megaproject development. They believe that decisive state intervention in collaboration with property developers was critical to gentrification. This has resulted in massive physical and socioeconomic changes that have benefited financial and economic activity, job opportunities, and population density. The new development in Iskandar Malaysia provides more options for facilities and services of higher quality. Apart from these positive outcomes, the negative aspects of gentrification dominate, particularly from a social standpoint. The social benefits of the urban poor are ignored, and the neighbourhood business structure changes inevitably because it no longer serves the low-income group. The poor are relocated to other areas, allowing development to proceed. The rising cost of housing and land will undoubtedly burden the children of low-income families. The researchers concluded from their research that the characteristics of Iskandar Malaysia's development are in the third of four waves of gentrification.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach that was taken for this study is by utilizing face-to-face in-depth interviews with selected expert respondents. This study managed to find five social experts who are well versed in the social life of the Iskandar Malaysia residents (Altenbucher, Vogel & Larcher, 2018). Before conducting the interviews, several preparations were made to ensure validity and this involves several actions such as:

• Scope of the interview was based on previous related literature
• Establishing several pertinent open-ended questions
• Selections of the respondents were based on the years spent working in Iskandar Malaysia and the relevancy of the personnel to the study
• Equipment and tools in collecting data
• Setting appointments with respondents

While the open-ended questions were prepared for the interview sessions, the interviewer allowed the respondents to express their views in a wider spectrum and the interviewer guides the flow of conversation with minimal intervention. Information gathered during the interview sessions was recorded and analysed according to its relevancy to the study, sorting it in a logical sequence and producing it into transcripts. Important points were then extracted from all of the interview transcripts where the points that are commonly agreed upon between the respondents are matched for generalization. The scope of this study is encompassed in the main theme which is to identify the types of social issues that the experts experienced in engaging the Iskandar Malaysia community.

The transcripts from the interviews were examined using thematic analysis to find the main theme of this study which is in identifying the social issues brought upon by rapid development in the Iskandar Malaysia region. In the analysis, themes were developed for representing the issues extracted from the transcriptions. Hence, this study carried out a thematic analysis of interview transcriptions using steps stipulated by Braun & Clarke (2006) and Judger (2016), however, minor modifications were applied to these steps to suit the study. These steps are elaborated as below:

i. Familiarization with qualitative data

After the preparation of transcription, the contents of the interviews' transcripts were read word by word and line by line, this process was done to familiarise me with the entire body of data.

ii. Themes Development

After the transcriptions are familiarized, sub-themes are identified which are social issues. Then the social issues that are expressed by the experts are extracted from the transcriptions. Subsequently, these sub-themes are categorised into the main theme which is the social impact domains. These domains are housing, security, employment, and environmental issues.

iii. Extract pertinent issues

Pertinent issues were extracted from the transcription whereby the transcriptions of the interviews were prepared for each session separately, and then a similarity check was applied to avoid reiteration and produce a representative issue/ quality.

iv. Segregated issues into subthemes

Social issues that have been highlighted in each transcription are extracted and the frequency of the issues mentioned was also counted and organised in table form.

v. Categorization of subthemes into main themes

These subthemes of social issues are then categorized into main themes that are social impact domains namely employment, security, housing, infrastructure and environment.

4.   RESULT OF THE ANALYSIS

The demographic background of the selected social experts that participated in the exploratory interview is as table 1

Table 1: Experts' demographic background

Respondents	Occupation	Expertise	Other accolades
Expert 1	Corporate Trainer	Community Leader	Local Community Leader, Youth Educator, Indian Rights Advocator, Winner of Iskandar Malaysia Social Hero Award (IMSHA) 2014
Expert 2	Liaison Officer for Chief Minister of Johor	Policy Maker	Small Medium Enterprise (SME) Investor
Expert 3	Editor-in-Chief of The Iskandarian	Journalist	Local Social Entrepreneur, Local Environmental Activist

| Expert 4 | Social study Professor | Local Expert | Science & Science Politic & International Relations, and Local Historian |
| Expert 5 | Head of Social Development at IRDA | Project Staff | Women Empowerment Enthusiast |

Table 1 shows that there are as many as five (5) respondents/experts that are considered experts in their field which strongly relates to the social development of people in Iskandar Malaysia. These experts are highly invested in the social development in their business and their outlook and they hope they can grow along with the people of the region.

4.1.1 Experts 1 transcription

At the early stage of the interview, the expert was briefed on the overall concept of the study. The expert felt obliged to give inputs based on his experiences and perception of the overall Iskandar development which affects its people either in positive or negative ways. The expert was quite sentimental and passionate by saying that there are a lot of things the expert had observed that are changing within the region, with not only buildings and infrastructures but the people as well. However, the expert said that even though buildings and infrastructures are rapidly growing and expanding, the social side does not equate with physical growth. To him, the government is too focused on the hardware whereas the software which the people of Iskandar are lacking and that motivated him to play the role of a social hero for Iskandar Malaysia which he also won an award.

When asked further regarding the social change, the expert answered by saying that the developing authority board (IRDA) often overlook the aspect of social sustainability such as in area like Ulu Belitong where the people are still in poverty. According to him, people are facing life's difficulties due to the inflated price of consumption goods. The price inflation is partly caused by Singaporeans coming in with their higher purchasing power. On the positive side, it benefits the business community by increasing their sale and profit margin, however for the local people/community, it is affecting their budget and lowering their purchasing power. This could contribute to distress for families especially in facing a weaker economy and currency that is currently affecting Malaysia as a whole.

Another problem that the expert highlighted faced by the Iskandar community is the issue of in-migration of expatriates and foreign workers working with local and international companies. This causes rising unemployment amongst the youth due to competition with the immigrant. The community feared that these workers are bringing in negative culture and a bad influence on the community's residents. They also feared for their security regarding their belongings and families especially their children because many criminal cases are highlighted in news related to foreign workers and migrants. As with the expatriates, the community feared that they are causing price escalation of residential housing in the area which resulted in community displacement due to the higher amount that they are ready to pay for housing which inflates the housing market.

The developers are taking the opportunity of building houses with inflated prices that are far beyond what any average local in Iskandar Malaysia could afford. To the expert, displacement is causing serious social change where communities are breaking apart and loss of culture ensues. The cohesion that holds communities together is often usually attributed to the proximity of their villages or housing areas, which in this case, are lost due to developers developing new high-end residential and displacing the locals. This in turn could risk the loss of culture and heritage which could alter the Malaysian cultural values in Iskandar Malaysia. Furthermore, the expert stated that the new residential development comes with amenities, facilities and

infrastructure for the residents. However, there is still a lack of public transportation systems in the IM which could give an advantage to the residents to better themselves in terms of connecting them to better education or employment.

In terms of social impacts resulting from the social change that has been happening around due to the development, the expert acknowledged the positive impacts are mainly coming in from the physical side of the development where the infrastructures are providing easy accessibility to the community. However, the negative impacts are things like loss of cohesion between residents and loss of local heritage partly due to the displacement of local people from their homes. Additionally, residents feel that they are losing their purchasing power and are having difficulty sustaining their living in Iskandar Malaysia and gradually resulting in the out-migration of the locals from this region.

4.1.2 Expert 2 transcription

At the initial stage of the interview, he proudly mentioned the development that has taken place in IM which to him, Johor is now far higher in the ranking of Malaysia. He added that the development that has been going on in the third phase of IM, has spearheaded the overall growth of Johor. He then pointed out several key development projects such as the Tanjung Puteri Port, Johor Bahru Airport, and the redevelopment of Johor Bahru as the centre of IM which is profiting Johor and the nation. According to him, major investments are coming from Singapore, China and the Gulf countries that have been steadily inclining, showing the potential of IM to be an economic hub for the southern Asian region.

However, he admits that within the rapid development there haven't been some sacrifices. This is because in some project development there have been issues of people losing homes due to displacement but these concerns are usually addressed quickly by IRDA. Even though it is addressed but it still doesn't solve the dissatisfaction of those homes and landowners being displaced by the authority. He hoped that the authority better sympathised with the state of the residents as some are used to a bigger plot of land and more housing area to do farming and husbandry works before their lands were reclaimed.

Mass Rapid Trains (MRT) and High-Speed Rails (HSR) are also an effort that could boost the productivity of the residents amongst those working in Singapore or have businesses in other regions. These added public facilities could enhance the relationship between the two neighbouring countries and in effect could make IM better which depends largely on the Singaporean economy as well. Many Malaysians are also dependent on the MRT and HSR as there is a need for a better public transport system in IM. This is because many Malaysians are also working in Singapore and Singaporeans spending their money in Johor could help to flow better into the IM region.

IM which largely depends on the Singaporean economy also needs to learn how to integrate better facilities into its region by providing amenities and facilities which are more attractive. As IM is only a short step away from Singapore, IM needs to invest more in the facilities as Multi-National Companies (MNC) who are based in Singapore would consider IM to be attractive to set up base there, however, before doing that they would have to consider the basic amenities and facilities that are available in the region which proves to be lacking.

He noted, that even though with this rapid development happening across IM, the skill sets amongst youth have not improved and there is a need for government to intervene and help to promote the growth of skills and talents amongst the youth. Apart from those cultural values that are also eroding due to a mixture of many influences which are picked up by youth and there have been many more social deviance occurring in the region.

On a positive note, he mentioned that there are also a lot of positives happening in IM as he sees a better collection at the local place of worship. As there is a better

collection, those places can certainly afford to provide a better facility to those that come to worship and they can also give out good content which could help in terms of leading to better ethics in society. With this, it would hope that it could reduce the crime rate around IM as the crime rate is quite significant in Johor compared to other states in Malaysia.

Even though there are various job opportunities offered in IM he feels that today's youth are not grabbing the opportunities or rather do not know which agency could help them to engage with potential employers. The synergy between potential employers and potential employees do not happen that efficiently even though there is an agency that handles job application, which is often not applied fully by the youth.

Admittedly, the industries in IM are also not dependent on the workforce that comes from IM or the outskirts of IM, rather many industries and companies depend on a lot of immigrant workers that are mainly from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar. This brings a lot of multiple social issues such as crimes, language barriers and culture clashes. This also causes the authorities and even residents to have a hard time assessing the immigrants' needs and issues.

Foreigners are coming in not in just the form of blue-collar workers, a lot of property buyers in IM are foreigners, from the data that he provided, almost 26% of the property buyers in Nusajaya were foreigners and from that figure alone, 73% of them were Singaporeans. Looking at the trends for the property market, there seems to be a demand and supply mismatch. Although there is a huge amount of property on the market, the population that is supposed to fill in the area have not yet flocked to IM. Plus, looking at the pricing of the properties, the units are not geared towards the local market, as not many of the IM population could afford to purchase the units. In IM it looks like the developers are very optimistic about the prospects of IM but there may be too much supply too soon. On a brighter note, Malaysia's relatively young population and the rising migration from rural to urban areas bode well for the property market.

This is why in his view, hard and soft infrastructure in IM needs to be enhanced tremendously, along with that the provision of a good public transport system is a must. Managing migration and job creation in IM will only help the region to prosper. This could attract people to live and work there as it will increase productivity and social cohesion to ensure the sustainability of developments in IM.

4.1.3 Expert 3 transcription

Expert 3 believes that to empower IM there needs to be capitalization of human capital, more specifically catered towards the women as expert mentioned that the empowerment of women is essential in bridging the gap between manual labour and salary differences. Furthermore, the expert trusted the ability of Malaysian women to be on par in terms of skills and abilities to match their male counterparts in the working environment. Consequently, the expert believed that this will improve the development of human capital and Malaysian employers are missing out if they are not employing Malaysian women in their companies.

Continuing along regarding the planned intervention, the expert believed there are as many positives as well as negatives that come along with it. She specifically mentioned that since now IM has become populated with many high-end residential areas. The downside of it is that even though there are many housing units but those housing units are not easily accessible in terms of price and not many can afford the housing offered due to the target market for these residential areas being foreigners with a higher income compared to the locals. For the average working Iskandarian, it would be hard for them to able to afford those houses. The expert added that even though the houses are available there is a lack of infrastructures and facilities around those neighbourhoods which would risk potential buyers choosing not to invest in the houses.

In addition, she mentioned that IM should look into providing better facilities for the whole of the area as adequate facilities could attract more people to live there. The expert added that facilities are integral in forming a sustainable and enjoyable environment that is conducive to growth. Talent and skills are also essential to help boost the growth of development, this is because good talent and skills it could help to bolster foreign direct investment (FDI) to move their funds into this region as there are talented people in helping them to manage their ventures. Apart from developing skills and nurturing talent, improving attitudes and educating better ethics are needed to show that IM is mature enough to be standing with the world. This is because certain foreigners view Malaysians to be uncultured and backward thinking and amidst all the negative coverage on corruption and instability of the geopolitical situation in Malaysia is helping to reinforce the idea. She believed for IM to be advanced there needs to be a better way to manage local talents.

As a passionate environmental activist, the expert commented on the current situation on the environmental front, the expert said that the development of IM is certainly positive for the growth of the economy for the region but couldn't be said otherwise for the flora and fauna. This is because when jungle areas have been cleared, all the animals lost their habitats and become stressed out due to losing habitats. This caused some rare species of animals, fishes and insects to become a risk of being endangered.

Moreover, IM has the longest grass bed in South-East Asia (SEA) which it has lost due to the rapid development of IM specifically from the Forest City development. Furthermore, the mangrove area that Johor is known for has also been affected, and even though some sites have been conserved as RAMSAR and UNESCO sites, there is still not enough to be done to conserve the environment. Even though, there was a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) developed for IM which was a blueprint for sustaining and managing the shoreline that Johor is famous for the question is whether the people who are developing the region adhere to it or not is a different matter. This is because the environmental decline is happening due to a lot of natural resources depleted or gone and all in the name of structural development. The development also causes air pollution (the dust from the soil transport), noise pollution (the sound from construction machines), toxic pollution (the chemical from the construction vehicle) and smell pollution (the decomposition of animals, flora and fauna).

According to her views, it is not just the environment that is affected significantly, the culture of the Iskandarians is also deteriorating. Due to the rapid age of consumerism and westernization of the country, culture is also lost and some grassroots cultures such as those of the indigenous people are lost such as Orang Asli Seletar, Jakun and so on. Although these things have been going not just here in Johor and Malaysia, this is in no doubt partly contributed by IM development.

Although there is a downside to environmental changes and cultural disposition, the benefit to it is that now IM has a plethora of available facilities and amenities around for ease of access for people of IM, while, job openings have been much more readily available and schools are abundantly available from public to private and high-end private schools such as those available in Edu City. With these added facilities it would offer the kids of IM another option to choose for their schooling.

4.1.4 Expert 4 transcription

Regarding youths in IM, his observation summarized that youths nowadays are thinking differently and have different worldviews than older generations. They are more concerned with sustaining the environment, job opportunities and managing global uncertainties affecting the country. However, this does not mean they are less concerned about politics as they know that politics have a great impact on the economic, social and also environment of the country. Youths today feel that they should make the initiative to change their circumstances rather than accept what is

imposed on them. The expert also expressed his concern about the increasing numbers of divorces happening in Iskandar Malaysia due to urbanisation contributed by rapid development.

His involvement with several IRDA social projects found that the public is still not well-informed regarding IM development and the role of IRDA. To him, IRDA should create a proper communication channel for the residents and people living there to participate in the decision-making phases of certain developments and this will mitigate the negative social impact on the IM community by discussing in a town hall meeting. According to him, most of the decisions in Johor are still governed by the Sultan and his Excellency's office. The Sultan has envisioned IM as a successful company where the employees are working hard for the company and hopefully in return the people will benefit from the development in the region and become an economic generator for the state. Job availability indirectly becomes the focus of Sultan's vision for IM to provide adequate jobs for the residents and even better employment offers than their current job. Besides that, the Sultan also stressed the importance of social health along with economic health development for the region.

As a sociologist, the expert suggested that the IM region should increase the safety and security of the region due to the crimes becoming more visible with the rising in social media coverage. People are engulfed with a sense of fear and insecurity due to the crimes being widespread amongst the technology-savvy young generation. This amplifies the anxiety of people in the community. The expert additionally stressed that effective public transport is necessary to improve the social health of the public who presently faces limited public transportation. With the increase in private transportation, traffic flows in Johor Bahru are choked predominantly. To him, offering a rail system in IM and also across the causeways to Singapore would help to lessen the burden of the public and also 400,000 Malaysians crossing the causeway daily. Of this number, 300,000 are from Johor and are majority live in the Iskandar Malaysia region where they are required to commute from Johor to Singapore daily before dawn and reach home late at night. This surely disrupts the family relationships of the residents which lowers the quality of life in terms of time with the family. It will increase the stress felt by families which will, in turn, lead to the breaking apart of functional family roles.

The expert is concerned about the higher cost of living faced especially by IM residents due to Singaporeans coming and shopping in this region with their strong purchasing power. Even though it is good for the country's economy but in terms of the prices that Malaysian have to pay are higher due to them earning a much lower wage than the neighbouring country. The expert acknowledged IRDA governance in the IM region adopts a less bureaucratic channel to speed up the development. However, most of the decisions made by IRDA have the sole focus on dollars and cents, while, disregarding most of the social and environmental impact. Whereas social and environmental health is vital to sustaining a better quality of life for IM residents.

In terms of education, his concerned about the overall performance of the rural and urban IM community especially the Felda (Taib Andak, Lok, Ulu Tebrau, Bukit Batu, Cahaya Baru) community in the IM region. Even though one of the IM objectives is to elevate poverty-stricken areas by giving proper education to the youth however until now the gap still exists between urban and rural youths. The expert suggested that to help people cope with the rapid development of IM, better public transportation is much needed, especially for those who commute between Johor and Singapore daily. Furthermore, the expert concurred with the Sultan's suggestion of making Johor a better state to live in by following these actions:

> ➢ Making Johor a "trouble-free" region with a lower crime rate and corruption.
> ➢ Encouraging families to be socially better by improving their education to participate in Johor's dynamic economy and also to reduce social problems such as divorces, drugs, and others.

> ➢ Maintaining a better environment for everyone to pitch in as the power to help lies with the people, not just the government.
> ➢ Reducing the environmental impact that hurts the flora and fauna of Johor due to the increased industry developments by developing a better waste management system for Johor.
> ➢ Developments should incorporate the heritage and tradition of Johor culture.

In his closing view, the IM region should maintain cleanliness to reduce the number of contagious diseases such as dengue, diphtheria and others. The region should offer better traffic management to reduce the existing congestion and traffic issues. Additionally, the public should be informed of any new developments so as they would not be sidelined by the authority as IRDA is a body responsible for planning, promotion and facilitating development including the social needs of the region, however, the local community doesn't feel that way.

4.1.5 Expert 5 transcription

According to the expert, IRDA has developed many social development projects such as community engagement projects, public awareness on current developmental projects, youth training centres, job centres and many more. The problems with the current social development projects are that public participation is lacking. The expert does acknowledge that the public is not participating as much as they expected due to the lack of communication from IRDA itself, however, they are currently improving that and the expert hopes in the future that public participation can involve the residents themselves.

Touching on the issue of social development projects, IRDA sees this as an opportunity to grow with the residents. hoping that the benefits not only reach out to those in the city but as well as those living in the rural region. They believed that those living in rural have a great potential to be a significant contributor to the overall growth of IM. They could as well be a driving force in securing a sustainable future as they hoped that IM to be a strong and sustainable metropolis of international standing by 2025 as per its vision.

As part of the vision for IM is also to be environmentally sustainable, however, the expert sees that it is difficult preserving the environment since the mentality of the people when it comes to waste management is lacklustre. This is because there is more waste being generated than ever coming from the region and it doesn't seem to be declining as the development progress. IRDA has also received complaints from the local residents stating there are many pollutions in IM such as air pollution, noise pollution, smell pollution and toxic pollution due to the development of IM. To counter that problem, IRDA has set up a blueprint for a low carbon society and better waste management as part of their development. It is hopeful that with the blueprint the waste management and low carbon emission could both be reduced to make IM a better living condition than previously before.

The expert believes that one of IRDA's strong suits is that they are very concerned about the wellbeing of the people in IM, this is why they have created so many social development projects for the people. They do acknowledge that when it comes to the well-being of the people the first thing that comes to mind is a place of residence. Houses are essential for any household. As they are seen as a bare necessity, IRDA has provided a policy for transit homes under the Rumah Iskandar Malaysia (RIM). This policy has been developed due to the increased demand for basic and affordable housing around IM. This is targeted at those who just started a family or started to migrate to the city and also those residents who have not had proper housing yet. Along with that, there are plans from the government to provide more low and middle-cost homes available around IM. Currently, most housing units that are available in IM are high-end premium units and are targeted mainly at foreign buyers.

The expert agreed that most of the housing is not readily affordable for most of the residents of IM and this is causing problems for those in the market for purchasing a property.

IRDA recognizes not only advances in the economic sector as well as the social sector. The proof of this is in the form of an award system that sets up basically to recognize those individuals who have helped the community in ways of their own. The award is called IMSHA or Iskandar Malaysia Social Hero Award, it has been running since 2014 and to date. This is essential in organizing such an event because it can give recognition to those who have participated in developing the people of IM and at the same time motivate others to do well and contribute towards helping society.

The expert believed that there isn't only one development that can impact the social health of the residents as each of the social development projects have varying impacts on the overall social health of Iskandar Malaysia. It is impossible to be very certain of such an impact might be on the total of residents. It might be apparent in some and not in others, but what the expert can confirm is that the development of IM does have a significant impact on the social wellbeing of the residents there.

4.2 Thematic Analysis Result

Based on the thematic analysis steps mentioned above, the pertinent social issues extracted are compiled in Table 2.

Table 2: Extraction and classification of social issues

Expert	Extracted social issues	Classification of the issues	Remark
E1	1. Immigration of expatriates and foreign workers	• Employment	• Employment – 2 • Security – 2 • Housing – 3 • Infrastructure -2
	2. Unemployment amongst the youth due to competition with immigrant	• Employment	
	3. Feared for security for belonging and families, especially children	• Security	
	4. Many criminal cases related to foreign workers and migrants	• Security	
	5. The cost of housing is increasing exorbitantly	• Housing	
	6. Local residents could not afford to buy a house	• Housing	
	7. Displacement of house	• Housing	
	8. The new residential development with amenities, facilities and	• Infrastructure	
	9. The lack of public transport (Facilities)	• Infrastructure	
E2	1. Displacement of the house for local residents	• Hosing	• Employment – 4 • Security – 1 • Housing – 2 • Infrastructure -2
	2. Lack of public transportation system	• Infrastructure	
	3. Amenities and facilities are available	• Infrastructure	
	4. Various job opportunity	• Employment	
	5. A lot of immigrants compete for jobs	• Employment	
	6. Immigrants involved with crime	• Security	
	7. The job agency is not used fully by youth (hard to find jobs for locals)	• Employment	

	8. The workforce depends on the immigrant worker (change in employment)	• Employment	
	9. The cost of the house is affected as many people couldn't afford to purchase the house	• Housing	
E3	1. Empowerment of women as the ability to work but there is salary different	• Employment	• Employment – 1 • Housing – 1 • Infrastructure -1 • Environment - 4
	2. The house is not reachable in terms of price and affordability	• Housing	
	3. The facility and amenities are lacking	• Infrastructure	
	4. The development of high-end residential areas (land usage is changing)	• Environment	
	5. The flora and fauna lost their habitat	• Environment	
	6. The natural resources are decreasing	• Environment	
	7. The development also causes air pollution, noise pollution, toxic pollution and smell pollution.	• Environment	
E4	1. Many crime	• Security	• Employment –3 • Security -2 • Infrastructure -1 • Environment - 1
	2. Fear and insecurity due to crime among youth	• Security	
	3. The public transport system is lack	• Infrastructure	
	4. IM plan can provide adequate jobs for the residents and better employment offers than the current job	• Employment	
	5. Empower women with skills to compete in the job market	• Employment	
	6. Different salary from Singapura	• Employment	
	7. Reducing environmental impact and improving the waste management system for Johor	• Environment	
E5	1. Many social projects lack community participation	• Security	• Employment –1 • Security -1 • Environment – 1 • Housing -1
	2. Difficult to the perverse sustainable environment due to community mentality	• Environment	
	3. Available Housing is not affordable to the majority of the residents due to the cost of a house	• Housing	
	4. Employment of women with skills	• Employment	

Table 2 shows that 36 social issues were uncovered from the five experts who have well understood the impacts of Iskandar development. These extracted social issues are then clustered into five domains of social impacts which are namely employment, security, housing, infrastructure and environment. The results from this classification are analysed for their frequency in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of the social impact domains

Social impact domain	Experts					Frequency
	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	
Employment	2	4	1	3	1	11
Security	2	1	0	2	1	6
Housing	3	2	1	0	1	7
Infrastructure	2	2	1	1	0	6
Environment	0	0	4	1	1	6
Total issues	9	9	7	7	4	36

Table 3 shows the social impact domains that were established from the interview conducted with 5 experts who are very familiar with Iskandar Malaysia development. The table indicates that employment is the most concern to them then follows by housing while security, infrastructure and environment have the same frequency score.

5.   CONCLUSION

This paper presented the qualitative study which has been carried out to understand the impact of the social issues encountered by residents from the perceptive of five experts who are engaged with the community. This study was able to uncover 36 social issues that have been brought to the surface by these experts. These social issues were extracted from the interview transcriptions using manual thematic analysis. The extracted issues were then categorized into five social impact domains which are employment, security, housing, infrastructure and environment. The main finding from the interviews is that employment is found to be the main concern by these experts and followed by housing issues that were highlighted.

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