

Fostering Ties and Trusts through Social Interaction within Community Gardening

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Abstract : Recent research has shown that many of the urban population in Kuala Lumpur, especially from the lower-income group, suffer from socio-psychological problems. They are reported as experiencing anxiety, depression, and stress, which is made worst by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the population was forced to observe the Movement Control Order (MCO), which is part of pandemic mitigation measures, pushing them to live in isolation as the new normal. The study finds the need to strategize for a better approach to help these people coping with the socio-psychological condition, especially the population from the lower-income group. In Kuala Lumpur, as part of the Local Agenda 21 programme, the Kuala Lumpur City Hall has introduced Green Initiative: Urban Farming, which among the approaches is the community garden. The local authority promotes the engagement to be capable of improving the social environment of the participants. Research has demonstrated that social interaction within community gardens can help the members improve their socio-psychological conditions. Therefore, the study explores the residents' experience from low-cost flats participating in the community gardening initiative from a social attachment perspective. The study will utilise semi-structured interviews to collect the participants' experience with community gardening and how the social interaction exchange between the members' forms and develop their ties and trust. For a context, the low-cost flats are part of the government social housing program (Program Perumahan Rakyat dan Perumahan Awam). Meanwhile, the community gardening initiative (Projek Kebun Kejiranan Bandar LA21 KL) is part of the local authority initiative to address the participants' social, environmental, and economic issues. The study will conduct thematic analysis on the collected data and use the ATLAS.ti software for data organization and management purposes. The findings could help other researchers and stakeholders understand the social interaction experience within community gardens and its relation to ties and trusts. The findings could shed some light on how the participants could improve their social environment, and its report could provide the local authority with evidence-based documentation.

Keywords : community gardening participation, lower-income population, social attachment, social interaction

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