

STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP MODEL OF SOCIAL FACTORS IMPACTING  
THE COMMUNITY'S PSYCHOLOGY IN THE ISKANDAR MALAYSIA  
DEVELOPMENT

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**DEDICATION**

For my wife and son.



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First of all, I am much more thankful for ALLAH SWT, for his special blessings over me. Even if I spend my whole life thanking his blessings, it is still very little effort to be thankful for his blessings. All my achievements thus far only because of him. Then, I would like to illustrate my heartfelt gratefulness to all those who have contributed to completing this project. I would like to express my gratitude to UTHM for giving me such a prestigious opportunity to take my Ph.D., which is an important step in my professional career and one of my UTHM.

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PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUNJALINAH

## ABSTRACT

In 2021, a total of 57,855 patients in Iskandar Malaysia were identified as experiencing mental health and emotional disorders. This represented an increase from 21% in 2020 to 28% in 2021 of the total population, making it a significant contributor to other health issues. The rapid development in the area has had profound psychological consequences, impacting the community in various ways. Thus, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive study on the social impact of these psychological consequences resulting from the development in Iskandar Malaysia. To address this, specific objectives were established, and a diverse approach was adopted. The first objective aimed to identify the social factors that contribute to the psychological consequences within the community. This involved engaging with five community leaders and conducting in-depth interviews to gather their insights on the critical social factors. Thematic analysis was then employed to organize and extract themes or domains from the collected data, resulting in 25 social factors categorized into five domains. The second and third objectives, which focused on establishing the ranking of social factors based on the community's perspectives and assessing their psychological consequences, were accomplished by surveying 368 members of the Iskandar Malaysia community using questionnaires. The community members were asked to rank the social factors affecting their psychological consequences, and the data were descriptively analysed using SPSS. The analysis revealed that the employment group had the highest ranking with a mean value score of 3.401, and 50% of the community members does experience psychological consequences from the development. The fourth objective aimed to develop a structural model illustrating the relationships, was achieved by applying a quantitative approach using multivariate analysis with the SmartPLS software. The results which are the main contribution of this findings are the structural relationship model showed that employment domain had the highest influence in the model, aligning with the findings from the descriptive analysis that employment had the most significant psychological consequences for the community.

## ABSTRAK

Pada 2021, seramai 57,855 pesakit di Iskandar Malaysia dikenal pasti mengalami gangguan kesihatan mental dan emosi. Ini mewakili peningkatan daripada 21% pada 2020 kepada 28% pada 2021 daripada jumlah penduduk, menjadikannya penyumbang penting kepada isu kesihatan yang lain. Pembangunan pesat di kawasan itu telah membawa kesan psikologi yang mendalam, memberi kesan kepada masyarakat dalam pelbagai cara. Oleh itu, adalah penting untuk menjalankan kajian menyeluruh tentang kesan sosial akibat psikologi ini akibat daripada pembangunan di Iskandar Malaysia. Untuk menangani ini, objektif khusus telah diwujudkan, dan pendekatan yang pelbagai telah diterima pakai. Objektif pertama bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti faktor sosial yang menyumbang kepada akibat psikologi dalam komuniti. Ini melibatkan penglibatan lima pemimpin masyarakat dan menjalankan temu bual mendalam untuk mengumpul pandangan mereka tentang faktor sosial yang kritikal. Analisis tematik kemudiannya digunakan untuk menyusun dan mengekstrak tema atau domain daripada data yang dikumpul, menghasilkan 25 faktor sosial yang dikategorikan kepada lima domain. Objektif kedua dan ketiga, yang menumpukan pada penetapan kedudukan faktor impak sosial berdasarkan perspektif masyarakat dan menilai akibat psikologi mereka, dicapai dengan meninjau 368 ahli komuniti Iskandar Malaysia menggunakan soal selidik. Komuniti juga diminta menilai faktor sosial yang mempengaruhi akibat psikologi, dan data dianalisis secara deskriptif menggunakan SPSS. Analisis menunjukkan bahawa pekerjaan mempunyai kedudukan tertinggi dengan skor nilai min 3.401, dan 50% komuniti mengalami akibat psikologi daripada pembangunan. Objektif keempat bertujuan untuk membangunkan model struktur yang menggambarkan hubungan, dicapai dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif menggunakan analisis multivariate dengan perisian SmartPLS. Keputusan yang menjadi sumbangan utama penemuan ini ialah model hubungan struktur menunjukkan bahawa domain pekerjaan mempunyai pengaruh yang paling tinggi dalam model, sejajar dengan dapatan daripada analisis deskriptif bahawa pekerjaan mempunyai akibat psikologi yang paling ketara kepada masyarakat.

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**LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<i>IM</i>	Iskandar Malaysia
<i>GDP</i>	Gross domestic product
<i>SIA</i>	Social Impact Assessment
<i>SI</i>	Social Impact
<i>PLS-SEM</i>	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
<i>SC</i>	Social Change
<i>IRDA</i>	Iskandar Regional Development Authority
<i>GOF</i>	Goodness of fit



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

Malaysia has set up five (5) economic corridors to increase local and foreign investments expected to boost the country's economy. These corridors are Iskandar Malaysia, Sarawak CORE (SCORE), Sabah Development Corridor (SDC), East Coast Economic Region (ECER) and *Koridor Utara*. Arguably, the most successful and notable out of all the economics corridors has been Iskandar Malaysia. Ideally, it is situated next to Singapore and receives many local and foreign investments. Iskandar Malaysia's record shows RM202.45 billion in total cumulative investments from 2006 to March 2016, an additional RM12 billion increase from 2015 figures.

Iskandar Malaysia, launched in 2006 for 20 years of development, is divided into 4 phases in its 3<sup>rd</sup> phase (2016-2020). This shows that Iskandar Malaysia is currently the most successful economic corridor compared to other regions, as it has the most cumulative investments (Samsurijan, Ebekozién, Azazi, Shaed, & Badaruddin, 2022). It is the brainchild of the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Iskandar Malaysia is underpinned by a robust legal framework in the Iskandar Regional Development (IRDA) Act 2007 that shows the support it has from the government to promote the region as a major economic corridor in the country.

Iskandar Malaysia covers 2,217 km<sup>2</sup> with five main key areas: Johor Bahru City Centre, Nusajaya, Western Gate Development, East Gate Development, and Senai-Skudai, with approximately 1.8 million inhabitants. Economic developments of Iskandar Malaysia are governed by nine pillars/sectors: Electrical & Electronics,



Petrochemical & Oleo-chemical, Food & Agro-Processing, Financial Advisory & Consulting, Creative Industries, Logistics, Tourism, Education and Healthcare. Iskandar Malaysia is seen as very serious and vigorously promoting its economic agenda and pushing for rapid development. Being in the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase from 2016 to 2020, Iskandar Malaysia has progressed rapidly, with several key developments completed and many more nearing completion. Progress is being achieved across multiple sectors, including education, healthcare, leisure and tourism, property, creative and retail. In addition, critical enablers such as physical infrastructure, safety and security, public housing, and social development initiatives are also moving forward (IRDA, 2018).

According to MIDA (2018), from 2006 to June 2015, the top five countries with the highest cumulative committed investments into Iskandar Malaysia were China, Singapore, the United States of America, Japan, and Spain. Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) account for 40% of the cumulated investment in Iskandar Malaysia. As the top foreign investor in Iskandar Malaysia, leading with total investments of RM14.68 billion, Singapore remained the largest foreign investor with a strong presence in manufacturing, services, education, healthcare, and properties. Nonetheless, in 2015, China had overtaken the USA as the second-largest foreign investor in Iskandar Malaysia, with total investments worth RM10.14 billion compared to RM5.66 billion for the USA.

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% Chinese origins with either Buddhists, Taoist or Christian, and fewer than 10% with Tamil-Hindu roots. Iskandar Region Development Authority (IRDA) also predicts 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 were created; many are from manufacturing, hospitality, food & beverages, and education and targeted to create 817,500 job opportunities by 2025 (IRDA, 2021).

As a growth driver for Johor and a prominent economic corridor in Malaysia, Iskandar Malaysia's primary focus is not just on economic development alone. Still, on the same track, it 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 and social sides. Inevitably, there is a need to assess social implications inherited from

the developments to determine people's feelings and thoughts about the current development.

Mental health is crucial to overall well-being, even amidst ongoing development. However, reports from Iskandar Malaysia indicate that the community is experiencing psychological consequences because of the development, emphasizing the need to study these impacts. Over the past three years, Johor has seen a worrisome increase of over 20 percent in mental health and emotional disorders cases since Iskandar Malaysia's development. Ling Tian Soon, the State Health and Unity Committee chairman, expressed concern about this trend, emphasizing the importance of effectively managing mental health to prevent further health issues. In recent years, the Johor State Health Department recorded a significant rise in mental health cases and emotional disorders, reaching 28 percent in 2020 and last year, compared to 21 percent in 2021. Prior to 2020, such cases were only at 11 to 12 percent. In total, 57,855 patients related to mental health and emotional disorders were screened last year.

Previous studies by Langub (2003) indicate that development significantly transforms communities, aligning with Karl Marx's economic theory of social change. Some development projects may fail or be abandoned due to socioeconomic conditions (Drummond & Taylor, 1997; Ichikawa, 2007). Such failures emphasize the need for decision-makers to clearly understand the social consequences of development (Sidu, 2009). The region's magnitude and impact of development have substantial implications for the social well-being of the local population, as they can bring about both positive and negative changes. Analyzing these impacts is crucial for future developments, enabling mitigation strategies and comprehensive planning that prioritize the well-being of the region's inhabitants and foster a positive socio-economic environment. Consequently, decision-makers must seriously consider the social impacts and consequences of Iskandar Malaysia's developments. Studies like the one proposed can be instrumental in raising awareness and prompting reflection on the current state of the communities in Iskandar Malaysia.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The rapid development of Iskandar Malaysia has had significant psychological consequences on the local community, impacting various social factors. While Iskandar Malaysia has successfully generated economic growth for the southern region of Malaysia, the profound changes in its landscape have affected three key areas: social, economic, and environmental (Ismail, Yusoff, Ismail & Saim, 2022). However, it is crucial to balance these factors to ensure a sustainable future for Iskandar Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2022). Supporting the development's sustainability and prosperity requires considering the social aspect alongside its rapid development. Understanding and assessing the social impacts are vital for achieving sustainable development, as the effects on the community's livelihoods have become a matter of concern in the ongoing debate about economic development. The importance of studying social factors becomes evident when examining the psychological consequences of rapid development in Iskandar Malaysia.

The significant changes in the region's landscape directly impact the local community's social fabric, profoundly affecting people's mental well-being, sense of identity, and community cohesion. Therefore, decision-makers need to understand the potential social impacts of development and identify which aspects are positive or negative for different individuals and social institutions. Despite being considered a planned intervention that affects the social fabric of Iskandar Malaysia, there has been a lack of specific social studies conducted in the area to assess whether the intended social changes and transformations have been achieved since the initiation of development in 2006 (Ismail et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies analysing Iskandar Malaysia as a city have highlighted various factors affecting its social dynamics, including disconnected highways, the replacement of low-rise buildings with speculative developments, pedestrian-unfriendly environments, high rates of traffic congestion and accidents, unreliable public transportation, high crime rates, and poor sanitation (Rizzo & Mandal, 2021).

These factors contribute to the social challenges the city and its residents face. Besides the study by Rizzo & Glasson (2012), there are several other studies on Iskandar Malaysia which were carried out, such as by Ho, Matsuoka, Simson & Gomi (2013), Rabe, Osman & Bachok (2014), and Osman, Bachok & Rabe (2015). Most of

them have focused predominantly on the economic impacts rather than the social aspect of the community. Additionally, these studies have often utilized a technical approach and relied on secondary data, lacking the engagement of public opinions, which is crucial in the political approach to studying social change. To address these gaps in knowledge and understand the social consequences of rapid development, this study aims to explore the social factors brought about by the development of Iskandar Malaysia.

One significant psychological impact of rapid development in Iskandar Malaysia is increased stress and anxiety levels among residents. A study by Hassan, Kassim, & Hamzah (2018) found that the changes brought about by development have led to a 25% rise in cases of stress-related disorders within the past five years. Additionally, a survey conducted by the Iskandar Development Regional Authority (IRDA) in 2018 reported that 40% of the respondents expressed concerns regarding emotional and physiological stress due to rapid urbanization. Understanding and addressing these psychological consequences are crucial for promoting the well-being and mental health of the local community. By considering the social factors alongside economic and environmental aspects, decision-makers can work towards achieving sustainable development and a better quality of life for the people of Iskandar Malaysia.

In order to fill these gaps, this study proposes to develop a structural relationship model of social factors impacting the community's psychology in the Iskandar Malaysia development.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

A research question is an answerable inquiry into a specific concern or factor. It is the initial step in a research project. For this study, the research questions are as follows:

- i.** What are the social factors that resulted from Iskandar Malaysia development?
- ii.** How do the community rank these social factors?
- iii.** What are the psychological consequences for the community?
- iv.** How does the structural relationship of these social factors represent the psychological consequences of the community?

#### **1.4 Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to develop a structural relationship model of social factors impacting the community's psychology in the Iskandar Malaysia development. To achieve this, these set of objectives are necessary to be achieved:

- i.** To identify the social factors affecting the psychological consequences of community.
- ii.** To establish the ranking of social factors based on community's perspectives
- iii.** To assess the psychological consequences of the community.
- iv.** To develop a structural model that picturised the relationships between five social factors domains with the psychological consequences

#### **1.5 Scope of Study**

The scope of the study is to determine the enclosure of the research, and this study focuses on the psychological consequences when assessing the social impact factors from the development of Iskandar Malaysia. The study was conducted within the Iskandar Malaysia development region, where rapid planned intervention has created social change processes such as migration, marginalization, social exclusion, and others, especially the region's community. The primary investigation of this study is to identify the social factors resulting in psychological consequences to the community. The community perceptions were gauged through a structured questionnaire survey to determine the social impact factors that concerned them. A small heterogeneous is a purposive sampling technique used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the thing you are interested in studying, which is, in this study, the community of Iskandar Malaysia. The population is selected as sampling representing the whole population which should be statistically sufficient to be validated and reliable. The samples were taken from the 5 key development areas of Iskandar: Johor Bahru City Centre, Nusajaya, Western Gate Development, Eastern Gate Development and Senai-Skudai area to represent the whole of Iskandar Malaysia region.

## 1.6 Significance of Study

This study makes a significant contribution by identifying and examining the dominant social factors leading to psychological consequences resulting from the development of Iskandar Malaysia. This research holds particular importance for policymakers tasked with managing both the intended and unintended impacts, as it provides a comprehensive discussion that serves as a guide and offers advice for shaping Iskandar Malaysia towards achieving its social development and sustainability goals.

The findings of this study can serve as an essential tool for those who deal with the daily effects of these impacts, enabling them to manage the situation better. Given that respondents in this study are members of the Iskandar Malaysia community, the research offers valuable insights to assist them in coping with the challenges posed by the rapid modernization and development in the region, thereby affecting their social well-being.

As Iskandar Malaysia strives to ensure the healthy social well-being of its residents, this study sheds light on the psychological consequences stemming from its development initiatives. Understanding these psychological consequences becomes crucial in assessing and mitigating unintended negative impacts while enhancing the positive impacts of Iskandar Malaysia's growth. Additionally, this research holds inherent value for future researchers, combining theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Integrating theory and empirical data in this study lays the foundation for future complementary or sequential research endeavours.

Subsequent researchers can build upon the insights and methodologies established here to explore related issues further or delve into different aspects of Iskandar Malaysia's development and its effects on the community's well-being. In conclusion, this study's contribution lies in its comprehensive analysis of the social factors leading to psychological consequences in the context of Iskandar Malaysia's development. By providing valuable guidance to policymakers, assisting the local community, and laying the groundwork for future research, this study plays a pivotal role in understanding and managing the multifaceted impacts of development in the region.

## 1.7 Motivation of Study

According to Blaikie (2009), there must be three (3) main factors for study motivation: personal, then secondly for academic reasons, and lastly, contribution to society. The first is for self; this study satisfies curiosity by helping guide researchers who want to study the psychological consequences of development or planned intervention. Moreover, personal reasons that highly motivate this study are that the researcher is a born Johorian and has lived in Johor for most of his life. The researcher felt deeply connected to the current situation and growth of Johor and Iskandar Malaysia as a region.

Secondly, the motivation acquired by academic reasons for this study is as follows. Initially, it is to contribute towards the body of knowledge for mostly SIA and Iskandar Malaysia. This is because even though there is an established SIA foundation in academic discourse, the process of conducting SIA is far from perfect and needs academic input worldwide. Then, this study presents a working framework for conducting SIA in the region by framing the relationship between planned intervention, social change processes and social impacts. From the reviewed literature, an inadequate number of studies have expressed the same working framework as this, which is much needed in the field.

Contributions to society are the last factor and arguably the most important in motivating the researcher to conduct this study. This is due to the study's value on the community by successfully identifying the community's social impacts from the rapid development of Iskandar Malaysia. Apart from this, this study also helps to identify the social change processes in the many communities of Iskandar Malaysia. By doing this, the policymakers or Iskandar Malaysia officials could take responsibility and improve on the current situation for its people and hope that it will achieve healthy social well-being, which is the overall ambition for Iskandar Malaysia development.

## 1.8 Structure of Thesis

This study is presented in seven chapters which are explicitly structured to achieve the objectives of this study. The following describes in detail the structure of the contents of each chapter.

**Chapter 1** is an introductory chapter that discusses the background of the research. In addition to this, the chapter introduces the research questions as a guide for achieving the study's objectives. While the scope of the study, research interests are also discussed as a basis for organizing things in an empirical study.

**Chapter 2** discusses the literature on social impact study and its dimensions and elements. Social change processes that are the pre-requisites of impact in the matter will be discussed, and the impact that would be incurred due to the social change processes. To tie it up, a look to carry out a working model of a framework for the investigation to achieve sustainable development in Iskandar Malaysia.

**Chapter 3** delves into the research conducted on Iskandar Malaysia, serving as the primary case study for this study. The chapter focuses on three key perspectives: social, environmental, and economic. This chapter examines facts and figures and provides a comprehensive overview of Iskandar Malaysia from these three angles.

**Chapter 4** describes the design and methodology to achieve the study's objectives. This chapter also discusses the research approach used as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. It will also include the motivation for applying the technique and its suitability for this research. The instrument's determination, the total sample and population research and the data analysis methods are also discussed and become part of the flow methodology in this chapter.

**Chapter 5** describes the exploratory study on insights into social factors in Iskandar Malaysia and establishes the relationship between catalytic planned interventions and social change processes. The information gathered from this exploratory interview was analysed using thematic analysis to discover the social factors surrounding the



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## VITA

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