

ATTITUDES, PRACTICES AND FELT NEEDS RELATED TO CHILD CARE AMONG RURAL MALAYS IN KUALA MUDA

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Dari kajian ini, adalah jelas bahawa cara-cara penjagaan kanak-kanak tradisional masih kekal di komuniti-komuniti desa Melayu di mana ibu-ibu memainkan peranan-peranan utama serta menanggung tanggungjawab-tanggungjawab asas mengenai penjagaan kanak-kanak. Lebih daripada 71 peratus responden perempuan dalam kajian ini mengakui bahawa mereka adalah penjaga utama kanak-kanak mereka dan biasanya mereka sendiri yang menjalankan tugas-tugas ini. Kaum bapa ataupun lelaki pula bukan sahaja kurang membelanja masa dengan kanak-kanak mereka jika dibandingkan dengan kaum perempuan, tetapi skop dan jenis aktiviti dalam peranan-peranan yang mereka terlibat dalam penjagaan kanak-kanak juga terhad. Puratanya, kaum lelaki membelanja lebih sedikit dari 4 jam sehari sahaja untuk bermain-main, mendidik dan mengajar kanak-kanak mereka manakala kaum perempuan membelanja sampai 10 jam sehari dalam aktiviti-aktiviti sedemikian di samping terlibat dalam aktiviti-aktiviti lain seperti memberi makanan, pakaian dan rawatan kepada kanak-kanak mereka. Kebanyakan responden perempuan kajian ini tidak memandangkan tadika sebagai satu pengganti ataupun cara alternatif untuk penjagaan kank-kanak. Kurang daripada 15% di antara mereka mengatakan bahawa tadika merupakan penjaga utama untuk kanak-kanak mereka dan majoriti (98%) di antara mereka tidak dapat mengidentifikasikan alasan-alasan kenapa mereka menghantar kanak-kanak mereka ke tadika-tadika tersebut. Walaupun tanggungjawab mereka dalam penjagaan kanak-kanak adalah berat, kebanyakan (80%) di antara kaum wanita di Kual Muda tidak menghadapi sebarang masalah dalam penjagaan kanak-kanak. Pada keseluruhannya, mereka puas hati dengan cara-cara dan kemudahan-kemudahan yagn sedia ada untuk penjagaan kanak-kanak di kampung-kampung mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, satu pertiga di antara responden kaum lelaki dalam kajian ini, berpendapat bahawa mutu penjagaan kanak-kanak di tadika perlu ditingkatkan dan pemeriksaan kesihatan secara biasa juga perlu diberi kepada kanak-kanak pra-sekolah di kampung-kampung mereka.

Findings from this study indicate that the traditional patterns of child care persist in rural Malay communities with mothers performing the major roles and responsibilities in child care. It is evident that the mother is the primary caretaker of pre-school children with over 71% of the female respondents indicating that they usually take care of their pre-school children themselves. Male (fathers) do not only spend significantly less time with their children compared to their female counterparts, but also their roles in child care tend to

be more limited in terms of scope and type of activities. On the average, males spent only slightly more than 4 hours in teaching, minding and playing with their children compared to females who spent about 10 hours per day involved in similar activities in addition to other child care activities including feeding, clothing and nursing their children. Most of the female respondents did not perceive kindergartens as an important substitute or alternative for child care. Only about 15% of them identified *tadikas* as the primary care takers of their pre-school children while the majority (over 98%) of them failed to identify any reasons for enrolling their pre-school children in kindergartens. These prevailing patterns of child care practices are reinforced by attitudes of perceived sex-role stratification of parents with regard to child care activities. Most males (over 75%) and females (over 80%) in the villages perceived child care as predominantly the responsibility women. However, the responsibility of educating the child was considered a shared/or joint endeavour between "husbands" and "wives" by a majority of both male (57%) and female (50%) respondents. Further, females (mothers) were also perceived to bear the major responsibilities of household (domestic) chores while males were perceived to share only in the responsibilities of purchasing and marketing of food as well as in taking care of the health of the family. In spite of their heavy responsibilities in child care, most women in Kuala Muda (over 80%) did not face any problems in caring for their children and on the whole, they seemed to be contented with the existing child care arrangements and facilities. However, one-third of the male respondents expressed the felt need that the quality of child care in kindergartens in their communities should be upgraded and that regular health examinations for pre-school children was important for the well-being of children.

INTRODUCTION

Children represent an important vital resource for the future growth and development of any nation. To ensure that they grow and develop successfully to meet the goals and challenges of the future, policy-decision makers in both developed and developing nations have increasingly stressed the need for laying a solid foundation for their maximum growth and potential development. In this regard, major emphasis has focussed on the changing problems and needs of child care¹ affecting the well-being of children, especially those in the pre-school ages (0-6 years old).

In most societies, including rural communities in Malaysia, children (particularly those in the pre-school age group) are primarily cared for by their mothers. However, other female members of the family including elder daughters, aunts, grandparents and relatives or even neighbours, often lend a helping hand. This is particularly true in most rural Malaysian communities characterised by the extended family system and informal personal relationships.

However, with economic development, urbanization and selective rural-urban out-migration of youths, these traditional patterns of child care responsibilities may have changed dramatically, affecting the type and quality of child care practices in rural communities.

A major concern is that the decline of the extended family in favour of nuclear family structures and the selectivity of migration of younger members of the village community (including young parents and mothers) to urban areas, will result in fewer family members (particularly females) being left to assume the responsibilities of caring for, and protection of, young children in rural communities. This problem is further compounded by the common practice of many young working couples (particularly among the Malays) in the urban centers who send their young children to be cared for by their parents or relatives in the villages of origin ("kampungs").

Furthermore, with the rising expectations and demands associated with urbanization and economic development, the economic or income generating roles of women may have top priority over their other responsibilities, including their roles as household managers. The increasing need for more income to buy consumer goods and services has also resulted in many women having to spend more time and energy in income generating activities², often in places outside their homes.

For rural women in traditional settings who continue to bear the major responsibilities of managing and running their households, including taking care of the young and the old, such changes in the needs, demands and resources associated with the changing roles of women invariably affect existing patterns and arrangements in child care. Indeed, changes in demographic and economic conditions in Malaysia indicate that the child care needs of low income families are rapidly being modified (National Family Planning Board, 1980:31).

In response to these changes the Ministries of Agriculture and Regional and Rural Development in Malaysia have focused on the development of pre-school child care facilities in rural areas with the aim of improving and upgrading the quality of life in rural communities. Kindergartens (or tadikas) have been established in various rural villages to ensure that the development of pre-school children will not be neglected in the course of rapid socio-economic development.³

These tadikas also serve to supplement as well as complement the changing roles of rural women particularly in meeting new and changing roles in child care. Though local support and input of parents and community leaders in the planning, operation and upkeep of the kindergartens, the pre-school program not only provides for the social, intellectual and healthy development of the

child but also serves as an important catalyst for the involvement of parents, especially mothers in community action and development.⁴

This study examines the needs, problems and facilities related to child care in selected rural Malay Communities in Malaysia. It addresses some of the major concerns related to the protection and care of preschool children within the context of rapid socio-economic change in Malaysia including:

1. What is the existing pattern of child care practices in rural vilages? (i.e. who usually cares for and/or looks after the children and what type of care is usually given to children?)
2. What are the existing kindergarten facilities and services available and how are they percieved by parents as alternatives for child care?
3. What attitudes do parents have regarding:
 - (a) sex role stratification patterns in child care practices; and
 - (b) the problems associated with child care; and
4. What are the percieved needs as well as "solutions" associated with the care and development of pre-school children in these rural areas?

The Location of the Study

The district of Kuala Muda in Kedah, was the focus of this study. A predetermined sample size of 300-350 respondents from four mukims (sub-districts) each representing one of the major economic activities of the District (padi, rubber, fishing and mixed farming), formed the basis for the selection of a cluster of villages in which a 50 per cent sample⁵ of all heads of households were then systematically chosen as respondents for the study. As shown in Table 1, both male and female heads from 316 households were selected as respondents for this study.

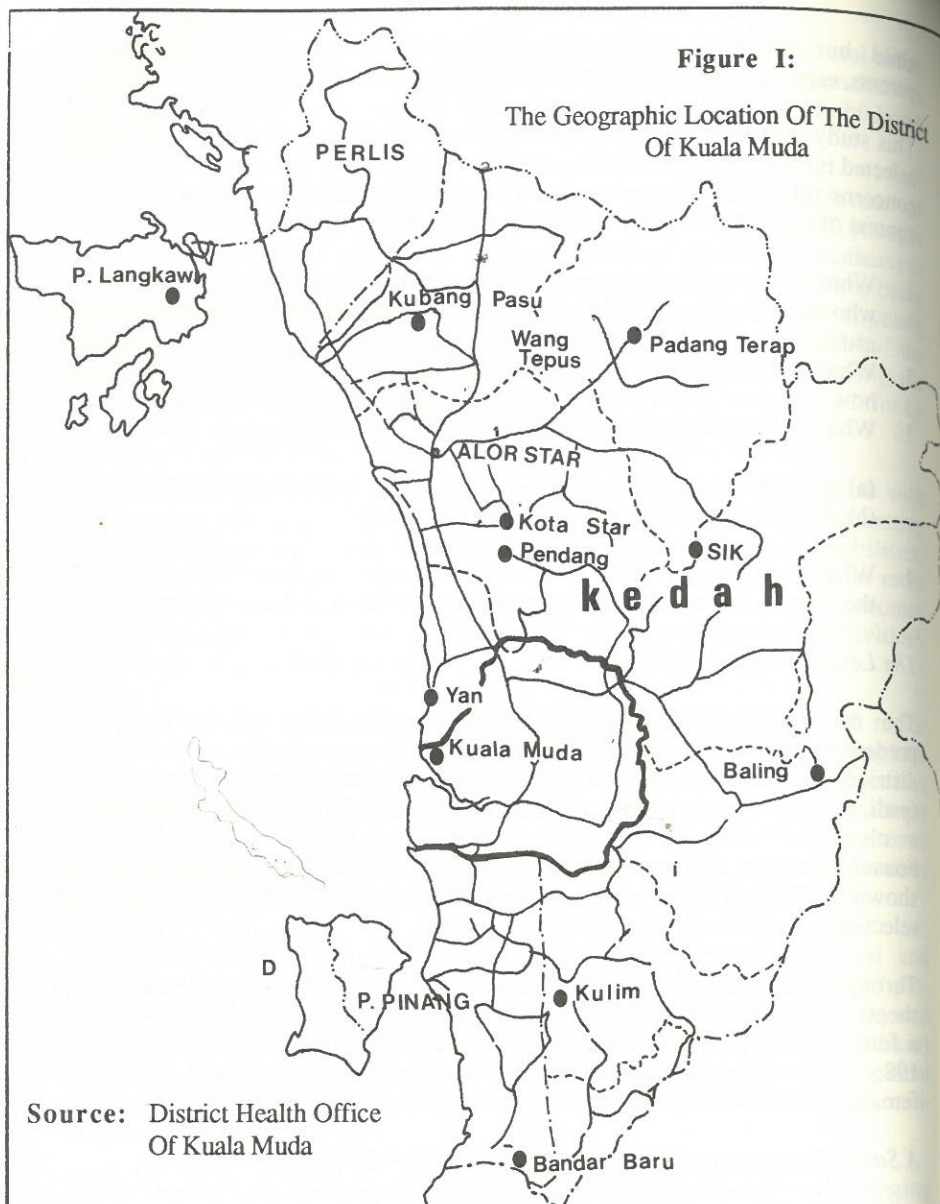
Through the use of structured interview questionnaire, and observation sheets, 5 teams of interviewers, with each team consisting of a male and a female interviewer conducted the field work and data collection in November 1985. (The male enumerators interviewed the male respondents, while the females interviewed the spouses of these male head of households).

A Socio-Economic and Demographic Description of Study Area

The District of Kuala Muda is located in central Kedah, in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia (see Figure 1). It comprises 90,877 hectares which are divided into 16 mukims (sub-districts). According to the 1980 census, the total population of Kuala Muda included 192, 308 persons, 49.8% of whom were male and 50.2% were female (see Table 2). Ethnically over 54% of the

Figure I:

**The Geographic Location Of The District
Of Kuala Muda**



Source: District Health Office
Of Kuala Muda

- International Boundary N
- State Boundary
- District Boundary
- Roads

scale:



population were Malays (who are predominantly rural) while another 26.8% were Chinese who live mainly in the urban centres. Another 16% were Indians who mostly live and work in the rubber estates.

Statistics provided by the Kuala Muda District Office indicated that rubber cultivation covered 51.2% of the total land area (with three-fourths being in large rubber estates and one-fourth in the form of small-holdings) (Table 3). The second major crop in the district is padi, which covers one tenth (10.6%) of the land area (Economic Consultants Ltd. : 1978). The remainder of the district is cultivated with coconuts (over 1,600 hectares); fruit orchards or mixed horticulture (over 1,300 hectares); coffee (25 hectares) and cocoa (4 hectares). (Statistic of Kuala Muda District Office).

Indeed, agriculture and related industries form the main sources of income for over 9,800 farm families in Kuala Muda. (Agriculture Department, 1982). They provide employment for over 60% of the population, 25.6% of whom were directly involved in crop cultivation, while another 36% were involved in the processing of agricultural products related to rubber and oil palm. (Economic Consultants Ltd., 1978 : 4).

In addition, Kuala Muda's two industrial zones of 208.4 hectares in Batu Arang and 36.2 hectares in Tikam Batu, also provide employment opportunities for many of the people in the district, especially for female youths between 15-24 years of age. In 1980, over 14% of total active labour force in the district were engaged in manufacturing industries (District Office).

However, inspite of the increased employment opportunities provided through industrialization, the majority of the population of Kuala Muda live at or below the subsistence level. It is estimated that the majority of the farmers in the rural interior areas of Kuala Muda (outside the Muda Irrigation Scheme) had an average monthly income of about \$170⁵ only. (The Star, October 1, 1982).

According to a study by the Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA)⁶ in 1981, more than 60% of the families in the mukims of Kuala Muda including Simpur, Bukit Meriam, Kuala Semeling, Gurun, Sungei Petani, Sidam Kiri and Teloi Kiri, earn less than \$300.00 per month, with the majority of them living below the poverty line (earning less than \$250 per month for a family of six).

In one of the 4 mukims selected in this study, Mukim Bukit Meriam, (which has a population of 4,765 persons) about three-quarters of the labour force were economically inactive, and the rest were engaged in fishing, padi farming or work as labourers in rubber estates and construction sites.⁷ The average monthly income in Mukim Bukit Meriam was estimated at \$274 (District Office Statistics). This relatively low level of income of the

residents may be traced to fact that the older farmers have abandoned padi cultivation and left their fields idle. (It is estimated that about half the padi fields in the area have been left fallow). This has resulted in an increased pest problem of rodents, which has reduced the income potential of the neighbouring padi fields in the area.

Similarly, in Mukim Kuala, which was also selected for this study, only 22% of the total labour force was economically active, with most of them being fishermen or businessmen and about 5% engaged in mixed and/or padi farming. With fishing being the primary source of income in this Mukim the estimated average income from fishing was only about \$300 per month (District Office Statistics). This relatively low income attained by the villagers is related to the absence of organized markets and market price fluctuations as well as loss incurred through poor storage facilities for their catch.

Meanwhile, in another Mukim focused in this study, Teloi Kiri, (which has a population of 9,223 people) about 25% of its labour force were engaged in rubber cultivation. (About fifty percent were rubber tappers and 20% were rubber small holders) (Kuala Muda District Office). Although, most of the rubber small holders here also grow papaya (in Kampong penghulu Tua and kampong Haji Saad), and maize (in Kampong Klinik) to supplement their income from rubber, the average monthly income was only around \$245 dollars (Ringgit).

Overall, it is evident that fishing and farming represent the major economic activities in the study area (Table 4). About 32% of the male respondents in this study were fishermen, most of whom were independent or self-employed. Only about 22 percent were engaged in farming with an equal number of owner-operators (9.8%) and tenants (10.7%). Slightly more than 10% were labourers who worked in the government service (7.0%) and in the factories (3.2%). However, the majority of the male respondents were self-employed (63.0%), with 18.0% being government-employed and about 10% engaged in the private sector. Only 1.3% claimed to be family-employed and 3.2% stated that they were in partnerships. (Table 4). Consequently, as shown in Table 5, the total mean income of the male respondents from all sources is about \$373 per month.⁸ Of these, 30% earned between \$201 to \$300, 20.6% between \$301 to \$400 and 13.6% between \$101 to \$200.

In short, it may be said that most of the people of Kuala Muda depend on agriculture and related activities for a living, and that a majority of them live at a subsistence level. It is also evident that many have low levels of education attainment. Directly or indirectly, their low level of education attainment may have precluded them from participating in income-generating activities made available through the modern industrial sector. About one-fifth of the people in the district had no formal education while the remaining two-

thirds had education of up to six years only (District Office). However, most of the male respondents (82%) in this study had attended at least primary school and about 11.7% had been to secondary schools. (Only 7 of the male respondents admitted that they had never attended school. (Table 6). Comparatively, the male respondents in this study were better educated than their female counterparts with an average of 2.24 years for the former and 1.9 years of education for latter respectively. (About 60% of the female respondents had attended primary and secondary schools while a few (1.6%) had been to religious schools, and about 27% had no formal education at all).

In addition, the problems of poverty and relatively low socio-economic development in Kuala Muda are also compounded by a lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and irrigation. According to the District Office records, only 60% of the villages have laterite or mud-surfaced roads. Of the 39, 599 houses in the district, only 65.3 percent have electricity and 65 percent have clean (piped) water supply.

The Findings of this Study

No doubt, these socio-economic conditions have greatly affected child care practices and needs as presented in the findings of this study. Firstly, findings related to the existing patterns and practices of child care in these rural communities will be described. This will be followed by a description of the existing attitudes towards child care according to perceived sex-role stratification patterns and the perceived problems related child care. Finally, the perceived (felt) needs and solutions for child care in these rural communities will be described.

The Existing Patterns of Child Care in Kuala Muda

The findings of this study indicated that the mother was the primary caretaker of pre-school children (as shown on Table 7). Over 71% of the female respondents indicated that they usually take care of their pre-school children themselves. Only about 4% stated that their children were usually cared for by relatives. One percent identified neighbours while another 2.5% identified their older children as usual care takers of their young children. Of significance, is that almost one-tenth (13.6%) of the respondents said that their pre-school children were usually left on their own.

Time Spent on Children

Child care is predominantly the responsibility of females especially mothers, in Kuala Muda. Findings in this study indicated that males (fathers) not only spend significantly less time with their children compared to their female counterparts, but also, that their roles in child care tended to be

more limited in terms of scope and type of activities. As shown in Table 8, on the average, males spent only slightly more than 4 hours while females spent about 10 hours per day involved in various child care activities.

In this regard, mothers usually spend an average of 4.5 hours tending to the needs of their children (with an average of 2.8 hours daily spent on just playing with them). In addition, teaching or educating as well as minding (advising and disciplining) of the children by mothers each consumed an average of one and a half hours per day respectively.

However, their male counterparts contributed to child care by spending an average of about one and a half hours per day in each of the activities related to playing, teaching and minding of their young children. Therefore, it is clear that the roles of fathers in child care were those of playmate, teacher and disciplinarian, while those of mothers included the overall responsibilities of feeding, clothing, nursing, teaching and minding the child.

Since the amount of time spent with children is often indicative of the quality of care given to children, the increased involvement of women (mothers) in income generating activities may affect the quality of child care provided. Findings from this study indicated that in addition to child care activities, the women also spend an average of about 5 hours daily on work outside the home. They also tended to livestock and vegetable farming activities spending an average of 1.4 hours and 1.1 hours daily respectively. Thus, the diverse and varied roles assumed by females/mothers in rural Malay communities (including child care roles) command a substantial part of their time as well as energy in their daily life.

Attitudes towards Kindergarten Facilities and Services as Child Care Alternatives

In recent years, kindergartens (tadikas) have emerged as a common facility in child care in rural communities in Malaysia. This is reflected in the study area where kindergartens under the sponsorship of KEMAS have been organised in Kampong Tepi Sungai (Mukim Kuala), Kampong Bukit Selambau (Mukim Teloi Kiri) and Kampong Tandop Batu (Mukim Merbok). In addition, the religious committee of the village of Kampong Pekan Lama (Mukim Merbok) also operated a kindergarten with the help of the State Religious Department. However, the village of Mukim Bukit Meriam did not have a kindergarten available at the time of the study (This facility was available about 3 years ago but was discontinued due to declining enrolment and low level of community participation).

How do rural women perceive these kindergartens? Findings in this study indicated that most of the respondents do not perceive kindergartens as an important substitute nor alternative for child care in their communities. This

is reflected in Table 7 where only about 1.5% of the female respondents identified tadikas as the primary care-taker of their pre-school children. Furthermore, this study also found that the vast majority of the respondents (over 98%) could not identify any reason for enrolling their pre-school children in these kindergartens. (Only 4 of the respondents identified educational development as a main reason for sending their pre-school children to these kindergartens).

Similarly, the majority of the female respondents in this study also failed to identify any needs (whether material or non-material) necessary for the operation and maintenance of the tadikas in their respective communities. This attitude of indifference and seemingly lack of interest in the development of kindergartens in their communities is further supported by the fact that less than 2% of the female respondents in this study stated that they had participated in kindergarten-related community activities (such as collection of donations, preparation of food for children, etc).

From these findings, it seems that tadikas may have little significance in affecting the type and quality of child care in these rural areas. Furthermore, female respondents in this study stated that agencies outside the family network were relatively unimportant as sources of knowledge or influence on child care practices. The contribution of KEMAS, Farmer's Associations and the mass media as sources of knowledge on child care were relatively insignificant.

Only a minority of the female respondents (4 percent) identified health centres (clinics and schools) as having an influence on their child care practices. Indeed, most women/mothers (over 64 percent) rely on their own knowledge and past experiences in taking care of their children (See Table 9). In this respect, it is interesting to note that contrary to traditional beliefs, less than 1% indicated that their mothers were a source of knowledge or reference on child care.

Attitudes and Perceived Sex Role Stratification Patterns in Child Care

The dominance of females (mothers) in child care responsibilities are reinforced by attitudes and perceived roles associated with gender in Kuala Muda. Both males and females in Kuala Muda viewed child care as a responsibility of women. Eighty percent of the women respondents and almost three-fourths of the male respondents in this study felt that females should be solely responsible for taking care of children (see Tables 10 and 11). Only 1.5 percent of the females and about one-fifth of the males viewed it as a shared responsibility between the husband and wife.

However, the education of children was seen as a joint responsibility of both parents (by about half of the male (51%) and female (50%) respondents). About one-quarter of both males and females indicated that the education of

children was solely a female responsibility. In contrast, only about 15% of the male and female respondents viewed it as the sole responsibility of males. Evidently, education represents an important value for many of the parents concerned with the future of their children.

In addition to their culturally (percieved) perscribed patterned responsibilities in child care women were also prescribed the responsibilities of domestic (household) chores including cooking, cleaning and washing (clothes). A large majority of both males and females upheld this traditional sexual pattern of division of labour (see Table 10 and 11).

However, in terms of purchasing and the marketing of food for household consumption, the pattern of differentiation of roles and responsibilities by sex is less clear. Overall, slightly less than half of the male respondents acknowledged that purchasing and marketing of food should be a responsibility to be shared by both males and females in the household. Similarly slightly less than one-third of the female respondents also shared this view. The daily marketing chores and responsibilities was seen as more of a female responsibility by female respondents (with 57% of them percieving this sex-role pattern). In contrast, over 46 percent of male respondents saw this as more of a male responsibility.

In terms of caring for the health of family members including children, it is evident that most female respondents (over 61 percent) viewed this as a responsibility of women while over half (52 percent) of their male counterpart saw it as a responsibility which they also share in.

In short, these findings reflect that the care and protection of young children in rural Malay communities continue to be a major domain of mothers and/or other women. Fathers and/or other males in these communities play relatively minor roles in terms of child care with the exception of the education of children in which they were perceived to have a joint or shared responsibility. In addition, traditional sex-role patterns were maintained by both male and female respondents particularly in relation to domestic household chores.

Perceived Problems Associated with Child Care

Given the responsibilities of child care and related domestic activities, what are some of the problems faced by women, particularly in relation to child care? Generally, most women in Kuala Muda did not face any problems in caring for their children. As shown in Table 12, over 80% of female respondents or mothers expressed that they had no problems related to child care. Only a few (12 percent) indicated having problems with their child caring roles. About 5% identified "naughtiness" as a major problem, while another 3% felt that not having enough time for their own entertainment was a

problem (arising from the heavy responsibilities of child care). A few mentioned other problems including the child's inquisitiveness (asking too many questions), unhealthiness of children (falling ill too often) and financial burden associated with having to take care of children (see Table 12).

Felt Needs Related to Pre-School Children

Overall, it is evident that women in Kuala Muda were generally contented with the existing patterns, practices and facilities related to the care of pre-school children in their communities. However, their male counterparts felt that some improvement was needed to upgrade the quality of child care in their communities.

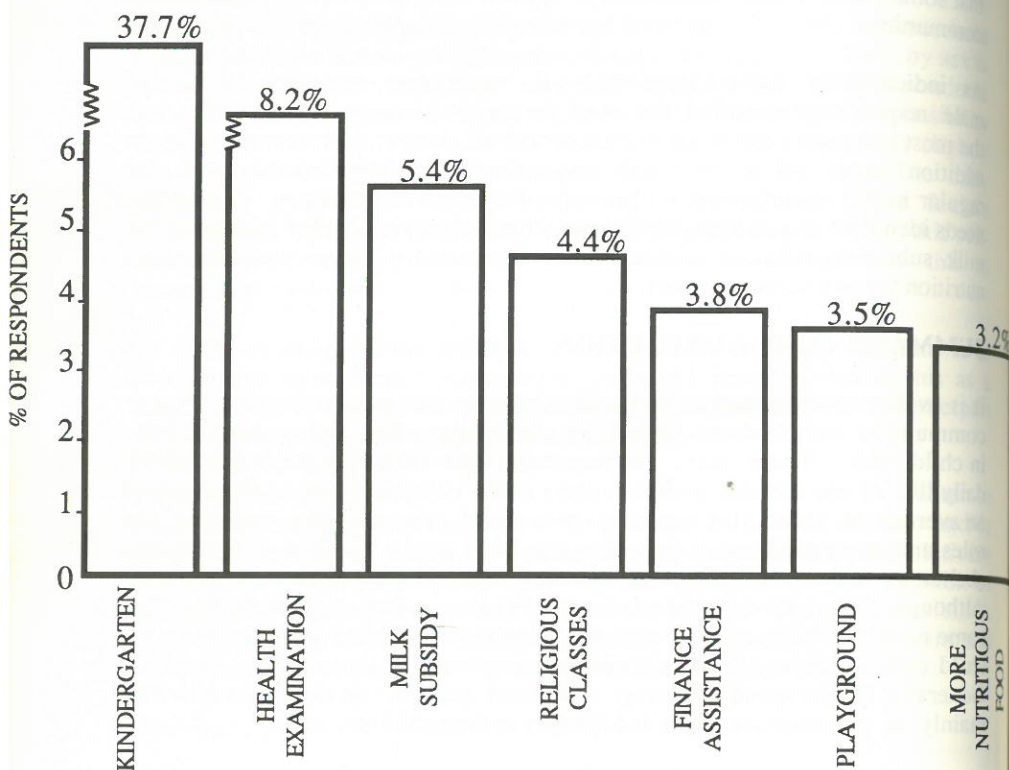
As indicated in Table 13 and Figure II, more than one-third (37.7%) of male respondents identified the need for better kindergartens facilities, as the most commonly felt need for pre-school children in their communities. In addition, about 8% of the male respondents also identified the need for regular health examination for pre-school children as important. Other felt needs identified as also important for pre-school children included the need for milk subsidies, religious classes, financial assistance, playgrounds and better nutrition for pre-school children.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is evident that the traditional patterns of child care persist in rural Malay communities with mothers performing the major roles and responsibilities in child care. These roles and responsibilities take up a major part of the daily life of the females and/or mothers in the villages. Many of them spend an average of about 10 hours involved in child care activities including the roles and responsibilities of providing the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter as well as in educating, minding and playing with their children. Although their male counterparts (or fathers) also perform major roles and bear some responsibilities in child care, the scope as well as time spent by them on child care activities are more limited (compared to those of the mother). Generally, fathers spend an average of 4 hours per day on child care activities mainly as playmates, teachers and minders to their children.

In spite of the availability of kindergartens, most of the female respondents do not perceive them as an important substitute or alternative for child care. Only about 15% of them identified tadikas as the primary care takers of their pre-school children. The majority (over 98%) also failed to identify any reasons for enrolling their pre-school children in kindergartens. Only a few of them (less than 2%) indicated that they participated in kindergarten related activities.

Figure II: NEEDS PERCEIVED AS MOST IMPORTANT FOR
PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN BY MALE RESPONDENTS.



These prevailing patterns of child care practices are reinforced by the attitudes of rural villagers as reflected by their perceived sex-role stratification in child care activities. Both males and females in the villages perceived child care as predominantly the responsibility of women (as evidenced by over eighty percent of the women respondents and almost three-fourths of the male respondents who perceived that taking care of children was the domain of women). Only a small number (1.5%) of the females and about one-fifth of the males in this study viewed child care as a joint/shared responsibility between husbands and wives. However, the responsibility of educating the children was considered a joint endeavour between a husband and his wife by a majority of both male (57%) and female (50%) respondents. Only about one-quarter of male and female respondents perceived the education of children solely as a female responsibility. These perceived sex-role stratification patterns in child care activities are related to a whole complex of gender stratified role responsibilities prevalent in traditional rural Malay communities. In addition to child care responsibilities females were also perceived to bear the major responsibilities of household (domestic) chores. Males on the other hand were perceived to share only in the responsibilities of purchasing and marketing of food as well as in taking care of the health of the family.

Generally most of the women in this study (over 80%) did not face any problems in caring for their children. They seemed to be contented with the existing child care arrangements and facilities. However, one-third of the male respondents expressed the felt need to upgrade the quality of child care through kindergartens in their communities. In addition, the need for regular health examinations for pre-school children was also identified by them as a felt need.

NOTES

¹In this study, child care is defined as the sum total of services related to health, nutrition, education, recreation and custodial care which are provided to children through their mothers relatives, friends or formal agencies.

²Income-generating activities is defined in this study as activities performed in the home or outside that results in earnings whether in terms of cash or in kind.

³KEMAS, the Community Development Division of the Ministry of National and Rural Development of Malaysia conducts various projects and activities which focus on women and children, including those related to food production, health, sanitation, nutrition and supplementary feeding. A major program activity of KEMAS officials has to do with the development of pre-school centres (or TABIKAS). The aim of such projects is to create an environment which is conducive to the social, physical, mental and emotional development of pre-school children. Run by teachers who have been trained in pre-school education courses organized by KEMAS offices at the state or Federal level (6-8

months course). These centres focus on the health and nutrition statuses of preschool children by providing them with regular medical examinations (by medical officers invited from the District Health Office); and balanced meals and/or snacks (as supplementary feeding towards a balanced diet).

⁴Although a trained pre-school teacher and some school supplies are provided by the government, it is left up to the community to provide the building and major expenses in running these classes. In addition, parents of children enrolled in these pre-school classes are often expected to help in meal preparation and other related community activities.

⁵All monetary values are in Malaysia Ringgit. Illustrative of Malaysian to US Dollars exchange rates are: 3.07: 1.00 in the 1960s, 2.31 to 2.59: 1.00 in the mid-70s, 2.15: 1.00 in 1980, and 2.45 in January 1986.

⁶Wan Azmi Arriffin, "Pernyataan Umum Keadaan Sosio-Ekonomi Dalam Wilayah KEDA," KEDA Monograph, No. 1, March 1981.

⁷Over one-fifth of the population is engaged in farming, 18% are padi farmers, and 1.3% of the population are involved in mixed farming. Most of them are either owner-cultivators or tenants. Less than 1% of the farmers in this mukim are share-croppers (District Office).

⁸On the average, the respondents earn about \$333 per month from their principal employments. About one-third of them (33.5%) earn between \$201 to \$300 and another 20.3% earn between \$101 to \$200 (Table 5). In addition, more than one-quarter of the respondents (i.e. 28% of them) receive an additional mean monthly incomes of about \$146 from secondary employment including farming (9.5%), commerce (7.0%); fishing (3.5%); and rubber tapping (2.2%).

TABLES

TABLE 1
POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZES OF SELECTED
MUKIMS AND VILLAGES FOR THE STUDY

Name of Mukims and Kampung	Total Population	No. of Kampung	No. of Households	Sample Size
Mukim Bukit Meriam	4,848	13	992	97
- Kg. Permatang Tengah	532	-	114	57
- Kg. Bukit Meriam	255	-	81	40
Mukim Kuala	2,423	9	513	118
- Kg. Tepi Sungai	428	-	146	73
Kg. Kepala Jalan	432	-	90	45
Mukim Merbok	12,033	21	2475	65
- Kg. Pekan Lama	-	-	90	45
- Kg. Tandop Batu	-	-	40	20
Mukim Teloi Kiri	9,367	51	1885	35
- Kg. Klinik	-	-	22	6
- Kg. Penghulu Tua	-	-	27	7
- Kg. Haji Saad	-	-	18	6
- Kampung Baru	-	-	25	7
- Kampung Pokok Macang	-	-	13	9

Source: Data for Mukims from Banci Penduduk Perumahan Malaysia, 1980.
(Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, K.L. - June 1982)

Data for Villages from Statistics provided by Penghulus or Pengerusi
JKKK (Jawatan Kuasa Keselamatan dan Kemajuan Kampung) if
respective villages

TABLE 2
THE POPULATION OF THE DISTRICT OF
KUALA MUDA BY ETHNIC GROUPS. (1980)

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
MALAYS	53520	53463	106983
CHINESE	26049	26597	52646
INDIANS	15804	15947	31751
OTHERS	442	486	928
TOTAL	95815	96493	192308

Source : District Profile, District Office Sungai Petani.

TABLE 3
THE LAND USE PATTERN OF KUALA MUDA
DISTRICT IN ACREAGE

Agriculture	Acreage
Ruber	47,270
Coconut	1,633
Padi	8,854
Cocoa	4
Coffee	25
Mixed Horticulture	1,357
Idle Land	1,792
FOREST	
Reserve Forest	14,812
Balak	343

Source : District Profile, District Office Sungai Petani.

TABLE 4
THE EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS OF THE
RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY.

Type of Employment	NO (%)
Self-employed	199 (63.0)
Government Service	57 (18.0)
Family	4 (1.3)
Partnership	10 (3.2)
Private Sector	30 (9.5)
Total	316 (100)

TABLE 5
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVELS OF MALE RESPONDENTS
FROM PRINCIPAL EMPLOYMENT AND ALL OTHER SOURCES.

Income Level	Sources of Income			
	Principal Employment		All Sources :	
	No	(%)	No	(%)
\$ 1-100	28	(8.9)	14	(4.4)
\$ 101-200	64	(20.3)	43	(13.6)
\$ 201-300	106	(33.5)	95	(30.1)
\$ 301-400	52	(16.5)	65	(20.6)
\$ 401-500	28	(8.9)	47	(14.9)
\$ 501-600	8	(2.5)	20	(6.3)
> \$600	17	(5.4)	24	(7.6)
Others	13	(6.1)	8	(2.5)
Total	316	(100)	316	(100)

TABLE 6
THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS
OF THIS STUDY

Type and No. of Years of schooling	Male No. %	Female No. %
0	7 (2.2)	84 (26.6)
1 - 6 (Primary)	259 (82.0)	191 (60.4)
7 - 9 (Lower Secondary)	22 (7.0)	20 (6.3)
9 - 10 (Upper Secondary)	15 (4.7)	15 (4.7)
Religious school	9 (2.8)	5 (1.6)
Vocational/Technical School	2 (0.6)	-
No Response	2 (0.6)	1 (0.3)
Total	316 (100)	316 (100)

TABLE 7
TYPE OF CARETAKERS OF PRESCHOOL
CHILDREN IN KUALA MUDA IN PER CENT.

Type of Caretaker	No.	(%)
Mother	227	(71.8)
Children Left on their own	43	(13.6)
Relatives	14	(4.4)
Siblings	8	(2.5)
Kindergarten	5	(1.6)
Neighbours	4	(1.3)
Not Applicable/No Response	15	(4.7)
Total	316	(100)

TABLE 8
AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT ON SELECTED DAILY
ACTIVITIES BY MALE & FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN PERCENT

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	AVERAGE NO. OF HOURS SPENT PER DAY	
	MALE	FEMALE
1. INCOME-GENERATING		
-employment	6.5	4.9
- repairing boat/sampan	3.5	-
- carpentry	3.0	-
- gardening	1.9	1.4
- making shrimp paste/dried fish	1.6	-
- livestock rearing	1.2	1.1
2. CHILDCARE		
- washing, cleaning & feeding	-	4.7
- playing with children	1.7	2.9
- teaching children	1.5	1.9
- advising children	1.5	1.7
3. DOMESTIC CHORES		
- cooking	-	2.1
- washing clothes	-	1.3
- cleaning house	-	1.3
4. LEISURE		
- listening to radio/TV	1.7	2.0
- strolling	1.7	*1.9
- hobbies	-	1.6
- sports	1.5	-
- sleeping	6.6	7.1
5. SOCIAL		
- social & religious	1.8	1.9
- convering	1.5	1.5
6. OTHERS	1.4	2.8

TABLE 9
ACKNOWLEDGE SOURCES OF CHILD CARE
BY FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN PER CENT

Type of Child knowledge	No (%)
Own Experience	203 (64.2)
Mother-In-Law and Relatives	85 (26.9)
Health Centre	10 (3.2)
School	4 (1.3)
Mother	2 (0.6)
Kemas	1 (0.3)
Mass Media	1 (0.3)
Farmers' Association	1 (0.3)
Elders	1 (0.3)
Not Relevant	8 (2.5)
Total	316(100)

TABLE 10
PERCEIVED SEX ROLE STRATIFICATION
PATTERNS OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS

Type of Activity	Male	Female	Both	No. Response	Total
	No.(%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	*No. (%)	No (%)
1. Child care					
- Education of Children	57 (18.0)	90 (28.5)	161 (50.9)	8 (2.5)	316 (100)
- Care of Children	4 (1.3)	262 (82.9)	4 (14.6)	4 (1.3)	316 (100)
2. Domestic Chores					
- Cooking & Cleaning	1 (0.3)	304 (96.2)	10 (3.2)	1 (0.3)	316 (100)
- Washing Clothes	2 (0.6)	307 (97.2)	5 (1.6)	2 (0.6)	316 (100)
3. Purchasing					
- Buying Foods	149 (47.2)	129 (40.8)	38 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	316 (100)
- Marketing	110 (34.8)	180 (57.0)	26 (8.2)	0 (0.0)	316 (100)
4. Health Care					
- Care of Family's Health	23 (7.3)	194 (61.4)	97 (30.7)	2 (0.6)	316 (100)

TABLE 11
PERCEIVED SEX ROLE STRATIFICATION PATTERN
OF MALE RESPONDENTS

Type of Activity	Male		Female		Both		No. Response		Total
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No (%)	No (%)	
1. Child care									
- Education of Children	48	(15.2)	81	(25.6)	180	(57.0)	7	(2.2)	316 (100)
- Care of Children	8	(2.5)	236	(74.7)	66	(20.9)	6	(1.9)	316 (100)
2. Domestic Chores									
- Cooking & Cleaning	0	(0.0)	296	(93.7)	19	(6.0)	1	(0.3)	316 (100)
- Washing	2	(0.6)	309	(97.8)	4	(1.3)	1	(0.3)	316 (100)
3. Purchasing									
- Buying Food	150	(47.5)	112	(35.4)	52	(16.5)	2	(0.6)	316 (100)
- Marketing	147	(46.5)	121	(38.3)	46	(14.6)	2	(0.6)	316 (100)
4. Health Care									
- Care of Family's Health	90	(28.5)	57	(18.0)	165	(52.2)	4	(1.3)	316 (100)

TABLE 12
PERCEIVED PROBLEMS RELATED TO CHILD
CARE BY FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN PER CENT

Problems	No	(%)
Children Naughty	18	(5.7)
No Time For Entertainment	10	(3.2)
Children Ask Too Many Questions	4	(1.3)
Children Fall Ill Frequently	4	(1.3)
Financial	3	(0.9)
Playthings Expensive	2	(0.6)
No Problems In Caring	265	(83.9)
No Response	10	(3.1)
Total	316	(100)

TABLE 13
FELT NEEDS PERCEIVED AS MOST IMPORTANT FOR PRE-
SCHOOL CHILDREN BY MALE RESPONDENTS IN PER CENT.

Needs	No	(%)
1. EDUCATIONAL		
- Kindergarten	119	(37.7)
- Religious Class	14	(4.4)
2. HEALTH		
- Health Examination	26	(8.2)
- Dental Care	0	(0.0)
3. NUTRITIONAL		
- Milk Subsidy	17	(5.4)
- More Nutritious Food	10	(3.2)
4. FINANCIAL		
- Financial Assistance	12	(3.8)
5. RECREATIONAL		
- Playground	11	(3.5)
6. OTHERS	12	(3.8)
7. NO RESPONSE	95	(30.0)
Total	316	(100)

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