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The Attitude of Officials Towards Compliance with Emergency and Housing Policies in Malaysia

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Abstract: The failures in regulation and compliance were identified as the key vulnerability and disaster causes in Malaysia. The beneficiaries were actually unaware of non-compliance that exposed them to hazard. Policy in emergency management exists as the important core of disaster regulation in Malaysia. However, the implementation is not according to plan and regulatory compliance was low. A research been done to highlight shortfalls in provision, training and awareness, and to recommend ways of improvement. Gathered actors' perspectives in the implementation of regulatory compliance in all level of emergency management system in Malaysia helps to explain the reason of regulatory compliance failures. Measuring their attitudes towards regulatory compliance reveals actual commitment because the implementation will probably involve making changes to existing barriers and on how actors' perceive and judge the benefit of it. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods together which involved 484 respondents. They have broadly negative general attitudes towards regulatory compliance, arguing that currently too many barriers are present in department levels to make regulatory compliance implementation straightforward. They need informative advice and guidance to enable them to see the very probable societal benefits that can lead towards regulatory compliance development. The research concludes by categorising obstacles that need to be overcome, to encourage actors to accept regulatory compliance and recommends changes to department structures, systems and practices prior to regulatory compliance implementation.

Key words: Attitudes, Disaster Management, Disaster Planning, Emergency Housing, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

People most probably misjudge disaster due to the fact that they have never been in a disaster situation in the past (Larsson *et al.* 1997) thus they give very low priority to disaster planning (Quarantelli *et al.* 1977). The general public seems to underestimate disasters until they experience it themselves. Even developed counties do not allocate big budgets in disaster management, time and other resources in planning for disasters due to rare occurrence of disasters (Davis, 2007). However, most of them are prepared in terms of regional networks, budget allocations, awareness on insurance coverage and many more (Newkirk, 2001). Unfortunately, developing countries are more prone to be predominantly hit by the disasters compared to developed countries (IFRCRCS, 1993). Even development plans do not usually take form in most cases in developing countries (Isbister, 1993). As a result, 95 per cent of fatalities occurred after disasters in less privileged countries (PHO, 1994). Thus, people live in developing country are, most likely, more vulnerable to hazards.

A hazard is the result of an increasing impact towards vulnerability on humans and society. In this respect disasters are not isolated events, but a sign of the insufficiencies and weaknesses within society, tempted by human-determined paths of development. However, considerations by society have been made concerning pre and post-disaster planning. Alternatives in thinking and planning to incorporate needs that are involved in post-disaster reconstruction have also been highlighted. Recovery requires an intensive approach that will support the foundations of community sustainability and capacity building and that will eventually reduce risks and vulnerabilities to future disasters. Government alone, as elected authority with overall control of legislation, is unable to facilitate recovery efforts without knowing the needs of a community. This is where the real

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challenge begins especially in housing reconstruction. Shortages of qualified people to handle impact assessments, the time taken for normal processing of building consents that require a more flexible approach and the need of government roles as the authorities elected are always the issues in disaster planning and recovery.

Furthermore, routine regulatory and legislative processes would not facilitate regulatory bodies coping with the volume of work associated with the reconstruction efforts and administration routine at the same time after disaster. Recently, new routines in the emergency management model, focuses more on government responses because of hands-on experience with the communities. Problems related to the government were highlighted in advance before addressing actions in disaster phases.

Malaysia is still in the process of reorganising and restructuring disaster management policy, learning from the national and international experiences. Providing post disaster housing must accommodate requirement in the national disaster management policy (known as the MNSC Directive 20) and parallel with the needs from international concern to the rights of disaster victims. International guidelines only present the legal context for the implementation of emergency housing 'responses' and do not represent or bind as a law. These guidelines outlined are based upon the consideration of law and human rights. It depends on local and national customary law. Trends in housing policy are very similar in the developing countries after a disaster strikes without enough attention to the needs of disaster victims, depend much on local initiatives and imported technology. Compliance culture is also still not established in most of developing countries, of which Malaysia is one, have not devoted much attention to pre-disaster planning.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of this research it was decided to utilise both quantitative (self completion questionnaire) and qualitative (focus groups) approaches. Often a combination of the two approaches is appropriately used. The main purpose of the structured interviewed (quantitative study) was to collect information to develop the focus group interviews (qualitative study). The structured interview (surveys) was used mainly due to the large sample framework in Disaster Management Mechanism of Malaysia. Not all of them in this mechanism involve in providing emergency housing. The purpose of questionnaires (surveys) distribution was also to identify the focus group for the next phase that only involve actors who are only involve in providing emergency housing in Malaysia. Thus, this research employs the surveys research method.

As a result of using the three-component model, the actors' attitude scale was categorised into three components: (1) cognitive, (2) affective, and (3) conative, for each of the ten hypothesised domains (current issues). Section A (cognitive) was for the purpose of gaining information on actors' perceived knowledge of the MNSC Directive 20; section B (affective) was to elicit information on how actors feel about the programme; and section C (conative) was to determine under what circumstances actors would be willing to accept the implementation. Besides categorising the current issues as the hypothesised domains, each domain was further subdivided according to the five groups of variables (culture related, structure related, law related, tradition related and work related) that had been influential in shaping actors' attitudes. Interrelating of the ten hypothesised domains with the three-component model of attitudes, and with the five groups of variables resulted in the production of matrix grid in the quantitative phase, and themes in the qualitative phase which was used as a guide for item construction (questionnaires). Also included in the questionnaire were items pertaining to various actors' biographical variables (experience, professional status, gender and level of control). Actors' biographical characteristics are mentioned in several international studies on enforcement and compliance as being influential in shaping actors' attitudes. Thus, the aim of the biographical items was to ascertain actors' background characteristics which may be responsible for shaping their exhibited attitudes towards regulatory compliance.

The subjects were the actors of a regulated population in Malaysian Disaster Management Mechanism, consisting of the administrative divisions of 13 States and 63 Districts. Nevertheless, only 5 strategic districts were selected in the states of Johor, Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Kelantan. The main criterion of selection was the distance of every state from the central administration of Putrajaya, Malaysia. The locations were selected in order to avoid bias and to encourage accuracy. The actors were stratified according to their involvement in the National Disaster Management Mechanism. The Disaster Management and Relief Committee in Malaysia, in order to justify proper disaster response concurrency to its level, has to form the following:

1. District Disaster Management and Relief Committee for Level I (minor) Disaster;
2. State Disaster Management and Relief Committee for Level II Disaster;
3. Central Disaster Management and Relief Committee for Level III (major) Disaster.

In the first phase, all of the enforcers from each of the departments in Disaster Management Mechanism in Malaysia were called actors. They were managers, clerical staff members, technical staff members and officers involved in disaster management. In total, 413 respondents participated in this survey as shown in Table 1, 66 departments (157 from district level, 202 from state level and 54 from central level) were accessed based on Disaster Management Mechanism of Malaysia. Disaster victims were the victims who were affected by disaster. Disaster victims' group is the group consisting of disaster victims under the actors' advocacy.

Table. 1: Survey Respondents

		Johor	Kelantan	Penang	Kedah	Sabah	Total
1	District	32	32	30	31	32	157
2	State	40	44	39	44	35	202
3	National						54
	Total						413

Source: Author

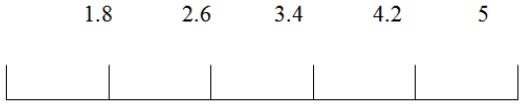
Parametric statistical tests using the SPSS statistical package were used in the questionnaire data analysis. This was justified in terms of the large size of the sample (i.e. 413) since it is generally appropriate to use a normal distribution-based test rather than a non-parametric test when the size of a sample is large enough (i.e. greater than 100). In order to quantify actors' attitudes towards regulatory compliance using the Composite Mean Score (CMS), differences in CMS range were divided into five equal intervals, where each interval constitutes a score of 0.8 as shown in Figure 1.

Using Box 1 as a reference, the interpretations of CMS made are as follows:

1. A mean score of 2.60 and less was interpreted to mean that actors have a negative attitude towards regulatory compliance (labeled Group 1);

2. A mean score between 2.61 and 3.4 would indicate that actors have a non-committal attitude towards regulatory compliance (labeled Group 2);

3. A mean score of 3.41 and above would indicate that actors have a positive attitude towards regulatory compliance (labeled Group 3).



Source: Author

Fig. 1: Divisions of CMS

In the second phase, information on biographical data gained from the quantitative approach was used as guidelines for selecting respondents for the qualitative approach. The main aim of the interviews was to illuminate and articulate the questionnaire findings. Thus, those who were only directly involved with emergency housing were selected for interview sessions.

All of the enforcers from each of the departments in Disaster Management Mechanism in Malaysia were called actors as shown in Table 2. They were managers, clerical staff members, technical staff members and officers involved in disaster management, especially in providing emergency housing. These included the actors from the special body appointed by the government, such as the contractors, compliance officers (i.e. CIDB) and contract workers, responsible for providing emergency housing to the disaster victims. Disaster victims were the victims who were affected by disaster. Disaster victims' group is the group consisting of disaster victims under the actors' advocacy.

Table 2: Interview Respondents

Professional Status	National (N)		State (S)	District (D)	Special Body Appointed by Government (SB)	Total
	Direct Contact with Disaster Victims	(N)				
Clerical Staff	6	9	8	10	5	38
Manager	1	-	1	1	1	4
Technical Staff	3	6	7	4	4	24
Officer		-	-	5	-	5
Total		25	16	20	10	71

Source: Author

The process of qualitative data analysis was an inductive approach to classify the data into groups (categories) and to identify patterns and relationships among these categories. Actors' comments on the issues of regulatory compliance in emergency housing in Malaysia were coded into three categories (1) affirmative about the issue of regulatory compliance being discussed, (2) undecided on the issue, and (3) negative towards the issue. For every question, the reasons was discussed for actors' having affirmative, undecided or negative views and coded according to their interpretive similarities. The codes used for analysing the interviews were arranged in sequence based on the interview schedule items in the interview's questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The percentage of actors with negative general attitudes was 48.2 per cent. Followed by non-committal attitudes (33.8 per cent) and only 18.0 per cent of actor's exhibit positive attitudes to regulatory compliance.

The quantitative and qualitative data showed an acknowledgement of the importance of ongoing regulation. Both methods proposed that more effort should be done to promote the importance of actors' knowledge of the MNSC Directive 20, due to the fact that actors lacked of information. They were also willing to work together with the disaster victims if the disaster victims are ready and the content of the program is suitable, even if their workload is increasing. The actors said that the MNSC Directive 20 was suitable and practical for their department only, but not for the actors and disaster victims. The current contents of the MNSC Directive 20 are not suitable for the actors and the victims and require revision, especially toward giving more authority to operational level (decentralise), although the programme shows some improvement (i.e. caring feeling) in the adaptation of disaster victims after a disaster strike. Regulatory compliance would give the benefit to the department related to the scene of emergency housing and was suitable to be implemented. However the implementation is not effective at all levels of the National Disaster Management Mechanism and is not tailored for them and the disaster victims individually. More input should also come from the disaster community especially NGOs. The literature review (e.g. Drabek, 1986; Davis, 2007; UNISDR, 2005) shows that, those countries that have achieved high levels of compliance relied on cooperation between the industries (e.g. NGOs and private sectors) and the government (e.g. appraisal and incentive) that the Malaysians should be learned.

Actors do wish to see changes at the department levels before regulatory compliance is fully implemented, especially with what benefits them (e.g. training, support and incentive). Even though the actors' expressions were more negative, they were actually willing to support the implementation especially if instructed by the Prime Minister's Department. As civil servants, actors are required to observe and implement government directives. Additionally, actors were interested to know about their working environments because most of them are familiar with the terms used at the disaster scene (e.g. disaster victims, emergency housing and regulatory compliance) and willing to talk about it with colleagues. Actors also expressed that even though regulatory compliance could be risky when involved with legitimacy and liability, it does have the potential to make actors more 'caring' towards the disaster victims. Actors agreed that the involvement of disaster victims in disaster victims' groups would increase their knowledge. However they were uncertain about the social development of the disaster victims due to a lack of advice and consultation from specialists regarding the MNSC Directive 20. Actors did not agree that disaster victims' emotional development would recover from disaster trauma unless it was handed over to the specialist. Nevertheless, actors were most favoured with the programme stipulated in the MNSC Directive 20 as guidance for providing emergency housing compared to other standards pertaining in international disaster communities. Actors added that efforts towards implementing full regulatory compliance are a good step in providing emergency housing.

Conclusion:

In summary concerning the main negative attitudes, it is essential to recognise them as the barriers that would have to be systematically addressed by the Prime Minister's Department to minimise their negative effects on regulatory compliance implementation. Questions which have arisen from this research have to be answered: What are the strategies needed to minimise the negative effects? How much funding and commitment is the Prime Minister's Department willing to allocate to a programme that in reality would benefit a relatively limited number of disaster victims? Would the Prime Minister's Department be willing to sacrifice other areas of its National Security Programmes in order to boost its regulatory compliance implementation? Is there any political will in the government to push its policy to this extent? And in a more positive light, what changes is the Prime Minister's Department willing to introduce so as to establish widespread acceptance of compliance culture and 'caring' community as a whole? It would be easy to feel

overwhelmed by the immensity of the task that faces the work force, but it may well be from within the present human resources that the Prime Minister's Department may begin to seek some of its answers. Ideas and recommendations in finding new solutions to old problems can move upwards as well as downwards; therefore the technical design of rules and regulations has now to be accompanied by organisational design. Although the established ethos of Malaysia's public service sector has tended to be one of control from above, there is promise and virtue in seeking to promote a professional culture.

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