

The Impact of Homestay Development Among the Communities of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Malaysia

Salleh, N.H.M

Samad, S

Othman, R

MohdIdris,

S.H & Jaafar, A.H

School of Economics, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract

In principle, the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) was established to eradicate poverty among Malaysians who are landless. Through this program, poverty can be overcome. In fact, in the effort to increase income, continuous efforts have been undertaken one of which is to encourage the participation of FELDA communities in homestay program. This study aimed to empirically analyze the impact on the community involved in this program. Impacts of study were from the aspects of economic, social, cultural and environmental. The study conducted a field survey with the aid of questionnaire as study instrument. A total of 161 respondents were interviewed at several homestay locations in Peninsula Malaysia. The sample was chosen based on stratified random sampling. Meanwhile, the tests conducted were mean analysis, one-way ANOVA and Tukey HSD post-hoc tests. Study results found that homestay program positively affected the operators. Comparatively, the Semenchu, Mata Ayer and Sg. Klah homestays recorded high economic impact. Meanwhile, the Mata Ayer, Semenchu and Jengka homestays dominated from the aspect of cultural impact. As for the environmental impact, Sg. Klah homestay recorded the highest. Nonetheless, from the social impact, study results did not find any significant difference among the home stays under study. In view that participation in home stay program significantly affected the homestay operators, supports and assistance from the government and FELDA are highly needed.

Key words: FELDA, Homestay, Impact, community participation, Malaysia

Introduction

The Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) is a government agency that plans on re-settlement for poor rural people to new locations that are developed. It focuses on the opening of smallholder plantations that cultivate rubber and oil palms. The FELDA scheme basically focuses on the *bumiputras* (natives) where majority of them were poor people (during the early period of independence). FELDA was established on 1st July 1956 under the Land Development Act. With an initial capital of RM10 million, FELDA is currently a statutory body which has successfully transformed the development of rural areas; and simultaneously increase the nation's output through its contribution in the production of main commodity, palm oil. The FELDA Global Ventures Holding Berhad (FGVH) was listed on Bursa Malaysia on 28th June 2012. It was Asia's biggest and the world's second biggest initial public offering (IPO); where this had placed Malaysia in the global investment's radar

(Economic Report 2012/2013).

The achievement of FELDA has been recognized by the World Bank when its goals of developing the rural folks through land development and re-settlement had been successful. FELDA has successfully become the world's largest plantation operator with 811,140 hectares of oil palm plantation across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The success of FELDA had encouraged the establishment of other regional land development programs such as the Southern Kelantan Development Board (KESEDAR), Central Terengganu Development Board (KETENGAH), Southeast Johor Development Authority (KEJORA), Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA), and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Agency (FELCRA). The main focus of establishing FELDA is to improve rural development and alleviate the standard of living of rural community through re-settlement; where these have been successful.

These settlers are lucky. Their lives have undergone much change from the aspects of infrastructural facilities and educational development. Thus, these had indirectly brought to the emergence of stronger and competitive new generation where there are various opportunities available. In addition to their dependence on the harvest of oil palms, they are also being given the opportunity to carry out other economic activities to increase their side income.

The location of the FELDA lands is unique and distinctive, thus the lands can be explored and featured as a tourism product. For example, the cluster type settlement will ease management. Additionally, there are several areas at FELDA's new locations have attractive natural environment that can be explored.

Thus, the FELDA land provided an opportunity that can be exploited for development. The settlers may be given the chance to be involved in developing supplemental activities as alternatives to increase their income. This is in line with government objectives in improving household income, which consequently increase the nation's income through the development of rural areas. Thus, the FELDA land should not be left out from rural development.

In view of this, several FELDA lands are involved in tourism development, especially in homestay program. Through their participation, the communities have been affected from various aspects. This study intends to observe the impacts to the community empirically through their participation in this activity.

Review of Past Studies

The development of homestay in Malaysia has been recognized to be the catalyst for the development of rural community (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). Through the homestay program, the obvious effects to the community can be categorized into economic, social, infrastructural, and environmental effects (Salleh et al., 2014). According to Yunis (2004) and Ashley et al (2001), tourism growth at developing countries is more rapid as compared to the developed nations due to their strategic locations. The homestay program is not only a rural tourism program, it fact it is also a strategy to develop rural areas that requires strong commitment from local communities. The development of homestay program in Malaysia has opened up a huge opportunity to the rural communities, and it is an advocate to rural socio-economic development.

The Neo-populist theory suggested that local communities to be the center to the planning and management of tourism as to encourage them to be involved in development

The Impact of Homestay Development Among the Communities of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Malaysia

activities. This can be achieved through a formal and active planning involving the local communities (Razzaq, et al., 2011). According to Scheyvens (2002), this is an effective method for the local communities and the environment is affected from the nation's growth especially in the tourism industry. Community-based tourism development is an effort to strengthen tourism development by improving the participation of local community, and encourage balanced growth in economic, social and cultural (Brohman, 1996).

Studies related to homestay are not something new. They had and still being conducted as there are still gaps in study areas; and this requires endless researches, as well as to relate it to all the communities involved. One of the studies is done by Bhuiyan (2013) in Terengganu. The state is among the low rank states in terms economic development, i.e. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thus, homestay development is seen as one of the activities that can generate economic growth to the community. Study results discovered that the local community will benefit from the aspects of economic, social, environmental and cultural.

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Razzaq et al. (2011) focused on home stays in the southern of Malaysia, Johor. This study also discovered that homestay program impacts the involved community's socio-economy. It also found that youth participation needs to be stimulated in order to sustain these homestay programs. The execution of strategies and programs that encourage youth participation is highly needed.

For the local entrepreneurs, homestay program can provide them a platform for business. They can embark into the small medium industry (SME) businesses such as producing tapioca chips, handicrafts, and others. With these supplemental economic activities, the local community especially the youths may be able to diversify their source of income (Kim et al 2012).

Additionally, according to Kim et al (2012), tourism helps the Virginian community to preserve their way of life. They also felt that with tourism, their traditional art is preserved. In other words, tourism preserves their cultural identity and belief to the next generation. Tourism also strengthened social cohesiveness and brings pride to the community, allowing them to be dependence on each other (Murphy & Watson 1995).

Moreover, tourism development also benefits the environment (Kuvan & Akan, 2005). This is because it becomes a reason why the local community takes care of their environment as they are aware of the tourists' demand (Mbaiwa & Stronza 2011). However, the communities are also concerned over the side effects of tourism.

A study conducted by Bestard & Nadal (2007) showed that local communities are concerned on the effects on environment. They felt that tourism will cause pollution and traffic congestion. Kim et al (2012) also found that there is an inverse relationship between environmental effects and tourism on health and safety to the community in Virginia. Besides that, the influx of tourist arrivals will cause congestion at recreational areas (Harvey et al 1995). This will result in uncontrolled dumping of garbage.

Nonetheless, studies in tourism that discovered environmental problems as a result of tourism are relatively small as compared to the positive impacts experienced. In view of the higher positive effects as compared to the negatives, home stay development that involves community participation must always be encouraged.

Data and Methodology

In this study, primary data was utilized in the analysis. The primary data was obtained from questionnaires distributed to 161 homestay operators through face-to-face interviews at selected FELDA areas. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, A and B. Part A comprised of open-ended questions related to respondent demographic profile such as gender, age, and marital status. Meanwhile Part B comprised of effects/impact of homestay tourism activities through four main aspects, namely economic, social, cultural and environmental. The 5-point Likert scale was utilized to measure the impact level of each operator; where, 1=Highly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree, 4=Agree and 5=Highly Agree.

The respondents were selected based on stratified sampling. A total of seven (7) FELDA land settlements were visited in order to collect the nanelom necessary information from respondents. Those areas were FELDA Semenchu, FELDA Serting Hilir, FELDA Sg. Tengi, FELDA Selasih, FELDA Jengka 25, FELDA Mata Ayer and FELDA Sg. Klah. The data was gathered by visiting homes of those involved in the homestay service. The selected locations are areas that legally provide homestay accommodation, i.e. registered with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and fulfill all the requirements set by the said Ministry.

Computer software utilized was the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* program; where the analyses utilized descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and post hoc. These analyses explained the frequencies, mean, percentages, and standard deviations. These analyses focused on the mean test of the impact of homestay development at FELDA areas. The utilization of mean is to explain the average of respondent agreement level and standard deviation in regard to the questions presented. This is based on the study objectives which are to analyze their economic status and participation level.

The one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) and post hoc test were utilized to determine the difference between significant means among the variables. The ANOVA analysis and F-test were conducted to prove the importance of each impact. The analyses were conducted at significant level $\alpha = 0.05$ (confidence interval of 95%) and F-value not exceeding 0.05. If the F-value is significant, i.e. lesser than 0.05, this shows that there is mean difference at each homestay area. However, if the F-value exceeds 95% confidence level (0.05), the contribution of the impact is insignificant. The utilization of post hoc test was to determine significant difference of mean in accordance to grouping.

The Empirical Results

Respondent Profile

The respondent profile was divided into nine categories, namely gender, ethnic, age, marital status, family type, number of children, occupation, income and educational achievement as depicted in Table 1.

In this study, female and male respondents were almost balanced at 50.9% and 49.1%, respectively. Hundred percent of the respondents were Malays. Majority of them aged 46 and above (83.9%), followed by those in the age range of 41-45 years old (13.0%), 36-40 years old (2.5%) and 31-35 years old (0.6%). This age factor shows that this activity is dominated by respondents who are still able and enthusiastic in operating a business rather than just filling up their free time (Syed Zamberi et al 2013). In terms of marital status, 97.5% of the respondents were married, 1.3% of them were singles, and another 1.3% of them were widows/divorcees. In general, 98.1% of the respondents were of nuclear family, while 1.3% of them were of extended family.

Table 1. Profile of Respondent

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	79	49.4
Female	82	50.9
Ethnic		
Malay	161	100
Age		
-	1	0.60
36 – 40	4	2.50
41 – 45	21	13.1
46 and above	135	83.9
Marital Status		
Married	157	97.5
Single	2	1.2
Widow/Divorcee	2	1.2
Family Type		
Nuclear family	158	98.1
Extended family	3	1.9
Number of Children		
None	7	4.4
1 – 3	48	30.0
4 – 6	94	58.3
7 – 9	12	7.5
10 and above	0	0
Occupation		
Self-employed	156	96.9
Public sector	5	3.1
Income		
Below RM760	3	1.9
RM761 – RM1,500	149	92.5
RM1,501 – RM2,240	6	3.7
RM2,241 – 2,980	3	1.9
Level of Education		
No formal education	7	4.4
Primary school	78	48.1
Secondary school	72	44.7
Diploma	4	2.5

It is found that 4.3% of the respondents were childless, and 29.8% of them were with 1 to 3 children. Meanwhile, 58.3% of the respondents had between 4 to 6 children, and only 7.5% had between 7 to 9 children. Majority of the respondents worked with FELDA, i.e. 96.6% as land settlers, and 3.1% of them were coordinators and management of the FELDA settlement. A total of 1.9% of the respondents earned income below the poverty line of RM760. Meanwhile, majority of the respondents, i.e. 92.5% were earning RM761 to RM1,500, 3.7% earned RM1,501 to RM2,240, and only 1.9% were in the highest income bracket of RM2,241 to RM2,980. Study results found that 4.4% of the respondents did not have formal education, while the educational attainment of primary and secondary levels were at 48.1% and 44.7%, respectively. Only 2.5% of the respondents had the highest educational attainment of diploma level.

Analysis on Economic Impact

Overall, the perception of homestay operators at FELDA land settlement encompasses of four (4) aspects, namely economic, social, cultural and environmental. The perception on economic impact was positive with an average mean of 4.255. The highest economic impact indicated by the respondents was that participation in homestay increases their side income without the need to rely on their main crop, oil palm, with a mean of 4.410. These results were supported by Abd Aziz et al (2010) through their study which stated that business opportunity

and development at FELDA will improve income through salaries and bonuses. This impact directly increases the villagers' standard of living. This was supported by respondents' agreement with mean of 4.037. Other impacts with high mean score were improvement in management skill, increase the opportunity for skill and knowledge, and public facilities with mean values ranging from 3.9006 to 4.3851. It is important to improve the public facilities as their settlements are located far from towns. The respondents also agreed that their participation in homestay program does eradicate poverty as well as improving their purchasing power. These caused better living quality, and reduced income gap between the participants and non-participants. Other economic impacts are as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Economic Impact of Homestay Development at FELDA areas.

Impact	Mean	Standard Deviation
Provide job opportunity	3.664	0.844
Increase family's side income	4.441	0.611
Increase the standard of living of locals	4.404	0.637
Reduce the income gap between participants and non-participants of homestay program	3.901	2.391
Generated income can contribute towards the village's development	3.745	0.801
Encourage local handicraft's industry	3.453	0.858
Encourage diversity in economic activities	3.522	0.791
Increase purchasing power and improve quality of living	4.044	0.793
Eradicate poverty among villagers	4.013	0.814
Improvement in public facilities for the locals	4.348	0.654
Increase in opportunity for individual skills and knowledge	4.379	0.632
Improve in management skill	4.385	0.603
Overall brings in economic benefits to local community	4.522	0.582

Mean Scale Note: 1= Highly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3= Somewhat Agree; 4=Agree; and 5=Highly Agree

Analysis on Social Impact

From social aspect, as indicated in Table 3, the respondents stated that their participation in the homestay program brings in social benefits to the local community with mean of 4.584. The social relationship and unity between families and communities can also be encouraged. Thus, guaranteeing better living quality (4.615), improving co-operation between community members (4.596) and creating responsible community (4.553).

Table 3. Social Impact of Homestay Development at FELDA areas

Impact	Mean	Standard Deviation
Each family has its own role	4.367	0.668
Create responsible community	4.553	0.580
Community members may improve the co-operation among themselves	4.596	0.563
The living quality from homestay tourism development will encourage better unity between families and communities	4.615	0.537
Reduce youth migration to the city	2.968	0.862
Improve communication skill	4.012	0.581
Improve area's safety	4.261	0.746
Reduce crime rate and social illness at village area	4.298	0.697
Overall brings in social benefits to local community.	4.584	0.555

Mean Scale Note: 1= Highly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3= Somewhat Agree; 4=Agree; and 5=Highly Agree

The safety aspect is also an important social aspect in determining a development. With the growth in homestay program, the operators are more confident in reducing crime rate and social illness at the village (4.298). This is because the community is busier and more hectic with their daily activities; thus, their time is not wasted by unhealthy activities. In fact, to these operators, the safety at the area had improved (4.261). According to the study by Abd

The Impact of Homestay Development Among the Communities of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Malaysia
 Aziz, et al (2010), the settlers basically disagree that crime rate will increase as a result of urbanization at their FELDA areas. However, through the homestay program, communication has been improved, may it be among the community members or with tourists. As a result, there is improvement in communication due to interaction with tourists of different background.

Analysis on Social-Cultural Impact

Tourism that is based on cultural heritage is one of the attractions that brings in tourist arrivals to developing countries. Exploring this impact, overall, the respondents agreed with this aspect at agreement mean of 4.335. This clearly shows that by developing homestay program, various local cultural activities, traditional customs and lifestyle of the community can be preserved. Cultural conservation is desperately needed. This is because culture is able to become the attraction that will result in tourist arrivals. Based on Table 4, the two cultural aspects that recorded high mean values are preservation of local community lifestyle, as well as the identity and customs of a family is handed down through the socialization process at mean values of 4.733 and 4.752, respectively. Clearly, through the development of homestay, cultural characteristics of the olden community can be passed on to the younger generation, and thus there will be continuity.

Cultural value is important to a community as local culture can be commercialized in order to fulfill tourist demand. This is agreed by the respondents with mean of 4.429. Tourist arrivals from various cultural backgrounds may also create exchange of cultural knowledge (4.329). In a more global setting, this will create culture loving community (4.1429) in the effort to conserve cultural identity (4.255).

Table 4. Cultural Impact of Homestay Development at FELDA areas

Impact	Mean	Standard Deviation
The local community's lifestyle is preserved	4.733	0.471
Identity/customs of a family is handed down through socialization process	4.752	3.178
Local culture is commercialized to fulfill tourist demand	4.429	0.659
Establishing cultural groups	3.783	0.871
Create community that loves culture	4.143	0.590
Know about other cultures	4.329	0.650
Increase the awareness of local culture among locals	4.106	0.566
Preserve local traditional houses	3.806	0.810
Preserve traditional/folk sports of local community	4.031	0.656
Conservation of historical sites	3.584	0.894
Preserve cultural identity of community	4.255	0.573
Overall, will diversify and preserve local cultural activities	4.335	0.580

Mean Scale Note: 1= Highly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3= Somewhat Agree; 4=Agree; and 5=Highly Agree

The cultures that can be preserved and featured with the development of homestays are traditional sports (4.031) and traditional houses (3.808). For the traditional houses, even though they can be preserved, the structure of the settlers' houses is already evolving to a modern design for comfort purposes. Meanwhile, from the aspects of cultural group establishment, and conservation of historical sites, through the development of homestay, they can be further strengthened (3.783 and 3.584).

Analysis on Environmental Impact

Overall, from the study done, the growth and development of homestays at FELDA areas had also improved the environmental quality with respondents' agreement mean of 4.503. In

detail, quite a number of the operators agreed that the development of homestay at their areas has improve the image and scenery of their villages (4.702), encourage conservation of the environment (4.578), improve the village's level of cleanliness (4.540), improve garbage management (4.223) and increase in the construction of parks and recreational areas (4.062). Even though the homestay development brings in negative impacts such as deterioration in air quality due to increase in vehicles; congestion; noisier neighborhood; and water pollution, the means recorded were still quite low, i.e. between 1.721 and 2.093. These proved that there is no significant negative effect to the environment and the environment's limit of carrying capacity due to homestay development is stable.

Table 5. Environmental Impact of Homestay Development at FELDA areas

Impact	Mean	Standard deviation
Encourage conservation of natural environment	4.578	0.609
Improve the village's image and scenery	4.702	0.498
Improve the village cleanliness level	4.540	0.622
Air quality is deteriorating due to high number of vehicles	2.093	1.011
Improve garbage management	4.230	0.760
Encourage recycling activities	2.863	0.771
Protection of the wildlife, i.e. migratory bird species	3.155	0.939
Establishment of more parks and recreational areas	4.062	0.842
Increase in traffic congestion	1.814	0.846
Cause noisier neighborhood	1.721	0.735
Cause water pollution	1.758	0.789
Overall, homestay activities improve environmental quality	4.503	0.653

Mean Scale Note: 1= Highly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3= Somewhat Agree; 4=Agree; and 5=Highly Agree

Comparison of Impact According to Homestay areas

Comparative analysis on the impact among the homestays is based on ANOVA and TukeyHSDpost hoc tests. From the results of ANOVA (please refer to Table 6), all the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts are significant as their p values are smaller than 0.05. This proves that the impacts experienced by each of the homestays differ. The ANOVA results are: economic impact $F(6,154) = 9.867, < 0.05$, cultural impact $F(6,154) = 10.95, < 0.05$, environmental impact $F(6,154) = 12.741, < 0.05$, and social impact $F(6,154) = 0.225, < 0.05$.

Meanwhile, the TukeyHSD post hoc test results are presented in Table 7 (a-economic impact), (b-social impact), (c-cultural impact) and (d-environmental impact). In terms of economy, there are three groups which experienced different values of impact. The first group is consisted of the homestays of Felda Selasih, Felda SertingHilir, Felda Sg. Tenggi and Felda Jengka 25. The second group is homestays of Felda Serting Hilir, Felda Sg. Tenggi, Felda Jengka 25, FeldaSemenchu and Felda Mata Ayer. The final group consists of homestays of Felda Sg. Klah, Felda Mata Ayer and Felda Semenchu; where these homestays recorded the highest economic impact as compared to other FELDA areas. From the social impact perspective, all the homestays experienced similar positive impacts.

Meanwhile, the cultural impact indicated that there are three different groups which experienced different impacts. The first group is consisted of homestays located at Felda Serting Hilir, Felda Selasih, Felda Sg. Tenggi, Felda Sg. Klah

Table 6. ANOVA test

Impact	Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Economic	11.068	6	9.867	.000
Social	1.348	6	.225	.046
Cultural	8.720	6	10.95	.000
Environmental	4.775	6	12.741	.000

and Felda Mata Ayer. The second group is consisted of FeldaSg. Tinggi, FeldaSg. Klah, and Felda Mata Ayer homestays. The final group is of homestays located at Felda Mata Ayer, Felda Semenchu and Felda Jengka 25. Based on the cultural impact, it is found that the third group recorded the highest impact.

From the aspect of environment, there are two groups which can be identified. The homestays that belong to the first group are the Felda Selasih, Felda Hilir, Felda Semenchu, Felda Jengka Mata Ayer and Felda Sg. Tinggi. Meanwhile, there is only a homestay that belongs to the second group is the FeldaSg. Klah. This clearly indicates that Felda Sg. Klah received the highest environmental impact.

Table 7. TukeyHSD Post Hoc Test: Difference in Impacts Experienced by Homestays at FELDA

Felda	N	Group		
		1	2	3
(a- Economic Impact)				
Selasih	20	3.5692		
SertingHilir	16	3.8221	3.8221	
Sg. Tinggi	11	3.9510	3.9510	
Jengka 25	23	3.9900	3.9900	
Semenchu	62		4.1737	4.1737
Mata Ayer	14		4.2143	4.2143
Sg. Klah	15			4.5744
Sig.		.068	.111	.096
(b- Social Impact)				
Sg. Tinggi	11	4.1414		
Semenchu	62	4.1792		
SertingHilir	16	4.2083		
Jengka	23	4.2609		
Mata Ayer	14	4.3016		
Selasih	20	4.3833		
Sg. Klah	15	4.4296		
Sig.		.114		
(c- Cultural Impact)				
SertingHilir	16	3.8229		
Selasih	20	3.8958		
Sg. Tinggi	11	3.9924	3.9924	
Sg. Klah	15	4.0056	4.0056	
Mata Ayer	14	4.1369	4.1369	4.1369
Jengka	23		4.3080	4.3080
Semenchu	62			4.4288
Sig.		.151	.146	.220
(d- Environmental Impact)				
Selasih	20	3.1625		
SertingHilir	16	3.2604		
Semenchu	62	3.2688		
Jengka 25	23	3.3043		
Mata Ayer	14	3.3333		
Sg. Tinggi	11	3.4318		
Sg. Klah	15		3.8944	
Sig.		.064	1.000	

Conclusion

Overall, the development of homestays in Malaysia has been successful. This success is not only attributable to Government's supports in developing rural communities, but is also due to the role of the communities themselves in developing tourism. With their participation in tourism development, there are opportunities available for them to be involved in economic development, as well as the opportunities to increase their income and other benefits.

As observed from this study results, they clearly indicate that through their participation as homestay operators, the communities had gained economic benefits, especially in earning of higher income, improvement in standard of living, improvement in management/financial skills and others. There are also benefits gained from the aspects of social, cultural and environmental. All these impacts are experienced by these operators and these will persist to be their stimulants for continued participation.

Nonetheless, the seven homestays at the FELDA areas under study had experienced different impacts. For example, the homestays of Semenu, Mata Ayer and Sg. Klah received higher economic impact as compared to other homestays. Meanwhile, from the cultural impact, Mata Ayer, Semenu and Jengka homestays precede others; while the Sg. Klah homestay enjoyed the highest environmental impact. However, these impacts are based on study of the homestay operators' perception.

As a conclusion, this study clearly indicates that homestay development among the communities needs to be continued due to the positive benefits gained. Even though the development of tourism brings in negative impact, the effects are very minimal especially to the communities and homestay operators. In strengthening this growth, in view that these homestays of this study are located in the FELDA areas, the efforts for development and to improve on weaknesses among the homestay operators can be jointly undertaken.

Acknowledgment

This study is fully funded by the National University of Malaysia through research grant, MPOB Endowment Research Grant (MPOB-UKM-2013-006).

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About the Authors

Salleh, N.H.M., is faculty member in School of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. E-mail: norlidahanim@gmail.com.