

LOCAL LABOUR:
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Manpower is one of the most important resources in construction industry. The success and failure of construction project is depending on human and people factor. Therefore, it is understandable that the human factor development is one of many reasons for the economic growth and globalisation competition in the Malaysia's construction industry as the construction's performance at site often depends on the manpower activities and its quality of workmanship. It is important to note that as the industry high growth continued, labour is measured as the overall effectiveness in sustaining construction projects operating and end result. The study is conducted to identify the most influential problem of local labour underemployment in construction industry though the industry is in demand of labour. The remedial action is finding the ways to overcome the problem statements yet provides better prospects and challenges for the trained local labour towards the new sustainable and globalisation construction industry. This research which conducted in a manner of structured interview with questionnaires mechanism draws together the current problems and the ways being undertaken by the construction practitioners. The focus is to determine and establish industry's initiatives on mutual recognition of skills qualification and provision of standard workmanship for nation construction industry's image. Data were collected from approximately forty (40) numbers of respondents of the construction parties (i.e developers, contractors, consultants and others relevant party in Johor, Klang Valley and east cost; Terengganu) involved to determine the best ways to ensure job placement and secure future for local labour in construction industry. The data obtained was analysed through quantitative and qualitative approach to derive conclusion of the study. It is concluded that the most appropriate ways to overcome the problem of local labour underemployment is identified as close monitoring on workmanship and standard to compete in global construction industry.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will present an overview towards the whole content of the study. It will include background, the problem statements, aim and objectives, scope of the study and a research methodology used for data collection and analysis. At the end of the chapter, a brief report outline will be presented which summarize the whole content of the study.

1.2 Background of study

The local trained labour can be defined tentatively as Malaysian worker with training and skills in construction industry. Based on several comprehensive literature reviews, concluded that the local trained labour is a worker equip with training and techniques to perform construction field works. The skilled and well-trained labour at construction site can be resulted to standard quality of workmanship and assured cost/time in management.

The economy often described construction industry as a 'people business'. It is sometimes said that construction is a job which can be carried out without much schooling and relatively based on experienced. That may be true for simple construction and labouring jobs, but this is an unsustainable approach.

The constant demand of 'cheap labour' among construction employers in succession to increase their own profit and neglect the project end result, although it provides in proficient workmanship, productivity and reliable outcome. Kelly (2004) has mentioned in a study with the foreign labours, employer can even pay fewer salaries, less benefits and even no safety measures have been applied at construction site.

CICA (2002) has clearly stated that the essential difference between 'developing' and 'developed' economies is 'education, training, skills' and the corresponding degree of technologies. The study has also concluded that skills shortages make it difficult for contractors to deliver the quality of products that more discerning clients require. This is an obvious problem in many developed countries and a growing one in developing ones, particularly those with significant populations of middle and upper class clients. Imparting skills, and upgrading our local labour to meet the future human resource requirements towards sustainable, would certainly require the participation of people in construction industry.

1.3 Problem statement

As to develop our construction industry towards an adequate and substandard of performance and to accommodate the high demand of construction development, the shortage of labour has caused strained to the industry. Hence, the local labour that is well-trained and skilled still has difficulties in finding job placement. The following problem statements have been identified faced by the local labour underemployment despites being trained and skilled for the field work.

The most problem is the constant demand of cheap labour among construction industry employers in succession to increase profit margin and to neglect the project end result. However with the unskilled and cheap foreign labour, most of the projects outcome is neither an adequate nor satisfied. The continue of hiring cheap foreign labour must to be discouraged as the size of foreign labour is already large and caused more nuisance.

Therefore, the construction industry must take steps to lessen the dependence on cheap and unskilled foreign workers through strategic adjustments toward using more efficient local trained labour and new building technology which without doubt provide technical training and assistance. Kelly (2004) has conducted a study that shows the low of mentality and availability of a cheap labour force would discourage the industry from investing in new technology and processes.

Whereby, the local labour that is well-trained and skilled is highly paid due to their unwillingness in field work. The lack of employer's interest in providing a good environment such as benefit and salary wise, safety, training development and technical required labour to improvise the construction industry. From the local labour point of views, they demand more reward to contribute to the construction industry's growth. These are the local labour demands for secured job placement in construction industry.

The improvement of training, skills and qualifications for construction workers are critical to the industry's growth and competitiveness. The development competitiveness is governed by the availability of qualified workers to carry out the projects task completed with standard quality within time framed and cost estimated. The employer's failure in overseen local labour demands is the problem cause towards local labour underemployment in construction industry.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of Study

The study aim is to identify the problem that caused local labour underemployment in construction industry and ways to overcome. In order to achieve the desired aim, the following objectives have been set:

- i. To identify the problem of local labour underemployment;
- ii. To identify the factors that lead to local labour underemployment in construction industry; and
- iii. To identify the appropriate ways to overcome the problem.

1.5 Scope of study

The research study is covered on the different levels of assessment the ways to overcome the problem. The research will be carried out on the data collected and analysis mainly based from the structured interviews from construction practitioners (i.e. developers, contractors, consultants and others relevant party in Malaysia's construction industry- as in Johor, Klang Valley and East Coast- Terengganu) and literature reviews. The study is to address and fulfill the set objectives. Therefore, the problems caused are briefly outlined and identified. However, it should be noted here that the study do pose few limitations due to time constraints and construction parties cooperation's.

1.6 Research Methodology

Towards achieving the objectives set, the research will apply the following methodologies:

1.6.1 Phase 1 : Literature Reviews

An extensive literature research to identify the problem causes of local labour underemployment. The literature review will be covered on books, online journals and articles, construction industry magazines and reports, published and unpublished masters and doctoral degree thesis as well as actual construction overview throughout the author's working experience in construction environment. These sources are valuable as they give the author a broad interest on the studied topic.

1.6.2 Phase 2 : Structured Interviews- Questionnaires form

Structured interviewing as in form of questionnaires to identify the problem caused, managing the problem's factor with implementing and practicing the ways to overcome the problem adopted by the respective construction practitioners in local construction industry.

1.6.3 Phase 3: Verify the research findings

Analysing data collection from the literature reviews and structured interviewing as in form of questionnaires to address the set objectives. The expected findings of this research will be identified from the questionnaires analysis to obtain conclusion.

The questionnaire survey methodology will comprise “select-the-scale” questions (as follows) describing the ways to overcome problem based on respondent feedback and practical view:-

- i) Strongly disagree
- ii) Disagree
- iii) Unsure
- iv) Agree
- v) Strongly agree

By the use of Five (5) point semantic scale, these five answer scales were represented with the following scores of 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. The detail explanations of the abovementioned research methodology will be presented in Chapter 3 under Research Methodology. The data flow diagram in Figure 1.1 will summarize the above research methodology process in brief.

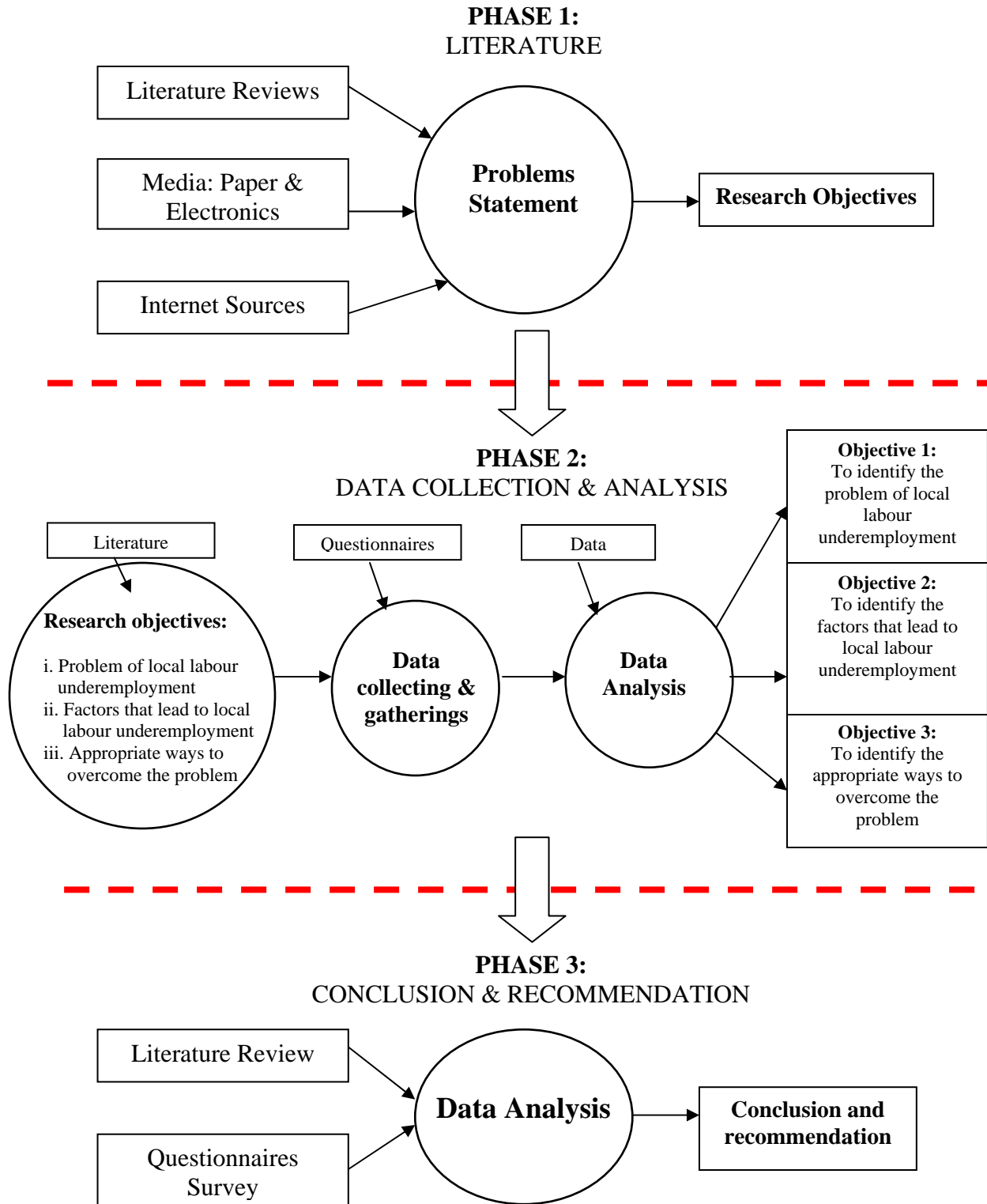


Figure 1.1: Data flow diagram of research methodology process

1.7 Summary of Chapter

The report study will be divided into five (5) chapters as follows:-

Chapter 1 is briefly outlines the introduction of this report study. This chapter includes the study background, problem statement, aims and study objectives, scope of study and the research methodology process to fulfill this study.

Chapter 2 is literature research and review based on books, online journals and articles, construction industry magazines and reports, published, unpublished masters and doctoral degree thesis and others relevant sources that highlighted the problem causes.

Chapter 3 will be discussed on the research methodology process which related with collecting data and information to present the findings.

Chapter 4 is focusing on analysing data collected from the questionnaire survey to obtain expected findings of this study. The analysis result will be shown in tables, pie charts, graphs, histogram and others relevant graphic for better understanding.

Chapter 5 is to determine and provide conclusion and recommendation of this study that includes discussion on the finding's result and recommendation for future research.

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