

SOCIAL IMPACT OF VOLUNTEER TOURISM TOWARDS HOST COMMUNITY
IN PERHENTIAN ISLAND, TERENGGANU

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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents and family
for their love, endless support
and encouragement.*

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ABSTRACT

Volunteer tourism impacts refer to the potential positive and negative impacts generated by volunteer tourist during and after volunteering in a specific host destination. As previous research merely focusing on the impacts gained by volunteer tourist and less research is done with respect to host destination perspective, this research is aim to suggest an approach to overcome the negative impact derived from the volunteer tourism in the study area. In order to discover and understand the exact positive and negative impacts towards the host community, this research applied a mixed- method research. Researcher has outlined three important inquiries of the research such as what are the positive social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community? What are the negative social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community? And how to minimize the negative social impact towards host community affected from the volunteerism activities? The results of this study illustrated the impacts experienced and valued by local community based on their involvement. Based on the key findings, this study concludes that host community agree that volunteer tourism create more positive cultural interaction between volunteer and host community. Meanwhile, the potential negative impacts of volunteer tourism in the study area were not too much affected due to the willingness of the host community to received volunteers. However, among the negative impacts identified were bad cultural influence; dignity degraded; negative perception; preferred volunteer tourist' interest; dissatisfied outcome; affected the carrying capacity; and dependency.

ABSTRAK

Impak pelancongan sukarelawan merujuk kepada potensi impak positif dan negatif yang terhasil daripada pelancong sukarelawan itu sendiri sama ada semasa dan selepas melakukan aktiviti pelancongan sukarelawan di sesuatu kawasan. Beberapa kajian lepas lebih fokus kepada impak terhadap pelancong sukarelawan itu sendiri berbanding impak terhadap penduduk setempat. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mencadangkan langkah-langkah untuk mengurangkan kesan negatif yang terhasil daripada pelancongan sukarelawan di kawasan kajian. Untuk merungkai dan memahami impak positif dan negatif terhadap penduduk setempat, kajian ini dijalankan secara kaedah campuran kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Pengkaji telah menyenaraikan tiga persoalan kajian iaitu apakah impak positif terhasil daripada pelancongan sukarelawan terhadap penduduk setempat? Apakah kesan negatif yang terhasil daripada pelancongan sukarelawan terhadap penduduk setempat? Dan bagaimanakah kaedah untuk meminimumkan kesan negatif terhadap penduduk setempat hasil daripada aktiviti kesukarelawan tersebut? Hasil daripada kajian ini mendapati kesan dan nilai terhadap pelancongan sukarelawan ini berbeza mengikut kekerapan penglibatan penduduk dan penerimaan mereka. Kesimpulannya, penduduk setempat bersetuju bahawa pelancongan sukarelawan dapat mewujudkan interaksi budaya yang lebih positif diantara pelancong sukarelawan dan penduduk setempat. Di samping itu, ia terbukti bahawa tiada kesan negatif yang ketara terhasil daripada pelancongan sukarelawan di kawasan kajian. Walaubagaimanapun, diantara kesan negatif yang telah dikenalpasti adalah seperti mempengaruhi budaya tempatan; mencalarkan maruah; memberi persepsi negatif; lebih mengutamakan minat pelancong sukarelawan; hasil kerja yang kurang memuaskan; melangkaui had muatan; dan tahap kebergantungan yang tinggi terhadap pelancong sukarelawan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Volunteer tourism is a rapidly growing form of alternative travel. One of its central pillars consists of benefiting host communities and facilitating development in resource poor and developing country context (Lupoli, 2013). Volunteer tourism originated as a primarily British and European phenomenon (as an offshoot of the Grand Tour), then expanded into a range of countries including Australia and the United States (in a somewhat different form that included the middle class and evangelical mission trips), and is now growing to include Asian and African participants as well (Alexander, 2012; Lo & Lee, 2011). A definition for volunteer tourism emerged as “those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, 2001). Besides that, McGehee and Santos (2005) define volunteer tourism as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need.” Volunteer tourism is part of a broader trend of ethical consumerism which aims to make positive differences in the communities of less developed countries (Butcher & Smith, 2010). A central idea to volunteer tourism is that it generates positive impacts to locals in host-destinations and that it fosters a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between the host and guest in a tourist destination (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Sin, 2009; Sin, 2010). Furthermore, Uriely, Reichel & Ron (2003) and Wearing (2004) argue that studies on volunteer tourism must encompass all host community members to understand the role that they can play in the tourist experience (as cited in Lupoli,

2013). Meanwhile, Wu (2011) suggest that the concept of volunteering refers to rendering of service by choice of or free will for the benefit of the wider community by an individual, group, or institution without necessarily expecting monetary gain in full knowledge and appreciation of being a volunteer. She also stated that volunteering enhances the social connections between different sectors, builds the bridges for governments, between communities and neighborhood, enterprises and employees, and thus helps build a more cohesive, safer and stronger community.

1.1 Research Background

Volunteer tourism has experienced significant growth since the 1970s (Ellis, 2003; Wearing, 2004). The size of the volunteer tourism market and its growth rate are difficult to ascertain, although the recent proliferation of volunteer tourism organizations and programs suggests that the sector is substantial and increasing (Brown & Morrison, 2003).

However, there are less literatures focusing on the impacts of volunteer tourism to the host community. The current literatures were not sufficiently concentrated to the attitudes of the host community towards volunteering activities in their respective areas. In general, the volunteer tourism literature focuses less attention on the host, either individually or as a community (Smith et.al, 2010). Part of the reason for this lack of focus on the host may derive from the difficulty in identifying and including the full spectrum of stakeholders who may fall under the terms host and community (Anne, McGehee, 2013). There is also lacking in discussions on the impact to the community from the volunteer experiences in their area. Therefore, a study is needed to discover what exactly social impact of volunteer tourism towards host community in study area.

1.2 Research Statement

Existing studies have often suggested that volunteer tourism, with strong overtones of “social”, “justice” and “pro-poor” tourism, has the capacity to bring about positive impacts to local communities in host destinations. However, existing literature is largely centered on the volunteer tourist, with little works directly regarding the perspectives of host-communities (Sin, 2010). Furthermore, very little if any, research exists that questions or explores the socio-cultural sustainability of volunteer tourism (McGehee). In general, the volunteer tourism literature focuses less attention on the host, either individually or as a community (Smith et.al, 2010).

Impact to the local community or host community could be one of the main important criteria in introducing and executing volunteer tourism activities in a specified area with high volunteer tourism potentials. This is because many researches has founded out that volunteer tourism activities will create positive impacts to the volunteer tourists and somehow or rather it will create a positive impact to the host community too. A study is needed to uncover what are the positive and negative social impacts reflected by the host community by having volunteer tourism in their village and also how to minimize the negative social impact to the host community?

In order to identify the social impacts of volunteer tourism activities to the host community, it may requires deep understanding in the theoretical background of volunteer tourism and the possible impacts generated as it is one of the new form of alternative tourism. The successfulness of a volunteer tourism activity in the context of local development may be seen if the potential impacts are identified. Thus it is important to identify the social impact of the volunteer tourism to the host community. The findings in the end may be creating an approach to minimize the negative social to the host community through volunteer tourism.

1.3 Research Questions

From the research background and research statement above, there are 3 research questions derived. There are as follows:

- i. What are the positive social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community?
- ii. What are the negative social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community?
- iii. How to minimize the negative social impact towards host community affected from the volunteerism activities?

1.4 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to provide in-depth understanding and exploratory findings of the social impacts of volunteer tourism to the host community. From the research questions above, there are several objectives set up for this study and the objectives are:

- i. To identify the positive social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community.
- ii. To identify the negative social impacts created by volunteer tourism towards the host community.
- iii. To propose the approach to minimize negative social impact towards the host community affected from the volunteerism activities.

1.5 Scope of Study

The scope of this research is as follows:

1.5.1 Theoretical Framework

In order to have a clear understanding on volunteer tourism, there are theories and ideas reviewed. These theories are really useful and important in guiding the whole process of this research. Theories and concept reviewed from previous research are volunteer tourism, social impacts of volunteer tourism and approaches to overcome the negative impacts derived from the volunteer activities. All these theories and concepts are explained in detail in Chapter 2.

As for this research, the framework was started from the volunteer activities. In this cluster, there are three main activities listed as the activities were done in the study area. Then, it leads to positive and negative impacts created by the activities. The impacts are mainly focus on the social impacts towards the host community. There were ten main potential positive impacts listed namely encourage cultural interaction; eliminate poverty; build good relationship; help locals in need; increase quality of life; give social and economic benefit to host community; improve knowledge sharing; expertise exchange; as idol to host community; and open mind experience of the host community. Meanwhile, there were five potential of negative impacts towards the host community namely negatively affect local culture; host community become too dependent upon volunteer tourist; undermining dignity of local resident; exceed carrying capacity if not properly managed; and impeding the need of host communities in terms of tourism development. After all the negative impacts, there are five potential approached that were suggested to be done in order to overcome the negative impacts such as enforcement of code of ethics for the volunteer activities; create activities that match the needs of the local residents;

suit the volunteer tourist' expertise with the local needs; let volunteer tourist have the opportunity to know the local culture; and create the volunteer tourism awareness campaign in order to give the some ideas to local community regarding volunteer tourism and its programs. The framework will be shown in the figure 1.1.

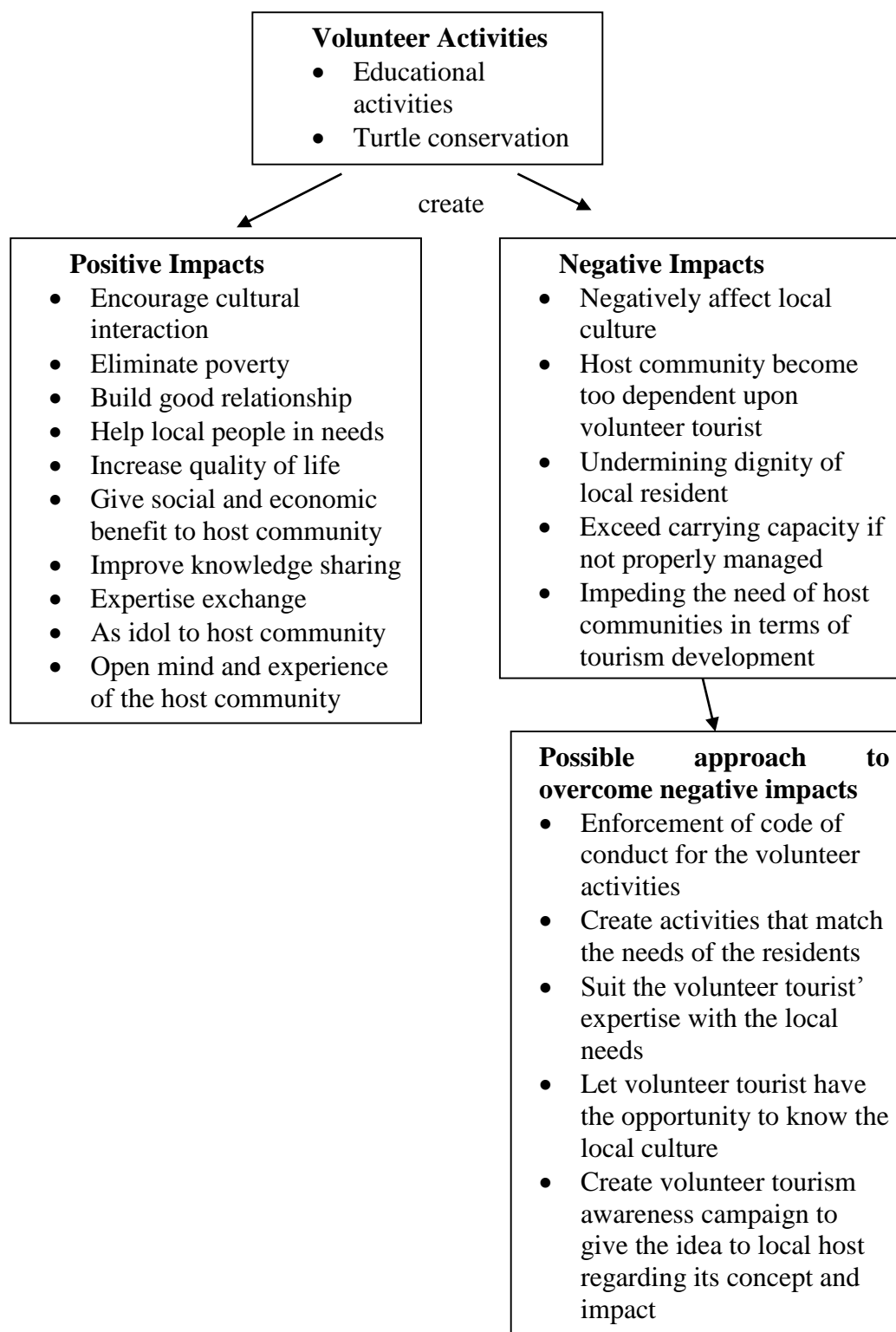


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework

1.5.2 Study Area

This research is focus in Perhentian Island, Terengganu as a case study. The islands total area covers approximately 1,392.15 hectares. The total population of Pulau Perhentian is about 1,300 people with almost 80% are involved in tourism sector, 20% in public sector and retail traders. Located on the north-eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia, about 21km off the coast of the quaint town of Kuala Besut. This area was chosen because it received volunteer tourist almost throughout the year. The volunteer activities have been started since 2010 and keep continuously until now. The volunteer activities were held in the study area are shown in below figures.

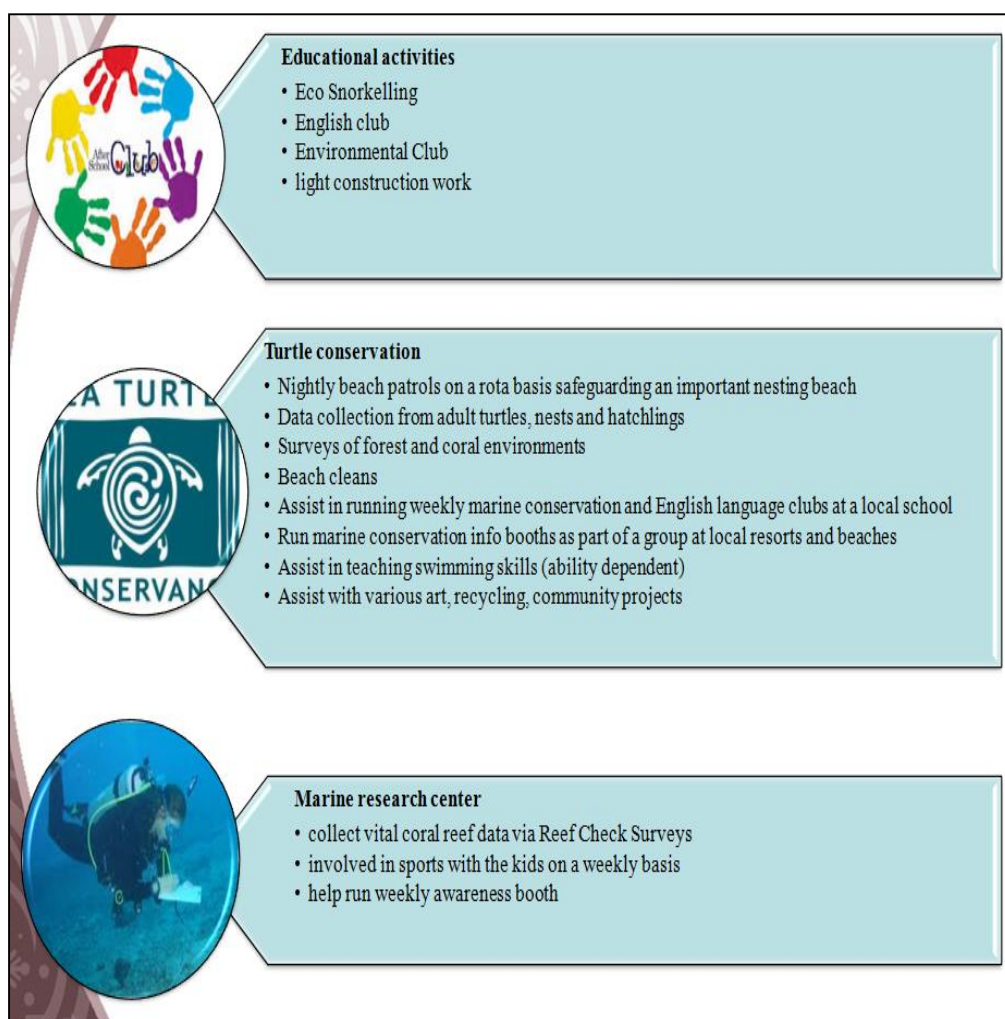


Figure 1.2 Volunteer tourism programs in study area

1.5.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology could create a framework as a guideline to researcher in order to complete this study. In general, this research framework is divided into 4 stages which are:

Stage 1 : Early research

This stage include identifying issues and problems arise and solving it through study. In order to get clear picture and good understanding of the topic, it needs literature review. For this purpose, all the related information will be gathered from various resources and will be reviewed. Then, research objectives were developed to clarify the focus of the study. After that, researcher will come out with research questions which will be the finding of the study.

Stage 2 : Data Collection

Data collection will be done through premier and secondary data. In this study, premier data will be obtained by interview and questionnaire distribution to the host community in the study area. Meanwhile, secondary data will be used to gather information from previous research, articles, and website that related with the study. This stage is crucial because the result form the survey will be analyzed to gain the reliable finding later.

Stage 3 : Data Analysis

Analysis will be done through data that have been collected. The survey will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Science) software. The analysis is to find out the positive and negative social impact to the host community reflected from the volunteer tourism activities. Besides that, analysis will discover the some ways to

minimize the negative impacts gained from volunteer tourism within the study area.

Stage 4 : Recommendation and conclusion

This is the final stage for the study. Researcher will identify the positive and negative social impact, and also suggest the preferred approach to minimize the negative social impacts towards host community in Perhentian Island. Figure 1.3 shows the flow of the study.

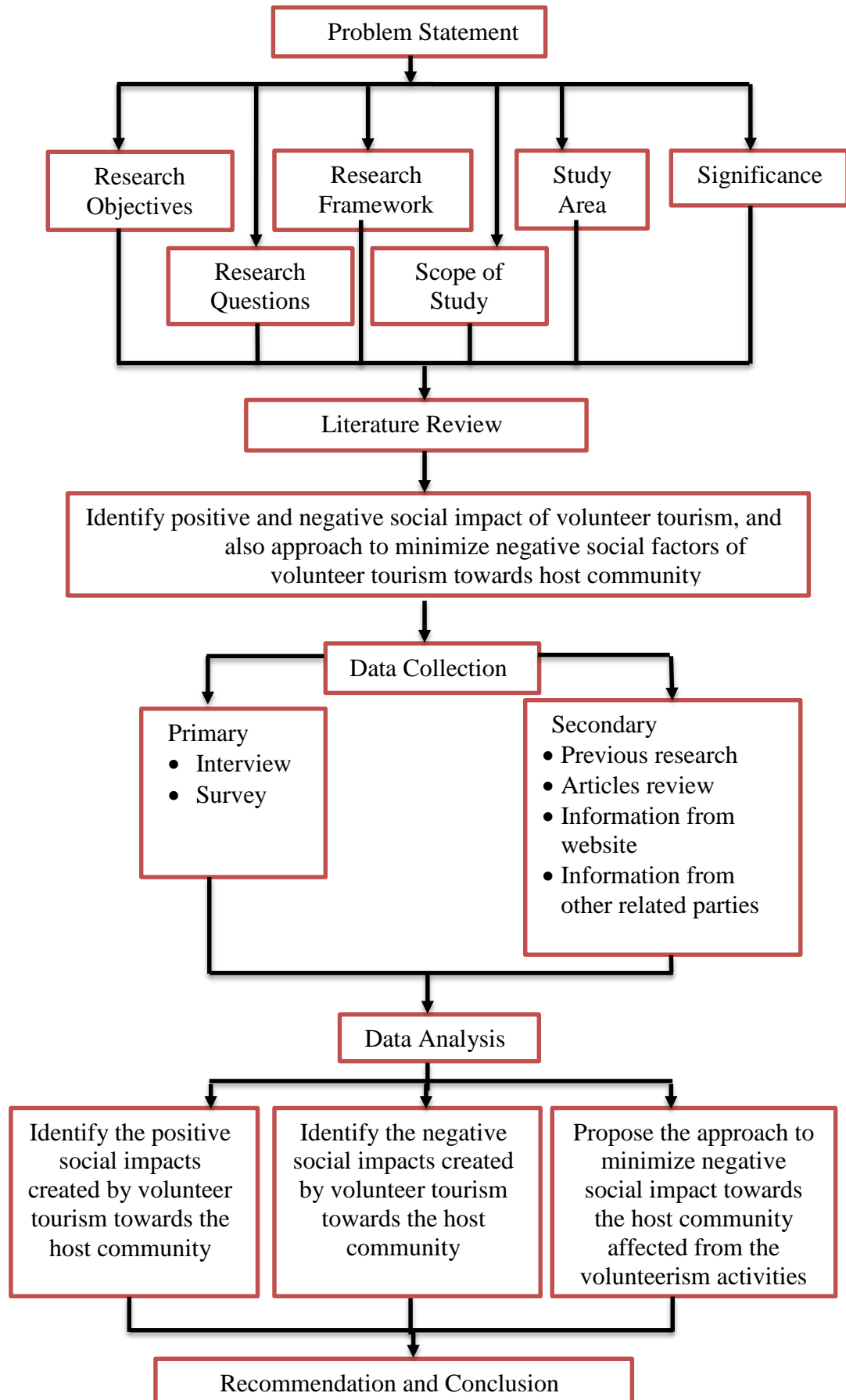


Figure 1.3 Research Design

This study will use survey to find out the result. Researcher use Simple random sampling to be the respondent for the questionnaire. This is the basic sampling method that allows each individual have a chance to represent the population. It means everybody have equal chance to be selected as respondent.

1.5.4 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire will be divided into 3 sections which are demographic, social impact and the approach to overcome the negative impacts. The divisions were done based on the objectives. Demographic section will cover the profile of the respondent. Meanwhile the other two sections will discover the potential social impact towards the host community and the approach to overcome the negative impacts in the area. The questionnaires were using dichotomous questions. It was used when a question has two possible responses which are 'Yes' or 'No'. These types of questions were used due to the estimation of education background of the respondent which is among school children, boatmen, village ladies and others. Another part in the question will cover for the suggested approach to overcome the negative impacts using Ordinal Question namely rank style.

1.6 Significance of Research

As mentioned earlier, the social impact of volunteer tourism to the host community can be considered crucial criteria in introducing and executing volunteer tourism activities in an area with high volunteer tourism potential. Moreover, many researches has founded out that volunteer tourism activities will create positive impacts to volunteer tourists and may positively affect the host community too. However, there is less exposure or research done in finding approach to overcome the negative impacts that derived from the volunteer activities. Thus, this research will try to explore and explain the social

impacts and suggested approaches to overcome the negative impacts in order to provide researchers with the real situation of volunteer tourism in Malaysia particularly.

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