

Level of prejudiced among Youth in Klang Valley, Malaysia towards Public Transport

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Abstract: Psychological constructs are undeniably pertinent in influencing users' willingness to choose public transport as their primary means of getting around. The aim of this article is to determine the level of prejudice among urban youth in Klang Valley, Malaysia towards public transport. This study involved a total of 445 respondents living in Klang Valley. In general, this study showed that the level of prejudice of youth in Klang Valley towards public transport is moderate. Significant differences were noted in terms of prejudice levels based on gender and ethnicity. The study suggests some ways on how to reduce negative perceptions of public transport among youth.

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Introduction

While Malaysia actively provides an effective and efficient public-transport infrastructure, one of the issues that must be resolved immediately is to increase the use of public transportation to make it users' premier mode of transport, especially among urban youth. Utilizing public transportation offers urban youth many benefits, and one of the important elements in managing the urban environment is to reduce dependency on private motor vehicles (Abd Rahim & NorGhani 2006). In addition, the high level of private-transportation usage in the city is placing a burden on the road network, and affecting the quality of the environment (Aiken et al. 1982). Moreover, the health and well-being of urban communities is being affected.

According to the National Population and Family Development Division of Malaysia (LPPKN), youth aged between 15 and 40 years in Kuala Lumpur make up half of the total population, or 800,708 people (LPPKN2010). This figure is high because many youths have started their careers in the city, and choose to live there. It is also related to the number of centers of higher education available in Kuala Lumpur, as well as in the area close to the capital city that is known as Klang Valley.

Malaysia's official definition of youth is those aged 15 to 40; this is considerably older than the age range provided within the definitions of most other countries and international bodies. Projected statistics for the year 2000 suggested that the increase in youth aged under 40 would be high enough for the youth population to reach 50% of the population (Azimi & Zanariah 2007). This means that the youth will represent two thirds of Malaysia's population, while the proportion of youth aged 15 to 24 years will be about

one third – that is, about 10 million and 75% that under the age of 40 years is about 16.5 million of 22 million people Malaysia.

Youth Attitudes towards Public Transport

Research has found that the majority of youth in every age group in Malaysia have their own vehicles (The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development 2011). Based on the statistics, youth is a dominant group residing in the Klang Valley; thus, one of the platforms to increase public-transport usage statistics in the city is to encourage these urban youth to utilize public transportation as their premier mode of transport. However, the study also found that only about 6.3% of Malaysian youth require additional public transportation around the area of their residence and place of work (The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development 2011), whereas total travel demand increased from 12 million trips in 1991 to 40 million in 2010. At the same time, the number of private vehicles increased by 300%, from 4.7 million in 1990 to 18.6 million in 2010 (Land Public Transport Commission, n.d.).

From 1985–1997, the composition of public transportation in Kuala Lumpur declined from 34.3% to 19.7% due to users switching from public to private transportation (Kuala Lumpur City Hall 2004). A home interview survey conducted by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency in 1998 showed that the estimated ratio of vehicle ownership was about 211 cars and 164 motorcycles for every 1000 residents. The study concluded that private vehicles accounted for 56.6% of all vehicles used within Kuala Lumpur.

In Malaysia, inhabitants are less concerned about, or are unaware of, the impacts of motorized

transport (Aldukali Salem et al. 2011). In addition, the openness of society towards public transport has yet to reach expected targets, although the government has spent millions to improve the quality of public transport around Klang Valley (AinulHanis 2012). There has been increased use of public modes of transport such as commuter trains, busses, minibuses, mass rapid transit, light rail transit and taxis. However, fewer people are using public transport, compared to private vehicles (Rozmi et al., 2012). When launching the Train 4-*Gerabak 1Malaysia* for the Kelana Jaya route in 2010, Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Abdul Razak stated:

Sometimes I smiled on my own when thinking about some people to not having any problem to access public transport when they are overseas, but when they are in their own country they are not willing to get into LRT (Light Rail Transit) or buses because of perspectives that it is less glamorous or not prestige.

At the same time, the Prime Minister raised the question “if these things can be ignored, is there any willingness from the community to migrate to public transport from their own vehicles?”. He explained that, in reality, the increased use of public transportation is highly dependent on acculturation and attitudes held by the community, in addition to government efforts (Bernama 2010). Indeed, this finding reveals some of the attitudes held by the public in the country. Due to insufficient interest in public transport among city dwellers, the city’s public transport system was operating without profit, and heavily dependent on the city authority to survive financially (Abd Rahim & NorGhani 2006).

The use of public transport decreased from 34% in 1985 to 20% in 1997, and currently this figure is only between 10 to 12% (Malaysian Government, 2010). Previous findings seem to indicate that there is no readiness among youth to utilize public transportation as their premier mode of transport. There are several factors that influence a person’s willingness to migrate to using public transport instead of a private vehicle, such as unreliability, delays, inconvenience, lack of comfort (Kamba et al. 2007), longer travel time, and higher cost (Abdul Kadir et al. 2006), but to what extent do these factors lead to prejudice among youth towards public transport itself? Would improvements to the quality of public transport services, change prejudices among urban youth towards public transport completely? Or, are urban youth in Malaysia prejudiced towards public transport on certain personal, unreasonable grounds?

Prejudice and Public Transport

Travel behavior studies rooted in psychology and the social sciences have demonstrated that abstract

psychological constructs, such as attitudes, values, norms, perceptions, affects and desires, are integral to an individual’s choice of travel mode (Jensen 1999; Hagman 2003; Verplanken et al. 2008). Though the role of instrumental factors, such as travel time and cost, in determining mode choice is well recognized, and the influence exerted by individual attitudes towards less tangible attributes, such as comfort and convenience, has gained considerable attention in the last two decades (see Morikawa et al. 2002; Kuppam et al. 1999; Vredin Johansson et al. 2006; Yan~ez et al. 2010), a comprehensive framework akin to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991) or the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (Triandis 1977) that recognizes the influence of each of these psychological constructs on travel mode choice has not yet been operationalized in practice, due largely to methodological and computational limitations.

Gabriela and Sarsfield (2007) found that some car users have a strong attachment to their car, and that it would be very difficult to attract them to use the public-transport system. Such users have no intention to ever stop using their cars, since they care about their cars and love to drive them, and usually have a very strong feelings against public transport. Gabriela and Sarsfield’s (2007) study also found that respondents with low income, who face many difficulties in buying a car, are not likely to stop using their cars, mainly because having a car is an important achievement to them.

Improving the quality of service of public transport in a city may not improve residents’ attitudes towards public transport (Murray, et al. 2010). It does not make any sense for a country to have a superior public-transportation system, but at the same time fail to contribute to the country’s economic growth and social well-being. If non-users hold prejudices towards public transport and public-transport users, these will need to be overcome before the non-users are willing to try public transport (Charlesworth & Greenfield 2004; Marks 1997; Mayville and Penn 1998; Sloan 1969). Therefore, prejudice is another factor influencing public transport usage.

Prejudice usually arises because of a preliminary assessment that is formed without reference to the real facts. For instance, there have been media reports of residents objecting to proposed bus systems on the basis that a bus service would enable criminals and undesirable neighbors to access or live in their neighborhoods (Achs 1991), although recent evidence suggests that this belief is unfounded (Liggert et al. 2003).

In the context of the present study, the target of prejudice consists of the users of public transport, as well as aspects of the public transport service. Prejudice is a nature inner of human which is incorrect and stiff,

and can be felt, directed and disclosed to a group, a community or only to certain individuals (Allport 1978). In general, the term “prejudice” can be defined as attitudes towards a specific target that are based on stereotyped beliefs about that target (Plous 2003; Ponterotto 1991; Whitely and Kite 2006).

Klang Valley in brief

Klang Valley contains the Klang River and its tributaries. It is a major river valley in Malaysia as Kinta Valley. Klang Valley is developing rapidly, and is also an engine that contributes to the country’s economy. Klang Valley was created in the 1800s, after Kuala Lumpur was opened, because a great deal of tin ore was found there. It is also associated with the opening of Port Klang (formerly known as Port Swettenhem) shortly thereafter to bring tin ore from Kuala Lumpur. Klang Valley is located in Kuala Lumpur, and is also in the middle of Selangor state. The main cities in Klang Valley are Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya, Puchong, Klang, PelabuhanKlang, Ampang, Gombak, and SelayangdanCheras. In the 1980s, the districts of Hulu Langat and Kajang became part of Klang Valley. Between 1990 to 2000, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, and Sepangdan Kuala Lumpur International Airport also came to be included in the Klang Valley area, because of its location in the Multimedia Super Corridor area.

Public Transport in the Klang Valley Context

Urbanization and motorization have been prominent in Klang Valley (Bunnell et al. 2002). Public-transport-sector investment in Klang Valley has been increased in line with the rapid development of the area’s infrastructure. In the mid-1990s, massive investments were made in the area of public-transport infrastructure; this involved a program including the completion of three major rail systems in Klang Valley: (1) The Putra Light Rail Transit system; (2) The Star Light Rail Transit system; and (3) The Monorail system. In 2003, the government began to restructure the Klang Valley transport industry by consolidating the majority of rail and bus systems under a single company, Syarikat Prasarana Negara Berhad (Prasarana). Prasarana is wholly owned by the government, and was incorporated in 1998 by the Ministry of Finance to facilitate, undertake and expedite public-infrastructure projects approved by the government. Today, Prasarana continues to be the largest public-transport operator in Klang Valley, with an approximate 60% market share (Sharifi et al. 2006).

The Greater KL/Klang Valley Land Public Transport Master Plan sets out an integrated 20-year plan to transform land public transport in the region, in line with local needs and aspirations, and provide consistency with the Kuala Lumpur City Hall City Plan,

the Structure and Local Plans within Selangor, and the Putrajaya Plan (Land Public Transport Commission, n.d.). The Greater KL/Klang Valley Land Public Transport Master Plan is supported by six subsidiary plans.

1. Urban Rail Development Plan sets the basis for the development of urban rail services and future corridors in the Greater KL/Klang Valley region;
2. Bus Transformation Plan and Taxi Transformation Plan identify the service standards and industry requirements for improvements to these modes;
3. The interchange & Integration Plan demonstrates the methods that can be adopted to link the modes, develop the first and last mile, and reduce the barriers to using public transport;
4. The Land Use Plan and Travel Demand Management Plan identify the supporting measures needed to assist in the development of public transport in the region.

Method

Data collection

This study used a quantitative approach. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Random sampling criteria were used to select the respondents. The study population consisted of multi-racial youth living in Klang Valley. These were secondary students, public university students and young workers (16 to 40 years old). Trained enumerators were used to identify the respondents who met the study criteria. The questionnaires were collected from the respondents immediately after completion. The respondents took an average of 15 minutes to complete each questionnaire.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to measure the prejudice level toward public transport. Based on selected demographic factors, independent t-tests and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to see whether there were significant differences in the level of prejudice. Missing data for scale items were imputed using the missing data function in SPSS 21. Overall only 1.59% of the data was imputed, with most items having less than 1% of the data missing.

Scales

Youth prejudice towards public transport was measured using an adapted version of Murray et al.’s (2010) Public Transport Prejudice Scale. The original scale has 28 items; in this study, only 11 items were used from the original scale. These were translated into simple Malay, and the meanings of the original items were preserved. Two items were added to the instrument: “Public transport is for people who do not have a private vehicle” and “Public transport is for

people who do not have a driving license.” Two non-prejudiced items, or positive statements, was reverse-scored in order to describe them as negative statements (representing prejudice) towards public transport. These items were: “Most people feel comfortable talking to strangers on public transport in Malaysia” and “People believe that cities are much better with fewer cars.” Items were measured using a five-point scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The Cronbach’s alpha value obtained for the prejudice scale was .755, indicating that the scale is reliable.

Survey Results and Discussion

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profiles of the respondents: 45.1% of the respondents are male,

while the rest (54.9%) are female. The respondents were grouped into three age categories. The majority (74.7%) were middle youth (20–25 years old), while 19.5% were in the category of end youth and the rest (5.7%) were early youth. With regards to ethnicity, 36.2% of were Malays, 33.5% Chinese, 27.6% Indian and 2.7% from other ethnic groups. Meanwhile, the majority of respondents (87.8%) were single, and the rest (12.2%) were married. Most (74.1%) were students in a higher learning education institute (IHLE), and 25.9% were working full time. They were also asked to briefly describe the importance of public transport to them: the majority (66.8%) said it is essential, while 33.2% replied negatively in this regard.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=445)

Background	Percent
Gender	
Male	45.1
Female	54.9
Age	
Early youth (16–19 years)	5.7
Middle youth (20–25 years)	74.7
The end of youth (26 years)	19.5
Ethnic	
Malay	36.2
Chinese	33.5
Indian	27.6
Other	2.7
Marital status	
Single	87.8
Married	12.2
Career status	
Full time working	25.9
Student (IHLE/Secondary school)	74.1
The importance of public transport	
Very important	66.8
Not important	33.2

Level of prejudice towards public transport among Klang Valley youth

A five-point Likert scale measured the prejudice level of the respondents towards public transport, with (5) strongly disagree, (4) slightly disagree, (3) not sure, (2) slightly agree and (1) strongly agree. The respondents’ level of prejudice as a whole was determined by calculating the mean and the total,

divided by the total prejudice variables that were developed to produce the overall mean. The results show that the respondents have a moderate level of prejudice [$M=2.6417$, $SD=.61593$] towards public transport. Table 2 refers to the determination of mean prejudice level based on the overall mean score reported for the respondents’ level of prejudice.

Table 2: Determination of Prejudice Level

Level	Mean
Low	1.00–2.33
Moderate	2.34–3.66
High	3.67–5.00

Descriptive analysis (Table 3) showed that of 13 items, nine prejudice items towards public transport were at the moderate level, with an average score of 2.8526 [$SD=.63239$]. In general, the level of prejudice towards public transport among youth in the Klang Valley was at the moderate level. Two items that showed the highest scores were “The only reason to use public transport is if you can’t afford to drive” [$M=3.53$; $SD=1.300$] and “Most people feel comfortable talking to strangers on public transport in Malaysia” [$M=3.1874$; $SD=1.14239$]. Assuming that the only reason to use public transport is when one cannot afford to drive is not a positive outlook.

However, the second item, “Most people feel comfortable talking to strangers on public transport in Malaysia,” is a non-prejudice item, or a positive statement towards public transport. The mean score obtained was [$M=3.1874$, $SD=1.14239$]. This finding indicates that prejudices toward public transport are at a moderate level. Youth in Klang Valley are seen as not ready in the true sense to tell strangers about the benefits of using public transport. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991), intention (which, here, is the intention to tell strangers about the benefits of using public transport) is a direct determinant of behavior, and this intention is in turn determined by attitudes (the degree to which one has a prejudiced or non-prejudiced evaluation of public transport), subjective norms (perceived encouragement by important others, such as family and friends, toward using public transport), and perceived behavioral control (the perceived better or worse toward public transport).

Table 3: Distribution of Means and Standard Deviations of Prejudice towards Public Transport (n=445)

No.	Variables	Mean	S.D
1.	Public transport is only really an option if the weather is good	2.77	1.225
2.	The only reason to use public transport is if you can’t afford to drive	3.53	1.300
3.	I would feel embarrassed to tell others that I rely on public transport to travel around	1.932	1.1644
4.	Most people feel comfortable talking to strangers on public transport in Malaysia	3.1874	1.14239
5.	People believe that cities are much better with fewer cars	2.2132	1.15467
6.	Most people agree that strange people travel by public transport	2.691	1.2556
7.	I have nothing in common with people that take public transport	1.961	1.1274
8.	Public transport is only good for short trips	2.468	1.1950
9.	Owning a reliable car means not having to use public transport	2.589	1.3025
10.	It is mostly young people who use public transport	2.315	1.1643
11.	Crime and the public transport system go hand-in-hand	3.101	1.1551
12.	Public transport is for people who do not have private vehicle	2.689	1.2954
13.	Public transport is for people who do not have a driving license	2.89	1.372

**Items in bold were reverse-scored*

An independent t-test was carried out to see whether there were significant differences in the level of prejudice toward public transport among the respondents based on gender; significant differences were found (males [$M=2.7350$, $SD=.63350$]; females [$M=2.5641$, $SD=.59261$; $t(445)=2.920$ $p=.004$]), with male youth having higher levels of prejudice compared to female youth in Klang Valley.

However, the study found that there were no significant differences in the level of prejudice toward public transport based on career status (full-time career [$M=2.6908$, $SD=.75348$]; IHLE student/secondary student [$M=2.6178$, $SD=.56455$; $t(445)=1.075$ $p=.283$]). Youth prejudices toward public transport thus do not change (to lower levels of prejudice) even for those who have started their career.

The findings show that public transport is still not the major mode of transportation among the respondents. Haryati and Sharifah (2010), in their research on urban transportation among respondents in the areas of Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur and Kajang (among the three big towns in Klang Valley), found that the majority of respondents felt more comfortable using their own transport because it depicts “social status,” even though they acknowledged that they have to face significant traffic jams.

The present study also found that there are significant differences in the level of prejudice toward public transport based on its importance to the respondents, where those who feel it is not important have higher levels of prejudice [$M=2.8816$, $SD=.57286$] compared with those who feel it is important [$M=2.5190$, $SD=.60168$; $t(445)=-6.067$ $p=.000$]. Table

4 summarizes the findings on differences in respondents' prejudice toward public transport by selective profiles using independent t-test.

Table 4: Comparison of Respondents' Prejudice toward Public Transport by Selective Profile (n=445)

Profile	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Gender				2.920	.004
Male	199	2.7350	.63350		
Female	242	2.5641	.59261		
Career status				1.075	.283
Full-time career	112	2.6908	.75348		
IHLE student	320	2.6178	.56455		
Is public transport important?				-6.067	.000
Yes	296	2.5190	.60168		
No	147	2.8816	.57286		

The analysis found the level of prejudice among youth in Klang Valley toward public transport varies based on ethnicity. Chinese respondents had the highest mean score [M=2.8300], followed by Indian respondents [M=2.6026], other [M=2.6026] and Malay [M=2.44854]. Table 5 summarizes the mean score for prejudice toward

public transport based on ethnicity.

A one way-ANOVA test was used to see whether there were differences in the prejudice level among the respondents based on ethnicity; significant differences were indeed detected ($p < 0.05$) (Table 6).

Table 5: Respondents' Prejudice toward Public Transport by Ethnicity (n=445)

Profile	n	Mean	SD
Ethnic			
Malay	160	2.4854	.61619
Chinese	148	2.8300	.60969
Indian	122	2.6082	.55225
Other	12	2.6026	.73551

Table 6: Comparison of Respondents' Prejudice toward Public Transport by Ethnicity (n=445)

Profile	SS	df	MS	F	p
Ethnic				8.605	.000
Between groups	160	2.4854	.61619		
Within groups	148	2.8300	.60969		
Total	122	2.6082	.55225		

SS=Sum of squares; df=degree of freedom; MS=Mean square

Tukey's HSD test indicated that there is a significant difference in prejudice levels towards public transport between Malay and Chinese respondents [M Malay=2.4854; M Chinese=2.8300; $p < .000$], and

Chinese and Indian respondents [M Chinese=2.8300; M India=2.6082; $p < .014$]. Table 7 summarizes the further analysis.

Table 7: Differences in Prejudice towards Public Transport among Ethnicities (n=445)

(I) Ethnic	(J) Ethnic	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Malay	Chinese	-.34459*	.06847	.000
	Indian	-.12278	.07216	.324
	Others	-.11719	.17969	.915
Chinese	Malay	.34459*	.06847	.000
	Indian	.22181*	.07341	.014
	Others	.22740	.18020	.588
Indian	Malay	.12278	.07216	.324
	Chinese	-2.2181*	.07341	.014
	Others	.00559	.18163	1.000
Others	Malay	.11719	.17969	.915
	Chinese	-2.2740	.18020	.588
	Indian	-.00559	.18163	1.000

Conclusion

Even though the prejudice level among youth in Klang Valley towards public transport is at a moderate level, it needs to be addressed. The usage of public transport can offer many benefits, as discussed earlier. Despite acknowledging the fact that there exist weaknesses in the public transport system that influence the public to elect to use private transport, people should not have negative attitudes toward public transport without valid reasons, as this could be detrimental to the nation, to individual users, and to other individuals when the message of prejudice is spread and accepted. The data showed that public transport usage is still not satisfactory, especially among the youth in Klang Valley. Thus, it is recommended that the government should take the initiative to improve the public transport infrastructure (to fulfill users' needs), while education should also be used as an important tool in this regard. It is believed that through this mechanism, at least when questions are posed regarding why people do not use public transport, the public, particularly youth, will give a fair evaluation toward public transport (and thus will not be prejudiced due to invalid reasons).

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