

## **HIKING PREPAREDNESS MODEL (HiPrep): A SCENARIO OF MALAYSIAN HIKERS AWARENESS**

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## HIKING PREPAREDNESS MODEL (HiPrep): A SCENARIO OF MALAYSIAN HIKERS AWARENESS

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### Abstract

*Mountain hiking is a well-known outdoor recreation activity in Malaysia. In fact, it became phenomenon since 2016 when the social media platform took place as a mainstream. Many people tend to hike some hiking spot which went viral. They liked to share their awesome pictures and experience as well. However, since then, accident and incident during mountain hiking activities in Malaysia drastically increased. Many hikers injured, died and lost in the jungle which previous study showed that human led were part of the cause. As a result, tons of SAR operations have been done and it was costly, time consumed and difficult. Regard to this circumstance, hiker's preparedness doubted. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to know the scenario of Malaysian hiker awareness on hiking preparedness from the expert point of view. Thus, an interview of local experts had been conducted. The finding showed, all the experts agreed that most of hikers nowadays were lack of knowledge about preparedness in terms of physical, knowledge and equipment. They stress out that most of the new hikers were not carried along basic things during their hiked such as headlamp, extra clothes, extra food and drinks, whistle and pocket knife. Experts also revealed that many newbie hikers didn't wear appropriate attire during a hike such as wrong shoes and backpack which end up with safety issue. This results could make researchers in the same area of interest to aware on the hikers' scenario in order to capture the Hiking Preparedness Model (HiPrep) in the future plans especially Hiking concerned.*

**Keywords:** *Hiking Preparedness Model, Safety Preparedness Behavior.*

## INTRODUCTION

Recently, the popularity of mountaineering activity among Malaysian community is increase and it is known as one of the fastest growing extreme sports locally and internationally. This is because the activities are very beneficial and can attract the entire community which are capable to fill their free time (Monasterio, Alamri & Mei-dan, 2014; Soule, Reynier, Lefevre, & Boutroy, 2017). The intended benefits are people can increase their potential from the aspects of physical fitness, mental toughness, self - confidence, group cohesion development (Mazuki, 2016), self-satisfactory and a good health (Siti Hajar, Salamiah, Norzuwana dan Norliza, 2015).

However, parallel with the positive progress of mountaineering industry in Malaysia, there is an increasing number of accidents and incidents among mountaineers occur especially at the easy access hiking spots. Based on statistic issued by the Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia, in 2018, 105 accidents and incidents were recorded. Surprisingly, this figure was 78% equal with the numbers of reported cases since 1996 to 2014 (Nik Jazwiri, 2016). This shows an increase number of unsafe activities in mountain hiking climate in Malaysia. In fact, mountaineering incident involves many bad implication to the physical, mental and emotion of mountaineers (Richardson dan Spano, 2018; Schffl, Morrison, Schöffl, Morrisond, Schöffl, dan Küpper, 2012; Hefti, Ullrich, dan Küpper, 2011). As far as literature studies from local perspective concerned, there are very limited scientific research in Malaysia to counter this issue.

## METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the awareness of hiking preparedness among Malaysian hikers in order to develop a model of hiking preparedness. Hence, researcher need to understand what kind of needs that should be covered in the model. Regard to this matter, researchers have conducted an interview among panel of experts.

There are types of interview that could be categories to collect the data for this study. Such as: focus group interview, structured interview, semi-structured interview and in-depth

interview. For this study, researcher applied a structured interview technique among selected experts to gain an in dept study based on information obtained about hiker's awareness in terms of mountain hiking preparedness and yet not time consumed (Saedah, Norlidah, Dorothy & Zaharah, 2013). This applicable technique with need analysis steps considered based on McKillip Model (Ramlan, 2017).

Base on the selected type, the interview schedule and questions were already designed. The questions designed based on literature review that related to hiking preparedness among hikers and using a standard set of questions. Researchers asked the questions in the same order that they have been designed and subsequently recorded the responses by the interviewees. Open ended and close ended questions with direction applied and researchers' level of probing was little or maybe repeated to clarified instructions when the informants tend to not clear with the questions. Finally, researchers combined the data from different informants and apply the data to understand the similarities and differences to describe the scenario of Malaysian hikers awareness concerned (Creswell, 2003).

#### *Justification of Experts*

Richey & Klien (2007) emphasized that expert selection in developmental research was very important. It was to determine the relevant of products developed. It covered a process of finding appropriate experts and justifying the criteria of experts to go with the study.

Based on previous study, researcher found that experts can be defined by their expertise of the particular field. It consists their experience and knowledge in the field. According to Le Maistre (1998), designer which have more than 5 years of experience in designing products have been selected as an expert in previous study. However, 2 of them were selected as experts and been found out that designer who had 18 years of experience in field was performed better in one formative evaluation. This argument supported by Ridhuan, Jamil, Siraj, & Yusof, (2015) which also stated that person who had experiences in the certain field more than 5 years could be defined as expert and even consisted at least 3 panels in one justified study.

Hence, based on above citation, researchers have selected 3 informants who had experiences in mountaineering more than 18 years in Malaysia's mountain as an expert of this

study. Table 1.1 showed the demography of the experts who had been selected as the key informants (P) in this study.

*Table 1.1: The experts' demography (N =3)*

<b>Num.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Academic Qualification</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
P1	Male	Bachelor Degree	20 years	President of a public group about hiking and camping around Malaysia which consists 250 000 members, organising local and international hiking trips.
P2	Male	Bachelor Degree	24 years	A postgraduate candidate in hiking trail assessment, organising local hiking trips and searching and rescuing (SAR) in the tropical mountains.
P3	Male	Bachelor Degree	21 years	President of Malaysia's nature guide association, guiding local and international hikers in Malaysia's jungle and mountainous area.

#### *Rational of Approach Selection*

Previously, there were local researchers who already implemented this kind of approach through their study such as Mohd Ridhuan (2016), Mazlan (2017), Mazlina Zaira & Hadikusumo (2017) dan Abdul Muqsith (2018). Hence, an interview among expert have been chosen as consideration of this approach as:

1. A standard set of question which already designed for the purpose of the study.
2. It contains the question which design based on literature in which area researchers want to venture into and help a researcher to focus on the area.
3. This approach involved a close and open - ended questions which can help researchers to get the driven answer without blocking the key informant idea.
4. The expert opinion are very great data which can represent a big picture of certain issue.
5. The characteristic of close and open ended questions which were exploratory and appropriate if researchers did not know the true issue or phenomena that researcher want to explore.
6. Structure interview was lesser time consumed.

## FINDINGS

Regard to the study objective, an overview of awareness of Malaysian hiker in terms of hiking preparedness was gathered. According to the expert point of view, researchers had found that most of new hikers did not well prepared before hiked. This argument based on statement:

*“I think they (experience hikers) are aware and more likely prepared, somehow, I concerned more on new hikers because they just started and didn’t get such wise information sources” (P1).*

This opinion also supported with the response of another expert who stated:

*“If consisted whom I called ‘hipster hiker’ or ‘mountain tourist’, they tend to take for granted because they often underestimate the trail and didn’t know what to do if something bad happen” (P2).*

This showed that new hikers more likely to be lack of preparedness during hiking activities than experience hiker. As a part of that, the other expert added:

*“Some time we didn’t know the level of the participants (hikers), so we need to do some sort of survey before we start. This was to determine the level of participant in terms of physical fitness and experience” (P3).*

Thus, researchers concluded that, all experts agreed that experience played an important role of awareness among Malaysian hikers. This is because an experience hiker have been through many expeditions and learnt from the past experiences (Scheunemann, 2011). It contradicted with new hiker who tend to hike because of trend and didn’t get a proper training before hike.

*“I think if true hiker (an experience hiker) is aware and more likely prepared” (P1).*

As researchers emphasised the comments of the first expert, based on the expert experiences and observations. It was a clear argument that hiker who had a good experience and good practices in hiking preparedness was more likely prepared than a new hiker. In other word, hiking preparedness among new hiker was doubted.

Hence, hiking preparedness consisted a preparation in terms of physical fitness, gears and equipment readiness and environmental knowledge (Mason, Suner, & Williams, 2013). Researchers found that, all experts have given a similar response which stated:

*“It is true, for example, sometimes we found hiker who went hike wearing a futsal shoes. The futsal’s shoe is slippery on hiking terrain. So, when in the middle of hiking he will know, how hard it is and can cause an injury. Another example, some of them went hike without carrying a drinking water. Anyway, it’s not all about gears, pre-caution needed as well” (P1).*

*“Okay, beside we prepare in physical aspect, we must also prepare an equipment aspect, correct. It is very important, equipment for personal neither group” (P2).*

*“Agreed” (P3).*

These responses showed that experts agreed, hiking preparedness consisted preparation in multiple aspects such as physical, equipment and knowledge. Somehow, hikers were not meet all the aspects. Such as the example that has been given, some hikers were not wearing a proper attire, did not carry even a drinking water container which was vital in hiking activities.

According to the experts’ arguments, Malaysian hiker awareness in terms of hiking preparedness was doubted. Especially among the new hikers. Experts agreed that most of the new hikers and some of experience hikers did not fully prepared themselves to do the mountain hiking activity. It was due to they did not get a proper training, did not know the correct and standardise information about the mountain that they wanted to hike and they did underestimate the trailhead.

## CONCLUSION

By extracting the expert’s comments and responses from the interviews that compiled hiking preparedness and casting them in the transcription, the review had revealed a lack of awareness

among Malaysian hikers in which such scenario occur. Specifically, the critical aspects of physical fitness, level of knowledge and equipment readiness seem to be under-represented in the hiking preparedness in the informant points of view.

The focus on the hiker, and educating them, was reminiscent of Scheunemann (2011) so finding from the study that many hikers especially day hiker did not prepare basic gear because as a short trip was the main reason. In other situations of hiking preparedness awareness, all levels of a system were more often incorporated in preparedness strategies (Mason et al., 2013).

There were examples of this in mountaineering, for instance in Safety Preparedness Behaviour Model (SPB) “Day hiker preparedness: Assessing the roles of past experience, safety messages & knowledge of safety practices” (Scheunemann, 2011, p. 13). A way to move hiking preparedness forward is to use the SPB Model as a springboard for empirical study of model-based enhancement as far as HiPrep development was considered in time being.

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