

Bibliotherapy in Public Libraries: A Conceptual Framework

Siti Arpah Noordin, Haslinda Husaini and Shamila Mohamad Shuhidan

Faculty of Information Management, Universiti of Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Email: {siti, haslinda3145, shamila}@salam.uitn.edu.my

Abstract—Children today are citizens of tomorrow as they are the key players in the development of knowledge societies. As to fulfill the needs of our children it is important to monitor their development especially in this new era of digital and borderless environment. Children will go through different types of experiences and challenges as they grow. Bibliotherapy is a concept that involves the use of books to help children cope with their life. Bibliotherapy is no longer a strange method or practices in library service, especially libraries in hospitals. Bibliotherapy has been widely recognized as an approach that helping librarians to better address emotional, behavioral and social concerns. Hence, the role of a library will be more visible and significant with bibliotherapeutic schemes rather than the traditional perceptions of librarians being the custodians of information/books. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the conceptual research framework of exploring the bibliotherapeutic scheme employed in the Malaysia public libraries and how the initiatives instill children's reading habits. As bibliotherapy is considered very new in Malaysia, this study will explore the insight of the adoption of the concept in public libraries. Adopting a qualitative multiple-case study approach, this research intends to cover public libraries in both East and West Malaysia. Series of semi-structured and focused-group will be conducted to capture the qualitative insights of the bibliotherapy providers and clients. The study will provide better understanding of the bibliotherapy concept and will become a baseline for future research in similar area.

Index Terms—bibliotherapy, public library, children, knowledge society, literacy, reading habits

I. INTRODUCTION

Children today are citizens of tomorrow as they are the key players in the development of knowledge societies. They need to be coached and educated to become part of a literate and an intelligent nation. Books can be used as a very good strategy to develop a nation's economy and culture. Along with the aspiration to nurture reading habits in Malaysia, the Malaysian government has made initiatives into it with various types of activities. For example, at the National Library of Malaysia, a unit was created to take charge of the reading promotion activities. This is to motivate and encourage the society about the importance of reading habits in Malaysian culture. The unit is responsible to create the opportunities and motivate Malaysian society to gain lifelong education

and knowledge. The role is to support the aim of the National Library's effort to instill and inculcate reading habit among Malaysian and to make reading as a cultural habits for Malaysian [1].

Towards the knowledge and literacy society, reading habits are an essential aspect to be considered. Reading is a ticket for success in education and lifetime. It's a process of lifelong learning and must have the continuity. Based on previous studies, only twenty percent of Malaysian reads regularly and the rest of it is reluctant to read [2]. As we are able to acquire new ideas and knowledge from reading, educational institution such as schools are important agents to nurture reading habits among children. Besides schools, libraries (school, public and university libraries) also engage important roles to promote reading habit among children. However, according to National Library of Malaysia in 2006, Malaysian read less; about seven pages a day. Several established Malaysian organizations studied the reading habit of Malaysian. The studies conducted by the National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia - PNM) and the Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka (DBP), Pandian (2000) revealed that Malaysians still in the average reading state, with only two books read a year. A survey in 2006 with a sample of 60,441 respondents, reveals the literacy has slightly decreased to 92 percent from 93 percent in 1996. Pandian, in his study explained that Malaysian reader is divided into two main categories, which is one group read regularly; carrying twenty percent of Malaysian while the second category, called reluctant readers.

Ones positive reading attitudes will lead to positive reading experiences [3]. This pattern is supported by the Smith & Mikulecky, 1978 [4] *Reading Modeling Effects* as the model concludes people who regularly read will continue to read without reluctant for information and enjoyment [5]. Similarly, students, for example, who fall in this category will continue to read even after graduation, hence, it influences as a model in their respective areas such as in homes and workplaces will help in the improvement of a nation reading reluctance [6]. Previous study in 2007 by Karim & Hasan, shown that Malaysian students were reluctant to read for information and pleasure, hence if the problem is not solved properly, Inderjit in his study conclude that Malaysia will be led by people who are reluctant to read. It's going to affect the nation's health growth of social and economic as Malaysians who are reluctant to read are

people who are lack of information which will affect their ability in knowledge, intelligence and maturity. They will not be able to make sound decisions or to solve problems even to initiate ideas.

Bibliotherapy has been widely recognized as an approach that helping librarians to better address emotional, behavioral and social concerns [7]-[9]. In Malaysian context, bibliotherapy is still new [10], therefore, the objective of this article is to introduce the concept of bibliotherapy as a way of encouraging reading motivation among Malaysian young adults, especially and the community generally. Bibliotherapeutic scheme initiated in public libraries can be a key factor in encouraging young adults to read. Conceptualizing bibliotherapy in Malaysian public libraries, the study will explore the insight of the adoption of the concept. The study will focus on how the bibliotherapy concept promotes children reading habits. The study will provide better understanding of bibliotherapy and make recommendations to public libraries.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

As mentioned earlier, with a positive reading attitudes, one may subsequently lead to positive reading experiences, hence, poor reading habits could lead to deprived experiences. As an example; previous study shown that poor reading habits will be responsible for poor academic performance and this will result a lack of literacy skills including reading that may cause a problem for living, working and survive. Due to that Inderjit, in his study found that lack of knowledge and information, children are tending to involve in many problems.

Lucas & Soares discussed [11] schools are the primary context in which children interact with each other. They do not serve only for teaching and acquiring knowledge, but also to educate students as citizens capable to define and achieve goals as well as to understand themselves, others and the surrounding. It is in schools, children learnt how “to know,” “to do,” “to live together,” and how “to be a person” [12] in a way that allows them to make decisions throughout their lives. Practically it is important for schools to highlight issues such real-life situations. The idea is to give a clear picture to the children whom might be went through or experiencing the situation. With that practice children will be able to analyse and solve and cope with problems.

The stress that students attempt to cope with is a problem in elementary schools based on research done by Ouzts & Paolombo [13]. They stated that while the world changed, so does the children. Therefore, children today are burdened with stress and anxiety in their lives. Children today may be facing to all sorts of problems; in adjusting to school, bullying issue, making friends, working together, and coping with fear, anxiety, anger, as well as frustration. At the same time they might also, be falling behind in school work, have lack of study skills, self-discipline, not be aware of their own aptitudes and abilities, or even be upset about family events such as issues pertaining to the death of their loved ones or the divorce of their parents. At the young age, children are

the victims and experience of more than one type of maltreatment and traumatic events due to the stress of life, it's responsible for issues likes families, life cycle and societal [14]. They need a model or guidance to face through the situation or environment. By using literature as a guided tool it will help in develop in emotional and social development of children. With the bibliotherapeutic scheme, children will feel comfortable to share and to discuss. Bibliotherapy thus provides children with metaphors for life experiences and its help children who have a difficulties to discuss or share their feelings or problems to learn new ways to handle the issues [15].

On the other hand, other social institutions like libraries and museums can also play a strong role in children's early learning. Therefore, services for children in a public library setting is a must for early childhood development. No-one should doubt the importance of children's libraries to children as well as their families. This is due to the fact that they are often the first encounter with lifelong learning, introducing the readers and learners of the future in an exciting, rich and varied environment.

Libraries are in a unique position, due to the resources and relationship with the community. Library as empowering place as a therapeutic landscape [16] due to the organizational opportunities to serve their surrounding communities. The existence of public libraries is to support community and society's development due to the ability of the libraries to provide the resources, services and facilities as in the times past, the public library has aptly been called ‘the university of the people’ [17].

The way of life of a nation is created of its citizen who are literate. Islam holds acquisition of knowledge which is literacy and reading in high value. The holy Qur'an reveals that the first communication between Allah and Prophet Muhamaad was knowledge-based, known Iqraa, that bring the definition of read or recite (Qu'raan 96:1-5). It shows the importance of reading not only towards individual but for nations development. There comes the role of the library in developing reading culture. Libraries have become an organization that is responsible to create an awareness about the importance of reading towards nation. This is because public libraries provide access to reading materials. Even the analysis of scientific publications witnesses that the bibliotherapy method starts or the root is in libraries as a field of reading recommendations in public libraries [18].

However, in the Malaysian society, generally the usage of library is low, particularly amongst the youth and children as they rarely exposed to the services, especially in rural areas as stated by Mohamad Yusoff et al., in his study [19] rural libraries lack of information needs assessment conducted by library personnel; outdated and unattractive (for youths) reading materials; and the provision of irrelevant materials that do not apply to the local context [20], [21]. Rural libraries playing a traditional role as a reading centre, information and knowledge seeking and discussion. Its responsible to 1)

inspire reading habits among the rural people 2) offer useful reading sources to the rural community, 3) assist rural students in getting useful sources for their studies and 4) provide related recreational activities for the rural community [22]. In many cases, rural libraries fail to construct positive attitudes among youths, as they seems fail to promote their books and services. Consequently this will demotivate youths from using them as they do not see any reasons or benefits for doing so.

Yusuf & Taharem [23] describe bibliotherapy as a technique for composing and constituting interaction between clients and therapists based on their mutual sharing of literature in fulfilling the client therapeutic needs. Bibliotherapy is a dynamic and interactive process, “that helps children to recognize that life includes challenges that have an impact on how people survive while developing a hardly resilient spirit in facing an array of circumstances”. Bibliotherapy does not claim to cure, but rather to enlighten and to promote insight. It is intended as an adjunct to treatment [24]. The rationale for using books as a coping mechanism for children; Yusuf and Taharem, state that readers will bring their needs and problems in their reading experience when they read good books. In fact, one could get involved with the characters and could easily relate to one's experience.

The possibilities to use bibliotherapy in the library analysis had been discussed [25] which is by reading bibliotherapy and interactional bibliotherapy or known as by reading and discussion about text. Which means librarians, personel counselor, social worker's will treat in a work of reading materials such as fiction. Their role is to propose a person in crisis which is identifying the problem to read related books that have similar stories, it allows to grow emotionally. Yusuf & Taharem, conclude that clients will gain new knowledge and insights when they finished reading a book, which they then reflect on their own situation and ways to handle them .

Reading to children will helps them to their development. Reading books itself is a safe activity, medium and style for children to explore and understand their feelings, environments, situations, community and societal expectations. It is a good thing to learn about the other people lifestyle and situation without dangers. Through bibliotherapy, it may increase interest in reading for recreational purposes, it is also an opportunities for children to develop reading skills and habits [26].

bibliotherapy and how it can be used as a platform to encourage children reading habits. Table I. depicts the proposed model for studying the effect of bibliotherapy on reading habits.

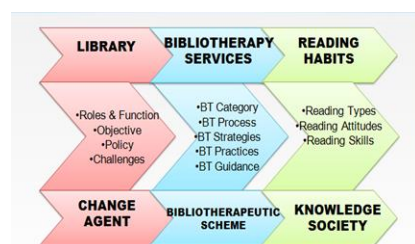
The research conceptual framework is constructed based on previous studies of Karim & Hassan [3], Janaviciene [18], Ogbodo [25], Brewster [27]-[29], Shrodes [30], Pardeck [31], Rubin [32], [33], Walia and Sinha [34].

Three main elements are gathered together and rationalised in this study; *Library* as the change agent, *Bibliotherapeutic schemes* as the initiatives and *Knowledge Society* as the national aspiration to have a literate society with good reading habits. The dimensions of the library are roles & function, objective, policy and services [35]. As for the bibliotherapeutic scheme, the dimension includes bibliotherapy category, process, practices and strategy [18], [27], [28], [30]-[32]. The dimensions of reading habits are reading types, reading attitudes and behavior, and reading skills [1], [2], [3], [5], [25].

The literature on bibliotherapy begin in the 20th century, and it was accepted in the library field, when a trained librarian was employed at the Mclean Hospital, Massachusetts in 1904. In the era, as a leading role, books were used as a therapy towards patients. It was in the year 1920s, Sadie Peterson-Delaney, also a librarian from Veteran's Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama had success in the outstanding program that was related to bibliotherapy towards African – American war veterans. She then received world recognition because of the method she adopted to treat the psychological and physical needs of war victims. In fact a year before; in 1919 an article was written by a librarian about bibliotherapy. The librarian was co-author with a neurologist in the publication of ‘The therapeutic use of hospital library’ (Bibliotherapy sourcebook 1978). Consequently, bibliotherapy is no longer a strange method or practices in library service, especially libraries in hospitals. The role of a library will be more visible and significant with bibliotherapeutic schemes rather than the traditional perceptions of being the custodian of information/books. According to previous studies by Battleson and Nessel, Fanner and Urquhart [8], [36], [37] the practices of bibliotherapy for helping the mentally ill continues to be well-recognized by librarians who often take part in programmes of rehabilitation and bibliotherapy. Library play a role as a stress-reduction agency through their services and activities of bibliotherapy [38]. Through the programme the children learn to cope with their threatening problems. Previous research [39] identified a lack of standardized bibliotherapy practice as an inhibitors to the schemes of bibliotherapy. It is highlighted that the authority which offers the service has no proper syllabus and in fact some libraries and librarians did not realize that services offer is technically bibliotherapy [39].

According to Janaviciene, bibliotherapy can be divided into three categories which are clinical bibliotherapy, rehabilitation bibliotherapy and education bibliotherapy or known as personality development. Other study such

TABLE I. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



III. THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This article attempts to highlight a research conceptual framework of study to explore the application of

as Brewster, identified bibliotherapy also into three categories which are clinical, supportive and developmental of bibliotherapy. To summarize the studies from the different authors, bibliotherapy has three types which are clinical, rehabilitation and educational bibliotherapy.

A main issue this study attempts to explore is how the bibliotherapy influences the clients reading habit. Previous study shown that reading significantly benefits to the reader experience and life. Through reading, not just the readers will acquire new ideas and knowledge, reading contributes significantly to job success, career development and ability to respond to change [40]. For reading to be meaningful, children must learn to cultivate reading behaviour for lifelong learning not just only reading per say as it is a continuous process. Younger generation today need to be encouraged and guided to develop interest to read not only to pass an examination, but for pleasure and lifelong learning. Due to this, an initiative and collaboration must be established. Public library as a community centre must play their roles and function to help the community. Good reading habits are an essential life skill for every citizen. It is an asset that needs to be nurtured as it will increase a person's knowledge, build maturity and character, promote creative thinking and widen the awareness in the social, economic, political and environmental contexts.

IV. SUMMARY

The research conceptual framework presented in this paper offer an opportunity for further investigation on the public library adoption of the bibliotherapy concept and how the services influence the reading habits of the clients. Hence, in order to validate the framework and the corresponding prepositions, the researcher will adopt a qualitative research approach involving the Malaysian public libraries. Series of semi-structured interviews and focused-groups will be engaged to answer the research questions. The scope of the study covers the public libraries from both the East and West Malaysia. It is hope that the findings may highlight the insights of the bibliotherapeutic schemes conducted by the libraries and how they promote the reading habits which may become the baseline for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Education of Malaysia, and University Technology MARA (UiTM), for giving ways and opportunities for us to further conduct this research project.

REFERENCES

- [1] Malaysian National Library, "The reading profile of Malaysians 2006," unpublished research by the Malaysian National Library, Kuala Lumpur, 2006
- [2] A. Pandian, "A study on readership behavior among multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Malaysian students," presented at the 7th International Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) Conference on Learning, RMIT University, Melbourne, July 5-9, 2000.
- [3] N. S. A. Karim and A. Hasan, "Reading habits and attitude in the digital age: Analysis of gender and academic program differences in Malaysia," *The Electronic Library*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 285-98, 2007.
- [4] C. B. Smith, S. L. Smith, and L. Mikulecky, *Teaching Reading in Secondary School Content Sub Ects: A Book in Ing Approach*, NY: Holt, Rine art and Winston, 1978
- [5] A. Pandian, *Reading in Malaysia*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, 1977
- [6] S. Inderjit, "Reading trends and improving reading skills among students in Malaysia," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 70-81, 2014.
- [7] T. Natalia, "Bibliotherapy in a library setting: Reach out to vulnerable youth," *The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2011.
- [8] B. Battleson and V. Nessel, "An investigation of the role of an on-site library in the provision of adjunct bibliotherapeutic treatment for emotionally disturbed youth," *Qqml Net*, pp. 287-293, 2012
- [9] S. Arulanantham and S. Navaneethakrishnan. (2013). Introducing bibliotherapy in public libraries for the development of health and social conditions of post war community in Jaffna District-An exploratory study. [Online]. Available: <http://blogs.ifla.org/riss/2013/05/20/introducing-bibliotherapy-in-public-libraries-for-the-development-of-health-and-social-conditions-of-post-war-community-in-jaffna-district-an-exploratory-study/>
- [10] E. Chik, *et al.*, Book Buddies: Nurture and Culture , Reading Habits Among Paediatric Patients and Guardians at Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia Abstract, 2014, pp. 1-10.
- [11] C. V. Lucas and L. Soares, "Bibliotherapy: A tool to promote children's psychological well-being," *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 137-147, 2013.
- [12] J. Delors, I. Al-Mufti, I. Amagi, R. Carneiro, F. Cgung, B. Geremek, and W. Gorham, "Educac,a: o um tesouro a descobrir," Relato'rio para a Unesco da Comissa'õ Internacional sobre Educac,a'õ para o se'c. XXI [Education a tresoure to discover], 9a ed. Porto: Asa, 2005.
- [13] D. T. Ouzts and K. L. Brown, "Practical applications for the classroom teacher: A bibliotherapeutic approach," presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association, Indianapolis, IN, April-May2000.
- [14] M. K. Rudman, *Children's Literature: An Issues Approach*, New York: Longman, 1995.
- [15] J. T. Pardeck and J. A. Pardeck, *Bibliotherapy: A Clinical Approach for Helping Children*, Langhorne, Pennsylvania: Gordon and Breach Science Publisher, 1993, p. 2.
- [16] L. Brewster, "The public library as therapeutic landscape: A qualitative case study," *Health & Place*, Elsevier, vol. 26, pp. 94-99, 2014.
- [17] C. Richardson Lack, *Can Bibliotherapy Go Public?* Spring. 27-32, 1985.
- [18] D. Janaviciene, "Bibliotherapy in lithuanian public libraries: Service identification and analysis," *Torunkie Studia Bibliologiczne*, vol. 2, no. 9, 2012.
- [19] M. Yusoff, *et al.*, "Attitude towards rural library services among youths in Malaysia," *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 777-782, 2013.
- [20] S. A. Nyaya, "Creating a library system that serves the needs of rural communities in africa south of the sahara," *Pan-African Studies.*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 9-22, 2009.
- [21] B. Vavrek. Rural Information Needs and the Roles of Public Libraries. [Online]. Available: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi-m1387/is_n1_v44/ai_17558549/?tag=content;coll.1995
- [22] R. Mazuki, S. Z. Omar, J. L. D'Silva, and H. A. M. Shaffril, "Mapping the problems in using library services among rural youth in Malaysia," in *Proc. Social Sciences Research ICSSR 2014*, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 9-10 June 2014.
- [23] R. Yusuf and M. S. Taharem, "Bibliotherapy: A tool for primary prevention program with children and adolescents," *Journal Antidadah Malaysia*, pp. 75-90. 2008
- [24] C. Caldin, *Reading and Therapy*, Santa Catarina: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2009.

- [25] R. O. Ogbodo, "Effective study habits in educational sector: Counseling implications," *Edo Journal of Counseling*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 1-11, 2010.
- [26] V. Elahe, "Bibliotherapy for use in psychological and social problems children," *Nationalpark-Forschung in Der Schweiz (Switzerland Research park Journal)*, vol. 102, no. 10, October 2013.
- [27] L. Brewster, "Books on prescription: Bibliotherapy in the united kingdom," *Journal of Hospital Librarianship*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 399-407, 2009.
- [28] L. Brewster, "Medicine for the soul: Bibliotherapy," *APLIS*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 115-119, 2008.
- [29] L. Brewster, "The reading remedy: Bibliotherapy in practice," *APLIS*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 172-177, 2008.
- [30] C. Shrodes, "Bibliotherapy: A theoretical and clinical-experimental study," dissertation, Berkeley (CA): University of Californi, 1950.
- [31] J. Pardeck. Bibliotherapy: an innovative approach for helping children. In Strub, P 2011, Bibliotherapy: a review of the literature. [Online]. Available: <http://www.commonscs.edu/mals/files/2011/01/strub-bliotherapy.doc>. 1994
- [32] R. J. Rubin, "Uses of bibliotherapy in response to the 1970s," *Library Trends*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 239-252, 1979.
- [33] R. J. Rubin, *Using Bibliotherapy: Theory and Practice*, Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1978
- [34] P. K. Walia and N. Sinha, "Changing trends in reading habits of teenagers in Delhi: An impact assessment of demographic and environmental variables," *Library Revue*, vol. 63, no. 1-2, pp. 125-137, 2014.
- [35] D. Janaviciene, "Bibliotherapy process and type analysis: Review of possibilities to use it in the library," *Bridges / Tiltai*, vol. 4, pp. 119-132, 2010
- [36] D. Fanner and C. Urquhart, "Bibliotherapy for mental health service users Part 1: a systematic review," *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 237-252, 2008.
- [37] D. Fanner and C. Urquhart, "Bibliotherapy for mental health service users Part 2: a survey of psychiatric libraries in the UK," *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 109-117, 2009.
- [38] M. N. M. Jackson. (2006). Bibliotherapy Revisited Issues In Classroom Management: Developing Teachers' Awareness and Techniques to Help Children Cope Effectively With Stressful Situations. [Online]. Available: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED501535.pdf>
- [39] Emma Hutchinson. Bibliotherapy Programmes in Dublin Public Libraries: A Case-Study of Dublin City, Fingal and South Dublin Public Library Services . Quantitative and Quantitative Methods in

Libraries (QQML) Special Issue Social Justice, Social Inclusion, 2014, pp. 95-103.

- [40] UNESCO. Early Childhood care and education. Education. [Online]. Available: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/early-childhood/2010>



Siti A. Noordin was born in Singapore. Holds a B. Sc. in Library Science from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (1987), obtained a Masters in Business Administration (MBA)- (Info. System) from the Oklahoma City University (1997) and obtained a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) in the area of Knowledge Management from Northumbria University, UK (2008).

She is a senior lecturer at the University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia since 2008 with 11 years experience as a librarian before becoming as one of the faculty members at the Faculty of Information Management, UiTM.



Haslinda Husaini born in Selangor, on 26 October 1977. She obtained her Master of Science in Information Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA (2008). Her Bachelor's degree is in Information Studies (Hons) (Info. Systems Management) from Universiti Teknologi MARA (2000), Malaysia as well. She worked as librarian for the past 9 years, mostly focusing on user education and reference, cataloguing and acquisition. She is a senior lecturer at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia for the past 5 years



Shamila M. Shuhidan born in Perak, on 22 September 1975. Holds a B. Sc. In Accounting from Hull University, United Kingdom (1998), Masters in Information Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (1999), and Doctorate in Business Information Systems in the area of Online Information Seeking Behavior from RMIT University, Melbourne (2013).

She is a senior lecturer at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia for the past 15 years.