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Spending Patterns and Perceptions: Malaysian Citizens' Views on the High Living Expenses

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ABSTRACT
The cost of living in urban Malaysia is higher compared to rural Malaysia. Individuals with lower incomes face significant challenges in fulfilling fundamental needs such as sustenance, shelter, healthcare, and education because of escalating expenses. With the increasing cost of living, individuals may face difficulties in effectively managing their financial resources, perhaps leading to excessive poverty. The objective of this study is to measure the perceptions of Malaysian individuals on the escalating expense of living particularly for the low-income category (B40), middle-income category (M40), and high-income category (T20). The research methodology utilized in this study was descriptive research, and the respondents were comprised of a sample size of 231 households that originated from various areas in Malaysia. The data were obtained using a standardized questionnaire (involved the application of tables and percentages) and further analysis will use SPSS to analyze the relationship between variables. The results indicate an insignificant detrimental link between consumption and lifestyle. The distribution of respondents across different states in a study might influence the statistical significance of the test results. Some states may have a larger or smaller representation in the sample compared to others. For future study, we suggest using stratified sampling to guarantee a more uniform distribution of responses across states. To reduce measurement mistakes, we should gather data with more accurate and reliable method.

Keywords: Spending Patterns, Perceptions, Cost of Living, Poverty, Malaysia

1) INTRODUCTION

A Households in Malaysia are being classified into three distinct income classes: the Top 20% (T20), the Middle 40% (M40), and the Bottom 40% (B40). The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2014) described T20, M40, and B40 and the group's income has escalated over time, indicating economic development. According to survey conducted on household income in the 2019 Household Income Survey conducted by DOSM (as indicated in Table 1), the T20 income category consists of households whose total income exceeds RM10,971. The M40 income categories have a household income range of RM4,581 to RM10,970. The households belonging to the B40 income bracket have monthly incomes that are below

RM4,580.

Table 1: Household Income Category in Malaysia

Category	Income Group	Income Range
B40	B1	Less than RM2,500
	B2	RM2,500 – RM3,170
	B3	RM3,171 – RM3,970
	B4	RM3,971 – RM4,580
M40	M1	RM4,581 – RM5,880
	M2	RM5,881 – RM7,100
	M3	RM7,101 – RM8,700
	M4	RM8,701 – RM10,970
T20	T1	RM10,971 – RM15,040
	T2	More than RM15,041

Source: Department of Statistic, Malaysia (2020)

The COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated the disparity in household income, hence posing a threat to the growing number of individuals in the B40 socioeconomic group. The pandemic worsened the situation by triggering economic instability, a decline in real incomes, a rise in the unemployment rate, and cost-reduction measures implemented by employers. According to Associate Prof Dr Irwan Shah Zainal Abidin, an Economics Lecturer at Universiti Utara Malaysia, the most concerning issue in the current unstable environment is the emergence of the 'new poor'. Hence, he emphasised the necessity for government intervention to promptly address and regulate the issue before it deteriorates further, as reported in Berita Harian on April 18, 2021. By 2022, it is anticipated that around 1 million middle-income households (M40) will have the capacity to transition into low-income status (B40). This is backed by an economist from Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Associate Professor Dr Ahmad Azrin Adnan, who claimed that when recovery is difficult to achieve, of course, there will be an increase in the number of B40 homes that used to be M40 (Sinar Harian, 22 Feb 2022).

Malaysia has encountered several economic issues, such as escalating inflation, significant unemployment, and volatile political conditions. In December 2021, Malaysia experienced a 3.2 percent increase in its inflation rate compared to December 2020. Malaysia has encountered several economic issues, such as escalating inflation, significant unemployment, and volatile political conditions. In December 2021, Malaysia experienced a 3.2 percent increase in its inflation rate compared to December 2020. It is expected that all essential necessities will increase in cost, particularly food, due to our country's historical dependence on imports to fulfil its requirements, as well as manpower shortages and natural disasters such as floods, which have affected manufacturing and transportation. Malaysia has faced economic difficulties because to the COVID-19 epidemic and other internal problems. However, there are now indicators of economic recovery. While there is a significant amount of empirical research on consumption patterns, the specific focus on consumption patterns in Malaysia is notably scarce [1].

Malaysia aims to attain the status of a high-income developed country by 2030, and a crucial aspect of this objective is ensuring a superior quality of life. Enhanced economic sustainability in a country enables its citizens to access improved quality of life, including better education and healthcare services, a protected environment, favorable working conditions, and efficient transportation and communication systems. The individuals' quality of life is further enhanced through a suitable and comfortable residence in a harmonious and secure setting.

The study seeks to examine the general patterns and trends in spending behaviors to gain depth understanding of the Malaysians' lifestyle. Understanding the spending patterns of Malaysians can assist individuals and households in managing their financial resources effectively. This can assist individuals in managing their money more skillfully, saving money for the future, and making wise financial decisions. For policymakers and government bodies to make better decisions, analyzing consumption trends and spending patterns can supply useful knowledge about the current economy. The enterprises, policymakers, and individuals must comprehend the consumption trends or spending habits of Malaysian consumers to make informed decisions that promote economic expansion, financial security, and sustainable progress.

Through enhancing data preparation and addressing data deficiencies, this study can contribute to the development of a comprehensive dataset for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically targeting the eradication of all forms of poverty (SDG Goal 1) by the year 2030. This objective is to eliminate poverty in all its forms globally by establishing effective policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels to promote greater investment in initiatives aimed at eradicating poverty. Furthermore, by ensuring a minimal level of inflation and a superior quality of life, Malaysia will ensure the fulfilment of SDG 2030. This goal emphasizes the need for fair and balanced economic development, as well as equitable access to opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of their gender or geographical region.

2) LITERATURE REVIEW

T The entire well-being and contentment an individual or a community feels in all facets of their lives is called quality of life. It includes elements that affect a person's sense of fulfilment and satisfaction on a physical, mental, social, and emotional level. Numerous empirical research has established the significance of a person's demographics and work position on overall spending and demand trends. Quality of life's a subjective assessment of their general well-being, satisfaction, and happiness with their physical, social, and emotional situations. It covers many aspects, including physical and mental health, work prospects, financial stability, education, social connections, and access to healthcare.

The escalating cost of living in Malaysia is not just a financial concern as it poses a significant threat to the quality of life of its citizens. Studies reveal a detrimental impact of rising costs on mental and physical health. A research study highlights the prevalence of stress and anxiety associated with financial strain, particularly among those struggling to manage expenses [2]. This emotional burden can have cascading effects on physical health, with research suggesting a link between financial hardship and chronic health conditions [3]. As individuals grapple with increasing costs, their ability to invest in preventive healthcare and address existing health issues can be compromised, further jeopardizing well-being. The rising cost of living disproportionately impacts access to necessities.

In addition, another study emphasizes the crucial role of housing affordability in determining standard of living, with increasing costs posing a serious barrier to adequate housing, particularly for low-income groups [4]. While another finding found that further reveal significant geographic disparities, with certain states and urban areas experiencing greater burdens compared to others [5]. This uneven distribution reinforces existing social inequalities and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, limiting opportunities for a decent quality of life for disadvantaged populations. There are another finding reports state that a shift towards shared experiences and leisure activities among B40 households, potentially as a coping mechanism for constrained budgets [6], [7]. Further result observes a reduction in spending on necessities, indicating financial strain and potential compromise on well-being essentials [8]. While these responses demonstrate individual resilience, they also point to the limitations of such coping mechanisms in ensuring sustainable well-being and highlight the need for systemic solutions. The escalating expenses associated with daily living in Malaysia significantly impact the overall standard of living experienced by its inhabitants. Its impact extends beyond mere financial burdens, permeating mental and physical health, access to necessities, and social fabric.

The increasing living cost in Malaysia presents a critical challenge, not in isolation, but in its complex interplay with the nation's income distribution. While economic indicators may suggest progress, a closer examination reveals a stark reality: for many Malaysians, particularly those within the B40 low-income group, high living costs act as a constricting force, further tightening the already strained financial circumstances brought upon by income disparity [7]. While wealthy individuals have the ability to buy everything wanted, the poorer individuals are struggle to have their necessities. Hence, a rise in income levels is beneficial for the rural poor to access to essentials that would improve their quality of life [9]. A greater standard of living for the population results in a significant rise in the general public's level of consumption and spending [1]. Compared to other factors, strong consumer spending accounts for a considerable portion of the economy's growth. Private consumption remained the main engine of national growth. The content and types of products and services sought have changed, and the amount of spending increased. The improvement in economic circumstances and elements relating to social facets of society can be blamed for these developments.

The B40s bear the brunt of this multifaceted challenge. Studies paint a grim picture of constant financial pressure, compelling them to prioritize necessities such as food and shelter over essential healthcare, nutritious meals, and secure housing [10]. This daily struggle for survival significantly compromises their well-being, weaving financial strain into the very fabric of their lives. The impact, moreover, extends beyond individual hardships; research by [11] demonstrates that the burden of high living costs spills over into the future, with B40s struggling to make adequate retirement savings due to immediate financial pressures, perpetuating vulnerabilities and anxieties about long-term security.

Income disparity further amplifies the challenges posed by high living costs, dictating spending patterns and limiting opportunities. Research revealed that low-income households are forced to prioritize immediate needs, often sacrificing leisure activities and personal investments [12], [13]. This creates a vicious cycle: limited access to leisure and skill development restricts their ability to climb out of poverty, further perpetuating income inequality and reinforcing the grip of high living costs on their lives. Subjective quality of life measures people's perceptions of their life experiences [14], in contrast to earlier publications that concentrated on the analyzing objective quality of life using quantifiable markers, like health care, education, and more [15]. According to previous research, as an indicator of the government policies, life quality usually highlighted the problems of individual's physical and psychological well-being [16], [17], [18]. In addition, it is also considered an effective assessment in a variety of aspects in the physical, social, environmental, and psychological areas to measure the individual's happiness, desires, needs, wants, and aspirations (WHO, 1998).

The overall pattern or direction that people's purchases and uses of products and services over a given time frame can be referred to as a consumption trend. It captures modifications in customer behaviour and tastes in regard to goods, services, and brands. This consumption trends can be affected by many element such as cultural, social and economy standards, technological advancements, environmental concerns as well as demographical changes. For organizations, decision-makers, and marketers to spot opportunities, foresee client needs, and make wise choices, it is crucial to understand consumption trends. According to research, households may reduce their grocery expenses during economic downturns by exerting more effort when shopping [19], [20]. Households change their buying habits to pay less for the same things by going to the store less frequently, shopping at a different location, looking for deals, or using coupons [21]. Contrary to low-income households, high-income households could weather the recession by changing their shopping habits.

Since living expenses have already begun to rise for the B40 group, The COVID-19 pandemic has increased their concern about financial difficulties such as career stability and the advancement of their children's education [22]. Contrary to the T20 group (59%) and the M40 group (48%), the B40 group did not indicate a significant 41% changes in consumption trends. This scenario highlights the consistent expenditures and consumptions trends of the B40 group for both before and after the introduction of MCO, unlike the T20 and M40 groups. The conditions of B40 group become worse after the COVID-19 pandemic as they become more concern on financial issues such as employment security and children's education, which are already troubled by increasing living expenses [22]. The high living expenses in Malaysia presents a formidable challenge, casting a long shadow over household well-being and impacting consumption patterns in multifaceted ways. While economic indicators may suggest progress, a closer examination reveals a reality where Malaysians adapt, adjust, and navigate evolving trends in their spending habits, shaped by both financial pressures and a spectrum of perceptions.

One notable trend reshaping consumption patterns is the increasing focus on health consciousness. As observed by [23], Malaysians are exhibiting a growing preference for healthier food options and related products, even though these choices may come at a premium. This shift reflects a commitment to well-being, but it also highlights the potential conflict between desired consumption patterns and affordability when confronted with a higher cost of living. However, the weight of the financial burden is not uniformly distributed. [24] highlights the effects on teenager from poorer group where the high cost of living significantly impacts their financial well-being and sense of control. These individuals often face the agonizing choice between sacrificing essential needs or healthy choices due to limited resources, highlighting the disproportionate impact of economic pressure on vulnerable communities.

Individual perceptions also play a significant role in shaping consumption trends. While some Malaysians, particularly those with higher incomes, might adapt their spending habits through strategic choices and technological solutions, others, especially those facing financial hardship, might experience anxiety and feelings of powerlessness over their economic circumstances [25]. These divergent perceptions underscore a fragmented landscape where the high cost of living creates diverse experiences and coping mechanisms, with some embracing adaptation and others struggling with economic vulnerability.

3) Data and Methodology

This study is conducted on the quantitative study and the non-probability sampling used. The questionnaires were distributed online (Google form) to Malaysian households between 1 September 2021 and 15 October 2021. The survey was successfully distributed at random and 231 people responded from 16 states in Malaysia. There were various sections to the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to complete Section 1 to provide demographic data. The lifestyle of the respondents was evaluated in Section 2. The information about expenditure trends and how Malaysian households feel about the growing cost of living was obtained from Section 3. For specific items, the respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale with potential options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Tables and graphs were used to present the descriptively analyzed data.

A structured online questionnaire has been dispersed to everyone at random for this method. For results to be generalised to any region and to be equally likely to the general population, a random data gathering technique has been used. 231 individuals were polled in total, and the information is kept in the Google sheet. Following data cleaning, only 230 responses were included in the sample size since the questionnaires that were incomplete or filled out incorrectly were not included in the study. This study attempted to examine how a household's lifestyle affects its consumption habits. The questionnaire includes a few significant indicators, such as income, education, employment type, economic conditions, and people's perceptions on consumption trends.

We first used the Cronbach's Alpha test to verify the data's reliability after gathering and cleaning it. Utilizing the primary data for additional analysis won't be as difficult if it is trustworthy. Next, we computed the descriptive statistics and concentrated on graphical analysis as we examined the data. Correlation analysis has been used to determine the association of respondents' lifestyle choices on their consumption. The tables and graphs of the results are provided in Section-4 of this article.

4) RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

4.1 Data Reliability

We concentrate on the reliability of questionnaire data of the sample sizes in the first part of the analysis. In this study, we utilized the Cronbach test to determine the questions Likert scale's consistency. The result of Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variable (consumption) is 0.757, which shows a decent amount of internal consistency. On the other hand, the independent variable's (lifestyle) Cronbach's alpha, which is 0.413, is rather low and denotes poorer internal consistency.

4.2 Descriptive Statistic

The survey was performed via a community questionnaire conducted throughout the country instantaneously. The purpose of the survey was to gather community opinions and impressions regarding the increasing expense in the living costs. Table 2 shows the respondent profiles of 230 individuals in all were surveyed and the most respondents (125) from Terengganu, were followed by Selangor and Johor.

Table 2: Respondent Profile (n=230)

Items	Descriptions	Percentage	Items	Descriptions	Percentage
Gender	Male Female	30.4 89.6	Total household income (per month)	RM2500 and below RM2501 – RM4580 RM4581 – RM10,970 RM10,971 and above	14.4 17.6 45 23
Age	Below 25 years 26 - 35 years 36 - 45 years 46 – 55 years 56 years and above	6.6 14 50.2 22.3 7	Number of dependents	Zero dependent 1 person 2 – 3 person 4 – 6 person 7 person and above	13.9 12.1 28.7 38.1 7.2
Race	Malay Others	99.1 0.9	Residential area	Urban Rural	70.9 29.1
Residence state	Johor Kedah Kelantan Melaka Negeri Sembilan Pahang Perak Perlis Pulau Pinang Sabah Sarawak Selangor Terengganu WP Kuala Lumpur WP Putrajaya	5.3 7 2.2 1.3 1.3 0.9 1.7 0.4 2.2 0.4 0.9 20.1 54.6 1.3 0.4	Type of house	Terrace house Semi-D Bungalow Village house Flat Apartment Others	31.4 14.2 29.2 18.1 0.9 5.8 0.4
Education level	SPM and below Diploma/ Degree level Master PHD	14.5 53 25.7 6.5	Type of ownership	Rental Resident Others	15.7 73.4 10.9
Marriage status	Single Married Divorced	13.5 83.9 2.6	Number of room	1-2 rooms 3-4 rooms 5 rooms and extra	8.3 78.3 13.5
Occupation	Government sector	53.9			

Items	Descriptions	Percentage	Items	Descriptions	Percentage
	Private sector	18.3			
	Self-employ	9.6			
	Housewife	10			
	Not working	8.3			

About 70.9 percent of survey participants were from the urban population, while 29.1 percent were from the rural area. In terms of income level, the M40 group had the largest proportion of 45 percent, followed by the group of B40 with 29 percent and the group of T20 with 23 percent.

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistic

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Consumption	.087	229	<.001	.982	229	.005
Lifestyle	.118	230	<.001	.979	230	.002

Table 3 shows the summary of descriptive statistics. We used Kolmogorove-Smirnow and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality test. From the result, we found that both tests indicates the data that being used is normal distribution.

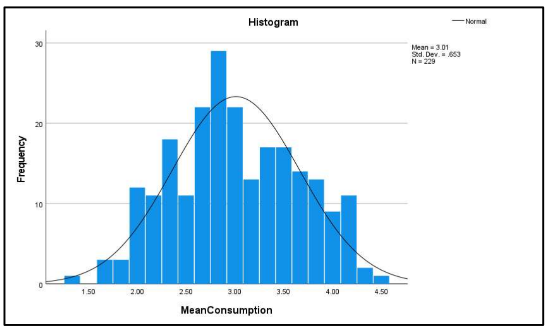


Figure 1(a): Normality Test Result for Consumption

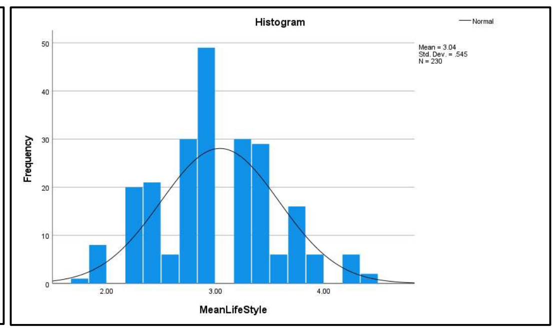


Figure 1(b): Normality Test Result for Lifestyle

Figure 1(a) and (b) show the normality test for Consumption and Lifestyle. The normality test for both variables which is consumption and lifestyle are by using the histogram method and it shaped the normal bell curve that indicates normal data distribution.

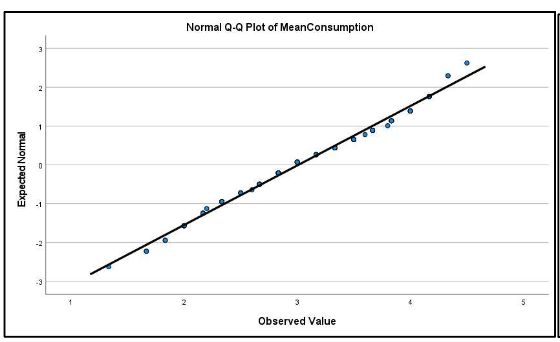


Figure 2(a): Diagram of Q-Q plot (Consumption)

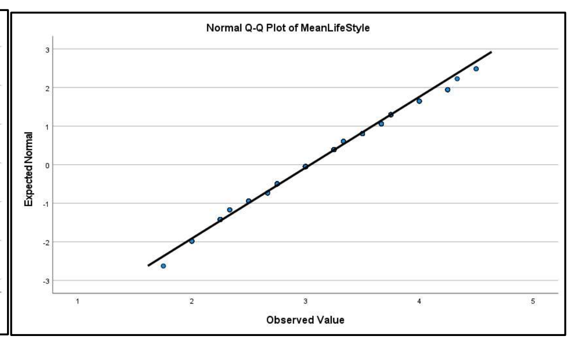
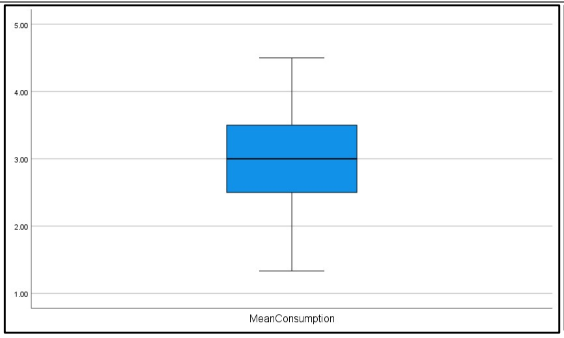


Figure 2(b): Diagram of Q-Q plot (Lifestyle)

The Q-Q plot also indicate both variables have normal data distribution for this study as shown in the Figure 2(a) and Figure 2(b).



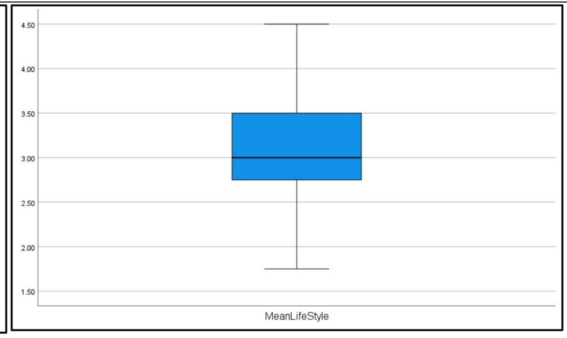


Figure 3 (a): Diagram of boxplot (Consumption). **Figure 3 (b):** Diagram of boxplot (Lifestyle)

Figure 3(a) and 3(b) shows that there is no number of outlier and we can consider that all data is normally distributed for both consumption and lifestyle.

Table 4: Distribution of respondent on types of loan and saving amount

Types of loan	Frequency	Percentage	Average saving per month	Frequency	Percentage
Hire purchase loan	131	60.9	No saving	30	13.2
Housing loan	118	54.9	RM100 and below	27	11.9
Personal loan	108	50.2	RM101 to RM500	71	31.3
Education loan	52	24.2	RM501 to RM1,000	50	22
Others loan	47	21.9	RM1,001 and above	28	12.3
ASB loan	18	8.4	Uncertain amount	21	9.3

Sources: Researcher analysis (2021)

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondent on types of loan and saving amount. We categorized the result on the variables of lifestyle and consumption trends.

A. Lifestyle

From the questionnaire result, 84.2 percent of respondents stated that the current economic situation is stressing their life. The study found that the highest type of loan incurred by individuals is a hire purchase loan (60.9 percent), followed by housing loan (54.9 percent), personal loan (50.2 percent), education loan (24.2 percent), others loan (21.9 percent) and ASB loan (8.4 percent) as shown in Table 4. Loans involving hire purchase and housing are mandatory loans for survival. A car and a house are the main necessities in life, and it is difficult to have both without a loan or difficult to pay in cash. Only in terms of personal loans, the percentage of 50.2 percent is quite high and worrying.

In terms of average saving, it is recorded that 31.3 percent of respondents make saving in the range of RM101 to RM500 per month, while 9.3 percent are saving with an uncertain amount. 13.2 percent of respondents didn't save any amount, which is quite worrying. This means that the income earned can only cover monthly expenses without any excess or possibly spending more than the income received. Every family needs to create a savings account for use in times of emergency. But if no savings are made continuously, this is very worrying. How does the household want to continue life without financial resources or savings if hit by an emergency?

This result is in line with the study on B40 household finances and consumption by [26] mentioned that vehicle loans were the most significant percentage when compared to all other loans followed by private loans and house loans. Due to the small number of respondents who are self-employed and apply for business loans, business loans have the lowest percentage.

From the results of the respondents, 1.7 percent admitted to being in a difficult situation or still in need, 41.9 percent were moderate in life, 54.1 percent admitted to being sufficient and not excessive and only 2.2 percent admitted to being in a luxurious situation. Due to this urgent life situation, 30.6 percent of respondents do part-time work to support their family's income. This means they carry out part-time work to help increase the family's income which is less to meet the demands of the family's monthly expenses. This means that the amount of salary received every month is not enough to cover their living and there needs to be additional from other sources of income. The higher living expenses in Malaysia, the price of expensive products and the low rate of salary payment will pressure the population to use the available free time to carry out part-time work. For those who have a permanent job and at the same time do part-time work, this will harm their body health, work productivity and rest time.

Because rest time is spent to help generate income for the family. The study by [26] argued that the impact of MCO implementation on financial and savings resources, the availability of savings, the capacity to recover financial resources, the preparation for the restoration of financial resources, and the actions taken in the event of future emergencies like MCO are all covered by financial analysis. Most respondents in this study claimed that the introduction of MCO harmed their income and savings. According to 31.3% of respondents, the MCO's adoption did not impact their jobs or pay.

B. Consumption Trend

A total of 176 respondents or 77.6 percent are burdened with monthly expenses such as pay TV, internet, and other services. While only 22.4 percent (51 respondents) feel not burdened on those expenses. From the result, 191 respondents always calculate or think first before making expenses even for the purchase of necessities. But in terms of buying branded things, 48.5 percent of respondent care about brand while 51.6 percent doesn't care about brand of product as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Buying trend and brand selection.

Think before buying	Frequency	Percentage	Care about brand	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	191	83.4	Yes	111	48.5
No	38	16.6	No	118	51.6

Sources: Researcher analysis (2021)

According to an analysis of B40 household spending patterns by [27], 62.6 percent of monthly consumption expenditures go towards housing, food, and transportation. Low propensity to save in among B40 households will have more significant on household financial needs B40. The high level of indebtedness among the B40 also affects the ranking of their finances because of the tendency in making personal loans to cover daily expenses. [28] contend that bad financial management practices can put people at risk of vulnerability and debt. Similarly, the literature shows that households need to control their daily spending wisely, especially in difficult financial times, because if they tend to spend more than they can afford, they end up becoming more vulnerable and poorer [29]. Similarly, research indicates that financial literacy and behavior encourage households to save money, accumulate assets, and improve economic results [30].

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The Correlation analysis has been conducted to determine the association of respondents' lifestyle on their consumption trend. The Pearson correlation test of this variable showed that the relationship between lifestyle and consumption are statistically not significant, r = - 0.005, p= 0.935 (as shown in Table 6). The correlation between the two variables is very weak. The negative symbol shows a negative relationship, but the small magnitude suggests that variations in one variable are not closely related with changes in the other. The p-value of 0.93 is much higher than the typical significance level of 0.05. This proposes that we do not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between the two variables. In other words, the observed correlation could likely be due to random chance. According to these results, we might conclude that there is no meaningful or statistically significant correlation between the two variables.

Table 6 : Result of correlation

Variable	Pearson	Lifestyle	Consumption	Spearman's rho	Lifestyle	Consumption
Lifestyle	Pearson Correlation	1	-.005	Correlation coefficient	1.000	-.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.935	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.662
	N	230	229	N	230	229
Consumption	Pearson Correlation	-.005	1	Correlation coefficient	-.029	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.935		Sig. (2-tailed)	.662	.
	N	229	229	N	229	229

While the result of nonparametric correlation is, r= - 0.29, p= 0.662 (as shown in Table 6). The correlation between the lifestyle and consumption is negative, indicates that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. The magnitude of -0.29 shows a moderate negative correlation. It's not extremely strong but still noteworthy. The p-value of 0.662 is higher than the significance level of 0.05. This shows that we do not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between the two variables. In other words, the observed correlation could likely be due to random chance. Based on these results, we might conclude that there is a moderate negative correlation between the two variables, but this correlation is not statistically significant at the conventional significance level of 0.05.

According to [31], Malaysian households have negative perceptions about the rise in living expenses. The causes of the rising cost of living can be determined by a variety of factors, including changes in household consumption patterns, price changes, and income trends. From the survey conducted (as shown in Figure 4), the most burden expenses are debt burden or personal loan (63.7 percent) followed by high living cost (61.9 percent), utility cost (43.8 percent), health and medical cost (30.1 percent), education cost (24.3 percent) and other expenses (21.7 percent). A total of 200 respondents or 87.4 percent of respondents agree that burdened by the high cost of living. In terms of respondent perception, they believe that factors that contribute to the high cost of living in Malaysia are higher price of products or services (46.9 percent), followed by factor of lower salary or wages (29.4 percent), failure to manage expenses (18 percent) and other factors (5.7 percent).

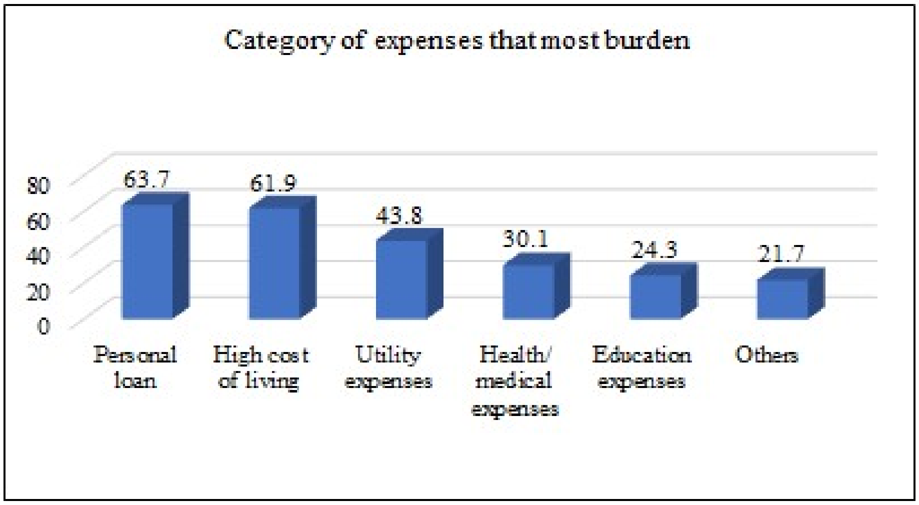


Figure 4: Expenses category

5) DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Report (2013), household savings of the lower income group are not enough to cover their expenses after old age retirement. [27] stated that the B40 household is a collection of homes coping with dangers of different sizes that have an impact on their life. Environmental, social, and economic variables all contribute to vulnerability. Economic characteristics that increase household vulnerability B40 include reliance on one source of income, high cost of living, inability to purchase a property, high levels of debt, and possession and access to assets.

Although managing expenses and lessening the effects of rising living costs can be difficult, we can consider several techniques. As smart consumers, we must play a role in trying to deal with the issue of rising prices of goods. It is also recommended to spend according to your needs and not according to your ability or lust. Make a budget that details your earnings and outgoings as well as find areas where you can spend less or less money. People need to control expenses so as not to exceed the available budget while if there is excess income it can be saved for future use or in times of emergency. Set up money for your key expenses in priority order. Assess your discretionary spending on things like entertainment, dining out, and non-essential goods. Make a practise of routinely saving money. Even tiny sums over time might build up and serve as a financial safety net. Develop your knowledge and skills consistently to increase your employability and earning potential. This may result in improved employment opportunities and possibly higher earnings. Investigate options for side income, such as freelance work, part-time employment, or capitalising on a talent or pastime.

Since every person's financial condition is different, it's important to adjust these recommendations to fit your own scenario. To successfully manage the rising cost of living, periodically reevaluate your spending plan, keep tabs on your costs, and make any adjustments. Therefore, it is so important to the government and policy makers to formulate strategic programs to help the low-income group to overcome the problem of poverty so that the standard of living of the population can be improved. The increase in the level of income among the poor helps them obtain the basic needs in achieving a better quality of life. If there is no price control, the country will inevitably experience a higher inflation rate which will ultimately burden Malaysians in the future.

Correlation study results indicate that lifestyle and consumption are negatively correlated. The absence of significance indicates that there is insufficient data to disprove the null hypothesis, which contends that there is no significant correlation between consumption and lifestyle in the sample. There are possible explanations for why a negative link could exist without reaching statistical significance, therefore in subsequent studies, we should consider the impact of additional variables, alter the sample's characteristics, or determine whether a larger sample size is necessary. This can entail studying more variables, utilising a different study design, or boosting the sample size to enhance statistical power. When interpreting study results, it's critical to take both statistical and practical significance into account.

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8] Data Availability

The data used in this study was collected by the authors for the publication purpose only. All the informations are confidential.

9] Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare that there is **no conflict of interest.**

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