

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the research findings of the data collected from the case study samples. The primary source of data is the interview. The results will be given concerning the research objectives stated in the study.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE INTERVIEWEES

The table 4.1 show the demographics of the interviewees categories. Only three men in Padang Terap who work as rubber tappers and rice farmers and make Kratom crops as a side income. All participants coded as Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3 to protect their anonymity.

Table 4.1:

Category of respondents.

Name	Main plant	Gender	Age	Duration of Kratom plant	Quantity of Kratom plant
Participant 1	Rice farmer	Male	48 years old	3-4 years	70 plants
Participant 2	Rubber tapper	Male	40 years old	10 years	500 plants
Participant 3	Rubber tapper	Male	45 years old	11-12 years	100 plants

4.2 ANALYSIS

This section obtained from the individual interviewees on exploring the Padang Terap Community's perception of the illegalization of Kratom under the Dangerous Drugs Act (1952). After the data collection process with all the respondents, the findings below were obtained. The findings from the interview were based on the analysis by coding the respondent's experiences. Several codes of experiences appeared in the interview of all or most respondents and will presented in this chapter. All the explanations will be supported with the quotation from the interview with the respondents.

4.2.1. Finding of research question 1: Why do people in Padang Terap continue to sell Kratom even though it has been declared a controlled substance under the Poisons Act (1952)?

Despite Kratom being classified as a controlled substance under the Poisons Act (1952), residents in Padang Terap continue to sell it for several reasons. An important aspect is the economic incentive it provides. The second factor is the high local and international demand for Kratom leaves and beverages. The third factor is the population's belief in the health benefits of using Kratom, which has been passed down for generations. Fourthly, Kratom tree maintenance is simpler than that of commodity crops. Analysis of reasons on continuing to sell Kratom, which has been declared a controlled substance under the Poison Act (1952 are as shown in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2:

Theme and sub theme for RQ 1

Theme	Sub themes
Financial assistance	a) High profit b) Previous crop failure
High demand	a) Demand for Kratom leaves b) Demand for Kratom beverage c) High demand for abroad
Belief	a) Ancient medical b) Ancient healing
Low maintenance	a) Easy care plant
Punishment	a) Mild punishment

4.2.1.1 Financial assistance

The sale of Kratom can provide respondents with a source of income and support. As Kratom is in high demand, it can be a viable means of generating income and meeting financial goals, especially for those in areas with limited economic opportunities. In this study, respondents have few reasons to continue marketing Kratom after the drug has been declared illegal.

a) High profit

The primary factor is profitability. Kratom sales can be lucrative because of its demand and the possibility of high profit margins, which are greater than the returns from their primary commodities as rubber tappers and rice farmers. Some respondents may choose to continue

selling it illegally to generate income and capitalise on the market. In the interview with respondent 1, as a rice farmer, he said:

“Saya jual setakat la ni, pendapatan saya jual air Ketum ni dah lebih kurang empat ke lima ribu, sebulan”

Respondent 2 works as rubber tapper, as stated:

“Eh, kalau getah sebulan, saya punya kebun dulu baru dua ke tiga ribu.. Itu pun kena bahagi dua! Haa! Hat ni orang kata, bersih RM40 ribu”

Respondent 3 works as rubber tapper also stated:

“kalau kata anggaran kasar dalam seminggu tu, purata pendapatan duit dapat RM4 ribu hingga RM5 ribu. Seminggu! Saya dapat. So, kalau kata sebulan, kalau tolak dengan, biasalah upah pekerja sikit apa semua, tak lari lah lebih kurang dalam RM15 ribu tu tak lari lah. RM15 ribu ke RM17 ribu lebih kurang itulah. Kira bersihlah saya dapat dalam sebulan”

b) Previous crop failure

The previous crop failure is the second factor. When faced with low prices for their primary agricultural commodities, respondents may consider diversifying their income streams. Low prices for commodities such as rice and rubber may prompt respondents to look for alternative income sources. This can involve activities such as the sale of Kratom and the exploration of new crops with higher profit potential. Respondent 2 grows rubber trees and has experienced an uncertain market price situation. During the interview session with respondent 2, he said:

“saya tanam pokok getah, lepas tu saya buang pokok getah, disebabkan harga getah jatuh 10 tahun lepas, dan tak dapat pulangan keuntungan. Ataupun, pendapatan merosot lah”.

Another response about the price of rubber is from respondent 3. He stated:

“Getah jatuh masa tu tak silap saya dalam sekilo RM2.30 macam tu lah. Memang tak boleh nak pi... Nak jual pun teruk masa tu”

Besides that, rubber and rice farmers require careful care to maintain good production quality. Both crops are susceptible to diseases that can affect product quality and profit. Respondent 1 faced situations where their rice plants were infected with diseases and can experience a significant impact on their returns. He stated:

“Kalau kata padi saya kena penyakit ke apa, kadang-kadang boleh turun sampai RM1000. RM900 pun saya pernah dapat encik”

4.2.1.2 High demand.

Kratom has grown in popularity both domestically and abroad as an herbal remedy and wellness substance. Respondents have a business opportunity to sell the plant or items made from it because of the huge demand for Kratom products. This demand may be influenced by a few things, including as the claimed health advantages and existing cultural perceptions of Kratom.

a) Demand for Kratom leaves

Kratom leaves are readily available to consumers in a variety of forms, including dried leaves. In most cases, the purchaser can gather the leaves from the garden, which will then be weighed in accordance with the market rate. The adaptability makes it possible for people to select the approach that best meets their preferences, which increases demand for Kratom leaves.

As a Kratom seller, respondent 1 stated:

“Kadang-kadang, ada jugak orang mai beli daun. Haa, daun ada jugak. Daun saya jual sekilo RM30. Kalau orang luar mai, mintak nak beli daun, saya suruh depa kutip sendiri lah. Lepas tu saya timbang lah

On the other hand, in Padang Terap, where Kratom cultivation and use have also been present, the price of Kratom leaves may be relatively lower. From view of respondent 3, factors such as the availability of a larger supply, local market dynamics, and potentially lower demand compared to Thailand could contribute to relatively lower prices.

Respondent 3 stated that:

“Kalau harga dekat market tempatan, kalau kat kita sini dia lebih kurang dalam dua puluh lebih lah.. RM25 – RM35 macam tulah. Ikut tempat lah. Tapi kalau Siam ni, lebih kurang dalam RM150 dapat lah. Sekilo”

b) Demand for Kratom beverages.

Kratom beverages are a simple and convenient method to consume Kratom. If purchasers do not intend to purchase Kratom leaves, they can only purchase pre-packaged Kratom beverages at a fixed price. The pre-packaged nature of Kratom beverages eliminates the need for additional preparation, making them appealing to individuals seeking convenience and time-saving options. According to respondent 1, a seller must additionally supply Kratom beverages because it makes the product attractive and can increase demand. This convenience has indirectly contributed to the local market's demand for Kratom beverages.

Respondent 1 stated the demand for Kratom beverage in the local market is very encouraging as stated:

“Setakat ni alhamdulillah, memang ramai. Banyak budak-budak muda kampung ni, Kadang-kadang kampung luar pun ada, mai beli sini, depa mudah beli hat siap mcm cheroi, hat daun ”

Kratom beverages in Padang Terap generally fall within a moderate price range compared to other beverages and herbal products in other regions. According to respondent 1, Kratom beverages packaged and sold to the local market are usually sold at an affordable price. Respondent 1 shared the selling price of Kratom beverage in the local market is as below:

. Untuk ayaq biasanya 5 ringgit sebungkuih”

c) High demand from abroad.

Padang Terap geographical next to Thailand also contributes to the high demand for Kratom from foreign countries such as Thailand. In Thailand, where Kratom has historically been cultivated and has cultural significance. In Thailand, the price of Kratom leaves may be higher than in other countries due to several factors, including a limited supply as a result of legal restrictions within the country, which can contribute to the higher price and demand.

It supported with respondent 2 stated that:

“Permintaan Ketum ni tinggi. Sama ada dalam negara kita ataupun negara luar. Haa.. Seperti, inilah, macam Siam. Thailand. Memang permintaan dia tinggi skit. jadi, belah sana ni memang jual mahai lah, dan depa mintak tinggi”

4.2.1.3 Belief.

Kratom holds a significant cultural and traditional significance for the Padang Terap people, who have a long-standing belief in its healing properties. The Padang Terap people, who are endemic to certain regions of Malaysia, have employed Kratom in their traditional medical practises for generations.

a) Ancient medical

According to the respondents, Kratom is an ancient medicinal remedy transmitted through their cultural heritage. They believe that, when used responsibly, it can promote overall health. Respondent 1, during the interview session, gave her view:

“Lagipun Ketum ni bagi saya, bukan salah pun. Dia bukan dadah. Dia ayaq daun. Kita, dulu dok buat ubat”

Similarly mentioned in an interview with a respondent 3 which stated that:

“Kalau guna cara yang elok, Ketum ni dia boleh.. Macam dulu orang-orang dulu, sakit-sakit pening, luka-luka tu, boleh buat ubat”

Kratom is often used by the Padang Terap people to increase energy and focus.

“Untuk orang kita buat kerja, bagi kuat badan lah.. Untuk memberi tenaga lah. Sumber tenaga”

b) Ancient healing

The respondent's belief in Kratom as an ancient healing remedy is deeply rooted in their cultural traditions and experiences. The knowledge and practices surrounding Kratom usage have been passed down orally from generation to generation, contributing to its continued use within the community. It is agreed to Respondent 1:

“Orang dulu-dulu buat bendang kan, kerja teruk, berat.. Jadi depa minum air Ketum ni lah, untuk, orang kata apa, nak pulihkan balik tenaga tu”

It is also agreed by respondent 2, who said:

“Macam orang dulu buat bendang pun, depa dok minum air ketum juga kan”

Respondent 3 also responded that he believed that Kratom was traditionally used for medical purposes by ancient people

“Daun ni pun kalau ikut daripada dulu tu, orang-orang kampung dulu dah guna dah, untuk ubat lah apa bagai kan”

4.2.1.4 Low maintenance

In comparison to other crops, Kratom trees are generally considered low maintenance and require basic care. It can attract respondents with limited resources and agricultural knowledge.

a) Easy care plant

According to respondent 1, Kratom trees are generally simple to care for, particularly under favourable growing conditions such as watering needs. Kratom trees favour moist soil but can withstand brief periods of drought. In general, they do not require an inordinate amount of watering, making them less water-intensive than other plants. Kratom trees are also known for their natural resilience to pests and diseases; they are generally less prone to significant pest infestations or diseases, making them easier to maintain.

It differs from the maintenance of rice and rubber plants. Both require adequate water throughout their respective life cycles. Establish an appropriate irrigation system, such as inundation or controlled irrigation, to provide a consistent water supply to the rice plants, monitor the water levels, and adjust irrigation based on the rice plants' growth stage. Additionally, it is susceptible to parasites and diseases. To reduce pest and disease incidences, the farmer must use appropriate sanitation and crop rotation and maintain a healthy ecosystem.

From an excerpt of an interview from respondent 1:

“Saya pilih Ketum ni pasal pokok Ketum ni dia senang jaga sikit. Tak macam padi lah”

Respondent 2 also agreed that caring for rubber trees is more complicated than Kratom plants. Rubber trees in rainy weather cannot be tapped, which differs from Kratom, which can be harvested even in the rainy season.

“Ha, dia tak renyah. Getah, kalau hujan tak boleh kutip. Hat ni, hujan panas, jalan.. Ha. getah kena baja... Kena apa semualah. Kena jaga, kena tebas semua bagai”

4.2.1.5 Punishment

In Malaysia, Kratom is classified as a controlled substance and is regulated as a poison under the Poison Act of 1952. Possession, sale, and use of Kratom without a valid license or authorization may result in legal consequences.

a) Mild punishment

. All respondents believe that Kratom-related penalties under the Poison Act are less severe. All respondents responded and agreed with that.

Respondent 1 stated:

“Haa.. Lagipun setahu saya, kalau ni, hukuman dia tak berat mana pun”

Respondent 2 also stated that:

“dia punya hukuman pun setakat denda saja. Yang saya tahulah.. Denda pun rasanya tak tinggi”

In supporting respondents 1 and 2, respondent 3 also agrees that the punishment for selling Kratom is only to pay a fine. He stated:

“Tapi kalau kata selalu dok kena tu, kalau kena bayar, bayar je lah denda. Selesai lah.. Maknanya settle lah. Kalau kata saya jual ni”

4.2.2 Findings of Research Question 2: What is the perception of Padang Terap people if Kratom is gazetted as an illegal substance under the Dangerous Drug Act (1952)?

The perception of Dangerous Drug Act 1952 in relation to Kratom can vary among respondents. Respondent opinion on this matter may be influenced by understanding and beliefs, economic considerations, and personal experiences. Analysis on people's perception of the Kratom gazette as an illegal substance under the Dangerous Drug Act (1952) are below

Table 4.3:

Theme and sub theme for RQ 2

Theme	Sub themes
Drugs act more severe than Poison act	a) Severe punishment
Not dangerous	a) Kratom is not drug

4.2.2.1 Drug Act more severe than Poison Act

The perception of Kratom and its legal standing can vary among community members. However, all respondents have a firm belief in the cultural and traditional significance of Kratom as a medicinal plant, while others may hold differing opinions or viewpoints.

a) Severe punishment

The Dangerous Drugs Act of 1957 is the Malaysian statute that governs narcotic crimes. All respondents are aware that the illegal possession, use, sale, or trafficking of certain substances can result in legal consequences. However, their understanding of the Act's specific penalties may be limited. However, most respondents are aware that the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1957 is a strict law with more severe penalties than the Poison Act.

Respondent 1 stated:

“Dadah ni memang bahaya lah. Hukuman dia penjara, gantung pun ada. Berat jugalah hukuman dia ni”

Respondent 2 also added that drug offences would face severe punishment.

“Hat yang lebih berat lagi yang saya tahu sampai boleh gantung tu, gantung sampai mati. Dan boleh dikatakan penjara seumur hidup tu”

The same view and understanding are also shared by respondent 3. He stated:

“Akta Dadah Berbahaya ni yang saya tahu adalah kena gantung apa semua tu, kan? Penjara, apa tu, yang saya tahu itulah, 39B kan. Tapi saya bukan jual dadah”

4.2.2.2 Not dangerous

The perception of Kratom as a not dangerous substance can vary based on cultural, legal, and scientific perspectives, among others. All respondents believed that Kratom has potential therapeutic benefits and should not be categorized as a controlled substance.

a) Kratom is not drugs

Kratom is "just a leaf" and not a narcotic. The perception could derive from cultural or traditional beliefs as well as a desire to highlight its natural origins and potential health benefits. Respondent 1 argues that Kratom should not be classified as a drug because it is derived from a plant and used in its natural state.

"Ketum ni bukan dadah pun! Dia daun je kan"

Respondent 2 who have personally used Kratom without experiencing adverse effects may be more inclined to believe that it is safe. Positive personal experiences can shape the perception and reinforce the belief that Kratom does not contain dangerous content. Respondent 2 who experienced the benefit of Kratom. He said:

"Sebab tak ada kandungan dadah dalam tu! Itu memang tumbuh-tumbuhan. Dan digunakan secara minuman. Dia tak ada cucuk, dia tak ada pil"

It is also supported by Respondent 3. He stated:

"Dia bukan macam dadah, dok melalok apa semua kan."

4.2.3 Findings of Research Question 3: What are the impacts on locals if the selling of Kratom is prohibited by the Dangerous Drugs Act (1952)?

When Kratom is prohibited or heavily regulated, it can have a negative economic impact on communities that rely on it. These respondents may have difficulty locating alternative sources of income, which can have a substantial effect on local economies and lost sustainable income. Some themes and sub-themes emerged, and the descriptions are shown below

Table 4.4

Theme and sub theme for RQ 3

Theme	Sub themes
Local economic drop	b) Loss of source income c) Refuse to return the old job
Secretly continue	-

4.2.3.1 Local economic drop

The main occupation of the people of Padang Terap, a district in Kedah, Malaysia, largely revolves around agriculture and related activities. Rice cultivation and rubber is a significant agricultural activity in Padang Terap.

a) Loss of source income

In regions where Kratom is a significant part of the local economy, a ban would navigate the loss of local source income, and it could lead to a decline in economic growth.

Respondent 1, who worked as a rice farmer for more than ten years, shared his experience of only earning an average income of RM 2,400.00 (every income for six months).

The income is acknowledged as insufficient to support his family and has given awareness to respondent 1 to find another source of income by growing Kratom which promises to multiply income. Respondent 1 did not agree with the government's recommendation to ban the sale of Kratom because it would affect his household income.

Quoting from respondent 1:

“Kalau kerajaan buat lagu ni, naya lah kami... Punca pendapatan saya boleh terjejas jugalah”

Respondent 2 worked as a rubber tapper before and now is heavily dependent on Kratom and also shared his opinions. He said it can be challenging for him to find alternative sources of employment in Kratom banned.

Quoting from respondent 2:

“kalau kata tak bagi ataupun sekat penjualan ni, kami akan drop lah kita punya ni. Jatuh la kita punya pendapatan, mungkin tak ada pendapatan. Saya nak kerja apa? Sini bukan ada kerja yang tetap.. Sini orang kampung buat kerja kebun saja”

Respondent 3 worked as a rubber tapper before. He is the breadwinner in their family, and his wife is a full-time housewife. More than income as a rubber tapper is needed to support the family. So, during the interview, respondent 3 opposes the government's proposal because he feels it can significantly affect him and his family, who rely on Kratom.

During an interview with respondent 3:

“Kami tak boleh nak cari makanlah. Macam, anak bini saya pun macam saya cakap tadilah, depa pun, mengharapkan saya je”

Respondent 1 also expressed that the government needs to examine the views and impact of income on them. He felt that his work as a rice farmer needed attention and financial assistance from the government. Respondent 1 quoting his opinion:

“Getah ke, sayur ke.. Nak buat pun modal. Lepas tu, kerajaan nak bantu ke semasa kami nak buat tanaman tu? Yang hat dok ada la pun tak bantu”

b) refuse to return their old jobs

Most respondents also refuse to return to their old jobs. Some respondents do not have the interest due to the low-income as a rice farmer, as stated by respondent 1 who stated:

“saya macam mau usahakan bendang semula lah.. Tapi itulah, memang tak cukuplah. Saya bendang pun dua relung je, nak tampung semua memang tak cukup. Saya kena, kalau kata saya tak boleh tanam langsung Ketum ni, saya terpaksa buat kerja lain. Jadi jaga sekolah ke...”

Respondent 3 found that getting another job without skill and qualifications is planting rubber plants because he has been involved with Kratom plant activities for a long time.

Respondent 3 mentioned in an interview:

memang tak boleh nak pergi lah. Haa..Yang mana yang boleh tu bolehlah. Macam saya, saya terus terang cakap, dah tak boleh dah. Pasal dah lama dah tinggal, memang dok nampak Ketum ni saja. Kalau kata nak jual balik ke getah, beratlah. Nak mula balik, nak cari kerja kampung lain pun payah.. Saya pun bukan yang, pendidikan bukannya tinggi mana sangat kan. Ha.. Orang rumah pun tak kerja.

4.2.3.2 Secretly continue selling

Profit motivation might be high, and respondents might be motivated by the potential financial gains of selling it. Even though they already know the punishment under the

Dangerous Drugs Act is much more severe, the financial pressure they will face still influences their decision to continue selling Kratom.

Respondent 1 stated:

“Jadi kalau kerajaan bertegas nak buat macam ni, saya kena jual diam-diam lah.”

Respondent 2 also added

“So, kalau kata dilaksanakan juga, saya akan.. Tak ada jalan lain lah. Saya akan teruskan juga benda ni, dengan jual senyap-senyap, ataupun orang kata apa.”

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted the study's findings and presented the themes obtained from the interviews regarding the respondents' experiences. All respondents' experiences were likely to be identical when involving kratom as the source of income. The information gained is mainly related to penetrating the reason why respondents still sell Kratom even though they know it is an offence under the law. In addition, the amendment of the act proposed by the government also became a concern for the respondents. Most respondents did not agree on the illegalization of kratom and the changes of the act regarding kratom.