

## Basikal lajak: What you need to know

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### ABSTRACT

*Basikal lajak* is a new emerging cycling trend among Malaysian teenagers. This trend is also related to safety issues as these groups usually cycle in the middle of the road. Not many can understand this trend as the subject is still new. Therefore, a focus-group discussions were conducted to collect information regarding the activity. 30 teenagers participated in the focus-group discussion from Hulu Langat Districts. Their age ranged from 10 to 15 years old. From the findings, teenagers are known to be involved with this activity because they like to modify bicycle, cycle in high speed and they like to gather with their same aged peers. These findings would provide fundamental information regarding *basikal lajak* trend and would help future study related to bunch riding, risky behaviour and social problems.

### Keywords:

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## 1. Introduction

Bicycle has been widely used as a means of transportation between First World War and late 1950's. Many people such as activist, politicians, policy makers, urban planners and public health experts have been promoted the usage and advantages of cycling since 1970's [6]. According to Shokoohi and Nikitas [7], cycling has been promoted as the best travelling mode for three (3) different reasons which are sustainable transportation, environmentally friendly and active mobility in the recent years.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (2015) has defined cycling as the use of bicycle for sports, transportation, and recreation. The people who are involved in cycling are known as 'cyclist', 'bicyclists' or 'bikers'. There are two main reasons for people to cycle which are cycling for leisure and cycling for utility [3]. Cycling for leisure involves pursuing and participating in the trip itself such as sports training cyclist, cycle tourists and recreational cyclist. On the contrary, utility cycling involves making a journey for the purpose of doing an activity at the trips' end such as going for shopping, going to school, and getting to work. Some countries are known as cycling friendly countries such as Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany in which most of the citizens participate in utility cycling and have an acceptable standard of cycling facilities [7]. Shokoohi and Nikitas [7] also acknowledge that

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Southeast Asia has low rate of cycling and there is almost no cycling infrastructure though there are moderate leisure cycling activities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### 1.1 Cyclist as Vulnerable Road User

According to WHO [8], more than half of all traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users who are pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. Cyclist comprises of three percent of global road traffic death in the same report. Based on the WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018, specifically, continents with higher number of cyclists such as Western Pacific and Europe, reported higher percentage of deaths which are six and five percent, respectively. For countries in Southeast-Asia where the number of cyclists is lower and has poorer development of infrastructure for these cyclists, the percentage of deaths are also lower which is only two percent of deaths. However, globally, every 13 minutes, a cyclist died due to road traffic accidents. In the United States of America, the number of preventable deaths from bicycle transportation has increased by six percent in 2019 and in the last 10 years, the numbers have increased by 37% from 793 in 2010 to 1,089 in 2019 (National Safety Council, 2019). In an article by Peter Flaxx (2019), several causes of higher statistics of cyclists' deaths are, vehicles are bigger in size, more drivers are driving on the road, mobile phone usage and more cyclists cycle on the road. Similarly in Malaysia, a rise can be seen in 10 years times as 63 deaths were reported in 2010 and 107 deaths were reported in 2019 (Polis Di-Raja Malaysia)

### 1.2 Accidents involving Basikal Lajak (Overshoot Bicycle)

In 2017, Malaysians were shocked by the death of eight teenagers who were killed while cycling with their "joyriding" group. The teenagers were killed after the group were hit by a car while cycling at 3am in the city center of Johor Bahru [5]. During this incident, it was reported that 30 to 40 teenagers aged 13 to 17 were cycling in their *basikal lajak* past midnight. In 2018, there were more cases reported in the newspaper that is related to *basikal lajak*. Though there were no cases that reported with high numbers of death, however it still involves accidents and serious injuries. These teenagers did not just risk their own lives but also the lives of others. Though some might think that the problems with *basikal lajak* is not as serious as Mat Rempit, but it has one similarity which is the teenagers are either racing to be number one or just seeking fun from the high speed.

### 1.3 Basikal Lajak as Leisure Activity

A study on exploring the meaning and culture significance of leisure and recreation by Aman *et al.*, [1] explained that there is no in-depth meaning of leisure and leisure was associated with free time while recreation is the individual participation in activities other than their daily routines or activities that they undertake during their free time. According to the same authors, Malaysian have the worse concept of leisure and youth especially, do not know the concept of worthy use of free time. Most youth in Malaysia did not realize that free time should be used positively and actively. Therefore, there are many leisure activities that falls on the negative sides. The reported accidents earlier showed that the teenagers have chosen a negative leisure activity by cycling with their *basikal lajak*. This was because, their chosen time to cycle was odd and the teenagers were also reported to have traveled quite a distance from their house, cycling on the road.

Besides than that, though cycling is considered as one of the healthier activities to be done, one thing that was highlighted was their chosen mode of transport which is a modified bicycle.

## 2. Study Objective

There are many things that are still unknown related to *basikal lajak*. There is no research that has been conducted on *basikal lajak*. Therefore, we have little understandings of the underlying reasons of *basikal lajak*. More research has to be conducted to explore the occurrence of cycling using *basikal lajak* and what is the similar criteria that these teenagers possess. This is because, Malaysians have unique culture and character which made these problems are hardly seen or reported in other developing countries. One obvious thing that can be seen in this *basikal lajak* trend is, they are cycling in groups, recklessly.

When talking about cycling in group, numerous studies were conducted on bunch cycling. However, in other parts of the world, there are the trend of bunch cycling. Though bunch cycling is not all negative, but it does gives impact to the safety of the cycling and the other road users. cycling and the other road users.

Thus, a qualitative research study was conducted to explore on *basikal lajak* subject among teenagers. A focus group discussion was chosen to gather as much as in-depth details that can we get that is related to *basikal lajak*. The aim of the study is to explore all aspects of involvement with *basikal lajak* and what are so enduring about cycling on the road, with high speed.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

Exploratory research method is adopted to collect information on *basikal lajak*. Exploratory research is chosen to gain insights and to give a better understanding of the situation as *basikal lajak* is a new phenomenon that is related to road safety and social problems. As Exploratory research is meant to offer background, it will also give the researcher to explore the general subject. Specifically, this research was conducted using qualitative method to explore the subject. Focus group discussion was conducted to gather information and conclude the findings. Since *basikal lajak* is a new phenomenon that is related to road safety, focus group discussion is very suitable. Since the subject is also related to social problems, focus group discussion will also ensure all participants to give insights as some participants might do not want to participate in the study if they were interviewed alone. If they were to be interviewed alone, they might think they are getting punishment because of what they did since the interview is becoming more personal. In addition, the participation rate might drop to low if they were interviewed alone. In the focus group discussion, questions that are included are factors and motivation involving in *basikal lajak*.

### 3.2. Location and Sample

The research is conducted in Hulu Langat District. Hulu Langat is one of the districts that is famous for *basikal lajak*. Since Hulu Langat also recorded high number road crashes, it become the best location to collect information on *basikal lajak*. The sample for this study is students from standard Four until students from form three. 5 school were selected and 3 of the schools are primary school and 2 schools are secondary school. Before the schools were chosen, the research team must call and identify school that have *basikal lajak* problems among their students. The list of school was retrieved from the website of Ministry of Education. In total, six focus group discussions were conducted and a total of 30 participants participate in the discussion.

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedures

For the focus group discussion, a set of questions were prepared beforehand to guide the researchers while conducting the discussion. All the participants were given an informed consent before the focus group discussion were conducted. The focus group discussion was recorded using voice recorder and main points were also written in a protocol that has been prepared earlier. After focus group discussion has been conducted, a verbatim was prepared based on the audio recordings. The transcripts were analyzed to gather findings and conclude the study.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. What is Basikal Lajak

As mentioned earlier in the earlier section of this paper, *basikal lajak* is a modified bicycle. *Basikal lajak* is a term coined for modified bicycle with the brakes removed and with shorter handles. In Malay, *basikal lajak* is also known as *basikal ciput*. The modifications were made so that the bicycle will be suitable to use it for a race and it will have more speed as the rider needs to lower down their body to suits the short handle. Usually, the bicycle was modified at the bicycle shop. The first thing that the teenagers will do is cut the fork. The fork is the part which continues to the handle of the bicycle. The first modification is important so that the handle will be lowered and will get the aerodynamic design that is required to be fast. Secondly, the body of the bicycle was also cut to shorten the height of the bicycle. Thirdly, the rims of the wheel of the bicycle are also modified into bright colors to make it more attractive. Next, the bicycle chain is changed into motorcycle chain to endure the speed of the bicycle. If they keep the bicycle chain, they chain might breaks when they were cycling in high speed and can cause accident if the chain breaks and get stuck in the rim. According to the participants of the FGD, not all of them modified their bicycle at the shop. Most of the times, they were doing it by themselves to save on money. By doing it themselves, they usually will buy secondhand items and parts.

“...buat sendiri, yang rangka tu beli yang basikal biasa dulu la, lepas tu modify,” (I do it myself, I buy the frame of the bicycle then modify, Participant 8).

“...saya beli body second-hand, saya buat sendiri,” (I buy second-hand frame then do it myself, Participant 1).

“...body kecil dia kena lowered. Kalau body tu macam dah pendek kena potong dlu, saya potong kat kedai,” (we have to lower the small body. I cut it first at the bicycle shop, Participant 20).

“... senang nak potong angin,” (more speed, Participant 4).



Fig.1. A modified bicycle – *basikal lajak* (Mohd Noor, 2018)



Fig.2. One of the *basikal lajak* that is being confiscated by the police [5]

#### 4.2. *Basikal Lajak* is about Speed and Racing

When ask about things that the participants like about *basikal lajak*, most of them mentioned about speed. The shape and the height of *basikal lajak* allows the cyclist to cycle to high speed. This is because, the body of the bicycle is light, and the handle is short thus the cyclist must bend his body downward towards the handle. The aerodynamic design of the body when cycling such manner is said to help the cyclist to be faster. However, to achieve high speed, they also must cycle at hilly road. It does not matter where is the hilly road but usually they will find location near to home for their usual location. Sometimes the hilly road is pack with cars so they will be mindful to cycle at that location. Some other times, they will choose to cycle during weekend when less cars traveled and less dangerous for them. At the hilly road, they will gather and race down the hill. The fastest to arrive at the finishing line will be announced as the winner. Usually, the winner will not get anything. Because they just race for fun and to prove who is the best among them. But sometimes, they do put bets and the winner will get them all. But bets not necessarily in the form of money. It could also be in the form of bicycle parts.



“... *basikal lajak* ni best... laju,” (*basikal lajak* can go fast and that is what makes it the best, Participant 5).

“... berlumba.. so seronok la. Rasa seronok kalau menang,” (racing, I’m having fun when I win, Participant 6).

“... sebab dia berat , bila turun bukit dia laju lar,” (because the bicycle is heavy, it will become fast when going downhill, Participant 22).

“...kadang-kadang ada orang cabar. Menang dapat 10 ringgit ke,” (sometimes people challenge me and the winner gets RM10, Participant 28).

#### 4.3. *Basikal Lajak is about Bunch Riding*

Third most important thing about *basikal lajak* is, they rarely cycle alone. Most of the teenagers cycling in a group or can be said as bunch riding. Besides than cycling in a group, they also have cycling events. Usually this is where they gather with teenagers from another place. They will cycle from their original location to the gathering place. Sometimes they followed adults who have vehicles. They did not care if they must travel far. Because during events, this is where they can meet other teenagers, can see bicycles with nicer rims and colors. And during this kind of events, they also competition. Usually, they will compete for the fastest and for the best bicycle category. have cycling race.

“... ramai geng-geng buat convoi,” (There are lots of my friend and we form a gang to convoy, Participant 12).

“... saya dapat ramai kawan masa event tu,” (I gain many new friends during the event, Participant 15).

“... ada la yang buat pertandingan, dia macam convoy lepas tu budak lajak kumpul kat situ,” (Some organize competition, some sort of convoy then all the kids gather there, Participant 8).

“... dia orang macam susun basikal lepastu duduk tepi basikal. Nanti dia tengok kalau basikal tu cantik, boleh duduk depan la,” (They arrange the bicycle in a row then the owner will sit beside it. They will see who has the nicest bicycle and the nicest one can be put in front for photo, Participant 3).

#### 4.4 Discussion

Based on the focus group discussion, it can be said that *basikal lajak* is about modified bicycle that is much more exciting than normal bicycle. This is because, *basikal lajak* can go faster than the normal bicycle and it can be used for racing. Therefore, *basikal lajak* fulfilled them with a sense that they can only understand. This can be linked to sensation seeking. Sensation seeking is known as the need for the individual to reach and maintain the optimum level of arousal and high sensation seekers love

to involve in physical risky activities [9]. Zuckerman [9] also stresses the willingness of to take the risk.

*Basikal lajak* also becomes popular because of influence of peers of the same age. And mostly, it was not because of influence of friend that they met at school. But it was the influence of friends who lives in the same neighborhood. This was because, when they are parents are not at home, they tend to go out of the house and spend their leisure time around their neighborhood and that is during that time they will socially identify themselves to belong to a group or gang. As cited in Densley [2], a gang is a “durable and street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity”, and in this phenomenon, basikal lajak is illegal. Modifying bicycles and conducting dangerous behavior on the street are illegal. Gangs are also easily formed in neighborhood area due to similar historic, socio-economic, and political factors of its residents and gangs continue to be concentrated heavily in urban areas [2].

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, *basikal lajak* is a novel experience for some teenagers that loves excitement and from risky activities, they can fulfil the needs. These teenagers are among kids that love to do activities in groups and through this exploratory study, the basics understanding of the subjects are achieved. From the focus group discussion, it is proven that they are still kids at young age who like to try new things. They are easily influenced by same aged peers to involve with activities that looks promising to them. At the end of the day, they are just trying to establish a social reputation in their teenage years. However, one thing that we should not is how motivated and highly spirited they are when discussion about basikal lajak which one activity that they really love.

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