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The Effect of Ethnic Self-Identity on the Kadazandusun Sense of Community

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of the ethnic self-identity of the Kadazandusun people on their sense of community and its four constituent elements. This study involved 242 Kadazandusun participants. A set of questionnaires consisting of three sections was used to measure research variables. Section A measured the demographic profile (age, gender, ethnicity, location, and education level); Section B made use of the Ethnic Self-Identity Scale, consisting of 14 items that measure the two components of ethnic self-identity (i.e., ethnic affirmation, & ethnic denial); and Section C measured the sense of community (i.e., reinforcement of needs, membership, influence & shared emotional connection). The study revealed that ethnic affirmation contributed to a sense of community and its four elements. Ethnic confirmation showed a significant contribution of 23% to the sense of community ($\beta=.48$, $t_{(212)}=7.93$, $p=.00$). Ethnic confirmation contributed 18% to the reinforcement of needs ($\beta=.43$, $t_{(212)}=7.19$, $p=.00$); it contributed 19% to variance in membership ($\beta=.44$, $t_{(212)}=7.50$, $p=.00$), 18% to variance in influence ($\beta=.43$, $t_{(212)}=7.15$, $p=.00$); and 19% to variance in shared emotions ($\beta=.43$, $t_{(212)}=7.30$, $p=.00$). Ethnic denial did not show a significant influence on the sense of community. The findings showed that Kadazandusuns who are high in ethnic affirmation (that is, they identify themselves with their group) engage in community activities, are proud of their cultural heritage, and have good interactions with in-group members, characteristics which help to form a strong sense of community.

Keywords: Kadazandusun, sense of community, ethnic self-identity, ethnic affirmation, ethnic self-denial.

1. Introduction

Culture and heritage can create awareness of one's identity^[1] Lewin (1948). One type of identity is ethnic identity, understood as the existence of concepts and characteristics of conduct which are centred on shared ancestral heritage and which differ from one ethnic group to another^[2] (Hussin, 2008). Identity was defined by Erikson as a sense of being at one with oneself as one grows and develops. It also means a sense of affinity with a community's sense of being at one with its future as well as its history^[3] (Erikson, 1974). We can understand our own identity by reflecting on our individual past and present as well as our growth and development. We can also identify ourselves according to the past and present of our community and society. Part of understanding our identity is understanding the self, which seems to be closely related concept. The self is the person, their individuality and who they are. The sense of self-shapes the identity of a person. We believe that ethnic self-identity is a product of culture which was inherited from the previous generation that may help to create a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging involves such elements as the reinforcement of needs, membership, influence and shared emotional connection.

Ethnic identity derives from various cultural elements, such as language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills, and all the other things that people learn or create themselves that constitute the "way of life" for any society^[4] (Anthony, 1996). All these elements may strengthen the self-



identity of an ethnic group or a community. As each ethnic group is influenced by particular history and culture, people of different ethnicities have their own unique sense of a group identity and a specific way of expressing their ethnicity^[5] (Driedger, 1976). On the individual level, ethnicity is a social-psychological process which gives an individual a sense of belonging and identity. Ethnic identity can be defined as the manner in which persons, on account of their ethnic origin, locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems^[6] (Isajiw, 2010). The external aspects of ethnic identity such as practising ethnic traditions by wearing traditional costume and playing traditional musical instruments may enhance one's ethnic identity. An ethnic group with a strong ethnic identity may foster a good sense of community. A sense of community is the feeling that members have of belonging, the feeling that the members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that their needs will be met through their commitment to be together^[7](McMillan & Chavis,1986).

Traditional music and costume are among the most common cultural expressions that identify a particular ethnic group. Many people might not realize that traditional music and costume can also help us to express our ethnic self-identity which contributes to the sense of community of an ethnic group. For example, the Suyá Indians of Brazil, a group that represents the classic 'endangered' culture of a small scale tribal society in a fragile ecosystem dealing with very real threats from a much larger frontier population, use music and ceremony to re-create and celebrate who they have been and establish what they wish to be. Music, because it can move people deeply has been used by members of communities around the world to create and erase cultural identity, and to create and dissolve unity^[4] (Anthony, 1996). The national anthem of a country, for instance can help to unite its people and to create a sense of patriotism.

Besides music, the traditional costume can also be used to identify a particular ethnic group; each ethnic group has its own unique design. The Kadazandusun can be easily differentiated from other ethnic groups by the black velvet fabric of their traditional costume and the particular style of embroidery that adorns their clothes. The traditional costume of Kadazandusun women is decorated with colourful embroidery, beads and the *tangkong*, a three-part hip belt made from silver coins, while the Kadazandusun male wears a traditional costume with a headgear called a *sigar*. All these reflect the beauty of the Kadazandusun costume. The traditional music and costume of the Kadazandusun reflects their ethnic identity; this expression of ethnicity may in turn foster a sense of community known as *pisompuruan* in the Kadazandusun language. During *Kaamatan* (Harvest Festival), cultural elements such as traditional music, costume and customs are promoted to strengthen the Kadazandusun identity.

The focus of this study is the Kadazandusun. In Sabah, there are 32 officially recognized ethnic groups with their own culture; traditional culture still influences the everyday life of most Sabahans. We were interested in examining the effect of ethnic self-identity that we believe may derive from traditional music and traditional costume's on the sense of community and its four types of the Kadazandusun community in Sabah. The Kadazandusun often identify themselves primarily as members of their ethnic group or village in their view, this local identification enables greater participation than does identification at the national level. The Kadazandusun feel themselves to be a marginalised population and their sense of belonging is rooted at the local rather than the national level^[8](King, 2013).

2. Literature Review

Past studies have suggested that higher ethnic identity development is related to higher levels of quality of life and life satisfaction^{[9][10]}(Iwamoto & Ming Liu, 2010: Xu, Farver & Pauker, 2014). This may be due to the fact that recognition by fellow members of an ethnic group may build faith, hope, and tolerance within the community and foster understanding and cooperation^[7] (McMillan & Chavin, 1986). These qualities help to develop a good sense of community which involves the reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection. One of the components of ethnic self-identity i.e., strong group affirmation was responsible for the strong ethnic identification and solidarity among the British, Scandinavians, the Poles, the French and the Jews. The ethnic self-identity varies significantly according to ethnic group membership^[5] Driedger's study (1976)

Cultural elements such as traditional music and costume may foster a sense of belonging and identification with the local community. For instance, the Sami, the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia and north-western Russia, use music to form bonds among their people^[11](Hanssen, 2011). Ethnic identity defines individuals in relation to the social groups with which they identify and to which they belong, as well



as the ways in which they differ from other social groups and individuals. This may contribute to a sense of community such as that found among Koreans. The Korean Traditional dress, for instance, called *hanbok*, an abbreviation of the term *haisuk boksik* (Korean attire) is still a strong indicator of national identity and values in the Korean culture^[12](Carrause, 2012).

Past study revealed the relationship between the sense of community and multigroup ethnic identity among Dominican adolescents. It showed that the greater the sense of community, the more positive was the multigroup ethnic identity of the participants. In this study multigroup ethnic identity referred to a sense of belonging and attitudes toward one's own ethnic group as well as feelings about interacting with and attitudes toward other ethnic groups^[13] Garcia-Reid, Peterson, Reid, and Peterson (2013). In contrast, another past study found that strong ethnic identities are not incompatible with a sense of belonging the Canadian^[14] study Schimmele and Zheng Wu (2015). A study which a majority of the sample self-identified as American Indian/Native American (85.3%) with small percentages reporting additional ethnic backgrounds revealed a significant difference in the sense of community and positive affect experienced by ethnic identity groups. Post hoc analyses demonstrated that adolescents in the 'achieved' identity group were significantly higher on sense of community and positive affect than the other three groups^[15] Kenyon and Carter (2011). We found that most previous studies revealed that ethnic self-identity may foster a sense of community within an ethnic group. This may be due to the fact that each ethnicity has its own culture and uniqueness and reflects its identity through traditional customs, rituals, languages, and communal activities.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to examine:

1. The effects of Kadazandusuns ethnic self-affirmation on the sense of community and its four types (i.e., reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection).
2. The effects of Kadazandusuns ethnic self-denial on the sense of community and its four types (i.e., reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection).

3. Methodology

Participants

There were 242 Kadazandusun participants who took part in this study. They came from various groups of Kadazandusun including *Tangaah* (Penampang & Papar), *Tatana* (Kuala Penyu), *Idaan* or *Tindal* (Kota Belud), *Lotud* (Tuaran & Tamparuli), *Kimaragang* (Tandek, Kota Marudu), and *Liwan* (Ranau & Tambunan). Although they come from different districts (i.e., Ranau, Tambunan, Keningau, Tamparuli, Kota Belud, Kota Marudu, Penampang, Papar, Membakut, and Kuala Penyu) and speak different dialects, every group is a part of the Dusunic family^[16] (Dayu, 2014). The Kadazandusun constitute the most numerous groups or *suku*^[17] Luping 2009. Kadazandusuns also comprise the largest indigenous community in the state of Sabah in East Malaysia^[18] (Embong, 2001). In this study we focused on Kadazandusun because they are the largest ethnic group in Sabah^[19] (Puyok & Bagang, 2011). The participants were youths aged 15 to 30 years old.

Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants. This was meant to measure their ethnic self-concept by referring to their traditional music and costume. The participants gave their responses based on the instructions provided in the questionnaire. There were three sections in the questionnaire. Section A measured the demographic profile (i.e., gender, age, location, ethnicity, and education level); Section B, which consisted of 14 items, measured ethnic self-identity (i.e., ethnic affirmation and ethnic denial) and Section C, with 24 items measured the Sense of Community Index, version 2 (SCI-2)^[20](Perkins,, Florin, Rich, & Wandersman, 1990).



Section A: Demographics Profile

There were 18 items in the demographic profile that measured age, gender, ethnicity, level of education and location.

Section B: Ethnic self-identity

This scale consists of 14 items which comprised two components (i.e., ethnic affirmation and ethnic denial) ^[5](Driedger,1976). The first four items measured self-identification with the ingroup, and the last three were related to participation in activities related to the ingroup. The measurement of the ethnic affirmation was 'I feel strong bonds toward the ingroup' and while ethnic denial was 'Afraid to express feelings about the ingroup'. The response scale provided was: 1 (never) to 5 (very often).

Section C: The Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2)

This scale consists of 24 items intended to measure four elements of the sense of community: reinforcement needs (items 1 to 6), membership (items 7 to 12), influence (item 13 to 18) and shared emotional connection (items 19-24). The SCI is based on a theory of sense of community that stated that a sense of community was a perception with four elements: reinforcement of needs, membership, influence and shared emotional connection ^[7]McMillan and Chavis (1986)

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to participate in this study based on purposive sampling; a requirement for participation was that both parents be of Kadazandusun ethnicity. Once the participants showed the agreement to participate, they were requested to fill in the questionnaires, which took 20-30 minutes to complete. After they completed the questionnaire, they were given a token of appreciation.

4. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0. A hierarchical regression test was used to analyse the effect of ethnic identity and its four components on the sense of community.

Results

The reliability values for each variable are acceptable, ranging from .75 to .95

Table 1:Reliability Values for Each Independent and Dependent Variable

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha values
Ethnic Self-Identity	14	
Ethnic Affirmation	7	.82
Ethnic Denial	7	.85
Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2)	24	.95
Reinforcement of needs	6	.87
Membership	6	.78
Influence	6	.75
Shared Emotional Connection	6	.90

Most of the participants, 131 (54.10%) were from the West Coast Division (Ranau, Kota Belud, Tuaran, Penampang, Papar, Kota Kinabalu, Putatan, Inanam, Telipok, and Tamparuli) and 85 (35.10%) were from the Interior Division (Beaufort, Membakut, Kuala Penyu, Sipitang, Tambunan, Tenom, & Keningau). Kadazandusuns most frequently reside on the western coast and in the interior regions ^[17]Luping (2009) noted,. Only 17 (17%) came from Kudat Division followed by the Sandakan Division with 8 (3.30%) and one



participant was from the Tawau Division. The majority of participants 160 (66.10%) were female, while 82 males (33.90%) participated. The mean age of participants was 19.32, ($SD=3.49$).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Kadazandusun Participants ($N=242$)

Variables	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	82	33.90
Female	160	66.10
Religion		
Christian	216	89.30
Muslim	23	9.50
Buddhist	1	.40
Missing values	2	.80
Kadazandusun sub-ethnicities		
Tatana	70	28.90
Tangaah	63	26.00
Liwan	38	15.70
Lotud	34	14.00
Kimaragang	16	39.30
Tindal	10	06.00
Bagahak	10	04.10
Tindal	10	04.10
Kedayan	1	00.40
Sabah Division		
West Coast Division (Ranau, Kota Belud, Tuaran, Penampang, Papar, Kota Kinabalu, Putatan, Inanam, Telipok, and Tamparuli)	131	54.10
Interior Division (Beaufort, Membakut, Kuala Penyu, Sipitang, Tambunan, Tenom, Keningau)	85	35.10
Kudat Division (Kudat, Pitas, Kota Marudu, Banggi)	17	7.0
Sandakan Division (Sandakan, Beluran, Kinabatangan, Tongod)	8	3.30
Tawau Division (Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu, Kunak)	1	.40

The ethnic confirmation showed a significant contribution (23%) to the sense of community $\beta=.48$, $t_{(212)}=7.93$, $p=.00$, while Ethnic Denial contributed neither to the sense of community nor to any of its elements.



Table 3: Regression Analyses of Predicting the Effects of Ethnic Self-Identity (i.e. Ethnic Affirmation and Ethnic Denial) on the Sense of Community

Predictors	Sense of community		
	ΔR^2	β	Sig
Step 1			
Ethnic Affirmation	.23	.48	.00
Step 2			
Ethnic Affirmation	.00	.47	.00
Ethnic Denial		.05	.48
Total ΔR^2	.23		

Table 4: Regression Analyses of Predicting the Effects of Ethnic Self-Identity (i.e. Ethnic Affirmation and Ethnic Denial) on the Four Components of the Sense of Community

Predictors	Reinforcement of needs			Membership			Influence			Shared emotional connection		
	ΔR^2	β	Sig	ΔR^2	β	Sig	ΔR^2	β	Sig	ΔR^2	β	Sig
Step 1												
Ethnic Affirmation	.18	.42	.00	.19	.44	.00	.18	.43	.00	.19	.44	.00
Step 2												
Ethnic Affirmation	.00	.41	.00	.00	.43	.00	.01	.40	.00	.00	.44	.00
Ethnic Denial		.05	.40		.00	.95		.11	.06		-.04	.49
Total ΔR^2	.18			.19			.19			.19		

Results showed that ethnic affirmation contributes to all four elements of the sense of community. Ethnic affirmation contributes 18% of the variance in the reinforcement of needs, $\beta=.42, t_{(212)}=7.19, p=.00$. Ethnic affirmation also contributes 19% of the variance in membership, $\beta=.44, t_{(212)}=7.50, p=.00$; 18% of the variance in influence, $\beta=.43, t_{(212)}=7.15, p=.00$; and 19% of the variance in shared emotions, $\beta=.43, t_{(212)}=7.30, p=.00$.

5. Discussion

The Effects of Ethnic Identity (i.e., Ethnic Affirmation and Ethnic Denial) on the Sense of Community of Kadazandusuns

The study showed that ethnic affirmation had positive and significant effects on the sense of community and on each element of its four elements (i.e., reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, & shared emotional connection). In this study, ethnic affirmation refers to how Kadazandusun participants identified themselves with their community through their relationships, engagement in community activities, pride in cultural heritage and interaction with in-group members. Our study revealed that when participants perceived the presence of these four elements of community, they tended to score higher in the reinforcement of needs, which involves being valued by their community and the feeling that their own needs can be fulfilled by the community. In addition, they also felt good about themselves, had a sense of pride and believed that they could share their problems with their community.



Reinforcement of needs

In this study, reinforcement refers to a feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources made available through their membership in the group^[7] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Certain aspects of positive ethnic identity such as feeling connected to one's ethnic heritage and having an affirmative sense of pride in and belonging to one's ethnic group have been identified as protective of mental health among African Americans^[9] Iwamoto and Ming Liu (2010). Among Kadazandusuns, the concept of *mokitulung* means the asking for help in a number of contexts; for instance, a person who is seeking help calls upon his friends to perform a particular task^[21] (Blood, 1990). This cultural tradition may also help to increase psychological well-being among Kadazandusuns. Reinforcement and need fulfilment are primary functions of a strong community. Reinforcement at the community level allows people to be together so that everyone's needs are met. People enjoy helping others just as they enjoy being helped, and the most successful communities include associations that are mutually rewarding for everyone^[7] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Membership

The second element in a sense of community is membership. This refers to the participants' connection with and trust in other members of the community. Being able to recognize most of the members of the community is an important element of membership as well. Young people who have explored their ethnic identity and have developed a positive sense of what their ethnicity means to them are better equipped to deal with culturally-related stressors. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness^[7] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Kadazandusuns, tend to feel and gain strong bonds within their ethnic group when they relate to it through traditional music and costume. the wearing of traditional costume and its accessories tend to make group members feel connected with their ethnicity^[22] Poletta and Jasper (2001),. People communicate something to the outer world through the use of dress, clothes, and fashion^[23] (Ivanescu, 2013). In Pakistan for instance, Muslim girls who wear the *salwar kameez* (Punjabi suit) in the public spaces of the Pakistani community feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and membership^[24] (Assman, 2008). In Japan, wearing a *kimono* is an expression of collective individualism that is often embedded in group activities^[24] (Assman, 2008).

Influence

The third element in the sense of community is influence. This element refers to how comfortable people feel within a community, and how well they fit in; it is also related to the extent members can affect the behavior of others in the group. Good leadership is another aspect of influence that contributes to a sense of community. In addition, influence involves a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members^[7] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Shared emotions another element in the sense of community refers to the belief that members of the community care for each other and share significant events such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters. In other words it refers to shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. This is the feeling one sees in farmers' faces as they talk about their home place, their land, and their families^[7] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Shared emotion

The shared emotions and influence of the Kadazandusun is evident in their collective and cooperative activities such as *mitatabang* (helping with the harvest or with cleaning a farm), *mongomot* (harvesting the paddy) and *moginakan* (having a big meal with family). In addition, the Kadazandusuns sense of community is reflected in significant celebrations such as the Harvest Festival, wedding receptions, traditional prayers, family gatherings and even on formal occasions such as graduation day. During the Harvest Festival held in the month of May, the Kadazandusun community in each district in Sabah never fails to wear their traditional costume, play traditional music and dance the *Sumazau* dance.

In the present day, the younger generation of Kadazandusuns wear the traditional costume to represent their community as a sign of pride. For instance, during their convocation, a pair of twins decided to dress in the Kadazadusun traditional costume along with the older members of the family because they felt proud of their roots^[25] (Voo, 2014). The sense of belonging and identification involves the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits into and is accepted by the group as well as a willingness to sacrifice for the group.



The role of identification must be emphasized here. It may be represented in the reciprocal statements “It is my group” and “I am part of the group”^[7](McMillan & Chavis,1986).

6. Conclusions

The research findings provided insights on the effects of ethnic self-identity (i.e. ethnic affirmation) on the sense of community and its four elements. The stronger the Kadazandusun ethnic self-identity, the higher the levels of the sense the community. In the future, it might be interesting to extend this study by examining the effects of ethnic self-identity towards other Kadazandusuns cultural elements such as traditional ritual and communal activities. It would also be interesting to examine the difference of ethnic self-identity of each Kadazandusun sub-ethnicities. This is because each sub-ethnicity of Kadazandusun has its special traditional rituals and slight differences in the design of their traditional costume, their dialect and their traditional music rhythm. However, we believe all these sub-ethnicities of the Kadazandusun within the Dusunic language family share a broad similarity in terms of their cultural heritage and ways of life.

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