

The Relationship of Exposure to News Media with Attachment to the National Ethos

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menguji andaian bahawa media berita memainkan peranan penting dalam meningkatkan etos bangsa dalam kalangan masyarakat Malaysia. Memandangkan belia adalah pengguna media yang paling ramai dan berperanan penting dalam membangunkan ekonomi dan politik negara, maka adalah amat bertepatan untuk meneliti kekuatan etos bangsa dalam kalangan belia Malaysia dari pelbagai kumpulan etnik, dan perkaitan antara pendedahan kepada media berita dengan etos bangsa. Sejumlah 606 orang pelajar, berumur antara 18 hingga 27 tahun, daripada sepuluh universiti dan kolej telah ditemu bual dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik tadbir sendiri. Tiga dimensi etos bangsa terhasil daripada data kajian dan responden mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap beberapa ciri negara ini. Namun demikian, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara tiga kumpulan etnik dalam tahap ikatan mereka dalam ketiga-tiga dimensi etos bangsa yang dikenal pasti. Pendedahan kepada media berita mempunyai perkaitan yang positif dan signifikan dengan dimensi identiti kolektif dan masa depan, dan dimensi nilai dan perkongsian sejarah.

ABSTRACT

This study tested the assumption that national media played an important role in promoting a strong national ethos among Malaysians. As youth are heavy consumer of media and play important roles in further progressing the country economically and politically, it is very pertinent to examine the strength of the national ethos among the Malaysian youth of various ethnic groups, and the relationship between the exposure to the news media and strength of their national ethos. A total of 606 students from ten universities and colleges aged between 18 to 27 years were interviewed in a national survey using a self-administered questionnaire. Three dimensions of the national ethos emerged from the data and the students had positive perceptions toward selected characteristics of the country. However, there is a significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their degree of attachment to the three different dimensions of the national ethos. An overall exposure to the news media has a positive and significant relationship with the shared identity and future dimension, and shared history and values dimension of the national ethos.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of strong identification with the national ethos in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religion Malaysian society

is obvious, but studies that specifically examined the influence of the mainstream news media as a powerful socializing agent on the degree of attachment to the national ethos

among Malaysians are noticeably lacking. When it come to defining a nation, group boundaries, collective memory and social allegiance to national characters are particularly essential.

Identification with ethos of the nation in the context of pluralistic and multicultural Malaysian society should provide a unifying force and function as an enabling factor in effective management of a culturally diverse society. As argued by Mohd Nor (2005), a collective memory and attachment to the distinctive characters of the country provide the socio-psychological mechanism for positive intercultural relations among the various social groups of the different ethnic and religious backgrounds, particularly in the times of conflict.

While celebrating diversity is logical and expected in a pluralistic Malaysian society, a more important issue in managing a pluralistic society is promoting and ensuring unity in diversity. A strong identification with ethos of the country, therefore, is imperative and is one of the strategies of achieving unity in the diversity. This requirement is fundamental and very critical in the context of sustaining economic and political development of the country. Building peaceful and harmonious Malaysian society has been an important political agenda since Malaysia gained independency and will continue to be one of the thrusts of national development in all the Malaysia Development Plans pursued by the country.

In realizing the development agenda, the local mainstream news media is expected to socialize the Malaysian public to the ethos of the country. Indeed, news on national aspiration and achievement, social cohesion and harmonious co-existence of the various ethnic and religious groups in the country have been and will continue to be among the dominant themes and narratives in the local mainstream media (Abdul Ghani 2003). In spite of the centrality of the national ethos to nation-building and integration objective, an empirical evidence on the nature of identification to the national ethos and its

theoretical linkages with exposure to the news media has not been examined; thus not clearly and adequately understood.

To address this knowledge gap, the present study assessed and discussed the strength of attachment to the national ethos among the Malay, Chinese and Indian university students, and identified the relationship of exposure to news of public affairs in the mainstream news media with the strength of attachment to the national ethos. The present study focused on youth of 18 years to 25 years because they made up a large section of the Malaysian society. Policy, theoretical, and methodological implications of the findings of the study are discussed in the paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

National ethos can be viewed as the expressed wishes of those who command authority within a nation and it is the means by which individuals within the country are committed to what is deemed natural, proper and right. Al-Haj (2005) argued that national ethos can be considered a major part of the collective cultural rights, and every group should be autonomous in deciding what sort of national ethos is required for maintaining its collective memory and developing its identity. In conceptualising the meaning of the national ethos (a society collective identity), Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport (2001) tied the concept of the national ethos with the nation's moral demand. Along the same line, Donnelly (2000) purported that ethos are both formal expressions of the authorities' aim and objective that wield a certain amount of power to condition people to think and act in an acceptable manner, and informal expressions of the members emerging from the social interaction that tend to reflect the prevailing assumptions, beliefs and norms. Donnelly (2000) further commented that ethos learned formally in official document or defined by the authorities often departs considerably from the ethos that emerges from the intentions, interaction and behaviour of the public.

For a country to embrace a truly distinct and uniform ethos, the values and belief of those in the authorities must reflect and reinforce those of the public. When respect for the authority is considerably weakened, the disparity and incongruence between formal and informal ethos will be more noticeable. While perception of the public may differ and depart from that required by the government, some degree of congruence must be established. This is due to the fact that the way people define their attachment to the ethos of their country can have a profound consequence on the intercultural relations practices in a pluralistic country. Thus, the agenda of strengthening identification to the national ethos is too crucial to be taken lightly. Meier-Pesti and Kirchler (2003) pointed out that since a nation is a large category, people develop their social representation of their nation and conceive the nation as an imagined community. The higher the subjective congruence between the self perception and social representation of the nation the more likely people feel close to their nation and show high identity.

The present study assumed and argued that the collective memory and consciousness of the selected national characters is an enabling environment that can foster a mutual respect and understanding in times of normal and problematic situations regarding events and issues of inter-ethnic relations. An attachment to the national ethos reinforces civic responsibility. It is also viewed that adherence to national characters and hence, Malaysianness must be ideological rather than pragmatic. In the context of building a progressive, peaceful and harmonious Malaysian society as envisioned in the Vision 2020, the previous Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad strongly argued that:

“Building a nation out of diverse people with differing historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and geographical backgrounds is something more than just fostering consensus on the basic character of a state or nation. It involves the fostering of (1) shared historical

experiences, (2) shared values, (3) a feeling of common identity, (4) shared destiny that transcends ethnic bounds without undermining ethnic identity, (5) loyalty, (6) commitment, and (7) an emotional attachment to the nation, and the flowering of distinctly national ethos.” (Jalaluddin *et al.* 2004: 9).

Accordingly, educating the public, involves a conscious effort by state and the news media institutions particularly the youth of today who live in an information society characterized by greater access to the mass media, with the specific national aspirations and values to serve state interest involves a conscious effort by state and the news media institution.

A meta-analysis study of the media effect by Emmers-Sommer and Allen (1999) showed that mass media are a significant source of learning, and media can influence attitude and behaviour. Many social sciences scholars (see for Al-Haj 2005, for instance) believe that the social instrument such as the news media can be effectively used for the creation of social beliefs that together constitute a national ethos and strengthen the nation to cope with emerging intercultural tension and conflict. Accordingly, messages and narrative presented to the Malaysian public by the local news media, which is regulated by the state should foster intercultural understanding, civic culture and society. Abdul Rahim (1992) and Kim (2003) in their studies of ethnic integration in Malaysia argued that the news media has the potential as a determinant of the ethnic integration provided the messages in the new media educate the public towards intercultural understanding.

While knowledge on how the media affects the perception, attitude, emotion and behaviour is still not clear, many studies have found that the media has a profound influence on the audience. Many studies have observed that students and adults at all level are heavily influenced not only by their families and schools but also by the media, as pointed by Zevin (2003). For instance a recent study of college students' media use and stereotype on the different ethnic groups, revealed that the

respondents' perception is influenced by the media used (Lee *et al.* 2003).

In the age of increasing media availability and influence, it is very pertinent to examine how the young people in the higher institutions declare their allegiance to the country or their social belief and representation of the country. Both the agenda setting and the cultivation theories are particularly relevant in anticipating the role of the news media in promoting and enhancing collective memory and identification to core characteristics of a nation. The question of identity has become increasingly central in studies on media with more attention being paid to the role the media plays in the cultural constitution of collectivities, specifically the nations, as pointed out by Schlesinger (1993).

As suggested by previous studies (e.g., Wanta *et al.* 2004), news coverage does indeed have an agenda-setting effect. The agenda setting function of the news media is expected as the news organizations usually subscribe to a particular ideology, which in turn shape the nature the direction of their coverage. As part of the national agenda in nation building, editors and journalists of the Malaysian news media should advocate the objective of building a Malaysian society characterizes with strong attachment to the national ethos by informing and reinforcing the national ethos narratives in the mainstream news media, as advocated by many for instance, Karim (2003) and Abdul Ghani (2003). As pointed by Wills and Mehan (1996) critics of multiculturalism argued that what is needed in a multicultural society is not an emphasis on diversity through multiculturalism, but a unifying of society through a common core curriculum and a common historical narrative. The cultivation theory postulated that the more time people spend with the news media (research on cultivation theory has primarily been on television effect), the more likely it is that their conception of social reality will reflect what is seen or read in the media (Synder *et al.* 1991).

The national narratives of national interest in the mainstream news media are a good instrument to cultivate the sense of

togetherness and collective consciousness. The narratives offer opportunities for teaching moral demand in fostering mutual respect and a sense of partnership and belonging. Collective narratives, as defined by Salomon (2004), are stories, beliefs, aspirations, histories and the current explanation that a group holds about the group itself and its surrounding, viewing that collective narratives are accounts of a community's collective experience, embodied in its belief system and present the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity. Thus, it is proven that the news media has become one of the most effective tools of any political socialization provided that it is used properly. A missed opportunity by the news media in fostering strong identification with the national ethos is something that should not be allowed to happen. An ambivalent identification to the national ethos would pose risk to the nation building process. Constructing a collective identity for diverse people is the key principle of the socio-cultural and political economic cohesion. Soen (2002) aptly pointed out that creating a civic collective identity is a pre-condition for a harmonious multicultural society.

Given the centrality of the national ethos in a multicultural Malaysian society and the power of the media in influencing people as discussed above, the present study, posed two research questions: (1) What is nature of attachment to the national ethos among Malaysian university students in the country? and (2) What is the relationship between exposure to news media and attachment to the national ethos? The findings of the study will provide insight into contours of the identity and national ethos, and the role of the mainstream news media in fostering strong attachment to the national ethos.

METHODOLOGY

The study reported here is part of a larger national study on "Youth as a foundation of unity: A survey of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian youth". The study employed a survey design as it attempted to assess the

TABLE 1
Profile of the respondents

Attribute	Statistics (N=606)		
	Malay (n= 325)	Chinese (n=211)	Indian(n=40)
Gender			
Male	30.5%	30.8%	32.5%
Female	69.5%	68.2%	67.5%
Age			
Range	20-27 years	19-25 years	20-30 years
Mean	22.3 year	22.1 year	22.8 year
Discipline of study			
Business, humanities and social sciences	41.1%	30.3%	17.5%
Hard sciences & IT	58.9%	69.7%	82.5%
Place where you were raised			
City	33.4%	51.7%	64.1%
Town	30.7%	29.4%	17.9%
Rural	35.9%	19.0%	17.9%

perception and attitude towards a multicultural society. The dependent variable of concern in this report is attachment to national ethos. In addition to the key socio-demographic variables, the survey also included variable on exposure to news media, the key independent variable. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the students in class and participation was voluntary. The survey took approximately twenty-five minutes to complete.

Samples

A random sample of 606 students in ten universities and colleges in the country participated in the study. A proportioned stratified random sampling was used in selecting the samples. Effort was made so that the samples adequately represented the Malay, Chinese and Indian student population in the country. From this total sample of students, Indian youth samples constitute about 7.0%, while the Malay and Chinese samples constitute 54.0% and 35.0%, respectively. The other category constitutes about 4.0%. The samples were also stratified by discipline of studies so that humanities and social sciences,

and hard sciences students were adequately represented.

About 53.7% of the student respondents were from business, humanities and social sciences discipline, and another 46.3% from hard sciences and IT. A majority of the samples were females, i.e. 69.3%, and 30.4% were males. The Muslim respondents constituted 54.3% of the samples, while the non-Muslim were 45.7%. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 27 years, with an average age of 22.3 years (SD=1.441). Table 1 summarizes the profile of the samples.

Instrument

Attachment to national ethos was measured by asking the respondents to indicate their agreement (from 1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to all the 16 five-point Likert items developed for the study. The items were developed and used by one of the research team member in his previous study based on the notion of the national ethos as defined by Mahathir Mohamed. Two of the items were about shared historical experience, two items related to shared values, two items focused on the sense of common identity, two items on shared emotional attachment, two items on

TABLE 2
Factor analysis and reliability of attachment to national ethos scale

Item	Factor 1 Shared identity and future/ destiny	Factor 2 Shared history and values	Factor 3 Shared loyalty/ commitment
I accept Islam is the official religion of the country.	.739		
I will not leave the country, regardless of what ever happen to the country.	.793		
I am confident that this country will always care of my well being.	.696		
I try act in responsibly relating to national problem faced by the country, although I questioned the action taken by the government.	.548		
I will sacrifice my life and wealth to defend the country when it is under threat.	.755		
I fully accept the view that Malaysia is an Islamic country.	.668		
Monetary control introduced in 1998 make the country free from being colonized by rich countries.		.562	
Power sharing among the various ethnic groups has ensured political stability in the country.		.685	
I accept the democratic system practiced in the country.		.635	
I am proud that this country is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country.		.704	
I accept the vision 2020 wholeheartedly.		.559	
Ethnic clash such as the May 13 1969 incident must be avoided.		.631	
I am proud when a Malaysian's achievement is recognized internationally.		.428	
It is not important to abide to the government PLKN program			.719
I don't care if the country is not respected.			.747
It is not important to give priority to Malaysian made products			.829
Eigenvalue	5.591	2.881	2.001
Percentage of variance explained	22.44	18.01	12.51
Alpha value	.834	.776	.695

commitment, two items on loyalty, and finally four items on shared destiny that transcends ethnic bounds without undermining the ethnic identity. A rotation factor analysis of the attachment to national ethos scale yielded three distinct factors. The three dimensions of attachment to the national ethos were labelled as shared identity and future/destiny (Factor 1, Eigenvalue= 5.75, percentage of variance explained= 33.83), shared history and values (Factor 2, Eigenvalue= 1.81, percentage

of variance explained= 12.08) and shared loyalty/commitment (Factor 3, Eigenvalue= 1.32, percentage of variance explained= 8.82). The Alpha values of the three sub-scales were .834 for shared history and values, .767 for shared identity and future/destiny, and .695 for shared loyalty/commitment.

The respondents were asked to indicate how frequent they used television, newspaper, radio, newsmagazine, and the internet to

obtain news on a 4-point scale (1=very frequently, 2=somewhat frequently, 3=seldom, and 4=never). The respondents were also asked to indicate how much attention they paid to the news in the news media on a 3-point scale (1=very much attention, 2=some attention, 3=not at all). The news media used score was multiplied with the news attention score to create an overall index of exposure to the news media. The higher the score, the greater the exposure to the news media used will be.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question of the present study addressed the issue of the nature of attachment to the national ethos among the Malay, Chinese and Indian university students. Although the measurement has been used before, no information is available on the nature of the national ethos construct. Three dimensions of the national ethos emerged from the data: (1) shared identity and future/destiny, (2) shared history and values and (3) shared loyalty/commitment to the country. Tables 3a, 3b and 3c summarize the distribution of respondents on their attachment to the three dimensions of the national ethos.

The data revealed that, on the whole, the respondents had positive perceptions and attitudes toward the selected characteristics of the country. In short, they shared the social representation of the nation. As shown in Table 3a, many of the respondents fell into the moderate and high degree of attachment towards the shared identity and future/destiny, with a large majority in the high category. The finding suggests that the respondents readily identify Malaysia as an Islamic nation and Islam as the official religion, and they also share the perception that the country has a good future and have a social belief that their well-being is adequately addressed by the country. Although the degree of attachment to the shared identity and future/destiny was favourable, there was a significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their degree of attachment to the shared identity and

future/destiny ($F=14.043, p=.000$). The results of a Scheffe test showed that the mean score for the Malay is significantly higher than the mean score for the Chinese, suggesting that the Malay respondents are significantly or more strongly attached to the shared identity and future/destiny than that of the Indian respondents. The Scheffe test also showed no significant difference in the mean difference between Malay and Indian, and Chinese and Indian.

Similarly, the study revealed that the respondents had favourable identify with selected history and values of the country. They had collective memory of the May 13 riot incident and the monetary control introduced by the government, shared acceptance of the practiced democracy system in the country and the sharing of power among the various ethnic groups as well as readily identify with the vision 2020. As shown in Table 3b many of the respondents fell in the moderate and high categories with a majority in the high category, except for the Chinese group. A test of group means difference was found significance ($F=11.325, p=.000$). The Scheffe test showed that the mean for the Malay respondents was significantly higher than that of the Chinese, suggesting that the Malay respondents are significantly more strongly attached to shared history and values dimension of national ethos although both had favourable identification.

The respondents were also found to have a favourable degree of loyalty/commitment towards the country, that is, they take pride in the country and supported the national service program and Malaysian-made products and the country. As shown in table 3c, many of the respondents fell in the moderate and high category of attachment to loyalty/commitment. A majority of the Malay and the Indian group were clearly in the high category, except for the Chinese group. A test of group means difference showed significant difference. The result of the Scheffe test showed that the mean for the Malay respondents was significantly higher than that of the Chinese, suggesting that, the Malay

TABLE 3a
Attachment to shared identity and future dimension of national ethos by ethnic

	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Percentage		
		Low	Moderate	High
Malay (n=325)	26.03 (3.22)	1.5	15.4	83.1
Chinese (n=211)	24.49 (3.49)	3.8	32.2	64.0
Indian (n=40)	25.15 (3.19)	2.5	22.5	75.0

Note: Higher mean indicates greater attachment to the shared history and values.

ANNOVA test of group means ($F= 14.043$, $Sig.= .000$).

Scheffe test of mean difference showed that the mean for Malay is significantly higher than the mean for Chinese at the .05 level.

TABLE 3b
Attachment to shared history and values dimension of national ethos by ethnic

	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Percentage		
		Low	Moderate	High
Malay (n=325)	26.45 (3.03)	4.0	34.5	61.5
Chinese (n=211)	25.13 (3.33)	8.5	44.5	46.9
Indian (n=40)	25.77 (4.52)	2.5	47.5	50.0

Note: Higher mean indicates greater attachment to the shared identity and future.

ANNOVA test of group means ($F= 11.325$, $Sig.= .000$).

Scheffe test of mean difference showed that the mean for Malay is significantly higher than the mean for Chinese at .05 level.

TABLE 3c
Attachment to shared loyalty/commitment dimension of national ethos by ethnic

	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Percentage		
		Low	Moderate	High
Malay (n=325)	11.96 (2.55)	7.1	30.2	62.7
Chinese (n=211)	11.28 (2.46)	7.1	43.1	49.8
Indian (n=40)	11.55 (2.73)	10.0	25.0	65.0

Note: Higher mean indicates greater attachment to the shared loyalty/commitment.

ANNOVA test of group means ($F= 4.835$, $Sig.= .008$).

Scheffe test of mean difference showed that the mean for Malay is significantly higher than the mean for Chinese at the .05 level.

respondents have a significantly stronger sense of loyalty/commitment to the country. The Scheffe test also showed no significant difference in the mean difference between

Malay and Indian, as well as between Chinese and Indian.

The second research question is used to reveal the relationship between exposure to the news media and the degree of attachment

TABLE 4
Degree of overall exposure to news media by ethnic

	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Percentage		
		Low	Moderate	High
Malay (n=315)	3.26 (1.27)	19.7	55.6	24.8
Chinese (n=207)	3.01 (1.34)	30.4	50.7	18.8
Indian (n=37)	3.61 (1.67)	21.6	35.1	43.2

Note: Higher mean indicates greater exposure to news media

ANNOVA test of group means ($F=4.173$, $Sig.=.016$).

Scheffe test of mean difference showed that mean for Indian is significantly higher than mean for Chinese at the .05 level.

TABLE 5
Bivariate correlations of exposure to news media and attachment to national ethos

News media	Dimension of Attachment to National Ethos		
	Shared Identity and Future	Shared History and Values	Shared Loyalty/ Commitment
News in television	.151 (.000)	.137 (.001)	.023 (.585)
News in newspaper	.066 (.110)	.086 (.038)	.007 (.864)
News in newsmagazine	.038 (.361)	.065 (.116)	.045 (.276)
News in radio	.086 (.038)	.103 (.013)	.033 (.427)
News in internet	.063 (.127)	.025 (.548)	.004 (.932)
Overall news media exposure	.114 (.006)	.103 (.012)	.014 (.731)

Note: Two-tail tests of significance

to the national ethos. It is worthwhile to first look at the distribution of the respondents in term of their extent of exposure to the news media. As shown in Table 4, the data revealed a variation in the extent of utilization of the media for news among the respondents. A majority was in the moderate category, except for the Indian group. Nevertheless, the overall findings suggest that the respondents frequently keep themselves updated with the news in the media. A test of group mean difference showed a significant difference ($F=4.173$, $p=.000$). The Scheffe test showed a significant difference between the mean of the Indian group with the mean of the Chinese group. Nevertheless no significant difference was observed between the Malay and Chinese groups, or between the Malay and Indian groups. The findings suggest that when

comparing among the groups only the Indian respondents are significantly more exposed to the news media when compared with the Chinese but not with that of the Malay group. The Malay and the Chinese have no significant difference in their degree of exposure to the news media.

A bivariate correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship of exposure to the news media and the strength of attachment to the three dimensions of the national ethos. Table 5 summarizes the patterns of findings of the association between exposure to the news media and its attachment to the national ethos. Overall exposure to news media was computed from the individual media used. Table 5 clearly shows that generally, the exposure to the news media had a positive and significant relationship with the

shared identity and future/destiny ($r=.114$, $\rho=.006$) as well as with shared history and values ($r=.103$, $\rho=.012$), but not with shared loyalty/commitment. The examination by individual news media revealed that the exposure to both the television and radio news positively and significantly correlated with the attachment to shared history and values, but not with shared loyalty/commitment. Exposure to newspaper correlated positively and significantly with only one dimension of the national ethos, i.e. shared history and values. The patterns of findings suggest that, while the overall exposure to the news media is positively related with shared identity and future/destiny dimension and shared history and values dimension of the national ethos, it is important to closely examine the influence of the different mainstream news media individually as observed in the present study.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The present analysis provides insight into the sense of identification to the national ethos among the university and college students in the country, and the role of news media in fostering identification with the ethos of the country. The construct of attachment to the national ethos is a multi-dimensional. Three dimensions emerged from the study, namely shared identity and future/destiny, shared history and value as well as shared loyalty/commitment dimension.

It was argued earlier that a strong attachment to national ethos is fundamental in this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religion country. A strong attachment to national ethos is viewed as a unifying force. On this point is encouraging to observe that the university and college students surveyed are not ambivalent in their perceptions and attitudes toward the selected characteristics of the country. They identify with the core socio-cultural, economic and political characters of the country, that provide the basis for common or collective social identity. On the shared identity and future/destiny dimension of the national ethos, they readily accept that Malaysia is an Islamic country with Islam being

the official religion. More importantly, they collectively see the country as having a good future and care for the well being of its people. They also see that they have a social obligation in ensuring a peaceful, harmonious and progressing pluralistic Malaysian society, in spite of the cultural and ideological differences and contradictions across the ethnic groups. With regard to the shared history and values dimension of national ethos, the respondents perceived some of the major historical events in the country such as the racial riot and the economic crisis encountered as collective memory. They also readily accepted that power sharing among the ethnic-based political parties, democratic system of governance and shared aspiration of the country as envisioned in the Vision 2020 as unique characteristics of the country. Finally, the respondents also readily identified and supported the major national program and product of the country, such as the Malaysian-made good and national service training program. In sum, a feeling of common identity and sense of partnership that is the building block for unity in diversity is there; hence what the government need to do further is to ensure is that such environment is sustained and enriched.

Based on the observed relationship of the news media exposure and identification with national ethos, at a practical level it can be concluded that the observed association means that the news media in the country to some degree has functioned as a change or development agent in the nation building, i.e. in the context of the present study, the news media are harnessing a strong attachment to national ethos. One practical implication of the relationship is that the news in the media should be used as educational material in relevant civic and citizenship courses with the aim of building a civil multicultural society and promoting better intercultural relations. A discussion of the relevant content of the media pertaining to the issues of intercultural relations in class should sensitise and educate the students towards the cultural competency. However, in light of the implied differential

influence of the different news media in the country on instilling attachment to national ethos, more attention should be given on the content of each news media.

Theoretically, given the observed relationship of the the news media exposure with the attachment to national ethos, it can be concluded that the news media exposure is a potential determinant of attachment to national ethos. However, an interestingly exposure to the news media has an influence merely on the attachment to shared identity and future/destiny dimension and shared history and values dimension of national ethos but not on the shared loyalty/commitment dimension. The reason for the difference is not understood. It could mean that the effect of the news media exposure is more apparent on the instrumental rather than the emotional aspect of attachment to the national ethos. Another theoretical contribution of the present analysis is it lends support on the agenda setting and framing function of the news media as a partner of the national development.

While the findings of the present study could be generalized to a larger young adult student population, readers have to be careful in doing so because of some methodological weakness. The sample size for the Indian respondents is very small as compared to the Malay and Chinese respondents and this may have influence on the test of the mean difference among the groups. Another issue is the analysis is limited to only bivariate correlation analysis. The influence of intervening or moderating variables has not been addressed. An additional analysis using a multivariate analysis is required to determine the actual contribution of exposure to the news media on attachment to the national ethos. Potential confounding variables need to be controlled by employing a more rigorous research design or controlled statistically.

Finally, items in the measurement of the national ethos need to be further refined so as to include items that really reflect the

distinctive characters of the country. Identifying the core and distinctive characters of the country is imperative in the nation building process.

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