



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES AS PREDICTORS
OF PERCEIVED INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANT BEHAVIORS AMONG
UNDERGRADUATES**

WENDY YEE MEI TIEN

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By

WENDY YEE MEI TIEN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

May, 2008



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chair: Professor Hj. Azimi Hamzah, PhD

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Youth are important assets for the continuous development of a nation. Therefore, many youth development programmes have been conducted to help youth to develop. Positive youth development, an approach that emphasizes the positive aspects of youth development is based on developing their health and physical competence, personal and social competence, cognitive and creative competence, vocational competence and citizenship competence. Having these competencies are very essential especially among youth living in a multi-ethnic society, Malaysia. Therefore, to avoid conflict, there is a need to be tolerant towards different cultural, religious practices, beliefs and ethnic differences. Despite many initiatives taken by the government to ensure such positive development among the youth, inter ethnic conflict is still an issue especially with the outbreak of the Kampung Medan incident in 2001 where most of the culprits involved were youth. Thus, the focus of this study is to identify the levels of youth development competencies among the undergraduates in Malaysia. Besides, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior the



occurrence of a specific behavior of a person can be predicted with the presence of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions. Incorporating both the theory of positive youth development and Theory of Planned Behavior, this study also aimed to determine the potential predictors for perceived inter ethnic tolerant behavior and to determine the level of inter-ethnic tolerance among the undergraduates. Using a self administered questionnaire, data were collected from 1086 undergraduates. Analysis was conducted to compare between undergraduates from the Public (PuIHE) and Private Institution of Higher Learning (PrIHE) and from five different programs of studies; namely, Bioscience, Social Science, Business Studies, Technical Studies and Information Technology Studies. The results indicated that students from both the institution of higher learning and across the five programs of study have the highest level of strength in vocational competence. In order to determine the predictor variables for inter ethnic tolerant behavior, a four predictors multiple linear regression model was used. The findings of this study indicated that there was a difference in prediction variables for inter-ethnic tolerant behavior between the PuIHE and PrIHE undergraduates. The results also indicated that not all the youth development competencies explained significantly to inter ethnic tolerant behavior (IETB) among students from the different programs of studies. However, among all the four youth development competencies, cognitive competence was the strongest estimator of inter ethnic tolerant behavior for the four out of five different programs of study. Overall, the model developed for this study based on the two main theories; youth development competencies and Theory of Planned Behavior on the prediction of behavior, was able to explain the gap in predicting inter ethnic tolerant behaviors among the youth.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falzafah

**PEMBANGUNAN KOMPETENSI BELIA SEBAGAI PREDIKTOR UNTUK
TOLERANSI DI KALANGAN MAHASISWA DAN MAHASISWI**

Oleh

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Belia adalah aset yang penting untuk pembangunan sesebuah negara. Oleh itu, banyak program pembangunan belia telah dijalankan untuk membimbing pembangunan belia ini. Pembangunan belia positif merupakan satu langkah pembangunan yang memfokus kepada aspek-aspek positif pembangunan belia seperti pembangunan kompetensi kesihatan dan fizikal, kompetensi individu dan sosial, kompetensi kognitif/kreatif, kompetensi vokasional dan kompetensi kenegaraan. Kompetensi-kompetensi ini adalah sangat penting terutamanya belia yang hidup di sebuah masyarakat yang berbilang kaum seperti Malaysia. Untuk mencegah dari berlakunya konflik perkauman, seseorang itu perlu mempunyai sikap toleransi terhadap perbezaan budaya, agama, kepercayaan dan etnik. Walaupun banyak inisiatif telah diambil oleh pihak kerajaan untuk memastikan pembangunan belia secara positif, namun, konflik perkauman masih berlaku; contoh; rusuhan kaum di Kampung Medan pada tahun 2001 dimana majoriti yang terlibat dalam rusuhan kaum itu adalah daripada golongan belia. Oleh itu, fokus kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti tahap pembangunan kompetensi-kompetensi di kalangan

mahasiswa di Malaysia. Berdasar kepada Teori ‘Planned Behavior,’ kelakuan seseorang boleh dikenalpasti melalui elemen ‘attitude’, ‘subjective norms’, ‘perceived behavioral control’ dan ‘behavioral intentions.’ Melalui pergabungan teori pembangunan belia positif dan teori ‘Planned Behavior,’ kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti prediktor-prediktor untuk sikap toleransi dan mengenal pasti tahap toleransi antara etnik di kalangan mahasiswa. Data-data telah dikumpulkan daripada 1086 mahasiswa melalui boring soal seidik. Analisis perbandingan telah dijalankan untuk membandingkan tahap-tahap yang berlainan ini di antara mahasiswa di IPTA dan IPTS dan juga di antara lima program pengajian yang berlainan (Biosains, Sains Sosial, Busines, Teknikal dan IT). Hasil kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa mahasiswa dari kedua-dua IPT and kesemua program pengajian mempunyai tahap tertinggi dalam kompetensi vokasional. Untuk menentukan prediktor-prediktor yang dapat mengenal pasti sikap toleransi, empat prediktor telah digunakan dalam model ‘multiple linear regression’. Hasil kajian ini telah menunjukkan bahawa prediktor-prediktor untuk sikap toleransi adalah berbeza untuk IPTA dan IPTS. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan dalam prediktor yang sesuai sebagai prediktor sikap toleransi untuk kelima-lima program pengajian. Walaubagaimanapun, antara keempat-empat prediktor yang dikenal pasti, kompetensi kognitif merupakan kompetensi yang paling penting sebagai prediktor sikap toleransi. Secara keseluruhannya, model yang dirangka untuk kajian ini yang berdasarkan dua teori, dapat menunjukkan peranan kompetensi-kompetensi pembangunan belia positif dalam mengenal pasti sikap toleransi di kalangan belia. Kajian ini juga telah mencadangkan beberapa aspek penting untuk kajian belia di masa depan.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctoral of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

WENDY YEE MEI TIEN

Date: 22 May 2008

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FIELDS	Two major fields of study (ARTS and SCIENCE)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IETB	Inter Ethnic Tolerant Behavior
IT	Information Technology
MMR	Moderated Multiple Regression
NEP	National Economic Plan
PrIHE	Private Institution of Higher Education
PROGRAMS	Five different programs of study (Bioscience, Social Science, Business Studies, Technical Studies, IT Studies)
PuIHE	Public Institution of Higher Education
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UM	Universiti Malaya
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Malaysia is a unique multi-ethnic society. The population is a contrast of racial and cultural roots, with predominance of Malays, Chinese and Indians and diverse groups of indigenous people such as Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan, Bajau, Melanau and Murut. For this, Malaysia boasts of rich cultural heritage, all rolled into one. Despite the differences in ethnic, religion, culture, values, beliefs, norms and practices, the people in Malaysia are able to live harmoniously compared to many other multi ethnic countries of the world. In fact, Malaysia has often been cited as an example of a plural society *par excellence* (Bee Lan, 1978). Nevertheless, Malaysia had come a long way to the stage she had reached today. Although it has been almost half a century Malaysia achieved its independence, issues of peace, inter ethnic relations, harmony and unity are still being emphasized through various channels in this plural society. This is the result of the lessons learnt from the unforgettable ethnic clashes and conflicts as part and parcel of the historical make up of the unique Malaysian society. The civil wars and bloodsheds other countries experienced as a result of inter-ethnic clashes also served as a reminder on the importance of inter ethnic tolerance and peace should not be taken for granted.



1.2 Historical Background

The making of the plural and diverse society in Malaysia was profoundly influenced by its historical background and its geographical location. Geographically, Malaysia has been the meeting point of three great civilizations. The civilization of the Malay archipelago, the Chinese civilization, and the Indian civilization confluence within the Malay Archipelago, consolidating itself in various stages with the growing importance of the Straits of Malacca as an important strait along the Silk Route. However, the historical plurality that existed in the Malay archipelago dramatically changed in the twentieth century with the arrival of European colonialism which generated an unprecedented movement of people accompanied by large scale of capitalism with the manipulation of racial identity for profit maximization (Puthucheary, 2002). Many Chinese were brought in from the main land China to work in the tin mining industries, the Indians were brought in from India to work in the rubber estates and the local Malays were left to agriculture activities in the rural areas. Hence, there was a rural – urban divide along ethnic lines and inequalities in economic distribution. This division thus had brought about much problems accompanied by racial polarization (Abraham, 1997).

Such division also became the spark that led to a succession of inter ethnic riots in 1945, 1946 and 1969. The 1969, May 13 incident, especially, had left a very sensitive and conscious mark in the lives of those who had experienced it.

According to Faaland (2003), the racial riots in 1969 were only the tip of an iceberg of a far more serious and deep-seated problem confronting the society, arising from Malaysian's past. Ethnic plurality, economic dualism and inequality were too ingrained in the fabric of the society. Malaysia being at the primary years of post Independence, still trying to stabilize the economic dualism and ethnic pluralism, finding it hard to strike a balance. Hence, politically and ethnically, the country retrogressed with racial feelings running high (Cheah, 2002). Economic disparity and social inequality between races due to geographical distribution aggravated the differences in incomes, and lifestyles between the rural and urban residences (Oo, 1991).

Tracing the causes of racial animosity after 1969, an affirmative action policy, the New Economic Policy (NEP), was formulated to reunite and rebuild the country. Its objectives were to create prosperity for all Malaysians and no community would experience a sense of loss and deprivation. In other words, economic growth alone, no matter how rapid it was, would not be enough. Distribution must be parallel, equal and no ethnic should feel threaten or neglected. The prevailing condition underlying the nature and characteristic of ethnicity rests, to a large extent, on the balance of ethnic power and social justice represented by the showcase of national development. Furthermore, the racial riots of 1969 not only produced an awareness of the importance of social equality and the equal distribution of economic wealth between different ethnic groups in Malaysia, but it



also forced the Malaysian government to take radical steps to nurture “culture pluralism” as a national quest. Thereafter, cultural pluralism was adopted by the national government as a theme to foster a philosophy that promotes “unity in diversity” (Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional, 2007).

1.3 Tolerance in a Plural Society

“Human diversity makes tolerance more than a virtue; it makes it a requirement for survival,” (Dubos, 1981, p. 2). Tolerance is not an end but a means; it is the minimal essential quality of social relations that eschew violence and coercion. Without tolerance, peace is not possible. With tolerance, a panoply of positive human and social possibilities can be pursued, including the evolution of a culture of peace (Towards a Culture of Peace, 1994). This principle is very critical in the context of a multi-ethnic society such as Malaysia. Therefore, to avoid conflict, there is a need to have the right attitude; liberal attitude. Tolerance towards cultural, religious, political and ethnic differences constitutes the liberal attitude. Without tolerance, there can be a lot of tension in the society. Following a comprehensive survey of the various ethnic groups conducted in Canada, Berry and Kalin (1995) concluded that “tolerant individuals” show little differential preference for various groups. Staub (1989) also argued in his book, “The Roots of Evil,” that tolerant and altruistic attitudes have an impact on support for multicultural policies that aim to bridge communities. Therefore, a disposition



towards tolerance was found to support organizational and governmental policy initiatives aimed at promoting multicultural harmony (Shalila, 1993).

For that reason, in order to prevent inter ethnic conflict from happening in the future, the government has also taken various steps to promote inter ethnic tolerance and understanding among different races. According to Oo (1991, p.8), such efforts are a philosophy that “acknowledges the contribution of different races and ethnic idiosyncrasies,” and which is an “impetus for the growth of a multi-racial and multi-lingual society.” This is especially important for Malaysia, which was invented by a shared common experience without existing common nationalism and without common ethnicity. Therefore, the efforts for national integration through tolerance and understanding became a national pursuit in bringing together culturally and discrete groups into a single territorial unit and establishment of national identity (David, 1997). This process reflects a deep recognition and commitment to the idea that racial harmony in plural societies is of paramount importance to national peace and stability. Hence, the racial riots of 1969 had brought about an important lesson that led to changes in the fundamental policies, changes in the socio economic climate and inter ethnic relationships in Malaysia. These mark the unique and significant differences of inter ethnic relationships in Malaysia as compared to the neighboring plural societies. Proudly though, all these had added a very significant page to the Malaysian history book.

