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A Study of National Integration: Impact of Multicultural Values

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Abstract

This study examines whether there are changes in the levels of integration of people in the state of Selangor (Malaysia). Data was collected from 744 respondents and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and interpreted using integration model. Integration was found to be at the third level that is level with the Chinese groups scoring the lowest in all the three domains, the Malays achieving the highest score in the cognitive domain, whilst the Indians receiving the highest score in the affective domain. Although the level of integration is rather high, there are areas which need to be improved.

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Keywords: National integration, Social distance, Ethnocentrism, National identity

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that Malaysia has achieved independence from the British colonial master more than 53 years ago, the agenda of integration and unity is still a priority due to its important role in the development of the nation. The ability of each country to be independent and progress economically depends on the social harmony and political stability which can only be achieved through unity and integration among its citizens, especially for a nation with a multicultural community. Malaysia is a nation with a population of various ethnic groups. According to the Population Census Malaysia (2000), the total population is 22.18 million with 65 percent Bumiputera or Malays (sons of the soil), 26 percent Chinese and 7.7 percent Indians. Due to such a population landscape the process of integration and unity in a Malaysian society is so important.

1.1 Ethnic Relations in Malaysia

Malaysia was known as Malaya before 1963. Early Malayan history has brought about the development of multicultural society in the country (Marimuthu, 1994; Ding, 2005). Multicultural society had developed as a result of the British policy allowing free immigration into the country (Cheah, 1983) to exploit tin mining areas and to open new land for the development of rubber estates (Faaland et al., 2005). Sikhs were brought into Malaya to serve as policemen and take care of security. Indians from Sri Lanka and India were brought in to serve as clerical and technical staff. The deployment of laborers from southern India was motivated to fulfill the needs of laborers for road building and laying railway lines (Zulhilmi & Rohani, 2003). A liberal immigration policy introduced by the

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British had changed the nature of communities in this country with the total immigrants increasing rapidly (Zahid, 1997). The immigrants came to Malaya freely till 1929 (Mohd Idris Salleh, 1994). This resulted in the Malays being less in number when compared to immigrants in year 1931 (Cheah, 1983), there was 45 percent Malays compared to 54 percent in the year 1911 and 49 percent in 1921. Migration on a large scale without any blockages had overcome the Malays in numbers (Faaland et al., 2005)

Polarization and separation of various ethnic groups came about as a result of the policy of “divide and rule” by the British to exploit the country’s and resources and to guarantee their political power in Malaya. The British government had different roles and status among the Malays, Chinese and Indians (Mahli, 1988) which resulted in the 3 groups being separated in term of living quarters, career and education (Zainal, 1986)

There were little social contacts between the groups of people living in the country then. Their social interaction would only take place in the office, workplace and the market places. This matter had strengthened attitudes of prejudice and strengthened ethnic identities (Mahli, 1988). Social relations among them could not be developed (Azmah, 2001) and this had developed aspects of divisions, groupings and keen competition between the ethnic groups especially to achieve economic, political and social advantages (Sanusi, 1989). If this situation was ignored and permitted to develop it could cause political instability within the country (Zahid, 1997)

The factors of difference in religion and cultures as well as not knowing the culture and sensitivities of the groups strengthened prejudice among the ethnic groups. Other than that the educational system which was separated as a result of British colonial policy also obstructed the unity and integration in the community. Until the Report of the Education Committee 1956 (Razak Report, 1956) there was no national system of education in Malaya (Mahli, 1988). The separated education system during the colonial era did not focus on development of national identity on the citizens of Malaya because of the vernacular system of education which did not streamline the teaching curriculum and the use of different medium of languages when the immigrants especially those who had lived for a long time in this country began voicing their demands as permanent residents including political matters, the Malays began to worry. They stressed that the immigrants were not the original inhabitants of this country. From that point the use of “Bumiputera” or sons of the soil to differentiate the Malay community from other racial groups was used widely (Azmah, 2001). Awareness arose among the Malays that they were left far behind in terms of the economic and educational pursuits when compared with other ethnic groups.

Feelings of prejudice between ethnic groups were worsened by the existence of various political, social and economic associations based on ethnic groups which championed their own ethnic interests. The most critical of the national unity problems in Malaysia began with the incident of the May 13, 1969 riots. The tragedy was the beginning of the re-evaluation of national policies and the restructuring process aimed at getting the different ethnic groups together.

According to Faaland et al. (2005) the 13 May incident destroyed the reputation of Malaysia in the eyes of the world. Faaland et al. also said that the 1969 riots represented only a small part of a bigger and more serious problem resulting from Malaysia’s past. Since the immigration of the Chinese and Indians to Malaysia integration of various ethnic groups became a major problem towards the achievement of national goals, social practices and national identity (Abdul Rahim, 2001). The 13 May incident had opened the eyes of the government on how weak national unity and inter ethnic relationship were. Various steps were taken by the government to strengthen national integration among Malaysians. Therefore measuring the unity periodically is critical to gauge the impact of the unity policy and programs.

2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The present study was based on 3 basic ideas: a) Integration constructs b) Bloom’s individual development domains and c) levels of integration. The major constructs used in integration were social distance, ethnocentrism and national identity. These constructs were for measuring elements of integration which referred to peaceful living, integration being committed to national identity as well as being loyal to the nation.

Social distance measure degrees of communication perceived by respondents between him or herself with members of other ethnic groups, that is referring to types of interaction carried out between respondents with the other ethnic groups. This also showed the closeness of relationship with individuals from other ethnic groups (Ibrahim Saad, 1979). Items in this construct were developed to measure attitudes of tolerance and acceptance in interaction with the other groups. Among the items in this construct were readiness to eat together with individuals

from another ethnic group, live in a housing area which had other ethnic groups and acceptance of political leadership from other ethnic groups.

Ethnocentrism construct measure cultural constraints for each individuals or feeling of superiority toward own ethnic group as compared to other groups (Ibrahim Saad, 1979). Items in this construct measure the degree of feelings one had towards aspects of characteristics of own ethnic group and others. Such items encompass characteristics like cost saving, loyalty, sincerity, cleanliness and others which are usually identified with certain ethnic groups.

National identity constructs refer to tendency an individual had of his own race being superior from other races (Ibrahim Saad, 1979). This construct also refers to readiness and acceptance of someone to show commitment toward his/her own race and nation, knowledge about certain governmental institutions and also national symbols (Ibrahim Saad, 1979). The items were to measure the degree of knowledge, attitude and behavior of an individual about national symbols like Yang Dipertuan Agong (or the King), heroes of Malaysia, parliamentary system, social justice, national culture and Malaysian history to differentiate him/herself as member of certain ethnic groups from other members.

The second idea in the conceptual framework was the individual development domains (Bloom, 1968), that is in terms of cognitive, affective and behavior domains. The cognitive domain referred to knowledge of an individual about his country, the affective domain referred to feelings and psychological aspects of an individual toward integration and unity, while the behavior domain referred to manifestations of behavior which indicate unity or integration.

The third idea in the conceptual framework was the level of integration which showed how the process of integration was made or developed. This concept showed integration in 4 phases of development among the people of different ethnic groups in a nation or country. Firstly there was the level of separation, where there was no interaction among the groups. Secondly there was the level of minimal contact and this was only to fulfil certain needs like buying and selling commerce or economics. The third level was the level of compromise or working together where intergroup communication among the groups had increasingly become more complex. The last level was the collaboration level where the various groups had agreed to create one identity to become one nation.

Integration concept was chosen as an element of process in the conceptual framework in order to achieve an individual's model of integration which was collaboration with the components of the integration construct and individual development domains. Each item was developed from interaction of three components in the conceptual constructs as discussed

3. Statement of the Problem

A study was carried out in 2007 to measure the level of integration specifically in the state of Selangor (the most developed state of the 13 states in Malaysia). This study was an extension of a study entitled Development of an instrument to measure the level of national integration carried out in 1993. In the 2007 study, the researchers made adjustments from sample size and locations for collecting current data. This study used the same formula to measure the integration level of communities in the previous study, that is maintaining study's principle which are based on the uniqueness of the Malaysian nation so that the perspective being studied were relevant and sufficient (Zahara et al., 1993).

This studied aimed to identify integration among people in the state of Selangor based on ethnicity, level of education, age and gender, looked at from constructs of national identity, social distance and ethnocentrism from domains of behavior, affective and cognitive. Based on the aims of research the study would attempt to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the level of integration among people in the state of Selangor according to their ethnicity based on construct of national identities, ethnocentrism and social distance and from behavior, affective and cognitive domains?
- ii. What is the level of integration among people in the state of Selangor according to level of education based on the construct of national identity, ethnocentrism and social distance and from behavior, affective and cognitive domains?

- iii. What is the level of integration among people in the state of Selangor according to age based on construct of national identities, ethnocentrism and social distance and from behavior, affective and cognitive domains?
- iv. What is the level of integration among people in the state of Selangor according to gender based on construct of national identities, ethnocentrism and social distance and from behavior, affective and cognitive domains?
- v. What is the level of integration among people in the state of Selangor according to their jobs based on construct of national identities, ethnocentrism and social distance and from behavior, affective and cognitive domains?

4. Methodology

The study survey was carried out in 6 districts in the state of Selangor which were Bangi, Kajang, Banting, Cheras, Kuala Selangor and Salak Tinggi. Composition of the residents were 744 persons, which was in coordination with the composition of residents in Malaysia according to ethnic origins which was 413 (55 percent) Malays, 178 (23.9 percent) Chinese, 138 (18.5 percent) Indians and 15 (2 percent) of other ethnic groups.

One set of questionnaire was used as instrument of the study. The items were divided into Section A (which encompassed personal items: gender, race, age academic qualification and employment) and Section B (which consisted of 70 items. The team that carried out the study had made a reevaluation of the 75 items used in the 1993 study, covering the language, measuring scales and current scenarios. A number of items which were not relevant to the current situation and which looked rather confusing were dropped. A number of items which were negative in form were also changed to facilitate data analysis later. After adjustments were made, one new set of questionnaire was completed. This set was pilot tested to make sure it was clear and precise to respondents. It achieved an index of reliability of 0.97 on the Cronbach Alpha. The questionnaire was translated into Cantonese and Tamil for those unable to read or speak the Malay language fluently.

5. Findings of the Study

Generally the study found the mean score for all constructs was 3.85. The level of integration achieved was the third highest that is the level of compromise or cooperation. Table 1 shows the mean score of the three constructs for all respondents of study

Table 1. Mean Score for All Construct and Sub-Constructs

Construct	Mean Score	Level	Standard Deviation
All Construct	3.85	3	0.48
Social distance	3.87	3	0.54
Ethnocentrism	4.02	3	0.66
National Identity	3.67	3	0.52

Table I shows that all respondents achieved level of social distance, ethnocentrism and national identity. Each at the third highest level. These differences of scores are dependent on ethnicity, academic qualification, age, gender and jobs held. Statistical analysis showed that there was a significant difference according to ethnicity. Table 2 shows result of this differences. Table 3 showed result of test Pos Hoc Turkey to show the difference.

Table 2. Integration Based on Ethnicity

	df	Mean Squared	F Value	P Value
Between groups	3	11.290	61.739	.000
In group	740	.183		
Total	7433			

Table 3. Test Pos Hoc Tukey Unity based on Offspring

Ethnicity	Race	Mean Difference	Sig.
Malays	Chinese	.5030	.000
	Indians	.2854	.000
	Others	.0139	.999
Chinese	Malays	-.5030	.000
	Indians	-.2176	.000
	Others	-.4891	.000
Indians	Malays	-.2854	.000
	Chinese	.2176	.000
	Others	-.2715	.091
Others	Malays	-.0139	.999
	Chinese	.4891	.000
	Indians	.2715	.091

**significant at level p 0.05

Based on the test of Pos Hoc Tukey there was a significant difference related to level of integration between the Malays and the Chinese where main scores of integration among the Malays was higher than those of the Chinese respondents by 0.50. A significant difference occurred between the Malay and Indian respondents where the mean score of the Malays was higher by 0.28 from the Indian score. The score between the Malays and the other ethnic groups did not differ significantly. The other ethnic groups had a mean score which was higher than those of the Indians and Chinese respondents. There was significant difference between the Indian and Chinese respondents where the mean score of the Indian respondents were higher by 0.22. The level of integration and the mean scores of each ethnic group is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Integration Norms According to Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Malays	413	4.03	0.34
Chinese	178	3.52	0.50
Indians	138	3.74	0.55
Others	15	4.01	0.47
Total	744	3.85	0.48

From the above the sequence of mean scores of integration from the highest to the lowest are 1) Malay, 2) Chinese, 3) Indians, 4) Other ethnic groups. Based on academic qualification the study found a significant difference among respondents

Table 5. ANOVA Level of Integration Based On Academic Qualification

	df	Mean Squared	F Value	P Value
Between groups	5	1.207	5.462	.000
In group	738	.221		
Total	743			

When the Post Hoc Turkey test was done it was found there was a significant difference in the score between those who had SPM (Certification of Education Malaysia) or same level qualification with those Diploma holders

and between Diploma holders with those who had Bachelor Degree. Masters and Bachelor Degrees holders had the highest mean score of integration when compared with those who had lower academic qualification. Table 6 showed the mean score differences.

Table 6. Integration Based On Academic Qualification

Qualification	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
LCE/SRP/PRM and below	70	3.84	0.42
SPM or same level qualification	219	3.89	0.46
STPM or same level qualification	73	3.84	0.45
Diploma	133	3.67	0.57
Bachelor Degree	224	3.92	0.42
Master	25	3.94	0.56
Doctor of Philosophy	-	-	-
Total	744	3.85	0.48

Table 6 shows that generally respondents based on their academic qualification achieved the third level of integration that is level of compromise or working together. However there is a difference that is where respondents with a higher qualification significantly would have an a much higher score of integration. This study found that there was a significant difference in level of integration among people in Selangor based on their ages. There was a significant difference among those aged 20 years and below and those aged between 21 till 30 years old. Table 7 shows that those aged between 21-30 years had a higher mean score from respondents aged less than 20 years. There was a significant difference in level of integration among citizens aged 20 years and below with those aged between 31-40 years. However there was no significant difference between those respondent aged between 21-30 years, 31-40 years and 41 years and above. In spite of this fact, every age group had a similar level of integration that is at the third level or compromise or cooperation level.

Table 7. Integration According to Age

Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
20 years and below	58	3.65	0.55
21-30 years	286	3.88	0.49
31-40 years	259	3.89	0.42
41 years and above	141	3.82	0.50
Total	744	3.85	0.48

The study found that there was a significant difference among people in Selangor based on gender. Table 8 showed level of mean scores of integration according to gender, where they were at the third level of integration that is compromise or working together.

Table 8. Integration According to Gender

Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	370	3.87	0.49
Female	374	3.84	0.47

The next variable was job categories. The rasional for looking at the aspect of category of jobs was that most non Malays work in the private sectors, while the Malays mostly worked in the government sectors except for those involved in the industrial sectors. Due to this the study wanted to see level of integration among the people based on

their job categories. This study indicated that there was a significant difference in level of integration between government officers and those working by themselves. Also there was a significant difference in level of integration between people working in the private sector with those working for themselves.

Table 9. Integration According to Jobs

Jobs	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Government	375	3.90	0.45
Private	211	3.83	0.50
Self-Employed	51	3.62	0.54
Pensioners	12	3.65	0.49
Not working/ housewife/ student	95	3.84	0.46
Total	744	3.85	0.48

People working in government and private sectors had a higher score when compared to those others who had other categories of jobs. Generally the respondents had similar level of integration that is they came out at a compromise level.

6. Discussion of Study

As mentioned, this study was as an extension of the study carried out in 1993. Table 10 showed the comparison between the findings of study in 2007 and 1993 for all integration constructs.

Table 10. Difference of Mean Scores for All Constructs and Sub Constructs of Study for 2007 and 1993

Constructs	Mean Score (2007)	Level	Mean Score (1993)	Level	Difference Mean (1-J)
All Constructs	3.85	3	4.04	3	-0.19
Social Distance	3.87	3	3.09	3	0.78
Ethnocentrism	4.02	3	3.28	3	0.74
National Identity	3.67	3	3.77	3	-0.1

Generally there was a difference between mean scores of integration between people in the current study when compared with those 15 years ago. For all the constructs of integration, the mean score achieved in the 2007 study had decreased somewhat when compared to the 1993 study. However respondents in both studies had the same integration level that is the level of compromise and cooperation. Communities for various ethnic groups were dependent on each other in various aspect like economy, social and political (Lee 2004). The 2007 study showed a decrease of mean score in integration on all constructs. Even though the level of integration remained the same there were instances of inter ethnic communication declining. This could be due to ethnic groups showing biases toward to their own race. For example Chinese employers tend to employ Chinese employees by using knowledge of Mandarin as a requirement of employment, knowing fully well that the Malays and Indians do not speak Mandarin. This phenomena was one of those factors that contributed to the gap in inter ethnic communication.

According to Seah (2000) social and economic classes (multiracial Malaysia) contributed to ethnic mobility. With the expansion and growth of the Malaysian economy the ethnic mobility of certain ethnic groups would be more pronounced. Consistent with the views ethnic integration score which declined from 1993 to 2007 was influenced by the expansion of Malaysian economy. Based on the comparison of the two studies it was observed that the mean score of the Chinese reduced from 4.01 (1993 study) to 3.52 (2007 study). The Indian scores were also reduced from 4.14 (1993 study) to 3.74 (2007 study). However the mean scores of the Malays remained the same at 4.03 for both studies. The reduction of the mean scores of the Chinese and Indian respondents were in line with the growth and expansion of the economy. See table 11

Table 11. Differences of Mean Scores of Ethnic Integration According to Ethnicity in 2007 and 1993 Study

Constructs	Mean Score (2007)	Level	Mean Score (1993)	Level	Difference Mean (1-J)
Malays	4.03	3	4.03	3	0
Chinese	3.52	3	4.01	3	-0.49
Indians	3.74	3	4.14	3	-0.40
Others	4.01	3	-	-	-

The Malaysian government introduced a number of policies designed to create better integration among the ethnic groups. However some of the policies according to Lee (2004) were misunderstood by some ethnic groups resulting in the policies being questioned and their implementation being hampered. This would lead to an enlarged interethnic gap in communication (Lee 2004). Pong (1993) gave an example of a policy perceived to be discriminatory to specific ethnic groups (specially Chinese and Indians). He cited the ethnic quota specified in the New Economy Policy on the entry of students into universities where the Malays were given a higher quota than the Chinese and Indians. The Chinese interpreted the university intake as having an impact towards their socio-economy factor.

The 2007 study showed there was a difference in level of integration based on academic qualification where respondents with Bachelor and Masters Degrees had a higher integration score when compared to those without degrees. This could be due to the fact that there was a higher and better inter ethnic communication at the university as well as a better understanding of governmental integration policies. The current university intakes policy is 51 percent of intakes were for Bumiputeras to enter higher education (public universities). However for the IPTS (private universities) there is no quota for both Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera. So the loss of places at public universities is made up by the gain of more places at IPTS (private universities). Hence the government policy must be understood in total where the government balances the various requirements of all the ethnic groups.

Based on job categories both the public sector (government) and private sector achieved level three of the integration scale. However it was observed that there were differences or instances of differences in the mean score which means that some government policies are not being understood fully by the private sector respondents. On top of this, the lower mean score could be because of lack of communication among respondents of ethnic groups who are self employed as well as those unemployed.

6.1 Implications of Study

- i. It must be accepted by the people and by the government that to integrate the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups is very difficult process. However we must accept that integration of all ethnic groups is a crucial requirements, for the country to survive to become an individual nation and to avoid external intervention, this matter must be resolved in the interest of all racial and ethnic groups.
- ii. The findings indicated that the integration level exist to support political, economic, compromise and cooperation among the ethnic groups. Ideally the level of integration should be at level four where people are ready to integrate, to work together and live together. The question now is how do we upgrade the level of integration in Malaysia among the ethnic groups from level 3 to level 4?
- iii. Malaysia should continue with studies and research on the integration level and researchers have to find issues that promote integration and that promote polarization. The latter act as impediments to integration, therefore it should be given emphasis and focus in our society
- iv. A situation similar to this one need a more drastic strategy and action in order that integration and communication issue among the ethnic groups can be solved in the near future. For that it is suggested that related institutions like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Department of

National Unity, schools, public universities as well as private universities review the curriculum and pedagogies in each of their institutions as a step to improve unity and integration of ethnic groups in Malaysia

- v. This situation also calls on other institutions that are related like Ministry of Unity, Ministry of Culture and Arts, Ministry of Youth and Sports and other nongovernmental organizations to play a role and bear responsibility to strengthen integration and communication among ethnic groups.
- vi. The model of political and economic compromise and cooperation among ethnic groups can at best achieve a level three of integration. Ideally for Malaysia we need a level four of integration. The question now is how do we motivate all the ethnic groups to live and work together as Malaysian.

6.2 Suggestion

The new model of integration of the government today is the One Malaysia model, as expounded by the new Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. In his talk to the press on 6 April 2009, he expressed on the need for a new national discourse: on the principles of transparency and accountability, service to all, not just a few and respect and fairness in the public dialogue. The values of One Malaysia as explained by the Prime Minister include the following : service to the people, performance must be based on productivity, nobody should be sidelined in development, jobs, scholarship, education and employment should be based on merit.

Generally the aspects as expounded by the Prime Minister indicate the value of multicultural education. Already a number of quarters in Malaysia have written about the need for our education system to be realigned towards multiculturalism approach and objectives. In order to address this challenge, teachers must be enriched in knowledge and skills to handle students from diverse ethnic and language groups, and increased their confidence about their sense of efficacy that is about their ability to teach all students effectively. Secondly, it is important that teachers be exposed to transformative academic knowledge in their teacher education programs. According to Banks (1996) "Transformative academic knowledge consists of concepts, paradigms, themes and explanations that challenge mainstream knowledge". Transformative academic knowledge is not neutral, that it reflects power and social relationships within society and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society (Harding 1991). Transformative academic knowledge plays a critical role in own efforts to prepare teachers to work with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Hence a discussion on unity and integration in Malaysia will nonetheless relate to the education reform so that change in the education of students will take place. Multicultural education assume that race, ethnicity, culture, religion and social class are salient parts of the Malaysian nation. It currently assumes that diversity would enrich a nation and increased the ways in which its citizens can perceive and solve personal and public problems. Diversity also enriches a nation by providing all citizen with opportunities to experience other cultures and thus to become more fulfilled as human beings (Banks 2008).

Thus one of the goals of multicultural education is to assist students to gain greater self understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures. It is assumed that understanding will pave the way for respect of other cultures. Another goal of multicultural education is to help individuals from diverse racial, cultural, language and religious groups to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function effectively within their cultural communities, the national civic culture and the global communities (Banks 2004)

6.4 Conclusion

Malaysia is a multicultural nation with the most multiethnic and multi religious country in Southeast Asia. As a multicultural nation, Malaysia cannot run away from problems which involved racial groups their integration and unity at level 3 or compromise level. This was similar to those achieved in the 1993's study, except that in terms of numbers on the integration scale, findings of the 2007 study showed a drop in the respondents unity. So the model of "One Malaysia" as expounded by the Prime Minister becomes the model to be worked on. It is basically a multicultural education designed to get people to be united and integrated

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