



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES ON INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE
AMONG EARLY YOUTH IN SELANGOR**

FAZILAH IDRIS

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By

FAZILAH IDRIS

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

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of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chair: Professor Hj. Azimi Hj. Hamzah, PhD

Faculty: Institute of Social Science Studies

The development, survival, and continuity of Malaysia lie on the shoulders of young Malaysians. As such, youth should demonstrate a higher level of understanding and greater tolerance in order to maintain peace and harmony. In line with that, the objective of this study is to determine the influence of individual attributes on inter-ethnic tolerance among early youth in Selangor. And, it focused on the influence of cognitive readiness, personality traits and religious personality on attitude, which would in turn, influence how an individual behaved in a multi-cultural situation. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1991) was used to model the relationships among the three selected independent variables that contributed toward inter-ethnic tolerance behavior. As many as 563 secondary school students in Selangor, representing early youth, participated in this study. This study adopted the exploratory design and survey data collection method. Instruments used were the Malay translated NEO PI-R Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R), a self-



designed questionnaire on the Inter-ethnic Tolerant Behavior (IETB) and Universal Religious Personality Inventory (URPI).

The study found that more than half of the youth possessed high level of cognitive readiness. For Malay and Indian youth, the majority have high level of cognitive readiness, while more female youth tend to have high cognitive readiness compared to male. In terms of attitude, majority of the respondents were found to have high level of positive attitude regarding inter-ethnic relations. Gender, religion and the level of religious practice significantly contribute to youth attitude towards Inter-ethnic Tolerant Behavior (IETB). In terms of the level of IETB, the majority of the Malay and Chinese early youth displayed a moderate level; however, the majority of the Indian youth have a high level of IETB.

The findings indicated that cognitive readiness, all personality traits, except for the domain of Neuroticism, and all three types of religious personality (pro-social, ritual and anti-social) significantly influenced the youth's willingness to accept issues regarding inter-ethnic relations. Specifically, pro-social and ritual behavior influenced youth attitude positively, while the influence of anti-social behavior on attitude was negative.

The study improved the proposed model which was based on Theory of Planned behavior (TBP) and confirmed the impact of cognitive readiness, personality traits and religious personality on youth attitude, and the impact of the youth attitude on their behavior on inter-ethnic issues. The study also found that cognitive readiness is the most influential factor to IETB, and that both cognitive readiness and religious personality influenced inter-ethnic tolerant behavior directly and indirectly as well through attitude. Inter-ethnic tolerant behavior (IETB) among students may be

improved through enhancing cognitive readiness, pro-social behavior, attitude and openness of the individuals.

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

**PENGARUH ATRIBUT INDIVIDU TERHADAP TOLERANSI ANTARA
ETNIK DI KALANGAN BELIA AWAL DI SELANGOR**

Oleh

FAZILAH IDRIS

Oktober 2008

Pengerusi: Profesor Hj. Azimi Hj Hamzah, PhD

Fakulti: Institut Pengajian Sains Sosial

Pembangunan, kelangsungan, dan kesinambungan negara terletak di atas bahu anak muda Malaysia. Oleh itu, belia harus menunjukkan satu tahap pemahaman dan toleransi yang tinggi untuk mengekalkan keamanan dan keharmonian negara. Sehubungan dengan itu, objektif kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk memastikan pengaruh atribut individu terhadap toleransi antara-etnik di kalangan belia awal di Selangor. Kajian ini tertumpu khususnya terhadap pengaruh kesediaan kognitif, tret personaliti dan personaliti beragama ke atas sikap yang akhirnya akan mempengaruhi bagaimana individu berkelakuan dalam persekitaran kepelbagaian kebudayaan. Teori Perlakuan Terancang yang dihasilkan oleh Fishbein dan Ajzen (1991) telah digunakan untuk mengaitkan hubungan antara tiga pemilihan variabel tidak bersandar yang menyumbang ke arah perlakuan toleransi etnik. Seramai 563 pelajar sekolah menengah di Selangor yang mewakili belia awal mengambil bahagian di dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini berbentuk explorasi dan survei digunakan bagi pengumpulan data. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah NEO PI-R Personaliti

Inventori versi Bahasa Melayu (NEO PI-R), soal selidik Perlakuan Toleransi Antara Etnik (IETQ) dan Inventori Personaliti Beragama Universal (URPI).

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa lebih daripada separuh belia mempunyai tahap kesediaan kognitif yang tinggi. Bagi belia Melayu dan India, majoriti daripada mereka mempunyai tahap kesediaan kognitif yang tinggi, manakala belia perempuan cenderung memiliki kesediaan kognitif yang lebih tinggi daripada belia lelaki. Berkenaan dengan sikap, majoriti daripada responden ini juga didapati mempunyai tahap sikap positif yang tinggi terhadap hubungan antara-etnik. Jantina, agama dan tahap amalan agama didapati mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap sikap belia dalam perlakuan toleransi antara-etnik (IETB). Berhubung dengan tahap IETB, majoriti belia Melayu dan Cina menunjukkan tahap yang sederhana, tetapi belia India memiliki tahap IETB yang tinggi.

Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kesediaan kognitif, kesemua ciri tret personaliti, kecuali *Neuroticism*, dan ketiga-tiga jenis personaliti beragama (pro-sosial, *ritual* dan anti-sosial) mempengaruhi sikap belia secara signifikan untuk menerima isu-isu berkaitan dengan hubungan antara-etnik. Secara khususnya, tingkahlaku pro-sosial dan *ritual* memberi kesan yang positif kepada sikap belia, manakala tingkah-laku anti-sosial memberi kesan yang negatif.

Kajian ini telah menambah-baik model cadangan yang didasarkan kepada Teori Perlakuan Terancang, dan mengesahkan impak kesediaan kognitif, tret personaliti dan personaliti beragama terhadap sikap belia, dan impak sikap belia ini pula terhadap tanggapan perlakuan berhubung dengan isu-isu antara-etnik. Kajian ini juga

mendapati bahawa kesediaan kognitif belia adalah pengaruh paling besar terhadap IETB, dan kedua-dua kesediaan dan personaliti beragama mempengaruhi IETB, secara langsung dan juga tidak langsung melalui sikap belia.

Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa tingkah laku toleransi di kalangan belia dapat ditingkatkan dengan memperbaiki tahap kesediaan kognitif, sikap, tingkah laku prososial, dan keterbukaan individu.

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THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES ON INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE AMONG EARLY YOUTH IN SELANGOR

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 21st October, 2008 to conduct the final examination of **Fazilah Idris** on her degree thesis entitled “The Influence of Individual Attributes on Inter-Ethnic Tolerance among Early Youth in Selangor” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Degree of Doctor Philosophy.

Members of the Examination Committee were as follows:

Jamilah Othman, PhD

Institute for Social Science Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Turiman Suandi, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Shamsuddin Ahmad, PhD

Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Azizan Baharuddin, PhD

Professor Datin
Centre for Civilisational Dialogue,
University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
(External Examiner)

HASANAH MOHD. GHAZALI, PhD

Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduates Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:



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

Hj. Azimi Hj. Hamzah, EdD

Professor
Institut of Social Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Ezhar Tamam, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Wong Su Luan, PhD

Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Khairul Anwar Mastor, PhD

Associate Professor
Centre for General Studies
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
(Member)

HASANAH MOHD. GHAZALI, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduates Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 12 February 2009



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.

FAZILAH IDRIS

Date: 22 December 2008

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
FFM	The Five Factor Model
IET	Inter-ethnic Tolerance
IETB	Inter-ethnic Tolerant Behaviour
IETBQ	Inter-ethnic Tolerant Behavior Questionnaire
MYDRI	Malaysian Youth Development and Research Institute
MRPI	Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory
MCEETYA	Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NEO PI-R	NEO Personality Inventory-Revised
NEP	National Economic Policy
NGO	Non-profit Organizations
OCEAN	Openness to new ideas, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism
PEN	Psychoticism, Extraversion and Neuroticism
PIETB	Perceived Inter-ethnic Behavior
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
URPI	Universal Religious Personality Inventory
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discussed the problem and its context, the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study, limitations and definition of terms used in the study.

1.0 The Problem and Its Context

Malaysia is a model of a successful multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious society (Lippahrt, 1977) and the diversity of its population is an asset as well a challenge to the government. The main challenge is how to ensure integration of the various ethnic groups while not violating their uniqueness or disrespecting their belief systems which may contribute to ethnic conflicts. Hence, Malaysia needs to further strengthen its multi-ethnic society in order to realize the goal of becoming a fully developed harmonious civil society in 2020. As Malaysia keeps on moving forward with its Vision 2020 plan, the youth of today are in line to be the future inheritors and leaders of a nation that “is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally”. Malaysians “must be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy...spiritual values...” (Mahathir Mohamad, 1999, p.5).



Furthermore, it is not easy to develop a nation like Malaysia, what more to manage and maintain peace and harmony due to its plural population which constitutes a polyglot of races, cultures, religions, and languages. Nonetheless, Malaysia has managed to sustain its stability, unity, peace and harmony due to what Tunku Abdul Rahman declared as racial harmony and tolerance (Cheah, 2004). This is made possible by common understanding, tolerance and respect among the nationals. In addition, there is a need to work together, and to maintain inter-ethnic harmony, inter-ethnic understanding and goodwill which in turn are responsible for the country's stability (Khalil Yaakub, 1985).

Achieving tolerance, unity and stability is very crucial for Malaysia. Without it, ethnic uprising and riots which remains a nightmare in Malaysia's history will probably reappear. As such, the country requires vigorous effort, including researches that can adopt new perspectives for maintaining harmony and unity. Considerations should go beyond common topics of economy, social, education and politics. Instead, we should identify the inner strengths of our individual youth which are cognitive readiness, attitude, religious personality, and personality traits, as well as appreciation of inter-ethnic tolerance.

In such a situation, it is important that there exist a study deliberating on the issue of inter-ethnic tolerance (IET). This is because IET is one of the binding factors for a multi-ethnic community. With it, there can be more understanding and harmony which is necessary for Malaysians to live together. Hence, this study is pioneering the research to determine the correlates of IET (cognitive readiness, attitude, religious personality, and personality traits) within a multi-ethnic

society. The result of the study will give a clearer picture of IET; thus, reduce the gap among the ethnic groups.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Striving for Unity through Diversity

Malaysia is a nation of unity in diversity with various socio-cultural and ethnic origins. It has a population of about 26.75 million (The Economic Planning Unit, 2006) and the major races are Malays and other indigenous people (65.9%), Chinese (25.3%) as well as Indians (7.5%) and others (1.3%). Moreover, it is recognized as a multicultural society and consists of 213 different ethnic groups that have diverse religions, cultures, and languages. In addition, there are about 140,000 indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia (Kamal Hassan & Ghazali Basri, 2005).

Malaysia can be regarded as a plural society following the definition given by Giddens (1993, p. 759). He regarded plural society as a situation where several ethnic groups coexist, while living in communities or regions largely separated from each other. A more detailed explanation was provided by Jary and Jary (1995, p. 495) who said that a plural society is one in which there exists a formal division of racial, linguistic or religious groupings and such distinctions may be horizontal or vertical. These two definitions aptly apply to Malaysia. Likewise, the most prominent explanation on plural society was given by Furnivall (as cited in Ahmad Fawzi Basri, Abdul Halim Ahmad & Abdul Rahman Aziz, 1987) in which he described plural society as a society with different segments of the

community living side by side, although unconnectedly, within the same political unit.

In the case of Malaysia as a plural society, the 1881 colonial census recognized three ethnic categories, namely Chinese, Tamil, and Malay. With increased immigration of Chinese and Indian labor to British Malaya in the early 1900s, a plural society was established, in which the concept of Malay as a race became fixed and indelible. Thus, a plural society emerged in Malaysia at the beginning of the 20th century, in which the various ethnic groups occupied separate cultural, social and economic spheres (Shamsul Amri, 2006). According to Khoo (1994), despite the relatively peaceful Malaysia, friction and sporadic conflicts were not exceptional in a situation which, culturally, became increasingly cosmopolitan. Two significant examples, among others, are the ethnic clashes in 1969 in Kuala Lumpur and the Kampong Medan incident in 2001. He added that the tension of the society due to all the differences could be great, but somehow, Malaysia has often been cited as an example of a plural society *par excellence*. The endeavor to replicate and uphold multi-ethnic integration in Malaysia is not over and will never be over for it is a way of life that we have developed and nurtured which must be sustained at all cost (Shamsul Amri, 2005).

To uphold the unique character of plural society in Malaysia, which comprises 213 different ethnic groups, it is important to take a close look at the concept of 'ethnic group' as defined by several renowned scholars. Jary and Jary (1995, p.205) defined an ethnic group as a group of people who share an identity which arises from a collective sense of distinctive history. Furthermore, Segal (1991)