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MEDIATING EFFECT OF ETHNOCENTRISM ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE FACTORS AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

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By

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Chair: Associate Professor Jusang Bolong, PhD
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This study is done in order to find ways on how social networking sites (SNS) can unite multiethnic people in Malaysia as the level of community tension index has been increasing since 2011 until now. Social networking sites is chosen as it brings many benefits to the users. This study also aims to examine the relationship between SNS factors (interaction, involvement, quality and intimacy) towards ethnocentrism and social solidarity. To address the research questions, a literature review of antecedents toward ethnocentrism and social solidarity were conducted. The literature review emphasized five principles in social solidarity namely equality, willingness, sharing, recognition and duties and also four elements of ethnocentrism namely stereotype, mistrust, avoidance and differential treatment. This study used social capital and social solidarity theory as foundations theories for model development. The minimum sample size was determined through Krejcie and Morgan table. The study involved 482 respondents, selected through a purposive sampling technique involving three main ethnics in Malaysia. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. A quantitative survey was designed using self-administrated questionnaire. All variables were measured through scales previously used by other researchers. The scales were checked for convergent and discriminant validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) under AMOS software was used in the analysis.

Results of the SEM indicated that the model fits the data. The findings indicated that two SNS factors namely interaction and intimacy have significantly influence social solidarity. Moreover, the result showed that two SNS factors which are interaction and involvement also have significance influence on ethnocentrism. Result from the study also found that the mediating variable which is ethnocentrism has a positive effect on the relationship between involvement and social solidarity.

The results of this study showed 61.3% of variance of social solidarity was explained by the proposed model. In addition, this study contributes knowledge on SNS factors, ethnocentrism and social solidarity.

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

KESAN ETNOSENTRISME SEBAGAI PERANTARA TERHADAP PERKAITAN ANTARA FAKTOR LAMAN JARINGAN SOSIAL DENGAN PERPADUAN SOSIAL

Oleh

ABDUL RAUF BIN RIDZUAN

Februari 2016

Pengerusi: Prof Madya Jusang Bolong, PhD
Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana laman jaringan sosial boleh menyatukan rakyat berbilang kaum di Malaysia. Ini disebabkan oleh tahap indeks ketegangan masyarakat telah meningkat sejak tahun 2011 sehingga kini. Laman rangkaian sosial dipilih kerana ia dilihat dapat memberi banyak manfaat kepada pengguna. Seterusnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perhubungan diantara faktor laman jaringan sosial (interaksi, penglibatan, kualiti dan keintiman) terhadap etnosentrisme dan perpaduan sosial. Bagi menangani persoalan kajian, kajian literatur ke arah etnosentrisme dan perpaduan sosial telah dijalankan. Kajian literatur menekankan lima prinsip dalam perpaduan sosial iaitu kesaksamaan, kesanggupan, perkongsian, pengiktirafan dan tanggungjawab dan juga empat elemen etnosentrisme iaitu stereotaip, ketidakpercayaan, penghindaran dan perbezaan layanan. Kajian ini menggunakan Teori Modal Sosial dan Teori Perpaduan Sosial sebagai asas pembangunan model. Saiz sampel minimum ditentukan melalui jadual Krejcie dan Morgan. Kajian ini melibatkan 482 responden, dipilih melalui teknik persampelan bertujuan yang melibatkan tiga etnik utama di Malaysia. Satu tinjauan keratan rentas dan soal selidik berstruktur telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Satu tinjauan kuantitatif telah direka dengan menggunakan soal selidik yang diuruskan sendiri. Semua pembolehubah diukur melalui skala yang sebelum ini pernah digunakan oleh penyelidik lain. Skala telah diperiksa untuk menumpu akan kesahihan diskriminan dengan menggunakan Analisis Faktor Pengesahan (CFA). Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (SEM) di bawah perisian AMOS telah digunakan dalam analisis.

Keputusan SEM menunjukkan bahawa model yang digunakan sesuai dengan data. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa dua faktor laman jaringan sosial iaitu interaksi dan keintiman telah amat mempengaruhi perpaduan sosial. Selain itu, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa dua

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faktor SNS iaitu interaksi dan penglibatan juga mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap etnosentrisme. Keputusan dari kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa pembolehubah pengantara iaitu etnosentrisme mempunyai kesan positif ke atas perhubungan diantara penglibatan di laman jaringan sosial dan perpaduan. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan 61.3% daripada varians perpaduan sosial telah dijelaskan oleh model yang dicadangkan. Di samping itu, kajian ini menyumbang pengetahuan kepada faktor-faktor laman jaringan sosial, etnosentrisme dan perpaduan sosial.

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I thank my beloved mum, Zulhijah Abu Zarin for everything she is, for her continuous prayer and words of wisdom; my father, Ridzuan Ahmad for a good education and support; I am grateful to my sister

and brothers unconditional love and constant support over the years is something that I cannot thank them enough for. Not a single day passes by that I do not think of them.

May Allah bless all of you!
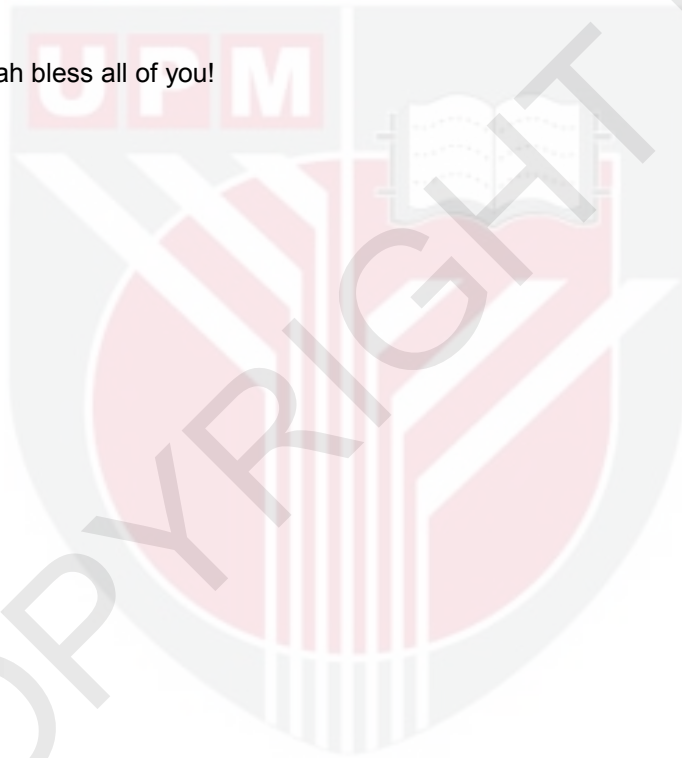
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Mass Communication. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
- this thesis is my original work;
- quotations, illustrations and citations have been duly referenced;
- this thesis has not been submitted previously or concurrently for any other degree at any other institutions;
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This is to confirm that:
- The research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- Supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CV	Convergent validity
DV	Discriminant validity
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
GFIs	Government Financing Institutions
GOF	Goodness of Fit
M	Mean
N	Number of Participants
NFI	Normed Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SE	Standard Error
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
Sig.	Significant
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
α	(Cronbach's) Alpha
ρ	Rho (Composite Reliability)
χ^2	Chi square

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

These days, with the new global era, many people have grown into media literate. As stated by Park (2012), in the digital media environment, it is not only essential for people to be able to catch the relevant content and understand the meaning within context, but also to generate and communicate messages. Most of the people use social media to communicate and search for information. As discussed by Ward (2010), social media is a type of online media that expedites conversation as opposed to traditional media, which delivers content but doesn't allow readers or viewers to participate in the creation or development of the content. There is a wide variety of social media, ranging from social sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. It is all about in what way human do with the technology, the software, the tools and the channels: allocation pictures and videos, writing product reviews, collecting content, attaching with old friends, sharing with new friends, collaborating in the workplace. It is a collective term that describes the means of communicating and engaging with people (Holloman, 2012).

However people look at it, social media usage is increasing speedily and dramatically in all level of humanity and in more countries round the world. Based from Lenhart & Madden (2007), social networking site (SNS) is an online scene where a user can form a profile and build a personal network that attaches him or her to other users. Facebook is the most popular social media sites. Burson-Marsteller Asia Pacific has released a very fascinating social media report. Based from the report, 64.7 percent of Malaysian use the internet and the top social network are Facebook and Twitter (Kent, 2012). In Malaysia, social networking sites such as Facebook has 12 948 320 users which consist of 49.50 percent of population. The indicator also shows that the largest group of users is currently 18 – 24, followed by the users in the age of 25 – 34. In term of gender, there are 54 percent male users and 46 percent female users (Malaysia Facebook Statistics, 2012). Many people in Malaysia are very friendly on Facebook. According to a survey conducted by international firm TNS, Malaysia ranked number one for social network friends followed by Brazil, Norway and China. Malaysians have the greatest number of friends on social networking sites like Facebook. Malaysian has an average of 233 friends in their social network. Malaysian also devotes the most hours per week on such sites. In terms of hours used up on social sites, Malaysians spent nine hours weekly. The survey also found that rather than using email, people were now expenses more time on social networks (Survey: Malaysian, 2013).

Growing evidence from analyses of online social network site use suggest that these sites have become important tools for managing relationships with a large and often heterogeneous network of people who provide social support and serve as conduits for useful information and other resources (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Malaysia is a country whose population consists of a multicultural society. Based from Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010, Malaysia's population was 28.3 million, with 67.4 per cent are indigenous, 24.6 percent Chinese, 7.3 percent Indians. However, Malaysia's population is expected to increase every year (Banci Penduduk, 2010). Therefore, the process of integration and assimilation in a plural Malaysian society is very important.

In a country with a multi-ethnic composition of the population, a more conducive environment such as peace, stability and harmony to be a desire in society. Rapid progress and development in a country does not bring anything - whatever meaning if people are not united. Social solidarity is an important pillar in building harmonious ethnic relations in a plural society like Malaysia. According to Kendall (2010), social solidarity refers to a group's ability to maintain itself in the face of obstacles. Social solidarity exists when social bonds, attractions, or other forces hold members of a group in interaction over a period of time. For that reason, social media can be seen as the beginning of a new way of living for the people who make regular use of its capabilities as it also has a power to shape human society (Blossom, 2009). Summary of studies done by Ravin Ponniah (2006) found that encouraging communication between ethnics may enhance solidarity. Furthermore, Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2012) mentioned that one of the effective ways to help shape the unity in a multi-ethnic society is by interacting and using more national language which is the Malay language. It can also be used as a medium to create a good feeling thought among various ethnic groups. Therefore, once people always get connected and expose through social media, they can create more friends, share their problems, sympathies or interest among them which can empower social solidarity.

Historically, cooperation and bonds of unity of different ethnic groups in Malaysia started with the so-called social contract between the country's largest ethnic. Social contract is an agreement among the multi-racial society through cooperation and consultation process towards self-government transfer of power from the English and manifested through the Alliance's victory in the elections of 1955. The spirit of social contract is based on the spirit of cooperation and friendship and then transformed to power sharing in the struggle for independence and the Federal Constitution (Fatan Hamamah Yahaya, 2011). Social media can be one of the instruments to fulfill the spirit of social contract between ethnics in Malaysia. As discussed by Blossom (2009), social media, then, is impacting the upcoming of human civilization by reworking the basic concept of what holds people together. It reworks the simple formula for civilization into a paradigm that reflects both people roots and their future: transform and co-exist with nature using highly scalable

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publishing that builds influence, leadership, and consensus among peers who can act collaboratively in a multi society changed by technology.

The Malaysian Prime Minister and government also have realized the importance of social media in order to get close with the community and encouraged harmony. Burson-Marsteller study finds almost two – thirds of world leaders are on social media. This study illustrates how Twitter is closing communication gap between society and world leader (Lufkens, 2012). Listening to people problems, giving good advices, visiting the community, involving in charity programs, engaging and supporting civil society activities, promoting public awareness on national unity that shown through social media are among the elements that can make people feel touch, safe and unite among them. Blossom (2009) stated that, people like contact with influential people who they would like to get to know better as a part of the experience of being there at a Web page.

The effect of social networking sites on society was confirmed since the 2013 Malaysia General Election, where blogs and other social networking sites played a main role during the voting. That also resulted in more social networks and blogs being created. As mentioned by Kushairi (1997), the new media today is the only accepted network that allows people to globally keep in touch with each other and obtain virtually any information they need. Finally, to ensure ongoing unity, stability and prosperity, deliberate measures need to be taken to cope with daily problems and living environment of the multi-racial society in Malaysia. Social media is expected to play a major role in helping to realize that dream. Going forward, only time will tell how social networking will be in the future. One thing for certain, social networking will remain as people always want to "connect" with other people.

Statement of the research problem

Malaysia is a multiethnic country containing of three main ethnics, namely Malay, Chinese and Indians. Social solidarity among the ethnics is very essential to ensure national harmony. However, the problem of unity in Malaysia is still threatened. According to Syed Husin Ali (2008), the agenda for national unity in Malaysia, 51 years after independence has still not flourished but, instead, seem to have withdrawn further and further into the distant mirage. It is due to as ethnic differences exist, which regularly manifest in stereotypes, discriminations, tensions and conflict that make difficulties the process of constructing national unity. There are many forms of strain and conflict that occur in ethnic relations in Malaysia, having occasionally erupted into riots and killings, as occurred during the May 13, 1969 Incident. The latest incident of racial clashes between the Chinese and Malay ethnics at Low Yat Plaza in 2015 indicates that ethnic relations in Malaysia is still fragile (Radzi Razak, 2015). One of the main causes of riots to happen is due to the economic disparities between the ethnics (Comber, 2011).

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In Kenya, over 300 killed in ethnic clashes in 2015. Rivalries between ethnics competing for scarce resources, such as livestock and water, are worsened by easy access to automatic weapons and the absence of state security officers (Over 300 killed, 2015). Moreover, ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims was very tragedic. Burmese authorities and members of Arakanese groups have committed crimes against humanity in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims in Arakan State since June 2012 (Burma: End Ethnic Cleansing, 2013).

Based from all the issues above, Mokhtar Muhammad (2008) stated that a country of diverse ethnic, cultural, economic class and language is not easy to maintain and preserve unity. This disunity can also be caused by prejudice, racism and ethnocentrism among races in Malaysia (Moha Zamani Fatimi Ismal & Hanai, 2008). Research also has revealed the level of harmony and ethnic relationships in Malaysia in year 2007 has dropped. This clearly demonstrates the unity and ethnic relations matters yet to be fixed in spite of plans by the ministry of unity implemented to develop unity (Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim, 2007). Unity in the country has yet said to be steady and may be prone to tension at any time. This condition is characterized by Shamsul Amri (2005) as a "stable tension". The community tension among multi ethnic has increased from year to year. Figure 1.1 below shows the community tension index from 2011 – 2013.
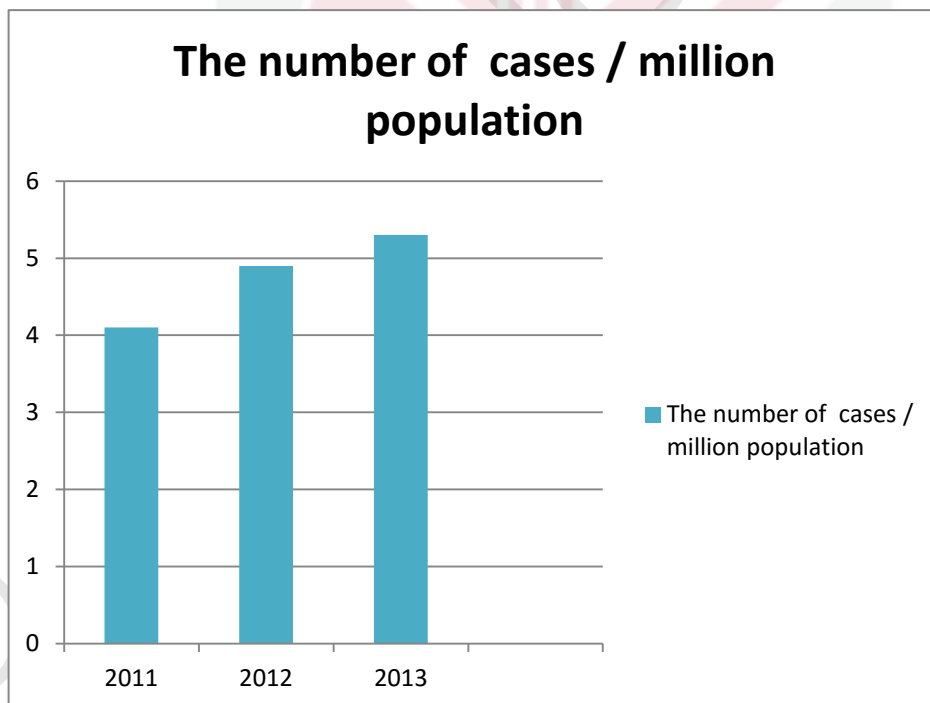
Figure 1.1 Community tension index 2011-2013
Source: Department of National Unity and National Integration

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In the past, people just rely on traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and so forth. Information presented is quite limited and easily controlled. Majority people get news from the same sources which make the people have the same point of view and less argument. But now, traditional media is no longer popular. Research done by Meraz (2009) stated that traditional media loss of agenda setting monopoly power to social media. As discussed by Ooi Heng (2012), the control over traditional media by government is still continue, but they need to face the challenge of new media that is more interactive and fast-moving battle in the representation of an event. It shows that social media being popular and however it has less much influence than traditional media.

Nowadays, more individuals are exposed to social media. Many people use social media to seek information. Social media are said to be a common name for websites that permit users to share content, media, photographs etc. The common ones are the famous networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, Myspace, YouTube and Flicker. According to Kaplan, Andreas and Michael (2010), it is a collection of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which permits the formation and interchange of user-generated content. Ultimately, all social media tools allow for some degree of sharing. Without it such a thing would not be social (Green, 2011). Besides, the usage of new communication technology such as social media can enable people to socialize, changing opinion, sharing problem and interest (Al-Hawamdeh and Hart, 2002).

In addition, Cheong (2011) indicated that social media bring many benefits associated with improved access and interaction where people can be connected in new ways. It is also a tool created for information delivery, and fundamentally the nature of the message and method of conveyance either aid or hamper social development (Moala, 2011). Development of communication facilities also has improved ties and social interactions between humans (Zaid Ahmad, 2006). Use of social networking sites can help in forming unity among various ethnic groups in Malaysia. However, the nature of ethnocentrism (intermediaries) that exist among multiethnic people in Malaysia is seen as a barrier to ensuring that people united and live in harmony.

People are also more convenient to get various information. However, information that is not controlled can lead to disagreements and give effect to the social solidarity. As stated by internal security and public order director, Datuk Salleh Mat Rasid, social media such as Facebook and Twitter have made Malaysians liberal and thus more willing to commit acts that can threaten national security (Yow Hong Chieh, 2012). Conflict between ethnics happened when people have lack of sensitivity. For example, one non Malay Facebook user has aroused Malays anger when its status is insulting the prophet Muhammad had spread to several blogs (Mohammad Fairuz Jumain, 2012). About the same issue happened in 2008 when a blog has been identified to insult the prophet Muhammad by using pictures and drawings and also

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contains Deepavali messages and insulting speeches against Hindu religion ("Polis Siasat Blog," 2008).

It is also not easy to curb the spread of racist information especially through social media. Some people take advantage of spreading false news, exaggerate the incident to provoke the anger and discontent which in turn trigger a fight as happened in Kampung Medan society. (Kurniawati Kamarudin, 2012). As stated by Zaharuddin Abdul Rahman (2012), social media can be used to expose the shame of a person. It can lead to harm to the multi ethnics in Malaysia. This new media also makes filtration and political control efforts in vain (Mokhtar Muhammad, 2008). Moreover, study done by Mohd Alif and Mohd Isa (2012) shown that Facebook gives more negative impacts rather that positive impacts.

Study done by Jusang Bolong et al. (2008) also shows that people prefer to communicate with their own ethnic rather than connecting with people from other ethnics. Furthermore, The Star newspaper on March 29, 2007, claims that several of Malaysian youngsters who are indifferent to racial assimilation. The outlook point out that only 52 percent of adolescents who had a friend of a dissimilar race (Ismail Abdullah, 2009). Plus, according to Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2011), interactions between ethnics in Malaysia have decreased as a result of practicing ethnic settlements. This can create the ethnocentrism becomes stronger among ethnics. Ethnocentrism can create hurdles to communication with those who are culturally dissimilar which give difficulty to achieve solidarity among ethnics. Lawman (2004) described ethnocentrism as an attitude that one's own culture, society or group is inherently superior to all others. It also means an incapability to appreciate others whose culture may be different which can lead to enmity to out groups. Therefore, people should scrape the attitude and mindset of ethnocentrism and replacing it with more positive thoughts by receiving different values and practices of other communities in harmony (Zaid Ahmad et al., 2006).

In Malaysia as well, there are some individuals who still hang out in groups, and the dissimilarity between the majority and the minority still happens (Mohd Hamzatul Akmar Md Zakaria, 2012). Research prepared by Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim (2011) has verified that the relationship between ethnic in Malaysia weakened due to the attitude of the community members who are still concerned with ethnicity. It is a tradition from time immemorial, every ethnic group prefer to socialize with their own ethnicity (Comber, 2011 and Ng, 2014). As discussed by Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2012), most of ethnics in Malaysia do not reflect the spirit of patriotism to the country but more concerned about their own ethnicity.

Lastly, as mentioned by Mior Kamarul (2013), people who live in multi-ethnic society are usually facing ethnic problems, have difficulty to develop the country and often create tension. Social media seems to be an alternative way to develop the nation. This new development is totally welcome because it also

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can help strengthen the emerging democracy in the region. New communication technology will empower the people and will act as a catalyst for civil society. Lastly, from article that researcher took from The Star Newspaper, The Prime Minister of Malaysia says" there aren't a lot of things that can unite young people these days. They all just seem to have their own thing going on now – they like different kinds of music, they support different football clubs and they are even divided over their choice of smartphones. But if there's one thing that all of them would have in common — one thing that unites them — it would be social media." (Ian Yee, 2010).

Research questions

I. What is the level of social solidarity among multiethnic SNS users?
II. What is the relationship between SNS factors and social solidarity?
III. What is the relationship between SNS factors and ethnocentrism?
IV. Does ethnocentrism give impact on relationship between SNS factors and social solidarity?

Research objectives

I. To determine the level of SNS factors among multiethnic SNS users.
II. To identify the level of social solidarity among multiethnic SNS users.
III. To identify the level of ethnocentrism among multiethnic SNS users.
IV. To determine the main predictor of change in social solidarity.
V. To determine the main predictor of change in ethnocentrism.
VI. To identify the relationship between the SNS factors and social solidarity.
VII. To identify the relationship between the SNS factors and ethnocentrism.
VIII. To determine the mediating effect of ethnocentrism towards relationship between SNS factors and social solidarity.

Significance of the study

The major research work done by Md Salleh Hassan et al., (2009) on the effectiveness of mass media in promoting and strengthening national unity and national integration focused only on traditional media such as television, radio and newspaper while this study focus on social media especially social networking. Social media also is the latest technology and most popular with high usage in this era. Another study done by Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim (2007) particularly address on national unity only in Selangor whereas this research studied the whole of Malaysia.

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Although the context of the present study is related to the studies mentioned above, this study would be different from all the studies, as this study particularly looks at the relationship between social networking site factors, social solidarity and ethnocentrism.

The finding of this study would contribute much in theoretical field of communication. From a practical point of view, any exposure of the social media detected by the study would provide the basis for understanding the effect of social networking sites on multiethnic social networking site users in Malaysia. Researchers used the social capital theory and the theory is expanded in the study of new media. From this study, the new framework and questionnaire have been developed for social networking site factors, social solidarity and ethnocentrism.

Second, the study would try to investigate the reasons for ethnics in Malaysia practicing ethnocentrism. The previous research has shown that all ethnics in Malaysia have strong spirit of ethnocentrism and prefer to be in group rather than mix with an out group. By doing this research, it will probably help the country to achieve nation form Malaysia from variety of ethnics. The researcher will study the relationship between social networking sites and social solidarity and make ethnocentrism as a mediator.

Third, for information policy planners, this study would be particularly useful, as it would encourage them to insist on promoting the national unity activities rather that it's a social usages. The results of this study also would provide information and may serve as guidelines for policy makers such as National Unity and Integration Department (NUID) and Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture in formulating policies.

Fourth, this study used drop and collect survey research and employed self-administrated questionnaires as a method of data collection which successfully reduced time and cost as compared to face to face interview survey research. Hence, on the practical level, this study would provide a guide and methodology for communication researchers to conduct study on the impact of any media and any particular segment of study.

Limitation of the study

The study embarks with the limitation that there is inadequate support from findings of the previous findings. Another limitation of the study is, to assess any influence on social media, a longitudinal would be the best method. Due to time and other constraints, this method could not be adopted for the present study.

In this study, it was not possible to capture all the social networking sites users in Malaysia. Nevertheless, respondents in Malaysia have been taken to make the study for more representatives.

Keywords definition

Social Media
: Ward (2010), "social media is a form of online media that accelerates talk as contrasting to traditional media, which supplies content but doesn't allow readers or viewers to join in the creation or expansion of the content". Examples of social media are Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, You Tube and etc.

Social Network
: As mentioned by Lenhart & Madden (2007), social networking site is an online site where a user can build a profile and form a personal network that links him or her to other users.

Social Solidarity
: According to Kendall (2010), social solidarity refers to a group's capability to uphold itself in the face of hurdles. Social solidarity exists when social ties, attractions, or other forces hold memberships of a group in interaction over a period of time.

Ethnocentrism
: Lawman (2004) stated that ethnocentrism as an attitude that one's own culture, society or group is characteristically greater to all others. It also means an incapability to appreciate others whose culture may dissimilar which can lead to enmity to out groups.

1.7 Summary

This study identifies the SNS factors from the literature and surveys the SNS users among multi ethnic in Malaysia to see how these SNS factors can influence the social solidarity and ethnocentrism. The study should contribute to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how SNS factors may function as core capabilities. The next chapter will describe the theories, and impact of social networking sites and ethnocentrism on social solidarity on SNS.

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