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Multi-Ethnic Harmony in Diversity Country with Functionalism Theory in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is an example of multi-ethnic nation with the major races consisting of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnic groups. As a multi-ethnic society, we live together peacefully in general. Due to the lack of research literature on the factors that contribute significantly to Malaysia's multi-ethnic harmony, the scarcity prompts the researchers to measure the phenomenon within

the context of the study. The researchers attempt to evaluate the racial harmony factors from the theoretical lens of functionalism through a quantitative like-scale survey distributed among the Malaysian public using the social media platform. 180 respondents collaborated and were analyzed for the correlation. The factors of Society, the Law, and Behaviour stood at .420, .912, and .366 respectively. This study is significant for the federal government and local authorities to devise activities that contribute towards maintaining harmony and strengthening unity among Malaysians at present and for the future social order.

Keywords

Ethnic fusion, ethnic relation, functionalism theory, multi-ethnic society.

INTRODUCTION

Diverse community life is a common sight, especially in countries located in the South China Sea, such as Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia. Community life like this has its ups and downs. Malaysia has long been recognized for its multi-ethnic society. According to the 2022 People's Information Portal (PMR) (Department of Information Malaysia, 2022), the population of Malaysia is made up of multi-racial, religious and heredity. Malaysians are divided into three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. In addition, indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia are known as Orang Asli and are divided into three major races: Negrito, Senoi, and Proto Malay. Sabah has the most ethnic groups of various dialects and cultures, with 32 ethnic groups, the majority of which are the Kadazandusuns. Other ethnic groups include Rungus, Bajau, Bajau Laut, Murut, Lundayeh, Orang Sungai, and Iranun, while Sarawak has 27 ethnic groups, with the Iban ethnicity being the majority, followed by Bidayuh, Melanau, and Orang Ulu.

Multi-ethnicity refers to a community or population made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent. Besides, it refers to a category of people who identify with each other based on similarities, such as common ancestral, language, social, cultural, or national experiences (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). We often advertise the concept of 1Malaysia, the Malaysian Family as if we are proud and bragging that we are a successful multiracial country. But the fact is that there is an opposite situation. Incidents of fighting, hatred, prejudice, and discrimination are still voiced by certain ethnic groups among social media users. The fact of the matter, Abdul Rahman Embong (2002) sees a widespread assumption regarding multiethnic or multicivilizational societies in underdeveloped and developing countries. It holds that a society with cultural diversity has built-in fragility and that it faces problems of survival because it is riddled with irreconcilable tensions and conflicts that inevitably tear the social fabric apart. This study aims to identify the factors that affect unity among various ethnic groups in Malaysia based on the Functionalism theory introduced by social expert Durkheim in 1961. The objective of the research is to investigate the functionalism social

theory on the multi-ethnic relations in Malaysia in conjunction with the country's 65th independent day.

According to the Language and Library Council [per.pa.duan] فرادوا means fusion, merging into one. While "Race" according to the fourth edition of the Chamber Dictionary is clan and tribe. Encompassing both the terms Unity and Race in Malaysia's perspective can be explained according to the National Unity Advisory Panel Meeting that convened in February 1992, defining unity by placing unity as the state of people from various ethnic groups, religions, and regions, living peacefully as a united nation by giving full commitment to national identity based on the Federal Constitution and Rukun Negara (Country Pillar).

However, in fact, incidents of multi-ethnic issues and conflict can become significant that influence domestic and even international politics. According to KOMAS, a non-governmental human rights incident of racial discrimination and racism in Malaysia more than doubled from 21 in 2020 to 53 in 2021. (FMT, 2021). How multi-ethnic groups with different cultures and heritage can live in harmony in a multi-ethnic country is an issue of global importance. It is imperative that we question whether functionalism theory offers a significant factor in maintaining harmonious life in multi-ethnic and diverse communities.

The significance of this study is to provide an empirical point of view on the society in Malaysia by examining the role of Durkheim's social theory factors in the unity of peaceful multi-racial in Malaysia which is made up of various races. The effort supports the Malaysian government in fostering racial harmony through various initiatives and programs.

Literature Review

This study adopts a theory of sociology, Functionalism was introduced by Durkheim (1961) who wrote an article entitled "Moral education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education". Durkheim is interested in how social order can occur and how society remains stable. He examined the basic structures that made up a society and how each part helped to keep the society stable. Functionalism is a dominant theoretical perspective in sociology in the 1940s (Avasthi, 2016). It is an approach, a method of thinking, and an open theory that combines various theories. It is based on the view that all aspects of society, institutions, roles, norms, and other forms of society's life. It forms a functioning social system in which all parts of the system work together with some degree of internal consistency.

The history of the development of this sociological theory has been reviewed by Ritzer in 1989. He has made a metatheoretical examination of the overview that begins at an early stage which is characterized by a micro-focus on creative actors. Then there is a shift to a focus on more macro-level phenomena and their effects on more passive actors at the middle level and a more integrated micro-macro concern in sociology. The application of this theory is not only focused on the social in the field of education, but it is also measured in the field of architecture such as

proposing a new theory "democratic functionalism", Stam (2000) evaluates the health field from the perspective of Functionalism, Beck (2022) develops this theory to social and behavior. John and Thembinkosi (2021) study a theory on the role of non-governmental agencies in shaping peace in southern Africa. Popov (2017) evaluates this theory as an agent to resolve regional conflicts. Okolocha (2009) evaluates the theory from the point of view of universalism, heterogeneity, and modern urbanism in Africa, and Laczko (1995) evaluates ethnic diversity in pluralism in Canada. However, researchers in the field of sociology examine and provide insights into related social theories through their writings. The criticism of these social researchers becomes a baseline and reference point for researchers in the future. McCall (1998) has suggested that ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences are seen as resources used in competition between communities. While Ashley (2020) thinks this theory has ignored the negative implications of social order. As he quotes the views of Antonio Gramsci who was born in 1891, Gramsci claimed that the perspective allows the status quo and the process of cultural hegemony that maintains the society. Functionalism does not encourage people to take an active role in changing the environment due to their social in nature, even when doing so may benefit them.

Research Method

This research scope is in the context of a multi-ethnic, Malaysia which targets major ethnics i.e Malay, Chinese, Indian, and also ethnics from east Malaysia, such as Kadazan Dusuns, and Iban ethnicity being the majority, followed by Bidayuh, Melanau from Sarawak. To question whether functionalism theory could offer significant factors in maintaining harmonious life in multi-ethnic and diverse communities. The researchers posit seven (7) hypotheses to investigate the functionalism theory on its significance in Malaysia multi-ethnic's context, in a quantitative survey design that involves the majority of Malaysian's diverse ethnicities in both West and East Malaysia. A total of 180 respondents participated in the online survey and the data were analyzed with SPSS statistical tool v28. Descriptive data, reliability, and correlation were analyzed, *inter alia*.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

To measure the research question of whether we have failed or succeeded in multi-ethnic relations in Malaysia requires a measurement of antecedents of sociology theory. Several theories could be considered within the social fact paradigm but the two most important are functionalism by Durkheim 1961 and conflict theory by Karl Marx (1867). The former is based on the idea that **each element of society has a function of its own and it is the interdependence of each element that contributes to the social order and social stability.** While the latter purports that due to society's never-ending competition for finite resources, it will always be in a state of conflict. Another worth considering is

Structuralism, which **stresses the necessity of a structure of which all elements of a society are a part of**. Both structuralists and functionalists emphasize that elements are interconnected. Part of structuralists' dimensions also corresponds to the Functionalism theory for example society, culture, and language. In addition, there is a need to include linguistic differences and culture as factors in response to McCall's appraisal of the theory. The antecedent Functionalism as adopted from Durkheim's theory has 6 dimensions. A similar theory was analyzed by Ritzer (1989) who also considered the different views of other researchers on Durkheim's theory. The factors that are seen as appropriate are as follows (1) Society, (2) Law, (3) Culture, (4) Interaction, (5) Behavior, and (6) Perception. In addition, there is a need to include linguistic differences and culture as factors in response to McCall's appraisal of the theory.

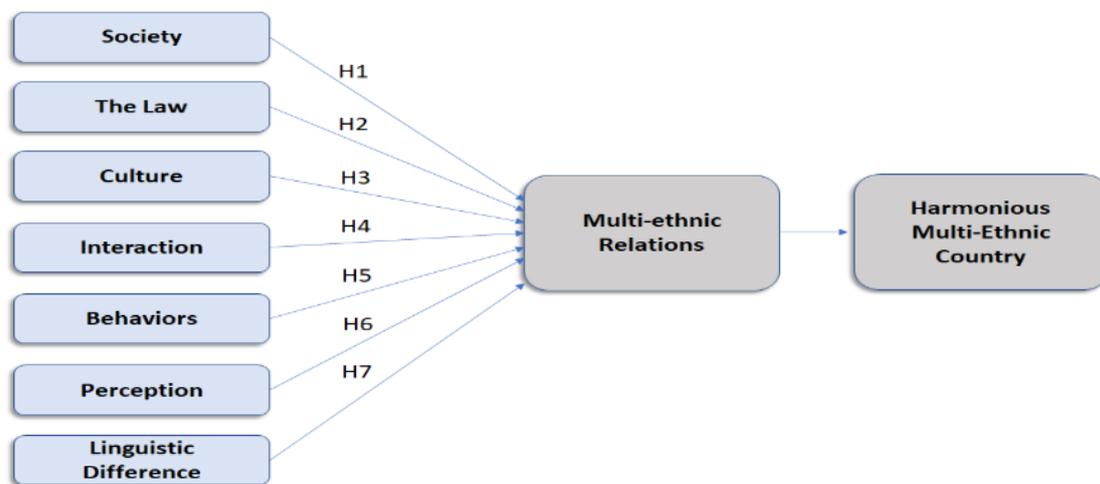


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework to measure factors that contribute to multi-ethnic harmony (adapted from Durkheim, 1961)

Figure 1 is a conceptual framework that is used to guide this research. Based on the previous study, the conceptual framework illustrates a dependent variable (harmonious multi-ethnic society); and seven independent variables (society, the law, culture, interaction, behaviors, perception, and linguistic difference). The framework is used to answer the main research question, that is, what are the factors that contribute significantly towards the success or the failure of multi-ethnicity harmony in Malaysia?

3.2 Hypothesis

Seven (7) hypotheses are formulated in the context of multi-racial relations in Malaysia.

H1: There is a significant relationship between Society and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia.

UNESCO has embarked on social research for decades at large scale, long-term autonomous research on multi-ethnic societies. The main priority is on the change in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, *inter alia*. Multicultural and multi-

ethnic societies pose problems that raise fundamental questions about the development of a harmonious life in multi-ethnic unity in many other countries. The theme of the institution of a multi-ethnic society is increasingly present in the social science discourse and in that ordinary journalism (Henri Giordan, 1994). Fiske reckons that sociologists also study the role of society in shaping behavior in a pluralistic society (2021). Therefore, the researchers believe and posit that the factor of society is significant to investigate the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies in Malaysia.

H2: There is a significant relationship between law and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia

The Law which refers to the rule of law adopts in Malaysia functions as social control, dispute resolution, and social change. It forms an important motivation in society and is the focus of the earliest study of legal institutions. Law acts as a code of conduct in society, which is why it is so important. It was also established to provide appropriate standards and regulations for everyone's behavior and to ensure the government's three branches' equity. It guarantees that civilization runs smoothly. The role of law in the formation of multi-society is recognized by Seron (1996). Apart from the written law and unwritten law, the Rukun Negara is a sacred rule with the aim to foster unity among people of different races, religions, cultures, and beliefs. Therefore, the researchers are also positive about the relationship between the role of law and the construction of a multi-racial society in Malaysia.

H3: There is a significant relationship between culture and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia

Motti-Stefanidi discusses the role of culture in the immigrant conceptualization of youth resilience (2018). He added that culture contributes to harmonious interaction among various ethnicities and religious groups. The ability of multi-ethnic cultures blends together with other culture is the basis for the harmonious development of society. (Wang, T, 2022). Researchers believe that there is a strong link between cultural factors of various races and the formation of a harmonious society in Malaysia.

H4 Interaction: There is a significant relationship between Interaction and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia

In the process of interaction, communication cannot be excluded. Communication always exists. The communication perspective can explain the social interaction between people to maintain social harmony in a multi-religious society. Fahrudin believes that like every interaction between individuals in society there are always two wishes that come together such as openness and isolation (2018) thus encouraging interactions among multi-ethnic and stimulating acceptance and tolerance between the society (Mamat,. Etl al 2022). The researchers posit that there is a strong connection between the interaction of various races with culture in Malaysia. Researchers believe that there is a strong link between the interactions of various races with the formation of a multi-racial society in Malaysia.

H5 Perception: There is a significant relationship between Interaction and

Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia

By definition, it is an attempt to identify and use social cues to make judgments about other people's social roles, rules, relationships, contexts, or characteristics (eg, trustworthiness). The lacked understanding of other ethnic and demographic factors could cause fewer social interactions among the ethnic groups (Mutang, et al, 2022). Therefore, the researchers believe that perception is a significant measurement factor for the unity of various races in Malaysia.

H6 Behavior: There is a significant relationship between Behavior and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia

According to the definition of how individuals or groups act or behave themselves when interacting with other individuals, groups or events. Cultural fusion refers to the bilateral process where the minority group adopts behaviors of the dominant culture. Maliki (2018), states that the value socialization process aims to develop change behavior, *inter alia*, and master the values needed to be able to emerge as part of a productive citizen. Some ethnic fusion has developed between the two ethnic groups (Bao, 2022). Researchers believe that there is a relationship between individual socialization in society and can cure a person's behavior.

H.7 There is a significant relationship between Language difference and Multi-ethnic unity in Malaysia.

Language difference is having the ability to speak another language that is different from the language used for instruction or used by the majority of people. Functionalism sees the functionality of language and its elements to be the key to understanding linguistic processes and structures. According to Lai Fong Yang & Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak, there are misunderstandings among different ethnic groups in the aspect of language that sometimes cannot be evaded (2012). Therefore, the researchers posit that the language is worthwhile to investigate the correlation between the mumulti-ethnics'armonious life in Malaysia.

Analysis

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Descriptive

A total of 180 respondents answered the survey which took 4 days. The total number of survey responses reached 99% complete data. A total of 32 (17.9%) male respondents, 146 (83.7%) female respondents, and 1 failed to select a gender. Meanwhile, data related to the race demographic, the Malay recorded 159 (88%), Chinese 10 people (2.9%), and others from the Bumiputera category other than Malays from Sabah and Sarawak totaling 11 people (6%).

4.2 Internal Consistency

Internal consistency of the constructs is measured with reliability's Alpha

value threshold at .70 (Hair et al., 2013; Rothbard, et al., 2003; Nunnally, 1978) in support of an acceptable level of .70. If the Alpha value is greater than .70, then the construct is reliable. Otherwise, if the value is below .70 the reliability is low. The value for each construct is illustrated in the following table. The detailed score of all constructs is displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Reliability of Constructs

Construct	No of items	Alpha value
Language	4	.796
Culture	5	.655
Interaction	5	.979
Behavior	3	.745
Perception	4	.593
Society	4	.803
Law	4	.796

The result revealed that the variables Language, Interaction, Behaviour, and Society are above .70. All four (4) constructs of Cronbach Alpha are above the threshold suggested by Hair, et al. (2013), while Culture and Perception constructs yield less than .70, at 6.55 and .593 respectively.

5.3. Data Distribution

In order to determine data normality, Skewness and Kurtosis were adopted. The formal assesses the extent to which a variable’s distribution is symmetrical. If the distribution of responses for a variable stretches toward the right or left tail of the distribution, then the distribution is referred to as skewed. While the latter measures of whether the distribution is too peaked (a very narrow distribution with most of the responses in the center)." (Hair et al., 2017, p. 61). A perfectly symmetrical data set will have a skewness of 0. The normal distribution has a skewness of 0.

The result shows that skewness for Society was found to be -.151, indicating that the distribution was left-skewed, and the Kurtosis of Society was found to be -.176, indicating that the distribution was more heavy-tailed compared to the normal distribution. While Interaction produces a score of -.222 and Kurtosis at -.342.

Table 2: Normality

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
INT	180	6	24	15.67	3.817	-.222	.181	-.342	.360
LING	180	9	25	15.85	2.987	.242	.181	.128	.360
PER	180	8	25	16.08	3.085	.056	.181	-.090	.360
BE	180	9	25	16.16	2.835	.207	.181	.420	.360
CUL	180	5	25	16.72	3.633	-.142	.181	.142	.360
SOC	180	9	25	17.88	3.015	-.151	.181	-.176	.360
LAW	180	10	25	18.59	2.877	-.316	.181	.527	.360
Valid N (listwise)	180								

Using statistical SPSS software v28, we calculate the values for the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution to be Skewness: -1.222 and Kurtosis: -342 for Interaction. Skewness, and Kurtosis for Linguistic yield value of Skewness at .242 and .128 for the Kurtosis. Meanwhile, Perception returns scores of 0.56 and -.090 for both Skewness and Kurtosis, respectively. At the same time, Culture produces Skewness and Kurtosis at -.142 and 142 correspondingly. Another construct, Behavior returns at .207 and .420 for both Skewness and Kurtosis. Furthermore, the Society produces values of Skewness, and Kurtosis at -.151 and -176 respectively. Lastly, the Law yields values at -.316 and .527.

In general, if skewness is positive, the data are positively skewed or skewed right, meaning that the right tail of the distribution is longer than the left. If skewness is negative, the data are negatively skewed or skewed left, meaning that the left tail is longer. If skewness = 0, the data are perfectly symmetrical (Xu et al., 2021).

The construct of Language, Perception, and Behavior is positively skewed while Interaction, Culture, Society, and Law are negatively skewed or rightly skewed. None of the constructs is perfectly symmetrical.

5.4. Hypotheses Testing

This research is anchored on the basis of whether the six (7) factors of Functionalism theory by Durkheim are applicable in the context of multi-racial in Malaysia. In addition, the researchers also intend to investigate a new construct as suggested by McCall, Linguistic Difference as part of the hypotheses. This comes after tension between ethnic groups can even seen when the government formalized the Malay language as the national language (Wan Husin, 2013).

Table 3: Correlation Data Table

		SOC_	LAW_	INT_	BE_	PER_	CUL_	LING_	DV_
SOC_	Pearson Correlation	1	.404**	.374**	.387**	.203**	.178*	.361**	.912**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	.006	.017	<.001	<.001
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
LAW_	Pearson Correlation	.404**	1	.245**	.273**	.255**	.181*	.246**	.420**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	.015	<.001	<.001
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
INT_	Pearson Correlation	.374**	.245**	1	.479**	.401**	.384**	.476**	.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
BE_	Pearson Correlation	.387**	.273**	.479**	1	.340**	.360**	.898**	.366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
PER_	Pearson Correlation	.203**	.255**	.401**	.340**	1	.427**	.379**	.122
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.104
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
CUL_	Pearson Correlation	.178*	.181*	.384**	.360**	.427**	1	.370**	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.015	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	.114
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
LING_	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.246**	.476**	.898**	.379**	.370**	1	.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
DV_	Pearson Correlation	.912**	.420**	.296**	.366**	.122	.118	.322**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.104	.114	<.001	
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation statistic shows a strong correlation between Society at an average $r(.912) = .42, p < .001$. While the Law at $r(.420) = .001, p < .001$, Interaction at $r(.296) = .001, p < .001$, Behaviour at $r(.296) = .366, p < .001$, Linguistic at $r(.322) = .001, p < .001$. The other variable the Culture and Perception score at $r(.118) = .114, p < .001$, and at $r(.112) = .104, p < .001$, respectively. The findings of the hypotheses produce the following results.8%), Chinese 10 people (2.9%), and others from the Bumiputera category other than Malays from Sabah and Sarawak totaling 11 people (6%).

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Internal consistency of the constructs is measured with reliability's Alpha value threshold at .70 (Hair et al., 2013; Rothbard, et al., 2003; Nunnally, 1978; Yongmei, 2021) in support of an acceptable level of .70. If the Alpha value is greater than .70, then the construct is reliable. Otherwise, if the value is below .70 the reliability is low. The value for each construct is illustrated in the following table. The detailed score of all constructs is displayed in table 1.

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	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.104	.114	<.001	
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation statistic shows a strong correlation between Society at an average $r(.912) = .42, p < .001$. While the Law at $r(.420) = .001, p < .001$, Interaction at $r(.296) = .001, p < .001$, Behaviour at $r(.296) = .366, p < .001$, Linguistic at $r(.322) = .001, p < .001$. The other variable the Culture and Perception score at $r(.118) = .114, p < .001$, and at $r(.112) = .104, p < .001$, respectively. The findings of the hypotheses produce the following results.

Table 3: Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypotheses symbol	Hypotheses	Supported/Rejected
Ho	There is no correlation between the Functional theory with Multi-ethnic harmony life in Malaysia.	Rejected
H1	There is a significant correlation between Society with Multi-ethnic harmony life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [912], p = [0.001]$ Supported
H2	There is a significant correlation between the Law with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.420], p = [0.001]$ Supported
H3	There is a significant correlation between the Interaction with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.296], p = [0.001]$ Supported
H4	There is a significant correlation between Behaviour with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.366], p = [0.001]$ Supported
H5	There is a significant correlation between Perception with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.122], p = [0.104]$ Supported
H6	There is a significant correlation between Culture with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.118], p = [0.114]$ Supported
H7	There is a significant correlation between Language with Multi-ethnic harmony in life in Malaysia.	$r(df) = [.322], p = [0.001]$ Supported

6.0 Discussion

The H1 yields the highest strong significant p-value of the correlation at .912 which tests the factor of society on the multi-ethnic's harmonious life in Malaysia. Certainly, society plays a critical role in shaping the trajectory of the development of a diverse society (Embong, *ibid*). Simply this factor that due to the modern racial relation in Malaysia inherited from the legacy of the pre-colonial and colonial periods of history dating back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The harmonious life in multiracial and multi-ethnic is well-supplied with the government initiatives *inter alia*, all the enacted educational policies have stated that unity is their comprehensive objective. Indubitably, the data finding shows that the social factor contributes the most significant correlation with the multi-ethnic's harmonious life in Malaysia.

The H2 yields a significant moderate p-value of the correlation at .420 which tests the factor of the law on the multi-ethnic's harmonious life in Malaysia. It is not far-fetched to conceive of 'justice' in terms of resilience. Sociologists argued that functional approaches are particularly apt (Nagel, 1956). The law can be viewed as a body of rules and legal sanctions that channel behavior in socially desirable directions. The introduction of the Sedition Act 1948 (Malay: Akta Hasutan 1948) provides harsh punishment upon guilty could be sentenced to three years in jail, an RM5,000 fine, or both served well to curb the seed of social conflict in Malaysia. The factor of social interaction also dramatically changed after the independence period and Kalpana Sharma (1987) strongly asserted in 1987 that "in the immediate post-independence period there was a consensus amongst the races and genuine optimism about a stable multi-racial future for Malaysia.

The H3 yields a significant but weak p-value of the correlation at .296 which tests the factor of interaction on the multi-ethnic's harmony life in Malaysia. Although the interaction factor is a vital aspect of maintaining a harmonious condition (Hashim et al., 2016), the empirical test returns a weak correlation. This could be contributed to the Muslim community's lack of understanding of the actual values of interaction (Hassan et al., 2021). The interaction among Muslims and non-Muslims are often based on assumptions and traditions of the Malay culture instead of the correct hukm, Islamic Jurisprudence. Since the research respondent was 88.2% of respondents Melayu/Islam while 11.8% were non-Melayu/Muslim it is explicable. At the same time, a certain small group within the society lack the correct understanding of the concept of societal cohesion in a country with diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures. This is because these few are more concerned that if they interact with people of other ethnicities, religions, and cultures, their religious beliefs would be swayed.

The H4 yields a significant but weak p-value of the correlation at .366 which tests the factor of behavior on the multi-ethnic's harmony life in Malaysia. Inclusive behaviour is very important in building social harmony and peace in multi-ethnic countries (Weda, S, et al 2022). However, many factors affect behavior when a

person interacts with another person. Life experiences, physical, personal and emotional factors, *inter alia*. Positive behavior such as tolerance, mutual understanding, and mutual respect should be included in future research. According to Tamam, E., in their survey, et al, (2016) The results of regression analyses showed that when exposed to public affairs news, the cognitive and attitudinal components of ethnic tolerance were significant predictors.

The H5 yields a significant but very weak p-value of the correlation at .122 which tests the factor of Perception on the multi-ethnic's harmony life in Malaysia. Social perception is knowing the social cues to make judgments about social roles, rules, relationships, context, or the characteristics of a society. In multi-ethnic societies, behavior potentially influences their behavior and perceptions. As Malaysia is a multiethnic country made of Malay, Chinese, and Indians the perception will differ for everyone. Some people, especially the public will agree with these concepts, and some will against them. To have a better correlation of *p-value on the perception factor*, as indicated by (Hamm) having a cross-ethnic companionship would have high scores on the significance and positive perception of any other ethnic group (2005).

The H6 takings a significant but very weak p-value of the correlation at .118 which tests the factor of Culture on the multi-ethnic's harmony life in Malaysia. This dimension of culture deals with power inequalities among people in a multi-ethnic society. A similar result was found in [Andrijauskienė and Dumčiuvienė \(2017\)](#). The findings support the assumption that knowledge and attitude directly influence the behavioural component of ethnic tolerance, as purported by Ben-Ari (2004). Accordingly, the study provides empirical support on the importance of learning and understanding the culture of other ethnic groups and developing positive attitudes toward the differences and challenges associated with ethnicity.

The H7 returns the p-value of the correlation at .322 which is a weak correlation on the factor of Linguistic Difference on the multi-ethnic's harmonious life in Malaysia. Malaysian diversity has been a source of tension and conflict in society, in 1969 were ethnic riots in Kuala Lumpur and other parts of the country. Malaysian society learned something hard lesson in the past. Malaysian society has changed, and ethnic relations have improved tremendously, with reasonably strong tendencies toward convergence and new solidarities. Malaysia emerges among the diversity index rank of 0.5877 in 2022 by World Population Review. The index measures the value of the probability of two people selected at random from any one country speaking the same language. 1.0 is the most diverse, and 0.0 is the least diverse. While the top rank is Chad stands at 0.8517 index points placing Malaysia close to the most diverse country at 0.2637 infinitesimal index difference. More programs in the future that encourage national consciousness should be organized, and Inter-ethnic languages should be introduced in our primary and secondary schools' curriculum for language adoption. A student should study one of the ethnic group's languages other than one's own tribal language. This will integrate the sense of oneness and promote the national consciousness required in

nation-building.

CONCLUSION

A multi-ethnic country like Malaysia can be a productive instrument for nation-building and can as well be a destructive force that pulls down efforts in the process of nation-building. Racial harmony is very much dependent on the federal government and local authorities policies. Thus, for any multi-ethnic country that wants to leap forward in the process of nation-building, a concerted effort of all governmental and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) is required. The political leadership, NGOs, and public communities should spearhead resilient efforts with a focus on factors such as Culture, Perception, Behaviour, and Interaction. These factors have been empirically found to be less significant in this study.

Malaysia uses criminal laws to prevent its society from uttering offensive words and publishing materials that can cause social disharmony. The Sedition Act of 1948 punishes any community member who promotes ill will and hostility between different races. Similarly, sections 298 and 298A of the Penal Code prohibit promoting enmity among races and religious beliefs in Malaysia. While the Presses and Publications Act 1984 regulates "undesirable publications" that are likely prejudicial to public order. These laws were perceived by Malaysian society as offensive and oppressive by restricting the freedom of speech and expression with a criminal penalty. These laws were seen selectively used against members of society who were against the government.

While these laws can be said to maintain public order in Malaysia, they failed to have any impact on cultivating mutual respect against each race and religion. Punishing the offender by sentencing them to prison creates obedience but fails to make them understand the cultural differences and how to live in a multicultural environment.

Future research should path the way for how law plays a role in maintaining unity and harmony, and mutual respect in Malaysia. The law must respond to cultural diversity in multicultural environments. Restorative justice is the way forward by focusing on mediation with the community's representative and society's members. The meeting helps the offender to communicate his hatred and ill will, but at the same time, helps him to understand that his action can harm society. It can help integrate into society with corrective measures necessary to maintain harmony.

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