Influencing Factors for Ethnic Tolerance among Multi-Ethnic Youths

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ABSTRACT: This study aims at investigating factors that are contributing to ethnic tolerance among multi-ethnic youths. Four factors identified in this study were socio-environment, socio-participation, knowledge and practices of patriotism. Ethnic tolerance in this study can be defined as ethnic relations and the unity among myriad ethnic groups who practice a variety of cultures, religions and lifestyles which are different from each other and they can live together without feeling prejudiced at each other. Ethnic tolerance is also referring to the concept of integration in the context of ethnic diversity in multi-ethnic society in Malaysia (Syamsul Amri, 2012). This survey involved 2600 multi-ethnic youth aged between 19 and 29 years in Malaysia which comprises of Peninsular area (n = 1600), Sabah and Sarawak (n = 1000). Peninsular Zone was divided into four zones namely north, south, east and west. A set of questionnaires was used for data collection. A pilot study was carried out prior to data collection and the Cronbach alpha results indicating that the items for all contracts are valid and able to be used (0.806 and 0.953). Results from this study revealed that all factors had a significant relationship towards racial tolerance. Detailed findings show that socio-participation is the largest contributor towards tolerance (34.4%), followed by knowledge, practices and socio-environment. Hence, all parties have to work together to organize activities which can enhance the friendship relations between different races. Integrity, moral, and empathy should be employed by every individual in learning and practicing tolerance. The importance of tolerance as a social value can not be understated in the life of harmonious society.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social harmony and unity could be achieved via many ways but the most prominent factors are through education and social interactions. In a Malaysian context, national education system plays important roles for promoting unity and harmony. History is one of the academic subjects aims at promoting unity and social harmony. The 13th May 1969 tragedy was a tragic moment in Malaysia due to ethnic conflicts. The importance of unity became a lesson for the country leaders which leads to the introduction many programmes to unite them. Fostering unity and appreciation of patriotism values began ever since in elementary school. The Malaysian government then realised the importance of patriotism among nations. Ministry of Education Malaysia (2000) urged that all schools in Malaysia irrespective of school types to promote patriotism and ethnic tolerance via academic subjects as well as co-curricular activities. Academic subjects introduced were History subject, Moral Education, Geography, Islamic Studies and others. In addition, the government emphasizes the importance of integration activities among school students via various academic and non-academic activities. However, despite being in education process for 13 years, the patriotism spirit among school leavers are loose and still at moderate level (Mohamed et. Al, 2011). This informs the importance of current study. On the other hand, we also must aware that ‘unity’ is the key variable in determining the stability of the politic, social, as well as economic.