THE LEVEL OF CYBER ETHNOCENTRISM AMONG MULTIETHNIC IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Ethnocentrism is the evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture. As Malaysians are practicing multicultural communication, ethnocentrism is there. This study is done in order to find the level of ethnocentrism among multiethnic SNS users in Malaysia. This study used the social capital theory as foundations theories for model development. The minimum sample size was determined through G*Power analysis. The study involved 482 respondents, selected through a cluster sampling technique involving three main ethnics in Malaysia. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. All variables were measured through scales previously used by other researchers. SPSSS ver. 20 software was used in the analysis. Results of the SPSS indicated that for the level of ethnocentrism namely stereotype, mistrust, avoidance and differential treatment in SNS are low

Keywords: *Ethnocentrism, Social Networking Sites, Social Capital*

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).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study done by Jusang Bolong et al. (2008) 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is defined as "a communication medium that is devoted to or described by interaction between members of the medium" (Kalamas, Mitchell and Lester, 2009). It is also said to be a general name for websites that permit users to share content, media, photographs etc. As discussed by Ward (2010), "social media is a form of online media that accelerates conversation as contrasting to traditional media, which conveys content but doesn't allow readers or viewers to join in the creation or expansion of the content". There is a wide diversity of social media, ranging from social sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. They are therefore described as media for social interactions which employs highly accessible and large communication apparatus. It is a web based and mobile technology which allows communication to become active and interactive dialogue. According to Kaplan, Andreas and Michael (2010), it is a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which as he says, allows the creation and exchange 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).

ETHNOCENTRISM

Malaysia is a country whose population consists of a multicultural society. The main ethnics in Malaysia are Malay, Chinese and Indian. The process of integration and assimilation in a plural Malaysian society is very important. However, as Malaysians are practicing multicultural communication, ethnocentrism is there. According to Samova, Porter and McDaniel (2011), ethnocentrism is found in all cultures. It happens when people usually approach and response to other cultures from the perspective of their own culture and often - consciously or unconsciously presume their culture is better than all others. Ethnocentrism can therefore impede intercultural communication. In a large and ethnically diverse society such as Malaysia, ethnocentrism can happen among ethnics. This can be seen through research done by Jusang Bolong et al. (2008) when the communities in Malaysia only prefer to be friend and communicate with their own ethnic. In terms of backgrounds of consumer ethnocentrism, the studies that were directed in Malaysia shown Malay, married and female tended to display higher ethnocentric tendencies (Othman et al., 2008).

ELEMENTS OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Based on extensive literature review, Smooha (1987) has classified ethnocentrism in his research into four major areas: stereotyping, mistrust, avoidance and differential treatment. Neulip and McCroskey (1999) also has developed Scale Items and Factor Loadings for the Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE).

Stereotyping

This element refers to have a fixed idea about what a particular type of person is like, especially an idea that is wrong. Most people in SNS label their out-group negatively. It is also overgeneralizations about appearance, behavior or other characteristics of members of particular categories which can be positive or negative (Kendall, 2010). As interaction in SNS between persons who are culturally and nationally diverse increase, so does ethnocentrism (Neulip and McCroskey, 1999).

Mistrust

Refer to have doubts about the honesty or abilities of someone. It usually happens to people who are from different ethnics (Kendall, 2010). However, according to Parekh (2008), trust based on affinities only, that

is, on interactions with like-minded people, provides for a very narrow definition of solidarity in an increasingly diverse world.

Avoidance

Refer to the act of avoiding something or someone. The strongest relationships are those in which there is relatively limited avoidance in SNS (Petronio, 2000).

Differential Treatment

Based from social identity theory, is that persons may form in-group unfairness and discriminate against those whom they associate with the out-group (Hargie et al., 2003). This differential treatment will lead to racism. According to Kendall (2010), racism is a set of attitudes, beliefs and practices that is used to justify the superior treatment of one ethnic group and the inferior treatment of another ethnic group. People who experience racism form strong barriers against integration and a sense of belonging (Modood, 2007).

Lastly, there are two types of ethnocentrism. According to Kendall (2010), the pledge to the flag, school song and the national anthem are forms of positive ethnocentrism. Though, negative ethnocentrism can also outcome from constant emphasis on the superiority of one's own group nation. Overall, ethnocentrism seems to bring many disadvantages to community rather than advantages.

ETHNOCENTRISM IN MALAYSIA COMMUNITY

What makes Malaysia unique is the variety of societies. 1Malaysia's goal is to preserve and improve this solidarity in diversity which has always been Malaysian strength and remains its best hope for the upcoming. However, The Star newspaper on March 29, 2007, claims that several of Malaysian teenagers who are uninterested to racial assimilation. The outlook shows that only as many as 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. Majority of Chinese's live in urban area while the dominant groups which are Malay are only a few in urban areas. This can make the ethnocentrism becomes stronger among ethnics. Ethnocentrism can create obstacles to communication with those who are culturally different which give difficulty to achieve solidarity among ethnics.

In Malaysia also, there are some individuals who still hang out in groups, and the difference between the majority and the minority still happens (Mohd Hamzatul Akmar Md Zakaria, 2012). Studies which done by Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim (2011) has verified that the relationship between ethnic in Malaysia weaken due to the attitude of the community members who are still concerned with ethnic. It is a tradition from time immemorial, every ethnic prefer to socialize with their own ethnicity (Comber, 2011). The statement is also supported by Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2012) as most of ethnicity in Malaysia does not reflect the spirit of patriotism to the country but more concerned about their own ethnicity. It is due to as each ethnic in Malaysia still fight for their own ethnics interest and demand to have their own way of education to maintain their tradition. For example, most school children are taught that their own school (SJK) and ethnic are the best. They prefer to isolate their children from the dominant ethnic which is Malay since from school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

This study employed the quantitative study approach (explanatory study) to identify the level of social networking sites among SNS multiethnic users in Malaysia. For sampling, by referring to Krejcie & Morgan table, 30 million population in Malaysia or 12 million SNS users can be equal to 384 sample of respondents with 95% confidence (The Research Advisors, 2006). The study involving 482 respondents, selected through a multistage sampling techniques which are cluster sampling and purposive sampling. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. The data were keyed in and analyzed by SPSS. (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan et al., 2015).

In this study, the sample size used was also determined by two technique namely G*Power analysis (Erdfelder, Faul and Buchner, 1996), and Green (1991) recommendation on using Multiple Regression Analysis. Using G*Power analysis, specifically for F – Test in Multiple Regression analysis , the total suggested sample is 138 (effect size f^2 = 0.15 (medium); α = 0.05; power = 0.95; number of predictors / independent variables = 5). The value of Alpha and power were acceptable for social sciene research. G*Power is a general power analysis program that perform high precision statistical power analyses for the most common statistical test in social science research. Moreover G*Power is design for sample size calculation based on specific statistical analysis used in the particular study (Erdfelder et al., 1996). The data was collected through a survey questionnaire. The method used to distribute the questionnaire is through online and self –administered questionnaires. A likert scale was used for the students to answer questions relating to the SNS factors. Data was key in and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

FINDINGS

a) Profile of the SNS User

The profile of the sample is discussed in terms of seven characteristics: gender, age and ethnic, status, state, education and occupation.

Table 1 Distribution of SNS User by Profile (n=482)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	192	39.8
Female	290	60.2
Age		
15-25	269	55.8
26-35	171	35.5
36-45	37	7.7
46-65	5	1.0

Ethnic		
Malay	307	63.7
Chinese	114	23.7
Indian	61	12.6
Status		
Single	352	63.7
Married	121	23.7
Divorce	9	12.6
State		
Melaka	72	14.9
Pahang	130	27.0
Penang	90	18.7
Selangor	170	35.3
Sabah	20	4.1
Education		
PMR/SPM	81	16.8
Diploma	126	26.1
Bachelor Degree	235	48.8
Master/PhD	40	8.3
Occupation		
Student	180	37.3
Working at public sector	102	21.2
Working at private sector	133	27.6
Self employed	50	10.4
Unemployed	17	3.5

Table 1 above shows the profile of respondents from SNS multi-ethnic users in Malaysia. Based from the findings, most of the respondents who answered the questionnaires are female (60%), aged between 15 – 25 (56%), Malay ethnic (64%), single (64%), degree holders (49%) and students (37%). Most of the respondents also are from Selangor (35%).

b) Level of stereotypes among SNS users with other ethnics

The data from table 2 below shows that SNS users believe that their ethnic should be role model to other ethnics (M=2.52). The level of stereotype is high because most of the respondents believe that their ethnic has the best lifestyle (M=2.44) and believe that other ethnic would be happier if they live like them (M=2.44). The result has proven that overgeneralization about appearance, behaviour, or other

characteristics of other ethnics exist. In addition, result from similar studies done by Berry and Kalin (1995) shows that a lack of acceptance of cultural diversity, a general intolerance for out-groups and a relative preference for one's in-group over most pot-groups. Overall, the average mean for respondents' stereotype is M=2.32. As interaction between persons who are culturally and nationally diverse increase, so does stereotypes (Neuliep and McCroskey, 1999).

Table 2 Stereotypes on SNS

Stereotypes	Mean	Std. Deviation
My ethnic should be role model to others	**2.52**	.92
My ethnic has the best lifestyle	2.44	.88
Other ethnics would be happier if they live like mine	2.44	.87
Life in my ethnic is better compared to others	2.41	.89
Other ethnics are primitive	2.24	.95
Other ethnics don't know what is good for them	2.21	.95
Cultures from other ethnics are not as valid as those in my culture	2.17	.92
Other ethnics are backward	2.15	.97
Overall	2.32	.69

c) Level of Mistrust among SNS users with other ethnics

In social capital theory, trust is one of the elements in order to gain solidarity and reduce ethnocentrism. The data analysis in table 2 described that respondents in SNS trust more only on their own ethnic compare to other ethnics (M=2.32). As discussed by Wheeless (1978), trust among multi ethnic member is crucial to solidarity.

Table 3 Mistrust on SNS

Mistrust	Mean	Std. Deviation
I trust more on my own ethnic	**2.32**	.93
I act strange and unusual when I associate with those from other ethnics	2.13	.95
I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures	2.11	.90
Other ethnics should try to be like my ethnic	2.10	.89
I don't trust other ethnics	2.04	.85
Overall	2.14	.72

d) Level of avoidance among SNS users with other ethnics

Based from the table 4, difficulty to add multi ethnic friends in their SNS is the highest mean (M=2.18) and followed by respondents rarely interact with other ethnics (M=2.15). It shows that multi-ethnic people in Malaysia are still having problem to get along with other ethnics. Results from similar studies done by Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim (2011) have verified that the relationship between ethnic in Malaysia is 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 mentioned by Petronio (2000), the strongest relationships are those in which there is relatively limited avoidance.

Table 4 Avoidance on SNS

Avoidance	Mean	Std. Deviation
It is difficult for me to add friends who are from different ethnics	**2.18**	.92
I rarely interact with other ethnics	2.15	.93
I prefer to ignore with any activities organized by other ethnics	2.06	.94
I do not cooperate with people from different ethnics.	1.94	.92
I'm not concerned with positive values of other ethnics	1.93	.86
I have little respect of other ethnics' customs and values.	1.90	.92
Overall	2.03	.75

e) Level of differential treatment among SNS users with other ethnics

In terms of di   fferential treatment in SNS, majority of respondents have different set of attitude towards other ethnic (M=2.12). Many respondents give different treatment towards other ethnics (M=2.11) and act differently according to ethnics (M=2.11). It shows that respondents mind set towards other ethnic is at average level. Hargie et al., (2003) also stated that individual may form bias to those who are from different ethnics. Similar research done by Modood (2007) found that many experienced racism and labour market discrimination, both of which form strong barriers against integration and a sense of belonging.

Table 5 Differential treatment on SNS

Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation
My set of attitude towards other ethnics are different	**2.12**	.93
My treatment towards other ethnics are different	2.11	.94
I act differently with those who are from different ethnics	2.11	.94
I tend to avoid with those who are from different ethnic	2.01	1.01
I act strange and unusual when I come to other ethnics	1.96	.87
Overall	2.06	.78

CONCLUSION

Table 6 Descriptive statistics of ethnocentrism

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stereotypes on SNS	482	**2.32**	.69
Mistrust on SNS	482	2.14	.72
Differential Treatment on SNS	482	2.06	.78
Avoidance on SNS	482	2.03	.75
Overall		2.15	.64

Table 6 showed the mean score achieved for all respondents on this dimension is only 2.15. It shows the level of ethnocentrism among SNS user is at low level. As stated by Segall (1979), ethnocentrism is now recognized as a universal phenomenon practiced by all ethnics. The highest mean for ethnocentrism is

stereotypes (M=2.32) and followed by mistrust (M=2.14). It shows that stereotype is the main contributor towards ethnocentrism. Researches done by Neuliep and McCroskey, (1997) have proven that people experience stereotypes when confronting the possibility of communication with someone from another ethnic or cultural group. In a large and ethnically diverse society such as Malaysia, ethnocentrism can happen among ethnics. This can be seen through research done by Jusang Bolong et al. (2008) when the communities in Malaysia only prefer to be friend and communicate with their own ethnic. However, the results from this research have proven that ethnocentrism did not happen in cyber world. People are more unite and tolerance in social networking rather than in a real world community.

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