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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Relationship of Urbanization on Perception of Ethnic Relations

Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah and Paimah Atoma

Centre For Core Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is currently actively involved in modernization process in its effort to achieve the status of developed country in the year of 2020. Malaysia emerged as a country that is contained in them more than 200 ethnic groups and various sub-ethnic colour, religion and culture. Therefore, unity of its people becomes the main core aspect beside the strong economic areas. This paper aims to determine the relationship of urbanization with perception of students towards ethnic relations issues. About 451 sets of questionnaire were distributed in University of Malaya (UM) and Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP). Simple random method was employed with data has been analysed descriptively with percentage and mean. Analysis regression technique also has been used to determine the relationship between urbanization and perception of students towards issues pertaining ethnic relations. The study has shown that, there are relationships between urbanization and students perception towards issues in ethnic relations. Findings also showed students from the developing areas are better in ethnic relations in terms of perception as compared to developed areas. It is thus, confirmed that urbanization has an influence on the level of ethnic integration. It is learnt that progress towards modernization should be balanced with the development of community itself and are ready to join hands together to develop Malaysia.

Key words: unity, issues on ethnic relations, tolerance magnitude, location, development, ethnic demography

Introduction

Ethnic diversity has made Malaysia a multi-ethnic and multi-religion in Southeast Asia (Brawn, G. 2005). Diversity was also made Malaysia a country that full of tolerance, integrated and high spirit of cooperation (Case, 1996). Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Malaysia as well as community as mobilization agents is not left out in explaining the diversity of ethnic identity on campus. The idea of government, with the slogan "1Malaysia" as a translation of the government's efforts in realizing the "Bangsa Malaysia" or "Malaysian Nation" can be realized if the citizen works together to foster the spirit. This paper will specifically discuss the relationship between urbanization towards the perception in the context of ethnic relations in Malaysia.

Urbanization and the perception of the Ethnic Relations:

The process of industrialization in the period to 18th century, mainly in the West, has brought together urbanization process worldwide including Malaysia which is rich sources of industrialization needs. This change has led to the development in Malaysia which is the remnants of Western colonial powers. Changes can be seen not only from economic aspects, but also in the ethnicity and social patterns. Moreover, Malaysia has emerged as a country that is contained in them more than 200 ethnic groups and various sub-ethnics with different skin colour, religion and culture. The process of urbanization has also witnessed Malaysia are in a dilemma and conflict of ethnicity as in 1969 and 2001. Although there are many studies made of the topic of urbanization on society and the sociology of its people, but many scholars believed there are still many opportunities of academic debate and study areas to investigate and assess on the processes of urbanization on the various Malaysian society (Mansor Mohd. Noor, 1997). There are a lot of literature and studies has been done by the western sociology researcher on the relationship and effects of urbanization on the life of urban and its comparison with non-urban, from a classical theories of Marx and Durkheim to a contemporary theory by

Simmel (1905), Park (1926), and the formulation of social-ecological theory of Chicago School (Maconis & Parrillo, 2001). In Malaysia, the theory of urbanization is often associated with the medley of the ethnic relations by Furnivall. Based on the existing literature, there are still shortcomings in the academic explanation of urbanization process in Malaysia and its effects towards ethnic integration. A common explanation that exists is more focusing on the differentiation between urban (city) and sub urban (town) with the level of migration as an indicator. Jayasooria (2006) in his study has compared the demographic effect on the communities of Malay, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia in migration that increased from the year 1970-2000. However, he found that urban community are having less interaction with each other as they are prefer as an individual. This fact is supported by other research findings in Mokhlis (2009) and Zhang J. (2011).

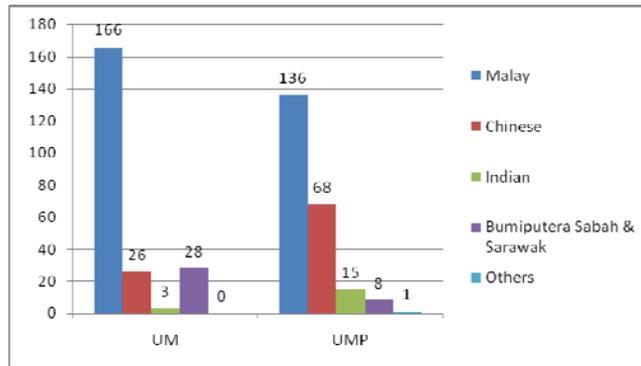
There are a number of literacy in Malaysia written by local scholars, taking into account the Public Higher Education Institutions and Private Higher Education Institutions as respondents in perception sphere. Zaharah (2005), in "University Students Perceptions of National Unity", has been studying a simple random sample of students at considered as city campus (National University of Malaysia (UKM), University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Multimedia University (MMU), and Tenaga Nasional University (UNITEN)). She found that the level of perception of various ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indians) on the concept of Bangsa Malaysia is high. This proves that the college or university students in urban areas have a high level of ethnic tolerance. However, Zaharah research does not encompassed students who study in the non urban campus.

Objective and Methodology:

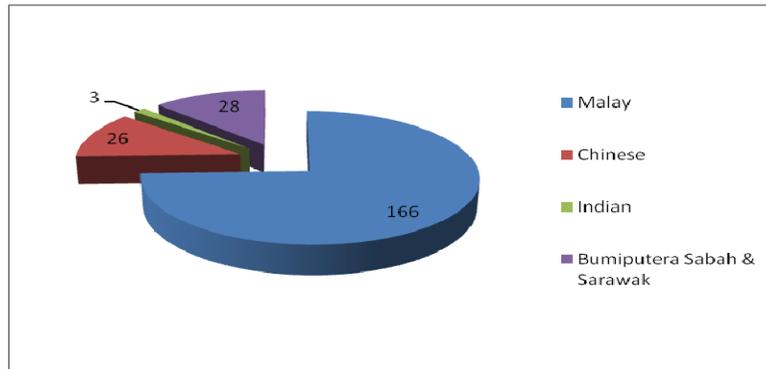
This paper aims to look at the relationship between urbanization with student perceptions on issues of ethnic relations in Malaysia

Quantitative method is used with a set of questionnaires that was built with a slight adjustment of the model by Mansor Mohd Noor (2005). A total of 451 questionnaires were distributed at two selected locations, an institution of higher learning in the Klang valley university and another university in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, by using a simple random method. Descriptive data were analysed using percentage and average (mean) to determine the relationship between urbanization with respondents' views on the issues of ethnic relations.

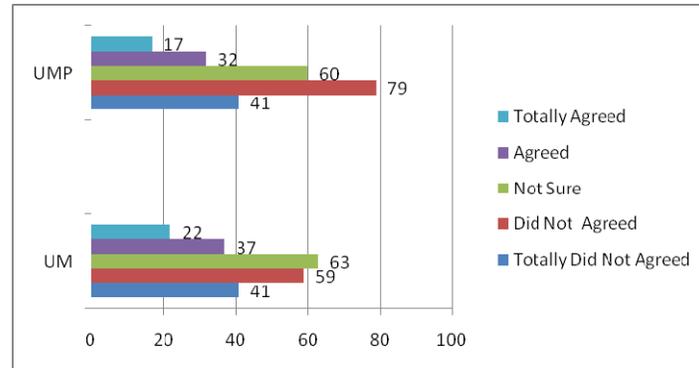
Results and Discussion



Graph 1.1: Respondents Demographic According to Ethnic Group in University.

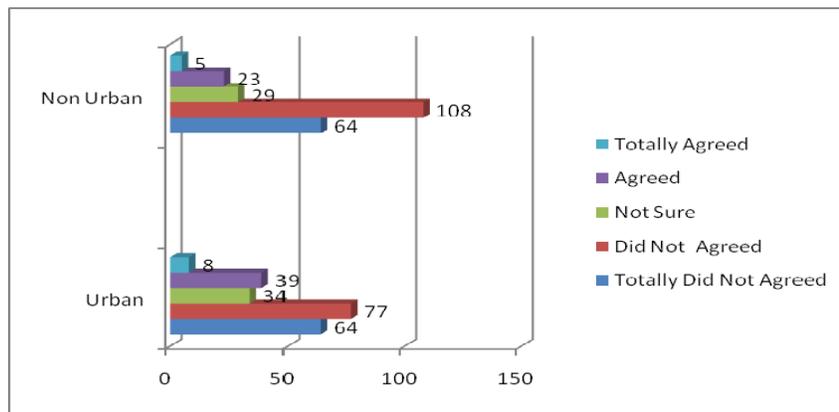


Graph 1.2: Respondents Demographic According to Ethnic Group.



Graph 1.3: Malaysia will be the cause for the loss of the Malay special rights.

Figure 1.3 shows respondents' views on the implementation of 1Malaysia that would cause the Malays losing their privileges. A total of 63 people (27.9%) respondents in urban areas are not sure with the above statement, while 79 people (34.6%) of respondents in developing areas do not agree with that statement. This shows that there is no significant difference on the perceptions of respondents in both areas of the above statements.



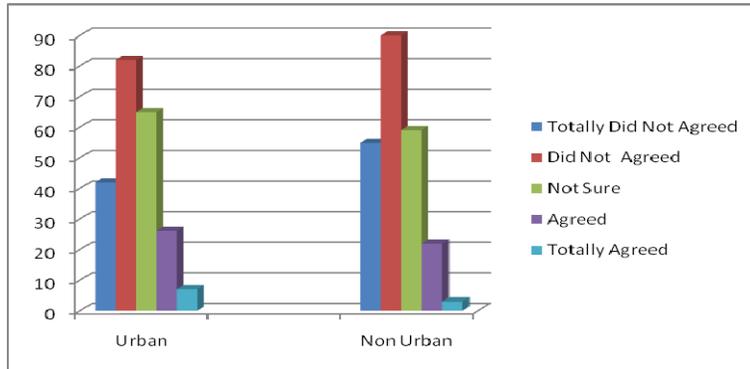
Graph 1.4: It is very difficult for me to have friends from different ethnic.

Figure 1.4 shows the perceptions of students on the difficulties of having a friend from different ethnic groups. Both universities showed the same level of percentage of totally did not agreed, that 64 people (28.4%) respondents developed area and 64 people (28.1%) in the developing area. But there are significant differences in answer of do not agree that are of 77 people (34.7%) in the city and 47.4% or 108 people in the developing area. A total of 47 people (21.17%) respondents of developed area agreed that it was difficult to get friends from other ethnic groups as compared with respondents in developing areas is about 28 people (12.28%) only. The above findings indicate the locations of the respondents from non urban area are having better social relations as compared to urban areas. In other words, respondents in urban areas are difficult to make new friends from different ethnic groups.

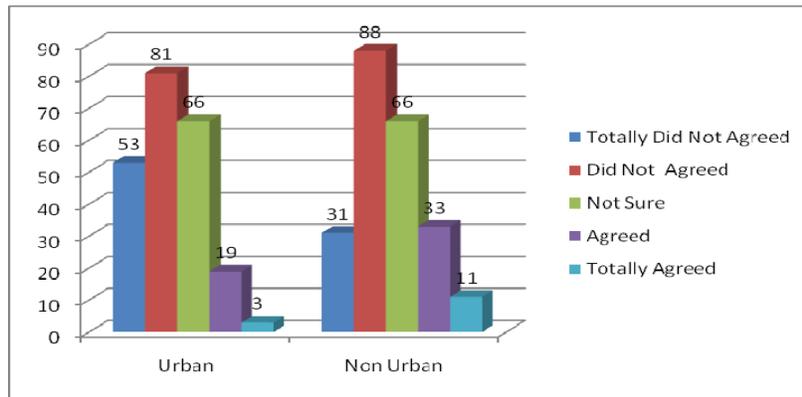
Figure 1.5 shows differences in the perception of other ethnic students less interested in making friends with me (the respondent) because they are ethnically different. A total of 26 people (11.7 %) of respondents in the urban said that they agreed with the given statement, but 89 respondents (39 %) in developing areas do not agree with that statement. These findings are consistent with previous findings that showed respondents' non urban and urban areas that differ in opinion on the issue of relations between different ethnic groups.

Figure 1.6 describes respondents' views on actions to borrow notes from other ethnic groups on account of notes by their ethnic group is not complete. While figure 1.7 to explain the perception of ethnic based on context of borrowing class notes from different ethnic. There is a significant difference shown by the respondent in the two different locations in the above statement. Respondents in urban areas state that they totally did not agreed (53 people or 61.9 per cent), while respondents in non urban areas totally agreed (11 people or 78.6 %). Meanwhile, the perception of borrowing notes based on ethnic shows that, Malay (119

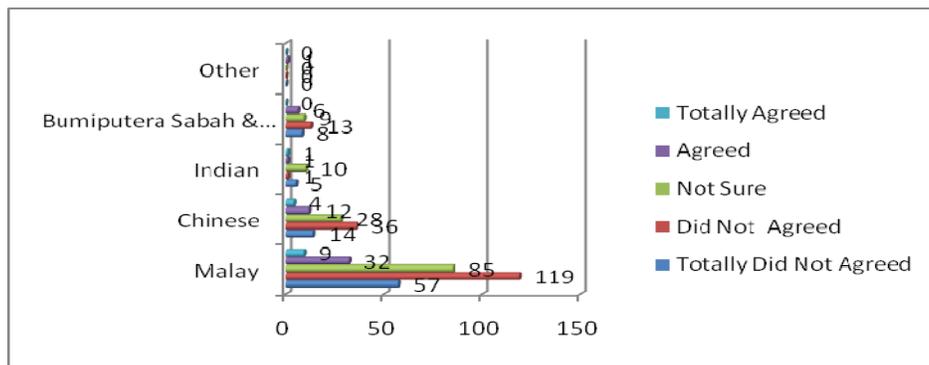
people, 39.4%), Chinese (36 people, 38%) and the Natives of Sabah and Sarawak (13 persons, 36.1%) did not agree with the statement as compared to Indian (10 people 55.6%) whom answered did not sure the most. This conclude that there is possibility of the urban students believed that their own ethnic class notes are complete and does not require them to interact with other ethnic groups to get notes.



Graph 1.5: Other ethnic students are less interested in making friends with me because we are in different ethnic groups.



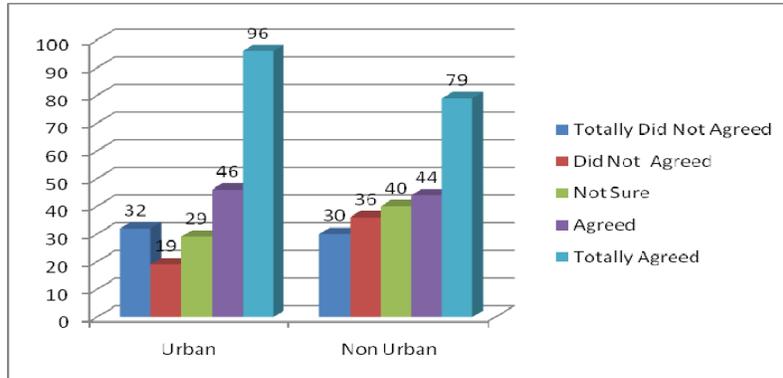
Graph 1.6: I often borrow a class notes from students of other ethnic groups because of my ethnic class notes are incomplete.



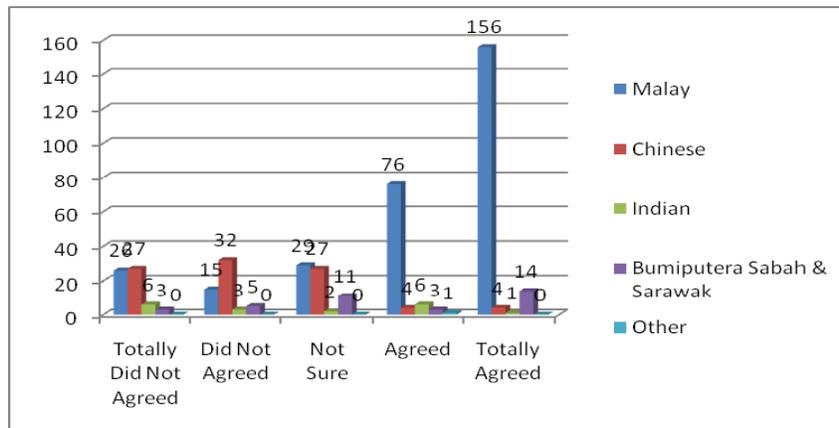
Graph 1.7: I often borrow class notes from students of other ethnic groups because of my ethnic class notes are incomplete.

Figure 1.8 and 1.9 respectively shows respondents' views on the statement of the Prime Minister of Malaysia must be from Malay ethnic group. 63.9 % of urban respondents agree (strongly agree and agree) with the statement given compared with 53.9 % of respondents in non urban areas. While scores for those who are not agree in urban areas is 23 %, whereas in rural areas by 28.6 %. However, findings based on ethnicity

indicated that ethnic Chinese respondents showed a higher percentage (62.7 %) in the statement do not agree, as compared to the percentage of respondents from ethnic Malays (13.6 %). Comparison of findings showed that the percentage of the overall perception of 54.9 % of students in the urban does not agree with the statement as compared to non urban students who are disagree (63.6 %) with the statement. In this case, clarification on the Malaysian political system of government and should be emphasized to provide better understanding to the students in the context of ethnic relations in Malaysia.



Graph 1.8: Prime Minister of Malaysia must be from Malay ethnic.



Graph 1.9: Prime Minister of Malaysia must be from Malay ethnic.

Studies have shown that there is the relationship between urbanization with students' perceptions of other groups. Results from this study have reflected the different perceptions of both groups of respondents. Findings showed students from the developing areas are having better ethnic relations in terms of perception as compared to developed areas. This finding supports research conducted by Jayasooria (2006) in his study that the interaction of urban communities reduced as their acting as individuals. This contrasts with studies Zaharah (2005), that a college or university students in urban areas have a high tolerance level. It is thus clearly prove that urbanization has an influence on the level of student integration.

Conclusion:

As an emerging country, Malaysia was not spared from the many challenges in ethnic relations. Accordingly, although the various strategies and approaches have been executed either by the government, non-governmental organizations and the people themselves, but these efforts should be intensified further to strengthen the relations between ethnic to achieve greater ethnic tolerance. Progress towards modernization should be balanced with the development of community mindset and soul to join hands together to develop this country. Sense of patriotism and nationhood should be further strengthening in ensuring peace, freedom and prosperity of this nation is long last.

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