

## **Challenges In Ethnic And Religious Tolerance Based On Youth Beliefs In Malaysia**

**By**

**Zahrul Akmal Damin**

Centre for General Studies and Cocurricular, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia,  
86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor  
Email: [zahruld@uthm.edu.my](mailto:zahruld@uthm.edu.my)

**Kamarulnizam Abdullah**

School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah  
Email: [kamarulnizam@uum.edu.my](mailto:kamarulnizam@uum.edu.my)

**Mohd Sofian Omar-Fauzee**

School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia,  
06010 Sintok, Kedah  
Email: [mohdsofian@uum.edu.my](mailto:mohdsofian@uum.edu.my)

**Siti Sarawati Johar**

Centre for General Studies and Cocurricular, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia,  
86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor

### **Abstract**

Ethnic and religious unity is a thing that every country wishes for not exempting Malaysia. Tolerance among the population is very much expected to achieve this. Nevertheless, ethnic and religious diversity in Malaysia is often seen as a challenge for realizing tolerance and thus creating unity. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the barrier factors for ethnic and religious tolerance while at the same time identifying proposals for improvement measures to tolerance among the community. Hence, the Focus Group Discussion or FGD study design was used by involving 72 youth informants from various ethnicities which comprised of Malay, Chinese, Indians and Bumiputera in Malaysia as information suppliers. As a result of the analysis it can be concluded that there are six themes that exist as a barrier factor to ethnic and religious tolerance, that are (i) social gap; 50.10 percent, (ii) religious differences; 13.82 percent, (iii) economic inequality; 12.16 percent, (iv) political conflict; 11.75 percent, (v) rights and privileges issues; 7.84 percent, and (vi) primordial sentiment; 4.33 percent. This issue is important to be examined because by investigating barriers to ethnic and religious tolerance, the best tolerance approach or method can be planned and implemented to ensure that Malaysians are united and thus can drive to the stability and progress of the country.

**Keywords:** Religion; ethnic; barrier factors; tolerance.

### **Introduction**

Malaysia which consists of West Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia) and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) is a unique country because there are various ethnic and religious groups (Mohd Azmir, 2015). Peninsular Malaysia is famous for its multi-ethnic groups such as Malays, Chinese and Indians as well as the aborigines such as Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay, while in East Malaysia, Sabah is famous for its 32 ethnic tribes such as Kadazan-Dusun, Murut,

Bajau, Suluk and Bisaya. Consecutively, in Sarawak there are 20 ethnic tribes such as Iban, Murut, Kelabit, Melanau and Kadayan (Zahrul Akmal et. al, 2016). From the aspect of beliefs or religion, Malaysians are practicing the teachings of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and animism (Shamsul Amri, 2012). As a Developing Country, Malaysia despite its diverse ethnics and religions, crave for a strong nation. Thus, ethnic and religious tolerance is the primary means of unifying the Malaysian multi ethnicity citizens (Nur Farhana & Khadijah, 2013). This is a prerequisite for Malaysia to move forward by ensuring harmonious living as well as ensuring national security. Since the independence on August 31, 1957 and the formation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963, Malaysia has taken various steps either top-down approach or bottom-up approach to promote tolerance. Although it has celebrated its 61st anniversary, Malaysia still seeks to strengthen its nation-building based on ethnic tolerance. Only through a harmonious life and a peaceful country Malaysia will take a step forward to achieve developed nation status.

## **Problem Statement**

Malaysia as a country comprising ethnic and religious aspects has a challenge in managing its diversity (Sarjit, Mohd Rahimi & Ahmad Tarmizi, 2015). This diversification is capable of disturbing the stability of the country if there is no tolerance between ethnic and religious populations. Efforts to build a strong nation to achieve the status of a developed nation will face the risk if three issues involving ethnicity and religion are not addressed. The issues are (i) the spread of social contracts, (ii) ethnocentrism and prejudice, and (iii) primordial sentiment. **Firstly**, issues involving the development of social contracts if not contained will threaten ethnic and religious stability in Malaysia (Mohd Azrone, 2018; Rokiah, 2018; Teo, 2018). It is evident that four things in the social contract that have been constituted as a constitutional basis are often meddled by non-Malays and Bumiputeras. The topics that are often challenged are Article 3 (1) concerning the position of Islam, Article 32 (1) concerning the position of the Malay Rulers, Article 152 (1) concerning the Malay language as the national language, and Article 153 (1) concerning Malay and Bumiputera privileges (Nazri & Ahmad Hidayat, 2012). **Secondly**, ethnocentrism and prejudice issues are also seen as a threat to Malaysians (Fazilah, Mohd Richard Neles, Abdul Razak & Ahmad Zamri, 2016; Khairul Anuar, Jessica & Ahmad Azan, 2015; Mahyuddin, 2011). This is because the people who practice this attitude will make judgments based on their point of reference without considering the views of other groups. In addition, the people who practice this attitude also have the potential to make a negative or bad response to ethnic and other religions. **Finally**, primordial sentiment is seen as a barrier to ethnic and religious tolerance (New, 2016; Nidzam & Kartini, 2017). The division of labor based on ethnic separation lines has led to the ethnicities in Malaysia, especially Malays, Chinese and Indians alienated economically and socially. In addition to this issue, these ethnic groups were also at varied settlements either in urban or rural areas. Due to the emergence of these three issues, it has led to a question of the status of ethnic and religious tolerance in Malaysia in terms of awareness, barrier factors and proposed tolerance measures. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze ethnic tolerance barrier factors from Malay youth perceptions in Malaysia.

## **Theoretical Debate**

Various theories have been introduced to understand the plural society in the world such as Class Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Theory of Plural Society. Class Theory developed by Cox (1948) concludes that racial and ethnic relations that take place in the United States are based on class and caste systems. Cox notes that there is a social gap due to the

prejudice of white people and the capitalists against black people and the working class. Disputes occur when the capitalists exploit the working class to benefit from industrial companies. Thus, there exists a system that promotes inequality in social systems by exhibiting social structure divide to white-minded people who own the industry while black-skinned people act as workers. Meanwhile, Rational Choice Theory was popularized by Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) as a result of the development of Thomas Hobbes philosophy in America. The doctrinal standpoint of this theory is that individual actors have the goal of optimizing their will and it is impossible for every individual to fulfil all his wishes. Therefore, individual actors will make rational choices for each alternative or option available to achieve the best choice. When an individual actor has finalized his choice, this means that the alternatives or other options are closed. So based on this theory, individual actors are assumed to act to maximize material rewards and social standing in society based on rational choices. A set of individual actors acting on the same choices will create social bonds over common interests (Hecher, 2011). Moving on, the Plural Society Theory was pioneered by Furnivall (1948) and Smith (1965). The observations made in Burma and India outline the issues of rigid society based on human linking. The description of the plural society is seen as a group of people who mingle but not united. Groups that are in the community are seen adamant to their culture, religion and way of life which cause them to be separated although they are sharing the same living space. Furnivall and Smith stressed that this complex society is described to have a side-by-side life but with a line of separation. In the field of economy, the plural society exhibited a clear division of labour based on race and ethnicity (Shamsul Amri, 2012). As such, among the three theories (Class Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Plural Society Theory) it is found that the Plural Society Theory by Furnivall (1948) and Smith (1965) is seen to have the similar characteristics with the people in Malaysia today. It is because Malaysians also have ethnic diversity in their own culture as well as in their respective religious divisions as a living guide. Additionally from the economic point of view, Malaysia has been following a division of work on the basis of divide and rule introduced by the British from 1874 and this specialization of the work seems to have been inherited although Malaysia had achieved independence in 1957. However, the use of the Plural Society Theory needs to be re-examined as the study by Hefner (2001) finds that the lives of the societies separately today are inadmissible.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative research approach is used to address the objective of the study as suggested by Zhang and Wildemuth (2015) that qualitative approach is seen to be able to explain and give a precise picture of the features found in a phenomenon. This is supported by Creswell (2012) specifying a qualitative research approach aimed at creating the meaning of a phenomenon. While Patton (2002) also asserted that qualitative approaches also enable researchers to approach, understand and explain phenomena that occur in society. In completing this study, researchers have used the Focus Group Discussion design or FGD. Discussions are conducted face-to-face with FGD informants using partially structured questions to allow detailed data to be obtained regarding ethnic tolerance in society. It is based on explanations of Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999) that semi-structured FGD discussions are best for clarifying factors and subfactors in the study. A total of 72 samples from youth between the ages of 18 and 40 years old were selected for this study. The sample consists of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Muslim Bumiputera and Non-Muslim Bumiputera youths. All of them have agreed to participate in the FGD on a voluntary basis. The sample was selected to represent five zones in Malaysia, namely 15 samples in North (Kedah), 15 samples in South (Johor), 15 samples in Central (Kuala Lumpur), 15 samples in the East (Terengganu) and 12 samples in Sabah / Sarawak (Sabah). In the context of FGD implementation, discussion sessions in each zone were broken down into three separate groups based on ethnicity with separate discussions. The three

groups consisted of Malay, Chinese and Indian youths for FGDs in Peninsular Malaysia while the FGDs in Sabah comprised three groups namely Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese. Each group of FGDs conducted in Kedah, Johor, Kuala Lumpur and Terengganu had five informants. Meanwhile, FGD groups in Sabah have four informants. According to Carlsson, Lannerstrom, Wallman and Holmstrom (2015), a sample of three to seven people is practical for every FGD session. Meanwhile, from the background of the sample, they are university students, government staff and private workers. In depth partially structured interviews conducted were built by researchers based on literary studies that have been made to answer the objectives of the study. The introduction section covered the informants' background information, the main section addressed the research objectives and the closure section was for additional information. Meanwhile, in the main section there were two categories namely the core questions and the probe questions. Therefore, the procedure of this study followed a systematic process to ensure that the FGD method can be implemented in an orderly, comprehensive and efficient manner. Here are the study procedures:

- (1) Obtained a letter of appointment as a researcher from Wasatiyah Center for Peace to conduct this study.
- (2) Obtained the permission to leave office from the head of department to conduct the research.
- (3) Contacted representatives from several Public Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTA) and Private Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTS)) to obtain youth representatives.
- (4) Contacted and informed the selected youth about the discussion and obtained consent on the FGD.
- (5) Distributed the FGD consent form to be signed to the youths who have agreed to be involved.
- (6) Informed the youth who agreed to be informants that the FGD interview would be recorded and the interview sessions would take no more than an hour.
- (7) FGD sessions were conducted and controlled by a facilitator appointed from their own ethnic group.
- (8) Every informant was informed that all their personal information would be kept confidential and would not be published in any publications.
- (9) Every informant was given the opportunity to withdraw from the FGD interview at any time without prejudice.
- (10) Written FGD interview transcripts were provided to informants for review and the researchers updated sharing of facts.

## **Findings And Discussion**

As a result of the responses given by the FGD involving 72 youth informants in Malaysia, the analysis found that there were six main themes which became the barrier factor of ethnic and religious tolerance in Malaysia. The themes were developed based on 485 raw data items which were studied in frequency (i) social gap, 243 frequencies or 50.10 percent, (ii) religious differences, 67 frequencies or 13.82 percent, (iii), economic inequality of 59 frequencies (iv), political conflicts of 57 frequencies or 11.75 percent, (v) the rights and privileges, of 38 frequencies or 7.84 percent, and (vi) primordial sentiment, of 21 frequencies or 4.33 percent as Table 1 and Figure 1.

**Table 1** *The Ethnic Tolerance Barrier Factors in Malaysia according to Themes, Frequency and Percentage*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Social Gap	243	50.10
2	Religious Differences	67	13.82
3	Economic Inequality	59	12.16
4	Political Conflicts	57	11.75
5	Rights and Privileges issue	38	7.84
6	Primordial Sentiment	21	4.33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** *FGD Informants*

<b>RAW DATA</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>
Lack understanding of other ethnicities (15)		
Problems arising from individuals (12)		
Disagreement of opinions (5)		
Lack knowledge of other races (3)		
Not learning other cultures (2)		
Selfish (2)		
You eventually create your own reason (1)	Individual	
Could not accept others' practice (1)	(43)	
Lack understanding between ethnics (1)		
Segregating in making friends (1)		
Vernacular school system (12)		
Unequal educational opportunities (9)		
Different streams of schooling (3)		
History course more like Islamic propaganda (2)		
There is no provision for Chinese schools (2)		
Not confident with education system (2)		
Our education is fragile (2)		
Obtained good result but could not go to university (1)		Social Gap
Moral class teach how to pass exam not into tolerance (1)		(243)
Making Malaysia as though belongs to Chinese (1)		
Making religious schools become churches (1)	Education	
TITAS, its promoting Islamic agenda (1)	(41)	
Schools practice only one language (1)		
Chinese go to Chinese Schools (1)		
Existence of education quota (1)		
Education system (1)		
Prejudice towards other ethnic groups (5)		
Racial grouping (4)		
Misinterpreting in like to cause of harm (3)		
Other ethnic groups feel like being ostracised (3)		
Existence of negative issues of other ethnic groups (3)		

Opinions of extremists in the media (3)	Negative views and
Events of Chinese clubs are not approved (2)	actions
Misunderstanding of ethnic groups (2)	(35)
Racist (2)	
Chinese are prejudice (2)	
Existence of conflicts (2)	
Malays always talk bad about the Chinese (1)	
Malays think they are the better ethnic group (1)	
Stereotype and prejudice (1)	
Racial misunderstanding (1)	
Cultural Differences (12)	
Racial Differences (8)	
50 types of tribes in Sabah (2)	
Social Differences (2)	
Taking the time to understand someone else's culture (1)	Culture (30)
Have own culture identity (1)	
Do not understand other cultures (2)	
Various tribes (1)	
Do not want to be open about culture (1)	
Language Differences (6)	
Usage of mother tongue only (3)	
Not fluent in Bahasa Malaysia (3)	
Language is the biggest issue (3)	
Assuming that other language is not up to par (1)	
Language hinders being together (1)	
The Chinese curses the Malays in Mandarin (1)	Language
We do not understand their language (1)	(21)
The Chinese do not understand the Malay writings (1)	
Do not know how to speak Mandarin (1)	
Community lacks interaction (4)	
The Chinese feel difficult to interact with the Malays (3)	
Less usage of the Malay language (3)	
Difficulty in interaction (3)	
Only speak in their own mother tongue (2)	Communication
Lack communication (2)	(21)
Difficulty in communicating (2)	
The Indians do not know how to speak Malay (1)	
Communication problem (1)	
Mind set of the tribes (2)	
Do not know each other (2)	
Prioritise own race (2)	
Care for their own race only (2)	
Malaysia is too open (2)	
Lack of mixing (2)	
Each race has own value system (1)	Lifestyle
Respect only their own ethnic (1)	(21)
Every race has own traditions (1)	

Comfortable mixing with own race (1)	
Each race has own art (1)	
Do not respect several races (1)	
Malays and Chinese are different (1)	
Own identity (1)	
Chinese like to clique (1)	
Chinese are proactive, Malays are not (3)	
Negative towards other ethnics (2)	
Back stabbing (2)	
Selfish attitude (2)	
Chinese and Indians conspire to overthrow the Malays (1)	
Judge other races based on own perspective (1)	
The Chinese are proactive to topple the Malays (1)	
Take advantage (1)	
Sentiments towards other ethnics (1)	Attitude
Chinese like to lie (1)	(18)
Chinese do not respect the Malays (1)	
The Indians always want to win (1)	
Racists (1)	
Negative feelings is inculcated by our parent since young (3)	
Family (3)	Family
Parents do not give moral support (2)	(11)
Parents do not educate their children (2)	
We are taught to preserve the racial gap (1)	
Media like to make the problem bigger (1)	Media
Media will exaggerate (1)	(2)
Powerful speakers (6)	
<i>Azan</i> should not be shouted (4)	
Chinese cemetery (land snatching) (3)	
Clothings are judged by the Muslims (2)	
Dominated by the Muslims (2)	
Complain about place of worship (2)	
Christians organize parties (2)	
Do not wash clothes at a Muslim owned laundry (1)	
Fight for a place for religious events (1)	Dissatisfaction (32)
Christians are not happy with Muslims (1)	
Organize a religious concert, but there are dances (1)	
Organize Chinese opera, disturbing (1)	
There are incense; many people are angry (1)	
Drive the illegal lorry, disturbing (1)	
There is no Indian cemetery (1)	Religious
Christians allow promiscuity (1)	Differences (67)
The priest pulls people using money (1)	
Priests donate a lot (1)	
Do not understand other religion (7)	Lack understanding
Difference in religious teachings (5)	of religion

Religious misunderstanding (3)	(21)	
Each religion has own teachings (2)		
Do not know about Islamic laws (2)		
Lack understanding of Islam (1)		
Religious sensitivity (1)		
Respect only own religion (3)		
Religious conflicts (3)		
Do not respect other peoples' beliefs (1)		
Racist in place of worship (1)		
Negative thoughts about religion (1)	Negative views and	
Negative towards other religion (1)	actions (14)	
Hijacked religious agenda (1)		
Create Hinduism as politic (1)		
Create Islam as politic (1)		
A handful of extremists (1)		
Different economical activities (11)		
Economic factor (6)		
Ethnic economical gap (5)		
Differences in opportunities (5)		
Malays are choosy about jobs (4)		
No opportunity (4)		
Chinese does not want to hire Malays (3)		
Private sector; Malays are totally oppressed (2)		
The Chinese economy has no <i>halal</i> law (2)		
Chinese companies take Chinese people (2)		
Fight to get jobs (2)		
Malays are left behind (2)		
Malay shop workers do not provide food during the		
fasting month (1)		
The dominance of a particular race in business (1)		
Chinese get more pay than the Malays (1)		
The income gap is unbalanced (1)	[No sub-theme]	Economic
We cannot work together well (1)		Inequality
Did not get what they deserve (1)		(59)
Segregated them to do a job (1)		
Economy is monopolised by the Chinese (1)		
Difference in development (1)		
There is a working quota (1)		
Sells liquor (1)		
Political system (8)		
Started from the political member (6)		
Racial political party (5)		
The issue is the political leader (4)		
Leaders care too much about tolerance (3)		
The top guns are not Malays (3)		
Political problem propaganda (3)		
We have our own leader (3)		
The Malays looks dominant (3)		
They take the religious and spirituality, they	Knowledge about	
created into politics (2)	politics	

Policy is focused on the Malays (2)	(50)	Political Conflict
Malays tolerate with the Chinese in the government (1)		(57)
Everyone wants to lead the country (1)		
Do not let other ethnics become the leader (1)		
The Malays have more power (1)		
Insinuate other ethnics in politics (1)		
Our politic in Malaysia (1)		
Priority only to Malays(1)		
Politicise the parliament (1)		
Former government lie on Malaysia politic (2)		
Affirmative policy can make races lazy (2)	Government	
Inequality in job promotion (2)	(7)	
Policy focuses on the Malays (1)		
Inequality among ethnics (5)		
Dissatisfied about Malays' privileges (3)		
Caring for the rights of the Malays (3)		
There are prices for Bumiputera and non Bumiputera (2)		
Rights and privileges have to be defended (2)		
Malay reserve lands are gone (2)		
Reserve lands are for Malays (2)		
Entrance in UiTM, only for Bumiputera (1)		
Rights of the Malays are given to the Chinese (1)		
Student intake quota to enter university (1)		
Support that the rights of the Malays are abolished (1)		
Short cut for Malays in 'rights of the Malays' (1)		
The rights of the Malays are given to others (1)		
Scholarship for the Malays are withdrawn (1)		
Scholarship should be made equal (1)		
Rights of the Malays are stolen (1)		
The Malays should be prioritised (1)		
Scholarship based on races quota (1)		Stealing rights and privileges
The Malays get discounts when buying a house (1)	[no sub-theme]	(38)
Non Bumiputera steals the rights of the Bumiputera (1)		
House and land for Bumiputera (1)		
More Malay rights (1)		
The Chinese want to change the constitution (1)		
Everyone has their rights (1)		
Rights should be made equal (1)		
Scholarship for Bumiputera (1)		
Case 513 Chinese and Malays are not in good terms (3)		
Revenge from the past (3)		
History factor in Malaysia (3)	Historical	
Chinese and Indians do not like History (2)	(12)	Primordial Sentiment
Ashamed the historical stereotype (1)		
Different geographical group (4)		(21)

Stay at different settlement (3)	Settlement
History of group settlement (2)	(9)

**Table 1:** The Ethnic and Religious Tolerance Barrier Factors from Youth Perceptions in Malaysia

**First Theme: Social Gap Factor**

The findings show that the social gap factor is a category of themes with the most frequent frequency support phrases of 243 frequencies. It is the main theme by representing 50.10 percent of the overall ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factor in Malaysia. From this theme, there are 10 sub-themes built below: (i) individual, (ii) education, (iii) negative actions and views, (iv) culture, (v) language, (vi) communication, (vii) lifestyle, (viii) attitude, (ix) family, and (x) media, as portrayed in Table 2.

**Table 2** The Social Gap Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia

No.	Sub-themes	Frequency	Percentage
		<u>Raw Data</u>	
1	Individual	43	8.86
2	Education	41	8.45
3	Negative actions and Views	35	7.22
4	Culture	30	6.19
5	Language	21	4.33
6	Communication	21	4.33
7	Lifestyle	21	4.33
8	Attitude	18	3.71
9	Family	11	2.27
10	Media	2	0.41
Total		243	50.10

**Source:** FGD Informants

The development of the first sub-theme, individual, is based on analyzed raw data such as lack of understanding of other ethnicities, problems arising from individuals, disagreements of opinions, lack of knowledge on other races, and not learning other cultures. This is evidenced by the dominant ethnic reality of the Northern Malay FGD that "... they do not understand and do not respect whereas we live in a plural society." This finding is also supported by other ethnic groups based on the Chinese FGD of Sabah which is "... those who do not understand each other are in the mood to cause disagreement." FGD Bumiputera Sabah also agreed on this by saying, "... understand their own religion or ethnicity and then be negative towards different ethnic and religious societies." Meanwhile, Northern Malay FGD informants once again point out that individual factors have impeded ethnic tolerance, "... this negative impression comes from the individual's attitude itself, and if we think negative then it will be negative ...." Similarly, Central Indian FGD Informant's views which looks at individual factors as the source point, "It comes from individuals rather than groups. The hate feelings are from individuals, not from groups." In a different context, individual factors are still seen as a barrier but they are associated with disagreement of opinions among the various ethnic groups as the Northern Malay FGD Informant's views, "... the rise of disagreement of opinions from each ethnicity will contribute to the barrier factor to tolerance among all ethnicities." This is also supported by Sabah Chinese FGD Informants, "... I think the different views of the various races are one of the barrier factors." Meanwhile, Northern Malay FGD Informants have stated

that individuals with less knowledge have caused difficulty tolerance to be accepted, " ... *because of the lack of knowledge from other races (individuals) ... we feel it is difficult to tolerate ....* "

The second sub-theme that is education was developed through raw data such as the vernacular school system, unequal educational opportunities, different stream of schooling, History courses more like Islamic propaganda, and no provision for Chinese schools. Hussein and Hanieza (2017) admit that the level of racial unity in the school is low. The findings of the Malay FGD are parallel to the barrier factor under the education sub-theme namely, "*... why it happens because of the education system has a vernacular school system.*" In this discussion, the Central Chinese FGD agreed on the vernacular school which led to the placement of ethnicity through its view, "*I mean like other people of races and entering vernacular school, I think that is the problem....*" FGD Informants from the same ethnic group but from Central said that "*... we have 3 main races and others ... we have vernacular schools. That is weird me ....*". Meanwhile, Indian ethnic informants also have similar stance when affirming the vernacular school is the cause,

*"The obstacle factor for my view is the vernacular school."* In this case, Bumiputera Sabah FGD informant also shared the opinion "*... in the old days this education system had a vernacular school, where indeed the schools were using only one language ... So it became one of the factors that prevented tolerance.*" While in the context of unequal educational opportunities, Middle Chinese FGD informants expressed dissatisfaction with this issue, namely, "*... very unfair for 4.0 Chinese students cannot get the scholarship but 3.0 students of other races can get.*" *It's a not about scholarship merit, it's mainly about scholarship based on races and there very much so unfair.*" An informant from the same ethnic group from Central also gave the view that, "*The educational opportunity ... For matric enrolment ... the chances for the Chinese and Indians are less ....*" And so for the same sub-theme but different issues, Central Chinese Informants feel that the subject of History taught in schools is inappropriate, "*...the 'History' course in public school it's more like an Islamic propaganda class. Much like TITAS that we are forced to take; it's promoting Islamic agenda rather than teaching you actual history of Malaysia....*" At the same time Central Chinese FGD Informant stated that "*History is a mandatory subject, if you fail it, you will fail all your SPM. You don't get the certificate. ...so much based on Islam and very unfair to like non-Muslim students.*" In contrast to the Sabah Bumiputera FGD informant, he felt the barrier to ethnic and religious tolerance in the context of education is due to the Chinese vernacular schools not getting provisions, "*... especially Chinese private schools, perhaps they are dissatisfied with the absence of any provision. But this is actually not an issue because for private schools this provision should not have been given... "*

Negative actions and views that serve as the third sub-theme is created as a result of raw data such as prejudice against other races, racial grouping, misinterpretation that will cause harm, other racial groups being side-lined, and negative issues about races. Southern Chinese FGD informants point out, "*... in Sabah, we are not biased against races or religious. Anyone can be a friend. But here (Peninsular) I think that there are Chinese ... very prejudiced. Prejudice about the Malays and the Indians.*" This issue of prejudice not only raised by the ethnic Chinese in the South but the same ethnic group in the Central area also had the same tone, "*... perhaps less racial understanding. So in Malaysia we tend to still be close to other races or we are prejudice against other races. We would think that if we have that prejudice we would be superior or insecure towards certain races.*" This prejudice practice is compounded by the feeling of association as worries mentioned by Central Chinese FGD

Informants, "...once you get over that like racial grouping, like what Informant A just say just now... like Chinese group, Indian group, Malay group... if you can overcome that, you will end it." In addition to this, an interpretation is also an issue and this matter is raised once again by the Chinese Central FGD Informant "I feel is it misinterpreting into like that, they can harm the life the other people to say in very drastic way, I feel that would have to be misinterpreting." However, South Indian FGD informants see the views and negative actions in different angles due to ethnic marginalization, "The fact is that a certain race is given a priority ... causes a barrier to ethnic tolerance. The other races also feel excluded (being marginalized) and dissatisfied...." The same feeling is shared by ethnic Chinese of Sabah through its FGD informants that "... every ethnic doing their own activities ... this situation creates income gap .... The instability of this will result in disintegration as a result of marginal feelings ..." The anxiety about these negative actions and views is also given attention by Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informants "And the less knowledgeable person in the matter will misinterpret it. And this causes our view of other religions or other races become different and more to a negative perspective ..."

Meanwhile, there are some raw data items that are identified as functioning as the fourth subtheme of culture such as cultural differences, racial differences, 50 tribes in Sabah, social differences, and taking the time to understand someone else's culture. Evidence suggests Eastern Malays FGD Informants try to reveal that cultural differences are a barrier factor of tolerance. He explains, "The culture inculcated by the Malays sometimes differ from each other ..." This is particularly troubling when the Central Chinese FGD Informants express implications from cultural differences, "... what I get from my experience in Malaysia, I do not see in what disrespecting each other's culture at much these days." He added, "... I do not like about our culture community in terms of tolerance towards other community." Meanwhile, Southern Indian FGD Informants tried to refine that different cultures cause tolerance barriers, "Every ethnic has different religions and cultures. Each of the races has different customs, language, art, culture, clothing and value systems." He further added, "... the differences in cultural elements such as the practice of trust and also in the language of create conflicts...." For Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informants, every ethnicity has its own culture and the failure to understand these differences will invite a dispute, "Malaysia is still experiencing racial and religious disputes ... As we know every Malaysian in this country has various and differences in terms of race..." He added, "... Sabah consists of various tribes, more than 50 tribes available in Sabah, so to understand each of these tribes is quite difficult compared to the Peninsular ..." Certainly this diversity of ethnicity leads to social differences of the same cultural aspects and the same informant added that, "... for me the social differences ... play a role ... when we say in respect of this ethnic tolerance ...." These cultural difference issues are also an issue to Middle Chinese FGD Informants to make sure they really understand about other cultures "...but it's a matter of going pass just basic interactions and actually taking the time to understand someone else's culture...."

In the meantime, language as the fifth sub-theme is derived from the classification of raw data such as different languages, using only native languages, not fluent in the Malay language, language is a big issue, and assuming the other language is a low language. Although Malaysia has a national language that is Bahasa Malaysia, language diversity shows the fragility of unity tool through language. Middle Chinese FGD informants shared the concern that, "The language is sometimes an issue, not so many in like Selangor. ... but the other parts of Malaysia, certain parts like Taiping in Perak, they are others only speak Mandarin or Cantonese and it's very hard to communicate." The problem of this language is also acknowledged by the same ethnic group through the Southern Chinese FGD Informant

*"Language is a factor that causes the lack of socialization."* Meanwhile, Sabah Bumiputera FGD informants examined that due to language issues then it complicates the communication between ethnic groups, *"... a separate language also makes it difficult for them to communicate with each other."* Meanwhile, Southern Indian FGD Informant found that there was a situation in the use of mother tongue language among the various ethnic groups that made it difficult for racial tolerance, *"If everyone is just managing the mother tongue alone then interaction between other ethnicities will be reduced and ethnic tolerance will also diminish."* This is because there are ethnicities that do not master the national language according to the Northern Malay FGD Informant, *"... ethnic Chinese are less fluent in Malay because of the vernacular school education."* This issue has also been supported by South Malay FGD Informants. *"There are Chinese ... there are Indians who cannot speak in the Malay language."* In the meantime, the Chinese also agree about the language issue when the Southern Chinese FGD Informants say *"Because language is an issue."* Language is seen as an issue of tolerance barrier because some view that the main language is low as exposed by the Northern Indian FGD Informants, *"... they just want to use their language and do not want to open up the world of culture. They think other languages are low-level languages...."*

While the sixth sub-theme of communication was built on the basis of raw data such as lack interaction among community, the Chinese had difficulty communicating with Malays, lack speaking in the Malay language, difficult interaction factors, and only speaking their own language. The debate on communications issues has been raised by Southern India FGD Informants that, *"I think the domination of a race in certain areas such as politics or business ....and also the social way among members of the community because of lack of interaction."* The issue of the lack of communication is also emphasized by Sabah Chinese FGD Informants that is *"our history of living in the same ethnic group makes us less communicating with the other races. So, the lack of this communication will lead to various disagreements with other races...."* This is because in the Eastern Malay FGD informant's view, Chinese ethnicity is seen as lack speaking in Malay, *"the language use is Chinese, so it makes them feel comfortable with that, so it is hard to speak or communicate with the Malays, they feel very uncomfortable around the Malays."* In this regard, it is acknowledged by the Southern Chinese FGD Informant, *"Our language is different. We are not fluent in Bahasa Melayu, so this is a problem."* In fact the Northern Indian FGD Informant found that difficulty in interaction was due to some ethnics are not fluent in the use of Malay language, *"... the difficult interaction causes a barrier towards tolerance among Malaysians is probably because of the lack of interaction with each other and there are also few who are proficient in national language..."* The Chinese FGD Chinese informant added, *"... we live differently, then with separate language. This makes it difficult for us to communicate ..."* While the Northern Malay FGD expressed her anxiety about the use of an ethnic language alone without mastering the national language, *"... they only speak their own language. So less for us ... other races to understand."*

The existence of the seventh sub-theme, lifestyle, is based on raw data such as mind sets of people (races), not knowing each other, prioritizing their own race, caring for their ethnicity alone, and the lack of association. The mind set issue according to the Eastern Malays FGD Informant, was able to prevent tolerance when each ethnic group had their own minds, *"... sometimes the thing that prevents tolerance between the Malays, China and India, is the mindset of each person. Malay mind set, Chinese mind set and mind set of India, respectively."* This view is supported by Southern Indian FGD Informants that the way people live today are unaware of their neighbours and this is stated as follows, *"... community disputes are linked to the difference between races or religions and that they have different beliefs because they are different people. So they do not know each other."* In this case, it is found that each race focuses

only on his own ethnic as emphasized by the Northern Chinese FGD informant, "... *the barrier to racial tolerance is that every race always prioritizes their own race, which makes every race more comfortable with their own people and it has created groups among the ethnics.*" The Chinese FGD Informant of Sabah also acknowledges this, "*Sometimes we see the people in Malaysia, and they are just caring for their own ethnicities. And everyone does not want to 'share' their ethnicity to others to find out more.*" Northern Indian FGD Informants also agree that less socialization is a way of life of the present society, "... *the factors that cause less tolerance in Malaysia are the lack of mixing between Malaysian citizens...*"

The eighth sub-theme that is attitude was developed based on raw data such as Chinese are proactive Malays are not, negative towards other ethnicities, back stabbing, selfish attitude, and Indian and Chinese are conspiring to bring down the Malays. According to Central Malay FGD Informants, the Malays are seen as less proactive in terms of their attitude than ethnic Chinese. This is stated as follows, "... *actually what happens is like this, the Chinese are proactive but the Malays are not. They always wait for things to come before their eyes...*" Sabah Bumiputera FGD also assesses negative attitudes may result from misinterpretation, "*And the less knowledgeable person in the matter will misinterpret it. And this causes our view of other religions or other nations different and more to a negative perspective ...*" The debate on this attitude was also raised by Central Malay FGD Informants on the backdrop of racial issues among the people, namely, "*That's why there is backstabbing, some take advantage ....*" Meanwhile, the debate about this attitude was also discussed by Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informants in particular about selfish attitudes, "... *selfish attitudes may also impede this tolerance practice ....*" In fact, Central Malay FGD Informants informally discuss the hot issue regarding the ethnic Chinese and Indian attitudes seen to have exceeded the limit. He said, "... *now Chinese, Indians are increasingly moving slowly to bring down the Malays ....*"

Family that serves as the ninth sub-theme of the raw data set, among them is negative feelings is put in us young by our parent, family, parents do not provide moral support, lack education by parents, and doctined that there is a racial gap. Central Chinese FGD explains that family factors play a role in tolerance. He thinks that there are families that instigated negative feelings toward different ethnic groups as, "...*a lot of a negative feelings we have towards other races is put in us when we are young by our parents... a lot of stereotype and likes false idea about other races are just put into our heads....*" It was also agreed by the Northern Malay FGD Informant that, "... *the factors that prevented tolerance are education from the family. For example, if he is from a family that is educated not to tolerate other ethnic ...*" In fact, the Eastern Indian FGD Informant says there are families that do not give positive support to the children through the following statement, "*For me the main obstacle to all individuals in Malaysia is their parents. Their parents did not give moral support since childhood.*" The views of the same races through the Northern India FGD Informers show that family influences are strong in the minds of children, "... *the factors that impede the tolerance of religious ethics in Malaysia are the lack of education of parents in their children.*" In addition to this evidence, the Northern Malay FGD Informants once again emphasized that it is due to family factors, "... *ourselves from us small ... we were educated like that. There is a racial chaos, there are specific rights.*"

Lastly for the tenth sub-theme of media, the construction of this sub-theme was based on raw data such as media makes the problem bigger, and the media exaggerate. The uncontrolled reporting by the media is said to cause grief to Central Indian FGD informant. He claimed that, "*It goes same to the newspaper also, that's how it is. If you want to end the problem, there are so many ways, but I personally feel that some media they like to make the*

*problem bigger and to make their challenge more famous... ” The informant further added, “... they might add on some irrelevant fact to make the story more interesting, so that many people will see. It's happening in media nowadays, it's like instead of telling the truth, they will exaggerate.... ”*

### **Second Theme: Religious Differences Factor**

With the frequency of support phrases 67 times, religious differences is the second largest theme contributing to 13.82 per cent of the ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factor in Malaysia as portrayed in Table 3. From this theme, there are three sub-themes under it that are (i) dissatisfaction, (ii) lack understanding of religion, and (iii) negative actions and views.

The development of the first sub-theme that is dissatisfaction was based on analyzed raw data such as strong loudspeakers, azan should not be shouted, Chinese cemetery (land grabbing), Muslim-dominated clothing, and dominated by Muslims. Recently, the issue of loudspeakers used during the azan has been criticized by non-Muslims. Northern Indian FGD informants stated, *“... the loud speakers are loud, where it disrupts peace or disturbs other religions in unnecessary times ....”* He added, *“... they started the azan in about 5:50 am ... this is what I mean by using the speakers ...”* Additionally, Southern Chinese FGD Informants are also in tune with the use of speakers, *“Maybe they always open the voice (speaker) the high volume one. Very loud ... Maybe because it is very close to home. Maybe at 5 o'clock out there what (voice) ... strong sound. People are sleeping ... still sleeping. However, the azan issue is sensitive for ethnic Muslims and azan is a must-have.”* The Southern Malay FGD states, *“There is, once, the azan should not be shouted. My housing area at that time ....”* Likewise, the situation faced by Sabah Bumiputera FGD informant, *“... the azan should not be shouted, that will also become religious sentiments among the residents in any part of the area ....”* Apart from the use of loudspeakers which is raised by non-Muslims, the Muslim ethnics also suppress their dissatisfaction with non-Muslim ethnics, for example in the issue of cemeteries. It was stated by the Southern Malay FGD Informant, *“There is a hilltop land, so people do not build houses. The hill is a bit steep too. So they made it as a Chinese cemetery. They bury dead people because they are trying to get the land there.”* Meanwhile, in the context of dressing, the Southern Chinese FGD informants poured out their dissatisfaction when judged by ethnic Muslims and it is stated by him, *“I am a woman ... I am not a Muslim. So the clothes I wear ... not suitable with Islamic teachings. i was judged by them. He added, “I like to wear shorts ... long sleeves. But for Islam it is unacceptable.”* While dissatisfaction among ethnic Indians is different and it is expressed through Central FGD Informant that, *“...the dominant race in Malaysia is Muslims and their religion is official in Malaysia .... That's why Islam is given a very high priority.”*

**Table 3** *The Religious Differences Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia*

No.	Sub-themes	Frequency Raw Data	Percentage
1	Dissatisfaction	32	6.60
2	Lack understanding of religion	21	4.33
3	Negative actions and views	14	2.89
	Total	67	13.82

**Source:** *FGD Informants*

Meanwhile, the formation of the second sub-theme which is lack understanding of religion, was derived from the classification of raw data, among others, lack of understanding of other religions, different religious teachings, misunderstandings of religion, every religion has different beliefs, and do not know the Islamic sharia law. This sub-theme shows that although the various religions in Malaysia have existed for many years, there are members of the community who still do not understand other religions as the Sabah Chinese FGD Informant's views, "... *we lack understanding between ethnic or religious of each other. This is the most serious factor...*" Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informant also supports this issue, "... *actually lacking understanding of individuals about other religions.*" Understanding this religion is in line with the differences in religious diversity. For example, Northern Indian FGD Informants say, "... *the barrier to ethnic tolerance is different religion...*" In fact Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informants have the same opinion, "... *for the religion in Malaysia, there are indeed many differences.*" Thus, religious misunderstandings will occur according to Sabah Chinese FGD Informants, "*This happens because when we misunderstand a religion or a different culture, certainly there will be disagreements among us.*" Southern Indian FGD informants are convinced that it is due to the belief in different religious teachings, "*Each one lack understanding and knowledge of each other and often considers they themselves are the best. Every religion has different views and beliefs.*" But for Southern Malay FGD Informants, "*the lack understanding of the religion is about the status of Islam as the official religion.*" Therefore, the appointment of the highest civil servants in a department should take into account the religious position in order for civil servants to know the Islamic legal issues. The anxiety is expressed by him as follows, "...*be a state attorney and do not know the Islamic legal law. Syariah Islam. Suddenly becomes a national lawyer. So people say if you want to be a lawyer you have to know about Islamic law.*"

While the third sub-theme that is negative action was built on the basis of raw data support such as respect for individual own religion, religious disputes, no respect for other religious beliefs, racism on places of worship, and religious (negative) thoughts. This negative action was voiced by South Indian FGD Informants, "*This is because they respect only their ethnic or religion. This response is a factor to be an obstacle to tolerance.*" Chinese FGD Informant of Sabah also sees conflict as a negative act. It states, "*If someone invades another religion, conflict is bound to happen, we take an example of the religious conflict that has taken place in Malaysia, the dispute of Christianity with Islam. Why it happens, because the use of the word 'Allah', has triggered the dispute.*" In addition, Northern Indian FGD informant is also linking issues of disagreement with no respect for other religions, "... *Malaysia is still faced with a population dispute associated with racial and religious differences is because there is no attitude to respecting other religious beliefs and teachings. This led to a conflict between Malaysians ...*" Due to this negative action, it is not surprising that social illnesses such as racism exist in the community as expressed by the Eastern Indian FGD Informant, "*In terms of places of worship, some have the nature of racism.*" In addition, thoughts have come to criticize other religions that are deemed unkind as the Southern Chinese FGD Informant said, "*Thought (negative) about religion. There is a small part of the Malay ethnic ... they see Chinese and say Chinese are pigs. They said bad things. It's normal to see this type of people.*"

### **Third Theme: Economic Inequality Factor**

The third largest theme contributing to the barrier factor to ethnic and religious tolerance is economic inequality. This theme contributes 59 support phrases and represents 12.16 percent as in Table 4. This theme was developed based on raw data such as different economic activities, economic factors, ethnic economic gaps, different opportunities, and Malays are choosy about jobs.

**Table 4** *The Economic Inequality Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia*

No.	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Raw Data			
1	Economic Inequality	59	12.16
	Total	59	12.16

**Source:** *FGD Informants*

Sabah Chinese FGD Informant states that there is an economic inequality in the scope of work. It is stated as follows: "... *economic practices are a barrier factor to tolerance and religion in Malaysia because of their different types of work.*" The uneasiness of this economic inequality is once again asserted by the same informant who said, "... *there is a certain ethnic whose economic situation is stable and another with economy in a low state ....So because of that they do not want to associate with other people or they will feel inferior ...* " He added that economic inequality would have implications for the economic gap. It is evidenced by the statement, "... *the Malays are more focused and focus on the kinds of jobs such as agriculture, fisheries and for the Chinese they are more focused on trade or business. And the fact is that the economic gap ....*" In fact, Central Chinese FGD Informant informs that economic inequality is due to different opportunities between Malays and Chinese as the statement, "... *yet they are (majority) the one differences other than minority.*" This is certified by the Southern Malay FGD Informant but he feels this issue is also contributed by the Malay ethnic mentality that is seen choosy about a job. His statement is as follows, "*Many economic opportunities go to the Chinese ... Malays choosy. Many Malays are educated and highly graduated. But they do not want to work because they are choosy.* "

**Fourth Theme: Political Conflict Factor**

With the support phrase frequency of 57 times, the factor of political conflict is the fourth largest theme which contributes to 11.75 per cent of the ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factor in Malaysia as in Table 5. From this theme, there are two sub-themes, namely (i) knowledge about politics, and (ii) the government.

**Table 5** *The Political Conflict Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia*

No.	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Raw Data			
1	Knowledge about politics	50	10.31
2	Government	7	1.44
	Total	57	11.75

**Source:** *FGD Informants*

The first sub-theme of knowledge about politics was developed through raw data such as political systems, starting from own politicians, racial political parties, top-level leaders, and leaders over guarding tolerance. These sub-themes highlight that the knowledge about politics factor is seen as a source of why ethnic and religious tolerance is difficult to achieve. The Northern Malay FGD informant stated, "... *perhaps in terms of the political system that took place in Malaysia, they disagreed and protested against the existing system of politics in Malaysia and caused differing opinions ...*" The matter regarding the challenge was also recognized from ethnic differently when Central Chinese FGD Informants also raise the same

issue, *"Politic, definitely politics ... So from me I think that number one barrier in Malaysian tolerance is politic, political leaders ...."* Similarly with the Northern Indian FGD Informants who see knowledge about politics as a challenge to tolerance, *"...I can see in terms of political factors which have become a barrier to racial tolerance, because when they are criticized by non-Muslims in the opposition party, the Muslims did not feel satisfied..."* In the meantime, there is also a view stating that discussions on power are linked to racial politics. The Central Malay FGD informants point out, *"... starting from the politicians themselves, because whatever issues are happening near our country, they will raise racial issues ..."* Meanwhile, Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informant also has the same view as *"In Malaysia the political party is racist, Malay UMNO, Chinese DAP although there are Malays but the majority is Chinese, Chinese MCA, Indian MIC ..."* The response to the challenge of this factor is reinforced by the role played by the superior as the opinion of the Central Malay FGD Informant *"... actually it starts from the top person, from the top leadership, and they are the ones who have actually poisoned those people below ...Even religious institutions are labelled as do not play their due role in tolerance"* as the experience shared by Central Chinese FGD Informant,

"I never been to mosque before, but friend of mine said he doesn't like going to the mosque in Subang because he heard all the political problem propaganda. They not actually during like, he feels like from he still kids until now what they talk about at the mosque is more political and there is he sees that, there is agenda behind that."

At the same time, the knowledge about politics factor has also been observed by Northern Indian FGD Informant as ridicule platforms. It is stated, *"... we used to see it at KINITV or YOUTUBE, where the red shirts involving UMNO and the other political parties have been made."* Based on another point of view, Central Malay FGD Informant felt a firm stand that knowledge about politics becomes the basic when considering permissible and non-permissible matters for the sake of tolerance. This is stated as follows,

"Because we the ones on top, if we have someone who is too tolerant, he becomes like this. He does not realize, the Malays are not aware that they are being seduced until they fail to see that the Chinese are now working.... the Chinese are pro-active and are really trying to bring down the Malays."

The second sub-theme of government was derived from a set of raw data including former government lied on Malaysia politics, affirmative policy can make lazy races, inequality in job promotion and policy focuses on only Malays. The ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factors are also linked to the role of the government. For example, Central Chinese FGD Informant said the government before the May 9, 2018 elections was involved with fraud against the people, *"... And so if look at modern politics in Malaysia I mean I would like to salute the Pakatan Harapan but our former government, they very much to lie on Malaysia politic ...."* Adding this informant again, the policy introduced by the government also affects an ethnic, *"... the policy can be seen for some races that affirmative policy can make races lazy to do something."* Informants from the South of the same races however see government policy as being double standard in rank promotion. It is stated as, *"in terms of jobs ... the issue of inequality in opportunity for promotion. It is in the government sector."* Meanwhile, the Sabah

Chinese FGD Informant also opined the similar issue in the context of the policy introduced by the government to reduce poverty, "...policies set by the government to help alleviate poverty among Malays. They have benefited the Malays and Bumiputeras compared to the Indians and the Chinese. "

***Fifth Theme: Stealing Rights and Privileges Issue Factor***

With the frequency of support phrases 38 times, stealing rights and privileges is the fifth largest theme contributing 7.84 percent to the ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factor in Malaysia as shown in Table 6. There are several raw data items identified as functioning as the theme such as inequality between races, dissatisfaction with the privileges of the Malays, defending the rights of Malays, having Bumiputera prices and non-Bumiputera prices, and the privileges must be maintained.

Table 6 *The Stealing Rights and Privileges Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia*

No.	Sub-theme	Frequency Raw Data	Percentage
1	Stealing of Rights and Privileges	38	7.84
	Total	38	7.84

**Source:** FGD Informants

Northern Indian FGD Informant states that there is an inequality between races. It is stated as, "... there is a racial inequality in Malaysia as we can see with the rights of Bumiputera where we can relate to the example of us to buy land ..." This matter is supported by informants of the Chinese FGD of Sabah but in a different context of the scope of the high ranks, "... exists inequality in terms of committees and certain ranks. Most of the highest ranks are mostly taken by the Bumiputera ethnic or the Malays." Feeling dissatisfied with the issue of rights and privileges was also reported by the Northern Indian FGD Informant when expressing their feelings, "... dissatisfaction with the privilege of the Malays has caused a sense of intolerance among ethnicity. Other people are dissatisfied with what is mentioned as the privilege of the Malays, other races claimed they are side-lined ..." However, Central Malay FGD Informant said that the rights and privileges inherited by the Malays need to be defended from any other violations of ethnicity. This is stated as, "... we should keep the rights of the Malays. If, for me, people has such a backstabbing nature ..." This parallel stance was also pointed out by the Northern Malay FGD that, "... the privilege of the Malays should be defended, as Malaysia itself was led by ethnic Malays and the Indian and Chinese came later." But once again Northern Indian FGD Informant expressed his dissatisfaction towards issue rights and privileges as follows, "... we have a Bumiputera price and a non-Bumiputera price which distinguishes and demonstrates racial inequality."

***Sixth Theme: Primordial Sentiment Factor***

The findings show that the primordial sentiment factor is a category of themes that has the smallest support phrase frequency of 21 frequencies. This theme represents 4.33 percent of the total ethnic and religious tolerance barrier factor in Malaysia. From this sixth theme, there are two sub-themes under it which is (i) History, and (ii) settlement, as in Table 7.

Table 7 *The Primordial Sentiment Factor Theme as a Barrier Factor for Ethnic Tolerance in Malaysia*

No.	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
		Raw Data	
1	History	12	2.47
2	Settlement	9	1.86
	Total	21	4.33

**Source:** FGD Informants

The creation of the first sub-theme of history was based on a set of raw data such as case 513 Chinese and Malays not good, revenge from ancient times, historical factors in Malaysia, Chinese and Indians do not like history, and ashamed of the historical stereotype. According to South Chinese FGD informant, racial riots on May 13, 1969 had a profound effect on ethnic tolerance, mainly involving ethnic Malays and Chinese. He cautiously said, *"In my view it is related to case 513 (May 13). Many people say that ... many Chinese were dead because the Malays killed them ... the history."* In this regard, Central Malay FGD Informant also expressed concern over the factors of history when reviving the avenger between ethnic groups as follows, *"Because from the past already there was an indeed the target of governing the country, and that they are willing to do anything, if the constitution is changed, because it is a sort of revenge, probably a grudge from the old days ..."* In the longer context, the history references before independence also show weaknesses by the imperialists creating an unbalanced policy. It has been criticized by the Central Chinese FGD Informant, *"History, because history in Malaysia, like Bumiputera and Malay, and afterward British brought over the Chinese and Indians for the mining, they were basically so like his father's generation always had been segregated up until independence ...."* Therefore, there is a view that states that ethnic Chinese and Indians do not like history as raised by the Central Malay FGD Informants *"... the Chinese and Indians, they do not like history, never like history, and often, and what goes out of their mouths, they will manipulate the facts ..."* This is not surprising as some referring to this history are those shameful things like the Central Chinese Informant *"So like create about tension between the races and also like all they all ashamed the historical stereotype for each races ...."*

The second sub-theme is settlement developed based on the raw data grouping for example different geographical groups, inhabiting different areas, group life history, and housing segregation. Sabah Bumiputera FGD Informant noticed that West Malaysia was also experiencing a geographic grouping in the context of settlement. He said, *"... we find that in Sabah in terms of geographical factor we will see there are divisions that we can set ourselves and that there are areas for the majority of the population in the region ..."* However, this grouping of settlements is not surprising if it happens in East Malaysia. This is because in Peninsular Malaysia the grouping of these settlements often occurs and it is clearly stated by Southern Malay FGD Informant, *"Separation. School isolation and followed by the settlement of housing."* This grouping of placement has a negative impact on ethnicity and the Sabah Chinese FGD Informant informs that *"... every race ... it is from our history to live in this ethnic group, so it makes us communicate less among the other races."* He further added, *"Each ethnic group performs certain activities and dwells on different areas, this situation also creates an unbalanced income gap and can cause dissatisfaction ..."*

## Conclusion

The findings to answer the objective of the study found that social barrier factor (50.10 percent) is the most important theme which serves as a major barrier to ethnic and religious tolerance in the perspective of youth in Malaysia. This is followed by other themes such as religious differences (13.82 per cent), economic inequality (12.16 per cent), political conflict (11.75 per cent), rights and privileges (7.84 per cent), and primordial sentiment (4.33 per cent). This discovery is important to enable every ethnicity and religion to know what is the do's and don't's in a diverse society in Malaysia. This study only applies the design of FGD among youth in Malaysia. Therefore, further studies on ethnic and religious issues are also recommended to use survey techniques. This is because this survey technique can involve the accumulation of larger amounts of data. In line with that, the generalization of the diverse ethnic and religious views is possible. The findings from this study suggest that the narrowing of the social gap should be emphasized to the younger generation. In this regard, tolerance among ethnics and religions development can be inculcated at individual, school or family institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that awareness campaigns be increased by the departments and agencies in social media such as television, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. In addition, ethnic and religious tolerance topics can be included in the History or Moral Education syllabus at both primary and secondary levels. Drastic measures can also be done by implementing national schools as the mainstream. It can be accomplished by empowering national schools and simultaneously closing national-type or vernacular schools in stages. This is seen in line with the views of the FGD Informants that the vernacular schools need to be closed. By conducting these intervention programs, it is hoped that the younger generation can learn and understand about other cultures and religions.

## Acknowledgement

The "challenges in Ethnic and Religious Tolerance based on Youth Beliefs in Malaysia" was conducted using the provisions of Wasatiyah Centre for Peace; 08/FRGS 03/2018.

## References

- Bagong Suyanto. (2016). Potential threats to social harmony in Johor, Malaysia. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, 24(4), 1737-1751.
- Carlsson, L., Lannerstrom, L., Wallman, T., & Holmstrom, I. K. (2015). General practitioners' perceptions of working with the certification of sickness absences following changes in the Swedish social security system: A qualitative focus-group study. *BMC Family Practice*. doi 10.1186/s12875-015-0238-5.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Fazilah Idris, Mohd Richard Neles Abdullah, Abdul Razak Ahmad & Ahmad Zamri Mansor. (2016). The effect of religion on ethnic tolerance in Malaysia: The application of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). *International Education Studies*, 9(11), 13-24.
- Hecher, M. (2011). *Rational choice theory and the study of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khairul Anuar Shamsuddin, Jessica Ong Hai Liaw & Ahmad Azan Ridzuan. (2015). Malaysia: Ethnic issues and national security. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(9), 136-143.

- Mahyuddin Ahmad. (2011). Between desire and hope: Ethnic relations and the notion of bangsa Malaysia in Gadoh. *Kajian Malaysia*, 29(1), 75-90.
- Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah. (2015). On Malaysia's ethnic tolerance: A study of two cities. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences*, 10(8), 294-297.
- Mohd Azrone Sarabatin. (2018, November 29). *Kontrak sosial, jus soli wujud hasil toleransi*. Diambil daripada <https://www.bharian.com.my/kolumnis/2018/11/503249/kontrak-sosial-jus-soli-wujud-hasil-toleransi>.
- Nazri Muslim & Ahmad Hidayat Buang. (2012). Islam dalam Perlembagaan Persekutuan dari perspektif hubungan etnik di Malaysia. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 20, 115-129.
- Nidzam Sulaiman & Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid. (2017). Will there be Malaysia spring? A comparative assessment on social movements. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 33(1), 43-58.
- Nur Farhana Abdul Rahman & Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali. (2013). Religious tolerance in Malaysia: Problems and challenges. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 3(June), 81-91.
- Sarjit S. Gill, Mohd Rahimi Ramli & Ahmad Tarmizi Talib. (2015). Kesedaran patriotik dalam kalangan belia bandar di Semenanjung Malaysia. *Jurnal Sosial Ilmu Politik*, 1(1), 111-120.
- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods: Ethnographer's toolkit*. New York: Altamira Press.
- Shamsul Amri Baharuddin. (2012). *Hubungan etnik* (Ed. ke-2). Bangi: Institut Kajian Etnik UKM.
- Zahrul Akmal Damin, Fauziah Ani, Lutfan Jaes, Khairunesa Isa, Siti Sarawati Johar, Harliana Halim, Shamsaadal Sholeh Saad, Ku Hasnan Ku Halim, Khairul Azman Mohd Suhaimy, Md. Akbal Abdullah, Khairul Anuar Kamri, Nur Azah Razali, Norafitri Md. Nor, Shahidah Hamzah & Rosman Md Yusoff. (2016). *Kenegaraan dan pembangunan mutakhir Malaysia*. Baru Pahat: Penerbit UTHM.
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2015). Qualitative analysis of content. Dlm. B. M. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Application of social research methods to questions in information and library science* (pp. 318-329). California: Libraries Unlimited.