

Research Article

The Level of Integration among Students at Secondary School: A Study in Limbang, Sarawak

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ABSTRACT: Student diversity is a challenge in forming a united society that can understand the values and norms of each individual. The aim of this study is to assess the level of integration among secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak. National identity was formed through building unity and integration among students. Therefore, this study is very important to see the level of integration of the students based on their behavior inside and outside of the school. Among the aspects to be examined to identify the level of integration is based on four dimensions of unity which is accommodation, acculturation, assimilation, amalgamation and the differences in mean level of integration based on ethnic demographic factors and the stream of primary education of the students. A total of 180 students were selected as respondents from three schools in Limbang, Sarawak. A set of questionnaire was used to measure the level of student integration. The results showed no significant differences of integration level of the students based on four dimensions of unity, and ethnicity and the stream of primary education of the students. However, the level of integration of the students are at a high level and most of the students tend to integrate through amalgamation dimension. Based on the overall mean, it shows that the highest mean score is dimension of amalgamation. In conclusion, fostering unity and integration should be focused in the practice of students in school or outside of school. For example, social integration practices in co-curricular and association activity. Through this practice, students will be able to understand more about the value of unity and integration so it can build national identity in students.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has a population of various ethnic groups with different language, culture, religion and different family system. This diversity does not prevent the country to go ahead and along with the development of globalization. Nevertheless, the existence of various ethnic is a challenge to form a united community that can also understand the identity and values of each culture and ethnic. This statement is supported by Ramlee Mustapha et al (2008) which is despite the nature of tolerance, unity and harmony in the country which has always been touted, some issues regarding unity and ethnicity often pose a challenge to the country's leadership in solving and managing the issues that are likely to invite some conflicts and disputes (e.g. [11]).

Similarly, at the primary school level, as stated by Najeemah Mohd Yusof (2006), the issue of fighting among ethnics has been reported to occur in students of different ethnic in high school (e.g. [7]). Jayum Jawan has also stated that the social relationship between students is at less friendly level and the polarization of students of different ethnic is evident (e.g. [5]).

School institutions is one of the places for us to develop national integration through social integration and social interaction among students. Rosmida (1999) states that students are considered as agents of change in society. Students can make a new way in inviting society to think. Students who are knowledgeable and who have good soft skills will be able to provide valuable input to the country (e.g. [10]).

Each ethnic are different in terms of belief, values, norm of life in which they affect their behavior, way of thinking and relationship with its surroundings. These differences lead to misunderstandings and conflicts that often occur among them (e.g. [8]). Therefore, it is important to ensure that secondary

school students have a high degree of social integration so they can establish good rapport thus, national unity and integration can be built.

Study based on unity and national integration among primary, secondary and university students has been done a lot by researchers, but research on social integration among secondary school students has never been done before. Thus, this study is expected to help students, teachers and ministry in facing challenges to achieve national identity. This is because through good social integration, the country can produce human capital that is united and respect each other's ethnic identity in the right way.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the level of integration of secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak and identify the differences in level of integration of students based on ethnicity and stream of primary school education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Integration means a merger or combination of two or more people into one entity or consolidation. (Kamus Dewan, 2007) .In addition, the integration also referred to the process of consolidation of the different communities, provinces and territories, shelter, culture, customs, way of life, backgrounds, beliefs and different religious beliefs to be an entity that is bound by the norms and values of society in order to achieve the goal of universal and common interest in a fair and equitable manner.

Integration is a process of creating a national identity among separate groups in terms of culture, social and location in a political unit. Meanwhile, the combination can also be defined as a process that unites the entire community and country so that every member of society can form an identity and shared

values and feelings of love and are proud of the motherland (e.g. [13]).

Another definition of integration by Jayum Jawan refers to the process of listing the various units or sections so that everything becomes one (e.g. [5]). It thus follows that this integration is the process of uniting all people of all races and different aspects of religion, culture and customs to be a group that mutually understand each other.

Unity and integration process in Malaysia exist in only four important concept of 'process 4A' which consists of assimilation, accommodation, acculturation and amalgamation. The concept of segregation that once existed in our country Malaysia due to the divide and rule policy of the colonial era before and after the independence, this concept is no longer valid in Malaysia (e.g. [13]).

According to previous studies conducted to measure the level of changes in attitudes and values of unity and national integration, some of the findings focused on the level of patriotism and perceptions of race relations and unity as well as values of nationhood based on Rukun Negara and the Constitution of the citizens which is in an unsatisfactory level.

Najeemah Mohd. Yusof (2006) also found that there are still gaps and stereotype in the activities of students in secondary schools. In her study of the pattern of social interaction between groups of students from different ethnic secondary schools in Malaysia has found the findings as follows, ethnic groups prefer to learn or discuss with their colleagues in the same ethnic group (e.g. [7]).

In addition, the negative attitude such as prejudice and stereotyping still exists in secondary school students of different ethnic, religion and socio-economic background in their schools (e.g. [9]). This assertion is supported by Jayum Jawan (2005), the social relationship was still less friendly and students of various ethnic polarization is evident. In other words, this clearly show that different ethnic beliefs, identities and norms tend to stereotype or be concerned about each other and maintain their identity. It also shows that ethnicity has a high influence on the formation of integration among schoolchildren.

According to the authors, this means there is also a possibility of the integration of students based on the dimensions of accommodation, assimilation, acculturation and amalgamation among students in secondary schools is still at a low level if the emphasis firmly on the goal of national unity and integration is given less attention by students, teachers and the authorities concerned.

Secondary school should be a platform for the implementation of the integration among students of different ethnicities. Even with the existence of various school system at primary school level that has threatened the development of unity values in early education (e.g. [4]), curriculum and co-curricular activities in secondary school can be done more effectively. Therefore, efforts to build a national identity should be implemented through programs and activities in schools to make up the attitude and spirit of integration of secondary school students. This is because secondary school connects all communities in the area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative and descriptive and conducted to determine the level of integration among secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak based on four dimensions of

unity and integration. The study also will look at the different levels of integration based on four dimensions of inter-ethnic and stream of primary education of the students.

Selection of participants are done randomly. A total of 180 participants which is Form 4 students are chosen for the study and they consist of Malay and non-Malay students from 3 different schools in Limbang, Sarawak. Furthermore, the basis of determining the number of samples of this study are based on Scheaffer, Mendenhall and Ott (2009), that state the minimum limit for the survey study participants are 30 people on a normal distribution (e.g. [12]).

In terms of data collection, the researchers have sought the cooperation of the History teachers to administer the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed in three schools that have been established by researchers with a total of 180 respondents. This study selected the respondents by the criteria that has been set. Before answering the questionnaire, the researcher will provide information to respondents regarding the purpose of the study, how to fill out the questionnaire and respondents were asked to respond individually. Respondents were given 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire and to ensure that the respondents fill out the questionnaires completely.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was constructed based on the suitability of the study conducted by the researcher. The researcher has chosen assessment tools based on the topics collected through the resources obtained namely Badariah Saibeh (2011) and Najeemah Mohd Yusof (2006) that has been processed according to the suitability of the research topic (e.g. [16]). Through the questionnaires, respondents must answer each question on a scale of approval levels that have been assigned to five categories. The questionnaire in this study is divided into two parts, part A and part B. Part A is regarding the background information on the study sample. Part B consists of 34 items that measure students' behavior related to integration and unity components, which is accommodation, acculturation, assimilation and amalgamation using question-formatted response through 5 likert scale score.

The data obtained will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 21. According to Mohd Majid (2000), analysis of statistical data using programming software Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) will be able to produce accurate calculation. Data from this study were analyzed by two methods, namely, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (e.g. [6]).

Table 1 Interpretation of the mean score

Mean score	Interpretation
4.30 to 5.00	Very high
3.50 to 4.29	High
2.70 to 3.49	Moderate
1.90 to 2.69	Low
1.00 to 1.89	Very low

Source: Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan (BPPDP) (2006), Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan (PIPP) Kuala Lumpur

Table 1 shows the mean score interpretation that is used to compare the integration level among the students which is used in analyzing descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

STUDY FINDINGS

The findings regarding the level of integration based on ethnicity and stream of primary education are discussed according to the data analysis which are descriptive analysis and inferential analysis.

Table 1 Demographic sample

Demography	N = 180	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	78	43.3
Female	102	56.7
Ethnicity		
Malay	70	38.9
Non-Malay	110	61.1
Stream of Primary Education		
One stream	138	76.7
Multiple stream	42	23.2

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents based on gender, ethnicity and primary education. Research shows more female students compared with male students. While non-Malay ethnic group is the highest compared to Malay ethnic group. The stream of primary education showed one stream schools are more than multiple stream schools.

Integration level of secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak based on four dimensions of unity

Table 2 Integration Level of Students

No.	Integration Level	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Accommodation	3.92	0.40	High
2.	Acculturation	3.76	0.46	High
3.	Assimilation	4.06	0.44	High
4.	Amalgamation	4.10	0.48	High
Total		3.96	0.35	

Table 2 shows the overall total score mean secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak based on ethnic and primary education findings indicate the dimensions of amalgamation had a total mean the highest ($m = 4.91$), followed by dimension assimilation ($m = 4.06$), next accommodation ($m = 3.92$) and finally the dimensions of acculturation ($m = 3.76$). This reflects the level of integration of the secondary school students of Limbang, Sarawak is to be at a high level and tend to amalgamate.

Integration level of secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak by ethnicity based on four dimensions : Accommodation, Acculturation, Assimilation, Amalgamation.

Table 3 Integration Level by Ethnicity

	Ethnicity	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
Accommodation	Malay	3.91	0.39	- 0.31	0.75
	Non-Malay	3.93	0.40		
Acculturation	Malay	3.66	0.41	- 2.43	0.01
	Non-Malay	3.83	0.48		
Assimilation	Malay	4.07	0.44	0.27	0.78
	Non-Malay	4.05	0.45		
Amalgamation	Malay	4.09	0.48	0.35	0.72
	Non-Malay	4.12	0.49		

Table 3 explains the difference of the level of integration based on the four dimensions according to ethnicity. The findings show that non-Malay students has a high mean score for dimension of accommodation. This can be seen from the table, the value of the mean score of non-Malay students ($M = 3.93$, $sd = 0.40$) is higher than Malay students ($M = 3.91$, $sd = 0.39$). Likewise for the dimension of acculturation, non-Malay students showed high mean score value of ($M = 3.83$, $sd = 0.48$) compared to Malay students of ($M = 3.66$, $sd = 0.41$). For dimensions of assimilation, the table shows the Malay students have a high mean score value ($M = 4.07$, $sd = 0.44$) than students of non-Malay ($M = 4.05$, $sd = 0.45$).

Next, the level of integration for the dimension of amalgamation shows the non-Malay students have a high mean score value ($M = 4.12$, $sd = 0.49$) compared to Malay students of ($M = 4.09$, $sd = 0.48$). However, as a whole, it shows only one dimension that indicates a significant difference based on integration level which is dimension of acculturation with value ($t = -2.43$, $p < 0.05$). Then, there were no significant differences in the level of integration based on the four dimensions according to ethnicity.

Integration Level of Secondary School Students in Limbang, Sarawak by stream of primary education based on four dimension: accommodation, acculturation, assimilation and amalgamation

Table 4 Integration Level by Stream of Primary Education

	Stream of Primary Education	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
Accommodation	One stream	3.94	0.42	0.68	0.49
	Multiple stream	3.89	0.31		
Acculturation	Malay	3.76	0.47	- 0.06	0.94
	Multiple stream	3.77	0.46		
Assimilation	Malay	4.07	0.45	0.38	0.70
	Multiple stream	4.04	0.41		
Amalgamation	Malay	4.14	0.47	2.91	0.04
	Multiple stream	4.01	0.51		

Table 4 explains the difference of the level of integration based on the four dimensions according to the stream of primary education. The findings show that students from one stream primary school has a high mean score for the dimension of accommodation. This can be seen from the table to the value of the score ($M = 3.94$, $sd = 0.42$) compared to students from multiple stream primary school ($M = 3.89$, $sd = 0.31$). Likewise, for the dimension of acculturation, students from one stream primary school showed high mean score value of ($M = RM3.76$, $sd = 0.47$) compared to students from multiple stream primary school ($M = 3.77$, $sd = 0.46$). For dimension of assimilation, the table shows students from one stream primary school has a high mean score value ($M = 4.07$, $sd = 4.07$) compared to multiple stream primary school students ($M = 4.04$, $sd = 0.41$). Next, the level of integration for the dimension of amalgamation shows that students from one stream primary school has a high mean score value ($M = 4.14$, $sd = 0.47$) compared to multiple stream primary school students ($M = 4.01$, $sd = 0.51$).

However, as a whole, only one dimension that shows significant difference level of integration by stream for primary education, which is dimension of amalgamation ($t = 2.91$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, there were no significant differences in the level of integration based on the four dimensions according to the stream of primary education.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

This study discusses about the level of social integration among students of secondary schools in Limbang, Sarawak. This study is a study that shows the level of integration among students will be increased upon the happening of perception and good social relations and ethnic factors. Primary education also has not been a big factor in enhancing the level of integration. It is important for us to focus on the issues of integration and unity among students because through the high social integration among the students, we are able to build national integration and foster unity among the community.

Overall, the level of integration of the students are at a high level and inclined to amalgamation. The results also showed that there was no significant difference in the level of integration of secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak based on ethnicity. Significant differences were only found in the dimension of acculturation. Based on findings, there are a few students that are not able to accept other ethnic dishes, use of other ethnic groups and they are more comfortable when assisted by fellow ethnic when facing problem, probably due to the religious aspect and customs, especially in terms of cuisine and clothes.

It certainly did exist in some circles of society where they have ethnocentrism attitude which is a belief that elements of their own culture is greater than the elements of other cultures (e.g. [2]). The results of this study are consistent with Suzana Sulaiman's study (2013). She stated that there were many students who love to eat a variety of ethnic foods but there are also students who only eat their ethnic food only (e.g. [14]).

This study is consistent with a study by Badariah Realist (2011), the findings of the four levels of integration shown by the leaders of the non-Malay ethnic students are at high level (e.g. [16]). The study by Faridah Karim et al. (2008) also obtained similar findings which is, the level of integration of ethnic university students across the peninsula is shown by non-Malay ethnic, the Indians (e.g. [1]).

In addition, in the study by Najeemah Mohd Yusof (2006)

about the pattern of social interaction between different group and ethnicity in secondary schools in Malaysia, she found that tribal cultures still exist among students in secondary schools although they were in the same class (e.g. [7]). This may also occur in some Malay students and non-Malay students even though both have high level of integration. Therefore, promoting the values of unity and integration among students should be taken seriously by all parties, especially to the Malay ethnic.

Fostering unity and integration can be achieved through co-curricular activities, volunteering activities and even the teachers also embed the values and practices of integration in co-curriculum. This statement reinforces the report submitted by the Daily News (October 22, 2015) in which the RIMUP was conducted in 78 schools and it is found that the activity of integration and unity can be seen through the interaction and behavior of students in the classroom and during extracurricular activities take place (Straits Times, 22 October 2015).

According to Aminuddin (1953) in Tan Yao Sua (2007), co-curricular activities play an important role in developing unity and integration among students. He listed four types of activities; classroom activities, school activities, community activities and events involving the outside world that can help students to engage in racial relations (e.g. [15]). This study has shown that the two ethnic groups have a high level of integration and proving that the statements which states that extra-curricular activities and the implementation of programs related to the unity and integration can increase the level of integration and create unity among the Malay and non-Malay.

Similarly, the different levels of integration, according to the stream of primary education which shows that there is no significant difference in primary school students in one stream school and a multiple stream school. However, this study contradict the statements of Mohammad Rodzi (2009) which states that the existence of a multiple stream school has prevented the students from building a good relationship, for example, being friendly, socialize and foster relationships (Mohd Rodzi Abdul Razak, 2009).

In conclusion, the integration of secondary school students in Limbang, Sarawak was not caused or was caused by the stream of primary education in either one stream school or multiple stream school. The integration level students are also not affected by the Malay and non-Malay ethnics. This is because, through the findings, it shows that students have positive social relationships in which through social relationships or social interactions that we can form integration and unity among students. This statement is supported through a study by Hazri et al (2004), trying to identify the level of social interaction between students of various ethnic groups in secondary schools. Findings indicate that the level of social interaction between students of various ethnic groups are affected by the situation, social background, prejudices of the students as well as school policy (e.g. [3]).

IMPLICATIONS

This study is very important to students in particular. Students can find out that integration and unity is very important and should be aware its importance to create a harmonious environment and atmosphere at school. In addition, the problems of stereotype and prejudice and that prevents cultivation of unity and integration among students can be avoided. When stereotype and prejudice among students are

avoided, there will be no discipline issue occur in school.

Teachers as agents in delivering knowledge and implementing government policies need to have a clear understanding of unity, integration and national identity to understand its importance. The hidden meaning behind the concept of unity and integration itself need to be taken seriously by teachers and the school in planning and implementing programmes related to unity and integration at school and outside the school in general.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of integration is important in school because it is the platform for the younger generation to build integration and it can also foster social interaction in multi-ethnic community. It is also an effort to create a new generation that is committed, courageous and confident in facing the challenges ahead in order to defend the nation and the country.

This study is also expected to broaden the view of researchers so the study on integration can be continued from time to time. In addition, this study also provides useful content to other researchers to do it in different population so that more efforts to build national integration can be done well and continuously. Efforts to build national identity through social integration among secondary school students should be a duty for all parties. To foster unity and build national integration, the importance of national integration must be integrated into the minds of every citizen, especially the younger generation as it will lead the country in the future.

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