



Research Article

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Malaysian Peacekeepers Perspectives on the Influence of Governance and Ethnic-Cross Relationship in Enhancing Ethnic Tolerance during Peacekeeping Operations

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Abstract

Ethnic tolerance among peacekeepers plays an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Therefore, this study aimed to analyse the influence of governance and ethnic-cross relationship towards enhancing of ethnic tolerance based on the perspectives of Malaysian peacekeepers. This study applied quantitative data collection method through a set of questionnaires with 432 participants that previously being deployed to various United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). The result indicates that both governance and ethnic-cross relationships have a positive correlation towards enhancement of the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers. The findings could strengthen the code of ethics for cultural competence, which emphasises the importance of understanding ethnic tolerance during peacekeeping operations or deployments.

Keywords: governance, ethnic-cross relationship, ethnic tolerance, Malaysian peacekeepers

1. Introduction

In countries emerging from war and conflict, state-building may take a decade to bear fruit. This situation becomes more difficult because of the growth of intolerance among the ethnic groups, such as communal violence during the post-war period in Cote d'Ivoire, which is often motivated by community-level cleavage and disputes over resources like land (Barcells, 2011). Hence, ethnic tolerance and cultural understanding are necessary during peacekeeping operations that take place in a more complex environment. Without both of these elements, peacekeeping operations can be ineffective and even worse, causing new conflicts with local residents to arise (Rubinstein et al., 2008).

Ethnic conflicts have become increasingly prevalent in recent decades. For a nation that has ethnic, racial, and religious disparities such as Malaysia, having a high spirit of tolerance and mutual respect is vital, especially when each ethnic group has different social interests. Malaysian experience has shown that the willingness to minimise prejudice or negative perception in individual behaviour when interacting and engaging with people from other ethnic groups is not unlimited (Hoffman, 2000). According to Fortna (2008), ethnic differences inside a state influence the likelihood of civil wars in the first place, and many have suggested that identity conflicts are particularly difficult to resolve.

Governance plays an important role in managing ethnic tolerance in multi-ethnic countries. Thanks to the power given by the people, the government has the power to manage the growth of the country and plan administrative procedures that meet the needs of the people, including the right to live in peace and harmony. According to Hyden and Court (2002), when people believe they are being treated equally and justly by the government, they experience a sense of fulfilment in being respected, which at the same time promotes peace. In order to achieve this, good governance is necessary, mainly when applied to basic principles such as the law's impartial execution to all levels of society without considering their background and social classes. In this study, the Malaysian peacekeeping force is a representative of the Malaysian government in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations.

In order to restore peace and security in conflicting countries, the UN has introduced UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) that consist of a coalition of military, police, and civilians from all around the world with various backgrounds. In this multidimensional peace phase, most wars and conflicts take place between different ethnicities or factions of the same country. The deployment of a UN mission affects the conditions that lead to violence in unforeseen and terrible ways. Efficient ethnic violence reduction is dependent not just on the type and number of peacekeepers, but also on their ability to change opportunities and incentives for various types of violence originating from ethnic compositions.

Existing literature on governance and ethnic-cross relationships has been done in various ways. However, there are few studies that bridge the two aspects, while there is no study that links both governance and ethnic-cross relationship effects on Malaysian peacekeepers' level of ethnic tolerance. Malaysia is one of the contributing countries to UNPKO along with other countries. Therefore, this study aimed to examine how governance and ethnic-cross relationships influence the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers during their deployment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethnic tolerance

The term "ethnic" originates from the Latin word "ethnicus," which means "country." It may also apply to individuals or "races." According to Horowitz (1985), ethnicity is a sense of collective belonging that might be based on common ancestry, language, history, culture, race, or religion. As for the word "tolerance," it means "to bear, hold out, and endure" (Mohd Azmir et al., 2017).

According to Schirmer (2012), the importance of tolerance has a major effect on liberal thought, with a focus on peaceful coexistence amongst ethnic groups. Communities will be more open to accepting differences in opinions, thinking, understanding, beliefs, and other ethnic communities as a result of the spirit of tolerance (Janmaat & Mons, 2011). When ethnicity clashes, however, it becomes crucial. For example, riots between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria led to a civil war back in the 1990s, while the war in the 1960s was driven by ethnic tension (Varshney, 2009).

The primary goal of peacekeepers deployed is to reduce violence. As a result, they must decrease mobilisation incentives and opportunities. Accordingly, peacekeepers must address the cost-benefit analysis that makes ethnic conflict violence so appealing. According to Salvatore (2018), the local distribution of power between ethnic groups affects the ability of UN forces to protect civilians. Efficient ethnic violence reduction is dependent not just on the type and number of peacekeepers, but also on their ability to change opportunities and incentives for various types of violence originating from ethnic compositions.

2.2 *The Influence of Governance on the Enhancement of Ethnic Tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers*

Governance requires interactions between institutions, processes, and practises that decide how power is exercised, how decisions are made, and how they have their say among people or other stakeholders. It is basically about authority, relationships, and accountability, or more specifically, who has power, who determines, and how responsible decision-makers are held (Plumptre & Graham, 1999). National integration has been critical to Malaysia's prosperity and development since independence, and it turned out to be one of the primary agenda pieces for Vision 2020. Malaysians' multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and multi-religiosity, which necessitated tolerance values and behaviour, has thus become a significant component of political, economic, and social strength (Mohd Azmir et al., 2017). Therefore, the importance of ethnic tolerance has been imbedded in every Malaysian, including the military.

From a political viewpoint, with an understanding of what each ethnic group inherits, the administration of a nation that insists on tolerance will be able to preserve peace in a multi-racial society. With the absence of political tolerance, a racially diversified community might lack the requisite lubricant to allow democratic processes to function effectively (World Public Opinion Organization, 2009). Nevertheless, it remains an unresolved subject in academic studies as to how and in what ways political and peacekeepers' ethnic tolerance are linked and hence influenced. Malaysia's political system is built on a federal constitutional monarchy, with His Majesty, the King, serving as the head of state and the Prime Minister as the head of the government. From 1957 to 2018, Malaysia's political system has been characterised by consociationalism, in which ethnic concerns are settled within the context of a grand coalition (Bogaards et al., 2019). In Malaysian politics, ethnicity plays an essential part, and several political groups are ethnically oriented. The foundation of racial group politics may be linked back to Malaysia's independence from the British, which desired all Malaysian nationals to be equivalent following independence, rather than Malays dominating the country. As a result, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO-representing Malays), Malaysian Chinese Associations (MCA-representing Chinese), and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC-representing Indians) bundled together to create the Alliance Party. Despite the fact that Malaysia seems to be in a period of political disarray since UMNO, which had ruled for more than 60 years after independence, was defeated in the 2018 general election due to massive, widespread corruption allegations, there have been no major issues with Malaysian ethnic unity, which remains strong under the leadership of His Majesty the King (Wong & Ooi, 2018). This demonstrated that Malaysian governance did an excellent job of promoting ethnic unity in the country, which was then portrayed by the Malaysian peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping operations.

In terms of economics, studies have shown that people with high levels of economic growth are more tolerant and work cooperatively for national economic development (Robert, 1973). Governing

the economic condition is critical to sustaining the nation's continuing and authentic national unity. A strong economic perspective will automatically breed nationalism and a willingness to band together for the public good. Malaysia faces significant security and political challenges as a result of economic disparities between ethnic groups. Therefore, the National Economic Policy (NEP) was designed to close the economic gap based on ethnicity while also improving economic imbalances (Jomo, 2005). The NEP reorganised occupational structures by mobilising numerous ethnic groups into multiple industries, as opposed to the old environment in which some industries were entirely dominated by particular ethnic groups. As a result, the NEP played a significant role in fostering ethnic unity, which was then followed by Malaysian peacekeepers in every peacekeeping operation all over the world (Amelia et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, a country with ethnic majorities and minorities will face obstacles and challenges as each ethnicity has different demands in all aspects, including the education system. Malaysian governance is doing all it can to develop policies in the economic, political, social, and educational sectors that can meet the demands of all ethnic groups. The national education curriculum is being given particular attention since it is viewed as a key means of uniting diverse ethnic societies (Janmaat & Mons, 2011). The Razak Report (1956) laid the groundwork for Malaysian ethnic harmony via education (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012). Furthermore, the formation of the Education Act 1996 has further led the Malaysian education system's policies in an effort to strengthen ethnic unity. This Act was drafted with the purpose of fostering unity through education system consistency (Jayum, 2003). As a result, unity in school can be seen in terms of linguistic mode, norms, curriculum, and educational materials. The establishment of vernacular schools or alternative streams indicates that Malaysia's educational system is constantly implementing policies that may satisfy the many requirements and desires of a multi-ethnic community. Therefore, Malaysian peacekeepers seem to have a high level of ethnic tolerance due to the educational system implemented by the Malaysian government.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive correlation between governance towards the enhancement of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers.

2.3 *The Influence of Ethnic-Cross Relationship on the Enhancement of Ethnic Tolerance among Malaysian Peacekeepers*

Ethnic cross relationships are daily types of interaction that consist of everyday life interactions, including families from various communities and ethnicities visiting one another, participating in cultural events together, and allowing their kids to play together (Varshney, 2001). When strong, all these types of interaction create peace. However, their lack or inadequacy allows ethnic strife to flourish. Research has shown that good interaction between people from different ethnic groups or ethnic cross-relationships decreases discrimination and increases the sense of shared identity and closeness between people (Jason et al., 2001). In this study, ethnic-cross relationships focused on three aspects, which are personal, community, and institutional.

At the personal level, relationships require cooperation either with individuals from the same ethnic group or with individuals from different ethnic groups in order to reinforce the social connections of community life. The outcomes of everyday experiences will indirectly reinforce cooperation and boost tolerant principles (Kioko, 2016). Malaysia, with a headcount of 32.7 million citizens, is a multi-racial and multi-religious nation. The ethnic diversity of Malaysia's population is one of its most striking features. The Malay (69.8%), the Chinese population (22.4%), and the Indian group (6.8%) make up Malaysia's ethnic groups. Additional ethnicities, like Eurasians and West and East Malaysians, account for 1% of the total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Malaysians are exposed to a wide range of cultures, social customs, and beliefs as the country is multi-ethnic. They're accustomed to mingling with and blending with people of different ethnic backgrounds. People of all races join together to rejoice during celebrations, which strengthens Malaysians' links of camaraderie and solidarity. For example, non-Muslims will celebrate Eid with

their Muslim friends, while Muslims will also enjoy the Chinese New Year and Deepavali celebrated by their Chinese and Indian friends (Husin et al., 2020). These personal interactions have been there since long before and are being practised by every Malaysian, which can also be seen through Malaysian peacekeepers.

Through the practise of tolerance, ethnic cross-relationships play a key role in strengthening social cohesion, both at the personal and community levels. These will further reinforce the relations between ethnic groups at the community level through discussions and debates in defence of the interests of each ethnic community. Former Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak, established the concept of 1Malaysia, founded on the philosophy of "People First, Performance Now" in an attempt to grow a more robust Malaysian ethnicity in the face of globalization's difficulties (Najib, 2009). The Malaysian concept aims to promote relationships and collaboration among Malaysia's multi-ethnic people as a means of countering the numerous challenges and risks that intend to harm and interrupt the integrity of individual lives. 1Malaysia strives to maintain and improve its unity in a variety of ways. Malaysia's core has always been its unity, even before the country became independent. This capability will be preserved as a ration or reserve in the event of an unforeseen crisis. Ever since the time of independence, unity has indeed been formed as the foundation for guiding the nation toward greatness. The goal of 1Malaysia is to rekindle and revitalise the feeling of togetherness and fraternity among the communities (Awang et al., 2016). This practise has been carried out by Malaysian peacekeepers in any operation.

Through interactions between ethnic groups, ethnic cross relationships that have formed at an individual level can grow at a group level, implicitly reinforcing mutual respect and strengthening it even at institutional levels. The risk of ethnic conflict would be reduced further if shared respect for the rights of all ethnic communities were fostered (Shamsul, 2001). Institutions, especially citizenship laws and government policies, describe and embody cultural values about who is a valid member of the nation-state when it comes to tolerance for ethnic minorities. Unification has to become a goal for everybody, and anyone can contribute to Malaysia's success. Individuals, communities, and social institutions all have a part, and achieving unity is dependent on how successfully these three organisational members collaborate. The Bahá' Office of External Affairs of Malaysia has organised a dialogue series titled "Protagonists of Unity," which is bringing together scholars, nongovernmental organizations, and representatives from the nation's religious organisations to discover the greater consequences of unity and the concept of civilization's unity (BWNS, 2021). Trust is developed when a secure conversation environment is established, one that is instilled with a feeling of respect for all and in which individuals talk with decency and listen to others with modesty and an inquisitive mind. Other than that, religious institutions also play an essential role in ethnic unity. For example, during natural disasters, such as the flood that took place in Malaysia, religious institutions help in giving shelter and providing basic necessities to all the victims, despite their ethnicity and religion. The mosque committees provide shelters and food; the church organisation helps with donations; while the other religious organisations help victims clean their properties (Savitha, 2020). This attitude and behaviour can also be seen through Malaysian peacekeepers.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive correlation between ethnic cross relationship towards the enhancement of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers.

3. Methods

3.1 Sample size and data collection procedures

A total of 432 Malaysian peacekeepers that have returned from overseas deployment have participated in this study. Due to the limitation of time, the researchers chose to use a snowball sampling technique. Various variables, including gender, services, race, religion, religion's practice, living area, ethnicity in living area, and number of friends from other ethnicities were used to describe the sample characteristics. The study was carried out using a quantitative approach to aid

the researchers in generating the most accurate research evidence. A convenience sample strategy was used to distribute 432 questionnaire surveys. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) application. To address the study's research questions, the Pearson Product Coefficient (r) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were used.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire was divided into three segments, and the first section focused on demographic information, such as gender, services, religion, and the frequency with which respondents participate in community activities. The following section was on ethnic-cross relationship affects towards ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers, while the last part was on governance affects towards ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers. The scores for each item were measured by using Likert's scale of 5, which fell into the range of 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, and 5 – strongly agree (Hair et al., 2017).

4. Results

4.1 Data analysis

Based on the information provided earlier, Table 1 displays distinct demographic characteristics of responders.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristics	Number of respondents (n=432)	Percentages (100%)
Gender		
Male	375	86.81
Female	57	13.19
Services		
Armed Forces	354	81.94
Air Forces	53	12.27
Navy	25	5.79
Race		
Malay	425	98.38
Chinese	2	0.46
Indian	1	0.23
Others	4	0.93
Religion		
Islam	425	98.38
Buddha	3	0.69
Christian	1	0.23
Hindhu	0	0
Taoist	1	0.23
Traditional Religion	2	0.47
Religion's practice		
High	119	27.55
Medium	312	72.22
Low	1	0.23
Living area		
Village	99	22.92
City	254	58.80
District town	79	18.28

Table 1 indicates that the total number of respondents is 432, which consists of 375 (86.81%) males and 57 (13.19%) females. 354 (81.94%) of the respondents serve in the Armed Forces; 53 (12.27%) are in Air Forces service and 25 (5.79%) are in Navy service. The majority of the respondents are Malay, which totals up to 425 (98.38%) of the total respondents, Chinese up to 2 (0.46%), Indian 1 (0.23%) and other ethnicities (0.93%). There are 425 (98.38%) Muslims, 3 (0.69%) Buddhas, 2 (1.47) traditional religions, and 1 (0.23%) Christian and Taoists. As for religious practice, the majority (312) of the peacekeepers are in the medium category (72.22%), 119 (27.55%) in the high category and 1 (0.23%) in the low categories. The findings also showed that 254 (58.8%) respondents live in the city area, 99 (22.92%) live in the village area and 79 (18.28%) respondents live in the district town area.

4.2 Governance

Governance was measured based on the works of Holohan (2019) and Sten and Sven (2012). Among the items are: "Ethnic unification can be achieved gradually through education," "Employment opportunities are open to all locals regardless of ethnicity and religion," and "Political parties play a role in reducing the tension of racial conflict." The variable's governance has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.827, and the item's reliability is valid since the value is greater than 0.7.

4.3 Ethnic-cross relationship

An ethnic-cross relationship was measured based on the works of Varshney (2001) and Husin et al. (2020). Some examples of the items are as follows: "In my sphere of responsibility, ethnic disparities are the source of conflict," "I mingle with peacekeepers from other countries," and "I am involved in multi-ethnic community activities." The variable ethnic-cross relationship has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.838, and reliability for these items is accurate since the value is greater than 0.7.

4.4 Ethnic tolerance

Ethnic tolerance was measured based on the works of Shamsul (2001) and Janmaat & Mons (2011). The following are some examples of the items: "All races should have equal rights in terms of education, politics, and economy," "I am open when individuals from other ethnicities disagree with me," and "I am fair in making decisions regardless of ethnicity." For the variable ethnic tolerance, Cronbach Alpha reliability is 0.859, and reliability for the variable is valid since the value is greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2: Coefficient of Determination

Construct	R Square
Governance	0.541
Ethnic-cross relationship	0.32

The value of R² was used to evaluate the structural model, as shown in Table 2. According to Hair et al. (2014), the path coefficients should have standardised values between -1 and +1. If a number close to +1 denotes strong positive relationships, a value close to -1 implies strong negative relationships. The endogenous factors in this study, governance and ethnic-cross connection, have R² values of 0.542 and 0.32, respectively. As a result, indicating the fact that the structural model created in this study has predictive value.

Table 3. Measurement model

Construct	AVE	Composite Reliability
Governance	0.867	0.979
Ethnic cross relationship	0.559	0.863
Ethnic tolerance	0.827	0.962

Table 3 above indicates the composite reliability (CR) determined from the factor of loadings of the attributable observable variable by each of the stated latent components. Based on the tables above, both governance and ethnic cross-relationships obtained CR ranging from 0.863 to 0.979, which, according to Hair et al. (2017), values greater than 0.50 are considered credible.

Table 3: Discriminant validity

Construct	Ethnic-cross relationship	Governance	Ethnic Tolerance
Ethnic cross relationship	0.754		
Governance	0.586	0.811	
Ethnic tolerance	0.572	0.461	0.775

According to Hair et al. (2017), each construct should have a higher AVE than the squares of the correlation between the constructs and all other constructs. Examining the correlations between the measures of potential overlapping constructs can thus be used to assess discriminant validity. Table 3 shows that all of the square roots of AVE, which are the values in bold off-diagonal, are greater than the correlations in the respective columns and rows. From that point on, the measurement model was found to have adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Construct	β	t value	p value	Result
Governance → Ethnic tolerance	0.257	2.660	0.008	Accepted
Ethnic-cross relationship → Ethnic tolerance	0.245	3.715	0.000	Accepted

Table 4 presents the path coefficients (β) and their significant values. Both the direct path coefficients, which are governance → ethnic tolerance and ethnic-cross relationship → ethnic tolerance, are both significant. In H1, this study expected that the governance factor would positively and significantly influence the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers. As predicted, the findings in Table 4 confirmed the hypothesis. In H2, this study expected that the ethnic-cross relationship factor would positively and significantly influence the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers. As predicted, the findings in Table 4 confirmed the hypothesis.

5. Discussion

5.1 Governance

As for political elements, Malaysian peacekeepers agreed that they are comfortable endorsing political parties based on those ethnic groups because they share similar cultures, languages, and religions. However, this does not forbid them from respecting and tolerating other political parties or systems. No matter where they were deployed, Malaysian peacekeepers managed to engage in their political systems. For example, the Malaysian Battalion (MALBATT) had 1,058 personnel under UNTAC, including an infantry battalion, military observers, and military police. The battalion had been sent to the Battambang region, which is one of the nation's most volatile regions. Malaysia

provided helicopters to transfer ballot boxes to safe facilities in assistance with the elections. Malbatt also kept a close eye on voters in the Battambang region, who turned out in large numbers with UN-issued ballot papers (Husain, 2021). In Mindanao, anyone who possesses property is regarded as powerful and holds a prominent position in the organisation (Hilotin, 2019). This is due to the importance of political power in monopolising and dominating territory. As a result, as soon as the Malaysian monitoring team arrives in Mindanao, they will meet with Moro Nation political leaders and Philippine government political leaders to explain the objective of their presence in the area. The Malaysian monitoring team has such a good relationship with the Moro leaders that they are able to hold successful peace discussions. This proved that Malaysian governance managed to enhance Malaysian peacekeepers' ethnic unity through politics.

As for economic elements, Malaysian peacekeepers agreed that economic factors could affect ethnic tolerance. Addressing economic, social, and cultural rights is critical to combating terrorism and rebuilding peace because the denial of these rights can be a major contributor to conflict and constant upheaval. For instance, there was an incident where the peacekeeper camp in Malaysia was approached by a tribal leader with 34 followers. To avoid any conflict, MALBATT's leaders at that time, Lieutenant Colonel Nazaruddin and Major Zain Hashim, who had understood the atmosphere of the economic activity and the poverty level of the local community, both invited the group to enjoy the food provided. Through conversation with the tribal leaders, the two leaders of MALBATT tried to win them over by buying armaments that they brought together and offering them cigarettes. However, at the same time, the MALBATT team is always on guard and alert. As a result of tolerance and trying to induce local people's culture, both MALBATT team leaders not only managed to avoid conflicts with the group but also helped them economically (Tan, 1989). This event showed that the economy had an impact on the enhancement of ethnic unity among Malaysian peacekeepers.

Malaysian peacekeepers strongly agree that education has a positive impact on ethnic tolerance levels. Peacebuilding education in peacekeeping operations should include facts and figures regarding modern militarised conflict. Other than that, it ought to emphasise the instruction of conflict resolution techniques and critical reading skills, coupled with the development of cultural tolerance and nonviolence values. In peacekeeping operations, education should include inter-ethnic community projects or inter-ethnic economic development programmes involving children and teenagers from different ethnic groups. For example, Malaysian peacekeepers had won the hearts of the local people through Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) that incorporated educational aid, skills training, and medical assistance. In education, infrastructure and other amenities have been provided by MALBATT, such as playgrounds and computers for schools and colleges. Mohd Johari (2016) said since the participation of MALBATT in UNIFIL, various programmes have been implemented for the benefit of the Lebanese people.

5.2 *Ethnic-cross relationship*

Malaysian peacekeepers believe that there is a major impact on ethnic tolerance through cross-ethnic social ties. As for personal measures, almost a majority of the respondents believe that individuals play an important role in shaping ethnic tolerance. Malaysian peacekeepers stress that relationships with fellow peacekeepers from diverse countries are just as vital as relationships with local populations in order to conduct efficient peacekeeping missions. During the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, a Malaysian peacekeeper remarked that one of the key challenges was linguistic barriers, which could be solved with the help of translators and the Arabic language skills of some peacekeepers from other countries. During the operation in Western Sahara, Malaysia sent a team of Malaysian Medical Unit (MMU) personnel to provide level 1 services, i.e., medical support to the people there, such as free dental care. Because the majority of the local community is unable to move freely, MMU has taken the initiative to visit their villages and provide free health check-ups and treatment. As a result, the bond between the Malaysian peacekeepers and the locals became strong (Change of Command of Malaysian Medical Units, 2012). This demonstrated Malaysian peacekeepers'

ability to collaborate with local populations and peacekeeper colleagues from other countries without being embroiled in racial disputes.

Malaysian peacekeepers agreed that the community played a key role in improving the degree of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers on the community indicators. When deployed to a foreign country, the first thing that was stressed is that peacekeepers should understand how local communities maximise the use of the environment in their daily routines, such as the availability of food and clean water, transportation, terrain, language, and working practises. To attain these objectives, the Malaysian peacekeeping force needs to learn and understand the local community's lives and daily routines in order to create connections and cooperation with them to fulfil the goals of peacekeeping operations. According to a peacekeeper, despite their varied cultures and backgrounds, the Lebanese and Malaysian peacekeepers get along quite well. This is obvious when the Malaysian peacekeeping force was frequently invited to local community events such as Aidiladha festivals, formal ceremonies, and weddings (The Sun Daily, 10 September 2016). Meanwhile, if the Malaysian peacekeepers attend a local community function, they will serve traditional Lebanese foods such as bread and kebabs. These activities help in boosting public confidence towards peacekeepers, and at the same time, peacekeepers can understand the local community in better ways.

Malaysian peacekeepers agree that relevant institutions play an important role in affecting ethnic tolerance levels. This sensitivity to recognising differences may also be related to the role played by the government. Malaysia is concerned about the end of the violence in Mindanao, Philippines, due to its proximity to Sabah in northern Borneo. In 2004, the International Monitoring Team, coordinated by Malaysia, was formed to monitor the truce deal. Even though both the Mindanao and Thai border conflicts are in Muslim communities ruled by authorities of different religions and ethnicity, Malaysia, as a moderate Muslim nation and fellow ASEAN member state, has the potential to close the gap between the disputing parties through religious institutions. Any progress in the Mindanao peace agreement would boost Malaysia's status as a regional mediator (Laila et al., 2018).

6. Conclusion

The research findings proved that governance does affect the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers especially in the aspects of education. Ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers is also influenced by economic and political factors. Besides, this research has also verified that ethnic-cross relationship has positive impact towards the level of ethnic tolerance among Malaysian peacekeepers. Therefore, the elements of ethnic-cross relationship such as individual, community and institutional should be prioritized in order to maintain the existing level of ethnic tolerance. Consequently, to gain benefit from ethnic assortment, it is important to keep the economy tolerant and versatile by implementing strong and efficient policies as well as financial institutions. Cultural justice will lead to political justice. Consequently, cultural acceptance and economic-political equal opportunity should be measured together in a policy or framework in order to enhance ethnic tolerance not just among peacekeepers but among local citizens as well. This study has provided an additional support towards existing studies on ethnic tolerance and can be used to improve the level of ethnic tolerance among peacekeepers from all around the world.

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