Social Cohesion Strengthens Social Ties among University Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The pattern of ethnic relations and religion among university students is always the focus of understanding Malaysian unity and ethnic relation. This study explores the study of unity by recalling the concept of solidarity put forward by Durkheim. Unity as the main concept needs to be reinterpreted by studying the social realities and social history in Malaysia. Unity happens in the long life of harmony since the 1969 ethnic riots until now, but Malaysia still faces social tensions and fights between ethnic and religious in society. Unity is still considered fragile and just a dream. The concept of social cohesion is expressed as a social phenomenon that needs to be studied as the atmosphere is harmonious but colored with social tension. The multi-culture of Malaysian come from its relationship with east civilization before pre-colonial and the British colonization. The differences between ethnicity and religion in social order cause tension and conflict among the groups. Yet development in the last four decades has changed the social landscape where multi-ethnic societies have turned into a socially diverse society. University students are targeted as respondents in understanding the concepts and patterns of social cohesion among them. Studies show that social cohesion among students is developed. The dimension and item analysis show that there are ethnic and religious differences, but the differences are relatively small. It is suggested that follow-up studies in identifying the form and understanding of the relationship of social cohesion on campus should be conducted through qualitative and ethnographic research design in obtaining data to strengthen ethnic relations in the university. Input from this follow-up study finding will strengthen social cohesion among students that can help governance and university development is well managed by identifying the social gap.

Keywords: Unity, Social Cohesion, Ethnicity, Colonial Science

INTRODUCTION

Scholars of sociology and ethnic relations have developed various concepts to understand and measure unity and social integration in a country. Various concepts such as harmony, unity, and integration are still limited in measure to identify the levels of ethnic relations and provide an explanation for the social fragility that often occurs in the society, especially those colored by ethnic and religious conflict. Can a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in this world ensure that their country is built on social stability and sustainable development?

Discourse on Ethnic Relations and Cohesion in Society

The debate over human relations in society and the importance of building social solidarity has been the focus of Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. Weber argues that every individual action is purposeful and that this action can build social bonding in society. Simmel examines the social network that occurs in society in which humans build their lives. In studying society affected by the current social change due to economic growth, division of labor and population boom Durkheim observed that social solidarity in society will be eroded and need to be nurtured and strengthen. In traditional society, mechanical solidarity is the core of unity in society but with economic development, collective values have been replaced by organic solidarity based on personal interests. The religious and cultural values of the society that became the collective value in traditional society are increasingly faded and replaced with professional and universal values. The contribution of these classical scholars has laid the foundation of knowledge in our understanding of unity and needs to be explored by researchers today in further strengthening the level and direction of unity in this country.

Discourse on contemporary ethnic relations is associated with unity, harmony, peace, and integration that results in public security and stability in the country. In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and post-colonial plural society, ethnic relations are colored by misunderstandings, social tensions, fights, and possibly end with violence and ethnic riot. Studies in India and Nigeria show that ethnic and religious differences are colored by competitive relationships between them without having shared values. Malaysia has also a social history of fragile ethnic relations that caused unity and national independence tainted by the bloody ethnic riots on 13 May 1969.

This ethnic riot has proven that developing a country based on economic development can prosper the country. However, social imbalances between rural-cities, ethnicities, and religions may cause ethnic and religious dimensions will be used to strengthen the competitiveness of their respective groups which can result in the threatening of national harmony, security, and stability. A colonial knowledge approach influenced the British to only focuses on economic activity for profit and ignored the issue of unity, nation-building, and nationalism which interpreted as opposing the interests of the colonialists.

The British took a political and administrative perspective by defined citizens of various civilizations, ethnicities, and religions through administration, and the country was managed through divide and rule. In the political framework of national development like Malaysia, unity as a nation is not a priority as the unity between ethnicities, religious groups, states, political parties, and so on. However, that kind of unity as a prospering and stabilizing model of the country fell on May 13, 1969.

In the Second Malaysia Plan, national development joined to the national unity as the ultimate goal. The New Economic Policy with the principle of distribution economic development has

eradicated poverty and restructured economic activity from overlapping with the ethnic lines. The results of the implementation of the NEP portray nowadays realities where economic development has transformed the social landscape from a poor country to a middle class, an agricultural country to an industrial commercial, and a rural country to cosmopolitan. These social changes have shaped society with the values and culture of modernity and the acceptance of diversity in their social and national life.

The transformation of society makes ethnicity and religion boundaries became thin and secondary, and act as an influence on the social actions of Malaysians has opened the civic space starting with the reform movement in 1998 and the change of government from BN to PH. Besides, the recent political crisis shows democracy, freedom, justice, and inclusion of the people are a request until fights and bloody violence did not stain the political change.

The Search for Understanding in Unity

Despite the social changes and transformation of society, the debate on unity is still confusing. There are scholars and leaders of political parties and NGOs who still feel that ethnic relations and unity in Malaysia are fragile and like a time bomb. However, world leaders like Obama, Clinton, and Imran Khan think Malaysia is a prosperous and moderate country. Malaysia is at the top rank in The World Security Index (2019) as a peaceful country. Local studies also have shown that the Ethnic Boundary Index, the Malaysian Welfare Index, the Malaysian *Maqasid* Index, and the Social Tension Index have shown good unity and ethnic relations in Malaysia.

However, confusion continues because the understanding of unity is in the form of dichotomy and binary; there or no, fragile or united. In contrast, the case of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the GE results from 2004 to 2018 that showed a decline in votes to BN until there was a change of government to PH not followed by domestic violence. Therefore, the concept and understanding of unity that describes Malaysians can live in peace and interact across ethnicities and religious boundaries as the impact of the NEP implemented needs to be future detail.

The study of Shamsul, Abdul Rahman Embong, and Mansor shows that Malaysia's plural society shaped ethnic relations before independence and 10 years later. Social change has shown the issue of ethnicity and religion as separate and isolated ethnic groups replaced with issues of multiculturalism, class, multi-identity, and diversity. Before independence in 1957 and a decade later, the country dominated by a plural society that faced ethnic conflict and ethnic riots on 19 May 1969. Then, the implementation of the NEP develops a multi-ethnic society that lives in tension but stable life in the new millennium with continuous progress achieved. Thus, social complexity in society has built social cohesion. Social cohesion in this society clamped on the one hand tends to conflict with misunderstandings, social tensions, and fights and on the other hand, tends to unity until there are moments of unity where differences have been shared and celebrated together as national heritage assets. The turmoil and fluctuations of social cohesion show that the process of unification to strengthen social cohesion and the fruitful of cohesion will produce a spark of unity through moments of unity that bind the people of diversity in a collective bond as a Malaysian nation.

Social cohesion was not intended to deny any conflict happen but as a way of giving a more appropriate place to the positive side as peace and tranquility are more dominant in daily life among the civil society in Malaysia rather than conflict (Shamsul 2012). Understanding this situation is desirable because Malaysia enjoys more time in a peaceful and stable state (Abeyratne, 2008).

Although there is a group prone to lift the paradigm of complexity and conflict as the basis and orientation in understanding the problems of ethnic relations in this country, the reality is the daily life situation of society is actually in a relatively stable and peaceful nature. An understanding of this situation is desirable as the more dominant aspect of daily life among the public society in Malaysia is based on social cohesion rather than conflict.

The concept of unity in this debate shows that it is a dynamic, fluid, and changeable social phenomenon, always a work in progress, and made as to the ultimate goal of national development. Perhaps, unity continues to be our dream and hope. We have achieved social cohesion together and attention remains to focus on unity to manage social imbalances in society through fair development, inclusiveness, and good governance of the country.

Development of the Concept of Social Cohesion

In the early stages, the study of sociology emphasizes solidarity and social integration as basic concepts in the study of society (Durkheim). After World War II, Chicago School sociology through the discourse of racial ties (Park) put the concept of segregation and integration into a continuum in studying the level and direction in a multi-ethnic society. Based on this large framework in studying society various concepts have been born such as social distance (Borgodus), unity, harmony, peace, happiness, joy, and others that have been built in increasing our understanding along with the social environment in the society.

According to Chan et al. (2006), modern sociologists have turned their attention to issues of social cohesion that focus on stability and the issue of division (Berger 1998; Gough & Olofsson 1999). Even the definition of the concept of social cohesion has been done in various ways, the general expectation that social cohesion requires stability, cooperation between groups, shared identity, and a sense of belonging (Chan et.al 2006). Whereas McCracken (1998) stated social cohesion is how society connects, the relationship between individuals, groups, and even government-people relations. The efforts of community members are generally phenomenological because they are based on non-structural behavior that centered on institutions in daily life. Thus in the context of the formation of social cohesion as a pre-unity phenomenon, the role of the agency of a daily defined is much more important and effective than the structure or institution of the authority defined. If conflicts and disputes arise in a plural society, its members will immediately find a solution through compromise in various ways and forms.

Thus, social cohesion focuses on systems, processes, and institutions, which are fundamentally dependent on society itself and their values (Cantle 2005). The most problem of today's multi-ethnic society is failing to communicate and not bound by a set of values that can control behavior. Social cohesion should focus on the social processes that supporting some aspects of harmonious community relations, social capital levels, inequality based on wealth in society, and access to services, social order, and values (Forrest & Kearns 2000). Social cohesion as defined by the European Council on Social Cohesion is a concept that encompasses values and principles that aim to ensure that all citizens have access to social and economic rights together and without discrimination.

According to Berger-Schmitt (2000), social cohesion involves two different analytical aspects that need to be seen from the dimension of inequality and the dimension of social capital. The concept of social cohesion from the dimension of inequality should aim at reducing inequality in society, reducing social exclusion, and fighting for equal and fair opportunities for all. Whereas from the dimension of social capital, social cohesion needs to strengthen social

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relations, interaction, and bonding strength in relations. The importance of taking into account these two dimensions is to get a complete picture of the real social cohesion concept in society.

This means that the social cohesion of a society involves aspects that are part of the life quality of individuals in that society. Second; element in the social cohesion of society is likely to have a direct impact on the quality of life of the individual. In its concept, the perspective of social exclusion as a process from the failure of social institutions that cause the living conditions of individuals to be neglected and third; the view that the social cohesion of a society affects the quality of life of an individual. Social cohesion is the social quality that people experience in their daily lives. For example, feeling an unbalanced social environment at work, at school, or in the neighborhood that related to an individual's life. This perspective considers the elements of social cohesion of a society that is necessary to form the quality of life of individuals in that society. In this context, a broad concept of quality of life involves individual characteristics and the quality of society.

In Malaysia, social cohesion defined and popularized by renowned anthropologist and sociologist Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (Shamsul & Anis 2014). Social cohesion is defined as a state of peace, stability, and prosperity that exists in a society, especially the multi-ethnic because there is a strong social bond (social bonding) built for so long based on at least five pre-conditions. First, quality material standards, such as having a moderate to the high quality of life index. Second, access to facilities that can guarantee and maintain quality of life and social mobility. Third, stable, safe, and secure social rules. Fourth, active interactions based on networks and positive relationship exchanges. Fifth, there are positive efforts towards the involvement of all parties in mainstream activities, especially in managing governance and development to overcome social deficits in a diverse society.

Mansor (2012) states that social cohesion is a set of processes and actions that can instill a sense of belonging among each member of society until they feel part of that society. This means that social cohesion is a process and urges continuous efforts to build shared values that enable them to face life, any challenges and find solutions that will benefit them all together. Mansor's (2012) view is in line with the concept expressed by Jenson (1998). However, Mansor (2012) explained that although social cohesion has been built with the existence of bonding and social relationships across groups and individuals, there are situations where they can mobilize ethnic parameters if there are social imbalances in society. If ethnic risks in the community occur continuously, their ethnic boundaries may thicken again (Mansor, 2012).

The Conceptual Framework of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion involves the development of shared values and interpretations of society, reducing differences in wealth and income, and generally enabling an individual to feel that they are bind in an effort, face common challenges and become members of a common community (Maxwell, 1996). MacCracken (1998) argues that social cohesion is a characteristic of a society that is interconnected between units in society such as individuals, community groups, organizations, and even settlement units.

Social cohesion is a concept that has various dimensions (Jenson 1998; Bernard 1999; Berger-Schmitt 2000), but Rajulton et al. (2006) stated that social cohesion is a concept that has multidimensional and also multilevel. Five dimensions that measure social cohesion are:

i. Belonging / Isolation: sharing of shared values, sense of belonging in the same community

ii. Inclusive / Exclusive: shared market capacity especially on the labor market or the possibility of an opportunity to join the economy

iii. Participation / Non-involvement: involvement in public affairs management, third sector

iv. Recognition / Rejection: pluralism as well as goodness i.e. tolerance

v. Legitimacy / Illegitimacy: maintaining public and private institutions acting as intermediaries, how the diversity of institutions reflects the people and their interests

Based on Jenson's work, Bernard (1999) classifies into three contexts namely economic, political, and socio-cultural, and types of social involvement based on attitudes and behaviors. Bernand adds five dimensions that Jenson has presented to another one dimension of equality/inequality that refers to social justice and ownership in an economic context (poverty and well-being). Therefore, in line with the study to look at shared values, this study uses six dimensions presented by Jenson and Bernard.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this paper is to identify differences or similarities in the level of social cohesion according to ethnicities. The design of this study is quantitative by the survey. The fieldwork involved public and private educational institutions nationwide with a sample size of 600 respondents. The study population consists of final year students of IPTA and IPTS in Malaysia. The Snowball sampling technique was used to obtain a determined number of samples.

The social cohesion construct consists of 24 items to represent six dimensions of measurement. All these dimensions include the concepts of belonging (4 items), inclusion (4 items), participation (4 items), recognition (4 items), legitimacy (4 items), and equality (4 items). This construct is adapted from the study of Khairol (2014) based on five dimensions that have been constructed by Jenson (1998) with the addition of one dimension by Bernard (1999) to make it all six dimensions. All items in each dimension were measured using a five-level Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

FINDINGS

The findings of the study will display the level of social cohesion pattern for each dimension, namely Belonging, Inclusion, Participation, Recognition, Legitimacy, and Equality by ethnic group as well as statistical tests (ANOVA) to explain if there is a significant average difference between them.

The Belonging dimension shows a high percentage of all ethnicities accept items for the placement of different ethnic roommates. This illustrates that each ethnic group can share the same values but does not occur in a situation that connects with religion. The Inclusion Dimension describes the percentage level of equality and opportunity given is relatively low compared to other dimensions. The Participation dimension shows a relatively high percentage of free voting items and multi-ethnic participation in association activities but is relatively low for the freedom to discuss political matters. As is well known, association activities and campus politics have been exposed to students while studying at university. Therefore, their thinking has been open, and able to express opinions according to current issues.

Table 1:

Social Cohesion based on ethnicities (percentage)

		Malay	Bumiputera	Chinese	Indian
Belonging	Sympathize with other ethnic acquaintances died.	92.6%	96.7%	86.2%	92.3%
	The diversity of the origins of the people is acknowledged.	92.3%	93.3%	83.0%	92.3%
	Socio-cultural programs are welcome.	81.5%	86.7%	64.9%	80.8%
	Placement of roommates of different ethnicities.	38.5%	75.0%	36.2%	53.8%
Inclusive	Education opportunities to public universities are open	68.9%	78.3%	45.7%	57.7%
	Opportunity to live in a residential college	77.2%	70.0%	59.6%	53.8%
	University aid is readily available	45.5%	40.0%	39.4%	34.6%
	Job opportunities are open	45.2%	41.7%	33.0%	23.1%
Participation	Free to vote	91.1%	90.0%	84.0%	80.8%
	Free to discuss politics	47.4%	55.0%	39.4%	26.9%
	Multi-racial association activities	81.5%	86.7%	71.3%	73.1%
	NGO involvement in open campuses	62.2%	71.7%	45.7%	53.8%
Recognition	Accept the symbols of other religions	41.2%	85.0%	78.7%	76.9%
	Acknowledge differences of opinion	74.8%	91.7%	77.7%	73.1%
	Appreciation to the students	80.9%	90.0%	76.6%	69.2%
	The ruling party strengthens governance and development	36.6%	51.7%	50.0%	65.4%
Legitimacy	Certify religious related laws	74.8%	78.3%	69.1%	76.9%
	Beware of receiving news of mismanagement	82.5%	83.3%	71.3%	80.8%
	NGOs are not given the same services	30.2%	35.0%	39.4%	46.2%
	The promises of political leaders cannot be kept	49.5%	45.0%	31.9%	38.5%
Kesaksamaan	Excellent students have the opportunity to get scholarships	79.7%	78.3%	73.4%	61.5%
	Easy to get Police help	54.2%	60.0%	40.4%	65.4%
	Significant poverty gap	77.5%	86.7%	48.9%	88.5%

	Foreign workers seize job opportunities	59.4%	45.0%	55.3%	53.8%

The Recognition dimension shows a relatively high percentage of two items for all ethnicities except for items that accept other religious symbols, and the ruling party strengthens governance and development. Item received other religious symbols quite low for ethnic Malays because it involves the religion matter. Item ruling party to strengthen governance and development is also quite low for ethnic Malays because there are issues that arise at the time that did not manage properly.

The Legitimacy dimension shows the same percentage for all ethnicities. Two items show a high percentage for "to acknowledge the existence of religious-related laws" and "be vigilant in receiving news of mismanagement". The other two items show a relatively low percentage for all ethnic groups, i.e., NGOs were not given equal treatment and the promises of political leaders cannot be kept. Finally, the Equality dimension shows a relatively high percentage of all ethnicities. This reflects the equality and equal opportunities obtained regardless of ethnicity, religion, and culture.

The analysis of the social cohesion dimensions following the highest ethnic group of students who are bound are Bumiputera (15) and Malay (4), while Indian (4) and Chinese (1) have lower bound. Malay students mostly tied to the dimensions of social cohesion in second place 11 times, followed by Bumiputera (7), India (4), and China (2). In the third place, based on the dimensions of social cohesion are Chinese, Indian (respectively 8), Malays (4), and Bumiputera (2). In the fourth place and marked weak bound with dimensions of social cohesion and the highest risk is ethnic Chinese students most felt (12), followed by India (7), Malay (5), and Bumiputera (0). These data indicate Bumiputera, and Malays have the highest percentage in the dimensions of social cohesion and the Indian and especially China have a higher possibility of ethnic risk.

Analysis by dimensions and items showed that Bumiputera students were found did not face problems in the five dimensions of social cohesion studied. Malay students have no problem with the dimensions of Belonging, Inclusive, and Participation. However, in the Recognition dimension, they are sensitive to religion, Legitimacy is with the problematic political leadership and religious and in Equality, foreign workers are an issue for them. When analyzing these five dimensions of social cohesion according to Chinese students, only one dimension is built, namely Recognition. Other dimensions relatively have a social gap with a sense of belonging where their own culture and outlook on life make it difficult to relate to diverse environments. Inclusive, they feel they are excluded in education, in Legitimization the legal issues and news is not in their favor, and in the Equality, they are excluded in matters of security and development. Meanwhile, Indian students were found built in the dimensions of Belonging, Recognition, and Legitimacy. Yet in other dimensions, they are faced with access to aid and employment opportunities in Inclusive, voting and speaking in Participation, of issues of dissent and appreciation, are not given in Recognition and they feel marginalized in Equality.

Based on the findings of the study obtained through the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test in Table 2 below shows that there is a significant average difference (p <0.05) between ethnicities for the five dimensions of social cohesion, namely Belonging, Inclusion, Participation, Recognition, and Equality. The overall analysis by dimension will be discussed based on significantly different by ethnic groups only. Tukey HSD analysis showed that only

the Bumiputera Sabah different from Malays and Chinese in the dimensions of Belonging. Dimensions Inclusion showed Malays different from the Chinese.

The third dimension (Participation) reflects the differences in average between the Chinese, the Malays, and Bumiputera Sabah. Next, the dimension of recognition shows the Malays has different average values with Bumiputera Sabah, Bumiputera Sarawak, and Chinese. The final dimension of Equality shows the Chinese difference with the Malays and the Bumiputera Sabah. These results indicate that there are ethnic risks that occur but the value of the difference is insignificant. There are ethnic groups who feel they have been marginalized in some situations which causes negative feelings to arise in them.

Table 2

ANOVA test

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Belonging	Between Groups	7.935	4	1.984	5.953	.000
	Within Groups	166.607	500	.333		
	Total	174.541	504			
Inclusion	Between Groups	17.947	4	4.487	8.809	.000
	Within Groups	254.653	500	.509		
	Total	272.600	504			
Participation	Between Groups	8.164	4	2.041	5.490	.000
	Within Groups	185.868	500	.372		
	Total	194.032	504			
Recognition	Between Groups	13.414	4	3.354	9.159	.000
	Within Groups	183.069	500	.366		
	Total	196.483	504			
Legitimacy	Between Groups	1.915	4	.479	1.911	.107
	Within Groups	125.281	500	.251		
	Total	127.196	504			
Equality	Between Groups	8.256	4	2.064	7.276	.000
	Within Groups	141.837	500	.284		
	Total	150.092	504			

The value of average differences between ethnicities is small if analyzed in depth because only differs by certain ethnic groups. This difference is not to represent all ethnic groups in Malaysia. This situation occurs due to the occurrence of the ethnic risk and ethnic group that

feels socially marginalized. As for the Legitimacy dimension, there is no significant average difference ($p > 0.05$) between ethnic groups. This shows that students regardless of ethnicity have similar opinions on equality in politics and social institutions.

Overall, the findings of the study show that social cohesion among the students is good and the four dimensions studied have a high percentage, that is, Belonging, Recognition, Participation, and Equality are high compared to the dimensions of Inclusion and Legitimacy. Malay and Bumiputera students found much tied to the social cohesion in society. However, Indian students and, especially, the Chinese feel they do not have the opportunity, access, and are marginalized in certain social spaces. In the analysis of these patterns of social cohesion does not show significant ethnic differences except in certain cases. Similarly, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test showed that there were significant average differences between ethnicities for the five dimensions of social cohesion but the differences were relatively small. However, the analysis shows a comparison of the Indian and Chinese students who often feel the ethnic risk relatively compared to the Bumiputera and the Malays. Social cohesion was found well build among students and with small differences. Therefore, what is happening in society and how governance and development are going on needs to be given continuous evaluation.

DISCUSSION

Research findings show that social cohesion is built among students of various ethnicities studied in Malaysian Universities. The analysis of the ethnic dimensions and items according to the instruments of social cohesion shows that there are gaps between them where Malay and Bumiputera students are more developed compare with Chinese and Indian. They feel that opportunities and access to governance and development services need to strengthen. However, the details of the differences between the ethnicities are small, and relatively, they build social cohesion among themselves.

In the daily life of multiethnic students on campus connect regardless of ethnicity and build a network between them. Their relationship is not influenced by ethnicity. Cross-ethnic social relationships are more build and relationships between them are based on social relationships even if the individual comes from a different ethnic background. They live in dormitories, eat in the canteen, go to lecture rooms, write academic assignments, and play ball on the university field in the same team. These multi-ethnic students have built strong relationships and networks that able to spark moments of unity in their lives. Human behavior transcends the fragmentary dimensions such as ethnicity and religion. They celebrate their university football team that won the national championship trophy for five years or went to the field along with their university team to help flood victims in residential areas hit by heavy rains and high tides that have not yet receded for a week.

However, there are still those who fight with tongue wagging and talk about conflict with other ethnicities but not end up with machete-wielding and walking in unity. Their culture is colored by differences that are mutually agreed upon or also agreed to disagree. This tongue wagging and speaking of conflict led to misunderstandings and social tensions in society, solutions are taken through discussion, consultation, dialogue, and mediation, and not with forces. So two individual students of different ethnicities, religions, or regions may have different views and lifestyles that separate them on one thing but these rigid differences do not prevent them from pursuing good relations with each other in other matters especially those that can provide material gain and mutual benefit. These two individuals can indeed compete and isolate individuals in the matter but in a changing social environment, their rivalry does not prevent

them from trading, performing tasks assigned in the office successfully. Their relationship is more of a social, non-ethnic, and horizontal relationship rather than a vertical relationship; differences are not a major influence in organizing their society. These students differ according to ethnicity and religion, but the relationship between them is embroidered across the dimensions of difference to a wholeness of social cohesion built into a society that is a prerequisite to unity. Cross-ethnic social relations and religious were found to be built.

To strengthen this study, follow-up studies need to use qualitative methods by taking the approach of ethnographic research on-campus residents to understand how the patterns of social cohesion found in this study are reflected in daily, group, and institutional relationships on campus. Most importantly, the ability of this follow-up study not only explain and identify the main influences on their behavior but can also contribute to policies, strategies, and activities in strengthening and improving social cohesion among campus residents. If they are hostile but it is not necessarily happening in all aspects of their lives and if they are hostile, they not necessarily unfriend with all the enemy's friends until the differences and hostility do not end in isolation, segregation, and disconnection. The space of social cohesion that exists that is not colored by the ethnicity, differences, and hostility in society is a common asset of campus residents to make the moments of unity possible in us moving towards that coveted unity.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic and religious differences may lead to conflicts between groups. The conflict between groups and ignorance with other groups will facilitate misunderstandings, social tensions, and fights in the community. Yet this study shows that differences in ethnic and religious backgrounds can separate the groups but in their living space there are aspects of life that bind them together, strengthen relationships, and build shared values of life. Ethnic and religious differences can be the basis for organizing differences in society and separating them. The experience of Malaysian students on campuses shows the influence of religion in specific aspects such as halal separating them or culture as the core of life but this does not stop them from eating together, studying together, and living together.

Social cohesion strengthens the pattern of social relations across ethnic and religious groups on campus will build collective social ties with these students to ensure a cohesive, harmonious, and peaceful campus community life. The general public society in Malaysia can benefit from the micro experience of these campus residents in our pursuit of unity as our national agenda and common dream.

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