UNITY IN FACEBOOK

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ABSTRACT

1Malaysia had been announced to be the main issue in the Malaysian development. The lifelong dream of Malaysia's 6th Prime Minister is a united, peaceful and prosperous Malaysia, with abundant opportunities for all citizens. However, the unity in Malaysia is still threatened. There are many forms of strain and conflict that occur in ethnic relations in Malaysia, having occasionally erupted into riots and killings, as occurred during the May 13, 1969 incident. This disunity also caused by prejudice, racism and ethnocentrism. Facebook which is one of the forms of social networking seem to be one of the ways to unite people. This study used social capital theory as foundation theory for model development. The minimum sample was determined through Krejcie & Morgan Table. The study involved 482 respondents, selected through a multistage sampling technique. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. Based from the findings, recognition and equality in Facebook are the main elements on unity. This research hopefully will contribute knowledge on Facebook and unity.

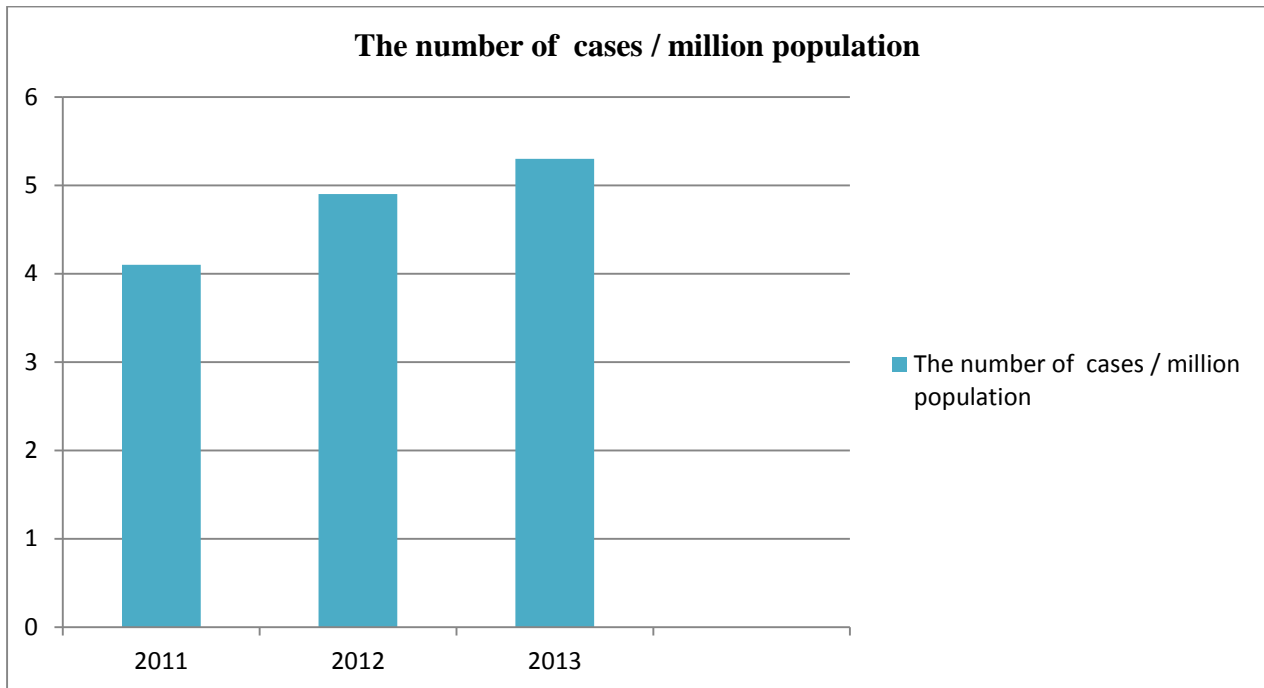Key words: Facebook, Unity, Social Networking Sites, Social Solidarity Theory

Introduction

Social solidarity is very important in order for Malaysia to maintain national harmony. Therefore, social solidarity among the ethnics is crucial to ensure people live in peace. According to Kendall (2010), social solidarity refers to a group's ability to maintain itself in the face of obstacles. Social solidarity exists when social bonds, attractions, or other forces hold members of a group in interaction over a period of time. Thus, once people always get connected and expose through social media, they can share their problems, sympathies or interest among them which can empower social solidarity. However, according to Hafizullah Emadi (2002), national unity cannot be attained by the negation of ethnic communities but by their recognition. This is when social media play significant roles in helping the government achieve its objective. Government has opened channels of communication to all Malaysian so that they easily interact and close to the government, especially with the help of social media. Sproull and Keisler (1996) stated that by using new communication technology such as social media, it can help people build relationship without considering the users status either they are rich, educated, and vice versa. As the communication exists, it also can create social solidarity between one another. In addition, the usage of new communication technology such as social media can enable people to socialize, changing opinion, sharing problem and interest and etc. (Al-Hawamdeh and Hart, 2002).

However, according to Syed Husin Ali (2008), the agenda for national unity in Malaysia, 55 years after independence has still not flourished but, instead, seem to have withdrawn further and further into the distant mirage. It is due to as ethnic differences exist, which often manifest in stereotypes, discriminations, tensions and conflict that complicate the process of building national unity. There are many forms of strain and conflict that occur in ethnic relations in Malaysia, having occasionally erupted into riots and killings, as occurred during the May 13, 1969 Incident. The statement is also supported by Mokhtar Muhammad (2008) states that the country of diverse ethnic, cultural, economic class and language is not easy to maintain and preserve unity.

Research also has revealed the level of harmony and ethnic relationships in Malaysia in year 2007 has dropped. This clearly demonstrates the unity and ethnic relations matters yet to be fixed in spite of plans by the ministry of unity implemented to develop unity (Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh & Jainabee Kassim, 2007). Unity in the country has yet said to be steady and may be prone to tension at any time. This condition is characterized by Shamsul Amri (2005) as a "stable tension". The community tension among multi ethnic has increased from year to year. Figure 1.0 below shows the community tension index from 2011 – 2013. The previous study which conducted by Md Salleh Hassan et al., (2009) has proven that mass media can promote and strengthen national unity and national integration and for this research, a survey was conducted by focusing on new media toward unity. SNS is chosen because many people in Malaysia has SNS account and are very friendly on Social Networking. According to a survey conducted by international firm TNS, Malaysia ranked number one for social network friends and have the greatest number of friends on social networking sites like Facebook (Survey: Malaysian, 2013).

Figure 1.0 Community tension index 2011-2013
Source: Department of National Unity and National Integration

The number of cases / million population

Unity in Malaysia

All the ethnics in Malaysia have their own cultural identity. Initially, it was hard for these groups to mingle and interact with each other as they were segregated by the nature of their residential locations. Cultural and religious practices also varied amongst these groups. This diversity made it very difficult to unite the country when it was occupied by foreign powers. After Malaysia attained independence, the government had implemented various policies and programmes to ensure social solidarity amongst the different ethnics in the country (Mardiana Nordin and Hasnah Hussiin, 2011).

For this reason, The Department of National Unity has defined national unity as "a situation in which all citizens from the various ethnic groups, religions, and states live in peace as one united nationality, giving full commitment to national identity based upon the Federal Constitution and the Rukun Negara." Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020), a government policy targeting developed status for Malaysia by the year 2020, names national unity as a key component of a developed country.
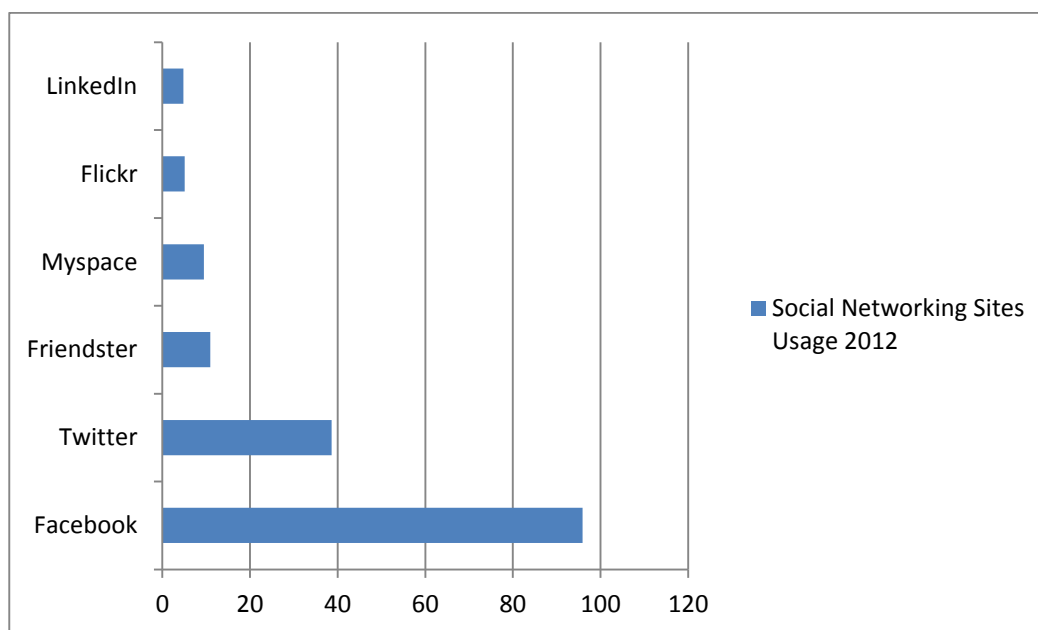
Issues in Ethnic Relations in Malaysia

Study done by Jusang Bolong et al. (2008) also shows that people prefer to communicate with their own ethnic rather than connecting with people from other ethnics. Ethnic relations also is becoming difficult. As mentioned by Abdul Muati from BERNAMA news, *"Today, we often raise small issues , insensitive and lack of mutual respect."* The research showed that the older generation (45 plus) are more tolerate and open to ethnic relations without prejudice. (Peranan Media Penggerak 1 Malaysia, 2012). Plus, according to Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2011), interactions between ethnics in Malaysia have decreased as a result of practicing ethnic settlements. Research done by Ezhar Tamam et al., (2006) also has revealed that ethnic tolerance in Malaysia was at an average level. Finally, research has also proven that ethnic relations was at an average level as the spirit of ethnocentrism is there (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan, Jusang Bolong, Siti Zobidah Omar, Mohd Nizam Osman, 2010). As stated by Segall (1979), ethnocentrism is now recognized as a universal phenomenon practiced by all ethnics.

Social Networking in Malaysia

Murray and Waller (2007) have recognized social networking sites as virtual societies which let people to link and communicate with each other on a particular matter or to just hang out together online. Social networking sites generally offer users a profile and allow them to share and upload photos, music and several types of messages they would prefer to share with other public. Moreover, these social networking sites offer social and emotional support, information resources and bonds to other users (Wellman and Gulia, 1999; Eyadat, & Eyadat, 2010). As mentioned by Rosen (2011), people who spend more time on social networking sites are better at showing empathy to their online friends and learn how to socialize.

According to Safko (2012), the big three social networks are Facebook, with over 800 million memberships; Twitter, with over 200 million memberships; and LinkedIn, with 120 million users. Burson-Marsteller Asia Pacific has released a very exciting social media report. Based from the report, 64.7 percent of Malaysian uses the internet and the top social networks are Facebook and Twitter (Kent, 2012). Most of the users are youth (Nazan et al., 2011). Figure 2.0 below show the SNS usage during leisure time by Malaysian.

Figure 2.0: Social Networking Sites Usage by Malaysian
Source: Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development

Social Network Sites are where Malaysians spend the largest share of their time online. In Malaysia, social networking sites such as Facebook has 12 948 320 users which involve of 49.50 percent of population. The figure also displays that the biggest group of users is presently 18 – 24, followed by the users in the age of 25 – 34. In term of gender, there are 54 percent male users and 46 percent female users (Malaysia Facebook Statistics, 2012). Many people in Malaysia are very friendly on Facebook.

Social Networking Sites (SNS) Factors

Based on an extensive literature review and empirical studies, Reza Pishghadam et al., (2011) have developed a few factors in measuring social solidarity. The factors affecting social network sites use in order to gain solidarity are:

Interaction: This factor refers to an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other. Through interaction by multiethnic in SNS, they can discover their similar attitude, opinions and values (Edelmann, 1993). The social networking sites today is the only accepted network that allows people to globally keep in touch with each other (Kushairi, 1997).

Involvement: refers to the act or process of taking part in something. At the involvement stage, a sense of mutuality of being connected develops in SNS. During this stage, people experiment and try to learn more about the other person (Devito, 2009). As stated by Devito (2009), during this stage a sense of mutuality of being connected develops.

Quality: This factor refers to the level of enjoyment, comfort, and health in someone's life. The quality in SNS that makes a relationship interpersonal is interdependency; that is the actions of one person have an impact on the other (Devito, 2009). Contact quality and frequency of contact with friends enhance group attitude (Tropp and Pettigew, 2005). According to Sabbagh (2003), people who characterized by a good or highly positive climate friends, respectively, to situations of strong solidarity.

Intimacy: Finally, intimacy refers to things that are said or done only by people who have a close relationship with each other. It is a feeling that you can be honest and open when talking about yourself, that you can express thoughts and feelings you

wouldn't reveal in other relationships (Devito, 2009). Exchange of essentials resources in SNS such as love, respect, unselfish attitude will contribute to strong solidarity (Sabbagh, 2003).

Past Research Findings on Social Networking

According to a survey conducted by international firm TNS, Malaysia ranked number one for social network friends followed by Brazil, Norway and China. Malaysians have the greatest number of friends on social networking sites like Facebook. Malaysian has an average of 233 friends in their social network. Malaysian also devotes the most hours per week on such sites. In terms of hours consumed on social sites, Malaysians spent nine hours weekly. The survey also initiate that rather than using email, individuals were now spending more time on social networking sites ("*Survey: Malaysian,*" 2010). Meanwhile, in the western countries, scholars have done a few researches regarding social media and have found a few findings. Based from a project of the Pew Research Center, majority of Social Networking Sites (SNS) users use social network for a few purposes (Smith, 2011). The first reason is for staying in touch with current friends (both new and old) – 67%. It is almost relevant for those under the age of 50.

Secondly is for staying in touch with family members – 64%. It is a major factor especially for women. Moreover, connecting with old friends you have lost touch with – is almost 50%. Meanwhile, connecting with others to share hobbies and interest consist of 14%. It is a relatively high value for middle-aged and older adults.
Thirdly, the reason for making new friends only show 9%, Reading comments by celebrities, athletes or politicians is 5%. Lastly, finding potential romantic or dating partners is only 3%. It is the minor element of the social media experience. In addition, research done by Hampton et al (2011) found 43% social network users who use the site multiple times per day feel that most people can be trusted. They also found that Facebook users have more close relationships compare to other internet users. They are easily to get more social support (such as emotional support, receiving advice, having people to spend time with and having someone to help) than other people. Moreover, Facebook users are much more politically engaged than most people.

Social Solidarity Theory

According to Kendall (2010), social solidarity refers to a group's ability to maintain itself in the face of obstacles. Social solidarity exists when social bonds, attractions, or other forces hold members of a group in interaction over a period of time. There are two types of solidarity which is derives from social structure based on the division of labor. Mechanical solidarity refers to the social cohesion of preindustrial societies, in which there is least division of labor and people sense united by shared values and common social bounds. Meanwhile, organic solidarity refers to the social cohesion originate in industrial societies in which people do very specialized tasks and feel united by their mutual dependence. Social solidarity also is described by the purpose of promoting group goals in his own right, provided the actor perceives positive attitudes from others towards himself. The sender's desire to benefit the receivers depends on his perceiving them having positive attitudes towards him or towards the group of which he is a member.

The behavior does not by itself promote the self-interest of the actor, but is desirable in its own right as an expression of a positive attitude in the actor towards the other group members, provided the actor perceive a positive attitude in the other group members towards himself or towards the groups as a whole (Widegren, 1997). In conjunction with this research, researcher found that social solidarity can be achieved when people have good relations with their friends in social networking sites (SNS). If people have good relations with friends from the different ethnics and religious, they will be categorized under organic solidarity. On the other hand, if people have many friends from the same background in their social networking sites, it is mechanical solidarity.

Methodology

According to Kowalczyk (2013), explanatory research is defined as an attempt to connect ideas to understand cause and effect, meaning researchers want to explain what is going on. Explanatory research looks at how things come together and interact. This study employed the quantitative study approach (explanatory study) to identify the pattern and magnitude of relations and interactions existing between the predetermined exogenous (interaction, involvement, quality and intimacy) and endogenous variables (social solidarity) in order to understand the phenomenon of solidarity in social network sites (SNS). The design of this study offers an enhanced understanding on the relationships that exist among variables involved in this study. According to rule of Thumb by Sekaran and Bougie (2010) sample larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most researchers. However, the target sample for this research is 500 respondents in Malaysia. By referring to Krejcie & Morgan table, 28 million population in Malaysia or 12 million SNS users can be equal to 384 sample of respondents with 95% confidence. (The Research Advisors, 2006). The study will be involving 482 respondents, selected through a multistage sampling technique. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. The data were key in by SPSS and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan, Jusang Bolong, S.Salahudin, 2014).

Findings

The researchers found that two elements from social solidarity model which are recognition and equality in social networking sites are the main contribution on social solidarity. So, in order to create social solidarity, multi ethnics' social networking site users have to recognize other ethnics and practice equality in SNS. Table 1.0 below shows the result base from descriptive output.

Social solidarity is the essential property of society. It is the bond that united all people. Based from table 1.0, the mean score achieved for all multi-ethnic SNS users on this dimension is 2.89. It shows that solidarity among SNS users is strong. The highest mean for solidarity is recognition (M=3.04). It shows that in order to unite all ethnics, the main important element is by recognizing each other. Recognition also is one of the principles in solidarity (Vasta, 2010).

Table 1.0: Descriptive Statistics of social solidarity

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recognition on SNS	482	**3.04**	.67
Equality on SNS	482	2.93	.63
Sharing on SNS	482	2.88	.69
Concern on SNS	482	2.81	.64
Willingness on SNS	482	2.73	.63
Overall		**2.89**	.54

Discussion, Implication And Suggestion

The findings of this study underline the importance of SNS factors in influencing social solidarity. Having recognition and practicing equality in SNS will help building solidarity. It is recommended that multi ethnics SNS users should interact more in order to gain solidarity and reduce ethnocentrism. Future research should refine the model of the antecedents' influence on social solidarity. The antecedents only explain 30.5% of the variation of the data in social solidarity. Future research should enhance the predictive power of the model by measuring other factors that influence social solidarity such as from other social media namely Youtube, Instagram and Whatsapp. Lastly, this study is theory-confirming, rather than theory-testing. Thus, new theory on social solidarity relationships in social networking sites may also be tested using new constructs of social capital relationships explored from qualitative methodology, such as interviews with SNS users. The methodology employed may also be extended to a mixed method, which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods of study.

Conclusion

Nowadays social media plays crucial roles in uniting the multi ethnic society. Furthermore, through social media, it can build confidence and faith among the society and indirectly will change the society behaviours. To realistic the dream of 1Malaysia is totally can be promoted by social media where it can lead and influence the society towards the goals of the governments which multi ethnics in Malaysia leave peaceful and harmony. Based from the findings, the elements of recognition and equality in SNS are the main contribution to unity which government should highlight. Government also should encourage people to have social networking site account, add multiethnic friends in the list and interact among them in order to boost solidarity. This research hopefully will contribute knowledge on SNS factors and social solidarity.

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