Social Integration Level of Chinese Muallaf in Malaysia

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Abstract: This research set outs to explore the exact level of the social aspect of integration between Chinese Muallaf and their Malay counterparts in Malaysia. It was sure that integration in social aspect becomes dilemma when the Muallaf convert from their own religion to Islam. It suggests that when these converts begin to practise Islam, their behaviour changes in line with the identity of the Malays. This is because Islam equates to Malay in the Malaysian context. Whilst they are welcomed by their Malay counterparts, it is nevertheless hypothesised that they may not integrate fully into the Malay culture.

Key words: Social, integration, Chinese Muallaf, Malays, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Statement on the focus of the research: Malaysia is a typical multi-racial and religious country. It is a prime example of a multi-racial society. One of the outstanding characteristics of its multi-ethnic population today is its highly variegated ethnic mix. The ethnic groups of Malaysia consist mainly of the Malay, Chinese community and Indian community (Malaysian Year Book 1980). Malaysia also has other ethnic groups like the Eurasians and natives of West and East Malaysia (West Malaysia which called Peninsular Malaysia which has 13 states and 2 special territories considered, as a centre of federal Malaysia (referred to as West and East Malaysia) known as Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya while East Malaysia or sometimes called Borneo has 2 states; Sabah and Sarawak and East Malaysia). Because of the multi-racial character of the population, it also has a variety of culture, religion, social norms and values. This makes the country a rich field for studying the integration of the various ethnic groups (Ibid). It is important to appreciate the recent level of integration in a multi-racial context, such as Malaysia in order to make possible the development of policies that could sustain solidarity within the community. Without this information the country will face a seriously troubled situation, created by the feelings of disaffection between all races.

This research set outs to measure the level or degree of social (there are several discussions related with the term social). For example, Avineri (1968) which coated from Karl Marx said that the term refers to human behavior. The behavior will develop gradually based on several reasons, such as age, surrounding environment and experience (Avineri, 1968). In contrast, Turner (2000) declared that social related to human way of life. The way

of life determined by race and ethnic, faith (religion) and actual practices within the group (race and ethnic). Then, the behavior will come out. Behaviors itself is not including in the term social but it is a result in a way of life (Turner, 2000). In this research, the definition from both scholars which are human behavior and way of life will be used together to give a clear sociological definition in relation to groups, Chinese Muallaf and Malays) integration between Chinese Muallaf and the dominant Malay community. These Chinese Muallaf fall into 2 district groups: The majority group have rejected their previous customs, traditions and way of life in order to embrace Islam (the term Muallaf is used here in this sense), the remaining (smaller) group are born into the Chinese Muslim community and are therefore not confronted with decisions which divide them from their former ethnic ties. As a result, Chinese Muallaf confront the dilemma that they are disliked by their own ethnic community because they differ socially from them after conversion to Islam, particularly in the new behavior needed across specific areas of conduct such as prayer, fasting, observance of ritual, alcohol prohibition, eating only halal meat and so on. On the other hand, they need to adapt their social norms and values to that of the Malay community since they dominate the social aspect as Muslim.

In effect, this new behavior results in a loss of ethnic identity which instead moves closer to that of the Malays themselves. That Islam equates to Malay in Malaysia is deeply influential in this inevitably this is the case, since Malays are the dominant ethnic group in what is their own country. Specific legislation protects this principle, such as Article 160 in the constitution of Malaysia. However, these social pressures to conform to the norms of Malay Islam create considerable confusion for Chinese Muallaf. Not only is their previous ethnic identity eroded but their

new identity is uncertain. Should they regard themselves, as Chinese, Malay or Muslim? It also creates a new problem related to their integration with the Malays. Should they avoid integrating with the Malays in order to avoid the assumption that they are being Malay even if in reality they are Chinese?

The earlier questions relate directly to the heart of this research which will focus upon measurement of actual levels of such social integration. In other words, the unclear situation in which the Chinese Muslim converts find themselves will affect their integration with the Malays. There is also the motive that discovering their level and degree of integration can help bring about appropriate policies to help them.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The general objective of this research is to look into the social integration of the Chinese Muallaf with the Malay Muslims in Malaysia by measuring the level of such integration. The level here means the statistical results affected from testing and analysis made by the researcher through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software.

This research task is to evaluate this level in the context of various situations of the Chinese Muallaf in Malaysia. Therefore, it is interesting to find out about integration between the Muallaf and Malays. It is interesting to know the exact level of their integration. The group of Chinese Muallaf will be divided according to selected criteria. Therefore, the general statement of the problem of this research is: If Islam is equated to Malay, based on the Constitution of Malaysia do the Chinese Muallaf change their social aspect in line with the identity of Malays. This means do they integrate with the Malays and what is the exact level or degree of their integration?

Specifically, the objective of the research is to look into the practices of social aspects, such as language, culture, norms and values of the Malays and to examine and analyse whether Chinese Muallaf integrate with such things. Therefore, these researches focus on the achievement of studying the level of social integration of Chinese Muallaf with the Malays by using several Malay practices.

STATISTICS OF CHINESE MUALLAF IN MALAYSIA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One of the interesting trends in Malaysia during the past 20 years is the increasing number of non-Muslims converting to the Islamic faith, especially after 1969. These was happen because of most states religious departments in Malaysia set up started on that year and supported by various Muballigh organisations means Islamic preacher organisation which are showed their well management by early 1970's and late 1980's, such as PERKIM stand for Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia or in Malay language called Persatuan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia was founded on 19th of August, 1960 by first Prime Minister of Malaysia. PERKIM is a voluntary organisation established to undertake welfare services and community development work and to provide care and assistance irrespective of race or religion in line with the teaching of Islam, Islamic Centre or sometimes called, as Kuala Lumpur Islamic Centre was set up by Malaysian government in 1985. It finally manages by JAWI in 1990. Although, it is an international Islamic Convention Centre and a organisation that responsible to organise various international exhibitions but served lesson centre for Muslim converts, especially from all over Malaysia. The objective of the lesson centre is to enhance Islamic quality, as a way of life through a medium of education and ABIM is a Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement or in Malay language known, as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia considered the most organised force in Islamic revivalism in Malaysia. Some of its major objectives have included establishment and propagation of Islamic pillars and principles, as enshrined in the Quran and Sunna and mobilisation of Muslim youth. The group has been highly critical of the Malaysian government over issues relating to alleged corruption and abuse of power. The data of conversion consider, as official secret document may affect the situation of multi-religious, racial and cultural society in Malaysia. It is a national sensitive issue whereas the data can be manipulated and will cause a havoc condition.

However, the data of those who are changed their religion are legal, as long as cannot be used to condemn another religion. Besides Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, the constitution also stipulates that every person has the right to propagate, profess and practice his own religion. Under the constitution, no one may be compelled to pay any tax, the proceeds of which are allocated in whole or part for the purposes of any religion other than his own religion. The followers of any religion also have the right to manage their own religion affairs, as well as establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes (Article 160, Constitution of Malaysia).

As a result in Malaysia, the data was collected separately by state religious department known as JAWI, PERKIM, ABIM and Islamic Centre. The exact number of those who converted is available at religious departments of the various states and JAWI (as a centre of state

religious departments in Malaysia). For example, the number was increased gradually in all states in Malaysia from year 1966 until 1975. Within this period the number of Muslim converts are 2,341. Unfortunately, there is no record of Muslim converts between years 1976 until 1979. In this case, JAWI gave a reason that during that time almost of state religious department put their focusing on Sharia Court which is a new unit in all states religious departments. They need to put their attention on that because the demand from government of Malaysia (JAWI 5 years report, 1976-1980, Kuala Lumpur).

However, the data of Muslim converts showed rapidly rose up within 10 years started from 1980 until 1990 in all states. Obviously, the dats was supported by Muballigh organisations which are almost of the organisations was set up in early 1970's likes said before. The exact number in Malaysia is 3,304. Unfortunately, states religious departments only deal with the number (all Muslim converts need to be registered their name with state religious department where they live) without detail explanations, such as their ethnic background, genders and ages. These was effect from firstly; the usage of names from Muslim converts that willing to keep on their own name before conversion whereas it is usual phenomenon in Malaysia as a Muslim always used the word Bin (means son of) for male and Binti (means daughter of) after their own names than follow by father names. As a result, the names of Muslim convert will base on their own language (Chinese, Indian and so on) and it is difficult to identify their genders. Secondly; as a new Muslim, they willing to keep all their personal background, as a secret to ovoid something can be persuaded them to their previous religion (usually came from their own parents, siblings, relatives even their own ethnics) (JAWI 5 years report, 1976-1980, Kuala Lumpur).

On the other hand, Islamic Centre, PERKIM and ABIM are able to give various information's related with the ethnic backgrounds, genders and ages of the Muslim converts in Malaysia, especially Chinese Muallaf. They got the data might be because of the officers or the right word is volunteers are from the Chinese Muallaf as well and there are no barrier between such volunteers and the new comers (new Muslim). For example, PERKIM came out with information based on ethnics in 10 years period started in 1950 in Malaysia. The 10 years period from 1981 until 1990 has a biggest number of converts in Malaysia in all ethnics stated which are Chinese, Indians, foreigners (those who are not included as Chinese, Indian and Orang Asli or native people) and Orang Asli (native people). Generally, it shows that the Chinese Muallaf are the majority of Muslim converts by ethnicity in Malaysia. It stated from the total 10,075 Muslim converts (from year 2001 until 2010), 6,001 of them are from Chinese ethnic and

it was represented 59.6%. In the side of gender of Chinese Muallaf in Malaysia from year 2001 until 2010, approximately 3,248 from the total 6,001 of them are male and the rest are female. From 6,001, only 600 of them will be selected as a sample to measure their integration in this research. It will represent around 10% of them (JAWI 5 years report, 1976-1980, Kuala Lumpur).

CRITERIA'S FOR COLLECTING AND MEASURING DATA

For this research, 600 questionnaires were distributed to Chinese Muallaf to measure their actual integration. As mentioned, these 600 respondents represent around 10% of Chinese Muallaf (from 6,001 strong populations in Malaysia). The criteria's for collection data including level of age, gender, occupational and educational background, monthly income basis and marital status. Meanwhile, 12 Malay practices were determined as criteria's for measuring the data which are:

- Baju Kurung/Melayu; a national costume of Malaysia worn by Malaysian in official events
- Batik; wearing Batik means to wear cloths with local concepts decoration
- Songkok; a traditional Malay cap and this headdress worn with the traditional outfit for Malay
- The Malay wedding; the ceremony is a traditional Malay culture
- Kenduri (feasts) is a customary occasion where people are invited and gathered to celebrate something
- Kompang is the most popular Malay traditional instrument which widely used for all sorts of social occasion
- Nasi Lemak; a rice cooked with coconut milk and served with anchovies, nuts, cucumbers, a chili paste known as Sambal and a choice of curries
- Jawi script; a traditional Malay writing. It is an adapted Arabic alphabet for writing the Malay language particularly in religious contexts
- Salam; used in Malaysia equivalent with a handshake
- Bersunat; means circumcision
- Khatam al-Quran; a ceremony of completion of the reading of the whole holy Quran
- Eid celebration will be started when millions of Muslim gathered at mosques in early morning on the 1st of Shawal (one of the months in Muslim calendar)

RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHY, INSTRUMENT RELIABILITY AND RESEARCH FINDING

Obviously, Table 1 shows respondents demography. Meanwhile, reliability in this research means consistency

Table 1: Respondents' demography

Data gath. Resp. Cri.	Criteria background	No. of data gathered	Percentage
Age (years old)	15-17	120	20
	18-24	60	10
	25-30	80	13
	31-35	60	10
	36-40	60	10
	41-45	110	18
	46-54	70	12
	≥55	40	7
Total		600	100
Gender	Male	300	50
	Female	300	50
Total		600	100
Occupational background	General workers	150	25
	Semi-skilled workers	150	25
	Skilled workers	150	25
	Professional workers	150	25
Total		600	100
Educational background	Primary school	150	25
	Secondary school	150	25
	College/Institute/ Pre-University classes	150	25
	University	150	25
Total		600	100
Monthly income (RM)	Upper income group (≥5,000)	200	App. 33.3
	Middle income group (1000-4,000)	200	App. 33.3
	Lower income group (200-900)	200	App. 33.3
Total		600	100
Marital status	Single	300	50
	Married (including single parent and widow)	300	50
Total		600	100

Returned questionnaires; Data gath. = Data gathered, Resp. Cri. = Respondent's Criteria; App. = Approximatley

Table 2: Reliability analysis results

Item/question No.	Item/question total correlation	Alpha analysis result
Q7	0.9724	0.9990
Q8	0.9710	0.9990
Q9	0.9640	0.9990
Q10	0.9891	0.9989
Q11	0.9862	0.9990
Q12	0.9909	0.9989
Q13	0.9886	0.9989
Q14	0.9916	0.9989
Q15	0.9913	0.9989
Q16	0.9643	0.9990
Q17	0.9892	0.9989
Q18	0.9891	0.9989
Q19	0.9922	0.9989
Q20	0.9922	0.9990
Q21	0.9925	0.9990
Q22	0.9874	0.9991
Q23	0.9897	0.9990
Q24	0.9744	0.9989
Q25	0.9239	0.9989
Q26	0.9642	0.9990
Q27	0.9891	0.9990
Q28	0.9899	0.9989
Q29	0.9917	0.9990
Q30	0.9876	0.9989
Q31	0.9834	0.9989
Q32	0.9886	0.9989
Q33	0.9657	0.9990
Q34	0.9872	0.9990
Q35	0.9921	0.9990
Q36	0.9929	0.9989
Q37	0.9901	0.9998
Q38	0.9936	0.9989
Q39	0.9932	0.9989
Q40	0.9907	0.9989

Reliability analysis through SPSS

or the degree to which an instrument will give similar results for the same individuals at different times. The best quotation to explain instrument reliability in research is through the definition the term given by Joppe (2000). She defined the reliability as:

> The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Joppe, 2000; Miller, 1984)

However, the researcher cannot be sure of unchanging elements in extraneous influences, such as something that might cause an attitude transformation among the respondents. This could lead to a difference in the responses provided. In spite of this, any attitude change that can be considered as unexpected cannot be counted as a cause of an unreliable instrument (Sekaran, 2003). Following on what Joppe (2000) illustrated in reliability analysis by using the Alpha (α) method, she

concluded that an Alpha (α) score of 0.6000 and earlier has a good reliability. The result of reliability testing of this research, after using the same method of testing as Joppe (2000) is shown in Table 2. The result shows that each of the instruments (questions) has Alpha 0.9000 and above or Alpha 0.9990 in percentage. It means the instruments or the questions used in this research are reliable and can be validly applied in the questionnaire (Table 2).

The word level in this research can be interpreted as certain numbers within the measurement which allows one to conclude that integration is at the high or low levels. Apparently, the usual formula used to get the levels is by looking at the Median (Y) value score, comparing it with the Mean (X) value score if the Median (Y) value score is higher than the Mean (X) value score (Y>X), it means one can come to the conclusion that the level of integration at the high level. On the other hand if the Y<X, this means the degree is at the low level (Joppe, 2000). The testing and analysis of the level is summarised in Table 3.

Clearly derived from Table 3, the Y value score less than the (X) value score (Y (2.6667)<X (2.8883)). This and leads to the conclusion that the level of social integration

Table 3: Testing and analysing results of the integration level

Variables	Social integration
Respondents	
Valid	600
Missing	0
Mean (X)	2.8441
Median (Y)	2.6667
Mode	1.00
SD	1.3782
Variance	1.8994
Range	4.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	5.00
Sum	1706.44
Percentiles	
25	1.6944
50	2.6667
75	4.0000

Testing and analysing through SPSS

Table 4: Testing and analysing results of the numbers and percentages of social integration

Y value score level	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
1.00*	118	19.7	19.7	19.7
1.11	2	0.3	0.3	20.0
1.44	1	0.2	0.2	20.2
1.67	29	4.8	4.8	25.0
1.78	10	1.7	1.7	26.7
1.89	23	3.8	3.8	30.5
2.00	52	8.7	8.7	39.2
2.11	5	0.8	0.8	40.0
2.33	2	0.3	0.3	40.3
2.44	11	1.8	1.8	42.2
2.56	2	0.3	0.3	42.5
2.67	56	9.3	9.3	51.8
2.78	22	3.7	3.7	55.5
2.89	29	4.8	4.8	60.3
3.00	1	0.2	0.2	60.5
3.11	5	0.8	0.8	61.3
3.22	15	2.5	2.5	63.8
3.33	3	0.5	0.5	64.3
3.44	1	0.2	0.2	64.5
3.56	2	0.3	0.3	64.8
3.67	8	1.3	1.3	66.2
3.78	7	1.2	1.2	67.3
3.89	1	0.2	0.2	67.5
4.00	76	12.7	12.7	80.2
4.11	3	0.5	0.5	80.7
4.22	8	1.3	1.3	82.0
4.33	1	0.2	0.2	82.2
4.44	1	0.2	0.2	82.3
4.56	11	1.8	1.8	84.2
4.67	1	0.2	0.2	84.3
4.78	2	0.3	0.3	84.7
4.89	5	0.8	0.8	85.5
5.00	87	14.5	14.5	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Testing and analysing through SPSS; *Valid

of Chinese Muallaf is at the low level. The exact numbers percentages relating to this low level can be obtained from Table 4 of testing and analysis.

Noticeably, the Y value score of social integration of Chinese Muallaf is 2.6667 and it was close to 2.67 from the (Y) value score level at Table 3. Commonly, the close value from the score level can be used to conclude the precise percentage of the certain level (ibid) (in this case, the percentage of social integration of Chinese Muallaf). Therefore from the cumulative percentage of the 2.67 (Y), score level is 51.8%. It means, 51.8% of the 600 respondents of Chinese Muallaf or 311 of them are not integrating socially with the Malays.

CONCLUSION

Briefly in the side of social integration, through Mean (X) and Median (Y) testing and analysing, enclosed the degree is in the low level. It was proved on such testing, the Median (Y) value smaller than Mean (X) value to reach the conclusion mentioned. In number, 311 respondents are not integrating with the Malays via social practices, norms and values transferred into document from questions at the questionnaire while 51.8% represented them in percentage.

It shows that Chinese Muallaf are not fully social integrated into the mainstream of Malaysia which was dominated by the Malays.

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