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Editorial

Introduction to JOEDS and KITA

The Journal of Ethnic and Diversity Studies (JOEDS) is launched as KITA's flagship journal, to include and celebrate the works from our homegrown scholars which focus on a variety of topics related to diversity. This not only includes ethnic diversity, which is an outstanding Malaysian trait, but also other forms of diversity, including but not limited to gender, social class, age, federalism, spatial (urban-rural) and others.

The Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) was officially established on the 8th of October 2007, on the date when Prof. Datuk Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, was appointed by the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) as the Director of KITA. KITA is the only full-fledged research institute in Malaysia focusing specifically on 'ethnic studies.' Although academically, KITA has a 'thematic studies' orientation, it, however, draws its strength from both 'disciplinary studies' as well as 'area studies,' thus encouraging cross-disciplinary activities, involving three major sectors of the society, namely, the public, the private, and the community sectors. Thus, KITA adopts an inclusivist approach in conducting its activities.

KITA'S vision is "Towards sustaining, comparatively and relatively, an inclusive-oriented, stable and harmonious intra- and inter-ethnic relations among Malaysians and beyond". Its mission is "To foster and build inclusive, multi-strategic approaches in addressing the complex ethnic-based related challenges." Hence, KITA focuses on academic work as well as public advocacy.

In addition, KITA possesses a wealth of research specialisations among its academic faculty and PhD and Masters by research students. KITA is part of international and national research networks as well as academic and industry networks that harness these talents.

To these ends, JOEDS aims to receive article submissions in the form of full research articles, short communications or research notes, as well as book or multimedia reviews, that address the vision and mission of KITA, as well as those that cover the breadth and depth of the study of human diversity in general.

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Towards Manga as Cultural Potpourri: Dramaturgy of Ethnicity and Diversity in Selected Malaysian Manga

Ke Arah Kepelbagaian Melalui Manga: Dramaturgi Etnisiti dan Kepelbagaian dalam Manga Malaysia Terpilih

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ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been an increase in the consumption and production of Japanese comics or manga in Malaysia, to the extent that Malaysians are producing their own homegrown manga titles. For example, Gempak Starz, a Malaysian comics and manga publisher, has been instrumental in spearheading the launch of many localised manga titles. Manga, which originates from Japan, has often been the topic of debate, regarding its depiction of characters, especially in terms of ethnicity. Iwabuchi (1998) used the term “culturally odorless” to describe the way in which many manga characters do not appear to belong to any particular ethnicity or culture. My research question is, how does Malaysian homegrown manga differ from the standard Japanese manga? For example, are there visual and thematic differences? Does it have potential for social critique and education? This paper analyses the way ethnicity and diversity are depicted in several selected manga titles from Gempak Starz’s most popular manga series, highlighting the ways in which ethnicity and culture are made recognisable. I comparatively analyse the dramaturgical approach in selected Japanese manga and selected Malaysian manga published and translated by Gempak Starz. I ultimately confirm that there is indeed a second wave of manga in Malaysia that transcends the initial “culturally odorless” appearance of traditional Japanese manga as outlined by Iwabuchi (Chan, 2018).

Keywords: Malaysian manga; cultural odorlessness; dramaturgy; ethnicity in comics; diversity in comics

ABSTRAK

Semenjak dewasa ini, terdapat peningkatan di dalam kepenggunaan dan penghasilan komik Jepun ataupun manga, di Malaysia, sehinggakan Malaysia telah mulai menerbitkan manga tempatan sendiri. Sebagai contoh, penerbit komik Jepun tempatan, Gempak Starz, telah menjadi pelopor dalam menghasilkan manga oleh penulis dan pelukis Malaysia. Manga, yang berasal daripada Jepun, telah menjadi isu perdebatan, mengenai cara watak-wataknya dipersembahkan, terutama sekali apabila berkait dengan topik etnisiti. Iwabuchi (1998) telah menggunakan istilah “tanpa bau kebudayaan” untuk menggambarkan bagaimana kebanyakan watak dalam manga seperti tidak mempunyai etnisii atau kebudayaan yang jelas kelihatan. Persoalan kajian saya adalah, bagaimana manga tempatan Malaysia berbeza daripada manga Jepun yang biasa? Sebagai contoh, adakah perbezaan dari segi visual dan tema? Adakah ia mempunyai potensi untuk kritikan sosial dan pendidikan? Makalah ini menganalisis bagaimana topik etnisiti dan kepelbagaian digambarkan di dalam manga popular oleh Gempak Starz, menyerlahkan cara ia dikenalpasti. Saya membuat analisis perbandingan di antara manga Jepun terjemahan dan manga tempatan Malaysia terbitan Gempak Starz yang

terpilih. Akhirnya, saya mengesahkan bahawa terdapatnya manga tempatan Malaysia yang bukanlah “tanpa bau kebudayaan” sepertimana yang dinyatakan oleh Iwabuchi (1998).

Kata kunci: Manga tempatan Malaysia; “tanpa bau kebudayaan”; dramaturgi; etnisiti dalam komik; kepelbagaian dalam komik

INTRODUCTION

This paper asserts and demonstrates the argument that the depiction of ethnicity in Japanese comics, or *manga*, is existent, especially when adapted into localised versions. *Manga* has historically been a Japanese art form, evolving from *ukiyo-e*, eventually gaining place as a contemporary form of entertainment. However, due to its monocultural origins, and coupled with the fact that it tends to be associated with fantasy, *manga* is not considered as a serious platform in dealing with the discourse of ethnicity. This paper thus highlights how *manga* has evolved into a platform which is capable of encompassing issues of diversity such as ethnicity, as part of the human experience. The argument is thus that we should elevate the status of *manga* as an international art form or medium of communication that enables the understanding of the human experience from a dramaturgical standpoint.

Perhaps, a similar assertion has been made by scholars in other nations, hence this paper aims to do the same for Malaysia. Numerous studies have been made regarding *manga*'s increasing global outreach, especially in Europe, topped by consumer markets in countries such as France, Italy, and Germany, as well as expectedly so in other Asian countries. In addition, Chinese *manhua* and Korean *manhwa* are closely connected comic genres. *Manga* is equally popular in North America, and is gaining attention in Latin America. It is thus nearly global as a medium of communication. Beyond communication in the form of entertainment, this paper outlines its more profound abilities. It does so by comparing the visual, thematic, and structural differences between Japanese and Malaysian *manga*, highlighting its potential for teaching and learning, especially with regards to understanding diversity.

Of course, *manga* is not without its critiques, where detractors view it as trivial or even prone to unsavoury content, but one must argue in response that the same observation could be made regarding any medium of communication, including but not limited to books, art, music, and movies. Thus the approach of pigeonholing something is not an objective or fair way of assessing the merits of a particular medium of communication. With that explained, we shall proceed to analyse *manga* as one would analyse any other medium of communication, which are not exempt from the formulation of public opinion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Manga is a form of Japanese comics that originated from Japan in a form known as *ukiyo-e*, woodblock prints, or "pictures of the floating world" (Brenner, 2007; in Chan, 2018). Its outstanding characteristics include a unique drawing style, in which characters are depicted with large expressive eyes, up-close perspectives of characters' facial expressions, framed in panels laced with textual vocalization of sounds, as well as explanatory notes or comments by the *mangaka* (*manga* artist). *Manga* genres are categorised based on the age and gender of its target readers, for example, *shonen manga* (for teenage boys), *shojo manga* (for teenage girls), *josei manga* (for women), and *seinen manga* (for men) (Wong, 2006; in Chan, 2018). The God of Manga, Osamu Tezuka (Power 2009), author of the famous *manga Astro Boy*, was

convinced that manga's format could be used to tell every kind of story, from adventure, to comedy to serious drama (Brenner 2007). *Astro Boy* was a Japanese comic book or *manga* series originally called *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Iron-Armed Atom*, 1951–1958), with *Astro Boy* originally called *Atom* in the original series; and had later been adapted into an *animé* (Natsu Onoda Power 2009). Comics meanwhile, may be understood as a form of visual language. Cohn (2005) problematised the definition of “comics” in terms of distinct features: images, text, sequentiality, and the ways in which they interact; remarking that although comics consist of images and text, comics utilise those differently from other mediums, such as children's' books. Cohn (2008) further pinpointed the unique characteristics of *manga* through the concept of Japanese Visual Language (JVL), namely the “*manga*” style, which includes the “big eyes” and “small mouth” schema as well as specific graphic emblems that form *manga*'s conventional visual vocabulary, with a total of 73 conventionalised graphic schemes in Japanese manga (Cohn & Ehly 2015).

Manga is more than just a “genre” or “medium”, but a cultural cycle, consisting of the publication cycle, the participation cycle, and the consumption cycle (Beaty & Weidenbaum 2012). In addition, Beaty & Weidenbaum (2012) state, that to read *manga* outside Japan involves several acts of distancing, which include the translation process, the time lag of *manga*'s storyline contexts, and the absence of the weekly or monthly serial cycle, as *manga* outside Japan is generally consumed in paperback collections reprinted years to decades after their original serial publication, known as *tankōbon*, which resemble graphic novels.

Concurrently, there are also other types of graphic novels, including American comics, French *bande dessinée*, and East Asian variants of *manga*, namely Korean *manhwa* and Chinese *manhua*. The latter two are most similar to Japanese *manga* in terms of structure, but there are also significant visual, thematic and structural differences. Malaysian cartoon or comic art is also an established field and has evolved over four main periods, namely the Pioneer Era (the 1930s to 1957, or Malaysia's Independence from the British), the New Era (1957 to 1970s), the Glory Era (the 1980s), and the Pluralist Era (since the 1990s) (Mulyadi Mahamood, 2012; in Chan, 2018). Malay comics, such as the famous *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Utopia* also has its own specifications, such as being A4 sized, and is thus bigger sized than *manga* (Roslina Mamat et al, 2015). Meanwhile, Tan (2014) observed that the Malaysian Chinese comic scene emerged in the 1970s and reached its peak in 1970; but although produced by Malaysian Chinese authors and written in Chinese, did not fulfil the three criteria of style, namely unique illustration, content and culture, and thus does not constitute a fully developed contemporary comic style (Tan 2014; in Chan 2018).

Manga has its equivalents or contemporaries worldwide. In Korea, comics are called *manhwa*, while in China and the Chinese-speaking world, it is called *manhua*. According to CBR.com, Korean *manhwa* was inspired by Japanese culture and language through the 1910s to the 1940s, rose in popularity in the 1950s, and declined in the 1960s, but has recently become popular again due to the proliferation of ‘webtoons’ in platforms such as Daum Webtoon and Naver Webtoon (Peralta 2020). Bae (2017) notes that in Korea, ‘webtoons’, or online comics have now become a staple of popular culture for over a decade, and have long since overtaken print *manhwa* in popularity and market size. Readers used to access print *manhwa* in *manhwa* rental stores, which was the primary space where print *manhwa* was read (Bae 2017). However, the shift towards ‘webtoons’ resulted in a change of space, and led to a change in sociocultural connotations attached to the genre (Bae 2017). Today, Korean *manhwa* has been developed into educational material such as applications and e-books for children, in order to boost reading activities amidst a decline, and is now the second largest book segment after

educational books (Korean Publishers Association and the National Library of Korea; in Siti Ezaleila Mustafa & Azizah Hamzah, 2014).

Wong (2002) defines *manhua* as a Chinese term which is commonly used in Hong Kong as an equivalent to cartoons or comics. In its traditional sense however, the Chinese term *manhua* referred to satirical and caricatural art containing social critique, though it has since evolved to include other foreign influences (Hung, 1994; in Wong, 2002). Wong (2002) also observed that the development of Hong Kong *manhua* led to the establishment of a unique local style and a flourishing industry by the 1990s. De Masi & Chen (2010) however note that the word *manhua* is used in China today to describe not only cartoons and comics published in China, but also translations of Japanese works and, in general, to comics in the Chinese language. Among others, contemporary successful Chinese *manhua* titles include ‘Zibuyu’, and ‘Confucius Did Not Say’, published by Shueisha Publishing Co. Ltd, one of the largest production and distribution companies of Japanese cartoons and *manga* (De Masi & Chen, 2010).

The manga market abroad has been thriving since 2005, when Asia (excepting Japan) comprised 42% of it, the US 36%, and the rest of the world 22% (Japan External Trade Organisation, 2005); and in Europe, France, Italy, and Germany were its major consumers (Boissou et al, 2010). France is the most developed export market for *manga*, even ahead of the United States, where since 1990-1991, *manga* had gained a 38% share of the French comics market (Bouissou 2006). In France, comics are called *bande dessinée* (strip cartoons), and are also known as *les BDs*, "lay bay day"; and there are also *roman graphique* (graphic novels) (Library of Congress). *Bande dessinée* have short one-off narratives, while *roman graphique* have long-running narratives stretching across many chapters or volumes (Library of Congress). In 1996, the *Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême* (Angoulême International Comics Festival) which was held since 1974, discussed the origins of *bande dessinée* (Grove 1993). The definition of *bande dessinée* has become more fluid and dynamic in terms of definition compared to twenty years ago, when *Tintin* was seen as the epitome of the form (Smolderen 2009). It is considered the “ninth art” (*Le Neuvième Art*) and thus holds a high status as an art form, occasionally exhibited at art galleries such as the Louvre; while French bookstores carry *bande dessinée*, American comics, as well as *manga* (Library of Congress). Many BDs as well as *roman graphique* tackle serious subjects, and as they continue to evolve, there has been a demand especially among today's youth for the representation of greater diversity, such as women and people of colour (Library of Congress).

Meanwhile, the American comic market comprises among others, American superhero comics, its most popular genre, as well as imported *manga* from Japan. There had also been an effort to produce its own homegrown *manga*. Original English language (OEL) manga originated during the manga boom in the West (2002-2008) (Acosta 2016). This was originally intended to create original works to be consumed in the same manner as imported Japanese *manga*, but instead the public considered OEL as inferior to Japanese *manga* (Acosta 2016). OEL was then rebranded into “global manga” (Anime News Network, 2006). Despite the fact that American and Japanese publishers dominate comic book sales globally, there are significant differences in both contexts and products (Hernandez-Perez 2016). For example, as mentioned, the superhero genre is the most popular genre in American comics, and is often criticised for being considered mainstream (Hernandez-Perez 2016). Instead, Japanese comics, which are particularly diverse in terms of demographic and generic segmentation, show a greater homogeneity in the use of stylistic codes which have come to be known as Japanese Visual Language (JVL) (Cohn 2010; in Hernandez-Perez 2016). At the beginning of the 21st century, the American publishing market attempted several strategies to reap success from the

international appeal of *manga* and *animé* (Japanese animation; from the French word *animé*) (Hernandez-Perez 2016). These strategies included introducing Japanese cultural elements, and the adaptation of Japanese Visual Language, via publishing products of Japanese and international authorship – an attempt which was executed through the publishing imprint Mangaverse (2000-2003; 2005-2006) (Hernandez-Perez 2016). These strategies were composed of elements such as aspects of the story, the deconstruction/appropriation of characters, different forms of transcultural adaptation, and hybridisation of media and genres (Hernandez-Perez 2016). Concurrently, the issue of race and ethnicity was tackled in an American superhero comic, namely the now-worldwide famous Black Panther, made into a Marvel movie recently. Hudlin made the character of Black Panther an icon of a 21st century (“race man”), by rendering him symbolic of a society superior to Western ones; making his land as aspirant for all Black people, especially Black Americans; displaying what could be accomplished by maintaining dynamic traditions and internal control; and presenting a man who completes himself with an equal partner (Yates 2017). America’s first Black Superhero, Marvel Comics’ Black Panther (T’challa), has been a symbol of Black Pride, Black Unity, and Black Superiority in his various iterations for nearly 50 years (Yates 2017). The Library Journal also charts the evolution of American *manga*, noting that the first wave began with traditional Japanese *manga*, followed by the second wave which contained Korean *manhwa* and Chinese *manhua*, followed by the third wave consisting of original English language (OEL), and finally the fourth wave which is global *manga* - listed by graphic novel publisher, Saturday AM.

“Diversity” as a concept has a unique personal history, within the paradigm of social theory. One of its leading scholars, Steven Vertovec, remarked that “in the last decade the proliferation and mutually conditioning effects of additional variables shows that it is not enough to see diversity only in terms of ethnicity, as is regularly the case both in social science and the wider public sphere” (Vertovec 2007: 1025). Across the globe, more people – from more varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds, subject to more varied conditions of mobility and legal status – come into regular contact with one another in today’s growing cities (Vertovec 2015: 1). Recently, there have been efforts to problematise the concept of diversity, especially regarding its enhanced form, super-diversity. Vertovec (2007: 1024) defined super-diversity as a concept created to express the following phenomenon in the United Kingdom, which is “distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of immigrants who have arrived over the last decade, who are: new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated, and legally stratified”.

In Chan (2018)’s paper on how Malaysian *manga* acts as dramaturgy of “everyday-defined realities”, the author applies Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (1996)’s concept of “everyday-defined realities”, namely people’s grassroots ways of defining their identity, to explaining the function of Malaysian *manga* for the reader. Chan (2018) uses Goffman (1959)’s theory of dramaturgy to outline the ways in which Malaysian *manga* (for example, Dreamerz and Leoz’s *Kepahitan Tersembunyi*) acts as a stage for the dramatization of these everyday-defined realities and its impact on individual identities. Goffman (1959) devised the concept of dramaturgical analysis as a sociological framework in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Life was viewed as a stage where individuals managed their desired self-image to be projected upon the eyes of others. The front stage is the sum total of this desired self-image to be publicly projected; while the actual preparation is achieved behind the scenes, in what is called the back stage. This could include learning a language, affecting an accent (to suit a depiction of an associated social class); following a fashion trend; maintaining one’s figure and beauty; and adopting the fashionable opinions and values of the present day. All this hard work goes on behind the scenes and an individual’s personal struggles with acquiring

these is not meant for the public eye. With that said, this present paper limits itself to analysing manga's ability to express diversity through its visual, structural, and thematic aspects. It demonstrates how *manga* is particularly adept at portraying these machinations artfully and seamlessly through its very structure.

Diversity in Manga

An evolution

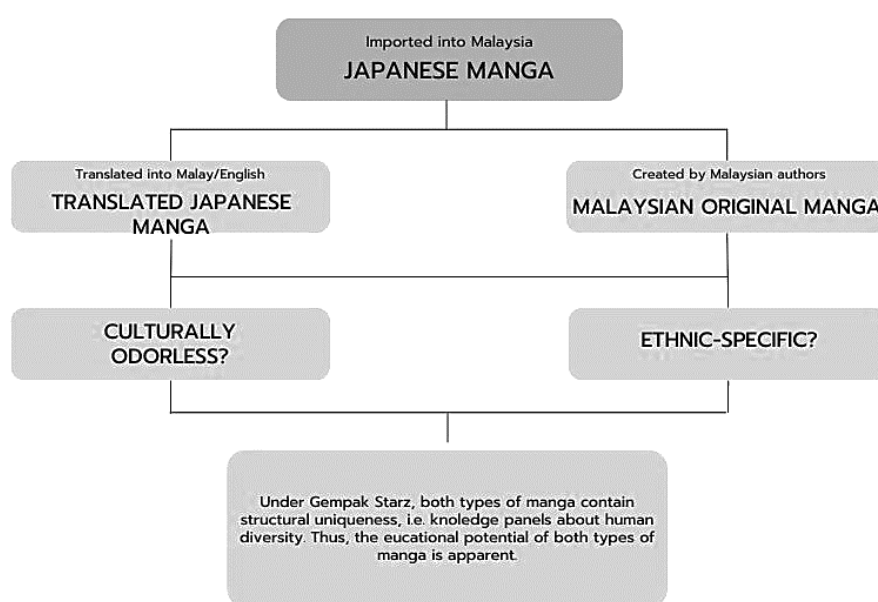


FIGURE 1. Evolution of diversity depictions in manga, from Japanese manga to Malaysian original manga (diagram created by Chan, 2022)

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

From the review of the existing literature and its main themes, I have formulated the following research objectives, which are to discern and outline the differences between Malaysian and Japanese *manga*, visually, thematically, and structurally, to decide what makes Malaysian *manga* unique. This is in relation to its depiction of diversity and ethnicity in a culturally recognisable context, which is Malaysia. It also aims to outline the educational content and potential of Malaysian original *manga*.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to answer the following research questions, namely:

1. What are the visual, thematic, and structural differences between Malaysian *manga* and Japanese *manga*?

2. Does Malaysian *manga* express diversity, including but not limited to depictions of ethnicity?
3. Is there educational potential in Malaysian *manga* and how is this demonstrated?

METHODOLOGY

For both Japanese and Malaysian *manga*, comics from the publisher Gempak Starz were selected, as it is currently the largest and most influential *manga* and comics publisher in Malaysia, among others. Gempak Starz carries translated Japanese *manga* and publishes local homegrown Malaysian *manga*. Several series which aim to be educational were selected, and a title selected from each. Selected *manga* consisted of Japanese graphic novels translated into Malay, and selected original Malaysian *manga*. Four *manga* titles were selected for each category. *Manga* consists of one-shot titles (standalone single volumes) and multiple volume series (serialised *manga* chapters in magazines which are later compiled into book volumes ranging up to tens of volumes). One-shot *manga* titles were prioritised, since the volume would be already complete at the time of analysis. The comparison from the visual, thematic, and structural approaches, as well as educational and content about diversity is presented in the following tables.

RESULTS

VISUAL, THEMATIC, AND STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALAYSIAN MANGA AND JAPANESE MANGA

Aspect	Japanese <i>Manga</i>	Malaysian <i>Manga</i>
Visual	Contains culturally odorless and culturally specific types.	In some titles, ethnicity is made specific and recognisable.
Thematic	There are moral values and other themes but the reader is supposed to detect them on their own.	Moral values spelt out explicitly.
Structural	Authors' comments.	Authors' comments. Knowledge panels.
Educational	Is not explicitly spelt out as a learning objective. But some titles do have potential to educate on specific topics such as culinary arts, martial arts, social stratification, history, etc. There are specific educational <i>manga</i> , e.g. focusing on topics like statistics/science, etc.	Knowledge panels added specifically for this purpose, perhaps to elevate the status of comics/ <i>manga</i> .

TABLE 1. Comparison of visual, thematic, structural and educational differences in Japanese and Malaysian manga (Chan, 2021)

MALAYSIAN MANGA AND ITS EXPRESSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Sociological Concepts/Themes	Japanese <i>Manga</i>	Malaysian <i>Manga</i>
Ethnicity	√	√
Social Class	√	√
Family & Relationships	√	√
Gender	√	√
Power	√	√

Moral Values	√	√ (explicitly stated)
“Japanese-ness”	√	√ + Malaysian-ness
Relevance to social issues	√	√

TABLE 2. Thematic Comparison of a Japanese Manga and a Malaysian Manga

EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL IN MALAYSIAN MANGA

Educational Feature	Learning Outcome
Knowledge panels	Cultural festivals, customs, traditions, heritage
Author’s explanation/comments	Understanding of purpose of structural element
Explicitly stated discussion of moral values	Acquiring moral values experientially (albeit vicariously)

TABLE 3. Educational features in Malaysian manga

ETHNIC STUDIES IMPLICATION

From the findings above, it is apparent that Japanese as well as Malaysian *manga* possess significant social commentary embedded within, including but not limited to: ethnicity, social class, family and relationships, gender, power, moral values, and relevance to social issues. This offers readers informal exposure to these sociological concepts and themes, thus enhancing one’s understanding of abstract concepts. In addition, this platform opens up discourse into the cultural similarities and differences between Japan and Malaysia, and can also involve cultures from more than just these two countries, such as those mentioned above like France, the United States, Korea, China and other countries. As of the present, *manga* has demonstrated potential to actively act as a tool for expressing diversity. Malaysian *mangaka* Kaoru, for example, has authored at least one specific volume whose theme centres on learning Japanese culture, as part of a series. *Manga*, and especially Malaysian homegrown *manga*, is thus a promising platform to create dramaturgical understanding, allowing viewers to imagine its characters as social actors in the readers’ own personal social contexts.

There are certain differences between Malaysian homegrown *manga* and Japanese *manga* (or other transcultural adaptations). Chief among these would be that Malaysian *manga* contains the following uniqueness: visually, ethnicity is deliberately made specific and recognisable especially to a Malaysian reader; thematically, moral values are spelt out explicitly instead of being left open to interpretation; structurally, authors’ comments that exist in Japanese *manga* also exist in Malaysian *manga*, except in the latter it is complemented by knowledge panels listing down facts and figures beyond just the author’s opinions. Thus Malaysian *manga* appears to very intentionally posit itself as educational material in an infotainment sense.

Graphic novels, including but not limited to *manga*, provide valuable insights into its characters’ front stage and backstage behaviours. This is the essence of dramaturgy. What differentiates *manga* from other mediums of communication such as films, television programmes, and other graphic novels, is that *manga* emphasises a direct view into the motivations of its characters, through its structural and narrative aspects. Thus, its readers can

be instantly drawn into engaging with the storyline through the eyes of the characters by delving into their psyches, root for those characters, and experiencing the plot through the perspective of the character as a social actor. This is dramaturgical because it portrays, for the reader's benefit, what goes on in the characters' minds as they evaluate a situation and the way in which those characters engage in impression management. This is one aspect that is uniquely emphasised in *manga* through its use of the up-close perspective, such as macro shots. The reader is able to put themselves in the characters' shoes and understand their situation, despite it possibly being foreign to the reader. Therein lies the potential for understanding diversity in terms of characters' experiences. As Boissou et al (2010) also observed, *manga* is not just a reading format, it also allows fans to interact with like-minded people. The social dimension of the fandom as a community played a role of great importance for a significant majority of the fans, with the Internet being an important medium (Boissou et al 2010).

Essentially, the process of reading *manga* requires its own specific cultural capital, which is not difficult to accumulate, and, as Kacsuk (2016) highlights, is also distinguishable between Bourdieu's concepts of pure and popular aesthetic disposition. Knowledge panels, whether explicitly or implicitly stated, provide the necessary social, cultural, and historical information and skill for the reader to follow the story. As Boissou et al (2010) found, fans' motivation for reading *manga*, besides escapism, was also because respondents found it easy to identify themselves with. Boissou et al (2010) also discovered that fantastic *manga* stories often required a high degree of attention and seriousness from the reader, because of a complex narrative together with syncretistic association of themes, figures, and objects coming together from many different cultures, and that when comparing *manga* and European comics, respondents rated *manga* characters as "more emotionally attractive" than those of European comics.

This may be because in *manga*, flashbacks are often provided for the reader to understand the characters' pasts, motives, and intentions, in a way that is informative instead of purely aesthetic. This enables the reader to form connections with the characters in *manga*, beyond the constructs and scales of good versus evil, protagonists versus antagonists, and so forth. It allows for a portrayal of the spectrum of the many shades of grey between pure black and white depictions of heroes versus villains in other forms of media. *Manga's* format allows for emotional engagement and a sophisticated comprehension of the many layers of human interaction, from the ego, to the culture, and the superstructure of society. Also, characters in *manga* often tend to focus on micro problems rather than problems that relate to saving the entire world, and therefore this makes it very relatable to the individual. According to Cohn, Taylor-Weiner & Grossman (2012), research on visual attention has shown that Americans tend to focus more on focal objects of a scene, while Asians attend to the surrounding environment, while Cohn (2014) noted that how a scene is framed appears to differ across cultures. For example, Cohn (2014) explained that Japanese *manga* proportionally show less than a whole scene (monos, micros) more often than they show a whole scene (macros), which is different than American comics, where whole scenes are provided outright.

Malaysian *manga* has also come a long way in being able to depict the everyday-defined realities of its people. In Roslina Mamat et al (2015)'s study, the authors studied similarities and differences in external characteristics of *manga* and *dojinshi* (fan art of *manga*) caricatures in Malaysia. They found that Malaysian *dojinshi* artists, or those who drew fan art of *manga*, consisted of the following: writers who fully incorporated external characteristics of *manga*; writers who included Malaysian and Japanese *manga* characteristics in their characters; and writers who fully utilised Malaysian characteristics in *dojinshi*. Hence, it is refreshing to witness the growth of commercial original homegrown Malaysian *manga* which has its own

unique local style. Yamato (2014) and Iwabuchi (1998) also suggest that transnational media texts of Japanese popular culture may be potential materials for reflecting and discussing the “individual proximity” in people, social issues, or phenomenon (rather than “essential culture” which is linked to the national/ethnic origin) (Chan, 2018).

Finally, in response to the observation made by Tan (2014) regarding the lack of a distinct Malaysian Chinese comic style, I add that Dreamerz and Leoz’s *Kepahitan Tersembunyi* bears some resemblance in content to this Malaysian Chinese wave of comics due to its depictions of Chinese ethnicity through a *wantan mee* family business; and that subsequent to this particular volume, there have been many new *manga* volumes that followed this mould. The stories tend to depict Chinese ethnicity and consciousness from the modern and historical aspects, as can be seen in the emergence of a volume specifically on *wuxia* (Chinese martial arts), and another on the Chinese *kopitiam* (coffee shop). However, these are not exclusively written in Chinese but in the Malay language, and is thus accessible to more Malaysians.

CONCLUSION

Manga is a great dramaturgical and communication tool that could be used not only in entertainment but also in education. Compared to other forms of multimedia, *manga* encourages its readers to use their own imagination, and hence engages the reader in an interactive social learning process. The reader is able to utilise their sociological imagination to mentally locate the individual, which is symbolised by the *manga* character or characters, within the reader’s own social reality. In reading *manga*, one undergoes a different experience compared to viewing a film, as in the latter one does not need to use one’s imagination so intently and completely to understand what is happening. *Manga*’s ability to be evocative could surpass that of reading novels, as there are visual cues in addition to text. Furthermore, *manga* is often a multi-volume affair, with a continuous storyline, compiled from monthly serials published in specialised *manga* magazines. Thus, this structure requires readers to possess an understanding of the social, cultural, and historical context of the *manga*’s theme, especially if it is a historical *manga*. Engagement with character emotions as well as developing a sociological imagination is also part and parcel of the specific cultural capital developed through reading *manga*. This paper supports the observation made by Chan (2018) that Malaysia’s *manga* market has evolved from a consumer to a producer of *manga*, an originally Japanese cultural product. In the case of Malaysian *manga*, it acts not only as a dramaturgical platform for the analysis of everyday-defined realities, but also as a springboard for creating awareness of Malaysian ethnic (and other forms of) diversities.

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Lim Lian Geok Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia: Perwatakan Menurut Perspektif Dramaturgikal Goffman

*Lim Lian Geok Soul Of The Malaysian Chinese:
Character According To Goffman's Dramaturgical Perspective*

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini meninjau perwatakan Lim Lian Geok (林连玉 Lin Lian Yu, 1901-1985) sebagai seorang pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Kemuncak bantahan Lim terhadap polisi pendidikan pascakemerdekaan menyebabkan hak kewarganegaraan Lim dilucutkan dan tauliah mengajar ditarik balik. Lim tidak tunduk mengalah sehinggakan Lim dinobatkan sebagai 'Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia'. Namun begitu, pengiktirafan terhadap perwatakan Lim nyata terbatas dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat etnik Cina. Tidak ramai anggota masyarakat etnik lain mengiktiraf sumbangan Lim, melainkan mereka mengikuti perkembangan semasa isu pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Sehubungan itu kajian ini meninjau keupayaan Lim menampilkan dirinya dalam perjuangan bahasa ibunda dalam perspektif Dramaturgikal Goffman, berasaskan penelitian kepustakaan dengan meneliti bahan rujukan dalam bentuk jurnal, buku, dan artikel. Hasil kajian mendapati Lim berjaya 'melakonkan' perwatakannya dalam masyarakat etnik Cina tetapi telah gagal 'melakonkan' perwatakannya dalam masyarakat selain etnik Cina. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat percanggahan pandangan antara Lim dengan kerajaan. Tuntutan Lim menemui kegagalan kerana kerajaan melalui sistem pendidikan aliran perdana yang mendukung aspirasi nasional perlu lebih mengutamakan kepentingan nasional secara keseluruhan. Kajian ini dapat menyimpulkan kemunculan pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang tidak pernah patah semangat menuntut hak pendidikan bahasa ibunda.

Kata kunci: bahasa ibunda; bahasa rasmi; Dong Jiao Zong; Lim Lian Geok; masyarakat etnik Cina

ABSTRACT

This article examines the character of Lim Lian Geok (林连玉 Lin Lian Yu, 1901-1985) as a Chinese mother tongue education fighter. The culmination of Lim's protest against the post-



independence education policy has led to Lim's citizenship rights to be deprived by the government. Lim did not give up until Lim was named the Soul of the Malaysian Chinese. However, recognition of Lim's character is limited to members of the Chinese ethnic community. Not many members of the other ethnic communities recognise Lim's contribution unless they keep up with the Chinese mother tongue education issue. This study examines Lim's ability to present himself according to Goffman's dramaturgical perspective based on reference materials in the form of journals, books, and articles. The results show that Lim succeeded in "acting" his character in the Chinese ethnic community but failed to "act" his character in the other communities besides the Chinese ethnic group. The findings show that there is a conflict of view between Lim and the government. Lim's demands have failed because the government, through the mainstream education system that supports national aspirations, needs to prioritise national interests as a whole. This study can conclude the emergence of Chinese language education fighters who have never been discouraged in demanding the right to education.

Keywords: mother tongue; official language; Dong Jiao Zong; Lim Lian Geok; Chinese ethnic community

PENGENALAN

Akar Penanti Bayu

keberadaan di dalam tanah,
puak akar yang menanti arus bayu,
nenek moyang bagai satu putaran yang melingkari,
kesan calar,
kayu-kayan terputah,
telahpun luput dalam tanah sebagai pelindung akar,
nadi dalam tanah,
salur darah pada akar dirancarkan,
dengan pesanan nenek moyang:
“Jangan pandang rendah pada diri!”

~ Nukilan: Xiao Man (Sajak terjemahan pengkaji daripada bahasa Cina ke bahasa Melayu dalam *Sinorama*. Vol. 30. No. 6, June 2005:2-3).

Begitulah nukilan sajak yang menggambarkan kedatangan imigran Cina menaiki kapal jong mendarat ke Tanah Melayu. Kedatangan golongan imigran ini pada pertengahan abad ke-19, mereka telah menunjukkan kesungguhan mempertahankan bahasa ibunda, mewariskan bahasa ibunda kepada generasi berikutnya yang disampaikan oleh penyajak tempatan. Pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang bertapak di Malaysia mempunyai sejarah perkembangan yang cukup panjang (Kua 1985; Tan 1997). Sistem pendidikan ini kaya dengan asal usul sejarah perkembangannya dan dikatakan sangat lengkap selain pendidikan yang berorientasikan bahasa Cina yang diamalkan di benua Asia Timur seperti Tanah Besar China, Taiwan, dan Hong Kong. Masyarakat etnik Cina di Malaysia yang terdidik dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dikatakan golongan etnik yang berjaya mempertahankan sistem persekolahan ini. Boleh dikatakan sistem persekolahan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina ini tidak wujud secara tiba-tiba tanpa kisah perjuangan di sebaliknya.

Golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang berbekalkan semangat tidak mudah mengalah telah bangkit menawarkan tenaga fizikal mahupun sumber kewangan mengembangkan dan mempertahankan kelangsungan kewujudan sekolah Cina ini supaya anak-anak Cina dapat menerima pendidikan bahasa ibunda dan mengekalkan identiti yang bertunjangkan budaya Cina melalui pendidikan jenis sekolah ini. Perjuangan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina di barisan hadapan, telah menyumbangkan segala tenaga atas nama melangsungkan kewujudan sistem persekolahan Cina supaya kebudayaan Cina dan maruah identiti etnik Cina dapat

dipertahankan. Golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina ini hidup pada zaman yang benar-benar menguji kekentalan mental mereka, hal ini disebabkan polisi pendidikan yang diperkenalkan oleh kerajaan penjajah dikatakan ‘tidak mesra’ pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan persaingan tuntutan hak pendidikan bahasa ibunda daripada kumpulan etnik lain telah menyukarkan lagi perkembangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina.

Pada hakikatnya, dasar pendidikan negara sebagai alat menyatupadukan murid dan pelajar sekolah yang berbilang etnik, budaya dan kepercayaan agama, sudah pasti sistem pendidikan disandarkan harapan memupuk perpaduan dan persefahaman dalam kalangan murid dan pelajar. Namun demikian, menurut Tan (2005: 47, 57-60), bahasa memperlihatkan ikatan yang begitu kukuh dengan sentimen etnik, hal ini ada asas kebenarannya kerana setiap etnik memiliki ciri-ciri keetnikan yang menonjol. Tuntutan golongan majoriti etnik Melayu dan golongan etnik minoriti Cina dalam isu bahasa dan pendidikan, terutamanya dalam usaha mereka menuntut supaya kedudukan bahasa dan pendidikan masing-masing dimantapkan melalui proses penggubalan dasar bahasa dan dasar pendidikan. Maka, kita dapat menyaksikan tuntutan kedua-dua golongan berkisar pada isu dasar keseragaman bahasa pengantar berteraskan bahasa golongan majoriti untuk memupuk perpaduan, dan isu dasar kepelbagaian bahasa pengantar berteraskan bahasa golongan minoriti untuk mempertahankan bahasa, budaya, dan identiti etnik. Kerajaan selaku penggubal dasar dihipit dilema yang merunsingkan ini terpaksa mengambil pendekatan akomodatif sebagai jalan tengah, iaitu bahasa pengantar diseragamkan mulai peringkat pendidikan menengah aliran perdana, dan bahasa ibunda golongan etnik minoriti dibenarkan setakat pada sekolah vernakular peringkat pendidikan rendah. Dalam konteks sedemikian, ada benarnya hujah menurut Santhiram (1997), golongan minoriti membuat pilihan sama ada memilih ‘cara hidup’, iaitu pemerolehan ilmu melalui bahasa pengantar ibunda atau ‘peluang hidup’, iaitu pemerolehan ilmu melalui bahasa pengantar majoriti sementara bahasa ibunda diajar sebagai salah satu subjek dalam kurikulum sekolah.

KAJIAN KEPUSTAKAAN

Kajian tentang Lim Lian Geok agak terbatas, kajian tentang kelemahan perjuangan Lim masih tidak banyak dilakukan. Selain itu, tidak banyak kajian dari perspektif pembinaan negara (*nation building*) yang mengupas cita-cita Lim Lian Geok yang menginginkan kerajaan mengamalkan dasar pendidikan yang adil dan saksama terhadap semua pendidikan bahasa ibunda, iaitu selain bahasa Melayu dijadikan bahasa kebangsaan, bahasa-bahasa ibunda etnik lain turut dijadikan bahasa rasmi. Kebanyakan kajian berfokus pada ketokohan Lim Lian Geok, sumbangan, pemikiran dan falsafah perjuangan Lim Lian Geok. Kajian yang seumpama dilakukan oleh golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan penyelidik berketurunan Cina, hasil kajian yang berkiblatkan kewibawaan Lim sebagai ‘roh dan nyawa’ etnik Cina disampaikan dalam bahasa Cina yang sukar menarik minat pembaca etnik lain supaya lebih mengenali Lim.

Setakat artikel jurnal ini diterbitkan, pengkaji masih belum menemui sebarang penulisan ilmiah yang cuba menganalisis ketokohan Lim Lian Geok berdasarkan kerangka teori dalam mana-mana disiplin ilmu. Rata-rata artikel yang sudah diterbitkan kebanyakannya dalam bentuk rencana popular yang ditulis oleh penulis keturunan bangsa Cina dalam bahasa Cina, bilangan artikel yang bercirikan ilmiah dalam versi bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Inggeris

agak terbatas. Antara skop rencana dan jurnal artikel yang telah dihasilkan terbahagi kepada kategori berikut: (1) falsafah pemikiran dan keperibadian Lim Lian Geok, (2) perjuangan Lim Lian Geok sebagai Bapa Pendidikan Bahasa Ibunda Cina di Malaysia, (3) tinjauan karya-karya sastra Lim Lian Geok, (4) memoir peribadi Lim Lian Geok, dan (5) perbandingan pemikiran Lim Lian Geok dengan tokoh-tokoh pendidikan, kesusasteraan dan bahasa di tanah air seperti Aminuddin Baki, Usman Awang, dan Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad (Za'ba). Adalah suatu kekurangan jika bilangan karya ilmiah tentang Lim Lian Geok dalam versi bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Inggeris terbatas. Kekurangan ini sudah pasti menyebabkan pembaca yang tidak memahami bahasa Cina tidak berkesempatan mendalami ketokohan Lim Lian Geok dengan lebih mendalam.

Kebanyakan kajian tentang Lim berkisar pada perwatakan dan keperibadiannya, sejajar dengan identiti Lim dinobatkan sebagai 'Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia'. Antaranya, Lee (2016) telah meninjau keperibadian Lim selepas waktu pengajaran di sekolah, kajian Lee menonjolkan bakat Lim seorang yang suka berkarya pada masa lapang. Hou (2003: 55-56, 66-67, 69,75) telah menyusur galur perjuangan Lim dan telah membandingkan fahaman dan pemikiran Lim dengan pemimpin MCA yang berketurunan Cina Peranakan, iaitu Tan Cheng Lock dan Tan Siew Sin. Menurut Hou (2003), Tan Cheng Lock memiliki ciri-ciri pemimpin yang serba kebolehan dan disegani anggota masyarakat. Tan berpendapat bahawa masyarakat etnik Cina memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda sesuatu yang munasabah, akan tetapi Tan mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga ketika berpolitik. Kefasihan Tan berbahasa Inggeris dan pandai bersosialisasi dengan pemimpin UMNO pada ketika itu membolehkan Tan memenangi hati masyarakat etnik Melayu. Manakala Lim hanya dapat berbahasa Cina, tidak mampu berbahasa Melayu mahupun bahasa Inggeris menyebabkan pengaruhnya terbatas dalam masyarakat etnik Cina. Lim yang tidak mengenal putus asa turut mengundang ketidakpuasan dan kritikan daripada Tan Siew Sin, Leong Yew Koh dan Tunku Abdul Rahman. Perselisihan faham timbul antara Lim dengan pemimpin MCA menunjukkan latar belakang pendidikan dan amalan budaya yang berbeza memberi kesan terhadap pegangan prinsip dan fahaman seseorang.

Ching (2015) dan Mak (2016) masing-masing meninjau falsafah pemikiran Lim di sepanjang perjuangan Lim dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda. Ho (2015) cuba meninjau sumbangan Lim terhadap politik etnik Cina pada zaman 50-an. Zaman hujung 50-an memperlihatkan kemerdekaan Tanah Melayu, kerajaan berusaha menyusun semula sistem pendidikan. Phoon (2015) membincangkan percanggahan pendapat antara Leong Yew Koh dengan Lim Lian Geok tentang sistem pendidikan yang memberi kesan kepada perkembangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda. Tan (2015), Tee (2015) dan Chong (2015) turut membandingkan ketokohan Lim Lian Geok dengan tokoh pendidikan seperti Aminuddin Baki, pendeta Za'ba dan tokoh aktivis pejuang nasib golongan minoriti, Hj Sulong al-Fatani di Patani, negara Thai.

Kajian-kajian yang telah dilakukan tidak terlepas daripada perspektif lingkungan etnik yang sempit dan rata-rata memberi pengiktirafan positif terhadap perjuangan Lim serta mengangkat setinggi-tingginya ketokohan Lim yang berjuang atas kepentingan etnik. Perbincangan selama ini terbatas pada jasa Lim dalam sepanjang hayatnya menuntut layanan saksama terhadap status bahasa Cina dan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Tindakan agresifnya ini telah mengundang akibat penarikan semula permit mengajar dan pelucutan hak kewarganegaraan terhadapnya. Namun, Yen (2008) mendedahkan kajian yang lebih menyeluruh tentang perjuangan Lim Lian Geok, cita-cita, cabaran dan tamparan yang dihadapi Lim Lian Geok dalam bahasa Inggeris kepada lapisan masyarakat umum yang lebih luas supaya golongan pembaca yang disasarkan dapat mengenali kisah perjuangan Lim yang lebih menyeluruh.

METODOLOGI

Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kajian kepustakaan. Penulisan artikel jurnal ini memerlukan sumber maklumat bercetak yang berkaitan dengan perkembangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan kisah perjuangan Lim Lian Geok mempertahankan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Sumber maklumat yang bersesuaian dan relevan dengan tajuk artikel jurnal terdiri daripada dokumen rasmi, dokumen-dokumen golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan pertubuhan Cina dalam bentuk memorandum tuntutan, minit mesyuarat persatuan Cina, kenyataan media, dan memoir pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina telah diteliti untuk menjadi sumber rujukan. Pengkaji juga telah meneliti sumber maklumat yang terdiri daripada bahan-bahan cetakan yang diterbitkan berkenaan dengan perjuangan Lim Lian Geok dalam bentuk siaran surat khabar, majalah, rencana, dan buku ilmiah yang diterbitkan dalam ketiga-tiga bahasa utama, iaitu bahasa Melayu, bahasa Inggeris, dan bahasa Cina untuk mengelakkan pandangan bias ketika menyampaikan hujah-hujah dalam artikel jurnal ini.

KERANGKA TEORI

Sebelum Erving Goffman mencipta namanya sebagai sarjana yang memperkenalkan perspektif dramaturgikal, lebih awal lagi William Shakespeare (1564-1616) dalam skrip dramanya telah mengibaratkan manusia sebagai pelakon dalam pentas hidup seperti ditunjukkan di bawah :

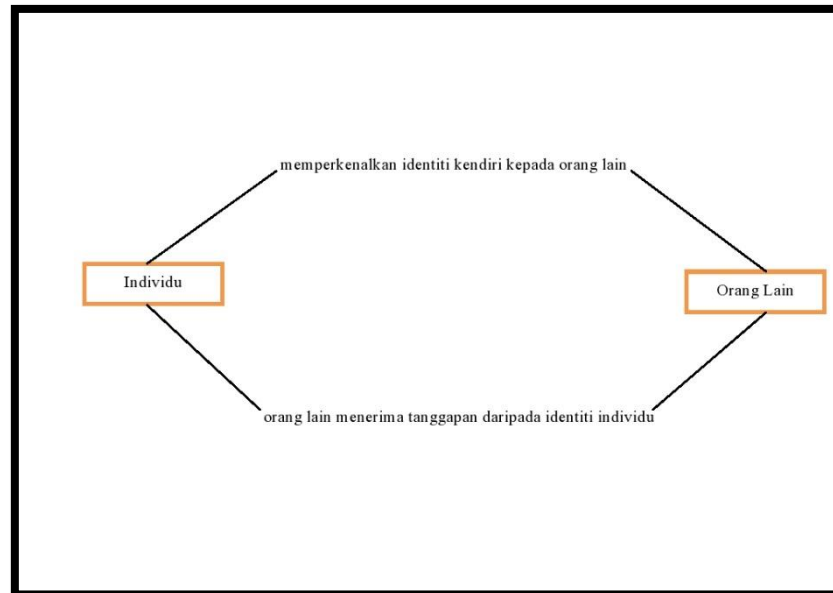
*“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages...”*
– Jaques in *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII, Line 139. (Poets.org., 2021, Jun 15).

Goffman (1922-1982) telah menerbitkan karya ilmiahnya pada 1956, *“The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”*. Goffman dalam karyanya mengibaratkan interaksi sosial sesama manusia dalam kehidupan seharian sebagai suatu lakonon yang dipertunjukkan di atas pentas. Seseorang pelakon yang melakonkan watak-watak tertentu dapat membezakan seseorang pelakon dengan pelakon yang lain. Lakonan ini dipersembahkan oleh pelakon kepada penonton yang terdiri daripada khalayak ramai, dan pelakon tersebut cuba menguruskan persepsi yang timbul daripada penonton terhadap pelakon tersebut. Dalam usaha pelakon menguruskan persepsi yang timbul di sebalik pertunjukan diri, ia telah menjadi asas bagi penonton (orang ramai) cuba memahami tingkah laku seseorang pelakon (individu) tersebut. Seperti yang hujah yang terdapat dalam karyanya, Goffman (1959: 1) mengatakan bahawa apabila seseorang individu menampilkan dirinya di hadapan orang ramai, pada kebiasaannya orang ramai akan mentafsir gerak-geri individu tersebut. Informasi yang diperoleh daripada tafsiran itu membantu orang ramai memahami situasi, dan membolehkan orang ramai memahami apa yang diinginkan oleh individu tersebut terhadap orang ramai, dan apa yang diharapkan oleh orang ramai terhadap individu tersebut.

Hujah-hujah Goffman disokong oleh Ma’rof Redzuan (2001: 61) bahawa konsep pengenalan diri digunakan oleh ahli psikologi sosial untuk menggambarkan tindakan seseorang individu mempengaruhi persepsi orang lain terhadapnya. Pengenalan diri melibatkan usaha

individu memperkenalkan dirinya kepada orang lain supaya individu tersebut diterima. Saban hari, individu berusaha memperkenalkan identiti dirinya kepada orang lain yang ditemui supaya matlamat di sebalik tindakan tersebut tercapai. Hubung kait antara interaksi individu dengan orang lain dapat digambarkan dalam Rajah 1:

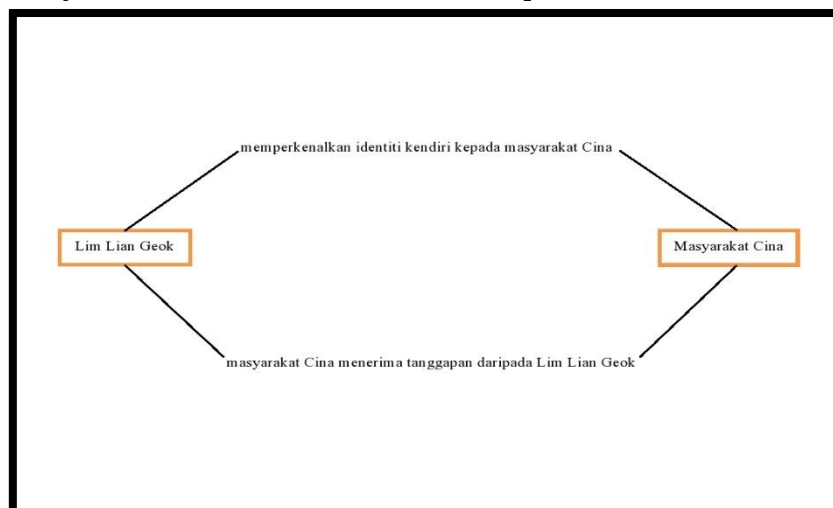
Rajah 1: Perkenalan Kendiri dan Persepsi



Sumber: Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 61)

Kalau Rajah 1 diubahsuaikan, maka Lim Lian Geok memperkenalkan identitinya kepada masyarakat etnik Cina dapat ditunjukkan dalam Rajah 2:

Rajah 2: Perkenalan Kendiri dan Persepsi Oleh Lim Lian Geok

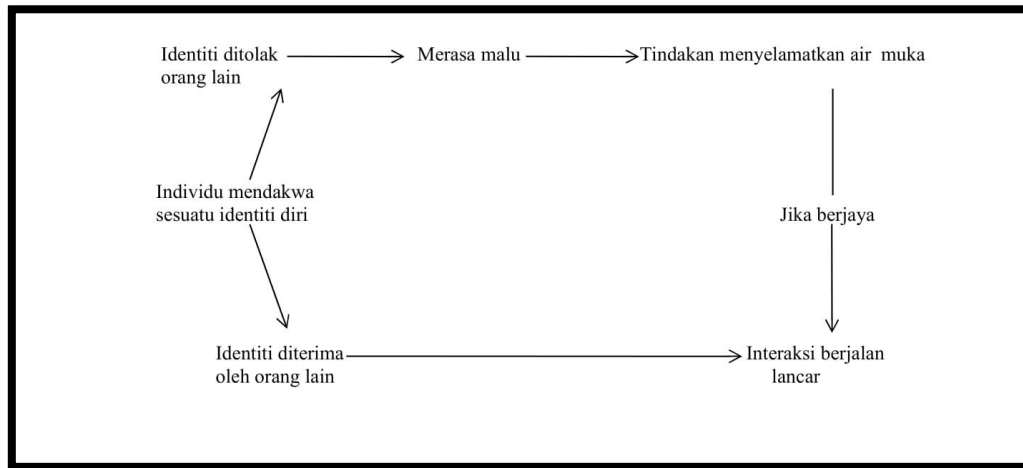


Sumber: Diubahsuaikan daripada Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 61)

Menurut Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 64), identiti yang ingin ditunjukkan oleh seseorang kepada orang lain akan melalui proses perundingan tentang apakah identiti sebenar yang ingin

ditunjukkan. Jika proses perundingan berjaya menandakan identiti seseorang itu diterima, begitu juga sebaliknya seperti yang ditunjukkan dalam Rajah 3:

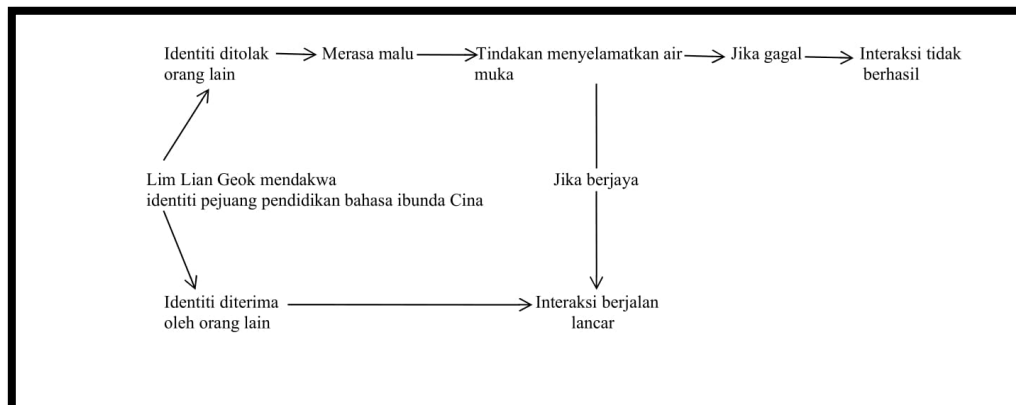
Rajah 3: Proses Perundingan ke Atas Identiti yang Didakwa



Sumber: Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 64)

Lim Lian Geok yang cuba mendedahkan identitinya kepada masyarakat etnik Cina dan masyarakat etnik bukan Cina telah melalui proses perundingan yang menentukan kejayaan atau kegagalan usaha memperkenalkan identitinya. Kejayaan atau kegagalan dalam proses perundingan mengakibatkan tindakan susulan diambil oleh Lim seperti yang ditunjukkan dalam Rajah 4:

Rajah 4: Proses Perundingan ke Atas Identiti yang Didakwa Oleh Lim Lian Geok



Sumber: Diubahsuaikan daripada Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 64)

Ma'rof Redzuan (2001: 61-62) bersetuju dengan hujah Goffman bahawa dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, kehidupan manusia diibaratkan sebagai lakonan. Individu dikatakan sebagai pelakon yang melakonkan watak-watak kepada penonton, kehidupan manusia seperti berada di atas pentas lakonan. Jadi, berbalik pada pandangan Goffman, sekolah Cina umpama sebuah pentas dalam dunia pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina, Lim Lian Geok dan golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina sebagai pelakon memainkan peranan masing-masing memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda supaya maruah bangsa dipertahankan. Menurut golongan yang giat mempertahankan pendidikan bahasa ibunda, seseorang berbangsa

Cina patut tahu akan asal usul bangsa sendiri, akar budaya bangsa sendiri dan tahu bertutur dan menulis dalam bahasa ibunda sendiri. Ketidakfasihan dalam pertuturan bahasa ibunda atau langsung tidak memahami bahasa ibunda sendiri dianggap perbuatan yang memalukan bangsa itu sendiri. Hal ini demikian kerana bahasa sebagai akar budaya bangsa, tanpa bahasa budaya bangsa akan tergoyang dan lenyap begitu sahaja menjadi generasi yang tidak bermaruah. Minda dan orientasi masyarakat etnik Cina ini menepati kata-kata hikmah Lim Lian Geok yang dipetik seperti berikut:

“Budaya kita jiwa bangsa kita...Orang Cina perlu membaca bahan bacaan dalam bahasa Cina, dan mengerti tulisan Cina...Sekolah Cina ialah kubu pertahanan budaya Cina...” (LLG Cultural Development Centre, 4 Jun 2010)

PENJELASAN KONSEP-KONSEP DRAMATURGIKAL GOFFMAN

Menurut Goffman (1959: 22), pentas hadapan merupakan bahagian individu sebagai pelakon yang sedang melakonkan wataknya. Goffman mengatakan:

“That part of individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance.” (Goffman, 1959: 22)

Penjelasan Goffman menandakan bahawa seseorang pelakon akan cuba sedaya upaya mempersembahkan perwatakannya melalui imej yang disampaikan supaya perwatakannya diterima. Lim Lian Geok dinobatkan sebagai ‘Jiwa Budaya Cina’ oleh masyarakat etnik Cina, pentas hadapan beliau ialah sekolah-sekolah Cina yang memainkan peranan sebagai kubu kebudayaan Cina yang perlu dipertahankan. Keadaan ini seperti yang dikatakan Goffman (1959: 22) bahawa manusia sebagai pelakon:

“We are all just actors trying to control and manage our public image. We act based on how others might see us.” (Goffman, 1959: 22)

Goffman turut mengatakan tempat yang bertentangan dengan pentas hadapan merupakan pentas belakang yang menjadi zon seseorang pelakon merehatkan dirinya dan melakukan apa-apa sahaja yang disukainya. Goffman (1959: 112-113) mentakrifkan pentas belakang sebagai:

“A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course...In general, of course, the back region will be the place where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude.” (Goffman, 1959: 112-113)

Tempat ini sebagai zon yang berada di luar pandangan masyarakat umum. Segala pertuturan dan pergerakan tidak terikat dengan norma sosial dan individu tersebut berasa selesa kerana keperibadiannya tidak terdedah kepada pengetahuan orang ramai. Umpamanya, Lim

berpakaian biasa dan gaya kehidupan serba ringkas semata-mata, kebendaan hidup tidak menjadi kejarannya, setelah sibuk mengajar anak muridnya, pada masa lapang beliau gemar bermain mahjong, bermain kad poker, menghisap rokok, berkarya, dan sebagainya. Penampilan Lim seperti digambarkan dalam catatan Hou (2003: 51), Lim tidak mementingkan penampilan diri, tidak menyikat rambutnya, berkasut kanvas tetapi tidak berstoking. Dari segi penampilan diri, penampilan Lim didapati begitu bersahaja kerana Lim tidak menyikat rambut dan tidak mencukur misai, begitulah penampilan Lim menurut memori daripada salah seorang pelajarnya, Huang Dong Wen. (*Zu Hun Lin Lian Yu*, 2001: 47-50).

Penonton pula Menurut Goffman merupakan sekumpulan individu perseorangan yang menyaksikan persembahan pelakon yang berasal daripada pelbagai latar belakang. Pelakon akan cuba mempengaruhi persepsi penonton terhadap perwatakannya dan persembahannya. Dengan kata lain, pelakon mengharapkan mesejnya dapat disampaikan kepada penonton secara berkesan dan Goffman (1959: 23–44) menyifatkan pendekatan ini sebagai pengurusan persepsi. Crossman (2019) yang mengulas konsep pengurusan persepsi Goffman mengatakan:

“... wherein each tries to present themselves and behave in a way that will prevent the embarrassment of themselves or others.” (Crossman, 2019)

Persepsi atau impresi yang baik menyebabkan pelakon memperoleh reaksi positif daripada penonton tentang tindakannya. Pada masa yang sama, persembahan seseorang pelakon dikatakan berjaya jika terdapat penonton yang mengiktiraf perwatakan pelakon. Dalam usaha Lim memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda di negara kita, anggota masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan bahasa ibunda sebagai penontonnya mengiktiraf perwatakan Lim kerana beliau sering menampilkan ke hadapan memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda yang semakin terumbang-ambing. Perlu ditekankan bukan semua penonton dari masyarakat etnik Cina terdidik dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda, ada juga yang terdidik dalam aliran sekolah Inggeris, contohnya Tan Siew Sin dan Leong Yew Koh dari parti MCA. Di samping itu, terdapat juga penonton yang bukan dari masyarakat etnik Cina yang menyaksikan persembahan Lim Lian Geok, mereka dari anggota Parti Perikatan, UMNO yang tidak mengiktiraf perwatakan Lim Lian Geok, malah beliau dilabelkan sebagai penghasut yang membantah polisi pendidikan tanah air sehinggakan tauliah mengajar beliau ditarik balik dan taraf kewarganegaraannya dilucut.

Goffman berhujah mengibaratkan interaksi sosial sebagai persembahan pentas, setiap individu dalam kehidupan seharian diumpamakan sebagai pelakon yang berlakon di pentas. Crossman (2019) mentakrifkan penonton yang menurut Goffman sebagai:

“The audience consists of other individuals who observe the role-playing and react to the performances.” (Crossman, 2019)

Jadual 1: Penerapan Unsur-unsur Dramaturgikal Goffman Dalam Perjuangan Lim Lian Geok

Hubungan Unsur Dramaturgikal Goffman Dengan Kisah Perjuangan Lim Lian Geok

Pentas Hadapan	Pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina
Pentas Belakang	Waktu kelapangan
Penonton	Masyarakat etnik Cina dan bukan Cina
Lakonan	Peristiwa yang terlibat dan situasi yang dihadiri Lim Lian Geok
Pengurusan Persepsi / Impresi	Usaha Lim Lian Geok mempengaruhi Masyarakat etnik Cina dan bukan Cina

Sumber: Pengkaji (2020).

KETOKOHAN LIM LIAN GEOK

Menurut masyarakat etnik Cina, terutamanya golongan aktivis pendidikan Cina yang kuat menyokong dan mempertahankan pendidikan bahasa ibunda, ketokohan Lim Lian Geok (1901-1985) pasti tidak asing lagi kerana namanya sudah terpahat dalam sejarah perjuangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina di tanah air. Lim disanjung tinggi sebagai tokoh pendidikan bahasa ibunda menurut kaca mata masyarakat etnik Cina kerana Lim menolak sebarang penindasan dan diskriminasi terhadap pendidikan bahasa ibunda, mendukung kesamarataan hak penggunaan bahasa ibunda setiap etnik, mencadangkan penetapan bahasa ibunda setiap golongan etnik sebagai salah satu bahasa rasmi negara, menggalakkan kerjasama golongan etnik lain hidup berbilang, makmur bersama.

Menurut Tee (2015), Lim semasa dalam hayatnya menerajui pimpinan Gabungan Persatuan Guru-Guru Sekolah Cina Malaysia. Lim selaku pengerusi lantang menyuarakan hasrat masyarakat etnik Cina bahawa:

1. Tulisan dan bahasa ibunda dalam sistem persekolahan setiap etnik patutlah digunakan, dan sistem persekolahan tersebut diserapkan dalam sistem persekolahan kebangsaan;
2. Perkembangan dan pembangunan sistem persekolahan setiap etnik secara sama rata;
3. Amalan tradisi dan kebudayaan setiap etnik dipertahankan.

Selain itu, Lim juga menekankan 10 perkara tentang kesamarataan, iaitu:

1. Pengiktirafan kepada sistem persekolahan setiap etnik dan menyerapkannya dalam sistem pendidikan kebangsaan;
2. Kesamarataan dari segi peruntukan dana kepada sistem persekolahan setiap etnik;
3. Pendapatan guru yang sama rata bagi semua sistem persekolahan setiap etnik;
4. Penugasan guru sistem persekolahan rendah dan menengah setiap etnik haruslah sama banyak;
5. Keseimbangan dari segi pembangunan dan penyediaan kelengkapan sistem persekolahan setiap etnik;
6. Kesaksamaan potensi pembangunan sistem persekolahan setiap etnik;
7. Peluang pendidikan saksama untuk kanak-kanak dan pemuda-pemudi setiap etnik;
8. Aliran vokasional dalam sistem persekolahan rendah dan menengah yang menggunakan bahasa ibunda setiap etnik haruslah diwujudkan;
9. Galakan penubuhan pendidikan persendirian supaya bilangan sekolah dan kelas bertambah;
10. Prospek kerjaya yang saksama untuk lepasan sistem persekolahan setiap etnik.

Peranan Lim tidak terbatas pada dirinya sebagai pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda, malah Lim juga seorang pendidik dan penulis yang aktif berkarya. Kini, sesudah 38 tahun Lim

meninggal dunia, namun jasa dan sumbangan Lim tetap dikenang oleh masyarakat etnik Cina yang mencintai pendidikan bahasa ibunda. Mereka yang berasa berhutang budi terhadap pengorbanan Lim kerana sistem persekolahan Cina yang lengkap telah dapat dipertahankan, murid dan pelajar Cina berpeluang menerima pendidikan bahasa ibunda dari sekolah rendah hingga sekolah menengah dan dikatakan menjadi etnik yang bermaruah. Adalah menjadi pegangan Masyarakat etnik Cina yang mencintai pendidikan bahasa ibunda bahawa sekolah Cina merupakan kubu pertahanan budaya Cina yang mengembangkan dan memperkukuh kebudayaan Cina melalui ciri-ciri sistem persekolahan Cina. Apabila menjelang ulang tahun pemergian Lim pada Disember tiap-tiap tahun, pasti ramai wakil dari pertubuhan Cina seluruh Malaysia membanjiri tapak kubur Lim di Tapak Perkuburan Hokkien, Kuala Lumpur. Sejak pemergian Lim buat selama-lamanya, tarikh kematian Lim telah ditetapkan sebagai sambutan Hari Pendidikan Cina (华教节 *hua jiao jie*) mulai tahun 1988, pelbagai aktiviti diadakan seperti ceramah perkembangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda, tayangan filem, pendeklamasian sajak, penyampaian anugerah tokoh pendidikan bahasa ibunda, dan sebagainya pada hari tersebut sebagai tanda penghargaan masyarakat etnik Cina terhadap Lim yang pernah berdiri di barisan hadapan mempertahankan maruah dan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda.

PERSOALAN KETOKOHAN LIM LIAN GEOK

Setakat manakah jasa, sumbangan dan pengorbanan Lim mendapat tempat dalam sejarah pendidikan Malaysia secara khususnya dan masyarakat etnik Cina secara amnya? Suatu persoalannya ingin dilontarkan oleh pengkaji, iaitu tentang berapa ramai dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat etnik Melayu dan India mengenali Lim Lian Geok? Paling tidak, mereka sekurang-kurangnya pernah mendengar namanya?

Pada hakikatnya, pengiktirafan jasa dan pengorbanan Lim nyata terbatas dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat etnik Cina, tidak ramai anggota masyarakat etnik Melayu dan India mengenali Lim Lian Geok, melainkan mereka mengikuti perkembangan semasa isu pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan menyokong gerakan perjuangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang diperjuangkan oleh Dong Jiao Zong. Jadi, mengapakah terdapat reaksi pandangan yang cukup berbeza dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat Cina, masyarakat Melayu dan masyarakat India terhadap perjuangan Lim? Mengapakah Lim diangkat sebagai 'Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia' oleh masyarakat etnik Cina sedangkan bagi masyarakat etnik Melayu dan India, Lim tidak dikenali ramai?

Pengkaji turut membincangkan percanggahan pandangan dan pendirian antara Lim Lian Geok dengan kerajaan berkenaan laporan pendidikan dan dasar pendidikan yang diimplimentasikan pada awal kemerdekaan negara terutamanya dalam Penyata Barnes, Penyata Rahman Talib 1960 dan Akta Pelajaran 1961. Pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dikatakan pernah melalui detik-detik yang penuh dengan pancaroba, setiap sekolah Cina yang bertapak di bumi Malaysia ini mempunyai sebuah kisah perjuangan yang berpanjangan. Menurut Kua (1985: 1), sistem persekolahan Cina dapat diwujudkan hanya setelah melalui pengorbanan, air peluh, air mata, motif politik yang ikhlas masyarakat etnik Cina di negara ini. Berikutan kebangkitan China sebagai kuasa besar dunia yang mampu menandingi Amerika Syarikat dari segi ekonomi, teknologi dan kuasa ketenteraan, golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda berasa syukur kerana penggunaan bahasa Cina semakin popular.

DAPATAN KAJIAN:

PENGURUSAN IMPRESI LIM LIAN GEOK BERJAYA DALAM MASYARAKAT ETNIK CINA YANG
TERDIDIK DALAM ALIRAN PENDIDIKAN BAHASA IBUNDA

Masyarakat etnik Cina mengagung-agungkan Lim Lian Geok sebagai ‘Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia’, yang membawa maksudnya roh dan nyawa etnik Cina (*zu hun*). Sudah tentu di sebalik panggilan hormat tersebut, terdapat ciri-ciri keistimewaan yang ada pada keperibadian Lim sehinggakan dirinya diberi panggilan hormat tersebut. Perjuangan Lim mempunyai erti perjuangan dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina di negara ini menurut lensa masyarakat etnik Cina. Hal ini dikatakan demikian kerana ketokohan dan usaha Lim mempengaruhi nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina yang dapat disimbolikan sebagai kubu pertahanan budaya Cina Malaysia. Sebuah pepatah Cina yang berbunyi *tian shi* (天时), *di li* (地利), *ren he* (人和), bermaksud jika ingin menjayakan sesuatu misi, hendaklah berpandukan faktor masa yang sesuai, tempat yang strategik dan individu yang boleh disandarkan harapan, kesemua faktor ini menyebabkan imej ketokohan Lim Lian Geok terserlah.

Sesungguhnya Lim tidak mementingkan penampilan diri, kehidupannya serba ringkas. ‘Harta’ peribadinya berbekalkan hujahan, pen, basikal, dan matlamat terhadap pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Namun reaksi Lim begitu bersahaja terhadap kritikan daripada individu perseorangan yang bermusuhan dengannya (Ho, 2015: 30-31). Apa yang menarik perhatian masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran bahasa ibunda terhadap Lim ialah sifat keberanian dan kelantangan bersuara, iaitu sebagai aktivis pendidikan yang gigih mempertahankan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Perjuangannya, hujahnya, pendiriannya, sebagai reaksi terhadap perkembangan politik semasa, yang mempengaruhi jatuh bangun pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina (Phoon, 2015: 87).

“...Beliau adalah jurucakap kepada komuniti Cina Malaya sepanjang perjuangan kemerdekaan. Beliau mengambil bahagian dalam “Mesyuarat Perundingan Melaka” bersama Tunku Abdul Rahman pada tahun 1955, untuk berunding tentang isu Perlembagaan..” (Facebook Rasmi LLG Cultural Development Centre, 13 Ogos 2020)

Naratif sedemikian menggambarkan tanggungjawab dan peranan yang dipikul oleh Lim sepanjang zaman keemasan perjuangannya. Kua Kia Soong (2010:1) menyifatkan keperibadian Lim:

“...No other Malaysian Chinese has been accorded that highest honour (Soul of the Malaysian Chinese)...” (Kua, 2010: 1)

Atas sanjungan Lim sebagai ‘Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia’, sudah tentu Lim berjaya melakonkan perwatakannya di ‘pentas hadapan’, memperkenalkan identitinya kepada ‘penonton’, iaitu masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda, pada masa yang sama masyarakat etnik Cina menerima tanggapan daripada Lim, pengurusan persepsi berjaya dicapai, seperti yang ditunjukkan dalam Rajah 2. Hal ini demikian kerana Lim dikatakan memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda yang terumbang-ambing dan menyelamatkan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina daripada ambang kepupusan. Nyata sekali pengiktirafan Lim sebagai ‘Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia’ datang daripada masyarakat etnik Cina yang memandang berat terhadap peranan bahasa Cina sebagai sebagai akar budaya bangsa, tanpa bahasa budaya bangsa akan tergoyang dan lenyap. Golongan etnik ini

menggunakan bahasa Cina sebagai bahasa pertuturan sehari-harian, namun kebolehan mereka menguasai bahasa lain menjadi tanda soal.

PENGURUSAN IMPRESI LIM LIAN GEOK TIDAK BERJAYA DALAM MASYARAKAT ETNIK CINA
YANG TERDIDIK DALAM ALIRAN PENDIDIKAN BUKAN BAHASA IBUNDA CINA

Ketidakupayaan Lim berbahasa Melayu dan Inggeris telah membataskan usahanya menonjolkan imej perjuangan yang positif dalam masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam pendidikan Inggeris. Tan Cheng Lock dan Lim Lian Geok berasal dari latar belakang yang berbeza, Tan Cheng Lock fasih berbahasa Inggeris, tidak tahu berbahasa Cina, pertemuannya dengan Lim perlu ada penterjemah. Tan Cheng Lock pernah menyindir Lim dengan kata-kata berikut:

“...saya hebat kerana mempelajari bahasa Inggeris, sayangnya awak tidak tahu berbahasa Inggeris, kalau tidak awak pasti menjadi seorang yang handal ...” (Lin, 1988: 80)

Pada hakikatnya, masyarakat etnik Cina boleh dibahagi-bahagikan kepada subgolongannya menurut kajian para ilmuwan seperti Yen Ching Hwang (2008:11) dalam karyanya mengatakan:

“...The change of the Chinese society was driven by both internal and external forces. The former consisted of the division and integration of the Chinese society, the rivalry and conflict of dialect and regional organizations, the division and competition between Chinese-educated and English-educated...” (Yen, 2008:11)

Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2016: 60-61) memaparkan pengkategorian orang Cina G1 dan G2 oleh Rita Sim dan F.K. Soong. Data menunjukkan bahawa terdapat kira-kira 85%-90% orang Cina menyertai persatuan Cina, terdidik dalam bahasa ibunda, dan membaca, mendengar dan menonton media Cina, manakala baki 15% orang Cina terdidik dalam pendidikan Inggeris, kebanyakan menganuti agama Kristian, Cina Peranakan, menyertai Kelab *Lions* dan *Rotary*.

Lim gagal melakonkan perwatakannya ketika berada di ‘pentas hadapan’ menghadapi ‘penonton’ berketurunan Cina tetapi terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan bukan bahasa ibunda Cina. Lim nyata terkandas dalam pengurusan persepsi kerana ‘penonton’ tidak memahami lakonannya dan tidak bersetuju dengan perwatakannya. Hal ini disebabkan oleh bukan semua anggota yang tergolong dalam masyarakat etnik Cina fasih berbahasa ibunda. Terdapat sesetengah golongan etnik Cina yang tidak fasih berbahasa ibunda malah terdapat juga yang langsung tidak tahu berbahasa ibunda. Antaranya, pemimpin parti MCA Tan Cheng Lock dan Tan Siew Sin yang berketurunan Cina Peranakan. Kebanyakan mereka menerima pendidikan bukan bahasa ibunda, tetapi mereka fasih berbahasa Inggeris dan bertutur dalam dialek tempatan. Tan Siew Sin pernah berasa kagum terhadap Lim dengan mengatakan:

“...dia tidak fasih berbahasa Inggeris, tidak pernah dijemput menghadiri majlis rasmi bersama pembesar pada hal orang ini sangat berpengaruh dalam masyarakat etnik Cina.” (Frank H. H. King dalam Hou, 2003: 70)

Seorang lagi pemimpin MCA yang pernah menyandang jawatan Menteri Kehakiman, Leong Yew Koh yang pernah bercanggah pendapat dengan Lim dalam isu pertukaran aliran sekolah menengah Cina lalu di Parlimen, menyifatkan Lim sebagai:

“...seorang Charlatan, penipu yang hanya mementingkan rezeki diri...” (Lin Liang Gong An, 1988: 42-43)

Pendakwah bebas terkenal yang berketurunan Cina dan juga ahli akademik, Mohd Ridhuan Tee Abdullah bersetuju dengan tuduhan kerajaan terhadap Lim sebagai penghasut dalam penulisannya. Ridhuan Tee berhujah:

“...Beliau (Lim) disanjung, dipuji dan dijulung serta diangkat tarafnya sebagai sebagai seorang patriot. Sedangkan kita tahu makna patriot adalah mereka yang sanggup berjuang mempertahankan tanah air meskipun nyawa adalah gadaian.” (Mohd Ridhuan Tee, 2011)

Golongan aktivis pendidikan Cina sering menyebut masyarakat etnik Cina menyokong pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina sebagai hak asasi manusia yang tidak boleh dicabar, akan tetapi adakah mereka menyedari bahawa masyarakat etnik Cina itu sendiri terdapat golongan yang tidak tahu berbahasa Cina dan langsung tidak mengambil peduli soal hidup mati *survival* pendidikan bahasa ibunda? Inilah kesilapan yang mungkin dilakukan oleh golongan aktivis pendidikan Cina tanpa disedari.

Seawal zaman 40-an, penjajah Inggeris menyusun semula pendidikan vernakular Cina. Kandungan Laporan Barnes dan Laporan Fenn-Wu menyebabkan usaha penjajah Inggeris menyemak semula sistem pendidikan gagal kerana terdapat percanggahan dalam kedua-dua laporan tersebut. Laporan Fenn-Wu mengjustifikasikan pendidikan vernakular Cina manakala Ordinan Pelajaran 1952 tidak merestui dasar kepelbagaian bahasa dan budaya seperti yang dicadangkan dalam kandungan Laporan Fenn-Wu. Akan tetapi, Ordinan Pelajaran 1952 merestui dasar keseragaman bahasa yang disarankan dalam Laporan Barnes. Bertitik tolak daripada itu, Laporan Razak memperlihatkan percubaan Perikatan mengakomodasikan dan menyelaraskan tuntutan etnik berkenaan isu bahasa dan pendidikan untuk mencapai perpaduan dalam negara yang mempunyai rakyat berbilang kaum (Tan, 2005: 69-70).

Dalam perkembangan seterusnya, terdapat suatu objektif dasar pendidikan yang bercirikan akomodatif terhadap tuntutan bahasa dan pendidikan etnik ditetapkan dalam Ordinan Pelajaran 1957. Penetapan ini sepadan dengan sikap tolak ansur yang ditunjukkan dalam penggubalan Laporan Razak. Laporan Barnes dan Ordinan Pelajaran 1952 sering dibantah oleh pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina kerana dikatakan mempunyai tipu muslihat penjajah memansuhkan pendidikan vernakular Cina. Lim Lian Geok bekerja keras menuntut bahasa Cina sebagai bahasa pengantar sekolah dan bahasa pengantar peperiksaan awam menjelang pilihan raya 1955. Suatu perjumpaan telah diadakan di kediaman Tan Cheng Lock, Melaka yang mempertemukan pemimpin MCA, Dong Jiao Zong untuk mencari jalan keluar menggubal dasar yang lebih adil terhadap pendidikan golongan etnik selepas 1955. Pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda yang tidak mahu bertolak ansur dalam isu bahasa pengantar juga disebabkan oleh pendirian pemimpin-pemimpin Perikatan yang tidak tentu (Tan, 2005: 72, 75-76, 78).

Menjelang 1958, Lim secara terang-terang mengkritik kerajaan bersikap berat sebelah terhadap pendidikan vernakular Cina dan menggunakan pengaruh politik untuk menyingkirkan pendidikan vernakular Cina (Jiao Zong 33 Nian Bian Ji Shi, 1987: 376). Pejuang pendidikan

bahasa ibunda menyambut baik perakuan-perakuan Laporan Razak dan Ordinan Pelajaran 1957 yang melindungi perkembangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina tetapi menolak perakuan yang mengiktiraf bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa pengantar utama pendidikan (Tan, 2005: 107-109).

Kemuncak bantahan Lim terhadap Laporan Rahman Talib memperlihatkan pertikaman lidah antara Lim selaku pengerusi Jiao Zong dengan Leong Yew Koh selaku wakil MCA yang menganggotai Jawatankuasa Rahman Talib. Lim yang menuduh Leong sebagai pengkhianat bangsa Cina manakala Leong menuduh Lim sebagai individu yang berfikiran sempit. Lim terus mengkritik kandungan Laporan Rahman Talib berniat menumpaskan sekolah-sekolah vernakular Cina dan kesan sampingannya lebih dahsyat daripada Ordinan Pelajaran 1952 (Tan, 2005: 115, 119).

PENGURUSAN IMPRESI LIM LIAN GEOK TIDAK BERJAYA DALAM MASYARAKAT ETNIK BUKAN CINA YANG TERDIDIK DALAM ALIRAN PENDIDIKAN INGGERIS

Kelantangan Lim memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dan mencadangkan Bahasa Cina dijadikan salah satu bahasa rasmi negara mengundang kritikan Tunku Abdul Rahman terhadapnya:

“Lim Lian Geok berjuang atas fahaman chauvinism tidak layak memperoleh hak kerakyatan Malaya...” (Lin Lian Yu Gong Min Quan An, 1989: 315)

Walaupun begitu, Lim Lian Geok pernah menyumbangkan sebuah artikel yang telahpun disiarkan dalam Utusan Melayu sempena Hari Raya 1956, yang memupuk gagasan Hidup Berbilang Makmur Bersama dalam penulisannya, Lim mengatakan:

“...bahawa Malaya adalah negeri yang didiami oleh pelbagai kaum. Setiap kaum yang terlibat dalam meneroka dan membangunkan tanah bertuah ini mempunyai sumbangan masing-masing yang wajar dihargai.” (Lim, 1956)

Kewibawaan Lim terbatas dalam kalangan masyarakat etnik Cina, golongan etnik Melayu langsung tidak mengenalinya dalam huraian Hou (2003: 56). Tak kenal maka tak cinta, perjuangan Lim dan pengorbanan beliau tidak mendapat sambutan dalam masyarakat etnik Melayu ada kena-mengena dengan ketidakfasihan Lim dalam bahasa selain bahasa Cina. Kekurangan inilah yang dikatakan membataskan keupayaan Lim mendekati masyarakat etnik bukan Cina terutamanya masyarakat Melayu pada masa itu. Kisah perjuangan Lim dapat dilihat apabila Lim berhempas-pulas memobilisasikan segala sumber yang ada seperti persatuan-persatuan Cina dan individu-individu perseorangan yang berwibawa dalam masyarakat etnik Cina setempat untuk memperjuangkan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina sampai titisan darah terakhir dalam hayatnya melalui tindakannya mempertahankan bahasa Cina supaya diangkat menjadi bahasa rasmi negara seperti status yang ada pada bahasa Melayu. Menurut perspektif masyarakat bukan etnik Cina, Lim dilabelkan seorang penghasut yang membantah dasar pelajaran kebangsaan yang mendaulatkan bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Inggeris pada ketika itu, selain mengapi-apikan perasaan rakyat membenci Yang di-Pertuan Agong sehingga boleh mendatangkan kemudaratkan dalam perpaduan rakyat.

Kemuncak bantahan Lim terhadap polisi pendidikan pascakemerdekaan menyebabkan hak kewarganegaraan Lim dilucutkan dan permit mengajar ditarik balik oleh kerajaan. Pada tahun 1961, sebuah notis perlucutan hak kewarganegaraan yang bertarikh 12 Ogos telah

diterima oleh Lim. Perlucutan hak kewarganegaraan atas sebab-sebab berikut (Lin Lian Yu Gong Min Quan An, 1989: 11-12):

1. Menimbulkan kekeliruan dan putar belit terhadap dasar pelajaran kerajaan, berniat mengapi-apikan perasaan tidak puas hati terhadap Yang di-Pertuan Agong dan Kerajaan Persekutuan.
2. Melancarkan rayuan emosi yang melampaui batasan perkauman, bermakna membangkitkan kebencian dan permusuhan dalam kalangan kaum di persekutuan yang ada kemungkinan mengundang situasi kecoh.

Pada ketika itu, Lim terpaksa berundur ke 'pentas belakangnya' selama 22 tahun, iaitu mendiami sebuah rumah yang serba kekurangan, manakala kos sara hidup dibiayai oleh rakan-rakannya dan pertubuhan Cina yang ketika itu, sehingga Lim menghembuskan nafas terakhir pada tahun 1985. Pemergian Lim dihebohkan oleh media bahasa Cina, ketika kenderaan membawa keranda berisi mayat Lim mengelilingi jalan raya utama di bandar raya Kuala Lumpur menuju ke arah kawasan perkuburan, kelihatan orang ramai sudah berdiri di tepi jalan, terdapat juga beribu-ribu orang wakil pertubuhan dan parti politik menyertai perarakan mengiringi kereta keranda untuk memberi penghormatan terakhir kepada Lim (Zu Hun Lin Lian Yu, 2001: 202).

HARI PENDIDIKAN CINA DAN ANUGERAH SEMANGAT LIM LIAN GEOK

Sungguhpun Lim meninggal buat selama-lamanya, namun jasa dan sumbangan Lim tetap dikenang oleh masyarakat etnik Cina sampai bila-bila. Golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina menggariskan beberapa pendirian Lim yang memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina sebagai semangat perjuangan Lim Lian Geok. Semangat perjuangan ini dianggap sebagai simbol perjuangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang berterusan supaya pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina dapat dipertahankan dan diangkat setaraf dengan pendidikan aliran pendidikan kebangsaan. Anugerah Semangat Perjuangan Lim Lian Geok sempena Hari Pendidikan Cina (华教节 *hua jiao jie*) dianugerahkan kepada individu perseorangan, badan bukan kerajaan (NGO) atau persatuan mulai tahun 1988 atas jasa dan sumbangan penerima anugerah terhadap perjuangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Antara asal usul Anugerah Semangat Lim Lian Geok menurut Laman Rasmi LLG Cultural Development Centre:

“Anugerah Semangat Lim Lian Geok dianjurkan bagi memperingati perjuangan Lim Lian Geok iaitu bekas Pengerusi Gabungan Persatuan Guru-Guru Sekolah Cina Malaysia (Jiao Zong). Sepanjang hayatnya, beliau memperjuangkan hak kumpulan etnik dalam pendidikan dan kebudayaan, demi pembangunan negara dan kesamarataan pelbagai kaum di Malaysia. Beliau juga berjuang untuk mempertahankan pendidikan Bahasa Ibunda. Perjuangan tanpa gentar dan semangat untuk berkorban tanpa mempertimbangkan kepentingan diri telah menjadi model yang diteladani oleh rakyat Malaysia, khususnya di kalangan masyarakat Cina...Anugerah Semangat Lim Lian Geok juga diperkenalkan pada tahun 1988 untuk mengiktiraf individu atau organisasi yang mempertahankan pendidikan Bahasa Cina di samping mengekalkan semangat idealisme beliau.” (LLG Cultural Development Centre 2022, Ogos 1)

Berdasarkan kriteria Jawatankuasa Pemilihan Anugerah Semangat Lim Lian Geok, penerima Anugerah Semangat Lim Lian Geok ialah individu atau organisasi yang telah menjiwai watak Lim, mencontohi keperibadiannya, pegangannya dan usahanya menggembelngkan segala sumber dan tenaga memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina. Berkenaan inti pati yang mendasari semangat perjuangan Lim Lian Geok, (LLG Cultural Development Centre 2022) menerusi laman <https://llgcultural.com/lim-lian-geok-spirit-award?lang=en>:

1. Berdasarkan perspektif ikatan antara negara dengan rakyat, penekanan ditumpukan pada kesaksamaan semua etnik dalam negara yang bebas penjajahan, rakyat sehati sejiwa, kehidupan bertolak-ansur, saling membantu demi hidup makmur membina negara bersama.
2. Berdasarkan perspektif mempertahankan dan memperjuangkan hak etnik terutamanya kedudukan pendidikan bahasa ibunda setiap etnik yang berpatutan, seseorang individu mestilah berani memperjuangkan nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda dan berani berkorban, menguatkan tekad, tidak mengubah pendirian walau apa keadaan sekalipun.
3. Berdasarkan perspektif mengembangkan budaya etnik, seseorang individu mestilah tidak rakus mengejar darjat dan kedudukan, memikul tanggungjawab dan melaksanakannya bagi sebatang lilin membakar diri menerangi orang lain.
4. Berdasarkan perspektif pengorganisasian dan modus operandinya yang berkiblatkan organisasi, mementingkan orang yang berkemahiran, menyelesaikan masalah melalui rundingan semua pihak berbabit untuk memberikan sumbangan yang membina.
5. Berdasarkan perspektif keperibadian dan perihal kehidupan individu, seseorang individu tidak tidak mementingkan penampilan diri tetapi mencintai ilmu untuk memajukan diri sendiri. Individu tersebut tidak memencilkan diri tetapi berprihatin terhadap perkembangan hal ehwal semasa, menegakkan keadilan, mempertahankan keadilan sampai saat-saat terakhir dalam hayat.

IMPLIKASI PENGAJIAN ETNIK

Kajian ini dapat memperkaya korpus ilmu dengan mengisi jurang penyelidikan dalam pembangunan dan perkembangan pendidikan Bahasa ibunda Cina yang belum pernah diterokai dengan lebih mendalam dan terperinci. Melalui metodologi yang dipilih, dapat mengumpulkan sudut pandangan masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang gigih mempertahankan sistem persekolahan Cina sebagai kubu pertahanan budaya Cina Malaysia.

KESIMPULAN

Amat nyata Lim Lian Geok seorang aktor ‘pelakon’ yang berjaya melakonkan perwatakannya hanya dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina menurut perspektif Dramaturgikal Goffman. Sebaliknya, Lim tidak dikenali ramai dalam kalangan masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan bukan bahasa ibunda Cina, begitu juga kisah perjuangan Lim dalam masyarakat etnik bukan Cina yang terdidik dalam aliran pendidikan Inggeris. Di sepanjang tempoh perjuangan Lim, yang merentasi zaman 50-an hingga zaman 60-an, terdapat pendirian dan pandangan yang berbeza antara Lim dengan kerajaan berkenaan kandungan dalam Penyata

Barnes hingga Penyata Rahman Talib 1960, dan dasar pendidikan yang diimplimentasikan iaitu Akta Pelajaran 1961. Berbekalkan semangat mempertahankan sekolah Cina sebagai kubu pertahanan budaya Cina, Lim dalam hayatnya mempertahankan nasib dan masa hadapan pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina sehinggakan dirinya dilucutkan hak kewarganegaraan dan tauliah mengajar ditarik balik oleh kerajaan, namun tamparan demi tamparan tidak mematahkan semangat perjuangan Lim. Tuntutan Lim dalam hak pendidikan bahasa ibunda Cina yang adil dan saksama menemui kegagalan kerana kerajaan berhasrat membina sebuah negara bangsa dengan mengangkat bahasa Melayu menjadi bahasa pengantar pendidikan perlu lebih mengutamakan kepentingan nasional secara keseluruhan. Kepentingan etnik tidak boleh mengatasi kepentingan nasional dalam konteks pendidikan negara. Pendirian kerajaan terhadap sistem pendidikan kebangsaan tidak menjejaskan ketokohan Lim sebagai ‘Jiwa Budaya Cina Malaysia’ dan simbolik perjuangan pendidikan bahasa ibunda menurut kaca mata masyarakat etnik Cina yang terdidik dalam pendidikan bahasa ibunda. Sungguhpun Lim kecundang dalam perjuangannya membela nasib pendidikan bahasa ibunda etnik Cina, namun ‘Semangat Lim Lian Geok’ terus menyemarakkan semangat pejuang pendidikan bahasa ibunda yang muncul selepas zaman Lim. Sudah tiba masanya kerajaan perlu bijak menangani tuntutan badan-badan NGO dan golongan aktivis pendidikan bahasa ibunda supaya isu tuntutan keadilan dan kesaksamaan pendidikan bahasa ibunda tetap dipertahankan malah menjadi pilihan utama golongan ibu bapa. Pada masa yang sama, kerajaan perlu menunjukkan keikhlasannya menjamin hak pendidikan bahasa ibunda setiap kumpulan etnik dan membenarkan pendidikan vernakular dapat terus berkembang pada takat yang tertentu.

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Turkish NGOs' Assistance to Refugees: What Can Malaysia Learn?

Bantuan Kemanusiaan Terhadap NGO: Apakah yang Boleh Dipelajari Malaysia?

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ABSTRACT

Until 2020, the refugee statistics are climbing due to the humanitarian crisis in their countries and regions, specifically the Syrian civil war crisis, the denial of Rohingya citizenship in Myanmar, and the Saudi Arabia-Yemen war. Based on the statistics shown by UNHCR, Turkiye hosts 3.8 million refugees and has been the largest refugee-hosting country in the world for the past eight years, most of whom are from Syria. Out of a sense of responsibility and concern about the plight of refugees in Turkiye, various actors, particularly NGOs, appeared to support them. Progressive NGOs have been influential in distributing humanitarian assistance to refugees and ensuring access to education, employment, and healthcare services. Like Turkiye, Malaysia is becoming a place in refugees' hearts to seek shelter and a better life. Thus, by comparing the roles and assistance between Turkish NGOs and Malaysian NGOs toward refugees through the discourse of previous studies, this study aims to untangle how Malaysian NGOs can learn from Turkish NGOs to empower assistance toward refugees further. Our research perceives Malaysian NGOs could implement humanitarian assistance to refugees, including teaching them how to be independent through vocational training and employment, education (English and local language), health (clinic and psychological treatment), shelter, legal aid, and intermediary.

Keywords: Humanitarian assistance; Malaysia; NGOs; refugees; Turkiye.

ABSTRAK

Sehingga tahun 2020, statistik pelarian semakin meningkat berikutan krisis kemanusiaan di negara dan wilayah mereka, khususnya krisis perang saudara Syria, penafian kewarganegaraan Rohingya di Myanmar, dan perang Arab Saudi-Yaman. Berdasarkan statistik yang dipaparkan UNHCR, Turkiye menampung 3.8 juta pelarian dan telah menjadi negara yang menempatkan pelarian terbesar di dunia sejak lapan tahun lalu, kebanyakannya berasal daripada Syria. Timbul rasa tanggungjawab dan keprihatinan tentang nasib pelarian di Turkiye, pelbagai pelakon, khususnya NGO, tampil memngghulurkan sokongan kepada mereka. NGO dengan tindakan progresif telah berpengaruh dalam mengagihkan bantuan kemanusiaan kepada pelarian dan memastikan akses kepada pendidikan, pekerjaan dan perkhidmatan penjagaan kesihatan. Seperti Turkiye, Malaysia menjadi tempat di hati pelarian untuk mencari perlindungan dan kehidupan yang lebih baik. Justeru, dengan membandingkan peranan dan bantuan antara NGO Turkiye dan NGO Malaysia terhadap pelarian melalui wacana kajian lepas, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan bagaimana NGO Malaysia boleh belajar daripada NGO Turkiye dalam memperkasakan bantuan terhadap pelarian dengan lebih lanjut. Kajian ini berpendapat NGO Malaysia boleh melaksanakan bantuan

kemanusiaan kepada pelarian, termasuk mengajar mereka cara berdikari melalui latihan vokasional dan pekerjaan, penyediaan pendidikan dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan bahasa tempatan, kesihatan (rawatan klinik dan psikologi), tempat tinggal, bantuan guaman dan perantara.

Kata kunci: bantuan kemanusiaan; Malaysia, NGOs, pelarian, Turkiye.

INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian assistance actions by NGOs categorize a few types of beneficiaries, such as victims of natural disasters, poverty, famine, orphans, the elderly, and people who have no place to live, including refugees. The refugee issue is gaining more attention from governments at the international level and international relations experts - the problem is a more complex assortment than other global issues. Refugees are an individual problem, but on the other hand, it shows issues appear on societal, government, and international levels. Refugees consist of humanitarian, moral, security, and development issues (Hakovirta 1993). For instance, in Loescher's study (2002), he found the primary concern of refugees is about security weaknesses in the countries that are being occupied; Turkiye, Syria, and Kenya. The human rights record in the three countries is terrific. Refugees face detention, persecution, and deportation from the country when authorities arbitrarily harass, detain, and arrest them. About 15% of those fleeing Syria in Turkiye are in refugee camps, and some are in cities. Some other Syrian refugees live in rural areas, making it difficult for humanitarian organizations to access and send aid- forced to live in congested with limited food supplies and other necessities (Al-Natour, Al-Ostaz & Morris 2018).

Until 2020, the refugee statistics are climbing due to the humanitarian crisis in their countries and regions, especially the Syrian civil war crisis, the denial of Rohingya citizenship in Myanmar, and the Saudi Arabia-Yemen war. Based on the statistics shown by UNHCR, Turkiye is the highest-receiving country hosting refugees, with a total of 3.8 million, and most refugees are from Syria. Out of a sense of responsibility and concern about the fate of refugees in Turkiye, various non-governmental actors, notably NGOs, have appeared to help this vulnerable group's survival. Until 2022, NGOs in Turkiye are seen to have sprouted rapidly, whether originally established in Turkiye or external NGOs that expanded their branches here. The two factors cause Turkish NGOs to grow are that Turkiye is a country adjacent to Syria, which causes many aid funds from foreign countries, especially Europe, to go through Turkiye. Second, most Syrians fled to Turkiye, causing civil organizations there to act immediately to resolve the issue.

Like Turkiye, Malaysia is becoming a place in refugees' hearts to seek refuge and a better life. History shows Malaysia has been the most sought-after destination for refugees since the crises of the Vietnam, Bosnia, and Myanmar wars. Until January 2023, UHNCR Malaysia recorded the number of refugees as 183,790 (details in figure 1). Most of the refugees' view Malaysia as the immigrant-friendly ambience, safe, and culturally adaption.

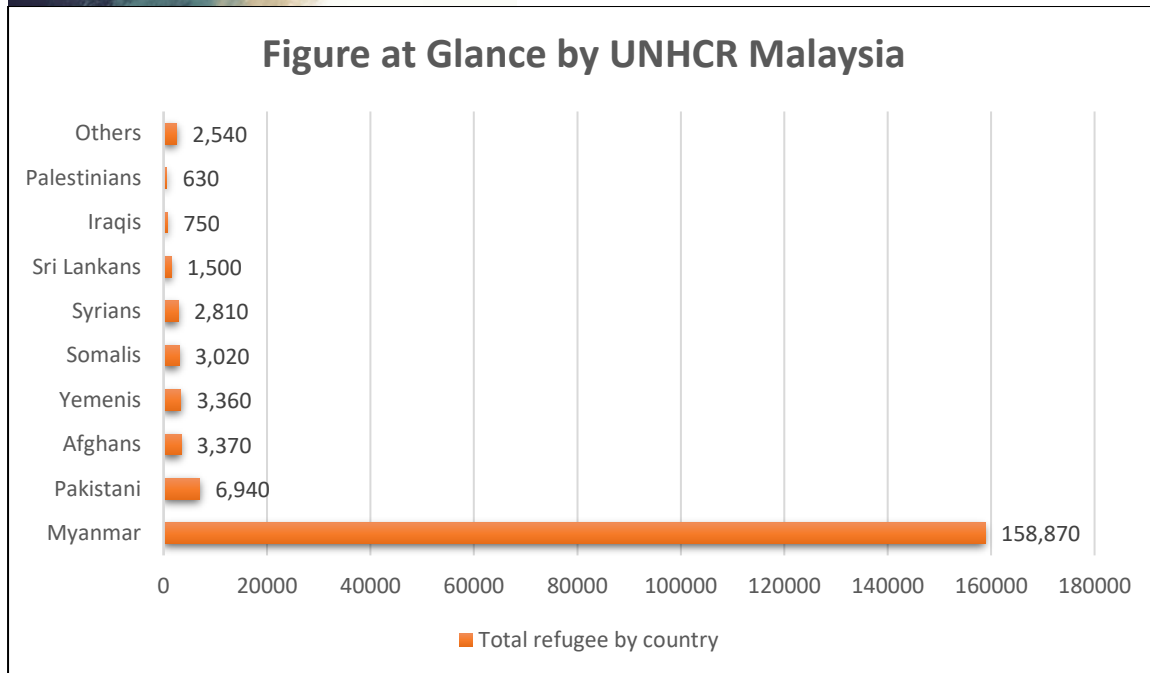


Figure 1: Statistic of refugees in Malaysia.
Source: (UNHCR Malaysia 2023).

Malaysia's tolerance of receiving and resettling refugees to third countries increases this arrival yearly. Due to the growing number of refugees in Malaysia, besides the incapability of UNHCR to comprehensively manage, particularly in survival assistance; thus, NGOs in humanitarian relief have thrived in recent years to assist the refugees. NGOs have become the most significant actors in meeting the needs of refugees in Malaysia. Hence, by comparing the roles and assistance of Turkish NGOs and Malaysian NGOs toward refugees through the discourse of previous studies, this study aims to untangle how Malaysian NGOs can learn from Turkish NGOs to empower assistance toward refugees further.

TURKISH NGOs ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEE

Although Türkiye is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and maintains the geographical limitation, the country still confronts the worst humanitarian catastrophe. It is the first secure destination for people fleeing war. In the last three years, taxpayers spent more than \$6 billion on refugees. Fortunately, there is not a primary public reaction against these vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to expect Türkiye to overcome this crisis alone. Erdogan's Türkiye is continuously on the edge of chaos. Numerous previous studies discuss the current circumstance of refugees in Türkiye, especially Syrian refugees, and the role of civil society in handling them, notably NGOs. Since the Syrian refugees first arrived in Türkiye, civil society is rose significantly, playing a crucial role in channelling support to and advocating for the rights of refugees. Their efforts have been influential in distributing humanitarian assistance to refugees and ensuring access to education, employment, and healthcare services (Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran 2022). Therefore, in this part, we will focus on the type of NGO assistance for refugees in Türkiye.

Kargin's study (2016) explored the circumstances of Syrian refugees in Türkiye and their impact on the Turkish people. Although his research is more focused on the presence of

Syrian refugees in Turkiye, which negatively impacts the lives of Turkish people, he also explains the role of NGOs in providing services such as food and clothing to the refugees there. According to the data obtained by Kargin through his interviews with Syrian refugee informants, the food and clothing resources provided still need to be improved. In addition, NGOs' involvement in the health field provides medicines for patients. NGOs were involved in education by building learning centres for Syrian refugee children and providing volunteer teachers to teach.

NGO participation in educating Syrian refugees in Turkiye can be examined more thoroughly in McCarthy's study (2017). The study examines the humanitarian operations of NGOs in the measures taken to educate Syrian children in Turkiye. He has chosen NGOs with Islamic religious patterns in areas with many Syrian residents, such as in Hatay, Istanbul, Adana, Sanliurfa, and Gaziantep in 2016. On September 16, 2013, the Turkish Ministry of Education entirely controlled education for Syrian refugees provided by NGOs inside or outside the refugee camp. The chairman of the NGO AY-DER explained that the goal of his organization in the involvement of providing education to Turkish refugees is to provide Syrian refugees with the knowledge that can help them gain goodness, improve their skills level and qualifications to become valuable individuals and build a bridge between Syria and Turkiye through joint program Turkish students. The role of humanitarian NGOs in the education sector in Turkiye can be summarized as the construction of temporary education centres; 1) school renovation and renewal, 2) providing teacher salary incentives, 3) developing, publishing, and distributing educational materials, 4) providing financial support to families, 5) providing Turkish language courses and vocational training, and 6) providing transportation to students. NGOs in Turkiye are also trying to support Syrian refugees by providing shelter, especially for groups that have just arrived from the border. This discussion can be examined in the study of El-Khani et al. (2018). A local NGO in Turkiye has turned a building that was originally a wedding hall into a temporary housing location. The families involved are supplied daily with essential items such as food, hygiene products, and baby milk.

Meanwhile, Yilmaz (2019) criticizes Turkiye's humanitarian movement, ignoring the employment field in humanitarian aid programs and social policies. NGOs solely focus on vocational training courses; for Syrian refugees to obtain jobs in Turkiye is alarming. In addition, Moustafa (2015) also criticized the actions of NGOs in Turkiye were found to have their interests when carrying out humanitarian aid activities. Initially, Moustafa's study attempted to provide a framework for understanding Syrian refugees' mental health care challenges. NGO had built a medical clinic for Syrian refugees in Kilis, Turkiye. However, the medicines in the clinic still need to be improved for Syrian refugees. He also explained which NGOs are interested in choosing a place to carry out humanitarian aid activities. The selection is to facilitate the work of NGOs, while others are deprived areas, alas, ignored.

Blow by blow, Aras and Duman (2018) divided into four subsections of services I/NGOs: (I) registration, (II) legal assistance and repatriation, (III) education and language, and (IV) employment and livelihood.

i. Registration

I/NGOs assist Syrian refugees in Turkiye in applying for their Temporary Protection ID card, which is necessary to access public services. The card ensures that the cardholder is registered in the country's residence system.

ii. Legal assistance

Turkiye needs a long history of hosting refugees, and it took a few years to prepare the legal foundation for Syrian migration. The Turkish government first referred to the incoming Syrians as 'guests,' which has no legal connotation. Eventually, the Temporary Protection Law was issued on October 13 2014, and state Türkiye provides Syrians temporary protection based on the following three elements:

- Admission to the country's territory, e.g., an open border policy.
- Protection from forced return.
- Meet the basic and urgent needs of incoming people.

The Human Rights Association in İzmir (İHDİ) has offered Syrian refugees protection and legal support. I/NGOs provide legal assistance to Syrian refugees with issues such as deportation.

iii. Education and language

I/NGOs assist in finding education and training programs for Syrian refugees; they play a vital role in guiding refugee communities to educational and vocational programs that may help integrate them into society and help them secure jobs and incomes.

iv. Employment and livelihood

Another service provided by I/NGOs is to help Syrians find jobs to earn an adequate income and live in decent conditions.

The massive influx of refugees, mainly Syrian, and its impacts on the socio-political scenario of Türkiye compelled the government to provide more accommodations collaborating with other agencies working in the same direction worldwide. Türkiye facilitates large humanitarian organizations, notably NGOs working inside Türkiye, to bring more support and financial assistance in these chaotic conditions. The above discussion shows that most Turkish NGOs contribute to the various fields of rehabilitation, such as food baskets, education, and healthcare facilities. Nevertheless, Turkish NGOs have reached an extraordinary level when involved with humanitarian assistance, from guaranteeing continuity of life, registration ID, and legal aid, and generating their income through vocational training or assisting them in looking for a job.

REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF NGOs

For refugees living in countries that signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol, their lives are more secure; they get several benefits, such as the right to work and access to free health and education. Nonetheless, the situation is not for refugees in non-member countries because many shortcomings and hindrances make life fragile. Four main formidable challenges often surround the life of refugees in continuing to live with refugee status, especially the Rohingya in Malaysia. In the view of Voothayakumar and Alavi (2019), the obstacle is that Rohingya refugees are in a vain place to live, affecting their social well-being. In addition, the Rohingya's status as refugees, it is difficult for this group to find employment and access to proper health care and education.

Syrian refugees are also found to be difficulties encountered in Malaysia. Based on the study of Nazri, Khalid, and Sulaiman (2019), four elements of jeopardy Syrian refugees: are personal, political, economic, and community. Syrian refugees lack a platform to inform if they experience any problems involving human security issues. Among the cases mentioned in their study is the issue of being a victim of sexual harassment that happened to a boy aged around 12 years old when he had suffered paedophilia from his Pakistani school teacher. At one point,

the teacher disturbed this child until at home. His family members feared filing a complaint with the police for being arrested due to only having a UNHCR card. For them, the UNHCR card ruled out confirmation of presence in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, a young man, around 19, committed suicide by jumping from the 10th floor of his residential building in Kajang. The accident occurred because the youth involved had psychological problems due to the stress of life and the trauma of the war in Syria. Being detained by law enforcement is often a challenge confronted by refugees despite having documents to stay legally in Malaysia. Besides, detention happens when refugees drive and have a valid international license to drive in Malaysia; alas, they are still detained by law enforcement because the license was refused in Malaysia. Some irresponsible police officers will take advantage by asking for a bribe if the arrested fugitives are reluctant to be treated. Many refugees do not have permanent work, making it more difficult for those with only a UNHCR card to work legally in Malaysia. Language differences between Syrian refugees and Malaysians also limit them from finding local private-sector work. As for Syrian refugee children, some are underfinanced from attending classes in learning centres either because the centres provided by NGOs are far from home or they are incapable of sending them to private schools.

The difficulties encountered by refugees in Malaysia have drawn the attention of many parties, specifically the government or NGOs. Ahmad, Rahim, and Mohamed (2016) have studied Malaysia's experience in managing refugees. The uniqueness of this study is that they have discussed many aspects of refugee challenges, Malaysia's measures to manage them, and the involvement of NGOs also play a role in helping refugees in Malaysia. The study has divided Malaysia's experience managing refugees into four groups who have been and are currently refugees in Malaysia: Vietnamese, Bosnian, Rohingya, and Syrian. In the situation of Vietnamese refugees, the Malaysian government and several agencies have developed Bidong Island, a Vietnamese refugee settlement; the island has longhouses, hospitals, clinics, temples, churches, post offices, vocational schools, and shops that can be used.

While in the case of Syria, the organization Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI) had previously helped refugees from Afghanistan and Somalia and recently helped Syrian refugees. The NGO has received special funds from UNHCR for refugee learning centres operations. A special fund has been launched through the "Syrian Immigrant Humanitarian Fund" in collaboration with NGOs: Humanitarian Care Malaysia (MyCARE), Syria Care Malaysia, Malaysian Humanitarian Aid and Relief (MAHAR), Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), and IMAM Response and Relief Team (IMARET). However, in the case of Bosnia and Rohingya, the involvement of NGOs in helping refugees comprehensively and only explained how the Malaysian government manages the refugees involved.

Studying aspects of education and looking at the challenges of Palestinian refugees discussed by Muhammad and Rokis (2019) debated the hindrances for Palestinian refugee children to get an education during their time in Malaysia. First, economic problems cause obstacles to arise. Numerous families are less able to cover the cost of sending their children to learning centres, and some children are forced to work to bear the family expenses due to their father having health issues.

The second is the institutional obstacle caused by the learning centres, such as MSRI, unsystematic organized education - the teachers who teach are recruited from among the refugees. Refugee children consider receiving an education in a government school is superior; it is systematic, but because they do not have the right, in the end, only NGO learning centres are chosen. The last obstacle is that their parents need more awareness about the significance of education. For parents waiting to resettle to a third country, education for their children is

unnecessary and can be completed once they are there. However, the issue of human trafficking and often being detained by law enforcement without reason is the most complicated problem. For this reason, legal services must be provided to refugees. Wahab and Khairi (2020) found there are four main obstacles in the provision of legal aid services to vulnerable non-citizens such as:

- a) Limited scope of legal aid protection.
- b) Financial constraints.
- c) Limits on the participation of private lawyers in the legal aid scheme.
- d) Lack of awareness.

Their study concluded that the failure of social institutions, especially legal aid institutions, to provide adequate access to legal aid among refugees indicates an unfair trial in Malaysia. Nevertheless, Prabandari and Adiputera (2019) criticized Malaysia's initiative to create a particular program for Bosnian and Syrian refugees, considering it a double-standard action. The Malaysian government determines its criteria regarding who can or cannot have a special visa, who should or should not be given workplace access, and who accepts international refugees' admission as legal migrants. Simultaneously, refugees are already in countries such as the Rohingya, Afghanistan, and Iraq, which are not given the privilege of legal status. Nevertheless, Malaysia's double-standards practices are unfair because Bosnia and Syria's selection of migrants based on the worsening situation in the countries involved urges the government to take immediate action.

Prabandari and Adiputera's research also discusses NGO involvement, Human Aid Selangor, and Malaysia Life Line for Syria (MLLFS) helping refugees in Malaysia. Human Aid Selangor provides accommodation and health services and builds learning centres to pursue education for Rohingya and Burmese Muslim children. Human Aid Selangor also stated that its organization has informal cooperation with UNHCR but received a certificate of appreciation from UNHCR for its work in protecting Rohingya refugees. In contrast, MLLFS carries out functions in the field of education and health but specifically for Syrian, Palestinian, and Yemeni refugees in Malaysia. There are several projects and programs MLLFS works closely with the Malaysian government, UNHCR, and several other NGOs in special programs for Syrian refugees.

While Abdullah (2014) specifically analyzed the involvement of NGOs in helping the Rohingya ethnic community in Malaysia. The Rohingya Information Centre organization is famous in Taman Bukit Teratai, Johor, and the centre has established many collaborations with various charities in Malaysia. Among other organizations are the Rohingya Solidarity Democratic Movement, the Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organization, and Community Rohingya Islamic Pro-Democracy Organization. Although this organization has its headquarters outside Malaysia and only in certain places, according to Azlinariah, it still strives to help the nearly 15,000 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia regardless of their state and district. The Rohingya ethnic group used the existing network of organizations to ensure the survival of their identity as well as possible. Abdullah, Dali, and Razak (2018) go deeper into the involvement of NGOs in the issue of refugee children's education in Malaysia. The initiative of Yayasan Salam, ABIM, Yayasan Tzu Chi Malaysia, and Pertubuhan Kebajikan Muslim Malaysia (PERKIM) to empower the educational well-being of the Rohingya ethnic group can be traced back to 1998 in collaboration with UNHCR Malaysia. Various obstacles surround the lives of Rohingya refugees, while this community has lived in Malaysia for a long time and

has grown and multiplied. Hence, the Malaysian government grants them citizenship rights, identity cards, and access to education in government schools.

Based on the discussion above, NGOs' humanitarian assistance to refugees in Malaysia, which is pioneered chiefly, is subsistence, food packs, health care, and education. Despite Malaysian NGOs being active in helping refugees in Malaysia, this marginalized group is still faced with various threats and obstacles. Ironically, the number of international refugees entering Malaysia to become a protection hub or a transit country has continued to increase from 2013 until 2020.

WHAT CAN MALAYSIA LEARN FROM TURKIYE?

Our study notes that it might need to be more logical to compare Turkiye and Malaysia because of the difference in both commitments to participate in the 1951 convention. Assuredly, the refugees living in Turkiye, members of the convention, have many advantages in particular livelihood (right to work, free access to health and education), and vice versa. All of these are obstructed for refugees in Malaysia. Nevertheless, we are persuasive that there is still much Malaysian NGOs can learn from Turkish NGOs in empowering humanitarian aid to refugees. Based on the discussion between humanitarian assistance NGOs in Turkiye and Malaysia, we have found out what Turkish NGOs have implemented and what Malaysian NGOs still need to fulfil.

In general, we would like to reprimand Malaysian NGOs paying heed to help refugees in urban areas, especially around the Klang Valley. In reality, refugees living on the sidelines still need attention in other states such as Kedah (Sungai Petani, Bukit Pinang); Pulau Pinang (Bukit Mertajam, Bagan Ajam); Johor (Kulai Besar). If we glance at Turkish NGOs, their aid is not solely focused in the urban areas – Istanbul but mobilized in inland areas such as Hatay, Adana, and Gaziantep. The findings also show that most aid activities help Rohingya, Syrian and Palestinian refugees more than other ethnic/nations. While referring to UNHCR statistics, Pakistani refugees are the second highest group in Malaysia, but the findings of NGO humanitarian aid show that the group is left out as beneficiaries. In addition, the NGOs assistance was channelled more to Muslims than non-Muslims. However, numerous non-Muslim refugees, such as Chins and Christians from Myanmar, or other persuasions, such as Shiites from Syria, have dropped out of NGO assistance because their existence in Malaysia is deemed unacceptable. NGOs should not be partial in the distribution of aid by looking at religion as a measure - the original goal of its establishment is to protect human life regardless of the beneficiaries' background.

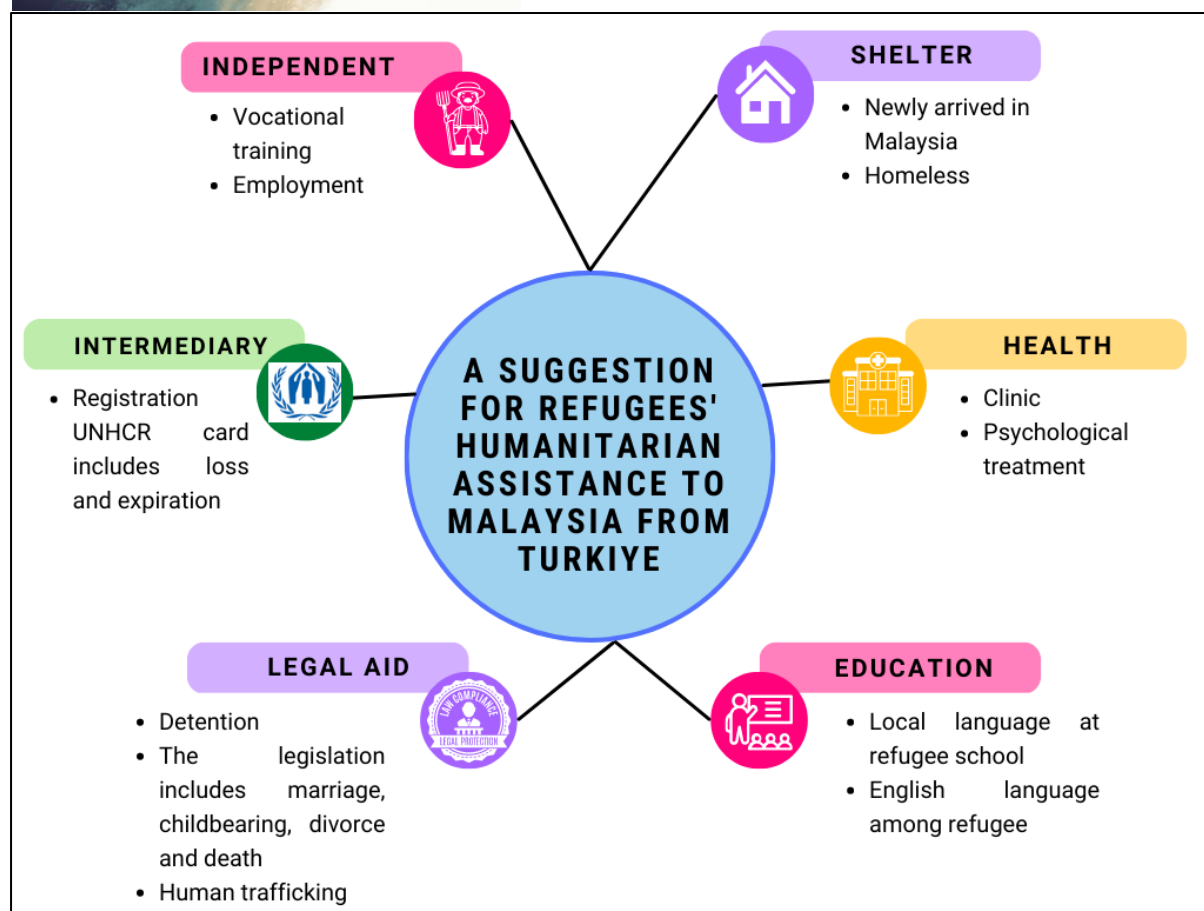


Figure 2: A suggestion for refugees' humanitarian assistance to Malaysia from Turkiye

In greater detail (figure 2), first, we would criticize the actions of Malaysian NGOs' excessive focus on food aid instead of teaching them how to live independently and earn their income. When the refugees are used to receiving assistance, they become dependent without self-effort to make a living - compared to Turkish NGOs started to teach independent living at the school level by conducting vocational training. Vocational training could be implemented for all ages. For men, among the training that could be carried out is repairing electrical equipment, including air conditioners, washing machines, or televisions. In comparison, self-training among women, such as cooking at home, including baking, heavy meals, and sewing. Vocational training eventually helps women earn their income from home and reduce the risk of being caught by the enforcement authorities. In training refugees to be independent, NGOs could assist them in finding jobs - they may need to learn about the channels, and language barriers make it difficult to find work. NGOs are more aware of the characteristics of less risky jobs from the authorities' arrest.

We also assert that apart from food aid, there is an issue that needs to be paid attention which is shelter - one of the primary needs of concern - understandable since shelter is essential for survival, personal safety, dignity, and protection from physical attacks (Kumssa et al. 2014). A local NGO in Turkiye has turned a building that was originally a wedding hall into a temporary settlement for newly arrived Syrians in Reyhanli, Southern Turkiye, close to the Bakhshen refugee camp. In the case of Malaysia, temporary shelters are crucial for refugees who have just arrived in the country but have no acquaintances to contact, leaving them with no direction. Ultimately, they had to live on the sidewalks, asking for donations in the streets,

mosques, and night markets. In addition, temporary shelter is necessary for refugees who are incapable of afford to rent a house, and some of them are forced to leave the house when ordered by the landlord suddenly without giving a period.

From the health aspect, NGOs should build private clinics instead of making accessible health care by providing doctors in the refugee areas – called mobile clinics. The construction of a clinic helps refugees get treatment at any time, incredibly when sick, compared to mobile clinics with limited times. In health treatment, it is also seen that only medical check-ups are done, while there is a necessary treatment that NGOs could carry out, which is psychological treatment. Based on the previous discussion, scholars display that refugees are traumatized - which harms their mental and emotional health due to the loss of country, culture, language, profession, family, and friends and the destruction of the future. Refugees have bad experiences in their own country before migrating to foreign countries on factors such as being victims of war, being detained and imprisoned for political or religious reasons, being tortured or exposed to physical and mental attacks, being sexual victims, and witnessing a murder. Our research believes that implementing psychological treatment by a Malaysian humanitarian NGO is significant in helping refugees deal with emotional disorders and trauma.

Next is education - a tool for searching best-fit job according to qualifications or making life meaningful, which plays a crucial role in today's environment. Education updates a person with knowledge that could be applied in a job/business/life. It all depends on the person and what aims while pursuing the education. Allude to Turkiye; the NGOs oblige refugee children to learn the national language; alas, the Malay language in Malaysia is excluded from the school teaching syllabus. Language classes are not created in schools only but can be implemented for adults. Language skills can be mobilized by teaching the local language and English. The language gap between refugees and Malaysians also causes them to be limited in finding work in the local private sector and need help interacting with the Malaysian community. Moreover, providing English classes is significant for refugees to resettle in the host country.

At the edge of other suggestions, we perceive legal aid as another essential assistance that should implement. Legal aid provides services to people incapable of accessing legal counsel in the justice system and is therefore considered a vital aspect of the right to justice. In Malaysia, refugees are among the most vulnerable populations facing unequal treatment and discrimination and ineffective mechanisms to guarantee their justice rights (Wahab & Khairi 2020). Numerous refugees often face detention and arrest at police lockups or immigration depots, and most of them do not know the mechanism to be free from arrest. In addition, issues involving legislation such as marriage, childbearing, divorce, and death require refugees to act based on Malaysian law, but most do not know the steps to take. Thus, NGOs' legal assistance can guide and facilitate all refugee issues.

For the last contribution, NGOs could act as intermediaries between refugees and UNHCR in card registration, loss, and expiration. This action is to facilitate and speed up the management of cards for refugees because NGOs need to use channels directly to UNHCR to ensure the process takes a long time. This action mainly benefits refugees who have just arrived in Malaysia and need the finances to go directly to the UNHCR office. In terms of language, the UNHCR has provided translators according to the language of each country.

CONCLUSION

Classically, humanitarian assistance is always defined as aid given suddenly and in the type of basic needs such as food, drink, and health care. Paradoxically, after this study explored the types of NGO humanitarian assistance and the needs of refugees in Malaysia, we perceived

humanitarian assistance as no more extended emergency aid and not only about basic needs. Based on the discussion of refugee needs above, our research found that NGOs could implement five other types of needs in humanitarian assistance because it is essential for refugees in Malaysia. The five requirements involve independence through vocational training and employment, education (English and local language), health (clinic and psychological treatment), shelter, legal aid, and intermediary. Therefore, we slightly reformulate the definition of humanitarian assistance – "aid given to any human being in need, at any time, without bound by a period and in various types as long as the relief could benefit the beneficiary to continue their life."

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YouTubers and the Malaysian Youths: An Exploration into Digital Parasocial Relationships

(YouTuber dan Belia Malaysia: Penerokaan Hubungan Parasosial Digital)

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ABSTRACT

A growing number of young media consumers are turning to online video platforms, with YouTube in particular attracting massive numbers of users and subscribers. As a result, these statistics increase the attraction of the celebrities, or YouTubers, featured in the videos. They gain viewers and worldwide recognition by their public presence and utilisation of vast marketing strategies. According to the concept of parasocial interactions, YouTube users may form links with the celebrities they view online. This study will extend previous research on the development of parasocial relationships conducted by Rubin and McHugh (1987) and Kurtin, O'Brien, Roy and Dam (2018) on social media to determine if such a relationship exists in the Malaysian community on YouTube. The results of a structural equation model were slightly similar to the original ones, proving that watching YouTube was a significant predictor of both social and physical attraction, regardless of ethnicity. The moderating variable of online comments introduced to the framework showed significant contribution to the development and the formation of parasocial ties, which increased the value of relationships. Overall, the results support applying parasocial interaction theory to the YouTube context in Malaysia.

Keywords: *parasocial relationships; YouTube; new media studies; youth; digital culture.*

ABSTRAK

Semakin ramai pengguna media muda beralih kepada platform video dalam talian, khususnya YouTube yang mampu menarik sejumlah besar pengguna dan pelanggan. Akibatnya, statistik ini meningkatkan daya tarikan selebriti, atau YouTuber, yang dipaparkan dalam video. Mereka mendapat penonton dan pengiktirafan di seluruh dunia dengan kehadiran awam mereka, dan penggunaan strategi pemasaran yang luas. Mengikut konsep interaksi parasosial, pengguna YouTube boleh membentuk pautan dengan selebriti yang mereka lihat dan mengikuti dalam talian. Kajian ini akan memanjangkan kajian lepas mengenai perkembangan hubungan parasosial yang dijalankan oleh Rubin dan McHugh (1987) berserta Kurtin, O'Brien, Roy dan Dam (2018) di media social untuk menentukan sama ada hubungan sedemikian wujud dalam masyarakat Malaysia di YouTube. Keputusan model persamaan struktur adalah serupa sedikit dengan model asal, membuktikan bahawa menonton YouTube adalah peramal penting bagi tarikan social dan fizikal, tanpa mengira etnik dan kaum. Pembolehuban penyderhana komen dalam talian yang diperkenalkan kepada rangka kerja menunjukkan sumbangan yang signifikan kepada pembangunan dan pembentukan hubungan parasosial, yang meningkatkan



nilai perhubungan Secara keseluruhannya, keputusan menyokong penerapan teori interaksi parasosial pada konteks YouTube di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: hubungan parasosial; YouTube; kajian media baru; belia; budaya digital.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital media and networks have become intertwined in the everyday lives of people, as part of greater changes in how we engage in information generation, communication, and creative expression (McChesney 2013; Thumim 2012; Van Dijck 2013). Unlike in the early days of computer and computer-based media creation, digital media is now broad and pervasive, with a varied range of individuals and organisations from all walks of life adopting it. Digital media have broken free from the constraints of professional and formal practise, as well as the academic, governmental, and industrial institutions that supported its early development.

This is especially true for young people, who, unlike members of the generations before them, see interactions in the context of non-anonymous online networks as a vital component of both their sense of self and their social life. As a consequence, a lack of Internet connection might potentially result in a person's exclusion from society (Dijck 2013). To succeed in the online world, one must have traits that are distinct from those needed in the real world, where these characteristics include the capacity to read and react to online social cues, develop and manage one's online reputation, and influence how others see oneself. This is because online interactions are less personal, particularly when it comes to moulding others' opinions of them (Boyd 2007). Although the specific forms of technology adoption vary greatly, this generation of young people is growing up in an age where digital media is woven into the social and cultural fabric of learning, play, and social communication. This is especially true in the post-COVID era when digital technologies are assisting in the organizing and growth of everyday affairs ranging from job and school to relationships and identity construction. As a result, it is critical to understand how this generation uses technology to further enrich their identities, build digital cultures, and translate this enrichment into their varied offline ethnic cultures via their social circle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many forms of social media that have emerged and come to dominate their users' time and energy over the last decade (Zarella 2010), with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Reddit, and Yelp being just a few of the platforms. According to Keenan and Shiri (2009), social networking sites can be classified as either "people-focused" or "activity-focused," with the former featuring "profile pages" that host personal details and content about the user and the latter allowing users to share and upload content such as videos and photos. Unlike traditional media, which solely broadcasts information to its audience, social media encourages a two-way conversation between its users (Mohd Faizal, Rosidayu, & NorAdzrah 2014). Therefore, people all over the world, most especially the younger generation, are increasingly using social media as a means of self-expression. When it comes to sharing original works of creativity online, YouTube is one option. Founded in 2005 by Chad Hurley, Jawed Karm, and Steve Chen, this site provides users with a central platform from which they may upload an endless number of videos and watch those uploaded by other users. Since its acquisition by Google in 2006, YouTube has rapidly expanded to become one of the most popular online video-sharing platforms, with over a billion users worldwide (Gill, Arlitt, Li, & Mahanti 2007). Tankovska (2021) claims that the site has over two billion monthly active members and daily video publications, making it the world's second most popular social networking site. After creating an account, users may comment on videos in any of the supported languages, regardless of their native tongue.

Malaysia is not left out in the digital race, and in fact, with an average of 7.2 hours per week, is Southeast Asia's top video-consuming nation. Out of Malaysia's total population of 32.98 million, 89.6 percent have access to the internet; of this number, 30.25 million (or 91.7%

of the total) are active social media users (Kemp 2022). At the beginning of 2022, the same data source estimated that 47.5% of Malaysia's 23.4 million YouTube subscribers were female and 52.5% were male (Kemp 2022). Over 7.5 million Malaysians watched YouTube on their devices in May 2022, and 66% of those viewers feel that YouTube "is TV," according to YouTube Internal Data (SilverMouse Marketing 2022). This highlights the shift in how TV is understood and consumed. The analysis from Digital Business Labs (2022) on YouTube use in Malaysia provides unique insight into the country's video-viewing habits:

- Younger Malaysians (16-34) are the most avid YouTube viewers.
- There are 23.6 million people in Malaysia who might be exposed to a YouTube commercial. However, the majority of YouTube views in the country occur outside of the traditional "prime time" broadcast window of 8.00 – 10.00 pm.
- Video contents involving food, music, gaming and beauty are the ones showing the greatest continuous development on YouTube in Malaysia.
- 7 out of 10 YouTube channels seen by Malaysians are local channels with localized content.

The growth of YouTube influencers, who are content creators with a significant fan base, strong brand identities, and predictable connections with commercial sponsors, has resulted in a rapid increase in the popularity of YouTube in Malaysia (Duffy 2020). It has also been shown that young people are increasingly sharing videos online (Khairi 2015). YouTube has had a huge impact on young people's access to information and pursuit of personal development. This is due to the fact that videos are more engaging and effective than written information, which may be boring to young internet users, as shown by Duffy (2020). Today, YouTube has evolved into a vibrant centre for entertainment-related mass media, with technical growth to be the primary cause of this phenomenon, sometimes known as the structural and technological revolution of communication (Dijk 2006). Because of the increase in YouTube video uploads by young netizens, important personalities in society now have more influence over the everyday routines of young people, especially those who spend a considerable percentage of their spare time viewing online videos. These YouTube stars, or celebrities, possess distinguishing features that separate them apart from the more typical Hollywood A-list. The majority of these videos portray the content creators in their own homes, contain language popular among their generation and its related cultural traditions, and concentrate on topics that teens may identify with (Strangelove 2010). Their viewers' ability to interact with them, both on the digital and personal platforms, through comments and messages provides an impression of approachability and mutual respect.

According to Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial contact is "*the one-sided interpersonal connection that television viewers construct with media characters*" (Rubin & McHugh 1987: 280). The authors created and validated a pathway that starts with attraction and ends with relationship significance, including parasocial interaction in the between. They used "talking to" to mean "seeing" a character on TV, "liking" to mean "being drawn to," and "intimacy" to mean "valuing" one's time spent with that figure. When it comes to liking and appreciating a TV character, the more appealing the character, the greater the impact on the viewer's parasocial relationships. Research on parasocial relationships has helped to solidify this theory, and it has since been applied to new mediums like radio (Savage & Spense, 2014), online communities (Bellantini & Martin 2005), social networking sites (Frederick E., Choong, Clavio, & Walsh 2012; Baek et al. 2013; Labrecque 2014; Tsiotsou 2015).

Therefore, in understanding the context presented earlier here, this study is a part of a larger research to explore the context of parasocial relationship development between Malaysian viewers and their YouTube idols. As this has not been done so, the results will contribute and update the findings towards a growing compilation of YouTube study in terms of parasocial relationships research, such as those by Chen (2014), Kurtin et al. (2018), Rihl

and Wegener (2019), Perez (2021), and Su, Wu, Chan and Hong (2021), particularly for an Asian setting, by determining whether a connection exists between young Malaysians and their preferred YouTubers, especially when cultural values and religion are so firmly engrained in many elements of the Malaysian multi-ethnic cultures (Wan Husin, Abdul Halim, & Zul Kernain 2020). Thus, the research questions will be as follows:

- Do young Malaysian viewers develop parasocial relationships with their YouTube celebrities?
- How do the antecedents of parasocial relationships affect the strength of relationship importance?
- Can YouTube's comment features, which enable viewers to engage with videos, impact the degree of the parasocial relationships?

METHODOLOGY

Parasocial interaction and parasocial connections were developed by Horton and Wohl (1956) as a result of their study of the effect of television personalities with whom viewers felt a strong connection, as based on their argument as follows: *“One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media – radio, television, and the movies – is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer. The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group. The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one’s peers ... We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a parasocial relationship”* (1956: 215). Many studies have been looking into this phenomenon and this became a popular concept in reception research as studied by Bond (2016), Bellantine and Martin (2005) and Hartmann and Goldhorn (2011). In following that, conceptual research has focused on distinguishing parasocial behaviour from parasocial relationships and, more recently, parasocial opinion leaders such as athletes (Frederick et al. 2012), brand icons (Labrecque 2014), and even ordinary every-day people (Strangelove 2010). The concept's empirical execution also requires the development of new measuring scales, survey equipment, and qualitative analysis procedures (Auter & Palmgree 2000; Dibble et al. 2016; Hoerner 2010). Following that, more studies have examined whether or if the notions of parasocial contact and parasocial relationships may be applied to novel phenomena that have evolved as a result of improvements in media technology (Tsotsou 2015; Brown 2015). This study will take one of these perspectives by evaluating literature on how Malaysian youths have formed parasocial connections, in looking at the existence of parasocial ties between Malaysian YouTube users and (also international) YouTube content providers, and if cultural beliefs and values do play a part in the relationship. Positioned contextually for a Malaysian YouTube audience, it is also hoped that this study will be able to add to the ongoing discussion regarding parasocial interactions in the age of digital forms of communication and engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Khamis et al. (2017:19) define self-branding as "creating a distinctive public image for financial benefit and/or cultural capital," and social media gives regular people the ability to do just that. People can become social media influencers by sharing their unique perspectives and/or material, which can lead to a growing fan following and ultimately, online stardom. Because of the personal nature of their communications and interactions with customers, in which they routinely divulge details of their lives and engage in mutual exchanges, social media influencers may beat traditional celebrities in terms of endorsement (Breves et al. 2021). This

means that the endorsements of social media influencers are powerful social proofs for the brands they promote. Consumers trust the recommendations of social media influencers because the commercial content they share is organically integrated into their daily lives (Kim & Kim 2021)

Existing influencer literature has looked at the role of influencers' personal attributes in influencing endorsement outcomes from the perspective of the source effect model in order to better understand how influencer marketing functions, whether in the context of social media influencers or more traditional celebrities. Attractiveness, credibility, and expertise are just some of the well-established influencer attribute factors that have been shown to elicit positive consumer perception and behavioural intention (Chung & Cho 2017; Schimmelpfennig & Hunt 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020; Torres et al. 2019; Yuan & Lou 2020). As a result of their immense popularity, authors of existing research have begun to investigate distinctive characteristics of social media influencers like the size of their fan bases (Arora et al. 2019; De Veirman et al. 2017). Some studies have found positive effects of a large number of followers on consumer perception and behaviour, while others have found either no effect or a negative effect (Aw & Chuah 2021; Boerman 2020; De Veirman et al. 2017).

The evaluation of past literature shows some studies conducted to establish a general psychological mechanism of influence for the success of influencer marketing. In particular, previous research has focused extensively on determining which aspects of influencers' personas—such as their beauty and credibility—drive the most desirable endorsement outcomes (Chung & Cho 2017; Sokolova & Kefi 2020; Torres et al. 2019). Given that the social media content presentation and social media interactions with consumers are the keys to the success of an influencer endorsement, this knowledge gap leads to a limited understanding of how social media influencers and their partnered brands can practically manage their self presentation on social media (Aw & Chuah 2021; Liu et al. 2020). Previous studies have shown that our knowledge of the effects of interactivity and self-disclosure on endorsement efficacy is limited; thus, future studies should aim to not only determine whether or not these characteristics affect endorsement effectiveness, but also the mechanism by which they do so (Leite & Baptista 2021; Liu et al. 2020). In addition, the influencer-consumer attachment has been hailed as the next frontier in the influencer marketing literature (Moraes et al., 2019), although there is still a startling lack of clarity regarding how to best promote relationships between consumers and influencers. For example, while previous studies have identified social media interactions and influencer personal characteristics as antecedents to parasocial relationships (Chung & Cho 2017; Aw & Labrecque 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020), these studies did not provide clear insights into the specific content and interaction strategies that foster parasocial relationships and the potential mediating impact of parasocial relationships on the endorsement outcomes. Furthermore, the linear assumption and variance-based approach is widely used in the existing studies to investigate the phenomenon, which results in an oversimplified understanding of the phenomenon as the complexities of consumer perception and behaviour in response to influencer marketing are not adequately captured (Pappas & Woodside 2021).

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Using various media theories, such as the uses and gratifications theory and the uncertainty reduction theory, Rubin and McHugh (1987) investigated the ties between communication, liking, and intimacy in order to predict the antecedents and consequences of what parasocial relationships, as proposed by Horton and Wohl (1956). They looked at whether, and the extend of, parasocial interactions developed similarly to or differently from the kind of relationships outlined by Berger and Calabrese's (1975) stage model of relational development,

concentrating on three axioms, to apply towards their investigation in the use of television context. The first axiom posited that more frequent communication and engagement reduces uncertainty, which in turn encourages more communication and interaction, and so on, strengthening the bond between the parties involved. As a result, getting to know a TV star better should lead to less anxiety and, in turn, more positive parasocial behaviour on the part of the viewer. The following axiom, which is Axiom 7, by Berger & Calabrese (1975) postulated that reduced ambiguity given by frequent contact enhances liking or interpersonal attraction. Applying this adage to the realm of parasocial television, Rubin and McHugh (1987) posited that viewers would become more enamoured with a show's protagonist after seeing them in many episodes. Yet, there are several factors at play in interpersonal attraction, as this is quite subjective and multifaceted. As proposed by Kurtin et al., (2018), there are three ways to define attraction to a TV personality: (i) the extent to which the viewer sees themselves in the TV personality or wants to befriend them (*social attractiveness*); (ii) the extent to which the viewer finds the TV personality physically attractive (*physically attractive*); and (iii) the extent to which the viewer sees the TV personality as competent, credible, or reliable (*task attractiveness*). According to Berger and Calabrese's (1975) axiom 14, there is a causal link between liking someone and feeling close to them. Therefore, in applying to the TV context, parasocial attachment to a TV star results from a viewer's interpersonal connection to that star, argue Rubin and McHugh (1987). Therefore, based on this study, Rubin and McHugh proposed that the degree to which a television viewer finds a relationship important would depend on parasocial interactions with that personality, well as on the perception of that personality's attractiveness, as shown in their framework in Figure 1.

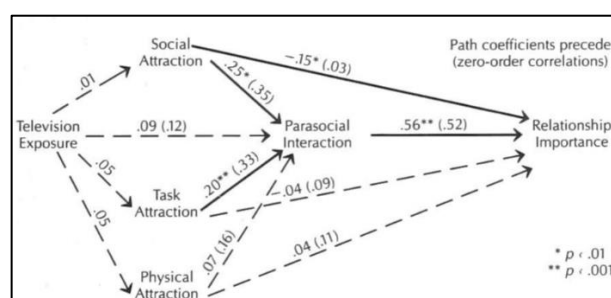


Figure 1. Path analysis of mediated attraction (Rubin & McHugh 1987)

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Subsequent empirical research has addressed the establishment of parasocial relationships for various sorts of television characters, expanding on Rubin and McHugh's examination of television as an environment for parasocial relationship formation. Parasocial relationships are strongest when a television personality engages the audience in some form of self-address and through repeated exposure, according to research involving news anchors (Levy, 1979), soap opera characters (Rubin & Perse 1987), comedians (Auter 1992), TV shopping hosts (Grant et al. 1991), and talk show hosts (Koenig & Lessan 1985). The parasocial connections studied here characterise affinities that emerge from repeated, or ongoing, exposure to a personality over time, which is characteristic of social media interaction (Dibble et al. 2016; Hartmann & Goldhorn 2011; Horton & Wohl 1956). Although Rubin and McHugh (1987) interchangeably used the phrases, parasocial research has since separated the two concepts into distinct categories. The present study is an investigation on the bonds formed via repeated interactions, especially focusing on the feedback channels such as the comments section, as well as community channels that are available on YouTube.

Recent empirical research on parasocial interactions in new media reveals that the participatory character of digital environments like Facebook (Joinson 2008; Tsiotsou 2015) and Twitter (Bond 2016; Frederick et al. 2012; Stever & Lawson 2013) promotes parasocial interaction and encourages certain users to create more parasocial than interpersonal relationships (Chen 2014; Jin & Park 2009). Parasocial studies have shown that viewers react to media personalities in ways similar to how they respond to those with whom they have interpersonal interactions, suggesting that the human brain processes mediated experiences in ways comparable to direct lived experiences (Kanazawa, 2002). Because of the manner in which viewers equate mediated experience with genuine experience on those media that give a prolonged participation role, an engaged new media user may be more likely to establish parasocial interactions than even an active television or radio viewer or listener (Chen 2014), as "...intimate, behind-the-scene insights into [their] normal lives and taste preferences," as Bond (2016:657) puts it, are what TV characters who use Twitter provide to viewers.

The blurring of lines between users, viewers, celebrities, and the personalities they play is one of the most appealing aspects of these interactive social networks. Several studies have demonstrated that viewers may "follow" or "friend" not just the people they choose to interact with, or the people they already know, or the people they've been exposed to via their friends, but also corporations, organisations, celebrities, and fictional versions of the latter (Frederick et al. 2012; Labrecque 2014). Celebrities and other public figures may be approached for interviews or other forms of connection through social media, but genuine two-way relationships may not always materialise. While many people use Twitter and Facebook to get in touch with celebrities, Baek et al. (2013) point out that this is mostly a one-way street. This means that mere proximity to the celebrity does not guarantee the development of any meaningful bonds. Researchers have shown that parasocial contact is more common on social networking sites than on other platforms because of these factors (Frederick et al. 2012; Frederick et al. 2014; Stever & Lawson 2013). For Bond (2016), the fact that many people believe Twitter to be a "genuine avenue for celebrity voices" helps to explain the prevalence of parasocial connections there.

YOUTUBERS & THEIR VIEWERS

YouTube channel owners that regularly post their own original videos to their channels are sometimes referred to as "YouTubers" (Hidalgo-Mari & Segarra-Saavedra 2017). They worked hard to keep their channels current because they knew that adding new forms of entertainment would keep viewers tuning in. Because of the effect their videos and livestreams have on their viewers, YouTubers are sometimes referred to as opinion leaders or influencers (Aran-Ramspott, Fedele, & Tarrago 2018), where their personality, appeal and competence all play key roles in their impact as YouTubers (Choi & Behm-Morawitz 2017; Salyer & Weiss 2020).

The increasing number of YouTubers as content providers has had an impact on YouTube users, with the creators hoping to garner views by portraying likeable characters while keeping their true selves hidden (Holmbom, 2015). Nonetheless, their charm in the video has been the driving force behind the growing fandom and eagerness of people to follow a YouTuber (Smith 2015; Cocker & Cronin 2017). Younger viewers see YouTubers as more "real" since they produce material about their everyday lives (Salyer & Weiss 2020). Expert YouTubers also have a good effect on their youthful viewers since their videos may be used as online lectures or educational resources as they provide scholastic wisdom or expertise, giving their young viewers a chance to learn from them and spurring an interest in education (Ifitikhar, Riaz, & Yousaf 2019). According to Yoon and Tourassi (2014) and Ifitikhar et al. (2019), the 74% of students prefer to study by watching a YouTube video rather than reading an academic journal or book, and they remember more knowledge this way. Furthermore, it was shown that

Youtubers inspired young viewers to develop a healthy sense of self-esteem through promoting positive themes in their videos (Khan 2016; Choi & Behm-Morawitz 2017). Westenburg (2016) observed that YouTubers' instructions and language result in a more thorough understanding of the topic among young viewers. As a result, young viewers choose to educate themselves, fostering a lifelong love of learning (Choi & Behm-Morawitz 2017).

It is no doubt that despite the positive influences of YouTubers, there are also negative effects, such as the study by Westenburg (2016) showing that the YouTube viewers' purchase intentions have been unconsciously influenced by the YouTubers, and this has also been confirmed by Lopes et al. (2020). Not only that, videos with contents of foul language and alcohol consumption have inspired young audiences into trying them out (Westenburg 2016; Aran-Ramspott et al. 2018), triggering concerns and worries that audiences, especially young ones, are utilising YouTube to escape from reality and their social roles (Yen, Chang, & Chou 2019).

Thus, if considered as the result of repeated parasocial interactions, serial forms may provide a firm basis for the establishment of parasocial relationships (Vorderer & Knobloch 1996). As a consequence of parasocial relationships, it is easy to explain the frequent use of media services (Hartmann, Klimmt, & Vorderer 2001). Viewers may grow to see celebrities as friends (Vorderer 1996; Rubin, Perse, & Powell 1985), aspects of their identity (Gleason, Theran, & Newberg 2017) or even role models as a result of these constant, reciprocal connections, as shown by Fisherkeller (1997), and Schmid and Klimmt (2011). Not only is there a desire to meet the celebrity, but there is also a feeling of belonging to a media-connected social network (Rubin, Perse, & Powell 1985). For a long time, academic research has focused on semi-friendly parasocial interactions, in which public figures are seen as a positive extension of the audience (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen 2016).

There has been a rise in the number of studies that critically explore the phenomena of online communication and, by extension, the alteration of parasocial connections brought about by the introduction of interactive media as a result of the digitization of these settings. Although Click, Lee, and Holladay (2013:365) conclude that 'the heightened sense of closeness and familiarity created by two-way interaction and celebrities' online disclosure of personal information has blurred the boundaries that once separated "real" and "imaginary" (parasocial) relationships in tradition media' their study reveals that while their uploads and postings on social media may strengthen the feeling of closeness and availability, the communications do not necessarily increase. Stever and Lawson (2013) found that although fans believe they have a deep understanding of their favourite celebrities, this is often not the case. All their fans add up in the eyes of the celebrity, a collective group as a whole, rather than on an individual basis; they are "a recognised component of [their] parasocial network" (Stever & Lawson 2013:349). In this way, having an online conversation is not at odds with the traditional parasocial relationship but rather a "new social connection that might increase the enjoyment of the PSI/PSR" (Stever & Lawson 2013:351).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

With the expansion of social media comes a greater need to investigate the reach and impact of YouTubers, and this is especially essential in Malaysia, which has a dynamic and growing dedication to online networking and communication. Malaysians and their YouTubers have not been the subject of many scholarly studies, particularly in the sphere of parasocial relationships. Previous research has examined YouTube's effectiveness as a language-learning resource (Hasan 2013; Juhary 2012), a medium for higher education (Danyaro et.al. 2010; Aripin et al. 2016), a platform for the dissemination of hate speech involving politics and race (Lingam & Aripin 2017), and even the understanding of national identity via YouTube

comments (Tze & Hassan 2021). The emergence of the parasocial relationship between Malaysians, especially young Malaysians, and their YouTubers is thus not well understood. This investigation will assist to fill up some gaps in this sector.

This study followed the framework as set by Kurtin et al. (2018) on YouTube, whose work replicated Rubin and McHugh's (1987) framework on TV. However, a new moderating variable of online comments, will be introduced to the framework to understand holistically the effect and impact on parasocial relationships, as proposed in the path model seen in Figure 2.

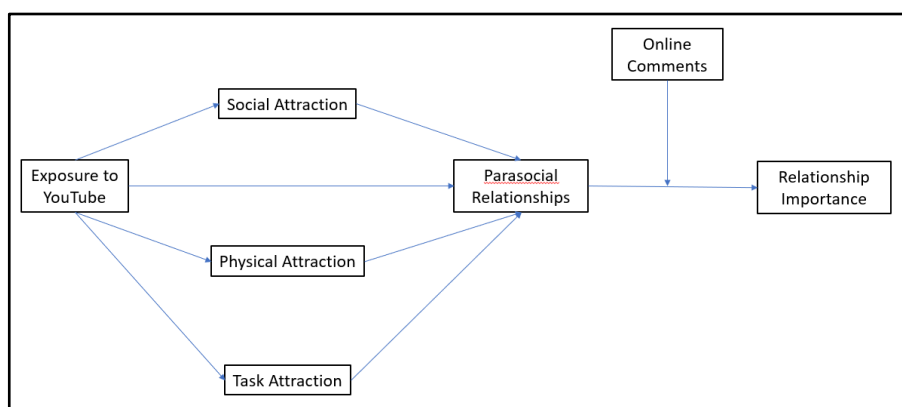


Figure 2. Proposed Path Model of this study
 (adapted from Rubin & McHugh 1987; Kurtin et al. 2018; Rihl & Wegener 2019)

ANTECEDENTS OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Attraction between people is multifaceted; it includes interest in completing a shared goal, in spending time together, and in a shared sexual interest. Therefore, that relational attraction or interpersonal attraction is a crucial precursor of a parasocial relationship, and as McCuskey & McCain (1974) posits, consists of three dimensions – task attraction, social attraction and physical attraction, and at the foundation of it all, the people involved will need to like or be comfortable with the other party (McCuskey, Larson, & Knapp 1981).

Task attraction The term for the allure of social media influencers is "task attraction" (Kim K. , 2018). Hellweg and Andersen (1989) advanced a similar argument, stating that individuals are more drawn to tasks that they perceive as being within their capabilities. Work attraction may also predict if a certain activity would be simpler to complete with the assistance of social media influencers (Han & Yang 2018). There is evidence that media characters may teach viewers real-world applicable skills (McCuskey, Hamilton, & Weiner 1974). Consequently, the attractiveness of the work is a significant element in deciding whether or not audiences believe that social media influencers can effectively do the assigned duty and serve as a dependable resource (Auter & Palmgreen 2000). To further enhance PSRs, audiences that consistently obtain useful information that aids in completing a task are more likely to feel positively about these influencers on social media (Xiang, Zheng, & Hu 2014). In a similar vein, Rubin and McHugh (1987) proposed that viewers' ability to empathise with media characters is proportional to the level of task attraction they experience for such characters. Thus, task attraction boosts viewers' comprehension, leading them to learn more from media characters and so raising their parasocial relationship capabilities (McCuskey & McCain 1974).

Social Attraction Social attraction refers to the adoration of an influencer by an audience based on similarity, liking, and compatibility (Lee & Giles 2008), where it indicates a viewer's willingness to interact with media characters as well as their degree of familiarity with media personalities (McCruskey & McCain 1974). In addition, social attractiveness is a function of an influencer's social skills (Preece 2001). The social attractiveness of a parasocial relationship is a predictor of audience behaviour (Loiacono, Watson, & Goodhue 2007), as it helps viewers to connect with media characters by sharing their beliefs and interests (Preece 2001), resulting in sufficient likability and motivating audiences to change their perspectives (Kiesler & Goldberg 1968). In other words, audiences establish these parasocial relationships with media characters due to the fact that social attraction causes audiences to perceive a stronger connection when they see shared characteristics with media characters (Pettigrew 1998). The more attributes social media influencers share with their followers, the higher their followers' comprehension (Chung & Cho 2017). This promotes stronger parasocial relationships between customers and social media influencers (Rubin & Step 2000).

Physical Attraction The remarkable looks and physiques of these media characters constitute their physical appeal (McCruskey & McCain 1974). According to Joseph (1982) and Boon and Lomore (2001), physical attractiveness may impact how an audience views a performer's appearance and fashion sense. In addition, the physically appealing media characters represent the viewers' idealised self (Perse & Rubi, 1989). People's inclination to develop relationships may be predicted by how physically beautiful they view the protagonist (Deutsch & Gerard 1955). Attractiveness enhances the possibility that viewers would identify with social media influencers' personality (Kurtin, O'Brien, Roy, & Dam 2018). In understanding this, the parasocial relationships are built between audiences and media characters when the latter are able to directly communicate portions of their personalities and attributes (Horton & Wohl 1956). When audiences connect with characters in media, they are more inclined to form friendships with them (Blanchot & Rottenberg 1997). In addition, these relationships are further formed due to the positive emotions elicited by enjoying the physical features and facial appearance of social media influencers (Karandashev & Fata 2014), which are then amplified by physical attraction (Liebers & Schramm 2019).

Online Comments Online comments are informational exchanges between the audience and social media influencers (Chatterjee, 2001). It is also a platform for viewers to voice their opinions on social media influencers and indicate whether or not they trust them (Walther & Parks 2002). According to study, viewers usually rely on online comments as evidence when it comes to social media influencers (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Shulman 2009). Consequently, online comments may support the credibility of social media influencers (Reinikainen, Munnukka, Maity, & Luoma-aho 2000). When audiences decide to accept content from social media influencers, they consider if other audience members have made the same decision (Gelb & Johnson, 1995). Online comments enable viewers to determine whether their thoughts are shared by others, which motivates them to employ social media influencers (Walther et al. 2009). In addition, positive comments may foster an emotional bond (Sanz-Blas, Bigné, & Buzova 2017) by facilitating a better understanding of media characters based on the opinions of others (Chatterjee, 2001). As a consequence, viewers have higher PSRs with social media influencers and so quickly accept the content (Pornpitakpan 2004). Audiences need facts and signals before they can trust social media influencers and establish these relationships (Walther et al. 2009). Because of the ease with which online comments may alleviate ambiguity (Lim & Van Der Heide 2015), they are increasingly being used to positively alter viewers' impressions of social media influencers by collecting the opinions of those who

already share those ideas. Additionally, the positive feeling further enhances the parasocial relationship ties (Liebers & Schramm 2019) and strengthens credibility (Pavlou, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Instrument Rubin, Perse, and Powell adapted the most widely used instrument to measure parasocial processes in their 1985 article "Loneliness, Parasocial Interaction, and Local Television News Viewing," which used a scale developed by Levy (1979) to measure affective attachments between audiences and media personalities. This measure was used by Rubin et al. to examine if people's perceived loneliness, TV watching habits, and level of social engagement were all connected (Rubin et al. 1985). Because Horton and Wohl's definition of parasocial interaction is questionable, it is likely that the scale considers a more informal connection between fans and their favourite artists (Dibble et al. 2016; Hartmann and Goldhorn 2011). As a result, proponents of the concept feel it is most valuable when used to study into the kind of good parasocial relationship that may emerge as a result of continuous parasocial interaction (Dibble and Rosaen 2011; Gleich 1996; Schramm et al. 2002). Previously, critiques of the Parasocial Interaction (PSI) scale could only be found in limited literature in selected countries (Gleich, 1995; Leibner et al., 2014; Rubin and McHugh, 1987; Schramm et al., 2002), but this is expanding to the growing interest in this phenomenon. Because of the conceptual difference between interaction and relationship, the PSI scale (Vorderer & Knobloch 1996) has enabled a more complex research of parasocial connections. Auter and Palmgreen's Audience Persona Interaction (API) scale is one such iteration that has been improved upon after first deployment and subsequent methodological debate (2000). Therefore, this study will use a mixture of scales as developed by Rubin, Perse and Powell's (1985) Parasocial Interaction Scale, and Auter and Palmgreen's (2000) Audience Persona scale to examine the responses of Malaysian youth and determine whether there is a link between YouTube and the establishment of parasocial interactions.

DATA COLLECTION

An initial survey (n=50) was used to test out the research design and collect data. The study's goals included validating the PSI scale with digital media celebrities, identifying survey flaws, and learning whether parasocial ties existed between YouTubers and their Malaysian viewers. There were no issues, therefore, data collection was carried out and a total of 358 responses were collected from various educational institutions. Only 307 replies were usable for study once the data was cleaned, validated, and the outliers removed. About 43% of the respondents were males and the remaining were females, with the majority of the respondents (93%) were aged between 18-23. About 75% of the respondents were single, 23% were in a relationship, and 2% were married. In terms of ethnicity, 53% were Chinese, 35% were Malays, 7% were Indians and 5% were Others. Due to the emphasis of the research on parasocial relationships between Malaysians and their favourite YouTubers, survey respondents were needed to be Malaysian citizens, and have to be users of YouTube. Further details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics Profile of Respondents

Item	n=307	%
Gender		
Male	132	42.9
Female	175	57.1
Ethnicity		
Chinese	162	52.7

	Malay	108	35.2
	Indian	22	7.2
	Other	15	4.9
Age			
	16-17	9	3.0
	18-20	130	42.3
	21-23	156	50.8
	24-26	12	3.9
Classification			
	Secondary / High School	22	7.1
	Undergraduate	279	90.8
	Postgraduate	6	2.1
Relationship Status			
	Single	232	75.6
	In a relationship	70	22.8
	Married	5	1.6
Social Media Platforms			
	Instagram	300	97.7
	TikTok	295	96.0
	YouTube	307	100.0
	Facebook	233	75.8
	Other	46	14.9

To understand the extent of social media use, participants were asked to report the social media platforms that they generally use (refer to Table 1), and also their time spent on these platforms (refer to Table 2). Messaging apps with the direct chat function such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Telegram were not included as these would encourage a one-to-one relationship, as well as knowledge of personal details, which would not fall into the parasocial scope as defined by Horton and Wohl (1956).

Table 2. Time Spent on Social Media

Item	n=307	%
Less than 1 hour to 2 hours (per day)	6	1.9
Between 2 to 3 hours (per day)	15	4.9
Between 3 to 4 hours (per day)	32	10.4
Between 4 to 5 hours (per day)	43	14.1
Between 5 to 6 hours (per day)	66	21.5
More than 6 hours (per day)	145	47.2

Participants were also asked the name of their favourite YouTuber, and the category/genre of which their influencer is in. This was done so that they would have a point of reference when parasocial connection questions were addressed. The numbers reported in Table 3 reflected as such due to some of the respondents having multiple favourites. Since this research includes a fictitious connection with a YouTuber, participants were also cautioned against including YouTubers who were already personal friends of theirs, since this may undermine the results in the exploration of this study.

Table 3. Genre of Influencer/YouTuber

Item	n=307	%
Food	296	1.9
Travel	143	4.9
Fashion	45	10.4
DIY	101	14.1
Auto	62	21.5

Gaming	31	
Movies	10	
Music	300	
Others	98	47.2

The respondents were then given a questionnaire with a variety of modified scales (see Table 4) to complete, using a five-point Likert scale to describe their degree of agreement (5 for Strongly Agree) or disagreement (1 for Strongly Disagree). Since the formation of a parasocial connection calls for repeated interactions between viewer/user and YouTuber, respondents were encouraged to seriously identify their preferred YouTuber (particularly if they had more than one preference) before submitting their responses. Instructions and the usage of the combination scale helped ensure that respondents had interacted or engaged with the YouTuber before, and that the connection under consideration was genuine and not a fluke.

Table 4. Measurement of items from the questionnaire

Variable	Number of Items	Adapted from
YouTube Exposure	2	Kurtin et al. 2018
Parasocial Relationship	6	Rubin et al. 1985 Hartmann et al. 2008 Auter & Palmgreen 2000 Kim et al. 2018 Bocarnea & Brown 2007
Attraction – Social, Physical & Task	18	Rubin & McHugh 1987 McCruskey & McCain 1974
Relationship Importance	6	Rubin & McHugh 1987
Online Comments	6	Rihl & Wegener 2019 Su et al. 2021

FINDINGS

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability and Validity Analysis Cronbach's α may be used to assess the consistency of a set of scores or ratings. Accuracy of the measurements in the sample is increased if the Cronbach's α is higher than 0.8 (Bagozzi & Yi 1988), where at least a 0.35 coefficient of determination is needed in order for the measurements to be reliable. Table 5 shows that the Cronbach's α for every section of the questionnaire is more than 0.8.

Besides looking at the correlation between each individual measurement, the composite reliability (CR) is also examined where an value of more than 0.6 is considered to be as acceptable (Bagozzi & Yi 1988). As seen in Table 5, all CR estimations were higher than 0.8, therefore this lends credence to the evidence being presented.

Another common indicator of reliability is the average variance extracted (AVE). Table 5 shows that all AVE estimates are greater than the 0.5 criterion recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), indicating that the latent variables may be trusted.

Finally, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the reliability of the suggested research model. The connection between the observables and the latent components may be explored with the help of factor loading. Over 0.5 factor loadings are generally seen as a valid indicator of reliability and validity (Bagozzi & Yi 1988). Table 5 shows that all products have satisfactory factor loadings.

Table 5. Empirical Results

Construct	Measure Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
YouTube Exposure	YE1	0.93	0.90	0.90	0.87
	YE2	0.88			
Task Attraction	TA1	0.87	0.95	0.93	0.78
	TA2	0.88			
	TA3	0.87			
	TA4	0.85			
	TA5	0.82			
	TA6	0.83			
Social Attraction	SA1	0.91	0.92	0.92	0.89
	SA2	0.89			
	SA3	0.89			
	SA4	0.86			
	SA5	0.84			
	SA6	0.88			
Physical Attraction	PA1	0.86	0.91	0.91	0.76
	PA2	0.87			
	PA3	0.84			
	PA4	0.83			
	PA5	0.88			
	PA6	0.86			
Parasocial Relationship	PR1	0.81	0.91	0.90	0.78
	PR2	0.80			
	PR3	0.79			
	PR4	0.79			
	PR5	0.84			
	PR6	0.83			
Online Comments	OC1	0.86	0.88	0.89	0.77
	OC2	0.85			
	OC3	0.90			
	OC4	0.91			
	OC5	0.85			
	OC6	0.84			
Relationship Importance	RI1	0.84	0.92	0.92	0.80
	RI2	0.83			
	RI3	0.85			
	RI4	0.89			
	RI5	0.87			
	RI6	0.87			

Table 6 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the variables that were explored. Bivariate correlations were measured based on those by Rubin and McHugh (1987) and Kurtin et al. (2018). Data revealed that a significant correlation ($r = .48, p < .01$) was found in the relationship between the exposure to YouTube and the parasocial relationship that developed after. This shows that significant watching of the YouTubers would help solidify the parasocial relationship.

In the case of the other variables, it was found that each of the attraction antecedents (social, physical and task) held a positive, but low, relationship with the exposure to YouTube

whilst significantly positively related to the development of parasocial relationships. It was also interesting to note that all three variables were significantly related to relationship importance, although not as high as the relationship between parasocial relationships and relationship importance ($r = .59, p < .01$). Online comments were also significant in the development of parasocial relationships ($r = .56, p < .01$), hence relationship importance ($r = .54, p < .01$).

Table 6. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Exposure	1						
2 Parasocial Relationships	.475	1					
3 Social Attraction	.216	.467	1				
4 Physical Attraction	.273	.415	.409	1			
5 Task Attraction	.232	.422	.426	.453	1		
6 Relationship Importance	.243	.589	.345	.330	.231	1	
7 Online Comments	.487	.564	.212	.236	.227	.544	1
<i>M</i>	3.12	3.16	3.22	3.43	3.15	2.21	3.21
<i>SD</i>	.83	.76	.63	.62	.79	.87	.85

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

In addition, independent t-tests were performed to see whether or not there were significant differences between the groups on each of the measured variables. Independent t-tests were conducted by gender and ethnicity. Due to its ability to evaluate whether or not the means of two groups are substantially different from one another, the independent t-test was the suitable strategy for this comparison.

Gender Differences There was no discernible difference in the ways that males and females interacted with their favourite YouTubers. Nonetheless, there was a negative age effect, with fewer parasocial encounters as persons aged. The parasocial effect may help to explain why some YouTubers are able to connect so closely with their young, teenage viewers. This impact is heightened when there are character and personal history similarities between the actor and the observer (Schmid and Klimmt, 2011).

DISCUSSIONS

This study has achieved its objectives, in exploring these questions:

RQ1: Do young Malaysian viewers develop parasocial relationships with their YouTube celebrities?

Yes, parasocial relationships are clear, and young Malaysian viewers do form such bonds with their favourite YouTube stars, as evidenced by the data shown above. There is no difference in the types of interactions between male and female users, but there is a small effect of age: the deeper parasocial ties between older viewers are less prevalent. Previous work on age and parasocial relationships by Rihl and Wegener is verified and brought up to date by these findings (2019).

RQ2: How do the antecedents of parasocial relationships affect the strength of relationship importance?

This research replicated and extended the work of Rubin and McHugh (1987) on parasocial ties in fictional TV characters, as well as the work of Kurtin et al. (1990), in order to evaluate data about YouTube users (2018). The following are some of the ways in which the results corroborate these studies:

- Higher levels of YouTube consumption reported higher levels of parasocial relationships with a YouTuber (confirmed studies by Baek et al. 2013, Frederick et al. 2012, Stever & Lawson 2013);
- Higher levels of attraction (in tasks, physical and social attraction variables) will result from high levels of YouTube consumption, which then leads to the establishment of parasocial relationships (this is consistent with the findings by McCrosky and McCain 1974, Rubin and McHugh 1987, Seidman and Miller 2013, Rubin and Step 2000).
- Higher levels of attraction also play a significant part in the importance of the relationship. While Kurtin et al. (2018) found no correlation between social and physical attractiveness and the value placed on a relationship, the present evidence suggests otherwise.

RQ3: Can YouTube's comment features, which enable viewers to engage with videos, impact the degree of the parasocial relationships?

Based on the data from Table 6, the ability to comment online on this platform plays a significant role in the establishment of parasocial relationships ($r = .56, p < .01$), thus perceiving that relationship to be important ($r = .54, p < .01$). Comments online are shown to be some degree of interactivity, which confirms that the strength of parasocial relationships increases along with greater interactivity (Rihl & Wegener 2019), thus establishing the importance of that particular relationship.

ETHNIC STUDIES IMPLICATION

The fact that people interact with one another is well-established in the social sciences and the subject of much discussion and study. Given the growing influence of digital media on people's sense of who they are and how they present themselves to the world, it's crucial to examine the ways in which parasocial relationships formed with YouTubers—particularly those endowed with a wide audience and powerful persuasion skills—can shape the self-images of their fans. With these strong ties, there can be the propensity for the YouTubers to convince people to alter their values, behaviours and actions (Gass & Seiter 2015), some to the point of shaping and constructing their identity as well (Lofft 2020). Even though digital technology and communication have been expanding over the globe, this is a new field where the influence of ethnicity has not yet been examined. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend how this generation used technology to enrich their identities, construct digital cultures, and then convert these enhancements into their various offline ethnic cultures by means of their social network.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that parasocial relationships are able to be established in a digitised media environment, demonstrating the viewers', or followers', relatively strong parasocial connections to the YouTubers. Further research can be conducted to further understand how these relationships will impact the young generation where digital tools are aiding in the management and development of everything from work and education to relationships and the building of individual identities.

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Migration, Mobility and the Embedding Process: The Nusantara Islam Experience

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of Islam, migration, mobility and cultural diversity in Nusantara covers Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, and Southern Kampuchea. It tends to be highly empirical in orientation, providing rich, detailed narratives, especially those offered by anthropologists. However, researchers are less interested in developing a conceptual umbrella or analytical tools such as the ‘knowledge-baseline’ and the ‘embedded thesis’ and accessing the macro landscape of cultural diversity in the region. This brief presentation begins with a conceptual framework. It argues that the region is heir to Hindu and Buddhist traditions and three European colonial government and administration systems (Portuguese, Dutch, and British). Islam is but one among all these. In some aspects, the Islam practised in the region has been transformed and reformulated by historical-structural realities. Thus, to understand Islam in Nusantara, one must begin with data from the area rather than some Middle Eastern and theological formulation of Islam. However, we must recognize Islam as a universalist theology originating from the Arabic Middle East. Therefore, a more informed analysis and understanding of Islam and Muslims in Nusantara and their contemporary articulations must be ‘embedded’ in the historical reality based on a ‘knowledge baseline,’ or timeline from ‘plurality to plural society to diversity, each representing a component of the generic sociological concept of “pluralism.” Generated by a complex process of migration. Similarly, to understand contemporary Islam and Muslims in the context of cultural diversity within Nusantara, its ‘embedization processes’, both in terms of breadth and depth and migration-based, must be understood historically and sociologically.

Keywords: knowledge-baseline, pluralism, plurality, plural society, diversity, migration, European colonial rule, embeddedness, ‘embedization process.’

INTRODUCTION

This exploratory discussion on knowledge baseline attempts to explain the embedization process of Islam in Nusantara. It holds firm that the practice of Islam in Nusantara has undergone a series of embedization of earlier elements, namely animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, before Islam found its home in the Malay archipelago. Though the embedization process flourishes and transforms society, the infuse components of embedization create a baseline for the society to accept the organic change from pluralism to plurality later turns into diversity with relatively little hesitation.

MIGRATION AND THE FORMATION OF A 'KNOWLEDGE-BASELINE' IN NUSANTARA

What is a knowledge baseline? It is a continuous and inter-related intellectual-cum-conceptual basis, which emerged from its history and has, in turn, inspired the construction, organization, and consumption process of this knowledge (Shamsul 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2018). Migration is at the heart of this knowledge baseline. Conceptually, the three concepts, namely, 'plurality,' 'plural society', and 'diversity', are articulations and variants of a sociological phenomenon called 'pluralism' generated by different forms of migration in the Nusantara region. The 'pluralism continuum' is a critical 'knowledge baseline' to make sense of Nusantara as both an abstraction, a form of knowledge, and a social reality, a continuum generated by migration, overlooked mainly by analysts of Southeast Asia.¹

In historical terms, plurality characterized Southeast Asia before Europeans came. Plurality here signifies a free-flowing, natural process not only articulated through the process of

¹ Shamsul (2001, 2003, 2004, 2018) coined the term and introduced the concept of "knowledge baseline" to explain the concept, nature and version of "pluralism" found over the last 600 years in Southeast Asia. "Knowledge baseline" initially dealt with the "plurality and plural society continuum". This particular form of knowledge baseline has been expanded and elaborated on in the doctoral thesis by Dr Azmi Azizi (2011). In the present essay, Shamsul included the term 'diversity'. Hence, the 'knowledge baseline' now has three concepts or variations of 'pluralism', becoming a 'plurality-plural society-diversity continuum'. So, the concept of 'diversity' is relevant to a post-colonial variant/version of 'pluralism'. The post-colonial state is 'united' through the notion of the state – it exists in a territory, has citizenship, and the rule of law – but remains diversified and divided hence 'unity in diversity'. The concept of 'diversity' comes from this phrase.

migration but also through cultural borrowings and adaptations. Politically speaking, the polity was the society's political order of the day, a flexible, non-bureaucratic style focusing on management and ceremony by a demonstrative ruler. States, governments, and nation-states, which constitute an elaborate system of bureaucratic institutions, only existed once Europeans came and dismantled the traditional polities of Nusantara and subsequently installed their governance systems, using 'colonial knowledge', which gave rise to the plural society complex.

Historically, 'plural society' signifies both 'coercion' and 'difference'. It also signifies the introduction of colonial knowledge (Cohn, 1969), the creation of social constructs, vocabulary, idioms, and institutions hitherto unknown to the indigenous population (such as maps, census, museums, and ethnic categories), the introduction of market-oriented economy, and systematized hegemonic politics, and most importantly the census (Shamsul A.B 1999; 2001). Modern nation-states or state-nations in Nusantara have emerged from this plural society context.

Once the countries of Nusantara achieved independence, they came to terms with and accepted the reality of the cultural, social, economic, and political divide inherited from colonial rule. The post-colonial era for these countries became a struggle of a constructed 'unity in diversity' – 'politically one state but with diverse demography components or ethnic groups'.

In other words, 'diversity' signifies an inherited dividedness and difference that has created distance, distrust, stable tension, and agree-to-agree and agree-to-disagree situations among the diverse ethnic, social, and cultural groups populating the country. Conflicts in various forms, including violent ones, have constantly threatened the peace and harmony of the newfound independence that they very much desired. To manage this diversity generated by migration, some prefer an 'assimilationist approach,' like Indonesia and Burma, or even Thailand, such as name-changes and a singular medium of national education. Due to demographic reasons, Malaysia adopted an 'integrationist approach' by creating 'integration platforms' as a strategy to create convergences, top-down as well as bottom-up, to make things work, underpinned by the process of 'bargaining, negotiation, and mediation.'

Therefore, the ‘pluralism continuum’ of “plurality-to-plural society-to-cultural diversity” is not only a ‘knowledge-baseline’ or timeline but also a real-life social construct endowed with a set of ideas and vocabulary within which people exist day-to-day in Nusantara. The plurality continuum is both authority-defined and everyday-defined (Shamsul A.B 2001).

EVOLUTION OF ISLAM’S PRESENCE IN NUSANTARA

The overall understanding of Islam, its introduction and evolution, in Nusantara must be in this pluralism continuum. Hooker (1983), a prominent legal scholar on Islamic law, reaffirmed this when he argued that Islam in the Nusantara region is heir to Hindu and Buddhist traditions and three European colonial systems of government and administration; British, Dutch and French.

As such, many scholars have argued that Islam has not escaped the influence of others (Geertz, 1968; Roff, 1985). Indeed, in some aspects of life among Muslims or in their Islamic practices, the practice of Islam has been considerably reformulated because it had to embed itself in a pre-Islamic metaphysical milieu and undergo a process of reshaping by the rational-scientific logic of the European technology of rule underpinning its colonialism (Shamsul, 2001, pp. 355-366). Therefore, in order to understand the role of contemporary pluralism and cultural diversity in the understanding and practice of Islam, Muslims and Islamic Studies in Nusantara, one must begin with materials and data from the region rather than with some Middle Eastern and theological formulation of Islam – while at the same time not denying that Islam is a universalist theology originating in the Arabic Middle East.

To make sense of Islam’s place in the pluralism continuum, we wish to introduce ‘the embedded thesis’, which means that before Islam came to the region, other religions existed, all external to the region. The one indigenous to the region was often called by orientalist mistakenly ‘animism.’ It is a form of spirituality based on indigenous cosmology, which has its intellectual tradition and social order like any other belief system. This indigenous spirituality system became the mould within which subsequent religions got layered and embedded. Based on this thesis, the cultural practice of Islam often includes elements of indigenous beliefs, Hinduism, and Buddhism. How this happened to Islam, we shall turn to now.

THE EMBEDDED THESIS: HOW ISLAM FOUND A HOME IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE NUSANTARA

An argument has heavily informed discourse about the ontology of Islam in the Nusantara region within Southeast Asian studies initiated in the 1960s by Clifford Geertz, the American cultural anthropologist, and William Roff, a historian of the Malay world of Scottish origin who, in the 1970s took issue with Geertz's argument. Both came to create their niche in producing knowledge about Islam and Muslims in the Nusantara.

- a) Geertz (1968) made famous the phrase "Islam observed," which he articulated in a book of the same title comparing Islam and Muslims in Indonesia with those in Morocco. Ontologically, Geertz's emphasis is on "Islamic praxis" or "Islam as a lived reality amongst Javanese Muslims". Perhaps his most famous cultural reading and observation was the *abangan-priyayi-santri* continuum, his typology of Muslims in Java. His many writings on Islam as cultural practice in the Sukarno era of Indonesia have been widely read and influential beyond academia (1986).
- b) Roff (1985), in an article in the French journal *Archipel* almost two decades later, introduces the phrase "Islam Obscured". Although not a direct reaction to Geertz's "Islam Observed", the article nonetheless serves well as a general response to an analytical trend that had become popular amongst Southeast Asianists both within and outside the region, which privileges a culturalist perspective in the representation of Islam in the region. Roff argues that one must not over-emphasize the cultural face of Islam to the extent of obscuring its significant political role in shaping the social life of Muslims at both the structural and agency levels. In his elaboration on the political role of Islam in the Malay World, Roff describes the nature of 'political Islam', or 'Islam as a political system', in the form of the Malay *KERAJAAN*,² The pre-colonial Malay feudal polity. Roff thus provides us with an alternative meaning and form of the notion of 'political Islam' (1985).

² The word *KERAJAAN*, written in capital letters in this essay, refers to a traditional Malay polity. The root word is Sanskrit, which refers to '*RAJA*'. When prefixed with '*KE*' and suffixed with '*AN*', it becomes *KERAJAAN*, which means "the polity of the *RAJA*". All letters in *KERAJAAN* are capitalized to indicate its pre-colonial form, where religion and state were fused.

Useful as they may be in their analyses of Islam in Nusantara, Geertz (1968) and Roff (1985), they narrate only part of the story. As is the case with Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam's original home is not Nusantara. Islam migrated and was brought to the region by people of foreign origins, including merchants and Sufis. When it arrived in Nusantara, Islam encountered a vibrant Malay civilization that had experienced a history of at least a thousand years, with indigenous so-called animistic beliefs providing the anchor. Anthropologically speaking, it is unthinkable that Islam could have transformed this civilization overnight. It took Islam centuries to find a comfortable home in Nusantara, or the Malay world (Hooker, 1983).

The sociological process of settling into this new home through migration involved complicated, indeed dialectical, interactions between these foreigners bringing the religion of Islam and the locals who eventually embraced the faith. Even amongst the locals, the 'Islamic spread' was uneven. Just as Hinduism and Buddhism had to contend with indigenous beliefs and cultural practices, accepting and accommodating them into their ontology, Islam had to contend with all the pre-existing social phenomena when it first arrived. Whether or not we wish to label this whole diffusionist process as 'syncretism' (if we are structuralists) or hybridization (if we are post-structuralists), one relatively deceptively decide which of the simple fact remains. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam all had to go through, for better terms, a continuous process of 'embedding' and 're-embedding' (Shamsul, 2018, p. 97).

The Islam that Geertz 'observed' and the Islam that Roff felt was 'obscured' was the Islam that had been genuinely embedded into the historical and sociological contours of the Nusantara civilization landscape. However, the Islam that foreigners brought through migration to the Nusantara world from the Arabian Peninsula, India, or China had previously undergone a complicated 'embedding process' in these regions. In other words, empirically, the Islam that came to this region was the 'embedded form' and not the 'pristine form'. How do we otherwise explain the many shapes and patterns of mosques found in the Malay world? How do we account for the contrast in Mecca during the Hajj season of white garments on Muslims from Nusantara with black ones on those from other parts of the world?

Therefore, although there existed a set of Islamic theological universals accepted by all Muslims – such as the five articles of faith that promise to bind all Muslims together as brothers and sisters – in a lived material reality, these universals have been remoulded by local ontological and sociological conventions. The ‘embedding’ process was, in fact, more complicated than this. An oscillation between ‘dis-embedding’ and ‘re-embedding’ occurred when new social forces arrived in Malay after Islam. The most significant of these was European colonialism.

As practised in the region, Islam and European colonialism became reconfigured in a fluctuating social, political, and economic scenario. In the context of the European rationalist epistemology that informed the colonial process, Islam and other religions were perceived as non-rationalist and even anti-rationalist entities. In the British Empire, they became ‘traditionalist’, marginalized, or side-lined by applying the technology of rule and official procedures that constitute modern bureaucracy. As a result, Hindus became separated from Hinduism and Muslims from Islam. This separation was supported and legitimized by the construction of ‘colonial forms of knowledge’ (Cohn, 1969). Among these was the field of ‘Malay Studies’ which focused on the Malay *ethnicity* as a unit of analysis and consisted of a corpus of material that detailed and elaborated exotic, non-scientific, and yet aesthetically laden “traditional” Malay conventions and material culture (Shamsul 1999, 2001, 2003). This study is one of many examples of what we may call the process of ‘de-embedding’ and ‘re-embedding’ – the shifting of the arrangement in the layering of different cultural influences – that affected Islam in the Nusantara.

Therefore, the Islam that Geertz observed (1968) and the Islam that Roff found obscured (1985) had undergone a series of embedding processes within sociological contexts and historical circumstances that prevailed before and after the arrival of Islam. We wish thus to argue that it is necessary for scholars seeking to characterize or label Islam in Nusantara to take a closer look at ‘embedded Islam’ and at the complex process that contributed to that “embeddedness.” In our attempt to understand and explain the ontology of Islam in the Nusantara region, it will be helpful if we take cognizance of the “Islam embedded” thesis more seriously.

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

Islam in Nusantara, like elsewhere in the world and especially in the Muslim-dominated maritime region called the Malay Archipelago, is an embedded form in the sense that it is not the pristine form that was practised in Mecca and Madinah during Muhammad's time or during the rule of the four Caliphs that followed Muhammad's demise. The embedding process is complex. Rapid migrations generated it from many world regions to Nusantara. The evolution of practice, when it first arrived around the 12th century, the indigenous peoples of the Malay world were already practitioners of animist belief systems, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Later, all became intertwined and hybridized, articulating the local Nusantara's features in tangible and intangible forms (such as architecture) (spoken in Malay). Therefore, Islam entered people's lives in the region and was inevitably shaped and reshaped by the extant historical-structural mould, articulating intense and deep pluralism, popularly and academically known as a situation of 'cultural diversity'.

The teaching of Islam at the initial stage of its introduction in most parts of the world has always been strongly dependent on the 'oral method' (reading aloud the Quran, memorizing, oral interpretation, and open discussion). Indeed, from day one, Muhammad taught Islam using the oral method when he could not read and write. Despite that, it was able to build a considerable number of followers in a short time. It could be said that Islam was best suited for the illiterate, who would subsequently learn to write and read Arabic alphabets to enable them to read the Quran and other Islamic texts. This Islamic progress and development created Persian, Urdu, and Malay texts that unified millions of followers using the same Arabic alphabets in those linguistic constituencies.

The *pondok* school tradition in the Nusantara, especially in Malaysia, is largely oral-based and teaches Islamic theology. Besides memorizing the Quran and becoming a hafiz (someone who memorized the entire Quran), students also learn *Jawi* (the Arabic script used for the Malay language). Eventually, they can read the Quran and other kitab (religious texts) that they will use to acquire converts and educate them in Islam using *Jawi* and *Jawi* texts.

The teaching of Islam in written form developed much later in the Nusantara. First, when there were enough teachers to establish madrasahs which initially taught Islamic theology, but eventually when instruction in modern science and mathematics was added. This blended Islamic theology syllabus took place during the colonial period. This combination of theological and modern subjects resulting from administrative and market demand during the colonial period was integrated into public services. Graduates from such schools were employed in public service and especially in the religious offices of every province/state. This infusion of knowledge of Islam and modern science served the colonial state and the Muslim population.

In Malaysia's post-colonial period, for instance, there was a massive expansion of Islamic education (which also teaches modern subjects), eventually leading to the establishment of Islamic Faculties in some local universities and the setting up of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983. Islamic education and economics, banking, and financial systems became mainstream in the 1990s. Shariah lawyers serving the Syariah courts also increased in number. Today, those studying law in Malaysia specialize in Islamic laws are learnt irrespective of their religion. Islamic financial institutions have become viable alternatives to conventional ones. University College Islam was established in 1997 and later upgraded to a full-fledged university in 2007 (Solahuddin Ismail, 2016).

The re-embedding of Islam into the colonial mould following the migration of the British to Malaya was the turning point in the expansion and transformation of Islamic education in Malaysia, from one purely theological to one that has become modernized and mainstream in the post-colonial era. The student population's size and the number of schools and institutes of higher education specializing in Islamic education, have also expanded. More significant is that Islamic education's content and curriculum became rather pluralized, with graduates enjoying greater employability.

Finally, the effort to position authorized Nusantara Islam in the context of complex and multiple migrations has almost ignored the all-important and multiple layers of the ‘embedization process’ over the last ten centuries. The modern threshold of this embedization process, in ‘an entwined history’ (Aljunied, 2019), is the arrival of the Western colonial ruler and the influx of migrant workers framed through colonial knowledge and the process of ‘define and rule’ and then followed by ‘divide and rule’ (Mamdani, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The analysis tool of ‘knowledge baseline’ provides a foundation to understand better the result of the embedization process in Nusantara, which by default accentuate pluralism and moulds the society in the Malay archipelago, which is already rich in nature, resources and subethnic groups. Hence, the region lived organically in diversity even before the Western colonies introduced a coercive migration through an indentured labour system for mining, plantations, and paid soldiers in the name of white-men burdens.

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Semua manusia adalah setara.

Memang, “*all men are created equal*,” ujar Thomas Jefferson. Walau bagaimanapun, frasa tersebut hanya suatu gambaran kepada suatu keadaan yang unggul (*ideal*). Kenyataannya, ia masih jauh untuk direalisasikan di bumi yang bercogankan “*Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*”. Hatta, frasa itu turut bertentangan dengan perlakuan individu tersohor yang pertama kali menuturkannya di kancah politik AmeriKKKa (meminjam ejekan Moochie) (Bailey 2018: 277). Ternyata, ada jarak antara “apa yang diucap” dengan “apa yang dibikin.” Jarak tersebut memberi bentuk dan landasan (*trajectory*) kepada seluruh perjalanan sejarah negara tersebut.

Issac J. Bailey, yang menulis buku yang bercorak sosiologi dalam nada penceritaan “*My Brother Moochie*,” telah membentangkan bagaimana Moochie bergelut dalam persekitaran rasisme yang memerangkanya. Namun begitu, bukunya tersebut bukan sekadar tentang Moochie, kekanda sulong kepada Bailey; bukan juga hanya kisah sebuah keluarga berkulit hitamnya di antara kawasan paling tidak selamat dan termiskin di Amerika Syarikat. Lebih daripada itu, buku ini lebih tepat mencoretkan bagaimana nasib boleh menjadi pembolehubah penting kepada seluruh perjalanan kehidupan sebuah keluarga, termasuk keluarga Bailey. Nasib adalah kata nama lain kepada takdir. Memang, keluarga Bailey telah ditakdirkan dilahirkan sebagai kaum yang berkulit hitam. Takdir, barangkali, adalah sejarah yang tidak boleh dilawan. Takdir inilah yang mencorakkan seluruh tema tentang ‘pengalaman kehidupan’ Bailey — sebagai seorang wartawan yang mengalami PTSD, gagap dan CIDP. Pengalaman kehidupannya ini menunjukkan suatu kerumitan (*complexity*) rasisme yang terdapat dalam sejarah Amerika Syarikat.

Memang sudah nasib Moochie dilahirkan sebagai orang yang berkulit hitam. Moochie, atau nama penuhnya Mtume Obalaji Mfume, merupakan tonggak keluarga (*breadwinner*) yang telah terlibat dalam kejadian pembunuhan pada tahun 27 April 1982. Malangnya, mangsanya adalah seorang yang berkulit putih: Seorang tauke kedai yang memang dikenalnya. Penghakimannya: hukuman penjara seumur hidup. Inilah nasibnya.

Persoalan yang dipulangkan kepada kita: Adakah Moochie akan memperoleh hukuman setimpal itu sekiranya mangsanya Mr. James Bunch bukan berkulit putih? Apakah hukuman tersebut sama sekiranya Moochie pula yang berkulit putih?

Bagi Bailey, kemungkinan ini tidak boleh dielakkan. Jika Moochie berkulit putih, beliau mungkin akan memperoleh layanan penghakiman yang sama sekali berbeza. Sekiranya dirinya merupakan orang berkulit putih, maka faktor generalisasi, stereotaip dan stigma mungkin tidak menjadi pemberat utama dalam keputusan penghakiman. Begitu juga andainya mangsa pembunuhan tersebut bukan individu yang berkulit putih, maka tentu sekali persoalan mengenai rasisme tidak akan berbangkit—sama ada secara langsung mahupun tidak langsung—dalam kamar penghakiman.

Tentu sahaja, kemungkinan-kemungkinan ini boleh sahaja dibangkitkan. Tetapi, pada akhirnya, setiap keputusan terhadap mereka yang berkulit hitam ibarat nasib: *Untung sabut timbul, untung batu tenggelam*. Ini kerana, tanggapan rasisme terhadap kes tersebut masih lagi berkisar batas individu: berkenaan dengan sosok warna kulit pelaku mahupun mangsa. Menariknya, Bailey berjaya menunjukkan “*My Brother Moochie*” lebih jauh daripada sosok Moochie semata. Menerusi bukunya ini, Bailey berjaya menunjukkan bahawa persoalan rasisme di Amerika Syarikat sebenarnya melampaui garis individu. Ia, bahkan, mencengkam dalam segenap struktur kehakiman, pasukan keselamatan dan sistem penjara negara tersebut. Bailey menunjukkan betapa sistem di Amerika Syarikat telahpun tertanam peraturan dan nilai yang berunsurkan rasisme.

Untuk membuktikan perihal ini, maka sejarah menjadi mauduk perbincangan kita. Moochie memang terkesan dengan sejarah perhambaan di Amerika. Baginya, dosa terbesar orang kulit putih ialah perhambaan. Pemenjaranya semakin membuktikan kepercayaan ini. Bagi Moochie, Orang kulit putih bukan sekadar memperdagangkan orang kulit hitam, hasil perculikan dari tanah Afrika. Lebih daripada itu, kaum kulit putih turut membunuh, merogol, mendera dan mendiskriminasi kaum kulit hitam dalam sejarah panjang perhambaan mereka. Individu yang melakukan perbuatan ini bukan biasa-biasa. Jefferson sendiri telahpun merogol hamba kulit hitam bawah umurnya (Bailey 2018: 21). Bukankah Jefferson tersebut merupakan presiden Amerika yang ketiga? Bukankah sosok tersebut yang berkata bahawa “*all men are created equal*”? Ironi, tetapi itulah sejarahnya.

Mungkin kita boleh pejam mata. Paling tidak, sama seperti Moochie yang bertarung dengan seluruh persekitaran rasis secara individu, maka demikian juga Jefferson. Sekurang-kurangnya, kita boleh pejam mata dengan bersangka baik bahawa Jefferson melakukan kesalahan tersebut atas kapasitinya sebagai seorang individu. Tetapi, Bailey memperlihatkan betapa seluruh struktur sistem Amerika yang rasis ini bukannya sekadar persoalan individu lagi. Struktur tersebut telahpun dicengkam dengan peraturan dan nilai rasisme sejak sekian lama. Dalam kata lain, rasisme telah diinstitusikan secara sistematik dalam setiap struktur sistem kemasyarakatan Amerika Syarikat. Misalnya, mengenai ketidakseimbangan pembangunan antara wilayah Amerika selatan dengan wilayah Amerika utara. Sudahnya, South Carolina menjadi daerah terabai lantaran majoriti penduduknya adalah berkulit hitam. Begitu juga dengan pembahagian sekolah yang dibezakan kemudahannya antara sekolah majoriti kulit hitam berbanding dengan kulit putih. Sudahnya, sekolah di St. Stephen dianak-tirikan. Ini belum disebutkan lagi

kepincangan keputusan kehakiman sekiranya melibatkan tertuduh di kalangan kulit hitam. Bailey (2018: 162-163) menukilnya:

“Never mind that we lived in a region where white men who had systematically raped and killed black people were openly honoured every day, and in a country whose currency featured the faces of slave owners. Celebrating those white men wasn’t condoning violence, defining down decency, or an affront to the victims and their families. It was righteous. It was American.”

Dalam banyak keadaan, Bailey mengesan betapa sistem Amerika Syarikat memang diselubung oleh bahana rasisme. Hanya sahaja dengan kemunculan gerakan hak warga (*civil rights movement*) pada sekitar 1960-an, maka hak kalangan warga kulit hitam mula mendapat perhatian meskipun tidak menyeluruh. Bahkan, sehingga Barrack Obama menjadi presiden berkulit hitam pertama sekalipun, tetap sahaja permasalahan rasisme belum ditangani sepenuhnya. Di sini, rasisme telah menjadi persoalan nasional (*national question*) bagi negara yang dianggap paling demokratik dan berkuasa di dunia. Rupa-rupanya rasisme adalah sisa-sisa barbarik yang masih tertinggal dalam kemajuan peradaban Amerika.

Memang, sistem boleh dipersalahkan. Ini adalah ‘jalan pintas’ untuk memaafkan diri sendiri. Sungguhpun begitu, sistem tetap terbentuk daripada hasil tangan manusia. Lantaran itu, menerusi tangan manusia juga, sistem sentiasa berupaya untuk diubah. Sistem sosial Amerika Syarikat pada tahun kelahiran ibu Moochie dan Bailey pada tahun 1930, adalah tidak sama dengan sistem sosial pada tahun 2014 di mana Bailey memperoleh parol. Sehubungan itu, ternyata, ada yang lebih parah daripada sistem. Budaya merupakan sesuatu yang lebih sukar untuk diubah berbanding sistem. Dalam hal ini, budaya merupakan sesuatu yang tersemat dalam fikiran, tuturan dan tindakan masyarakat Amerika Syarikat. Ia adalah suatu tabiat yang terakam dalam seluruh perilaku bawah sedar (*subconscious*) masyarakat Amerika. Dalam bahasa Bailey (2018: 266), *“racism is as insidious and as rooted into our culture.”* Meskipun sudah tertulis dalam perlembagaan bahawa semua manusia adalah setara, tetap orang seperti Donald Trump dipilih oleh rakyat Amerika Syarikat. Apakah rasisme tidak pernah berubah antara tahun 1930 dengan 2019? Malah, mungkin lebih teruk? Apa lagi bentuk rasisme yang tidak difikir, diucap dan dilakukan oleh Trump? Hemat Bailey (2018: 275-276):

“Imagine him using his privileged perch to help railroad five young black and brown boys into prison sentences for a rape they did not commit (even though he would be accused of rape by an ex-wife before she softened her language). Image he reportedly said he believed blacks had a lazy trait and had black employees ushered into the background when he showed up at one of his properties; and imagine he lead a bigoted movement fueled by a conspiracy theory about the birthplace of the country’s first black president.”

Dan, kita boleh terus menyambung bayangan Bailey tersebut, lagi dan lagi.

Tetapi, semua kemungkinan bayangan ini tetap sahaja akan merujuk kepada individu yang sama. Ia akan merujuk kepada individu yang dilahirkan pada tahun 1946 tetapi pada akhirnya menjadi presiden ke-45 Amerika Syarikat. Individu tersebut tetap dirujuk sebagai presiden kepada sebuah negara yang menempatkan pertubuhan bangsa-bangsa bersatu (PBB)? Akan tetapi, rasisme tidak pernah mengenal zaman dan tempat. Kemajuan peradaban bukannya

bertanda pada perbezaan antara masa lalu (*the past*) dengan masa kini (*the present*). Sebaliknya, kemajuan peradaban bertanda pada nilai-nilai kemanusiaan. Dan, ini tidak terdapat dalam diri Trump yang mewakili gambaran umum kepada konsep individu Amerika, sistem Amerika dan budaya Amerika.

Kendatipun begitu, kita perlu berhati-hati. Bahawa adalah suatu kesilapan besar sekiranya kita mengambil kesimpulan mudah dengan menyalahkan individu, sistem dan budaya sebagai punca kepada nasib malang yang menimpa keluarga Bailey secara bertimpa-timpa: Daripada Moochie sehinggalah Zadoc. Bukan sahaja Moochie yang mendekam di penjara, beberapa lagi ahli keluarga menyusulnya: James, Jordan, Smooch, Zadoc dan lain-lain lagi. Kalau tidak kerana kesalahan membunuh, maka pastinya kerana kesalahan jenayah berat. Dadah mungkin adalah punca yang mudah untuk ditunding.

Dadah memang menjadi musuh utama kepada St. Stephan, kawasan kediaman Bailey yang majoritinya berkulit hitam. Dadah juga menjadi musuh ketat kepada keluarga Bailey. Sekiranya pada tahun 1982 Moochie dipenjarakan kerana membunuh, maka "*the cycles of violence*" (Bailey 2018: 241) yang sama berulang. Pada tahun 2001 pula, adiknya Jordan pula dituduh atas kesalahan yang sama. Semua pembunuhan ini bermula dengan dadah. Keadaan ini menggambarkan seolah-olah terdapat 'lingkaran celaka' yang menyelubungi takdir orang berkulit hitam. Lebih-lebih lagi di South Carolina. Dan, lebih-lebih lagi di St. Stephan. Bahkan, lebih-lebih lagi, kononnya menurut Zadoc "*real men go to prison*" (Bailey 2018: 253). Dadah bukan sahaja menghasilkan jenayah, lebih menyedihkan, turut membentuk kerancuan pemikiran mereka yang terlibat. Dadah telah membudaya dalam persekitaran keluarga Bailey.

Walau bagaimanapun, Bailey tidak dengan mudah menyalahkan takdir ini. Dadah bukanlah punca utama kepada nasib keluarganya. Buktinya: Beliau sendiri adalah anomalinnya.

Bailey mengalami kegagapan semenjak Moochie mulai mendekam di dalam penjara. Ia adalah suatu peristiwa traumatik bagi Bailey. Walaupun tiada bukti saintifik adanya hubungan antara peristiwa traumatik dengan masalah kegagapan, seperti mana yang dinyatakan oleh pakar mengenai kegagapan, tetapi kebetulan tersebut tetap menunjukkan betapa kehilangan Moochie sangat dirasakan oleh keluarganya, terutamanya Bailey yang berumur 9 tahun pada masa kejadian tersebut. Kalau tidak kerana kekuatan ibunya, tentu sukar untuk Bailey dan keluarganya menempuh waktu-waktu berikutnya. Ibunya adalah lambang kesabaran yang menjadi teladan kepada Moochie. Biarpun segala sistem dan budaya tidak memihaknya, ibunya tetap sabar berdepan dengan sebarang cabaran: dipukul oleh suaminya, penglibatan anak-anaknya dalam kegiatan jenayah, penyalahgunaan dadah dan alkohol yang bermaharajalela dalam kerabat keluarganya dan sebut sahaja apa lagi. Pendek kata, rasa bersalah (*guilt*) dan malu (*shame*) tidak mampu untuk mengikis sikap positifnya. Keberaniannya berdepan dengan takdir terpampang tatkala dengan penuh berani hadir ke majlis pengebumian Mr. Bunch. Dengan rasa kesal tetapi tetap tampak kuat, ibunya memohon maaf bagi pihak Moochie, anak sulungnya. Tidak mungkin kehadirannya tersebut tidak dilihat sebagai suatu teladan yang mempunyai makna yang mendalam oleh Bailey?

Berkat teladan ibunya tersebut, Bailey menjadi anak yang sama sekali berbeza. Kegagapannya, barangkali, menurut Bailey sendiri, adalah rahmat. Kerana kegagapannya, Bailey lebih terasing, agak menyendiri dan selesa bungkam. Dengan kurang bercakap juga, Bailey lebih

memilih untuk berkomunikasi dengan pena dan kertas. Akhirnya, siapa sangka Bailey menjadi seorang wartawan? Kegagapannya adalah cabaran. Bukan hambatan. Malah peristiwa yang menimpa Moochie, pada awalnya menjadi azimat untuk Bailey memilih karier sebagai wartawan penyiasatan. Kata Bailey (2018: 132), *“before that, I had desperately wanted to use my journalistic skills to uncover a grave injustice, to prove that Moochie was just another young black man in the South railroaded by a racist system.”* Dengan kekuatan individu yang dimiliki oleh Bailey, maka bukan sahaja sistem yang pincang dan tidak memihaknya berjaya ditempuhinya. Sebaliknya, budaya rasis dan dadah sama sekali tidak mendapat tempat dalam membentuk pandangan-duniannya.

Sudah tentu, mengubah budaya bukanlah kerja yang bernoktah. Mengubah budaya adalah kerja abadi, terus-menerus, tanpa henti. Budaya adalah sesuatu yang dinamik, yang sentiasa berkisar antara ulangan (*repetition*) dan pembaharuan (*innovation*) dalam perjalanan ruang dan waktu. Perbezaan sesuatu budaya tidak boleh dikesan dengan ketara dalam masa beberapa tahun. Beberapa dekad, mungkin. Beberapa abad, ternyata.

Tetapi, menunggu berabad adalah mustahil bagi kadar umur lazim manusia. Justeru, mengubah budaya barangkali terlalu sukar untuk dilihat keberkesanannya dalam ruang waktu kehidupan kita. Maka, apa lagi pilihan yang ada? Bailey menyebutnya dengan mudah: Keluarga.

Ternyata, mempunyai sebuah keluarga, setidaknya dengan seorang ibu yang kuat seperti ibu Moochie dan Bailey, boleh memberi makna kebebasan yang hakiki. Segala kerumitan rasisme tampaknya boleh diringkaskan tatkala terdapat empat dinding rumah yang bernama keluarga.

Sebab itu, keseluruhan buku *“My Brother Moochie”* ini menghimbau betapa kebebasan tiada mempunyai makna tanpa kehadiran keluarga yang mengisi seluruh rasa hampa kita. Di sini kita tidak ingin berhujah bahawa individu, sistem dan budaya adalah subjek-subjek yang enteng dalam menakdirkan jalan cerita seseorang. Akan tetapi, semua takdir tersebut boleh diralat dengan adanya sebuah keluarga yang *sakinah mawaddah warrahmah*. Moochie memerlukan 32 tahun penjara (1982 – 2014) untuk menyedari hal ini berkata kepada Ikey, *“Boy, without family, I don’t know what I would do.”* Ikey, nama panggilan Moochie untuk Bailey (2018: 274), mendengarnya tanpa membantah. Ikey telah lama menyedari bahawa hanya dengan mencintai keluarga, maka dirinya akan dapat mencintai dirinya sepenuhnya (Bailey 2018: 286).

Moochie dan Ikey benar. Tanpa keluarga, kebebasan adalah penjara. Lantas, keluarga adalah harapan terakhir untuk setiap penderitaan (*suffering*). Tidak mempunyai keluarga adalah suatu malang terbesar bagi manusia: Bererti setiap penderitaan tidak boleh ditebus (*redemption*). Jika ada yang dinamakan takdir yang tidak boleh dilawan, maka tidak mempunyai keluarga adalah perkaranya. Setidaknya, Ikey, Moochie dan seluruh kaum keluarganya dalam buku *“My Brother Moochie”* tersebut mengajar kita suatu perkara yang berharga yang patut disyukuri: keluarga tiada galang gantinya.

Jelas sekali, *“My Brother Moochie”* menunjukkan bahawa semua manusia adalah tidak setara. Hakikat ini yang mewarnai dunia rasisme bukan sahaja di Amerika Syarikat tetapi juga di seluruh dunia. Namun begitu, rasisme pada hakikatnya lagi—sama ada bertumpuk dalam sosok individu, sistem mahupun budaya—boleh sahaja dilawan dengan rasa kebersamaan (*solidarity*) yang terdapat dalam sebuah keluarga. Tembok rasisme, sama seperti tembok penjara, boleh



dirempuh dengan semangat kekeluargaan yang tinggi. Bak kata Bailey (2018: 273) sebagai merumuskan kepentingan empat dinding keramat tersebut:

“Prison isn’t a place you send a man; it’s what you do to his family, and what his family eventually does to society.”

RUJUKAN

Bailey, J. Issac. 2018. *My Brother Moochie: Regaining Dignity of the Face of Crime, Poverty, and Racism in the American South*. New York: Other Press.