

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS HARMONY INDEX INSTRUMENT INDICATORS FOR MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The subject of inter-religious relationship among different religious adherents is crucial in determining social peace and harmony in a multi religious country like Malaysia. The question to what extend the society is susceptible to religious issues remains uncertain. This study will contribute in understanding the Malaysian socio-religious harmony status among the multi-religious adherents through development of the social religious index. To suffice part of this effort, the aim of this study was to develop the socio-religious harmony index instrument which is viable to measure socio-religious harmony level in Malaysia. However, the development of a reliable and valid instrument relies heavily on the quality of the variables or the indicators to be used to measure the index. Hence, the instrument was developed using key informants' input via experts' panelist which included selected stakeholders from various backgrounds such as academics, ministry officers, policy makers, non-government organization members, and head or representative of religious groups. To effectively manage the input from the expert panelists, the study adopted Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) as main methodology to determine the indicators and sub-indicators (quantitative indicators) to be included in the index instrument questionnaires. Fuzzy Delphi was conducted in two rounds: FDM round 1 to determine the main indicators and FDM 2 to determine the sub-indicators to measure each main indicators. Based on the experts' consensus, the findings of FDM 1 proposed 22 socio-religious harmony indicators. For FDM 2, based on the indicators, the experts proposed 53 sub-indicators as quantitative indicators to measure each indicators. These indicators and their respective sub-indicators will be used to form the index instrument.

Keywords: Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM), index instrument, social harmony, socio-religious relation, Malaysia.

Introduction

As a multi-religious country, Malaysia is susceptible to social issues and conflicts which could be disruptive to social order and potentially could compromise national stability. The recent conflicts such as the emergence of the Malay Bible, the use of the word 'Allah' in other religion apart from Islam, and the issue triggered by the construction of a Hindu temple at Shah Alam have more or less raised societal safety and security concerns at the national level.¹ However, such conflicts are not new as exemplified in the past issues such as matters pertaining to halal certificate by non-Muslim businessmen, the usage of Arabic and Quranic terminologies, funeral processes, and Islamic propagation.² Some of these issues had escalated beyond control to hostility among different religious adherents though in specific areas which could eventually jeopardize the social harmony in the country at a larger scale.³

The spark grew into religious tension after the news spread in the mainstream media which resulted in bad perception of a religion to other religious adherents.⁴ Ironically, despite of the concerns on the fragility of the harmony relationships among different religious adherents against racial or inter-religious issues, the actual perception among the religious adherents is yet to be measured to facilitate understanding of actual socio-religious situation.³ Due to that, the question to what extend the society is susceptible to religious issues

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¹ Zaid Ahmad, *Kajian Isu dan Cabaran Hubungan Antara Penganut Agama di Semenanjung Malaysia*. *Jurnal Perpaduan*, Jld. 2., (2014), 35-39.

² Sintang, S., Khambali @ Hambali, K. M., Baharuddin, A., Senin, N., Shaharud-din, S., Yon, W. A. W., Nor, M. R. M., *The Dialogue of Hikma: Generating Harmony in Muslim-Non-Muslim Relations*. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 24(2), (2013), 213-224.

³ Zaid, A., Ahmad Tarmizi, T., Nur Ayuni Mohd, I., Sarjit, S. G., Jayum, J., & Abd Hakim, M., *Tahap Kepentingan Isu-Isu Antara Agama di Malaysia*. *Seminar Antarabangsa Dakwah & Etnik 2014: Da'wah & Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Perspective*.

⁴ Hasan, Z., *Memahami Isu Islamofobia: Antara Persepsi dan Realiti*. Paper presented at the Bengkel Kefahaman Islamofobia oleh Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (JAWI) di Dewan Hadhari, Kuala Lumpur, 2012, pp. 68-75.

remains blurry. An accurate indication of the level of harmony among multi-religious adherents in the country would be valuable to the government or relevant stakeholders in their selection and execution of appropriate interventions. Misaligned interventions to address a certain religious conflict could be dangerously counterproductive.

The index measurement can be used by government to understand the status of an issue or conflict whether it is alarming, moderate, or low in terms of its religious tension. An index or a composite indicator (CI) is a useful tool in identifying trends and drawing attention to particular issues. They are very helpful in setting policy priorities and in benchmarking or monitoring performance.⁵ Composite indicators (CIs) which compare state and country performance are increasingly recognized as a useful tool in policy analysis and public communication. The number of CIs in existence around the world is growing year after year due to its effectiveness in monitoring performance in a diverse set of issue including human right, security, environment, economic and other social aspects. The increasingly availability of information together with new global issues arising and the growing demand for transparency from key constituencies may have been propelling factors that explain such a rising trend.⁶

In the context of this study, studies have been conducted to measure the social relationship at four levels by using Harmony Index. For instance, past studies have dealt with index for harmony in the family, harmony in the country, harmony in the world and harmony with nature.⁷ However, these indexes lacked in socio-religious aspects in family harmony and welfare. There was also a working project that measured religious hostilities by private individuals, organizations or groups within the country by using Social Hostilities Index (SHI), an index developed by PEW Research Centre. SHI measured mob violence, terrorism, and religious criminal cases in the society due to religious conversion, dress code ruled by the government, suppression of others from practicing their religion and so on. However, the measurement is less applicable in Malaysia, as mob violence is very rare, except for tongue wagging leading to religious tension.⁸

In the neighboring countries such as Singapore, studies were conducted to measure the relationship among races and religions by using Inclusiveness Index. Developed by the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), it measured Singapore's multicultural resilient specifically whether Malays, Christians and the Chinese were consistently less inclusive than non-Malays, non-Christians and non-Chinese respectively.⁹ This index showed how Singapore indicated her ethnic relation.

Locally, in Malaysia, the Department of National Unity of Integration (JPNIN) had developed an index called Societal Stress Index (SSI) to measure the level of social tension in Malaysia. Reported quarterly, this index has been the primary reference for the measurement since 2010. Based on newspaper report as well as data from the Royal Malaysia Police Force, the IKM takes several indicators into consideration such as demonstrations, protests, inter-racial conflicts and issues. However, there was no clear indicator in socio-religious perspectives. However, this index will be used as a guideline in selecting the indicator of harmony relationship specifically in Malaysian social context.

There was also research conducted by University Putra Malaysia (UPM)¹⁰ in measuring the level of understanding, perception, prejudice, and issue of inter-religious in Malaysia. However, it did not indicate pattern of religious relationship among different adherents that could be analyzed annually. Based on the above literature review and research gaps stated, there is a large gap in measuring socio-religious harmony among the society which is context suited to Malaysia. Due to that, this project aimed to fill the void to investigate the socio-religious harmony. Based on the outcome of the measurement, the socio-religious harmony level and the relevant indicators revealed will provide the necessary and viable platform to develop a practical and sustainable intervention in developing peace and harmony among multi-religious adherents in this country. The output of this research is expected to be the basis for the relevant stakeholders in policy-making specifically in relevance to the creation of socio-harmony (equilibrium) among multi-religious adherents as platform for

⁵ Nardo, M., Saisana, M., Saltelli, A., Tarantola, S., Giovannini, E., & Hoffmann, A. *Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide*. (2008).

⁶ Bandura, R., A Survey of Composite Indices Measuring Country Performance: 2008 Update. *Office of Development Studies, New York: United*, (February 2008), 1-95.

⁷ Bell, D., & Mo, Y., Harmony in the World 2013: The Ideal and the Reality. *Social Indicators Research*, (2013), 1–22; Díaz, S., Demissew, S., Carabias, J., Joly, C., Lonsdale, M., Ash, N., Zlatanova, D., The IPBES Conceptual Framework - connecting nature and people, *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 14, (2015), 1–16 and Center, P. R. (2010). Social Hostilities Index, 55–57. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/09/RisingTide-SHL.pdf>

⁸ An, D. A. K., Siri Kertas Kajian Etnik UKM, Institut Kajian Etnik (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), No.1, November 2008, pp. 9–29

⁹ Chin, Y., & Vasu, N., *Ties that bind and blind*. Singapore, (2012), 78-80.

¹⁰ Zaid, A., Ahmad Tarmizi, T., Nur Ayuni Mohd, I., Sarjit, S. G., Jayum, J., & Abd Hakim, M., Tahap Kepentingan Isu-Isu Antara Agama di Malaysia. *Seminar Antarabangsa Dakwah & Etnik 2014: Da'wah & Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Perspective*.

cohesion of the national community. In detail, the result of the study is important to the government as it will contribute to determine the socio-harmony (equilibrium) level among multi-religious adherents.

Methodology

The main aim of this phase is to develop the socio-religious harmony index instrument. Since the strengths and weaknesses of composite indicators largely derive from the quality of the underlying variables,¹¹ the selection of indicator and sub-indicators for the SRHI instrument were based on experts' input facilitated through Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). Fuzzy Delphi was introduced by Kaufmann & Gupta.¹² It is a combination between fuzzy set theory and Delphi technique.¹³ The fuzzy Delphi method is an analytical method for decision making which incorporates fuzzy theory in the traditional Delphi method. The Delphi method¹⁴ itself is a decision-making method which involves several rounds of questionnaire surveys to elicit experts' opinion on an issue being investigated. The premise, which justifies the development of this method, stemmed from the view that experts' opinion is permissible in new and undeveloped areas.¹⁵ Hence, the aim of Delphi method is to make decision based on achievement of consensus on a particular study. The method not only allows integration of opinions from various experts for prediction outcomes but it also meets the requirement of gaining the opinions independently from each expert through multiple cycles of questionnaires.¹⁶

The procedure for this phase is as the following:

1. *Selection of experts to develop the index instrument.*

In this phase, a panel of experts was chosen through purposive sampling. Fourteen (14) experts were selected to develop the instrument. In Delphi method, proper selection of experts is vital as it affects the quality of the result of the study.¹⁷ Adler and Ziglio¹⁸ emphasized that the general selection of experts should be based on four criteria: knowledge and experience with the issues under investigation, capacity and willingness to participate, sufficient time to participate in the study and effective communication skills. Purposively for this study, the panel of experts consisted various stakeholder background that are religious officers, ministry, NGOs, public figures, religious leaders/representatives from main religions-Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and academicians. Specifically for religious leaders, they were selected based on their representativeness in the field of inter-religious dialogue. As they are the transformative agent in multi-religious society, Kamaruzaman¹⁹ in her writing suggested the criteria of competent, knowledgeable, and committed toward their religion. In the same vein, Rothman²⁰ argued that the selection of panel should be in overall aspect, not only the position that he held, but also the knowledge in the inter-religious field. In 2014, Karim, Khambali and Saili examined the factor of education level, experience in religious dialog, and religious level of the religious leader in determining the level of understanding of the panel. A broader perspective has been adopted which included the following criteria: (1) religious level, (2) politic factor, (3) current demand factors and also (4) prestige factor.²¹ Thus, based on the criteria of experts as listed above, adopting for this study, the experts were selected based on five categories that are related to the socio-religious context as shown in Table 1.

¹¹ Nardo, M., Saisana, M., Saltelli, A., Tarantola, S., Giovannini, E., & Hoffmann, A., *Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide*, (2008).

¹² Kaufmann, A., & Gupta, M. M., *Fuzzy Mathematical Models in Engineering and Management Science*. (New York, USA: Elsevier Science Inc, 1998)

¹³ Murray, T. J., Pipino, L. L., & van Gigch, J. P., A pilot study of fuzzy set modification of Delphi. *Human Systems Management*, 5(1), (1985), 76–80

¹⁴ Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M., *Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*. (United States of America, 1975).

¹⁵ Fowles, J., *Handbook of Futures Research*. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978).

¹⁶ Saedah Siraj, Researchion of the future curriculum. in *Second International Conference on Principalsip and School Management*, (2006).

¹⁷ Jacobs, J. M., *Essential assessment criteria for physical education teacher education programs: A Delphi study*. (West Virginia University, 1996).

¹⁸ Adler, M., & Ziglio, E., *Gazing Into the Oracle: The Delphi Method and Its Application to Social Policy and Public Health*. (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1996).

¹⁹ Kamaruzaman, K., *Religion and Pluralistic Co-existence: The Muhibah Perspective; a Collection of Seminar Papers*. (IUM Press, 2010).

²⁰ Rothman, A. Harmonious society. *China Business Review*, 35(2), 2008, pp.24–28

²¹ Karim, K. M., Khambali, K. M., Saili, S. A., Kefahaman Konsep Asas Dialog Antara Agama di Kalangan Ketua Agama Islam dan Kristian di Malaysia dan Kesannya Terhadap Hubungan Sosial, 4(1), (2014), 69–82

Table 1.
Expert’s Category

| Category of expert | Range of year experience | Position |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Policy makers | 10-15 years | Director of Institut Kajian dan Latihan Integrasi Nasional (IKLIN) under Jabatan Perpaduan Negara Dan Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN) |
| High authorities Muslim institution | | Director of Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) and Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) |
| Muslim NGO | | High position of Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA), Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGO's (ACCIN) dan Majlis Perundingan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM) |
| Religious leader | | Religious leaders of Hindu Sangam, Christian, Buddha, Bahai, Sikh, and Tao |
| Academician | | Doctorate in comparative religion in several IPTAs, publish a lot of papers related to the topic |

2. *Determine Linguistic Scale*

In order to address the issue of fuzziness among the experts’ opinion, a linguistic scale is determined to frame the respondents’ feedback. The linguistic scale is similar to a Likert scale with an additional of fuzzy numbers given to the scale of responses based on triangular fuzzy number. For every response, three fuzzy values were given to consider the fuzziness of the experts’ opinions. The three values consist of three levels of fuzzy value: minimum value (m1), most plausible value (m2), and maximum value (m3). In other words, the linguistic scale is used to convert the linguistic variable into fuzzy numbers. The level of agreement scale should be in odd numbers (3, 5, or 7 point linguistic scale). In this study, a 7-point linguistic scale is applied. The experts’ responses with the correspondent fuzzy number scales for each questionnaire item on their view of the model were inserted in an excel spreadsheet.

3. *Determine Threshold value ‘d’.*

The next step was to calculate the difference between the experts’ evaluation data and the average value for each item to identify the threshold value, ‘d’. The threshold value is important to determine the consensus level among experts. According to Cheng and Lin²², if the threshold value is less than or equal with 0.2, then all the experts are considered to have achieved a consensus. The threshold values which are marked ‘red’ in color in the sample calculation in Table 3.8 indicate the individual user’s opinion that are not consensus with the other experts’ view. However, what is more important to be considered is the overall consensus for all items. The overall group consensus should be more than 75%; otherwise a second round of fuzzy Delphi needs to be conducted.

4. *Calculate Defuzzification Value*

Once the group consensus is achieved, the aggregate fuzzy evaluation is determined by adding all the fuzzy numbers for each item. The final step of the procedure of this phase is called the defuzzification process. The defuzzification value for each questionnaire item was calculated using the following formula:

²² Cheng, Ching-Hsue, and Yin Lin, Evaluating the best main battle tank using fuzzy decision theory with linguistic criteria evaluation. *European Journal of Operational Research* 142.1, (2002), 174-186

$$A_{\max} = 1/4 * (a1 + 2am + a2)$$

In the general application of fuzzy Delphi, defuzzification is essential to classify the variables agreed by consensus of the experts through ranking of the variables. The variable that has the highest defuzzification value is ranked highest in priority to be considered as output variable.

Fuzzy Delphi method (FDM) was conducted in two rounds. The first round (FDM 1) was to determine the main indicators of the socio-religious harmony index instrument. The second round (FDM 2) was appropriated for the sub-indicators or also known as quantitative indicators to measure the indicators.

Findings and Discussion

Result of FDM 1

Based on the findings, the final list of indicators for socio-religious harmony are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

List of Ranked and Prioritized Socio-religious Harmony Indicators

| QUESTION | DEFUZZY | INDICATORS |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| 1 | 13.18 | Mutual respect |
| 2 | 12.98 | Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings |
| 3 | 12.68 | Inter-religious social justice towards other religions |
| 4 | 12.53 | Provocation |
| 5 | 12.5 | Cohesiveness of the community |
| 6 | 12.4 | Community engagement |
| 7 | 12.05 | Appreciation |
| 8 | 11.93 | Awareness on others' beliefs |
| 9 | 11.83 | Non-violence |
| 10 | 11.75 | Feeling safe and secured |
| 11 | 11.65 | Religious tolerance |
| 12 | 11.58 | Physical and non-physical socio-religious conflict |
| 13 | 11.45 | Peaceful feeling |
| 14 | 11.35 | Social trust |
| 15 | 11.18 | Religious prejudice and stereotypes |
| 16 | 11.18 | Co-existence |
| 17 | 11.08 | Comfortable |
| 18 | 10.83 | Socio-religious tension |
| 19 | 10.8 | Religious Discrimination |
| 20 | 10.63 | Dialogue and Understanding |
| 21 | 10.5 | Acknowledgement |
| 22 | 10.15 | Shared values of neighborhood and friendship |

The threshold value for FDM 1 calculated was 76% which was more than the minimum 75% consensus value. This means that the participants (expert panel members) selected for this study were highly appropriate for the intended study as they shared common grounding in terms of knowledge, experience, shared-grounding of context of problem, and commitment to contribute.

Based on the list in Table 2, the proposed indicators of socio-religious harmony index instrument were grouped and ranked using Fuzzy Delphi technique. Ranking of the indicators was based on collective agreement of participants and discussion among them. For example, the socio-religious indicator, ‘Mutual respect’ generated the highest fuzzy evaluation score of 13.18; hence, being listed as the most important indicator followed by the socio-religious indicator ‘Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings’ which registered 12.98 for fuzzy evaluation score. The socio-religious indicator ‘Shared values of neighborhood and friendship’ received the lowest Fuzzy evaluation score of 10.15, thus listed as the least significant socio-religious indicator compared to other indicators. In total, Table 2 shows the Fuzzy Evaluation scores for all 23 socio-religious indicator.

Based on these 23 indicators (Table 2), the findings of FDM 2 revealed the sub-indicators for each indicator as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

List of Ranked and Prioritized Socio-religious Harmony Sub-Indicators

| QUESTION | DEFUZZY | SUB-INDICATORS |
|----------|---------|--|
| Q30 | 11.5 | Majority of religious leaders portray positive attitude towards co-existence. |
| Q42 | 11.5 | Majority of the religious adherents are treated justly by the community |
| Q7 | 11.33 | Majority of the people practice non-violence attitude in their multi-religious neighborhood. |
| Q41 | 11.23 | Majority of the people are satisfied with the rights of religious practice as enshrined in the constitution. |
| Q48 | 11.23 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious institutions |
| Q28 | 11.15 | Majority of religious adherents practice tolerance towards other religious celebration, ritual and beliefs. |
| Q4 | 11.05 | Majority of the people feel secure living in multi-religious neighborhood. |
| Q17 | 11.05 | Majority of the people respect other religious adherents to celebrate their festivals. |
| Q37 | 11.05 | The degree of having social activity involving different religious adherents |
| Q44 | 11.05 | Religious minority adherents are treated justly by |

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| | | the community |
| Q13 | 11.03 | Majority of the people appreciate the common values of the religions |
| Q29 | 10.98 | Majority of religious adherents practice tolerance towards neighbors from other religions. |
| Q2 | 10.98 | Majority of the people live peacefully with other religious adherents. |
| Q8 | 10.95 | Majority of the people are against violence attitude towards other religious adherents for peaceful co-existence. |
| Q40 | 10.95 | Majority of the people are satisfied with the freedom of religious practice. |
| Q18 | 10.88 | Majority of the people respect other religious adherents to practice their rituals |
| Q39 | 10.88 | The effectiveness of community engagement among different religious adherents |
| Q12 | 10.8 | Majority of the people appreciate the kindness of other religious adherents. |
| Q47 | 10.68 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious practices |
| Q43 | 10.65 | Religious infrastructures are adequately provided for all religious adherents. |
| Q20 | 10.6 | Majority of the people are aware of other religious rituals. |
| Q50 | 10.6 | The degree of stereotyping against other religious adherents |
| Q46 | 10.6 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious adherents |
| Q49 | 10.58 | The degree of prejudice against other religious adherents |
| Q33 | 10.58 | Majority of the people befriend religious adherent of other religions |
| Q45 | 10.58 | Frequent use of provocative words against other religious adherents |

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| Q54 | 10.58 | The amount of religious tension incidents |
| Q32 | 10.5 | Majority of the people have sense of belonging to their multi-religious neighborhood. |
| Q11 | 10.48 | Majority of people can put trust on other religious adherents |
| Q22 | 10.48 | Majority of the people are aware of sensitive issues of other religion |
| Q27 | 10.48 | Majority of religious leaders practice tolerance towards other religious celebration, ritual and beliefs. |
| Q31 | 10.48 | Majority of religious adherents portray positive attitude towards co-existence. |
| Q6 | 10.43 | Majority of the people feel at ease living together with other religious adherents. |
| Q21 | 10.43 | Majority of the people are aware of other religious beliefs |
| Q1 | 10.4 | Majority of the people promote peaceful living with other religious adherents. |
| Q16 | 10.38 | Majority of the people acknowledge the commitment of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence. |
| Q3 | 10.3 | Majority of the people feel safe living in a multi-religious neighborhood. |
| Q36 | 10.3 | The degree of interaction within multi-religious neighborhood |
| Q38 | 10.3 | The degree of having voluntary work involving different religious adherents |
| Q53 | 10.3 | The degree of religious tension in society |
| Q24 | 10.1 | Adequate number of mainstream media exposure on inter-religious understanding to public |
| Q19 | 10.03 | Majority of the people respect others to adhere their beliefs |
| Q26 | 10 | Effectiveness of dialogue activities in promoting understanding among religious adherents. |

| | | |
|-----|-------|---|
| Q14 | 9.9 | Majority of the people acknowledge the interest of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence. |
| Q58 | 9.825 | The amount of non-physical religious conflicts |
| Q51 | 9.825 | The degree of religious discrimination in the neighborhood |
| Q34 | 9.725 | Majority of the people support inter-religious activities |
| Q35 | 9.725 | Majority of the people are happy working with other religious adherents in the community. |
| Q25 | 9.7 | Adequate number of mainstream media coverage on inter-religious understanding activities |
| Q15 | 9.625 | Majority of the people acknowledge the effort of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence. |
| Q5 | 9.475 | Majority of the people feel welcomed living together with other religious adherents. |
| Q55 | 9.25 | The amount of major physical religious conflicts |
| Q52 | 9.225 | The degree of religious discrimination in the workplace |
| Q9 | 9.075 | Majority of people consider other religious adherents are trustworthy |
| Q10 | 8.9 | Majority of people can rely on other religious adherents |
| Q57 | 8.875 | The amount of minor physical religious conflicts |
| Q23 | 8.775 | Adequate number of inter-religious dialogue among religious adherents |
| Q56 | 8.6 | The amount of criminal cases due to religious issues |

Based on the list in Table 3, the proposed sub-indicators of socio-religious harmony index instrument were grouped and ranked using Fuzzy Delphi technique. Similar to FDM1, ranking of the sub-indicators was based on collective agreement of participants and discussion among them. For example, both socio-religious sub-indicators, ‘Majority of religious leaders portray positive attitude towards co-existence’ and ‘Majority of the religious adherents are treated justly by the community’ generated the highest fuzzy evaluation score of 11.5; hence, being listed as the most important sub-indicators followed by the socio-religious sub-indicators

‘Majority of the people practice non-violence attitude in their multi-religious neighborhood’ and ‘Majority of the people are satisfied with the rights of religious practice as enshrined in the constitution’ which registered 11.33 and 11.23 respectively for fuzzy evaluation scores. In total, Table 3 shows the Fuzzy Evaluation scores for 58 socio-religious sub-indicators. However, unlike FDM 1, for FDM 2, the ranking of the sub-indicators was not to measure their significance to socio-religious harmony. Instead, the procedure was to result in the list of accepted sub-indicators to be included in the development of the index instrument.

However, after conducting the cut-off point procedure in finalizing the end result, the list of the socio-religious sub-indicators was reduced to 53 initiatives after eliminating initiatives which scored lower than 9.1. Socio-religious sub-indicators which were removed included ‘Majority of people consider other religious adherents are trustworthy’, ‘Majority of people can rely on other religious adherents’, ‘The amount of minor physical religious conflicts’, ‘Adequate number of inter-religious dialogue among religious adherents’ and ‘The amount of criminal cases due to religious issues’. Further refinement of the list by the participants resulted in the final list as shown in Table 4 which shows 53 socio-religious sub-indicators under 22 indicators.

Table 4
Indicators and Respective Sub-indicators

| | Indicators | | Sub-Indicators |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Mutual respect | 1 | Majority of the people respect other religious adherents to celebrate their festivals. |
| | | 2 | Majority of the people respect other religious adherents to practice their rituals |
| | | 3 | Majority of the people respect others to adhere their beliefs |
| 2 | Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings | 4 | Majority of the people are satisfied with the freedom of religious practice. |
| | | 5 | Majority of the people are satisfied with the rights of religious practice as enshrined in the constitution. |
| 3 | Inter-religious social justice towards other religions | 6 | Majority of the religious adherents are treated justly by the community |
| | | 7 | Religious infrastructures are adequately provided for all religious adherents. |
| | | 8 | Religious minority adherents are treated justly by the community |
| 4 | Provocation | 9 | Frequent use of provocative words against other religious adherents |
| | | 10 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious adherents |
| | | 11 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious practices |
| | | 12 | Frequent provocative actions against other religious institutions |

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| 5 | Cohesiveness of the community | 13 | Majority of the people support inter-religious activities |
| | | 14 | Majority of the people are happy working with other religious adherents in the community. |
| 6 | Community engagement | 15 | The degree of interaction within multi-religious neighborhood |
| | | 16 | The degree of having social activity involving different religious adherents |
| | | 17 | The degree of having voluntary work involving different religious adherents |
| | | 18 | The effectiveness of community engagement among different religious adherents |
| 7 | Appreciation | 19 | Majority of the people appreciate the kindness of other religious adherents. |
| | | 20 | Majority of the people appreciate the common values of the religions |
| 8 | Awareness on others' beliefs | 21 | Majority of the people are aware of other religious rituals. |
| | | 22 | Majority of the people are aware of other religious beliefs |
| | | 23 | Majority of the people are aware of sensitive issues of other religion |
| 9 | Non-violence | 24 | Majority of the people practice non-violence attitude in their multi-religious neighborhood. |
| | | 25 | Majority of the people are against violence attitude towards other religious adherents for peaceful co-existence. |
| 10 | Feeling safe and secured | 26 | Majority of the people feel safe living in a multi-religious neighborhood. |
| | | 27 | Majority of the people feel secure living in multi-religious neighborhood. |
| 11 | Religious tolerance | 28 | Majority of religious leaders practice tolerance towards other religious celebration, ritual and beliefs. |
| | | 29 | Majority of religious adherents practice tolerance towards other religious celebration, ritual and beliefs. |
| | | 30 | Majority of religious adherents practice tolerance towards neighbors from other religions. |
| 12 | Physical and non-physical socio-religious conflict | 31 | The amount of major physical religious conflicts |
| | | 32 | The amount of non-physical religious conflicts |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|--|
| 13 | Peaceful feeling | 33 | Majority of the people promote peaceful living with other religious adherents. |
| | | 34 | Majority of the people live peacefully with other religious adherents. |
| 14 | Social trust | 35 | Majority of people can put trust on other religious adherents |
| 15 | Religious prejudice and stereotypes | 36 | The degree of prejudice against other religious adherents |
| | | 37 | The degree of stereotyping against other religious adherents |
| 16 | Co-existence | 38 | Majority of religious leaders portray positive attitude towards co-existence. |
| | | 39 | Majority of religious adherents portray positive attitude towards co-existence. |
| 17 | Comfortable | 40 | Majority of the people feel welcomed living together with other religious adherents. |
| | | 41 | Majority of the people feel at ease living together with other religious adherents. |
| 18 | Socio-religious tension | 42 | The degree of religious tension in society |
| | | 43 | The amount of religious tension incidents |
| 19 | Religious Discrimination | 44 | The degree of religious discrimination in the neighborhood |
| | | 45 | The degree of religious discrimination in the workplace |
| 20 | Dialogue and Understanding | 46 | Adequate number of mainstream media exposure on inter-religious understanding to public |
| | | 47 | Adequate number of mainstream media coverage on inter-religious understanding activities |
| | | 48 | Effectiveness of dialogue activities in promoting understanding among religious adherents. |
| 21 | Acknowledgement | 49 | Majority of the people acknowledge the interest of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence. |
| | | 50 | Majority of the people acknowledge the effort of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence. |
| | | 51 | Majority of the people acknowledge the commitment of other religious adherents towards peaceful co-existence |

| | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 22 | Shared values of neighborhood and friendship | 52 | Majority of the people have sense of belonging to their multi-religious neighborhood. |
| | | 53 | Majority of the people befriend religious adherent of other religions |

Discussion

The findings of FDM 1 finalized 22 socio-religious harmony factors. Based on the collective result in Table 4, the findings showed that the experts consensually agreed that mutual respect is the most important indicator for socio-religious harmony. It is relevant and essential in the interaction of multi-religious society in Malaysia cases as argued by Kamaruzaman.²³ Rothman²⁴ on similar stance emphasized that people should respect the differences in religious belief in order to achieve harmonious society. The experts of this study also agreed that rights and freedom of the religious adherents should not be neglected. It has been argued that the recognition of the rights of non-Muslims is more fundamental to an ethical Islamic society.²⁵ Malaysia's challenge nowadays is to define the rights of Muslims and non-Muslims that are still indistinct in nature.²⁶ It cannot be denied that the issues on right and freedom of religious conversion, demolition of temples, apostasy, and Islamic state discourse have widened fault lines among different religious communities in Malaysia.²⁷ This is consistent with Zaid,²⁸ where these problems become the main factors that hinder the harmony development among various religions as the problems emanate power struggle as well as violation of rights and laws. The same goes to justice; it is a determinant factor of socio-religious harmony index based on experts view as shown in Table 2. They agreed that justice plays a pivotal role for co-existence among various religious adherents.²⁹

Justice has also been proven to be the main principle of social harmony compared to fairness in the dualistic model of harmony.³⁰ The indicator 'Provocation' was also another index instrument's important indicator. Though Sintang³¹ claimed that the people in the East Malaysia were not easily influenced by provocation, the challenge is still relevant due to several recent provocative issues such as the use of 'Allah' in other religion besides Islam and the translated Bible in Malay. Cohesiveness of the society has been known by the sociologist as social solidarity. The experts' opinions are aligned with the sociologist where social solidarity provides a strong bond and contributes a measure of stability to the society. Its role as a social bond and a harmonizing factor is a feature of a particular phase of progress of human association. Social solidarity also unifies people through blood ties and bonds of alliance.³² However, acknowledgement was registered as the indicator with lowest significance. Acknowledgment was actually debated among the experts as a high stake indicator especially when regarded from the theological perspective. However, in this study, all the indicators were discussed and considered through the social lens and not from the theological viewpoint. This could result in the low acceptance among experts in viewing acknowledgment as a socio-religious harmony indicator.

Unexpectedly, 'dialogue for understanding' is also one of the least significant indicators as interfaith dialogue has been adopted for the past 55 years and actively conducted for 28 years as a main intervention of the country in fostering inter-religious relationship.³³ Rahman et al.³⁴ argued that findings and discussions of dialogue were merely tabled and debated among participants without substantial follow up in practical implementation on the society. In other words, the effort of having dialogues was largely to provide understanding of the needs and

²³ Kamaruzaman, K., *Religion and Pluralistic Co-existence: The Muhibah Perspective; a Collection of Seminar Papers*. (IIUM Press, 2010).

²⁴ Rothman, A., Harmonious Society, *China Business Review*, 35(2), (2008), 24–28.

²⁵ Muzaffar, C., Morality in Public Life: The Challenge before Religion. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 19(3), (2001) 90–110.

²⁶ Rahman, N. F. A., Mohd, K., & Hambali, K. Religious Tolerance in Malaysia: Problems and Challenges. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 3, (2013), 81–91.

²⁷ Jha, P. K., Religious Assertion in Malaysia: Constrained or Conflagrated? *Strategic Analysis*, 33(6) (2009), 890–902

²⁸ Zaid Ahmad, Kajian Isu dan Cabaran Hubungan Antara Penganut Agama di Semenanjung Malaysia. *Jurnal Perpaduan*, 2., (2014), 35–39.

²⁹ Nur Farhana Abdul Rahman, Pemahaman Konsep Tauhid Asas Keharmonian Kepelbagaian Agama. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 1, (2012), 34–42

³⁰ Leung, K., Koch, P. T., & Lu, L., A Dualistic Model of Harmony and its Implications for Conflict Management in Asia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 19, (2002), 201–220.

³¹ Sintang, S., Peaceful Co-Existence in Religious Diversity in Sabah, Malaysia. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: A-Arts and Humanities-Psychology*, 14(1), (2014), 67–77

³² Kaynasma, S., Ibn, I., Un, K., & Kavrami, A., *Ibn Khaldun 's Asabiyya for Social Cohesion*, 1, (2012), 253–268

³³ Karim, K. M., Khambali, K. M., & Saili, S. A., Kefahaman Konsep Asas Dialog Antara Agama di Kalangan Ketua Agama Islam dan Kristian di Malaysia dan Kesannya Terhadap Hubungan Sosial, 4(1), (2014), 69–82

³⁴ Rahman, N. F. A., Mohd, K., & Hambali, K., Religious Tolerance in Malaysia: Problems and Challenges. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 3, (2013), 81–91

practices of other religious adherents where religious unity serves as a reference point of discussion. Majid³⁵ emphasized the same, where dialogue is a method of reconciliation that build understanding among the religious adherent and it plays a vital role in minimizing conflicts and fostering harmony among people of different religious inclination. However, Karim et al. questioned the effectiveness of dialogues in fostering harmony among multi-religious society and minimize conflict in practical life since religious sensitivity issues not only still in existence but seemingly increasing in numbers and forms.

Overall, as mentioned in the findings section, Table 4 shows the overall findings of this study indicating 22 main indicators and 53 sub-indicators which ought to be included in developing the index instrument to measure the socio-religious harmony level in Malaysia. From the group of indicators, it can be concluded that the indicators could be categorized into two main types: indicators of socio-religious based on consensus interaction and indicators of socio-religious harmony based on conflict interaction.³⁶ Indicators of socio-religious based on consensus interaction would include mutual respect, rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings, inter-religious social justice towards other religions, cohesiveness of the community, appreciation, awareness on others' beliefs, non-violence, feeling safe and secured, religious tolerance, peaceful feeling, social trust, co-existence, comfortable, dialogue and understanding, acknowledgement and shared values of neighborhood and friendship. Management of these indicators in promoting socio-religious interaction support consensus theorists which subscribe that relationship among different groups of society is founded based on mutual needs and benefits.³⁷

In contrast, social conflict theorists argued that society development is established through struggle with each other in extracting resources such as status, decision power, economy domination, recognition, and acceptance till balance is achieved. For example, social conflict theorists such as Karl-Marx and Weber argued that society is created through conflicts where society is a result of competence among society members and not through harmony. While Weber agreed with Marx that economics played a central role in society development, Weber posited social prestige and political influence as added factors. If the findings of the study would to be considered through the lens of these conflict theories socio-religious harmony indicators based on conflict interaction may include provocation, Physical and non-physical socio-religious conflict, Religious prejudice and stereotypes, Socio-religious tension, and Religious Discrimination.

However, in this study, the experts in consensus argued that the indicators should be developed based on the belief that every members of society should play their roles in developing and maintaining a stable and harmonious society. This is in accordance to Functionalism theory. Based on this theory, contrasting with conflict theory, this theory holds that even bad aspects or conflicts play a role in binding the society together working together with positive aspects (indicators) in developing a harmonious society.³⁸ Hence, the mix of both positive (e.g. Mutual respect) and negative indicators (e.g. Provocation) were included as a result of this study essentially in developing the index instrument to measure the level of socio-religious harmony among different religious adherents in Malaysia.

Conclusion

This paper presented the findings of selected indicators and sub-indicators of socio-harmony by the expert panel through Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) in development of the index instrument. Experts had agreed upon the indicators that are essential and relevant to be included in the index instrument to measure the harmony relation among religious adherents in Malaysia. Based on the experts' consensus, mutual respect has been the primary principle of maintaining the religious harmony in this country. The same goes to other important indicators such as right and freedom, justice, and cohesiveness of the society. The overall result through the indicators and sub-indicators showed a mix of functional and conflict aspects of indicators to be included in practical measurement of social harmony. As a conclusion, this study not only proposed the indicators and sub-indicators for the index instrument but offered a perspective in manipulation of key informants (experts) in in developing the significant indicators for the construction of socio-religious harmony index (SRHI) instrument contextually for Malaysia.

³⁵ Majid, A. A., Inter-Religious Dialogue in Malaysia and Prejudice Reduction : a Preliminary Survey. *Proceeding of the International Conference on Social Science Research, ICSSR*, (2013, June), 706–717.

³⁶ Frazer, O., & Friedli, R., *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation : Concepts , Cases and Practical Implications*. *CSS Mediation Resources*, (2015).

³⁷ Hamilton, M., *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and comparative perspectives (Second Edition)*,(2013).

³⁸ Pope, W. Durkheim as a Functionalist. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 16(3), (1975), 361–379.

Acknowledgement

The paper is a published work of the Socio-Religious Harmony Index Instrument project funded by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) awarded by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The fund was very instrumental to the success of the project conducted. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Puan Enizahura Bt Abdul Aziz from Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) in facilitation of this research collaboration between IKIM and UTP. We are also indebted to Professor Dr. Zaid Bin Ahmad and Associate Professor Dr. Sarjit Singh a/l Darshan Singh from Universiti Putra Malaysia for their expert contribution. A special thanks goes to all expert panels participated in the workshop whose name cannot be mentioned for privacy issues.

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