Perception on Inter-Religious Interaction among Muslim and Non-Muslim: A Case Study in Kedah and Selangor

Persepsi Terhadap Interaksi antara Agama dalam kalangan Muslim dan bukan Muslim: Kajian Kes di Kedah dan Selangor

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ABSTRACT

Perception is one of the substantial elements that shapes the way an individual understands realities and interacts them. In Malaysia, perception either it is positive or negative, is observed as one the main factors that influence the ways their multi-ethnics societies interact to each other. This article reveals the perception levels among the multi ethnics and religious communities on the issue of inter religious relationship in the states of Kedah and Selangor, Malaysia. The findings are based on the quantitative research conducted that involves 555 respondents selected from the different religious domains i.e Islam represents the Muslim community meanwhile Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity represent the non-Muslim community. The research data analysed using descriptive statistical test which includes frequency, percentage, min and inference statistic tests like the Mann Whitney-U and Kruskal Wallis-H to explain the respondents' background and to evaluate the perception level of Malaysia society. The study finds that the perception level among the Muslim and non-Muslim communities with regard to the subject of inter-religious relationship is high even though there is significant difference on Mann Whitney-U: (Z -8.264, p = .000). Furthermore, there is a significant difference between the ethnic composition and states that been involved which records Kruskal Wallis-H: [x2 (1, N=555) = 70.857, p=.000] and [x2 (1, N=555) = 26.229, p=.000] respectively. The finding shows that the reality inter-religious relationship among the Malaysian society today is manageable.

Keywords: Perception level; inter-religious relations; sociology; society; statistical analysis

ABSTRAK

Persepsi adalah salah satu unsur penting yang membentuk cara seseorang memahami realiti dan berinteraksi dengannya. Di Malaysia, persepsi sama ada positif atau negatif, diperhatikan sebagai salah satu faktor utama yang mempengaruhi cara masyarakat pelbagai etnik berinteraksi antara satu sama lain. Artikel ini mendedahkan tahap persepsi antara pelbagai etnik dan masyarakat agama mengenai isu hubungan antara agama di negeri Kedah dan Selangor, Malaysia. Penemuan ini berdasarkan kepada penyelidikan kuantitatif yang melibatkan 555 responden dipilih dari domain agama yang berbeza-beza iaitu Islam mewakili masyarakat Islam sementara itu Buddha, Hindu dan Kristian mewakili masyarakat bukan Islam. Data penyelidikan dianalisis menggunakan ujian statistik deskriptif yang merangkumi ujian statistik kekerapan, peratusan, min dan statistik kesenjangan seperti Mann Whitney-U dan Kruskal Wallis-H untuk menerangkan latar belakang responden dan menilai tahap persepsi masyarakat Malaysia. Kajian mendapati bahawa tahap persepsi dalam kalangan masyarakat Islam dan bukan Islam berkaitan hubungan antara agama adalah tinggi walaupun terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan terhadap Mann Whitney-U: (Z -8.264, p = .000). Selain itu, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara komposisi etnik dan negara yang terlibat yang mencatatkan Kruskal Wallis-H: [x2 (1, N = 555) = 70.857, p = .000] dan [x2 (1, N = 555) = 26.229, p = .000] masing-masing. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa realiti hubungan antara agama dalam kalangan masyarakat Malaysia hari ini boleh diurus.

Kata kunci: Tahap persepsi, hubungan antara agama, sosiologi, masyarakat dan analisa statistik.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion which encourages interaction among Muslims and also towards the non-Muslims. This evidence can be found clearly from Surah al-Hujurat (49: 13):

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other) ...)"

According to Fathi Osman (1997: 121), this verse specifically puts weight on diversity and states that varieties in human beings is to stimulate and encourage interactions, teamwork and to complete each other but not meant to alieanation or coflicts. Human beings as a whole are viewed as the same by Islam in terms of humanity and self dignity(Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziy 2000:524); so does in the view point of Allah SWT without physical and cultural discrimination.

Meanwhile, Malaysia is a multi cultural, lingual and religion state, where there are groups of people and community with different lifestyle and at the same time strives to preserve their own identities (Asma Abdullah & Pedersen 2003: 17-18). However, the relation between ethnic groups still rusty even though Malaysia had obtained her independence more than 50 years ago (Mohd Farid 2012: 8; Fazilah Idris et al. 2019: 35). But it would be rather unrealistic to assume that this multi ethnic and multi religion factor as a stumbling block for national unity (Oo Yu Hock 1991: 25). Relating to this, there comes a need to examine the level of perception towards the multi ethnic and religious relation, specifically in Kedah and Selangor when it could be seen that inter-religious relation is playing a stronger role in terms of inter ethnic relation, with the rise of religious issues to critical level lately.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malaysia is a country made up by a complex population with different cultures. However, there is clear line of dichotomy that separates the society and culture, namely Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera, Muslim non-Muslim and Malay and non-Malay. According to Asma Abdullah and Pedersen (2003: 85-87) the religion dichotomy among Malays, Chinese and Indians are as following:

1. Malay/Muslim- All the affairs had been decided by Allah. Religion plays a very vital role in this ethnic group. It influences all the aspects, the solidarity of community, strict diets and many more.

2. Chinese- There are various traditions and beliefs. The role of religion is more liberal and pragmatic while giving priority to moral values and ethics. Lenient and flexible than rigidness. Form of worship is polytheism. Rather than familiarizing their behaviors towards Islam and Malay community, they tend to get familiar with their own religion.

3. India- A community that adorns polytheism. Have faith on the karma concept and reincarnation. Holds very strong to their religious teachings and very sensitive towards their religion.

4. Meanwhile the Christians are mainly from non-Malay group and divided into many streams, around 19 groups. Does not represent any ethnic groups that been introduced by the European colonial powers. More liberal and open in voicing out their opinions regarding Islam.

In addition, there are several factors that stimulates the perception among the multi religion society. One of it is as being said by Tun Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi; that each races' sensitivity on their own religions could cause any action or speech not relevant, humiliating and not right which would cause dissatisfaction, anger and many more. Sometimes an opinion for one religion which is nothing but could be a meaningful thing for the Muslims (Berita Harian 1 November 2007).

According to Chandra Muzaffar (2002: 334) the non-Muslim community need to realize that Islam and Malay are an important aspect in creating Malaysia as a nation state. They need to view it in a balanced perspective and avoid any prejudice, bias and antagonistic elements (Khadijah Mohd Khambali et al. 2017:68). This type of negativity could become a blocking stone in preserving the harmonious national unity among ethnic groups. If possible, the negative perception towards Islam by non-Muslim community should be reduced as how the Muslim community had lessened their negative perception towards the non-Muslim community in order to achieve a purer social interaction. At the same time, the Muslim community also should realize the co-existence of non-Muslims in this multi ethnic society and has their own right to exercise

their religion matters as long does not clash with the Constitution. (Takim 2011: 291)

Islamisation is another factor which is viewed as putting a stronghold for the Malays in the political system and society. Most of such perception is voiced out even though there are some part of the Chinese, Indian and other communities are also Muslim and most importantly Islam itself had warned that it is a religion not based on any ethnic groups (Barr, Michael D. and Anantha Raman Govindasamy, 2010: 297). Actually, such allegation is made when the non-Muslim feels the Malays who are indirectly are Muslims less interact with them. Hence the non-Muslim feels alienated in the process of Islamisasi till creates a negative feeling within themselves as a reaction towards the Malay Muslim community. The word 'Masuk Islam' viewed as 'Masuk Melayu' by many non-Muslim literally a misperception (Ahmad F. Yousif 2011: 157). Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 3-4) has argued that the Islamisasi causes the dichotomy and a bigger level of polarization in the Malaysia society.

Other than that, not knowing each other's position, wants, aspiration and sensitivity among Malays and non-Malays also do contribute towards a not so good perception. It worsens when the ignorance towards other religion and culture becomes additional element (Chandra Muzaffar 1989: 325). There is also tendency to understand a religion based on individual perception. This will make the understanding on religion tolerance different of subjective (Nur Farhana & Khadijah 2013: 86).

Therefore, in creating a nation state with tolerance and unity is not an easy thing as there are resistance and challenges to overcome first. According to Chandra Muzaffar (1996: 37-41), the followings are the perception of non-Malays towards Malays and vice versa, which one should know and analyse first before achieving ethnic, racial and national harmony:

1. Non-Malay perception on Malays:
    a. Negative behavior towards Malay language.
    b. Less appreciation the history and background of nation even though lives long under the Federation of Malaysia.
    c. Gives importance to own race than other races.
    d. Attitudes that hinder the growth of moral values by giving liberalism and democracy as an excuse.
    e. Attitudes that makes them feel they always hashed and treated as second class citizens.

2. Malay perception on non-Malays:
    a. Still doubts the honesty and loyalty of non-Malays for this country.
    b. No sympathy towards the sufferings and miseries of non-Malays.
    c. Prejudice and stereotype towards the non-Malays.
    d. Unacceptance in multi lingual, culture and religion as a valuable asset in shaping up a Malaysia race (Shamsul Amri Badaruddin 2007: 13-17).

All these show that Malaysian are not only separated by geographical, physical and cultural factors but also by the mindset of suspicion and prejudice. Hence, research on perception, attitude and social interaction among the ethnic groups has to be done in creating an understanding and minimizing conflicts between races and religions in attempt for a positive social interaction to materialize (Chandran Kukathas 1993: 93).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To interpret the data descriptively on the respondents' level of perception regarding interaction between religion in Malaysia
2. To analyze the statically and comparative data between the Muslim and non-Muslim, ethnic and states regarding the interaction between religion in Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive and statistic inferences (non-parametric test) regarding the level of perception among multi-religion Malaysians. Therefore, a set of questionnaires was prepared by the author to achieve the research objectives. According to Sekaran, Uma (2003), the questionnaire method is the most suitable approach in measuring matters such as knowledge, behavior, perception, understanding involvement and so on. Also, it is a practical and effective approach in controlling a vast research sample.

Research population consists of people from four religions only; Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity in the Kedah and Selangor states. Limited time and fund had become a constraint for the author to conduct this research in all the states in Malaysia. Meanwhile, both states are chosen based on several factors such as Selangor had become the focal point of settlement for people from different religion and ethnic background and also the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim is not too high at the level of 15.8% only. Where else Kedah is chosen based on clear gap between the two groups of religion, which is 56.2%. In addition, inter religion relation and other issues related to it is also a factor in choosing both Kedah and Selangor. Hence, such a situation is significant in getting information from the respondents on related issues, especially issues related to ethnic relations in the context of religion sociology.

The sampling process uses the randomly stratified probability technique. This technique uses two main criteria, which are percentage of population based on ethnicity and religion. This sampling was chosen because of the pattern of selection population sample research are based on quota that enable researcher to expect the number of approximately ratio which is match with the real sum of populations within a categorical sample research (Ian Marsh 2000). In addition, these ratios are evaluated by the numbers of population (6,921,104) which based on ethnic and religion category after separated non possibility participant; non dominant religions and non-citizens were both exempted from this research (568,747). Meanwhile, the determination of sampling population was referring to framework model entitled as Table of Determination Sample Size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

TABLE 1. Total Population of Kedah and Selangor State

Subject/Religion	Islam	Buddhism	Hinduism	Christian	Total
1. Percentage	64.3%	22.1%	10.5%	3.1%	100%
2. Sample	357	123	58	17	555
3. Ratio	2.6	0.9	0.4	0.1	4

Based on the above information, it is shows that the sample size for this research kindly the best rate is 500 people. Sidek Mohd Noah (2002) explained that more abundance sample size will be more small cumulative sampling. Then, for purpose to make sure that every religion represents the relevant number of ratios with total population. Hence, the researcher allocates the amount by 55:20:15:10 to divide with 555 respondents. Despite, this ratio was changed after the data collections gathered into 54:19:16:11 and perhaps it is not affecting the reliability and validation from research's target.

Thus, a set of questionnaires are applied in this research in purpose to acquire the standard of information from opinion polls (survey) about attitude, behavior or the others character that related to population who are examined (Robertson 1987: 38). Basically, this research involves six parts but this article just focusses on two part solely which is demographical respondent and the level of perception on inter-religion interaction. On the other hand, this part consists eight relevant questions for all level of participant which is based on eight selected criteria; common perception, friendship, neighborhood, favorite foods, festival/ceremony, respect to corpse or patient and worship places as indicate at Figure 4.

The reliability and validation toward this questionnaire were test on 30 respondents for pilot study intent to identifying any weakness and deficiency. The results show no any sign trouble to understand easily among these participants even though the scale of measurement for this part because stand around 0.0 until 1.0 of Alpha Cronbach's values. The result indicated amount's CA: [α (N=30) = 0.866]. Hence, this part is significant to test the variable which discussed for this research. Lastly, all the data that acquired from field work had analyzed using by Software SPSS version 20 via frequency, min average, Chi Square and others.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

Table 2 shows the background of respondents participated in this research:

TABLE 2. Respondents' background

Demographic Factors		Frequency	Percentage
State	Kedah	(n)	(%)
	Selangor	277	49.9
Ethnic	Malays	278	50.1
	Chinese	301	54.2
	Indians	125	22.5
	Others	101	18.2
Gender	Man	28	5.0
	Woman	243	43.8
Age	17-25	312	56.2
	26-40	290	52.3
	41-50	183	33.0
	51 and above	41	7.4
Religion	Islam	41	7.4
	Buddhism	301	54.2
	Hinduism	107	19.3
	Christianity	88	15.9
Highest education obtain	No formal basic education	59	10.6
	UPSR	8	1.4
	PMR/SRP/LCE/SRA	2	0.4
	SPM/MCE/SC/'O'LEVEL/SMA/SPVM	17	3.1
	UEC	115	20.7
	STPM/STP/HSC/'A' LEVEL	3	0.5
	/I.B./STAM	49	8.8
	Diploma/Certificate/Matriculation	136	24.5
	Degree	174	31.4
	Master	44	7.9
	PhD	6	1.1
	Others	1	0.2

According to the Table 2, the respondents consist of people who resides in the Kedah state (49.9%) and Selangor state (50.1%), where 555 individuals had participated in this research. This discussion on the respondents' background will be divided into two sections; the profile, religion and academic qualification of the respondents. The profile section deals with the ethnicity that represents the four different races where more than half of the respondents are Malays with 301 individuals (54.2%), Chinese with 125 individuals (22.5%), Indians with 101 individuals (18.2%) and the rest are from other ethnic groups with only 28 individuals (5.0%). In addition, female respondents are higher than the males with 312 individuals of them (56.2%) where else the males consist of 243 individuals (43.8%). This research also had divided the age category into four main groups. Respondents

from the age 17-25 are the one most actively participated in this research with 290 individuals (52.3%), followed by the age group of 26-40 years old with 183 individuals (33%). The rest are from age groups of 41-50 years old and 51 years and above with 41 individuals (7.4%) each.

The second section is on the respondents' religion and their highest academic qualification. The religion background is represented only by four religious communities based on the dominant religions factor. Half of the respondents represented by Islam community with 301 individuals (54.2%), Buddha with 107 individuals (19.3%), Hindu with 88 individuals (15.9%) and Christian with only 59 individuals (10.6%). On the other hand, the academic qualification is further divided into three categories; basic education, average and high education. Basic education level which includes no formal basic

education, others till PMR and equivalent to it records as the lowest with 28 individuals only (5%). SPM level till Diploma and equivalent to it is put under the average level of education category. This category has 303 individuals (54.6%) in it, which is the highest among the three. The high level of education consists of Bachelor's Degree till PhD qualification and it records 224 individuals (40.4%).

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS STATISTIC

The level of perception on inter-religion interaction in Malaysia is measured by 8 items with the Likert's scale, which has five scales; strongly don't agree, don't agree, unsure, agree and strongly agree. The measurement on the perception is based on the 8 criteria that chosen as well as stated in part of methodology research. The followings are the overall result;

Over all, respondents' level of perception is on a bit high level with 72.6 % (n=403). Contradicting with this record, the percentage for low level of perception is merely 2% (n=11) while average level of perception is 25.4% (n=141). From the percentages mentioned earlier, it could be explained that the level of perception among respondents regarding inter-religion interaction is high compared to the low and average level of perception which are just more than ¼ of the overall result.

TABLE 3. The Level of Perception on Inter-Religion Interaction

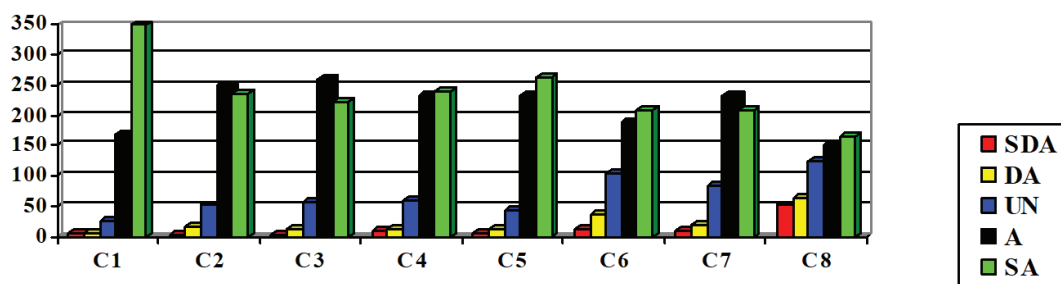|	(n=555)	Percentage (%)
Low (4 to 7)	2	0.3
Moderate (8 to 12)	82	14.8
High (13 to 16)	471	84.9
Total	555	100.0

minimal: 5
maximum: 16

FIGURE 1. Frequency value of level of perception on inter-religion interaction

TABLE 4. Frequency level of perception among respondent'

	Statement	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	Level
C1	All religion teach good moral values and ethics.	6 (1.1)	5 (0.9)	26 (4.7)	168 (30.3)	350 (63.1)	High
C2	I presume positively toward my friend of other religion.	3 (0.5)	14 (2.5)	51 (9.2)	251 (45.2)	236 (42.5)	High
C3	I presume positively toward my neighboor of other religion.	2 (0.4)	12 (2.2)	56 (10.1)	261 (47.0)	224 (40.4)	High
C4	I respect the other religion's favorite meals.	9 (1.6)	13 (2.3)	61 (11.0)	233 (42.0)	239 (43.1)	High
C5	I respect the other religion's festival or ceremony.	5 (0.9)	11 (2.0)	43 (7.7)	34 (42.2)	262 (47.2)	High

... continued

C6	I don't have problem to attend my friend's bridal ceremony of other religion.	13 (2.3)	37 (6.7)	105 (18.9)	190 (34.2)	210 (37.8)	Moderate
C7	I respect the other religion's funeral.	10 (1.8)	19 (3.4)	83 (15.0)	233 (42.0)	210 (37.8)	High
C8	I don't have problem to live among different religion's neighbourhood.	51 (9.2)	64 (11.5)	124 (22.3)	152 (27.4)	164 (29.5)	Moderate

Based on the above shown tables and figures, for the overall statement indicate that the frequency values for the level of perception among respondent' on inter-religion interaction is high due to scales of "agree" and "strongly agree". But just two question respectively at the moderate level involve number C6 (72%) and C8 (56.9). Where else the frequency of statement's C8 showing that percentage for scale "uncertain" minimal difference level with scale "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" that scored 22.3%. In short, the result of C8 is balanced at frequency level of "50-50" for this question among respondent' beside the percentage of 20.7% respondent' disagree with this statement.

ANALYSIS STATISTIC I (MANN WHITNEY-U)

Mann Whitney-U test is a non-parametrical test that analyze the difference between two samples against the dependent variables are ordinal scale data (Chua Yan Piaw 2008: 93). Thus, the test would be used to know if there is any difference between the 301 Muslim respondents that represent Islam and remaining 254 Buddhist, Hindu and Christian respondents that represent the non-Muslim community. The test result for the respondents' level of perception on inter-religions interaction is significant (Z -8.264, p=.000). Meanwhile, the min average for the Muslim community is lower with the record of 226.59 compared to the non-Muslim community which records 338.93. This result portray that the Muslim community have a lower than the level of perception regarding inter-religion interaction of non-Muslim community by noticeable difference amount with 112.34 (min average).

TABLE 5. Mann Whitney-U test for level of perception between Muslim and non-Muslim

Ujian Mann-Whitney U	N	Min	Nilai Mann Whitney-U	Z	Sig (p)
Muslim	301	226.59	22751.5	-8.264	.000
Non-Muslim	254	338.93			

*$p<0.05$; N=555

ANALYSIS STATISTIC II (KRUSKAL WALLIS-H)

The Kruskal Wallis-H is a test to analyze the difference between more than two samples against dependent variables (ordinal scale) which functions same as the Mann Whitney-U test. However, the Mann Whitney-U test is also used in this section as a follow up test to identify which pair of categories will contribute to overall significant difference (Chua Yan Piaw 2008: 173). On the other hand, statistical test is done on the independent samples according to the four ethnic groups; Malays (n=301), Chinese (n=125), Indians (n=101) and Others (n=28) for identify any factor that contribute the difference significant among them.

TABLE 6. Kruskal Wallis-H Test Based on Ethnic Composition

Kruskal Wallis-H Test (Ethnic)	N	Min	Chi-S (X2)	Sig (p)
Malays	301	293.08	6.146	0.105
Chinese	125	258.99		
Indians	101	259.41		
Others	28	267.86		

Overall, the level of perception among respondents is significant level which records [x^2 (1, N=555) = 70.857, p = .000]. However, the test result indicates that there is significant difference existed between Malay-Chinese, Malay-Indian and Malay-Others follow up test by using Mann Whitney-u test markedly with (Z -6.568, -6.276, -3.791 p= .000). Meanwhile, there are no difference between the others comparison involve Chinese-Indian, Chinese-Others and Indian-Others by numbers: (Z -.468 p= .640), (Z -1.277 p= .201) and (Z -.777 p= .437). This indicates that ethnic Malay for both state at the lower level positive about level of perception on inter-religion interaction than the others ethnic which is no clearly noticeable differences among them.

The next discussion is on the statistical analysis on the variables based on the state composition by using the Kruskal Wallis-H test. The statistical test done on the independent samples based on the state composition only involves two states; Kedah (n=277) and Selangor (n=278) (Table 7):

TABLE 7. Kruskal Wallis-H Test Based on States

Ujian Kruskal Wallis-H (Negeri)	N	Min	Chi-S (X2)	Sig (p)
Kedah	278	243.25	26.229	0.000
Selangor	277	312.62		

The test result on the level of perception on inter-religion interaction for both states indicate a significance difference [x^2 (2, N=555) = 26.229, p = .000]. The value of min average for the communities in Kedah is lower with 243.25 compared to Selangor's value, 312.62. This result shows that the respondents from Kedah has a noticeable difference amount of level of perception on the inter-religion interaction compared to Selangor's amount where the difference is vast 69.37 (min average). This might be caused by the fact that almost 80% of Kedah's population are Muslim, compared to the more balanced population of Selangor in terms of multi-religion. Hence, this test shows us the level of perception among respondent's for the both state have a significant difference which is Selangor's people higher than Kedah.

DISCUSSION

Based on the overall research finding, the respondents' level of perception on inter religion relation is high. However, the statistical result shows that the level of perception between Muslim and non-Muslim and the Malay community which majority are Muslims records a very low perception level of inference value compared to non-Muslim community and other ethnic groups where majority are from other religion background. This is because there is tendency to understand a religion based on one's own perception. Such thing will lead to a subjective understanding on tolerance and interaction between religions (Nur Farhana & Khadijah. 2013: 86). According to the previous researches by Ahmad F. Yousif (2011), Chandra Muzaffar (2002 & 1989), Mohd Farid Mohd Syarif (2012), and Abdul Halim Ramli (2009), it can be concluded that there are certain perceptions had been manifested from interaction between religious and ethnic groups, especially since Islamization Policy era. Such negative feelings are alienation, worriness without cause, jealousy, superiority-inferiority complex, making generalisation rushingly and different national ideology such as secularism and Islam state concept.

This illustrates that the cognitive information not nessecarily shapes up one's perception even though he/she is a commited individual to their religion(Syaidatun Nazirah Abu Zahrin et al. 2017: 11). There are other factors such as psychological, reference group and inter religious comperative pattern that influences one's perception. Hence, the findings shows that the interaction level Muslim and non-Muslim which is cold is on a low level in this emperical study (please refer to 5.4.4 dan 5.6).

Indirectly, the findings of this reseach antogonize Fauzi Yusoh's (2004), entitled "Hubungan Kemasyarakatan di Antara Orang Islam dengan Bukan Islam Menurut Pandangan Islam". His findings shows that Islam urges its followers to interact with non-Islam people that lives together in a Islam state, who also didnt see the Muslims as their enemy. Such a relation is a must to ptray the beauty an dharmony of Islam and also to get their attention to tolerate and understand Islam itself. On the other hand, this present research finds that the Muslim community is less tolerant and not so open for interaction compared to the non-Muslims even though Islam upholds and encourages its people to

tolerate and interact with other relion people. This thing occur due to tendency in understanding a religion based on one's own perception (especially in Muslim community) and results in religion tolerance understanding varies (subjective) (Nur Farhana & Khadijah 2013: 86).

Jahara Yahaya et al. (2004: 4-7) argues that interaction amongethnic groups most of the time influced by ethnography factor and economy background. There is also possibity for a population with multi races and religions to interact more often with one another compared to a mono ethnic population. Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 25) states that exclusive Islamic identitiy is more obvious in rural areas as there are majority of Muslim population compared to town or city areas. In addition, they less interact with non-Islam population which directly causes their views are different from those resides in town and city areas.

So the orientation of interactions among religions and ethnic groups for different type of population most likely contributes to the significant difference between the two states as how the finding of the reseach shows. Elements such as perception, attitude and action are reflection of how a person's mentality and behavour and as a whole potrays a community's image he/she represenrs. In a nutshell, there are several perceptions and attitudes such as negative perception shaped by history and previous experiences, misunderstanding, always having a negaitve view on others, often making rushed generalisations, stereotypes and low level of realisation could become a blockage towards a positive social interaction. On the other hand, negative attitudes that makes oneself keep distance from others are included as do not want to coopearate, like to blame the fate, not considering others' sensitivity, behaving exclusively, being egoistic, xenophobia, high level of ethnocentric, selfish, not being honest, open and genuine, not tolerating and many more If such perception and attitude become dominant in an individual, it can causes a less harmonious atmosphere in the plural society of Malaysia. So, this are the challenges that need to be faced in order to create an individual personality with high level of nobility and honorable perception, attitude and action so it could be applied in the social interaction among ethnic and religious groups.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analyses, the research's results indicate some point that need to specified, which is the level of perception among respondents about interaction between religion is high. Second, there are significant' difference between Muslim and non-Muslim about interaction between religions considerably in huge volume. Finally, there are significant' differences among both variable either ethnic and state. Clearly, there are significant differences traced among group ethnic Malay and Chinese and Indian.

In short, level of perception among multi-religion and multi-ethnic society about interaction between religions especially in Kedah and Selangor proved a very positive result. Although, mostly social researchers summarised that level of perception among Malaysian markedly at moderate level, meanwhile this research produced the number of new discovering which data analysed showed us by highly rate even obtained just 72.6% percent.

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