

Budiman Malay Political Leadership and Implications for Ethnic Relations among the Malay and Chinese Communities

Kepimpinan Politik Melayu Berbudiman dan Implikasinya terhadap Hubungan Etnik antara Komuniti Melayu dan Cina

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ABSTRACT

Malay political leadership has played an important role in Malaysia's nation-building, especially in the aspects of governance, nation development and national unity. However, it is currently at the unprecedented crossroads after 2018 elections and post Covid-19 era. Malay political leaders have to strive hard to position themselves with good contemporary political leadership while still preserve their own distinct cultural identity by embracing traditional Malay values. This study, therefore, aimed to identify and analyze a Malay political leader as a budiman leader, who practices 'budi and its networks', a concept identified by Lim (2003). On the other hand, a failed Malay political leader reflects the negative dimension of budi, which is the concept of badi. A primary survey had been conducted to analyze the contemporary perceptions and expectations of both Malay and Chinese communities towards Malay political leaders. Based on 205 respondents through questionnaires, the survey found that both Malay and Chinese respondents strongly view and expect Malay political leaders to be a budiman leader, or a man of ren (or jen, translated as 'human-heartedness') from Chinese's perspective. In general, a man of ren is equivalent with budiman, as 'perfect virtue', who practices 'budi and its networks'. The implications of the study indicate that if a Malay political leader is a budiman leader, he or she will be highly respected morally and supported politically by both Malay and Chinese communities.

Keywords: Malay political leadership; budi; budiman; badi; ren/jen; ethnic relations

ABSTRAK

Kepimpinan politik Melayu telah memainkan peranan penting dalam pembinaan negara Malaysia, terutamanya dalam aspek pentadbiran, pembangunan dan perpaduan negara. Walau bagaimanapun, kepimpinan ini kini berada di persimpangan jalan yang belum pernah dialami dahulu, selepas pilihan raya 2018 dan era pasca Covid-19. Pemimpin politik Melayu perlu terus berusaha untuk meletakkan diri mereka selaras dengan kepimpinan politik kontemporari yang baik sambil tetap mengekalkan identiti budaya mereka yang tersendiri dengan mengamalkan nilai-nilai tradisional Melayu. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti dan menganalisis pemimpin politik Melayu sebagai pemimpin budiman, yang mengamalkan 'budi dan rangkaianannya', satu konsep yang dikenal pasti oleh Lim (2003). Sebaliknya, pemimpin politik Melayu yang gagal dalam kepimpinannya akan mencerminkan dimensi negatif budi, iaitu amalan badi. Satu tinjauan primer telah dijalankan untuk menganalisis persepsi dan jangkaan kontemporari daripada masyarakat Melayu dan Cina terhadap pemimpin politik Melayu. Berdasarkan 205 responden melalui soal selidik, kajian itu mendapati bahawa kedua-dua responden Melayu dan Cina sangat memandang dan mengharapkan pemimpin politik Melayu sebagai pemimpin budiman, atau seorang pemimpin yang bersifat ren (atau jen) dari perspektif masyarakat Cina. Secara umum, seorang pemimpin yang bersifat ren adalah setara dengan pemimpin budiman, iaitu seorang pemimpin yang 'berkebaikan sempurna' yang mengamalkan 'budi dan rangkaianannya'. Implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa jika seorang pemimpin politik Melayu adalah seorang pemimpin budiman, dia akan dihormati dari segi moral dan disokong dari segi politik oleh kedua-dua masyarakat Melayu dan Cina.

Kata kunci: kepimpinan politik Melayu; budi; budiman; badi; ren/jen; hubungan etnik

INTRODUCTION

Malay political leadership has been an essential and key element in Malaysia's nation-building since independence in 1957, especially in the aspects of governance, nation development and national unity. The uniqueness of Malay political leadership is that it has been able to maintain indigenous primacy in such a multi-racial nation and at the same time embraces western democracy system while still able to preserve its conservative Islamic and Malay values (Shome 2002). It has successfully led the country through the independence of Malaya, the formation of Malaysia, nation-building and economic growth, while still maintaining a relatively political and social stability in this multi-racial nation. The one key factor for this achievement is due to this uniqueness of Malay political leadership which practices good Malay values while leading the country.

However, Malay political leadership is currently at an unprecedented crossroad after the impact of the general elections in 2018 and in this post Covid-19 uncertain era, with so much critical, challenging and contradictory local or global issues going on at the same time. A few examples of those issues include geopolitical instability and tensions, economic tensions between major world powers, the prospect of a global economy recession, climate change, inflation and rise of cost of living, the sustainability of public health system, social tensions and polarization. It appears that Malay political leadership will still be a key element to reform or tackle all these current critical issues authoritatively. And in order to handle all these issues successfully, it can be argued that Malay political leaders have to strive hard to equip themselves with good contemporary political leadership, while still strongly preserving their own distinct cultural identity, especially in embracing traditional Malay values (Shome 2002).

This study, therefore, aims to identify a Malay political leader as a *budiman* leader, who practices '*budi* and its networks', a concept identified and mapped out by Lim (2003), based on the traditional Malay values system. It is also intended to analyze how and why a *budiman* political leader would be respected morally and supported politically by both Malay and Chinese communities, in which from Chinese perspective, *budiman* is equivalent with a 'man of *ren*' (or *jen*, translated as 'human-heartedness'), as 'perfect virtue', who practices '*budi* and its networks' (Lim 2003). In general, it is suggested that a *budiman* Malay political leadership system that blends Malay civilizational values with contemporary political leadership principles will continue to lead the nation well, along with its implications for a better ethnic relations in Malaysia.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The first issue to be addressed in this study, along with Malay political leadership, is the reality of unprecedented crossroad of the nation after the impact of the general elections in 2018 and in this post Covid-19 uncertain era. Many critical local and global issues and challenges have to be dealt with by our political leaders, in order for our nation to achieve the developmental goals and purposes, in the midst of uncertainty and instability of political, economic and sociological situations, both locally and globally. It appears that Malay political leadership will still be one of the key factors to deal with all these current issues authoritatively. And in order to handle all these issues successfully, it appears that successive Malay leaders have to strive hard to position themselves with good contemporary political leadership as any political leaders of the modern era while still preserving their own distinct cultural identity, specifically in embracing traditional

Malay values (Shome 2002). From cultural perspective, a Malay political leader would be expected as a *budiman* leader. According to Lim (2003), a *budiman* is a wise person who is “thoughtful, considerate, of good conduct, and his decisions should be enlightened and practical one that helps the society towards prosperity” (Lim 2003). A contemporary *budiman* Malay political leader, who practices ‘*budi* and its networks’, will be highly honored, respected and supported by the Malay community, in order to lead the country to handle all these current critical local and global issues.

The second issue to be addressed is that on the other hand, a ‘non-*budiman*’ Malay political leader might be a root cause for some political instabilities and turmoil. The potential political and economic instability and turmoil can also be caused by inadequate governance and poor leadership of Malay political leaders. This leads our discussion to the negative dimension of *budi*, or the concept of *badi* (Lim 2003). *Badi* (anti-*budi*) will cause and lead a political leader into the possibility of poor governance, corruption, and power abuse. A contemporary *badi* Malay political leader will eventually lead the country astray. However, if the mind and heart of a Malay political leader is guarded by *akal budi* and *hati budi* (i.e., *budiman*), then he will not fall into the negative dimension of *budi*, i.e., *akal badi* and *hati badi*. In politics, a leader can have solid credentials and competence but still fail as a political leader if he has poor personal character (i.e., *badi*). However, if a leader has a good character (*budiman*), it will penetrate and guide the way he exercises his credentials and charisma, and become a successful and respectable political leader.

The third and final issue to be addressed is the perspective of Chinese community towards Malay political leaders in Malaysia. The Chinese have their own perceptions and expectations towards a political leader. Confucius used the word *ren* (or *jen*, translated as ‘human-heartedness’) not only to denote a special kind of virtue, but also to denote all the virtues, so that the term “man with *ren*” becomes synonymous with the man with all-round virtues (similar to the concept of *budiman*) (Lim 2003). It can be argued that a political leader would be viewed and expected as a man of *ren*, from a Chinese cultural perspective. Thus, from the ethnic relations perspective, if a Malay political leader is a *budiman*, it is suggested that he will also be highly honored, respected morally and supported politically by the Chinese community. The concept of man with *ren* can be translated as ‘perfect virtue’ in the Chinese mind, which they can fully comprehend the concept of *budiman* as ‘perfect virtue’ in the Malays mind.

In conclusion, Malay political leaders would strive to be a *budiman* leader, with all integral aspects of ‘*budi* and its networks’, in order to lead and govern this multi-racial and multi-cultural nation, specifically in handling all the current critical issues, and also for a better ethnic relations in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive study of Malay political leadership has been conducted by Anthony Shome (2002), in his book entitled *Malay Political Leadership*. Shome has demonstrated how Malay leadership has played a crucial role in the political evolution in Malaysia’s political history, from the pre-independence period, including the era of colonization and nationalism, through the rule of the first four Prime Ministers after the independence. He is using multidisciplinary approach by drawing on anthropology, psychology, political and economic history to show how well Malay leaders have kept within their traditional Malay values system, in handling the expectations of their own Malay community, while at the same time addressing the needs of the wider multi-

cultural community (Shome 2002). The uniqueness of Malay political leadership, in the midst of global political leadership, is that it has been able to maintain indigenous primacy in such a multi-racial nation and at the same time embraces western democracy system while still persevering its conservative Islamic and Malay values (Shome 2002). There is no leadership of its kind anywhere that has been able to achieve this integration of traditional and contemporary political leadership system in a multi-racial nation. Shome also points out that “Malay political leadership has been remarkably successful in harmonizing a variety of idiosyncrasies in its path to modernization” (Shome 2002).

Shome traces through the dynamics of modern Malay politics by encapsulating the biographical profiles of the first four Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Tunku, Razak, Hussein and Mahathir, in three different aspects, namely the national unity, the economy dimension, and the foreign affairs (Shome 2002). In conclusion, accordingly to Shome, modern Malay leadership is still relatively young and there is no ‘typical’ Malay leader’s model yet, as “Malay leadership is evolving and is still in the throes of finding a proper mix within its cultural diversity for a leadership that can truly be a Malaysian amalgam” (Shome 2002).

Suleyman Temiz and Arshad Islam (2019) analyze the Malay political leadership from the perspective of charismatic political leadership. They trace Mahathir Mohamad’s political careers and personality to illustrate the aspects of power, control, stability and defense in the political leadership. Mahathir’s influential charisma with his integrated-style leadership is one of the significant aspects of his political heritage (Suleyman Temiz & Arshad Islam 2019). Mahathir represents a Malay leader who is charismatic, powerful and modest, with his personality as a man of principle and action, and made him a world-embracing political personality (Suleyman Temiz & Arshad Islam 2019). His political goals had always been certain and directed toward Malaysia’s national wellbeing, although his undertakings had attracted both passionate support and hatred from friends and foes (Suleyman Temix & Arshad Islam 2019). Through his long service as a Prime Minister, Mahathir’s political leadership attributes and personality traits has become an essential contribution towards the Malay political leadership system.

Junaidi Awang Besar (2021) analyzes the influence of party sentiment and personality of leadership of voters’ political choice in State Legislative Assembly of Chempaka, Kelantan, during the 2018 General Elections. The findings show that the respondents prefer the political parties that have the leaders who prioritize the people, the development of people, the needs of people and fairness to all people (Junaidi Awang Besar 2021). The leaders’ personality traits expected by the respondents are honest and trustworthy of the responsibilities, free of corruption and prioritize the needs of people (Junaidi Awang Besar 2021). The people (*‘rakyat’*, citizens) are concerned with their political leaders who always put their people first, with the good personality traits such as honesty, trustworthy and clean. It appears that there is always a significant integration of both leadership effectiveness (putting their people first) and personal characteristics (honesty, trustworthy and clean).

A recent research on Malay political leadership was carried out by Syed Arabi, Zeti Azreen and Ssemuddu (2023) on the leadership attributes and personality traits of Muhyiddin Yassin, by permitting the correspondents of different ethnic groups to choose on their own the traits that they believe are associated with Muhyiddin when he was the eighth Prime Minister of Malaysia. The findings show that the respondents singled out top three Muhyiddin’s leadership attributes, namely firm/brave, people-oriented and performance of his responsibilities (or people-oriented, firm/brave, confident and visionary for second choice), and his top three personality traits are kind, firm/brave, and weak in decision-making (or firm/brave, trustworthy and soft-spoken for second choice) (Syed

Arabi, Zeti Azreen & Ssemuddu 2023). This study shows that Malaysians have intention to identify certain leadership attributes to their political leaders' personality traits, which again is an integration of both leadership effectiveness and personal characteristics. For Muhyiddin's case, Malaysians were satisfied with his performance, from the perception and way the Covid-19 crisis had been managed, but it had to do more with his administrative leadership, in which people perceived him as more of an administrator than other leadership dimensions, based on the findings of this research (Syed Arabi, Zeti Azreen & Ssemuddu 2023).

Malay political leadership is still essential and relevant in governing the country, and will continue to be one of the key factors to reform or tackle all the current critical political, economic and social issues authoritatively. And in order to handle all these issues successfully, Shome argues that successive Malay political leaders have to strive hard to position themselves with good contemporary political leadership while still preserving their own distinct cultural identity and embracing traditional Malay values as their personality traits (Shome 2002).

Thus, this study aims to identify a Malay political leader as a *budiman* leader, who practices “*budi* and its networks”, a concept identified and mapped out by Lim Kim Hui (2003), in his doctoral thesis entitled *Budi as the Malay Mind: A philosophical study of Malay ways of reasoning and emotion in peribahasa*. According to Lim, a *budiman* is a wise person who is “thoughtful, considerate, of good conduct, and his decisions should be an enlightened and practical one that helps the society towards prosperity” (Lim 2003).

Budi is a key concept in the Malay values system. It is a set of internal values that shape one's mentality and personality (Wan Norhasniah 2011; Lim 2003). *Budi*, as a Malay cultural conception, helps to guide one's thinking, feeling and behavior, and hence encompasses the Malay way of life (Khalidah 2022). *Budi* is a foundation of Malay cultures (Wan Abdul Kadir 1993). Hence, *budi* as the principle element of Malay cultures has a very influential situation to define the way how Malays think and interact (Lim 2003; Wan Norhasniah 2011).

A *budiman* practices ‘*budi* and its networks’ (as coined by Lim), which includes the integral aspects of *akal budi* (reasoning and rationality), *hati budi* (emotion and passion), *budi bicara* (judgement and decision making), *budi bahasa/budi pekerti* (morality and behaviors) and *budi daya* (practical and actions). This ‘*budi* and its networks’ encompasses the integrations of ‘mind-emotion-moral-goodness-practicality’ (Lim 2003). In general, the Malays combine the reason, emotion and moral nicely into their concept of *budi* (Lim 2003). In general sense, *akal budi* describes how the Malays think, *hati budi* describes how the Malays feel, *budi bicara* describes how the Malays make decision, *budi bahasa/budi pekerti* describes how the Malays behave in their words and deeds, and *budi daya* describes how the Malays act practically. The ‘*budi* and its networks’ combines and integrates all these dimensions, and being demonstrated by the *budiman*.

Budi, together with Islam, in fact carries many nuances of meanings in the Malay worldview and plays a pivotal role in every aspect of Malay life, including their interactions with other ethnic groups (Lim 2003; Wan Norhasniah 2011; Khalidah 2022). For example, the Malays use *budi* to resolve their conflicts, and also help them to cope with the “bombardment of various diverse foreign civilizations and cultures” (Lim 2003). *Budi* is also useful “for the sake of social harmony within a multiracial, multireligious and multicultural social and political formation” (Lim 2003). Lim describes *budi* as the Malay philosophy eclecticism, therefore, dialectical thinking is not important in Malay world and is not fully developed (Lim 2003). *Budi*-Islam, in fact, is the core value of Malay identity (Wan Norhasniah 2011; A. L Samian 2015; Rais Yatim 2021; Hashim

Hj. Musa 2008; Wan Abdul Kadir 1993; Khalidah 2022). Wan Abdul Kadir (1993) suggests that *budi-Islam* is the central element to construct the Malay's cultural and identity foundation.

Rais Yatim emphasizes the importance of *budi* in Malay civilization, in which he has described the difference aspects of *budi* as Lim does, including *akal budi*, *hati budi*, *budi bahasa*, *budi pekerti*, *budi daya*, *budi bicara*, *budi baik* and *hutang budi*, in his latest book entitled *Budi Asas Tamadun* (Rais Yatim 2021). He points out that the Malay concept of *budi* and *budiman*, was once recognized by the British as “the Gentleman of the East” (Rais Yatim 2021). Zainal Abidin Borhan, in his writing in Rais Yatim's book, describes a *budiman* as total personality, a perfect gentleman (Rais Yatim 2021). Thus, it may be suggested that a contemporary Malay political leader who is also a *budiman*, a leader who practices “*budi* and its networks”, will definitely be highly honored, respected morally and supported politically by the Malay community, in order to lead and govern the country.

Another issue to be addressed is that the current political instability and turmoil might be also due to the inadequate governance and the poor leadership of some Malay political leaders. This leads our discussion to the negative dimension of *budi*, or the concept of *badi*. According to Lim (2003), in Malay, *bermain budi* means “to cheat or to deceive”, and “too much *berbudi* will become what the Malays call *mengada-ngada* (over-acting)” (Lim 2003). This negative dimension of *budi* reminds us that we should not push anything to extreme, for instance, a good altitude of *rendah diri* in *budi* will become *hina diri* in *badi* (Lim 2003). In Malay cultures, if *akal budi* and *hati budi* represent the positive dimension of *budi*, then *akal badi* (reason without ethics) and *hati badi* (emotional without ethics) will be the negative dimension of *budi* (Lim 2003). If the mind and heart of a Malay political leader are guarded by *akal budi* and *hati budi* (i.e., *budiman*), it appears that he will not fall into the negative dimension of *budi*, i.e., *akal badi* and *hati badi*, which will eventually lead a political leader into the possibility of corruption, power abuse, and poor governance.

Rais Yatim also relates the concept of *budi* and *badi* with politics, which he describes a politician who intends to help and serve the people without corruption as *budi baik*, and the corruption behavior is an anti-*budi* behavior (Rais Yatim 2021). The concept of *muafakat* as part of *budi* is a good practice in politics (Rais Yatim 2021). He concludes that *budi* is a very essential aspect in politics, that all politicians should have *budi*, *budi bahasa*, a culture of compassion, respect each other, help each other, free of corruption, acquiescence to the code of conduct and laws, and keep the promises (Rais Yatim 2021).

Finally, this research is also attempted to look at Malay political leadership from ethnic relations perspective, especially from the Chinese perspective. The Chinese have their own perception and expectations towards a political leader. Confucius used the word *ren* (or *jen*, translated as ‘human-heartedness’) not only to denote a special kind of virtue, but also to denote all the virtues, so that the term ‘man with *ren*’ becomes synonymous with the man with all-round virtues (Lim 2003). Chinese embraces the philosophy of *Li Yi Lian Chi*, which combine *Li* (respect or *budi*), *Yi* (righteousness), *Lian* (integrity) and *Chi* (shame on negative things), which is closely related to the concept of ‘man with *ren*’ (Rais Yatim 2021). From Chinese cultural perspective, it is suggested that a good political leader should be viewed and expected as a man with *ren*, a man with all-round virtues who practices *Li Yi Lian Chi*.

Therefore, if it is concluded that *budiman* is the man with all-round virtues (*budi* and its networks as coined by Lim), then both *ren* and *budi* can be interpreted as ‘perfect virtues’ for both Malay and Chinese (Lim 2003). Rais Yatim also agrees that the concept of man with *ren* in Chinese mind is equivalent with the concept of *budiman* in Malay mind (Rais Yatim 2021). Thus,

from the ethnic relations perspective, if a Malay political leader is a *budiman* leader, he will also be highly honored, respected morally and supported politically by the Chinese community. The concept of ‘man with *ren*’ can be easily translated as ‘perfect virtue’ in the Chinese mind, which they can fully understand the concept of *budiman* as ‘perfect virtue’ of the Malays.

In conclusion, it appears that the contemporary Malay political leaders should strive to be a *budiman* leader, with all integral aspects of ‘*budi* and its networks’, in order to lead and govern this multi-racial and multi-cultural nation, specifically in handling the current critical issues and for a better ethnic relations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A primary field survey had been conducted at the Sungai Buloh Parliamentary constituency area (P107), in the two state constituencies of Selangor which are under this parliamentary constituency, namely Paya Jaras (N38) and Kota Damansara (N39). The survey was conducted between 5th and 17th November 2022, which was during the campaigning period of the 15th General Election (GE15).

The main objective of this primary survey is to analyze the contemporary perceptions and expectations of both Malay and Chinese communities towards *budiman* Malay political leaders. In order to meet this objective, we have to set a limitation of research to survey mainly among the Malay and Chinese communities, as there are also Indian and other communities in this parliamentary constituency. This study is intended to choose just one non-Malay’s cultural system to compare and identify with the concept of *budiman* Malay political leaders, thus the concept of “man with *ren*” in Chinese cultures is selected. Further study can be done for another non-Malay’s cultural system, for example, a concept of “perfect virtues” in Indian cultures to compare and identify with the concept of *budiman* in Malay cultures.

A set of questionnaire was designed to achieve this research objective. The questionnaire method is an appropriate approach to measure certain sociocultural issues, including perceptions and expectations. The survey is not intended to provide a definitive view of the issues, but rather it is designed to highlight the perceptions and expectations of both Malay and Chinese communities towards issues that are related to Malay political leadership and ethnic relations. The survey was conducted during the campaign period of GE15 at one of the tight contested parliamentary constituency areas, because such situation provided a significant opportunity to study and analyze issues related to Malay political leadership in the context of ethnic relations between Malay and Chinese communities.

The survey consists of two major parts. Part 1 covers the profile of the respondents by gender, race, age and education. Part 2 of the survey consists of four sections. Section 1 deals with questions on current political situation in Malaysia and the main factor causing that situation. Section 2 measures the perceptions of both Malay and Chinese respondents towards *budiman* Malay political leaders, and their expectations on those leaders in practicing “*budi* and its networks”. Section 3 intends to collect a list of *budiman* Malay political leaders from both Malay and Chinese respondents, including the contemporary *budiman* leaders, the most representable *budiman* leaders among all current and past leaders and the potential future *budiman* leaders. Section 4 deals with the implication of *budiman* Malay political leaders for ethnic relations. Part 1 comprised 8 questions and Part 2 had 12 questions in total which took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete, while each respondent was met face-to-face and completed the questionnaire

on the spot. More than 600 people had been approached randomly at the Sungai Buloh Parliamentary constituency area, between 5th and 17th November 2022. A total of 205 respondents participated in this primary survey by filling up the complete questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

Table 1 shows the background of these 205 respondents who participated in the survey. The majority of the respondents are Malay (64.0%), followed by respondents who are Chinese (30.0%). As the objective of this survey is mainly to compare the findings between Malay and Chinese, we group all other respondents into the category of “others”, which is 6.0%. The data analysis and discussion will focus on the Malay and Chinese respondents. Male respondents are higher than the females, which are 57.6%, while the female respondents are 42.4%.

In terms of age distribution, the largest age group is the 21-25 years old (23.4%). This is followed by the 26-30 years old group (22.9%) and the 18-20 years old group (14.6%). It means the majority of the respondents are the 18-30 years old group (60.9%). The second larger group is the 31-50 years old group (31.2%). The older age groups, comprising respondents between 51-60 years old (5.9%) and those aged above 61 (2.0%), account for a combined total of 7.9%. For education background, the majority of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree (45.9%), followed by certificate or diploma (25.9%) and the secondary school graduates (20.0%).

TABLE 1. Respondents' background

	Demographic Factors	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Ethnic	Malays	131	64.0
	Chinese	61	30.0
	Others	13	6.0
Gender	Male	118	57.6
	Female	87	42.4
Age	18-20	30	14.6
	21-25	48	23.4
	26-30	47	22.9
	31-35	20	9.8
	36-40	21	10.2
	41-50	23	11.2
	51-60	12	5.9
	61 and above	4	2.0
Education	No education	2	1.0
	Primary	5	2.4
	Secondary	41	20.0
	Cert/Diploma	53	25.9
	Bachelor degree	94	45.9
	Post-Graduate	10	4.9

CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION & CAUSING FACTORS

This section deals with questions on current political situation in Malaysia and what were the main factors causing that situation. The context when the survey was conducted, i.e., between 5th and 17th November 2022, was one of the most uncertain political situations before the 15th General Election (GE15), and the results of the survey demonstrated that instability and uncertainty.

Figure 1 shows the perceptions of Malay and Chinese respondents on that current political situation in Malaysia:

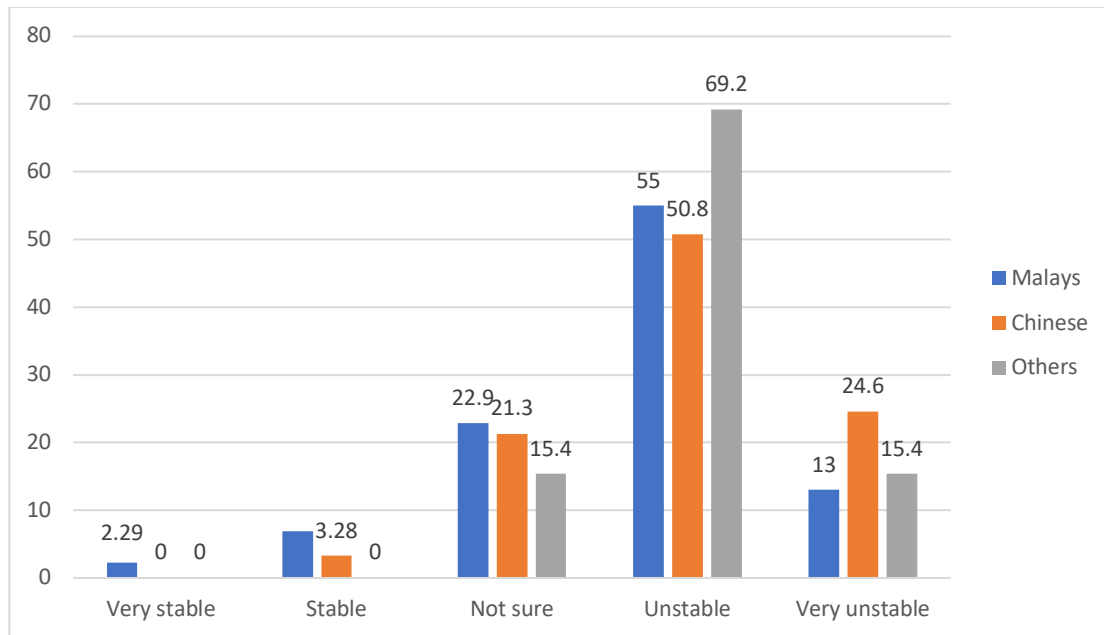


FIGURE 1. Perception on current political stability in Malaysia, prior GE15 (Percentage)

Majority of Malay respondents described the current political situation before GE15 in Malaysia as “unstable” (55.0%) or “very unstable” (13.0%). But there were 22.9% of Malay respondents preferred to describe it as “not sure”. A small percentage of Malay respondents described the situation as “stable” (6.9%) or “very stable” (2.3%). Majority of Chinese respondents also described the current political situation before GE15 as “unstable” (50.8%) or “very unstable” (24.6%). 21.3% of Chinese respondents preferred to describe it as “not sure”. Only 3.3% of Chinese respondents described it as “stable” and none of them described it as “very stable”. In summary, majority of Malay and Chinese respondents had the similar perceptions on the current political situations before GE15 as “unstable” or “very unstable”, which account for a combined total of 68% of Malay respondents and 75.4% of Chinese respondents.

Figure 2 shows the major factor that causing the “unstable” and “very unstable” political situation, described by both Malay and Chinese respondents. Out of 89 Malay respondents (68%) who described the situation either as “unstable” or “very unstable”, the majority of them believed that the major factor causing this instability was due to the politicians (70.8%). 18% of them believed that it was due to political system. For Chinese respondents who described the situation as “unstable” or “very unstable” (75.4%), majority of them also believed that it was due to the politicians (50.0%). About 26% of them believed that it was due to political system. Chinese respondents were a bit more concerned about the economy factor than Malay respondents, which

19.6% of them believed that the instability was due to economic factor. In summary, majority of Malay and Chinese respondents viewed the current political instability was more political factors related, either was due to politicians or political system, and not related to other factors like economic, pandemic or others.

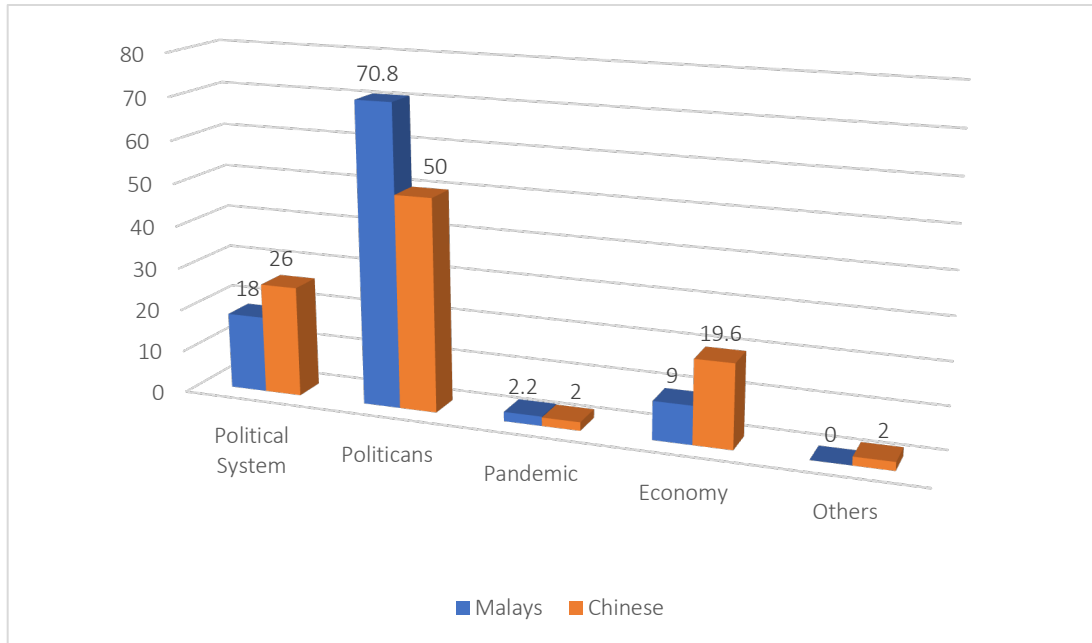


FIGURE 2. Major factor causing the “unstable” or “very unstable” political situation (Percentage)

PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS *BUDIMAN* MALAY POLITICAL LEADERS

This section analyzes the perceptions of both Malay and Chinese respondents towards *budiman* Malay political leaders, and their expectations on those leaders in practicing “*budi* and its networks” in their political leadership roles. The respondents were asked whether they agree that a Malay political leader should be expected as a “*budiman*”, by providing a simple definition of *budiman* as a wise person who is “thoughtful, considerate, of good conduct, and his decisions should be enlightened and practical one that helps the society towards prosperity” (Lim 2003).

Figure 3 shows the expectations of both Malay and Chinese respondents towards the *budiman* Malay political leaders:

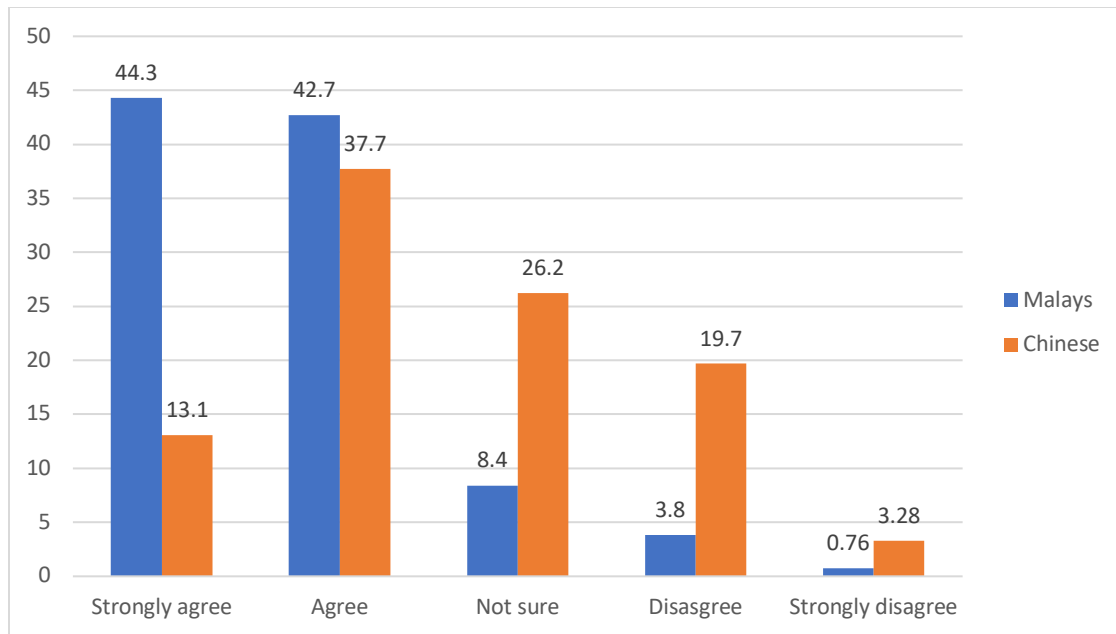


FIGURE 3. Expectation on Malay political leader as a *budiman* leader (Percentage)

Majority of Malay respondents “strongly agree” (44.3%) or “agree” (42.7%) that a Malay political leader should be expected as a *budiman* leader, account for a combined total of “strongly agree” and “agree” at 87%. There was a group described it as “not sure” at 8.4%. Majority of Chinese respondents “agree” (37.7%) on this perception, 13.1% “strongly agree”, while there was still about 19.7% “disagree” with this view. If to combine both “agree” and “strongly agree”, the percentage will be at 50.8% for Chinese respondents. In summary, majority of respondents from both Malay and Chinese communities “agree” or “strongly agree” that a Malay political leader should be expected as a *budiman* leader. The definition of *budiman* is equivalent with the concept of “man of *ren*” for Chinese respondents, hence created no confusion for them to understand the concept of *budiman* Malay political leader.

The next question was to ask the respondents what will be the most essential *budi* aspect for a Malay political leaders in their governance roles. The different aspects of *budi* were listed for selection, including *akal budi* (knowledge/wisdom & rationality), *hati budi* (feelings and passions), *budi bicara* (judgement and decision making), *budi bahasa/budi pekerti* (morality, ethical and conducts) and *budi daya* (practical and actions). The majority of Malay and Chinese respondents believed that all of these aspects, which is “*budi* and its networks”, are essential for *budiman* leaders in carrying out their governance and leadership roles. For Malay respondents, the percentage was 71.8%, while Chinese respondents was 68.9%. In summary, the concept of “*budi* and its networks” provides a holistic view and comprehensive definition for *budiman* leaders, which they should seek the balance and holistic integration with their cognitive dimension (*akal budi*), affective dimension (*hati budi*), evaluative dimension (*budi bicara*) and their outward behaviors and actions (*budi bahasa* and *budi daya*).

BUDIMAN MALAY POLITICAL LEADERS

This section intends to collect a list of *budiman* Malay political leaders from both Malay and Chinese respondents, including the contemporary *budiman* leaders, the most representable *budiman* leaders among all current and past leaders and the potential future *budiman* leaders.

First, a list of the current Malay leaders was given to all the respondents, and they had to select the top three leaders that they thought are the *budiman* Malay political leaders. For Malay respondents, 128 of them selected top number 1 *budiman* leader, 127 selected top number 2 *budiman* leader and 121 selected their top number 3 *budiman* leader.

Table 2 listed the top five *budiman* leaders based on this selection:

TABLE 2. Current Malay political leaders viewed as *budiman* leaders by Malay Respondents

	Selected as top 1 (%)	Selected as top 2 (%)	Selected as top 3 (%)
Khairy Jamaluddin	21.9	14.2	19.0
Anwar Ibrahim	19.5	12.6	7.4
Muhyiddin Yasin	18.0	13.4	6.6
Mahathir Mohamad	14.0	9.4	0.8
Ismail Sabri Yaakob	7.8	10.2	8.3

For Chinese respondents, 57 of them selected top number 1 *budiman* leader, 57 selected top number 2 *budiman* leader and 55 selected their top number 3 *budiman* leader.

Table 3 listed the top five *budiman* leaders based on this selection:

TABLE 3. Current Malay political leaders viewed as *budiman* leaders by Chinese Respondents

	Selected as top 1 (%)	Selected as top 2 (%)	Selected as top 3 (%)
Anwar Ibrahim	38.6	10.5	16.4
Syed Saddiq	15.8	12.3	12.7
Khairy Jamaluddin	14.0	14.0	9.1
Mahathir Mohamad	12.3	12.3	16.4
Nurul Izzah Anwar	7.0	17.5	5.5

Most of the Malay and Chinese respondents selected at least one of the leaders in the list as a *budiman* leader. There was also an open column for respondent to put any name that was not in the list. This list which included most of the contemporary Malay leaders, had encouraged the respondents to select *budiman* leaders based on their perceptions and expectations. Based on the observations and conversations with the respondents, another factor that encouraged them to choose a *budiman* leader among the current leaders was a strong recognition and appreciation for that particular leader, in the midst of current political instability before GE15 which was mainly due to the factor of “politicians”. Although the integration of both leadership effectiveness and personal characteristics is essential for both Malay and Chinese respondents, the view of who is a *budiman* Malay leader is so significantly different between these two communities, which is reflected in the findings in Table 2 & 3. This difference ethnicity’s perspective and expectation remains a key factor to determine the *budiman* Malay political leaders.

Second, the respondent was asked to choose the most representable *budiman* Malay political leader in Malaysia, among all the current and past leaders. The question was an open column for the respondent to fill in just one leader’s name as the *budiman* leader. 124 Malay respondents selected the most representable *budiman* leader, and 49 Chinese respondents made the

same selection. The open column encouraged the respondents to take times and think through all the Malay leaders that they had in mind from the past until now, and finally decided to select one as the most representable *budiman* leader. In this manner, all the Malay political leaders in the past or current, will have an equal opportunity to be selected.

Table 4 listed the top five most representable *budiman* Malay political leaders based on these selections:

TABLE 4. Malay political leaders viewed as most representable *budiman* leaders by Malay & Chinese Respondents

Percentage (%)		
Malay Respondents	Mahathir Mohamad	23.4
	Muhyiddin Yasin	19.4
	Anwar Ibrahim	12.9
	Khairy Jamaluddin	10.5
	Abdullah Badawi	7.3
Chinese Respondents	Anwar Ibrahim	20.4
	Mahathir Mohamad	14.3
	Khairy Jamaluddin	14.3
	Tunku Abdul Rahman	10.2
	Abdul Razak Hussein	8.2

Again, the different ethnicity's perspective remains a key factor to determine the *budiman* Malay leaders, as shown in Table 4.

Third, the respondent was asked to think of the future and select a good *budiman* Malay political leader to lead the nation in the future. 115 Malay respondents selected the future *budiman* leader and 41 Chinese respondents made their selection. A desire to look into a better future by choosing a future *budiman* Malay leader became a great motivation for the respondents to make this selection.

Table 5 listed the top future *budiman* Malay political leader based on these selections:

TABLE 5. Future *budiman* Malay political leaders selected by Malay & Chinese Respondents

Percentage (%)		
Malay Respondents	Khairy Jamaluddin	36.5
	Anwar Ibrahim	18.3
	Muhyiddin Yasin	13.9
	Mohd Rafizi Ramli	7.8
	Syed Saddiq	7.0
	Nurul Izzah Anwar	7.0
Chinese Respondents	Anwar Ibrahim	34.1
	Syed Saddiq	29.3
	Khairy Jamaluddin	22.0

ETHNIC RELATIONS & *BUDIMAN* MALAY POLITICAL LEADERS

This last section intends to address the issues of ethnic relations and *budiman* Malay political leaders. It deals with the implication of *budiman* Malay political leaders for ethnic relations.

Figure 4 shows the perceptions of both Malay and Chinese respondents about the current situation of ethnic relations in Malaysia:

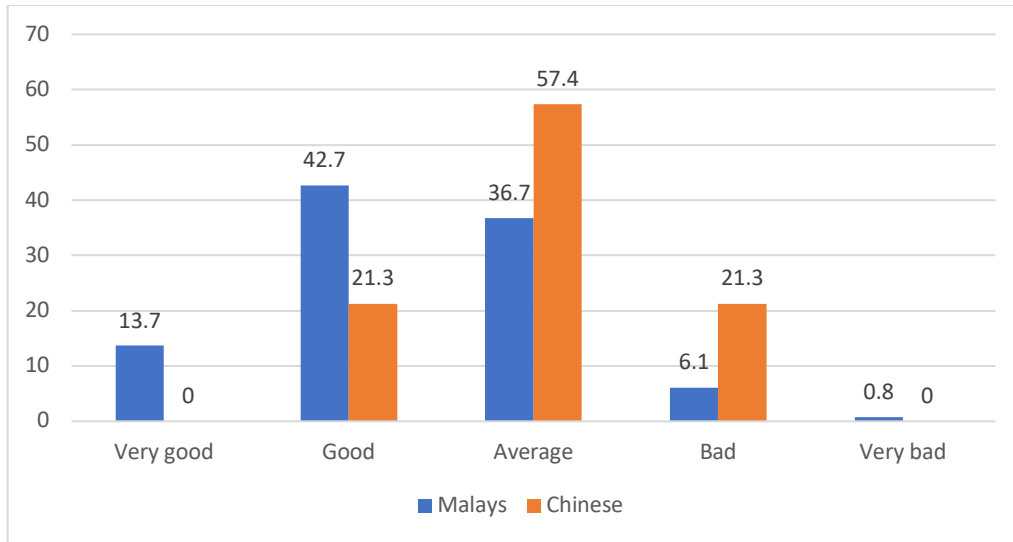


FIGURE 4. Perceptions on ethnic relations in Malaysia by Malay and Chinese respondents (Percentage)

Majority of Malay respondents had a perception that the ethnic relations in Malaysia is “good” (42.7%), followed by “average” (36.7%) and “very good” (13.7%). For Chinese respondents, majority of them believed that the ethnic relations was “average” (57.4%), followed by “good” (21.3%) or “bad” (21.3%).

In terms of major factor that divides Malaysians for better ethnic relations, Figure 5 shows the perceptions of Malay respondents.

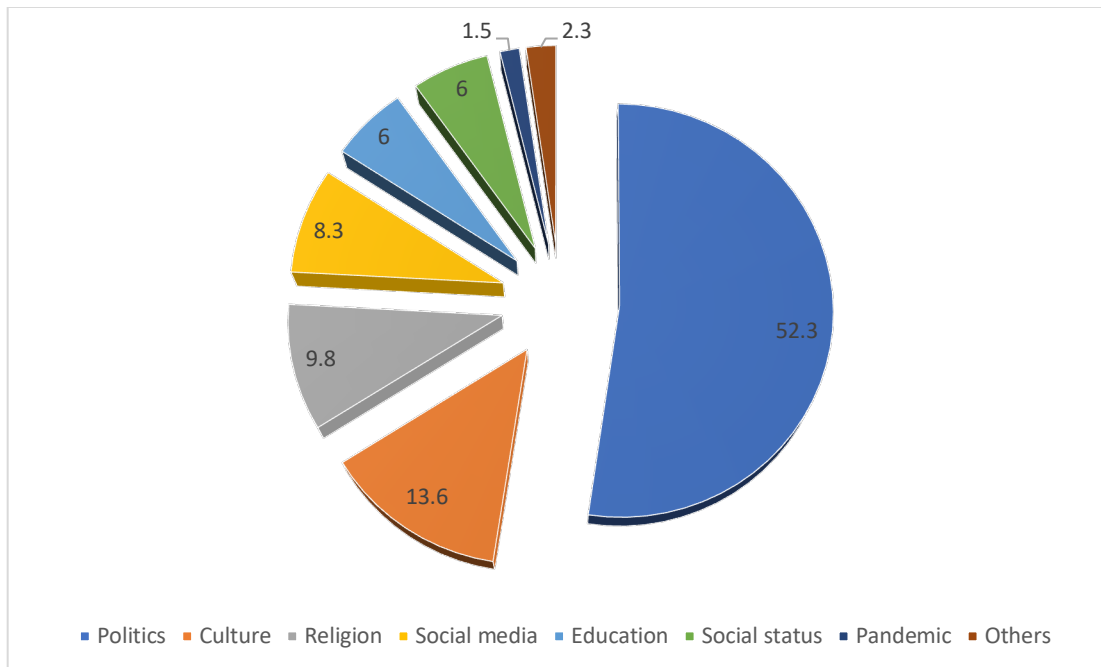


FIGURE 5. Major dividing factor for better ethnic relations by Malay respondents (Percentage)

Malay respondents view that politics was the major factor that divides Malaysians for better ethnic relations (52.3%), followed by other minor factors, including culture (13.6%), religion (9.8%), social media (8.3%), education (6%), social status (6%), pandemic (1.5%) and others (2.3%).

Figure 6 shows the perceptions of Chinese respondents:

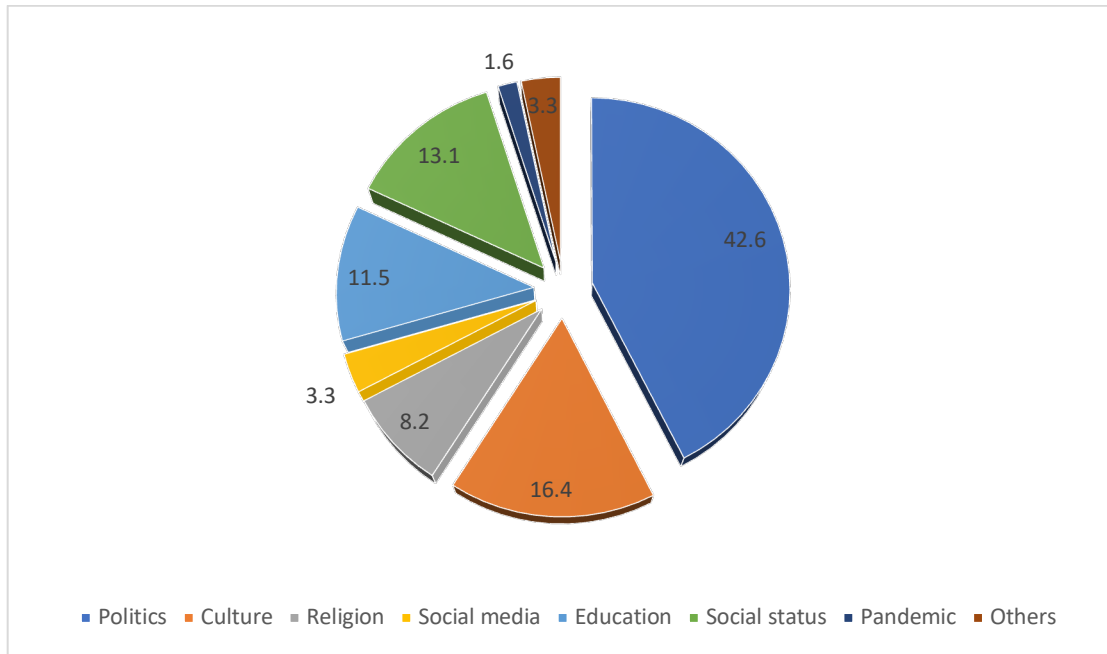


FIGURE 6. Major dividing factor for better ethnic relations by Chinese respondents (Percentage)

Similarly, Chinese respondents viewed that politics was also the major factor that divides Malaysians for better ethnic relations (42.6%), followed by other minor factors, including culture (16.4%), social status (13.1%), education (11.5%), religion (8.2%), social media (3.3%), pandemic (1.6%) and others (3.3%).

In summary, Malay and Chinese respondents viewed that the major dividing factor for a better ethnic relations was politics, followed by culture. The third dividing factor was religion for Malay respondents and social status for Chinese respondents.

Figure 7 shows the opinions that a good *budiman* Malay political leader will enhance a better ethnic relations in Malaysia.

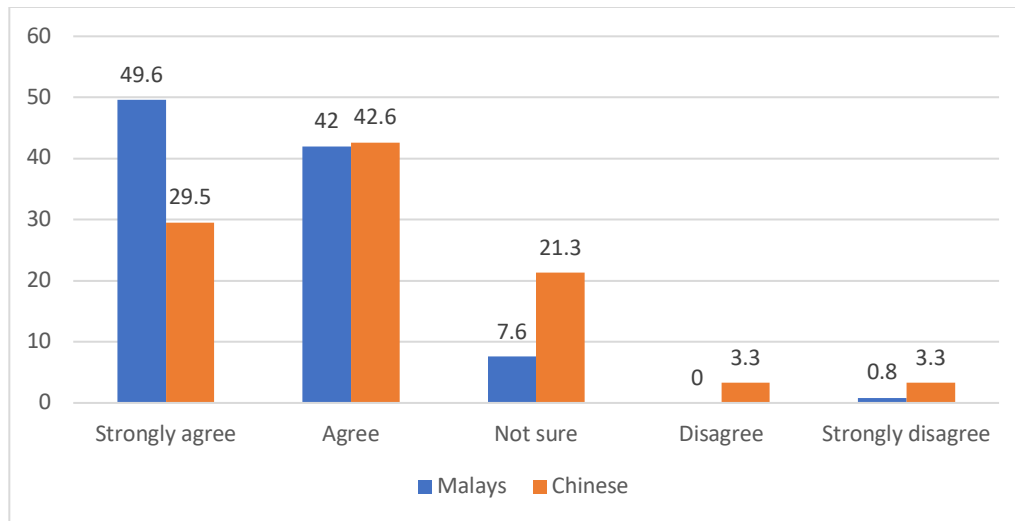


FIGURE 7. Budiman Malay political leader will enhance ethnic relations (Percentage)

Majority of Malay respondents “strongly agree” (49.6%) or “agree” (42%) that a *budiman* Malay political leader will enhance a better ethnic relations in Malaysia. Similarly, majority of Chinese respondents “agree” (42.6%) or “strongly agree” (29.5%) with this. 21.3% of Chinese respondents preferred to describe it as “not sure”. In summary, majority of both Malay and Chinese respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *budiman* Malay political leadership will enhance a better ethnic relations in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and discussion, the primary survey’s findings indicate some important points that needed to be specified. First, the level of perception among Malay and Chinese respondents to view and expect a Malay political leader as a *budiman* leader is very high. The Chinese respondents have no issue to understand the concept of *budiman*, as it is equivalent as ‘man of *ren*’ in their mind, in which they can fully understand the concept of *budiman* as ‘perfect virtue’ of the Malay.

Second, the expectation on the *budiman* Malay leaders to practice “budi and its networks” from both Malay and Chinese respondents is very high. It indicates that there is a strong expectation towards the political leaders to integrate the leadership effectiveness with their good personality traits.

Third, the identification of certain Malay leaders as *budiman* leaders, including the past, current and future leaders, is very significant. There are significant differences between Malay and Chinese respondents about the *budiman* Malay leaders. For example, based on the first choice, the Malay respondents identified Khairy Jamaluddin (21.9%), Anwar Ibrahim (19.5%), Muhyiddin Yasin (18.0%), Mahathir Mohamad (14.0%) and Ismail Sabri Yaakob (7.8%) as top five current *budiman* Malay leaders, while in Chinese respondents’ view, the top five were Anwar Ibrahim (38.6%), Syed Saddiq (15.8%), Khairy Jamaluddin (14.0%), Mahathir Mohamad (12.3%) and Nurul Izzah Anwar (7.0%). For future *budiman* leaders, Malay respondents selected Khairy Jamaluddin (36.5%), Anwar Ibrahim (18.3%), Muhyiddin Yasin (13.9%), Mohd Rafizi Ramli (7.8%), Syed Saddiq (7.0%) and Nurul Izzah Anwar (7.0%), while Chinese respondents only had

three significant preferences, namely Anwar Ibrahim (34.1%), Syed Saddiq (29.3%) and Khairy Jamaluddin (22.0%). While the integration of both leadership effectiveness and personal characteristics is still essential, this difference ethnicity's views remain a key factor to determine the *budiman* Malay political leaders.

Fourth, the recognition of some past leaders as *budiman*, including Abdullah Badawi being identified by Malay respondents, and Tunku Abdul Rahman and Abdul Razak Hussein being identified by Chinese respondents, reminds us that the contributions and commitments of the *budiman* Malay leaders will always be remembered and appreciated even they are not in political power and position anymore.

Fifth, as the politics is viewed as the major dividing factor among the ethnic groups, there is a strong implication that a *budiman* Malay political leader will enhance a better ethnic relations in Malaysia. A further survey on the next steps that a *budiman* Malay leader should take in strengthening ethnic relations in Malaysia is recommended to be conducted.

In conclusion, the level of perceptions and expectations on *budiman* Malay political leaders is very high from both Malay and Chinese communities, and provided a significant implication for better ethnic relations in Malaysia. The key implication of this study indicates that if a Malay political leader is a *budiman* leader, he or she will be highly honored, respected morally and supported politically by both Malay and Chinese communities.

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