

Original Research Paper

Addressing Equity: Assessing Inclusion and Diversity in Government Services, Operations, and Management

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Article History

Received:

13.04.2022

Revised:

10.05.2022

Accepted:

21.05.2022

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Abstract: Equity is the use of justice to recognize each other's rights, using equality for the same. On the other hand, equity adjusts the rules to certain conditions to make it fairer and more equitable in an organization. It also serves as a platform of justice and because it does not prescribe written laws, it only creates more democracy and also has a role in law. Enlightening managers and leaders on how to inculcate and seek a diverse workforce to increase productivity by employing all employees to their maximum potential, resulting in increased profitability and effectiveness. Because of the importance of business, organisational management, and human capital management, the topic has become one of the most thought-provoking problems now debated. To be competitive, one must learn to deal with a wide range of situations. This paper discloses that workplace diversity and inclusion boost employees' ability in critical thinking, solving problem, and their professional skills. These positive outcomes will eventually enable organizations to attract talent, improve corporate attractiveness, and improve performance, productivity, and finances. As a result, this paper highlights the historical background of the different races in their job scope before and after Merdeka, the results of the survey and interview session in regards to the inclusion of multiracial in their workplace, factors that less inclusion of other races in the workplace and the Islamic perspective of the inclusion diversity in any kind of area.

Keywords: Employers, Government Services, Management, Workplace.



1. Introduction

Diversity is the variety of human differences that includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, social class, physical characteristics, and religious or ethical values [1]. It may include the mentality or perception of some group of people, and how they think, and act based on the circumstances that they are in. Workplace diversity refers to the range of dissimilarities between people in an organization. Despite one's race, appearance or age, respect and consideration should be granted to someone with the capability and potential in carrying out the job. Diversity at the workplace brings benefits to the corporation as it grows innovations, productivity and competitive advantages, acquires creativity and provides a positive reputation. The differences in people working in an organization allow them to give unique experiences in the workplace [2].

Inclusion in the workplace means making sure that each employee is granted the room to thrive. If diversity concerns creating a workforce with an extensive option of backgrounds and experiences, the inclusive policy is about how a voice is given to all [3]. Therefore, diversity without inclusion is pointless. Inclusion can be practised by giving every employee the same access to opportunities and resources. The efforts of inclusion in the workplace help everyone to feel equal as it provides traditionally marginalized groups for all despite having dissimilarities in gender, race or even those with physical or mental disabilities. It is all about appreciating and respecting. Ensuring the voices and viewpoints of others are heard and thoroughly considered is important in building a better work environment where everyone feels respected and accepted [4].

Another topic related to diversity and inclusion is equity. Equity explains the situation where everybody regardless of their differences has a level playing field. The combination of all there: diversity, inclusion and equity encourages the employees to perform the best at work. Equity allows everyone in the workplace to have the same access to opportunities [5]. For an organization to change and innovate, the organization must be diverse, equal and inclusive. A safe work community and promising cooperation culture must be offered to all team members. Innovative and creative ways to deal with challenges at work can be achieved by having a diverse team with a broad scale of perspectives and skills to help brainstorm, problem solve and strategize.

According to Shaban [6] having a team full of diverse members seems to be promising, however, a diverse community may cause a communication problem between team members. The goal when possessing an organization with diversity is to tackle the differences. The employees may find it challenging to comprehend each other while working. The obvious dissimilarities in backgrounds and experiences will result in different ways of handling the same situation and putting forth their ideas [7].

Valuable team members will keep driving innovative ideas and identifying issues but a bit too much number of opinions can cause to failure to reach an agreement. Particularly innovative ways to solve problems may go unnoticed amongst the excess of other ideas. Therefore, an excessive count of opinions can compromise the ability of the company to stick to tight deadlines due to this reduction in productivity [8].

The differences in perspectives, opinions, and ideas are important for innovation but can slow down the process of decision making and progress toward aims. For example, an employee points out a significant matter related to the status quo that requires an explanation. It is possible to see such biases, discrimination, and harassment in a diverse workplace. Employees who experience all the negative effects of being different from others will fail to bring their authentic selves to work, hindering innovation, creativity, and teamwork [9].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pre Merdeka-History

During the colonization of the British Empire in Malaya from 1896 until 1957, the term 'divide and rule' were introduced by the British to separate the functions and the job scope between every race such as Malay, Indian and Chinese. The paramount intention of this idea is to avoid the integration between races and to ensure that each race lives separately and the British will remain their domination in the administration of Malaya. For example, Malay are more towards becoming farmers and fishermen in Kampung, Chinese are normally working in mining and business industries while Indians are working plantations in the estate.

The impact of ethnic occupational differentiation was utilized not only for the government services, however, but it was also spread out the education, living area and human resources. The Malays are left behind compared to other races because they only involve traditional occupations like

farming and fishing as compared to other races who are lived in the city and involved in exports industries such as mining. This can be referred to the statement by Roff [10] who explained that the British wanted to prevent the Malays to involve in modern society, “Our trusteeship for the Malay demands that we administer the country on lines consistent with their welfare and happiness, not only for today but for the future ages. That end will be attained rather by building up a sturdy and thrifty peasantry living on the lands they own and living by the food they grow than by causing them to forsake the life of their fathers for the glamour of new ways which put money in their pockets today but leave them empty tomorrow, and to abandon their rice fields for new crops which they cannot themselves utilize and the market for which depends on outside world conditions beyond their orbit”.

This agenda of divide and rule by the British ensured stability in their position in Malaya and enjoyed the maximum resources in Malaya from the results from each race. Furthermore, the Malays are in the lowest position among other races as the Malays who are the farmers need to provide good food like fish, rice and bread to the miners and the British. The Malays have no opportunity to belabour like other races as they are not allowed to have an integration between races. According to Ghee [11], the labour for the Malays and Chinese in the years 1921 and 1947 are follows Table 1.

Table 1. Labour For the Malays and Chinese in the Years 1921 and 1947 [2]

Industries	Malays		Chinese	
	1921 (%)	1947(%)	1921(%)	1947(%)
Fishing and Farming	89.0	79.1	41.0	50.1
Mining	5.0	7.2	37.3	24.3
Business	1.5	2.2	12.7	14.2
Administration	2.1	8.9	1.0	1.9

From the Table 2, less percentage in administration from both races due to the position dominated by the British. Hence, below 10% of Malays are involved in crucial industries like mining and business. This shows that there is less harmonization and integration between races and cultures, especially in the workplace when the divide and rule was implemented intentionally to have biases among races as according to Kerniah Singh Sandhu [12]:

“They (the British Colonial governments) welcomed, or were prepared to tolerate, as the case may be, Indians as a labouring or a subordinate class, but not as that which might one day conceivably compete with European interests... in Malaya, although not a declared policy, this bias or discrimination nevertheless appears to have been frequently practised surreptitiously, if not openly. This attitude of the Malayan government ... largely explains the lack of any substantial numbers of a big business, highly qualified professional and other such classes in the stream of modern Indian migration to the country”.

2.2. Post Merdeka

After the proclamation of Merdeka on August 31st 1957 by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the agenda of divide and rule was no longer implemented as the independence was gained by the togetherness of every race in Malaya for example Tun Dr Ismail, Tun Sambanthan and Tun Tan Cheng Lock. After Merdeka, Malaysia was formed including the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak in 1963. (Singapore joined in 1963, but seceded in 1965.)

About half of the population of the peninsula at that time comprised ethnic Malays, with almost 40 % Chinese and 10 % Indians. In Sabah and Sarawak, there were almost no Indians, and over 1/3 of the population was Chinese. Of the indigenous Bumiputera population, Muslims and non-Muslims were almost evenly balanced in Sabah, while less than a quarter of the population of Sarawak was Muslim. From this stage, it is very difficult as the British divide and rule caused an imbalance lifestyle between races as the majority Bumiputera like Malays are in poverty while the minorities are well developed in mining and trade business. To overcome this, many Bumiputera were involved in other sectors such as administration, business and professional sectors other than farming and fishing as

before. Furthermore, there was integration between the races and the income gap is decreasing significantly. According to Perumal, the income distribution by ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia from 1957 to 1970 are as follows Table 2.

Table 2. Income Distribution by Ethnic Groups in Peninsular Malaysia from 1957 to 1970

	1957/58	1967/68	1970
Malay			
Mean income, RM/month, 1959 prices	134	154	170
Gini coefficient	0.342	0.400	0.466
% share of income of bottom 40%	19.5	17.2	12.7
Poverty incidence	70.5		65.9
Chinese			
Mean income, RM/month, 1959 prices	288	329	390
Gini coefficient	0.374	0.391	0.455
% share of income of bottom 40%	18.0	17.0	13.9
Poverty incidence	27.4		27.5
Indian			
Mean income, RM/month, 1959 prices	228	245	300
Gini coefficient	0.347	0.0403	0.463
% share of income of bottom 40%	19.7	16.3	14.3
Poverty incidence	35.7		40.2
Chinese : Malay average income ratio	2.16	2.14	2.29
Indian : Malay average income ratio	1.71	1.60	1.75

After that during the time of Tun Razak was Prime Minister in 1970, he introduced New Economic Policy (NEP) to improve the previous policy and balanced the economical power between races and prevent market failure. This policy intended to ensure that every race is at par as the problem Bumiputera were still left behind by staying in Kampung and doing farming and fishing. This NEP is a landmark history in Malaysia as the policy was successful in its inclusion between races in the government sector, professionals and private sector until today. For example, in the 1950s most lawyers are Indian, but the impactful of NEP caused there to be many lawyers or doctors from Chinese and Malay. In addition, the NEP also reduced the gap between races after the black history racial tensions in 1969 and created harmonization, peace and develop the country economically.

2.3. Modern Society in Malaysia

In this modern society of the year 2022, there is no sceptical part that each race is only suitable for this particular job, for example, only the Chinese can be a businessman because they are good at it. The Malaysian are celebrating, respecting and having good relationships with each other regardless of their races after achieving Merdeka in 1957. The effect of this harmonization gains a massive positive impact on the country in developing the country in social, economic and welfare according to Mansor [13]. This is because each race has its strength and unity can give a huge influence and also provide a positive lifestyle for each other. Diversity is the variety of human differences that includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, social class, physical characteristics, and religious or ethical values. It may include the mentality or perception of some group of people, and how they think, and act based on the circumstances that they are in. Workplace diversity refers to the range of dissimilarities between people in an organization. Despite one's race, appearance or age, respect and consideration should be granted to someone with the capability and potential in carrying out the job. Diversity in the workplace brings benefits to the corporation as it grows innovations, productivity and competitive advantages, acquires creativity and provides a positive reputation. The differences in people working in an organization allow them to give unique experiences in the workplace and viewpoints of others are heard and thoroughly considered is important in building a better work environment where everyone feels respected and accepted [14].

Nair & Vohra [15] highlight that inclusion is the strength of diversity where employees feel valued and included in an institution. It is the process of identifying and accepting the differences in team members of an organization. Fairness and justice are important in practising equality in diversity and inclusion. Potentially, an organization that invests in diversity stands to gain in apparent and economic ways, subtle forms of stronger allegiance, greater well-being and respect that they command in the process. In creating inclusion in a workplace, an organization needs to focus beyond diversity-based recruitment and diversity training and include holistic ways to leverage diversity. It requires rephrasing the conversation from demographic diversity to thought diversity and lastly to inclusion, and addressing biases, both conscious and unconscious that may slow down the acceptance and integration. When workers feel included, in a true sense, past mere lip service, they are allowed to bring the complete of themselves to the company, communicating and giving voice in all ways that let the effective problem solving, creativity, innovation and increase performance in numerous ways.

According to Mohammed Inuwa and Zainab Idris [16], the performance of employees is an essential component of organisational performance, thus it is suggested that employers should prioritise significant motivational means that will secure job equity among their employees to obtain the highest performance level. They believed that job equity allows perceiving fairness in the workplace that brings growth in productivity and goal consistency in the workplace. Employee who is treated with fair and equal treatment tends to improve in performance as well as low employee turnover and absenteeism. Hence, it is suggested that equity should always be at a play in every level of decision making in cooperation and to make sure that organisational justice triumphs in every unit and department of the organization.

3. Methodology

The study will cover areas in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The research will be performed using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the qualitative method, interviews will be conducted with selected civil servants from the following agencies:

- Central Government
- State Government
- Local Government

4. Finding and Discussion

This research will provide a viewpoint of equity, inclusion and diversity in government agencies and how they are affecting the services, operations and management of the government. It will expose the importance of equity, inclusion and diversity in the workplace which is crucial in maintaining a good working environment for all employees. Thus, all three objectives are targeted to be achieved by the end of this study. The expected findings from this research are as follows:

1. The recognition of equity, inclusion and diversity
The level or condition of inclusion and diversity in government agencies is expected to be acknowledged from the actual experiences of the civil servants. The experiences of the respondents will be obtained from the interviews and questionnaires and the feedback will be studied to identify the state of diversity and inclusion in the government working environment.
2. The effects of equity, inclusion and diversity
The result of equity, inclusion and diversity experienced by the civil servants will be identified based on the interviews and questionnaires. The effects can be recognized once the state of equity, inclusion and diversity is finalised. More positive outcomes are expected if the majority of civil servants are satisfied with the acceptance of equity, inclusion and diversity in their workplace.
3. Recommendations to improve equity, inclusion and diversity
Since the results of this project will show the condition of inclusion and diversity in government services, operations and management from the perspectives of the civil servants themselves, the researcher may suggest ways to improve the inclusion and diversity in the public sectors. Future recommendations will be made to ensure the equity in diversity and inclusion is improved and to bring benefits to all employees.

Furthermore, based on findings by doing interviewing 120 respondents, the results are as follows Table 3.

Table 3. Does the Inclusion of Other Races in the Workplace is a Good Idea

Sector	No. Respondents	Yes	No	Not Sure
Government	75	60	5	10
Operations	20	20	0	0
Management	25	10	3	7

As the research and interview conducted from 10th February until 25th February via a google form, it can be proven that almost 100% of Malaysians have no issues with the diversity of races in their work, especially in an operational sector like Celcom. However, from the chart above, there is a small number of people who disagree to have other races in the workplace in the government and management sector as the reason behind it is the companies and the sector are full with only one race, and they never experienced other races in their workplace.

Nevertheless, the respondents also highly agree that there are some extra factors that they experienced by having relationships with other races in the workplace such as Table 4.

Table 4. Inclusion of Other Races in the Workplace

No	Statement	Agrees (%)
1	Respecting each other culture and ethnic	93
2	Visiting officemate when in trouble	70
3	Hanging out together	80
4	Respecting each other religion	85
5	Celebrating each other religious festival	60
6	Eating halal food served by non-Muslim officemate	50

It is a positive outcome from the research above as there is a high percentage that Malaysians are still respecting and accepting each other culture and religion especially Muslims who cannot eat lunch during Ramadhan may leave the office at 4,30pm compared to non-Muslims will be operating as normal office hours. Most of the respondents also comment that understanding each other religion, culture and tradition can avoid racial tensions and make a positive environment in the workplace that leads to progressive work.

Accordingly, a specific law is needed to stop discrimination in the workplace regardless of race, religion or gender discrimination in the workplace was unacceptable in a democratic society as it was against the Federal Constitution. Although there are currently many laws related to the workplace, such as the Employees Act and the Industrial Relations Act, the fact is that it does not solve the problem. Prohibiting Muslim staff at the front and customer service from wearing headscarves is a form of discrimination and against the Federal Constitution which guarantees the right to equality and rejects discrimination as well as injustice.

The best example taken is in the workplace. As a Malaysian who is committed to the Rukun Negara, we must abide by the law and respect others regardless of gender, religion, politics and background. As a multi-racial and multi-religious country, it must be very difficult for some of us to establish good relations with other friends

However, we need to be grateful. Although Malaysia has many colours and cultural patterns, we remain peaceful under one administration despite different races & political beliefs. This act can sever ties between human beings, and it is deeply hated by every religion. Starting from that, when in the

workplace we must set aside ranks and degrees when dealing with others so that issues of selfishness and bias do not arise.

Elak diskriminasi kaum dalam sektor pekerjaan

Astro Awani
Mac 10, 2019 05:57 MYT



Waytha Moorthy menyeru agar isu perkauman tidak dijadikan sebagai modal untuk meraih sokongan oleh mana-mana parti politik. - Gambar fail

Diskriminasi kaum dalam bidang pekerjaan di negara ini perlu dihentikan.

Demikian tegas Menteri Di Jabatan Perdana Menteri, P. Waytha Moorthy yang menyatakan peluang pekerjaan yang saksama penting dalam menyatu padukan masyarakat berbilang kaum.

Figure 2. Astro Awani 10 March 2019

4.1. Factors of Less Inclusion between Races in Services, Operations, and Management

Based on interviews conducted around March 2022, it can be classified that there are three main factors on why some employers or workplaces are not hiring and having more than one race.

- Different Religion

Different religions can cause one person cannot to be employed. It is because some government sectors especially under the purview of the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for Religious Affairs like Yayasan Dakwah Islam Malaysia (YADIM), Syariah Court or Majlis Agama Islam Negeri are exclusively for the Muslims as the job scope of this kind of job involves Syariah and Islamic jurisprudence like fiqh. According to Danial Farhan, this job is only for those people who are professing the religion of Islam and the inclusion of non-Muslims in this religious sector may hard for them to execute their jobs in religious matters such as Fatwa. Thus, it also mentioned in the Federal Constitution that any Islamic matters are under the state law are exclusively for the Muslims; "...Islamic law and personal and family law of persons professing the religion of Islam, including the Islamic law relating to succession, testate and intestate, betrothal, marriage, divorce, dower, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy, guardianship, gifts, partitions and non-charitable trusts; Wakafs and the definition and regulation of charitable and religious trusts, the appointment of trustees and the incorporation of persons in respect of Islamic religious and charitable endowments, institutions, trusts, charities and charitable institutions operating wholly within the State..."

- Different Languages

Secondly, it is hard for a workplace that only has clients or customers of only one race to communicate with employees of other races. According to Mr Tan, as an employer, the purpose of their business or companies is to gain maximum trust and comfortable for their customers and clients to ensure they stay with us. He also emphasized that it is very difficult for him to accept other races to work in his Chinese Restaurant as their customers normally

He faced trouble when he took Malay girls' work in his restaurant and end up, getting so many complaints from customers as the employee cannot understand the request of the customer clearly.

- **Sensitivity of Other Religions**

For the last factor, some employer believes that hiring different religions as their employers may hurt their feelings and insensitivity. Mr Najumuddin is of an opinion that if we put in the shoes of non-Muslim employer, some job requires their employers to do something that is against their religious teachings. For example, every bartender in a nightclub must serve alcoholic drinks to the customer and this action is against the Islamic Religion and also a part of Syariah Criminal Offence under Section 19 of Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997:

- (1) Any person who in any shop or other public place, consumes any intoxicating drink shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both.
- (2) Any person who makes, sells, offers or exhibits for sale, keeps or buys any intoxicating drink shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding five thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to both.

In addition, some employers hard to permit their Muslim employees to go for Friday prayer and leave the office early for the iftar during Ramadhan.

The same goes for Muslim employers, some of them hard to hire non-Muslims as they want to avoid insensitivity toward non-Muslims. For instance, the Hindus are forbidden from eating meat, and this may require during the meeting with the client, there is no lunch in the month of Ramadhan in the office and religious activities in the office.

4.2. Islamic Values

In the religion of Islam, the purpose of Allah creating people of different colours, background and races are not to be discriminated against or separate, but to know each other and celebrate their differences. This can be referred to as Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13: [17]

“O mankind, We have created you male and female, and We have made you peoples and tribes, that you might know one another, verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted”.

This verse emphasizes that diversity is a natural phenomenon created by God and we are bound by the laws of nature to this diversified world, where religions and cultures exist next to each other in the same lands and countries. Since diversity is divinely created, we all need to understand and accept the beauty of creation. Allah assures us that we can live together in peace and harmony with people of other faiths. The diversity of cultures is like a garden where different types of flowers grow on the same soil.

In terms of Islamic history of civilization, during the establishment of Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Prophet Muhammad S.A.W promotes unity between all races such as Ansar Arabs, Muhajirin Arabs, Persian, Jews and black people like Bilal R.A. One of the significant institutions of unity is where the Prophet in the administration of the Madinah. As Rasulullah was the head of the state, the representative of the council meeting will be the leader from each tribe such as the tribe of Aus and Khazraj to discuss any relevant matters for the state. Other than that, the Jews from Bani Quraizah and Bani Qainuqa' will be assisting in funding some war equipment to preserve the peace of the state together with other tribes and races.

Other than administration, Rasulullah also promotes the inclusion of other tribes and races in the construction and agriculture sectors as before this it has been monopolized by the Jews and the slave. The reason behind this was happening is because the Arabs think that these sectors are in low class and not suitable for them. Therefore, the Prophet encourages the Muslims involve in these sectors and be part of the state's economic contributions. According to Hadith: [18]

“I heard the Messenger of Allah say: Allah, Most High, will cause three persons to enter Paradise for one arrow: the maker when he has a good motive in making it, the one who shoots it, and the one who hands it; so shoot and ride, but your shooting is dearer to me

than your riding. Everything with which a man amuses himself is vain except three (things): a man's training of his horse, his playing with his wife, and his shooting with his bow and arrow. If anyone abandons archery after becoming an adept through distaste for it, it is a blessing he has abandoned; or he said: for which he has been ungrateful.”

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be noted that there is a massive change in the culture in the area of inclusivity of every race in the workplace such as in sectors of government services, operations and management. There is no more existence of divide and rule policy as promoted by the British colonial. Nowadays, Malaysians are more accepting of each other as the strength of Malaysia is through diversity in skin colour, culture, religion and race. The differences in the workplace can create harmonisation, bonds and uplifting each other between employees. Moreover, it is just hearsay when someone believes that there is no inclusivity in a workplace is because of racism and non-acceptance of diversity. Based on the outcome of surveys and interviews, Malaysians who are employers specifically have no issue in accepting the differences and some employers who are not accepting other races are because they understand the culture and the religion of the races which accept them in the workplace may cause uncomfortable, insensitivity and cannot perform very well in the workplace.

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