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## **National Identity : Survey On University Of Malaya Special Preparatory Program Of Japan (SPPJ)**

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**Abstract.** As a multiracial and multireligious country, the issue of national identity is a challenging one especially in the process of nation building. Therefore, although most Malaysians are familiar with the national

identity reinforcement, however their level of understanding were different; some of them were aware of its

existence, some are able to give its definition and the foundation of identity reinforcement. This study is focusing on the issue of national identity reinforcement through understanding, appreciation and practices among students of The Centre for Foundation Studies in Science (The Special Preparatory Program of Japan)

University of Malaya. These students were selected to pursue their studies in Japanese Universities based on

their excellent academic results. In this respect they were selected as respondents for this study.

**Keywords:** national identity, appreciation, national, reinforcement

### **1. Introduction**

After independence, Malaysia has endeavoured to create a national identity for its citizens and multiracial society of its civilization. A strong national identity is crucial in retaining authoritative and

sustainable civilization. Therefore, even though most of Malaysians are familiar with the national identity

reinforcement, however their level of understanding were different; some of them realized of its existence,

some are able to give its definition and the foundation of identity reinforcement. In effectively realizing a

spirit of rules as required by national identity, the total condition and the purpose of engaging its values must

be understood. From the awareness of this understanding, it is anticipated that the passion and learning those

values would be realized. The most important thing is we are able to appreciate the national values and spirit

by practicing it in our lives.<sup>[1]</sup>

In this survey, students from The Centre for Foundation Studies in Science (The Special Preparatory

Program of Japan) of University of Malaya were the respondents. They were chosen to further their studies

in Japan due to their excellent academic results. Furthermore, they are required to sit for identity course as

part of preparation in undertaking academic and environment challenges.

Therefore, this group of students who are expected to represent Malaysia have to encounter the world

while upholding the national identity and image. A strong identity in the students is crucial because as they

are regarded as a leader in future, the nation do not want them to be carried away by the impact of the globalization. Through this survey, national identity reinforcement could be evaluated through the understanding, realizing, practicing in depth of its influencing factors.

The objectives of this survey are:

- Evaluating the students' knowledge and understanding of national identity.
- Evaluating on how much the students are realizing the values of national identity.
- Identifying the effectiveness of the national identity values reinforcement by observing on how students are practicing those values in their lives.

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## **2. Background to the Study**

Identity could be achieved through patriotic education program which would be able to improve and reinforce the spirit of appreciating oneself, family, society and nation. The responsibility to instill this patriotism spirit had been given mostly to the Ministry of Education at every level through curriculum and co-curriculum.

However, the most disturbing issue which is the aim to develop Malaysian students and society that really patriotic has not been fully achieved so far. Therefore, those statements those highlighting the loss of

Malaysian identity need to be proven. Most of the research and publications have not discussed on the extent

of effectiveness of the national identity reinforcement in particular. Researchers are more focused on the basic and values to be included in the development and reinforcement of the national identity. Among others is the research done by Rushdi Ramli [2] who study about the identity reinforcement of

Muslim Malay in line of Ahli Sunnah Wa al-Jamaah's school of thought. He argued that the social derangement among the youth could be addressed through the internal and external identity reinforcement as

understood and defined by Ahli Sunnah Wa al-Jamaah.

Besides, there is other study which discussed the basic foundation of identity development through the

study of National Principles. The study which was carried out by Zuraini Jamil [3], highlights the education as

perceived as an important medium that could nurture identity, unity, understanding and cooperation among

Malaysian which comprises of different ethnic groups, cultures, religions, races. He also pointed out about

the different relocation challenge that influences the thinking and attitude of the certain particular classes of

society towards the unity efforts done by the government. Another study done by Azrina Jonit [4] discussed

the value of education towards the development of integrity. Based on the national education philosophy, the objective of education is to develop a good citizen. Therefore, the statements of identity loss among Malaysian should be proven. Based on this condition, studies either in particular or focusing on the effectiveness or on the extent of how much Malaysians lose their national identity should be carried out. The findings of this study should be a reference in improving the weaknesses of national identity reinforcement practices.

### **3. Methodology**

This study would adopt the quantitative method. Questionnaire has been distributed randomly to 60 students. Respondents are students of The Centre for Foundation Studies in Science particularly, The Special Preparatory Program of Japan of University of Malaya.

### **4. Findings**

All respondents were given a similar questionnaire. They had given full cooperation in answering and returning the questionnaire.

#### **4.1 Respondents Profile**

The 60 respondents profile as shown below:

Table 1 : The Distribution of Respondents based on Gender

**Gender Number (Frequency) Percentage (%)**

Male 33 55

Female 27 45

Total 60 100

The majority of the respondents are male which is 33 or 55% and the rest is female students. All respondents are Malay.

Table 2 : The Distribution of Respondents Based on Type of School

**Type of School Number (Frequency) Percentage (%)**

Normal School 10 16.7

Boarding School 50 83.3

Total 60 100.0

Table 2 shows the number of respondents on type of school either normal school or boarding school. It

shown that 50 respondents are from boarding school while the rest, 10 respondents are from normal school

before they are selected to study at The Centre for Foundation Studies in Science, University of Malaya.

Table 3 : The Distribution of Respondents based on place of origin (Hometown)

**Place of origin Number (Frequency) Percentage(%)**

Urban 37 61.7

Rural 23 38.3

Total 60 100.0

Table 3 shows the place of origin of the respondents. It is shown that 37 respondents are from urban

while the rest are from rural area.

#### **4.2 The Practice of values of national identity**

Table 4 : The Distribution of the National Identity Practices

**No. Items Agree Less Agree Disagree**

1. I have heard and aware of National Identity

before.

26 (43.3%) 20 (33.3%) 14 (23.3%)

2. I know by heart the National Principles and National Anthem song.

48(80%) 12(20%) -

3. I know and carry out my religious obligation dutifully and faithfully.

58(96.7%) 2(3.3%) -

4. I and my family still practice our customs and cultures.

38(63.4%) 17(28.3%) 5(8.3%)

5. I agree with those customs because from my personal view, it is compatible to the current trend.

31(51.7%) 23(38.3%) 6(10%)

6. I and my family communicate through Malay Language.

55(91.7%) 4(6.6%) 1(1.7%)

7. I am more comfortable using Malay Language when I'm communicating with friends from different ethnic groups.

44(73.3%) 11(18.3%) 5(8.3%)

8. I visit friends from different ethnic groups at their celebrations because of our friendships.

31 (51.7%) 22(36.7%) 7(11.6%)

9. I am comfortable when mixing around with friends of different ethnic groups.

41(68.3%) 14(23.3%) 5(8.4%)

10. I am interested in learning the cultures of other ethnic groups.

39(65%) 15(25%) 6(10%)

11. I will try to help my friends when they are in trouble and need my help.

58(96.7%) 2(3.3%) -

12. I am not hesitant to carry out team works or activities.

55(91.7%) 4(6.7%) 1(1.6%)

Based on the Table 4, the understanding of National Identity of students of SPPJ could be identified as

26 respondents (43.3%), 20 respondents (33.3%) are not sure and 14 respondents (23.3%) don't know about it.

However, it can be said that all respondents are familiar of National Principles and National Anthem song

even though 20% cannot remember or understand the National Principles.

In Table 4, there are statements which highlight the practices of good values and culture practices which

should be part of the individual. Based on the above table, it can be said that almost all students

58 respondents (96.7%) are practising their religious obligations as required by their religion. While another two

respondents (3.3%) are unable to confirm whether they are performing their religious obligation accordingly.

From the Malay customs perspective, it was found that 38 respondents (63.4%) confirmed the practice

of the customs in their families. While another five respondents state that either they or their families are not practising the customs in their daily lives. The rest or 17 respondents (28.3%) are not sure of the custom practices. Besides, a number of respondents, 31 of them (51.7%) emphasized that their customs are still relevant to the current situation. Malay society cannot be separated from their customs which was inherited since time immemorial. This customs also develop the identity of Malays and make it special. However, the different view of those are not practicing the customs argue that customs are not important in their lives as 29 respondents (48.3%) regarded inherited customs as not suitable to current situation. Most of the respondents 55 of them (91.7%) used Malay Language to communicate with family members, while five respondents (8.3%) are not using Malay Language. Meanwhile, judging from the usage of language among friends of different ethnic groups has shown that they are comfortable using Malay Language. 44 respondents (73.3%) states that they use the language to interact with other ethnic groups. The relationships to other ethnic groups can be also been exploit to observe the attitude of students in the practice of racial unity. 31 respondents (51.7%) pointed out that they do visit their friends during celebration, while 29 respondents (48.3%) do not practice that. From the perspective of social relationship, 19 respondents (31.7%) highlights feeling uncomfortable and 41 respondents (68.3%) do have any problem in social relationship with other ethnic groups. Interest in knowing other ethnic groups' cultures should be taken in account because it shows that the individual caring attitude towards other ethnic groups. From this study, 39 respondents (65%) show real interest in knowing in depth of others ethnic cultures, 15 respondents (25%) at moderate level while five respondents (10%) could not be bothered of other ethnic cultures. Other good values especially pertaining to living in the society like caring, cooperation, tolerance should be inculcated by these students. 58 respondents state that they are willing to help their friends in trouble and two respondents give opposite reactions. They are not hesitant to carry out a work or task in group whereby 55 respondents express their consent while another five respondents are more comfortable to carry out work or task individually. In whole, most of the students of SPPJ have good identity especially in the aspect of patriotic spirit, basic religious practices in line with their religious beliefs such as prayers, fasting and others and the practices of good values. On the other hand, based on the findings of the survey of ethnic relationship there is

a cause for concern because some students highlighted their discomfort when being around with other ethnic groups and are less or not interested in wanting to know other ethnic groups' cultures. Besides, students' perception towards customs shows the changes of the importance of the customs.

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