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TITLE: IDENTITY NEGOTIATION MECHANISM IN A MULTICULTURAL FIELD: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS BASED ON THE CULTURAL PRACTICE OF CHINESE IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

In this work, the author finds out the way Chinese Malaysians manage their ethnic identity in the multicultural Malaysian society in terms of cultural practices and the strategies of intercultural communication. The study is a quantitative approach with analysis based on SPSS that focuses on the effects on the participation in rituals, festivals, and multilingual practices on the development of communication style and identity. The results indicate that Indirect communication is highly practiced particularly in the city or metropolitan of Malaysia such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang, whereby the cultural diversity fosters subdued flexible interactions to preserve peace and identity. The urban life increases the multicultural engagements and therefore, indirect communication becomes important in ensuring a nationwide social cohesiveness besides testing the cultures to change and redefine their identity. The integrative strategies promote the bicultural competence and advance the ethnic identity, whereas the assimilation ones are linked to its diminishment. The results highlight the protective role of indirect discourse and inclusive cultural practices in managing identity in urban multicultural contexts. This study offers a foundation for future research on identity negotiation in diverse societies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Identity has transformed from a static, single-dimension theory to an adaptable, process to a large extent that dictates how multicultural spaces operate [1]. In the last couple of years, social sciences have paid much attention to identity negotiation, which depicts how people interact with other cultures to strive for social status in their society. People in multicultural contexts have to negotiate identities in the face of a multitude of cultural stories, linguistic systems and social norms that they encounter during their daily activity [2]. Malaysia stands as an ideal environment to study this phenomenon because its multicultural structure comprises the main Malaysian population groups that include Malays, Chinese and Indians [3]. Chinese Malaysians create an appropriate environment to study cultural hybridity as it develops through negotiation practices. This study addresses the problem of how Chinese Malaysians navigate and negotiate their ethnic identity within Malaysia's multicultural society, where cultural preservation and adaptation often conflict. The objective is to examine how cultural practices, multicultural exposure, and communication strategies interact to shape identity negotiation, with a focus on the mediating role of indirect communication style. The ancestral link of Chinese Malaysians with China exists alongside their national dedication to Malaysia and their global cultural understanding leading to continuous ethnic identity transformation [4]. The group identity exists both through social interactions as well as contests of performance which makes its ancestral roots difficult to determine [5].

The Malaysian Chinese population combines their cultural heritage with government-led Malay supremacy policies through the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) [6]. Malaysian Chinese go through different life levels such as linguistic practices that incorporate Mandarin, the various Chinese dialects and Malay- English with religious-cultural practices. This harmonizes different spiritual backgrounds and social behavioural changeovers from homes, workplace to public domain like; global mobility, online communication access amongst others and learning circles of the world system has made identity combination even more difficult for the younger generations who are left with the responsibility to merge old ethnic roots with modern cosmopolitan aspect [7]. Identity identification positively performs nonstandard family issues since it accommodates wider macroscale environments that also entail state laws as well as tools for economic advancements and cultural development [8]. Experts require complex analytical approaches to cope with so many influencing factors and environment-based ones for the understanding of identity formation in such a context [9]. The existing body of research about cultural practices with multicultural exposure fails to integrate analytical structures that unite these elements with the process of identity negotiation through cultural inclusion along with communication strategies. Research frequently fails to address how indigenous communication patterns of East and Southeast Asia act as regulatory mechanisms which influence ethnic identity disclosure. The analysis in this study uses three dimensions including cultural resources represented by cultural practices and social positioning represented by cultural inclusion and interactional strategies manifested through indirect communication. Social positioning refers to how individuals perceive their place and acceptance within the societal and cultural hierarchy, influenced by both personal experiences and structural factors. Chinese Malaysians utilize their traditional cultural heritage to follow official state perspectives and current multicultural norms through specific patterns of communication. Research variables receive comprehensive literary evaluation through this study which allows builders of empirical hypotheses to connect theoretical base with regionally applicable information. The structural model utilizes hypotheses to determine direct and indirect relationships between cultural practices together with multicultural exposure and cultural inclusion processes while indirect communication style acts as a culturally important mediating factor.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is structured around the core variables used in the proposed identity negotiation framework:

(1) cultural practices, (2) multicultural exposure, (3) cultural inclusion, (4) indirect communication style, and (5) identity negotiation strategies. This structure aligns with the development of testable hypotheses in later sections and addresses the identified gaps in past research.

2.1. Cultural Practices and Ethnic Identity Development

Cultural practices, including language, rituals, festivals, and daily customs, are foundational in shaping ethnic identity. These practices are not only expressions of cultural heritage but also serve as mechanisms for reinforcing group cohesion and distinctiveness, as they foster a collective sense of belonging and reaffirm shared cultural Identity Negotiation Mechanism inA Multicultural Field: A

Three-Dimensional Framework Analysis Based on the Cultural Practice of Chinese in Malaysia

values across generations [10]. Engaging in traditional rituals, language use, and communal festivals allows Chinese Malaysians to maintain ethnic continuity while navigating the complexities of Malaysia's multicultural society. In the context of Chinese Malaysians, traditional practices such as Chinese New Year celebrations, temple rituals, and linguistic preferences (Mandarin, dialects) continue to serve as identity anchors.

Wang) *et al.*[10] highlight how cultural pedagogy utilizing traditional Chinese arts (e.g., calligraphy) reinforces identity through educational spaces. However, this work is limited to formal educational settings and does not explore identity expression in broader sociocultural contexts. Cultural practices also intersect with societal expectations, as observed in Malaysian policy frameworks that emphasize Malay cultural dominance. This makes cultural preservation not only an act of tradition but also one of resistance and negotiation.

2.2. *Multicultural Exposure and Identity Adaptation*

Fewer cultural interactions engage multicultural exposure, which involve daily work with foreign cultural groups, in institutions of learning and via policy or migration. Malay society's multicultural exposure is integrated with multilingual communities, use of shared public offices and media content. Quinio[11] study targeted Canadians immigrants reveal how multicultural surroundings make the production of hybrid identities problematic.

Multicultural exposure can also lead to the outcomes of identity adaptation in two major ways that are integration and assimilation. Integration helps the people to maintain their cultural heritage but are active members of the larger society- such as the Chinese Malaysians can still maintain their traditional festivals, dining habits, and use of language but still be involved in the Malay dominated institutions of the society, schools, and workplaces. Assimilation, on the other hand, is a process where individuals incline themselves more towards the mainstream cultural norms, at the cost of their cultural identity, i.e. young Chinese Malaysians in everyday interaction use English or Malay other than their native languages, and use mainstream cultural expressions in order to evade social isolation. These conflicting approaches emphasize the two-way pressures of living in multicultural societies, in which ethnic continuity and societal inclusion are frequently in conflict[11]. Although the personal narratives given by Quino in his research,

it is not in aid of analysing the nuanced manner in which communication provides these transitions[12] . Multicultural experiences can be fruitful to Chinese Malaysians provided they can enhance bicultural competence, but in the same breath, the exposures can act as a challenge that will dull ancient identity markers. Bicultural competence is the capability to negotiate and blend the values, behavior and expectations of two different cultural settings successfully.

2.3. *Social Belonging And Cultural Inclusion.*

Cultural inclusion is a sense of belonging, being identified with in the mainstream culture. This would imply resource contributing, appreciation of cultural heritage, and allowing the minority groups to contribute to the construction of shared narratives. The state policy like New Economic Policy in Malaysia have the propensity to affect cultural inclusion, protecting the pre-eminence of the Malay culture and economy[6].

The theoretical perspective of identity under cultural and power relation is provided by Sabaliauskienė[13]. Her discussion highlights the significance of inclusion in supporting the sense of self that is stable in multicultural contexts. Nevertheless, her conclusions can be applied very slightly due to the absence of empirical evidence. In Malaysian case, the perceived exclusion, which may be in the form of underrepresentation in political discourse, education inequity or a state policy such as the New Economic Policy, can result in defensive identity strategy embraced by minority groups such as Chinese Malaysians. These can be dropping out of the communal discussions, focusing on intra-group cohesiveness or choose to focus on customs of the traditional in privacies. Further, to maintain the social harmony and avoid the direct clash of cultures it is possible to resort to the indirect communication strategies in the form of suggesting, silence or euphemistic speech, especially in the inter-ethnic relations at the working places, at school or in the public administration. This indirectness has its protective role in which the ethnic identity is conserved without raising the tension in a Malay society [12].

2.4. *Indirect Communication Style as A Mediating Strategy*

In cultures of East and Southeast Asia there is a significant number of indirect communications characterized by *https://redfundamentos.com* 86 implicit communication, deference, and contextual cues. It is to ensure harmony and avoid conflict as well as group face protection. For Chinese Malaysians, indirectness

makes it possible for the expression of identity within the confines of multicultural decorum and hegemonic power structures [12].

Teh[12] illustrated Malaysian ESL classrooms as the identity-forming spaces, where the indirect communication facilitates the negotiation of divergent cultural expectations. Although helpful, the study is limited to institutions of learning. The wider role of the indirect communication in negotiation between cultural practices and strategies of identity is under researched in empirical models.

This study assumes that the indirect communication plays the main role of mediator intertwining the cultural practices and multicultural exposure with the choice of identity strategies. Its regulatory function is crucial to addressing sensitive intercultural dynamics within the complex social environment of Malaysia, where the need to maintain the interpersonal harmony frequently overrules the direct confrontational approach. For instance, in professional or bureaucratic setting Chinese Malaysians might use the indirect speech style to negotiate against disagreement or dissent without controverting the dominant cultural norms hence upholding the social cohesion [12]

2.5. Identity Negotiation Strategies: Assimilation And Integration

Identity negotiation involves strategic decisions about how individuals present themselves within multicultural environments. Strategies include:

• Assimilation: minimizing cultural distinctiveness to blend into the dominant culture.

• Integration: maintaining one's cultural identity while participating in the broader society.

Studies indicate that integration results in a better ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing, whilst assimilation can cause loss or confusion of identity [11]. Nevertheless, the other variables include inclusion and the style of communication which moderate these outcomes.

Bhujel, and Sinha[14] pay attention to the way visual clues of Nepali communities in West Bengal (linguistic landscape) are used to establish ethnic identity in the public space. Although interesting, this work fails to bring out the interpersonal levels of identity work. This is where the necessity of a model that involves both the symbolic and communicative sides of the negotiation process comes in.

2.6. Synthesis And Conceptual Gaps

Though the available literature plays a role in figuring out identity in multicultural settings, most of such literature dwells on either macro-level structures (e.g., policies) or micro-level manifestations (e.g., narratives, symbols) but does not combine them into a unified picture. In addition, there is scanty research that takes into account the mediating role of the culturally specific communication style such as indirectness.

This research addresses these gaps by proposing a model that integrates:

• Cultural practices and multicultural exposure as background variables, • Cultural inclusion and indirect communication style as mediators,

• and identity negotiation strategies as outcomes.

This structure enables empirical testing of how Chinese Malaysians negotiate identity in a way that respects both heritage and multicultural realities.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Figure 1 illustrates the framework which demonstrates how cultural practices interact with multicultural exposure and identity negotiation strategies through cultural inclusion. The framework displays the middle role of cultural inclusion which bridges cultural practices with multicultural exposure. The research builds its theoretical basis through this model which provides an organized method to conduct statistical analyses of proposed relationships. The analytical framework will provide guidance for the empirical analysis to produce better insights regarding how cultural heritage interacts with multicultural exposure to shape Chinese Malaysian identity expressions.
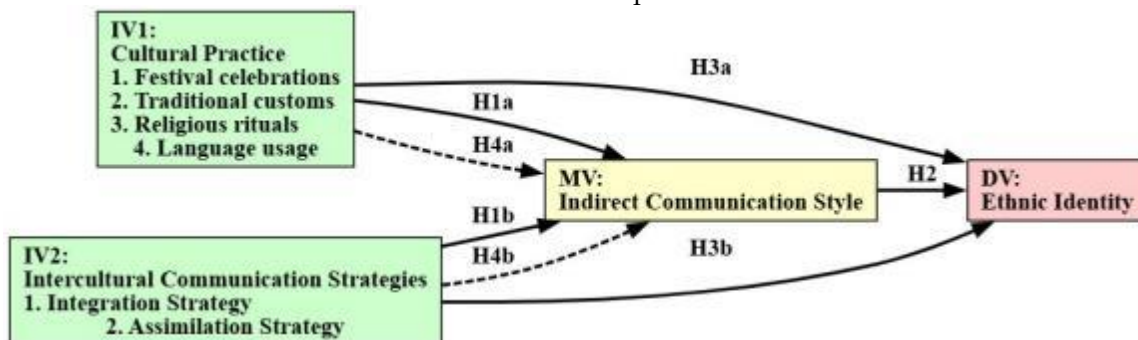

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

3.1. Research Hypothesis

3.1.1. Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework and literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Cultural practices (festival celebrations, traditional customs, religious rituals, language usage) significantly influence indirect communication style.

H1b: Intercultural communication strategies (integration and assimilation strategies) significantly influence indirect communication style.

H2: Indirect communication style significantly influences ethnic identity.

H3a: Cultural practices significantly influence ethnic identity.

H3b: Intercultural communication strategies significantly influence ethnic identity.

H4a: Indirect communication style mediates the relationship between cultural practices and ethnic identity.

H4b: Indirect communication style mediates the relationship between intercultural communication strategies and ethnic identity.

The development of these hypotheses ensures alignment with the conceptual model and offers scholars a robust foundation for conducting empirical studies within Malaysia's multicultural context. **The investigation examined connections between cultural practices, multiculturalism experience, and approaches to cultural inclusion and identity negotiation [15]. The hypotheses presented here are described below:**

H1a: Influence of Cultural Practices on Indirect Communication Style

Engagements like attending cultural events, religion followings and speaking native languages build the foundation of infection patterns of individuals. The involvement in these practices strengthens values of harmony, respect of hierarchy, and collectivism which brings the indirect forms of communication development. Those who are tied close to their cultural traditions often choose indirection, hidden meanings and a refusal to confront directly in their transactions in accordance with expectations in a culture [16, 17]. A way of communicating, in this sense, reflects a deep interest in cultural background and has the character of a conscious endeavor at maintaining social cohesion in various contexts.

H1b: Influence of Intercultural Communication Strategies on Indirect Communication Style

Communication strategies used in the intercultural milieu, i.e., integration and assimilation have very

important role to play in terms of the manner people adapt their communication strategies in the multicultural setting [18]. Indirect communication may be an intentional strategy of integrators, which allows preserving its cultural heritage and at the same time being responsive to other cultural values. The problems with direct confrontation and indirect hints they use keep everything in balance and in respect to ensure that without forgetting their cultural roots they can fit into the multicultural environment. On a similar note, there are some forms of indirect communication, which assimilators can embrace in order to downplay any cultural manifestation and reduce the risk of cultural

conflict. That is, the orientation adopted by individuals in control of their consumption in order to move cross- cultural environments has a significant bearing on the means by which they plan and express themselves in the course of the social interaction process.

H2: Role of Indirect Communication Style in Shaping Ethnic Identity

The survival of ethnic identity and the development of this ethnic identity relies heavily on using an indirect method of communication, as this gives the individual a means to express themselves; their self-expression is that which targets the realities of society to the norms of society and thus to the values therein. From deployment of non-literal translations of meanings, body language, and cooperative interactions, people guard their cultural distinctiveness through cross-cultural interactions. Through such a form of communication, individuals are not forced to overemphasize the need to oppose the dominant social rules in order to preserve their cultural core [10]. Because of this, people can survive with a strong ethnic identity through a feeling of shared continuity and group in their cultural community.

H3a: Effect of Cultural Practices on Ethnic Identity

Cultural traditions are important in the creation of ethnic identity through inter connectedness to the past and tradition for individuals. The process of internalization of values and norms of one's ethnic group is achieved when an individual participates in cultural events and observances, linguistic expressions, community traditions and so forth. With social and psychological support, individuals enhance their sense of ethnic identity as such support fosters belonging and validates cultural continuity [10]. The sustained preservation of cultural traditions contributes to the formation of a strong and recognizable ethnic heritage for individuals within multicultural environments.

H3b: Effect of Intercultural Communication

Strategies on Ethnic Identity

The people's perception of and communication of the ethnic identity is determined by the choice they make concerning intercultural communication, i.e., integration or assimilation. By integrating, a person is able to maintain his cultural heritage while, at the same time, staying in touch with the wider society, thus promotive the ethnic self-awareness. Assimilation on the other hand can make ethnic markers less visible, which will dilute the visibility where ethnic identity is concerned. Therefore, the strategy chosen in the adaptation to multiple-cultural contexts has a significant influence on one's experience value when it comes to ethnic background.

H4a: Mediating Role of Indirect Communication Between Cultural Practices and Ethnic Identity

Indirect communication style serves as a crucial mediating factor between cultural practices and ethnic identity. While cultural practices instill foundational values and norms, the way individuals express and sustain these through communication determines the visibility and strength of ethnic identity [10]. Indirect communication allows for the subtle transmission of cultural meanings in ways that align with group expectations and avoid social conflict. Through this mediating role, it enables individuals to uphold their cultural identity while adapting to broader multicultural dynamics.

The indirect form of communication is an integral link between cultural practices and ethnic identity formation. Cultural practices serve as the foundation for core values, but it is through communicative behaviors—particularly the mode of expression and adherence to these values—that the visibility and resilience of an individual's ethnic identity are articulated. . Indirect communication provides a resource for passing cultural relevance without being aggressive to the standards of a group and contributing to the social peace [16]. This mediation by way of indirect communication enables people to live up to their cultural identity, whilst exiting effectively in multicultural settings.

H4b: Mediating Role of Indirect Communication Between Intercultural Strategies and Ethnic Identity

The way people see and express their ethnic identity is to a large extent dependent on their indirect communication in intercultural situations. Indirect communication is important in defining the expression or hiding of the culture identity when people choose integration or assimilation. By mediating interactions people can retain cultural values

and thrive in multicultural social scenarios. Using the indirect means of communication can help people

find the right equilibrium between their ethnic identity and social expectations of multicultural ambience.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used a quantitative approach through cross-sectional surveys to examine how Chinese Malaysians manage their identities while considering cultural behaviour together with their multicultural interactions. A cross-sectional research design works best for data measurement at one moment in time because it reveals important relationships between variables in the population of interest. The study defines cultural practices as traditional customs alongside Chinese Malaysian values alongside behaviours while multicultural exposure captures the extent to which members of the Chinese Malaysian community engage with and adapt to various ethnic groups in Malaysia. The research evaluates how these elements affect identity negotiation methods within multicultural settings. Cultural inclusion refers to an individual feeling of belongingness and acceptance in the Malayan society at large. The research explores how cultural inclusion builds or weakens the connections between the cultural practices and multicultural exposure, identity negotiation approaches. The research makes use of both Multiple regression analysis and mediation analysis based on statistics for an in-depth quantitative study of Chinese Malaysian identity interactions leaning towards the cultural and multicultural components.

4.1. Population And Sample

Chinese Malaysians of all inhabiting the various states in the Malaysian state were the research participants for this study. The cultural diversity in Chinese Malaysian population demanded the researchers, to add numerous demographic characteristics that would reflect the community in their study [19]. In the study, stratified random sampling was employed to get an equitable representation of the Chinese Malaysian population using the different age groups and level of education and their residential preferences of being rural or urban people [20].

The population had five age groups beginning at 18-29 and ending at 60-65 years. Besides four levels of education that increased from secondary school to post graduation degrees were taken into account. The researchers divided the residential districts among urban and rural sectors in order to measure the possible differences in the urban and rural life of people when people adjust their identities [21]. The specified sampling technique reduced unintended sampling

errors by ensuring participants from various backgrounds participated. Therefore, the findings delivered broader insights across diverse groups.

A power analysis with G*Power software found the suitable sample size at 129 based on three conditions: an α = 0.05 significance level, medium effect size (0.15) criteria, along with a desired power of 0.80 while applying four predictors in the model. Statistical analysis revealed 129 participants as the minimum requirement for hypothesis testing because of the need for sufficient power [22]. Because of potential missing information and non-respondents, the study distributed 200 questionnaires to ensure complete necessary questionnaire returns. The chosen sampling method guaranteed a strong final response count which could produce statistically reliable analysis to reveal accurate relationships between cultural practices and multicultural exposure and identity negotiation methods among Chinese Malaysians [23].

4.2. Instrumentation

The established questionnaire served as the data collection method to examine Chinese Malaysian cultural practices and multicultural exposure while investigating identity negotiation strategies [24,25]. Through a thorough construction method the questionnaire was created to fulfil its dual requirement of being complete and suitable for the Malaysian multicultural environment. Five distinct parts structured the research instrument to explore different types of variables and demographic information. The 5-point Likert scale extended from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for respondents to evaluate their perceptions and attitudes about cultural practices as well as multicultural exposure and cultural inclusion and identity negotiation strategies. The studied items originated from validated previous instruments while field experts confirmed their content validity. The following document shows the arrangement of survey questions into separate sections.

Section A: Demographic Information
The demographic portion of the survey collected fundamental participant information in its first section. The section functioned as an overview to acquire respondents' background information [26]. Basic demographic information collects necessary data to understand the variety of participants while making it possible to analyze subgroup results. The demographic questions included:

- Age: The survey participants chose their age segment from organized age brackets which included 29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–61.5 years.
- Gender: A simple choice between male, female,

and other.
- Educational Attainment: Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education, with options including secondary school, diploma, bachelor's degree, and postgraduate degree.
- Residential Area: This item classified respondents based on whether they lived in an urban or rural area, reflecting the potential influence of living environment on cultural practices and identity strategies.
- The demographic data filled in the A section helped in the fact that, diversity in the sample was achieved and that the sample is representative of the population of interest. It was also used as a foundation of subgroup analyses which came up during the subsequent processes of data analysis.

Section B: Cultural Practices
The section called Section B of the questionnaire gauged the cultural practices of the respondents who participated in the study. As an example, the celebrations of the Mid-Autumn Festival or The Chinese New Year, and the usage of Mandarin or dialects in the communication at the workplace can be seen as the examples of how the traditional practice is defining the cultural identity. This segment had four questions that analyzed the participation frequency in as well as the strength of cultural events in the traditional Chinese culture and cultural value observation [27]. The measurement items tested cultural events and general practice which defines the foundation of culture identity. These were four items:

- I frequently participate in Chinese cultural festivals and ceremonies.
- I speak Chinese dialects (e.g., Mandarin, Hokkien) in daily life.
- I follow traditional Chinese values in personal and family matters.
- I engage in cultural practices such as calligraphy, tea ceremonies, or Chinese medicine.

The questionnaire assessed different aspects of cultural practices through these items which evaluated the degree of cultural engagement and their influence on daily activities of respondents [28]. Participants completed their responses using a 5-point Likert scale which measured their frequency and intensity of interaction with these practices.

Section C: Intercultural Communication Strategies
It updated Section C to evaluate the intercultural communication strategies that is distinct with multicultural exposure. The strategies are concerned with the extent to which people are able to interact with other people who belong to other cultural groups

through means such as integration as well as assimilation [29]. The instruments of measuring these strategies are:

- Strategies to integrate one's cultural values when interacting with individuals from other ethnic groups.
- Adjustments made in behaviour or communication style to align with the dominant culture during interactions with people from other ethnic groups.

By evaluating these strategies, the study aims to understand how Chinese Malaysians navigate intercultural interactions and manage their ethnic identities within a multicultural environment. A combination of integration and assimilation are the most important approaches to formulate identity negotiation processes by allowing individuals to integrate into the cultures of a wide variety of societies without losing their cultural status [30].

Section D: Indirect Communication Style (Mediator)
As the mediating variable in Section D, indirect communication style was referred to in the study in order to investigate how this factor can form the identity negotiation strategies adopted by Chinese Malaysians. In this section, the study examined the way the participants utilize indirect communication to be able to work through intercultural situations and to enact their cultural identity. The following was incorporated in this section:

- Tendency to communicate directly and indirectly when dealing with other people of different ethnicity.
- Employing non-verbal communication to say something or to show an opinion in multicultural communication.
- Caution in the use of words so as to eliminate conflict or misunderstanding in intercultural communication.

This part examines the use of covert verbal and non-verbal acts by the Chinese Malaysians to control their identity within the multicultural contexts. Indirect communication style acts as a broker in the discussion of a correlation between cultural practices, multicultural exposure and identity negotiation strategies. Such a style of communication allows people to communicate and retain their ethnic identity and adjust to the norms and expectations of multicultural conditions [31]

Section E: Ethnic Identity (DV)
The last part of the survey was an examination of ethnic identity as a dependent variable (DV) of the research. The main question that was covered in this section was to discuss the perceptions of Chinese Malaysians towards their ethnic identity and its

management in multicultural settings. The five questions in this section man measured the negotiating person and identity and how people assert their cultural identity to deal with different environments [32]. Depending on the contact with the different cultural groups, the participants altered their identity negotiation strategies. These were the five items

- Multicultural settings are associated with a strong connection with ethnic identity.
- Traditions and values of certain cultures are practices within various environments.
- Ethnic identity affects interaction with other cultural persons.
- It is felt when one feels proud about his or her ethnic background in relation to others.
- Ethnic identity can be said to give confidence to handle multicultural scenarios.

These questions were items of the scale that assessed the magnitude of the ethnic identity and the manner in which the participants uphold and assert their cultural values as they communicate with representatives of other cultural communities. According to the study results, the study covered how Chinese Malaysians manage their ethnic identity in the context of multicultural encounters, the need to retain their culture and consider adaption [33,34]. The responses were rated on a 5-point likert scale, with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), which allowed conducting the statistical analysis and connected to the validity and reliability of the instrument used to measure the ethnic identity in the multicultural setting of Malaysia [3].

4.3. Validity And Reliability

The measurement instrument became essential for guaranteeing accurate and valid results during the research process. The research results would maintain both accuracy and meaning because of the tests conducted [36]. The following methods were Multiple methods helped to validate and establish the reliability of the data collection instrument through assessment procedures.

• Content Validity: The questionnaire content validity assessment took place through evaluation by experts in multicultural psychology and Malaysian cultural studies. experts in the fields of multicultural psychology and Malaysian cultural studies. These A group of experts examined the questionnaire to validate that the included items captured their intended construct properly. The experts confirmed that each questionnaire item accurately measured the constructs alongside cultural and contextual relevance for the Malaysian Chinese community. relevant to the

Malaysian Chinese community. Their feedback was incorporated to A process was used to evolve and adapt the survey questions until they perfectly matched the native characteristics of the target population.

• Construct Validity: Exploratory Factor Analysis was the method used to determine construct validity. conducted. An EFA analysis investigated how the research constructs structurally relate to each other. Each part within the questionnaire underwent an examination to check if items linked successfully to the targeted factors. factors. All content measuring fewer than 0.50 points on factor loadings received elimination to reduce the questionnaire content. Researchers included items in the final instrument which properly reflected each construct. questionnaire. The evaluation delivered valuable information about the different factor relationships. The examination of scales together with their relationship patterns validated the theoretical framework of the study.

• Reliability: Internal consistency served as a tool to validate the instrument. evaluated using Cronbach's alpha.

This measurement method shows how similar the questionnaire items perform when rating the constructs.

These scales contain items which successfully assess the identical basic construct. The following Cronbach's alpha values were obtained:

o Ethnic Identity: α = 0.88
o Indirect Communication Style (Mediator): α = 0.84
o Cultural Practices: α = 0.81
o Multicultural Exposure: α = 0.76

The values illustrate acceptable through excellent reliability measures which confirm that all scales surpass the accepted threshold level of α > 0.70. The established threshold for α relies on a value greater than 0.70. Results from reliability coefficients demonstrate that the provided questionnaire shows consistency. The instrument demonstrates reliability as a dependable method to measure all targeted constructs.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

The design of the information collection was able to collect data of the diverse Chinese Malaysian demographics at different geographical areas. Malaysians in various geographical and demographic regions 37. A blend of online A blend of online and offline survey models permitted maximum coverage to reach more respondents. The procedure was carried out as follows:

• **Online Distribution:** Google Online data collection, which is the platform used to distribute the questionnaire easily, was chosen via the survey builder platform. The survey request was shared via different social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and WhatsApp as well as email sharing. The survey instruments were Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and email lists in order to provide universal access to the survey. This process provided great chances of reaching individuals who were digital media users. Individuals who download technology and those who reside in urban areas where internet access is a norm were represented all over the research period.

• **Offline Distribution:** In this analysis, the online surveys together with paper surveys were distributed to our respondents. The survey was distributed in the places where access to digital tools was limited. The project involved measures to ensure there was equal enrolment between urban and rural participants. Such surveys were Community centres along with Chinese cultural associations which played the role of distribution point of surveys. educational institutions. The research study has used a mix of online surveys and paper survey as a strategy of covering a large sample size possible to represent the various participants. diversity in terms of age, education and location.

• **Informed Consent each of the respondents was informed prior to the survey.** A form given gives information about the objectives of the research along with the provision of confidentiality of responses and conditions of voluntary participation. The respondents were made to understand that the participants had the complete freedom to withdraw their participation in the study without any penalty. This was done in order to achieve full understanding of the participants regarding their rights along with the purpose of their participation, an ethical research practice.

• **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Response confidentiality was granted since the survey was anonymous. Data was collected in Survey format and no personal identification information was provided to the survey but all respondents were given a full privacy protection. By repeatedly informing participants about the absolute confidentiality of the data, research staff informed them about it. The researchers assured the participants that the information would be kept confidential to the investigation of this study. Any information gathered under this study would be confidential as well as anonymous according to the survey rules.

- **Voluntary Participation:** The research study provided freedom as the participants had absolute freedom of choice of whether to participate or not. The research assured the subjects of truthful response and no negative consequences of not participating such as quitting surveys at any stage of the assessment process.

The quantitative techniques enabled researchers to obtain information among different and representative Chinese Malaysian respondents thereby rendering results of the studies more generalizable.

4.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected was analyzed using different statistical procedures to test the hypotheses of the research.

- **Descriptive Statistics:** The demographic features of the sample were summarized using the descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations of age, gender, educational attainment, and residential location. This gave a clear image of what the participants distribution in the sample was.
- **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA):** EFA has been done to find out the construct validity of the tool.
- Identification of underlying factor structure among the questionnaire items was done using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. This analysis proved that items correlate with the corresponding constructs cultural practices, intercultural communication strategies, indirect communication style, and ethnic identity.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson correlation coefficients have been calculated to test the relationships between the core variables: cultural practices, intercultural communication strategies, indirect communication style and ethnic identity. This was used to determine important interrelations among constructs prior to using more complex statistical modeling.
- **Multiple Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression was conducted to evaluate the direct relationships between cultural practices and intercultural communication strategies and ethnic identity. The study was used to analyze the predictive power of independent variables in determining the outcomes in ethnic identity.
- **Mediation Analysis:** Mediation analysis was done to test the mediating effect of indirect style of communication in the relationship

between (a) cultural practices and ethnic identity and (b) intercultural communication strategies and ethnic identity. This analysis has ascertained the applicability of the indirect communication style as a strong predictive variable between the predictors and the outcome.
- **t-Tests and ANOVA:** Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to test the differences in ethnic identity between different demographic groups in terms of age groups, sex, levels of education, residential areas. These comparisons showed that there were certain demographic aspects which affected the perception and the negotiation of ethnic identity.

5. RESULTS

The study demonstrates the data by three kinds of analysis that comprise the descriptive statistics along with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and hypothesis testing conducted by Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was selected due to its capacity to analyze the multifaceted relationships among the observed and latent variables to give a complete picture of the direct and indirect impact of the identity negotiation model. Study will also provide descriptive data regarding sample demographics in the form of such statistics but EFA will be used to test the construct validity of the variables by providing the validation of their factor structure. The implication of hypothesis testing using SEM is that the relationships between cultural practices after exposure to multiculturalism and cultural inclusion against identity negotiation strategies may be tested. The SEM output provides path coefficients along with the level of significance along with the model fit indices. The outcomes of such analyses will help to understand the whole process with the help of which cultural factors and multicultural experiences influence the strategies of identity negotiation among Chinese Malaysians.

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 and 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants including the age structure, gender, educational level, and place of residence. Besides demographic information, the table presents the descriptive statistics of the main variables of the study the mean scores and standard deviations of the variables, cultural practices, intercultural communication strategies, indirect communication style, and ethnic identity. These statistical indicators give an approximate profile of

the central tendencies and dispersion in the data, which gives an idea of the reaction of participants towards the main constructs of the study.

5.2. Demographic Characteristics of The Sample

The survey population represents the population demographics of the Chinese Malaysians. The sample is majorly aged between 25 and 34 years (35%), and there are 30% aged between 35 and 44 years. The older age groups (45-54 and 55+) were also represented in a smaller percentage, which implies the presence of a younger sample in general. There was quite a fair balance in the gender distribution 52 percent of female and 48 percent male respondents. Regarding education level, the majority of the respondents had attained secondary education (30%), diploma education (40%), 20% had obtained a degree, and 10% attained a postgraduate education. On the residence, 60 percent of the people who responded to the question lived in towns whereas 40 percent lived in villages.

5.3. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Mean scores of the key variables give understanding of the responses of the participants that are generally typical in the constructs. The mean of the variable Cultural Practices was 3.78 (SD = 0.72); this is a moderate involvement in traditional cultural practices and values. The mean of Intercultural Communication Strategies was 3.56 (SD=0.68), indicating that the participants have adopted the intercultural communication strategies moderately, including integration and assimilation. The means of the variable Indirect Communication Style were 3.92 (SD = 0.75), which indicates a rather high degree of inclination to resort to subtle, non-confrontational communication in multicultural environments. Lastly, Ethnic Identity, the dependent variable, had the highest mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.65) and this showed a lot of confidence and consistency among the participants in upholding and asserting their ethnic identity in the multicultural social setting.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics.

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage
Age	18-24	15%
	25-34	35%
	35-44	30%
	45-54	10%
	55+	10%
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52%
Education Level	Secondary	30%
	Diploma	40%
	Degree	20%
	Postgraduate	10%
Residential Area	Urban	60%
	Rural	40%

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cultural Practices	3.78	0.72
Intercultural Communication Strategies	3.56	0.68
Indirect Communication Style	3.92	0.75
Ethnic Identity	4.10	0.65

Table 1 and 2 contains extensive information that is used to present the demographic composition of the sample population as well as statistical distributions of variables under analysis. The given descriptive statistics precondition the possibility to realize the Chinese Malaysian perception of cultural practices and their multicultural engagement and identity management methods.

5.4. Exploratory Factor Analysis (Efa)

To determine how well the measurement model construct validity was, we performed the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The items of the variables that were evaluated by the analysis included: Cultural Practices, Intercultural Communication Strategies, Indirect Communication Style and Ethnic Identity. The major aim of the EFA was to determine the underlying factor structure as well as to make sure that every item loaded its intended construct adequately. Factor extraction was done by Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The factor loadings that were less than 0.50 were not included in the list to enhance the reliability and understanding of the measure scales. The findings proved that the respective groups of items were clustering as anticipated, which made the theoretical framework of the proposed study plausible.

The analysis was based on varimax-rotated principal component technique as the items with a loading greater than 0.50 were considered retained because the latter value marks significant construct-related connection. Table 3 shows that the values in all the items were above the 0.70 mark, which suggests great reliability of the factors and convergent validity. Each item loaded strongly onto its corresponding factor, thus supporting the validity of the measurement model and justifying the use of these items in subsequent structural analyses.

The findings of the EFA suggest that items are confidently measured by what they have been designed tobe; that there are no cross-loadings of significance or deviations. These results ensure the structural validity of the measurement model on empirical basis and they validate its use in the subsequent Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

Table 3: Factor Loadings from Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Variable	Item	Factor Loading
Cultural Practices	Participation in Chinese cultural festivals and ceremonies	0.84
	Speaking Chinese dialects in daily life	0.79
	Following traditional Chinese values	0.72
	Engaging in cultural practices (e.g., calligraphy)	0.83
Intercultural Communication Strategies	Interacting regularly with individuals from other ethnic groups	0.81
	Feeling comfortable in multicultural environments	0.78
Cultural Inclusion	Feeling respected for my cultural background	0.75
	Feeling a sense of belonging in multicultural settings	0.80
	Believing Malaysian society promotes cultural integration	0.83
Indirect Communication Style	Adjusting behavior to avoid cultural conflict	0.87
	Adapting communication style depending on others' cultural background	0.76
	Feeling confident negotiating my cultural identity in diverse settings	0.89
	Maintaining my cultural identity while engaging with other cultures	0.85
	Using different identity strategies depending on context	0.82

5.5. SEM And Hypothesis Testing

The indices of goodness offit of the structural equation model assessed in Table 4 are given in Table 4. The Chi- square ($X2$ = 193.45, df = 120, p < 0.001) is statistically significant and this is expected when sampling is large. There are other indices that are within acceptable limits: Goodness ofFit Index (GFI = 0.92) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.95) are higher than 0.90, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.05) has the value lower than 0.06. All of these indicators taken together point to the overall good fit of the model.

Table 4: Model Fit Indices for SEM.

Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold	Status
Chi-square (χ^2, df = 120)	193.45	p < 0.05 expected	Significant
Goodness ofFit Index (GFI)	0.92	> 0.90	Acceptable
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.95	> 0.90	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.05	< 0.06	Acceptable

5.6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Results of the hypothesis test, which was performed by Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), correlation analysis, mediation analysis, and demographic comparisons, are introduced in the following section. These comparisons aid to investigate how the cultural activities are connected with the intercultural communication approaches, indirect discourse style and ethnic identity and how the demographic aspect like level of education and place of residence affects them. The findings of these tests give more insight into what influences the ethnic identity in the multicultural Malaysian context.

5.7. Sem Analysis

Hypothesis testing on structural equation modelling (SEM) exhibits the following results obtained in Table 5 below. Path coefficients also show the extent of relationships between the reconstruct items: Cultural Practices, Intercultural Communication Strategies, Indirect Communication Style, and Ethnic Identity. The p-values are used to determine statistical significance.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Results.

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value
H1a: Cultural Practices influencing Indirect Communication Style	0.36	0.001
H1b: Intercultural Communication Strategies influencing Indirect Communication Style	0.29	0.002
H2: Indirect Communication Style influencing Ethnic Identity	0.41	0.000
H3a: Cultural Practices influencing Ethnic Identity	0.33	0.003
H3b: Intercultural Communication Strategies influencing Ethnic Identity	0.27	0.004
H4a: Indirect Communication Style mediating the relationship between Cultural Practices and Ethnic Identity	0.15	0.002
H4b: Indirect Communication Style mediating the relationship between Intercultural Communication Strategies and Ethnic Identity	0.13	0.003

The concept of cultural practices and intercultural communication strategies exerted its influence on the indirect style of communication (H1a and H1b). In its turn, this style of communication had a significant influence on ethnic identity (H2). Further, the ethnic identity was directly bored by the cultural practices and intercultural communication strategies (H3a and H3b). As part of mediated relationships, indirect communication style was the most important determiner of cultures practices and their ethnic identity (H4a) and intercultural communication strategy and ethnic identity (H4b). Furthermore, significant differences were found in ethnic identity based on education level (F-value = 5.42, p = 0.001) and residential location (t-value = 2.18, p = 0.031). These findings confirm the validity of the conceptual framework, highlighting the importance of cultural engagement and communication strategies in ethnic identity development within a multicultural context.

5.8. Direct, Indirect, And Total Effects:

The standardized path coefficients indicate both direct and indirect effects among the constructs. Cultural Practices and Intercultural Communication Strategies both exert direct effects on Ethnic Identity (β = 0.33, p = 0.003 and β = 0.27, p = 0.004, respectively). Indirect Communication Style serves as a mediating variable with significant indirect effects (Cultural Practices → Indirect Style → Ethnic Identity: β = 0.15, p = 0.002; Intercultural Strategies → Indirect Style → Ethnic Identity: β = 0.13, p = 0.003). Therefore, the total effects (direct + indirect) are β = 0.48 for Cultural Practices and β = 0.40 for Intercultural Communication Strategies.

5.9. Correlation Analysis

Table 6 shows the correlation coefficients between the study variables. Correlation analysis provides insight into the strength and direction of the relationships between constructs, which can help in understanding how cultural practices, intercultural communication strategies, indirect communication style, and ethnic identity are related.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Results.

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation (r)	p-value
Cultural Practices	Indirect Communication Style	0.36	0.001
Intercultural Communication Strategies	Indirect Communication Style	0.29	0.002
Indirect Communication Style	Ethnic Identity	0.41	0.000
Cultural Practices	Ethnic Identity	0.33	0.003
Intercultural Communication Strategies	Ethnic Identity	0.27	0.004

The correlation results reveal moderate to strong positive relationships between the variables. Cultural practices are positively correlated with indirect communication style (r = 0.36, p = 0.001), indicating that engagement in cultural practices tends to enhance the use of indirect communication strategies. Similarly, intercultural communication strategies also show a significant positive correlation with indirect communication style (r = 0.29, p = 0.002). Indirect communication style is strongly correlated with ethnic identity (r = 0.41, p = 0.000), demonstrating that a preference for indirect communication is associated with a stronger ethnic identity. We also found positive correlation between the level of cultural practices (r = 0.33, p = 0.003) and strategies of communicating with other people (r = 0.27, p = 0.004), which implies that cultural engagement and communication strategies between people are factors that contribute to, as well as influence, the development of ethnic identity.

5.10. Mediation Analysis

The findings of the mediation analysis are shown in Table 7. Mediation analysis employs the degree to which indirect communication style is considered as a mediator in the connection between cultural practices, intercultural communications strategies, and ethnic identity. The strength of mediation is computed using

the indirect effects.

Table 7: Mediation Results.

Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	p-value
Cultural Practices → Indirect Communication Style → Ethnic Identity	0.15	0.002
Intercultural Communication Strategies → Indirect Communication Style → Ethnic Identity	0.13	0.003

Results of the mediation analysis suggest a strong moderating effect of indirect communication style between cultural practices and ethnic identity (β = 0.15, p = 0.002) and between, intercultural communication strategies and ethnic identity (β = 0.13, p = 0.003).

The mediation effect supports the idea that communication strategies are an essential mechanism through which cultural practices and intercultural strategies shape ethnic identity.

5.11. *Group Differences by Education Level and*

Residential Location (T-Test & ANOVA)

Table 8 provides the results of comparing ethnic identity across different demographic groups. While SEM assesses structural relationships among latent variables, t–tests and ANOVA were applied to explore group–level differences (e.g., based on education and residential area), which SEM does not explicitly capture. The analysis examines the influence of education level and residential location on the strategies individuals use for identity negotiation.

Table 8: Education Level and Residential Location Differences.

Grouping Factor	F-value/t-value	p-value
Education Level	5.42	0.001
Residential Location → Ethnic Identity	2.18	0.031

Significant differences were found in ethnic identity based on education level (F–value = 5.42, p = 0.001) and residential location (t–value = 2.18, p = 0.031). These results suggest that individuals with different levels of education and those living in urban versus rural areas adopt different strategies for negotiating their ethnic identity. Education and residential location are important contextual factors that influence how individuals manage their cultural identity in a multicultural environment.

5.12. *Pls Path Diagram*

Figure 2 illustrates both immediate and secondary influences of Cultural Practices, Intercultural Communication Strategies, and Indirect Communication Style on Ethnic Identity. Standardized values of path coefficients are presented in favour of each of the pathways indicating the direction and strength of the connection.
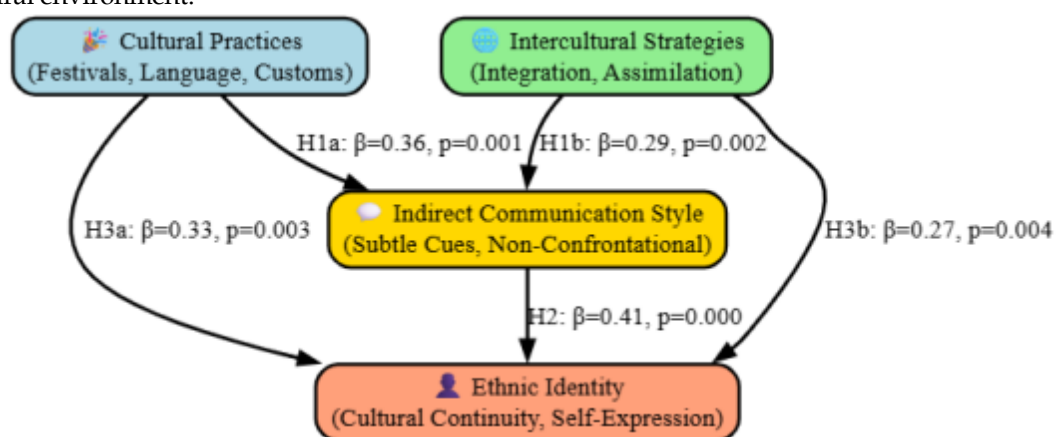

Figure 2: PLS Path Diagram

Such findings are significant in suggesting how identity negotiation is undertaken by Chinese Malaysians. Particularly, they show the role of cultural interaction and flexible communication strategies in affecting the process of ethnic identity formation among the Malaysian multicultural community mediated by such demographic variables as educational level and the place of residence.

6. DISCUSSION

The research studies a process of cultural practices and intercultural communication strategies that define identity negotiation of Chinese Malaysians within the cultural tones mosaic of Malaysia. On the basis of

findings, it is determined that there is the cultural engagement of events, custom and religious practise engagement. Other than that, the mechanisms of how individuals adapt the process of incorporation include integration and assimilation into interaction, which may alter how they communicate indirectly (H1b) because integration enables the person to bargain the boundary between preserving a certain culture and social adaptation. The reason behind people

maintaining a cultural identity in an indirect fashion is a form of expression where people give clues implicitly and use simple nonverbal communication that is consistent with their culture. It should be mentioned, that such an approach toward the communication strategies due to the possibility to express the ethnic identity without any direct confrontation contributes to support and belonging in the cross–cultural communication [10]. Similarly, Wang) et al.[10] acknowledge that indirectness of the Malaysian Chinese communication is not only a face-saving strategy but also a cultural art of keeping strategy in the different social context.

The study also shows that the usage of indirect communication expressions is crucial for the relationship between the cultural practices and the ethnic identity (H4a), as well as between intercultural communication models and ethnic identity (H4b). Cultural practices enhance ethnic identity through transfer of central values and norms of behaviour of which indirect communication is a part. According to Wang) et al.[10], traditional customs and festivals of the Chinese Malaysians have symbolic interpretation and it dictates an indirect non–verbal and verbal behaviour. Likewise, when outlining the cultural determination of communicative tendencies, Wang) et al.[10] describe how the issue of communicative inclinations is determined by cultural rituals in such away that individuals can communicate without regard to whether they belong to a particular culture in almost imperceptibly compliance with the patterns. Similarly, intercultural communication strategies are helpful in identity bargaining since it offers a platform where cultural symbols are presented or manifest in the multicultural environment in veiled terms.

Based on the results, culture inclusion and social systems play a key role in the building of effective identity

negotiation. Cultural inclusion acts of mediation serve to strengthen the feelings of belongingness amongst people

whose lives are embedded in highly multicultural and urban environments. This acceptance makes people feel justified in their cultural expression and

increases the use of more adaptive identity negotiation strategies. Schools and workplaces along with other institutions of civic life in the city are critical to the ways Chinese Malaysians negotiate their ethnicity. In other instances, such as cities like Kuala Lumpur, one has to often make multicultural experiences in these locations, which trigger the need to use adaptive communication plans. Other forms of these urban environments encourage the use of two languages, indirect form of communication, and cultural sensitivity, allowing such people to retain their heritage and still adapt to the rest ofthe world. Therefore, lived urban experience plays an important role in forming bicultural competence and the flexibility of identity. As an illustration, Ma, and Roosli[38] report that inclusive cultural context empowers the minority groups in the process of claiming and renegotiating of their identity.

In addition, historical factors such as living in the city and the countryside and the influence of educational level also affect ethnicity identity management. These results indicate that the design and planning of multicultural cities and inclusive public places are vital determinants of the multicultural exposure and social integration that provide space helping to negotiate day–to–day intercultural encounters. According to Hu) et al.[16], more adaptive and integrative identity strategies are more likely to be used by people who settle in urban space and who have more multicultural exchanges and a higher educational level. This corpus manifests dynamic nature of identity, and strategic communicational role in sustaining the cultural partition between multicultural populations. This indicates that mixture of cultures by people in cities is often present with consequent development of adaptive strategies of communication, such as, de facto, indirect communication. These contexts force people to strike a trade between cultural maintenance and social assimilation, making such process even more difficult. Conversely, the rural environment might seek to strengthen cultural homogeneity and reduce interaction chances with encounters of a different culture.

7. STUDY LIMITATIONS

Although the research sheds light on identity bargaining among the Chinese Malaysians, there are a few limitations we must pay attention of. First, it can be seen that the cross–sectional data cannot be used to determine how identities change with time. Second, the use of self–reported survey data may be influenced by social desirability bias. Third, the sample was predominantly urban, which may limit the

generalizability of the findings to more rural populations. Lastly, while the SEM approach offers robust analysis of relationships, it does not capture the rich, contextual nuances that qualitative methods might reveal.

8. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in this research can have significant implications on the development of multicultural policies especially in education and working environments. Cultural awareness programs and cross -cultural communication training can be integrated in educational institutions to encourage inclusiveness and empower students with a sense of identity. Workplace cultures can be developed through policies that recognize and celebrate cultural practices like flexible holidays, intercultural team building to help workers feel part of the group and diminish identity conflict. The lessons can also be transferred to urban planning and community organization to establish culturally inclusive spaces and communal events that allow the expression (and attendance) of cultures and offer intercultural interaction specifically the multicultural metropolis like Kuala Lumpur.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article reveals that the issue of identity negotiation is significant in the multifaceted ethnic make-up of Malaysia whereby autonomy is accorded to the identification, and the people are provided with an inclusive governance. It becomes evident in this paper that the embodiment of social events, creating multicultural relationships and meaning of inclusive institutions are essential qualities to the way Chinese Malaysians may demand identities. Individuals that participate in the study attest to the fact that their exposure to other ethnic groups regarding issues of cultural practices enhances the level of self- confidence and open-mindedness to their identities. The ethnic inclusion role of the identity negotiation mediation demonstrates the value of community acceptance in identity negotiation. Educational and workplace policies can also be useful based on the findings. Schools can integrate multicultural awareness and training on intercultural communication in the curriculums to help the youth to negotiate their identities. On the same note, the diversity and inclusion policy can be brought to workplaces where intercultural dialogue

and appreciation of ethnic identity should be encouraged, particularly in urban areas. These common-sense steps can establish the conditions, under which people can be able to express their cultural identity, in addition to effectively cross-cultural participation. In addition, the study reveals that identity negotiation (socially framed by education and co-residence) is the reason why people align multicultural environments. Our theory of Identity Negotiation Theory is confirmed in this paper where we describe the integration processes of people with different backgrounds into Malaysia.

This gives advice to policy makers, teachers and people in leadership positions. Probably, the policy of diversification and the possibility to interact with representatives of other ethnic groups are of significant concern to organizations, as they help to strengthen the relationships among various ethnicities and their increased trust to the identity of the individual. Educational setting and community-based programs in cases of example should be aimed at building cross cultural communication skill and cultural awareness at an early age so that more liberal environment is created in the society. Despite the useful insights presented in the study, the study has cross-sectional design that makes it impossible to observe the change in the identity negotiation among people throughout their life cycle. The current exploration of the process of this complicated identity negotiation is generally reflective as it gives broad information on what it is and what is the general result of this process. Further researches ought to examine how identity negotiation evolves over the years and employ the approach of qualitative research so that a consciousness can be raised regarding the extremely minute, daily experiences of this process in Malaysia.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study's cross–sectional design offers a snapshot of identity negotiation but does not capture its evolution over time. In future studies, it is recommended to use longitudinal designs in an attempt to understand the variations of identity negotiation at different developmental stages. Moreover, in–depth data on life on a day–to–day basis among Chinese Malaysians living in the context of multicultural environments can be offered based on qualitative research (interview or ethnography). Generalizability would also be increased by widening the sample to other ethnic groups or regional comparisons in order to discover any patterns, which are indicative of identity construction in Malaysia.

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