

## Interaction Value Analysis towards Creating Harmonious Ethnic Relations in Malaysia

**Wan Zulkifli Wan Hassan**  
**Jamsari Alias**

School of Liberal Studies  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
The Institut of Islam Hadhari  
Universiti Kebangsaan  
Malaysia

**Nazri Muslim**

School of Liberal Studies  
Universiti Kebangsaan  
Malaysia  
E-mail: nazrim@ukm.edu.my

**Che Sulaila Che Harun**

The Institut of Islam Hadhari  
Universiti Kebangsaan  
Malaysia

### Abstract

*Ethnic diversity should be managed impeccably, so it can become an important factor in creating a tight-knit ethnic relations among the Malaysian people. Future ethnic relations are dependent on the question on society's understanding of the interactional value so that the societal problems may be solved. The problem that is often faced by several the Islamic society thinkers is their understanding on the interactional value that is encouraged and the items that can be shared with the society of a different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The misunderstanding from the Islamic society on the Islamic interactional value oftentimes keeps them away from a society of diverse religions, ethnics, and cultures. Some go to the extreme and take the difficult approach in understanding the interactional values of Islam as they do not know that there is the potential for a lax and tolerance in certain cases. This research will be conducted by an online questionnaire among respondent-approximately 554- respondent, who have been exposed to Islamic interactional values. Data collected will be analyzed and codified quantitatively using SPSS. This research finds that most of the society understand the Islamic interactional values in creating harmonious ethnic relations in Malaysia. Seeing that only several respondents are less knowledgeable on the Islamic interactional values, these values should be appreciated and made as a culture in everyday life.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Interactional Values, extreme, harmonious, ethnic relations, Malaysia

### Introduction

Issues that are often brought up pertaining to ethnic relations in Malaysia revolve around this obsession with their own ethnics, which centers on the elements of ethnocentrism, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. According to Shamsul Amri (2012), the ethnic relations line in Malaysia since 1946 until today shows one that fluctuates in ethnic relations, but in general the situation in Malaysia is peaceful, with harmonious ethnic relations.

However, there have been times whereby a less-than-ideal situation crops up to the point that it creates conflict within the complex Malaysian society, thus causing a strain in the relationship between ethnic and religion. Additionally, there are some within the Islamic society who segregate them from the society who does not share their ethnicity and religion as they wish to preserve the sanctity of their religion based on trivial excuses such as refusing to share cups used by people of other ethnicities or religions. There are also instances of those who take the initiatives to offer laundry services dubbed as 'Muslim-friendly', which do not allow non-Muslim patrons.

Therefore, they need specific guidance to practice a culture that can create a harmonious and prosperous environment. Problems involving *hukum* should be clarified to the society so that every action they make when interacting with their non-Muslim compatriots are based in Islamic understanding.

Many of them act outside of their understanding and are, in fact, prejudiced, something which is born from discussion by the public who are also not as competent in the laws of the religion. The question of interactional *fiqh* between Muslims and non-Muslims is less debated in an organized and structured way by traditional and contemporary Islamic scholars.

This research hopes to provide a true picture on the problem faced by the Islamic community in judicial problems involving their interactions with non-Muslim family members as well as room for a solution. Therefore, the understanding on the value of interaction is an ideal concept approach in the efforts to create a peaceful and stable society within the nation.

This approach is seen as appropriate with Malaysia's stand as a nation that is progressive, harmonious, and rejects any form of extremism to the point of terror. An understanding towards the interactional values is assumed as an ideal medium to be highlighted among the Muslim society that comprises of various races. With this, the harmony among the Malaysian society will be even more peaceful and prosperous. It is hoped that by instilling understanding towards the value of interaction, this will provide a guideline to the society especially the Muslims to take a more proactive step in bringing Malaysians towards a balanced harmony.

### Research Problems

Malaysians are made of various ethnics, committed to strengthening the spirit of unity and integration between ethnics and boundaries. This is important to ensure Malaysia's continuity as a melting pot nation with a number of territories separated by the states. This ethnic diversity shows that the issues of language, religion, the special position of the Malays, as well as the ranking of the Malay Kings are important factors in creating a tight-knit ethnic relation among the Malaysian society (Nazri Muslim 201). These issues, as according to Ratnam (1969), will determine the ethnic relations atmosphere of the future by seeing how the question of the special position of the Malays, religion, and language is resolved.

The aspect that is often playing in the background for the non-Muslim community is the question of Islamic jurisprudence that does not allow its followers to perform things that may be shared with the Islamic community. The misunderstanding among the Islamic community themselves on Islamic laws oftentimes leads to less interaction between them and the multi-tiered community.

There are also those who are extremists and take the hard way in jurisprudence problems as they do not understand that some cases allow for certain religious rules to be relaxed. Seeing how limited religious guidance is given to a part of the Muslim community, oftentimes their knowledge on the laws for interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims is based on the norm of the Malay culture, and not based on Islamic knowledge. Islamic laws as understood through these methods sometimes are not based on *dalilisyarie* that are *muktabar* and are more as a perception.

Studies have indicated that the Muslim community faces plenty of confusion and life problems that come from various parties, whether it be the non-Muslim community or the Muslim community itself, as well as other problems triggered by life changes that happens within the community (Nazri Muslim, Nik Yusri Musa and Ahmad Hidayat Buang, 2011). The starting point for problems begins when they are at crossroads to retain a harmonious life with a melting pot community of various religions, ethnicities, and cultures while also facing a dilemma of understanding Islam and adapting themselves to a Muslim cultural and lifestyle environment (Osman Chuah 2008; Karin Van Nieuwkerk 2006; Carol Amway 2001, Ali Kose 1996).

In the context of ethnic relations in Malaysia, items that are assumed to be favourable to the Malays in the Federal Constitution are balanced with the other demands which would also give an advantage to the non-Malay ethnicities. The idea that sets Islam as a national religion is balanced by a provision of right for every citizen to embrace and practice a religion of their choice so long it is done in a peaceful and harmonious way, as is the item that sets Bahasa Melayu as the national language is balanced with the provision that no one is prohibited from using (except in formal situations) or teaching or learning any other languages. The same situation happened on the item that sets the special position of Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak, balanced by the provision that the government may not strip off, take back, or cause the rights of other races to be eroded (Nazri Muslim 2012).

The question that often arises in the thinking of the Muslim community is during interactions with non-Muslims involving familial aspects such as politics, neighbourhood, problems pertaining to food and drink, festivities, lineage, *aurat* limitations, inheritance of property, and so forth.

Even though these questions have had some parts of them answered, for some of the community, this creates new queries that are still a big question mark. To give a relevant and easy answer without sidelining the *syariah* aspects is highly needed by the Muslim community. The non-Muslims also require reasons as to why Islam does not allow certain things to be done by the Muslims to avoid misunderstanding and enmity.

## Research Questions

Therefore, there is a great need for research on *fiqh* interaction to be highlighted as a scholarly study by considering real-time problems in the field. The leading research questions are:

1. How is the communal understanding, specifically for the Malaysian Muslims, on their understanding of interaction value with a community of various religions, ethnics, and cultures?
2. What is the main issue of the community that may threaten a harmonious life of the community in interacting with a society of various religions, ethnics, and cultures specifically related to social situations?
3. What is the Islamic interaction value that may be applied in the compound community of Malaysia that contains various religions and races where the impact may fortify the spirit of unity and retain harmony?

## Research Objectives

1. To identify the understanding and practices of the Muslim community in Malaysia through *fiqh* interaction with a community of various religions, ethnics, and cultures.
2. To study the real issue of the Muslim community that may threaten the harmonious communal lifestyle when interacting with a community that comprises of various religions, ethnics, and cultures, specifically when related to a social context.
3. To develop an Islamic interaction value that may be applied in the compound Malaysian community that comprises of various religions, ethnicities, and cultures as an effort to fortify the spirit of unity and to retain harmony.

## Literature Review

In general, past research on *fiqh* interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims are more focused blindly on literature review without considering the real problems of the Islamic community specifically the *mualaf* who still actively interact with their non-Muslim friends and family from their previous life.

One of the writers who has touched on the understanding of value interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims is Prof. Dr. Yusof al-Qardhawi in his book: *Fi Fiqh al-Aqalliyat al-Muslimah*, Dar al-Syurouk (2001). In the book, he discusses the questions of law that involved minority Muslim communities in the middle of a non-Muslim community. He also expands on the methods based on fatwa that should be taken on by the *ulama* in discussing the laws related to the minority Muslim community. According to him, the *ulama* should find the easiest way and recognize the desires and urgency in making a *fatwa* without being too tired to a specific *mazhab*.

That said, he did not go into detail all the *fiqh* issues related to the relationship between the minority Muslim community and the non-Muslim community and contended to provide only several examples of *fiqh* issues.

Mohammad Nidzam Abd. Kadir (2009) discussed several *fiqh* issues related to the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Seeing how the book was written to be read by the layman, therefore the author attempted to dissect the *fiqh* issues in an easier way and wrote less on the aspect of differences between *mazhab* and *dalil*. Among the topics the author discussed is the law of interacting with non-Muslims during festivities, with neighbours, food, impurity of the dog, alcohol, marriage/weddings, and politics. However, there is still a number of familial aspects that were not discussed such as child custodial rights, child's lineage, inheritance rights, and handling of the deceased between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Other than that, there is also research conducted by Abdul Ghafar Haji Don et al., (1999). *Dakwah kepada Non-Muslim di Malaysia: Konsep, Metode dan Pengalaman*; Osman Abdullah@Chuah Hock Leng and Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri "Muslim Converts in Malaysia: The Problem of Cultural Adjustment" (2008).

The research on ethnic relations issues in Malaysia have changed significantly in the last five decades. According to Chandra Muzaffar (1990), racial controversies in Malaysia can be divided into several phases. In the 1950s, the issue of citizenship and social contracts dominated the racial relationships, followed by the language issue of the 1960s before the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), while quota and urbanization coloured the ethnic relations during the 1970s and 1980s.

During the 1990s and the new millennium, religious issues strongly influenced ethnic relations in the country. According to the author, when comparing the racial relations in Malaysia from five decades ago, the religious issues that have been popping up of late have an incredibly critical impact. This view is corroborated by Syed Husin Ali (2008) who characterized the current ethnic relations sentiments as being at an all-time high which could in turn cause conflicts and blood spill. There is a handful within the society who have a lesser understanding on the concept of co-living within a nation, which is comprised of various religions, ethnics, and cultures.

This problem occurs when there a part of the society worries that interaction between the various religions, ethnics, and cultures may cause them to sway from their own religious views and beliefs.

In addition, a handful of the society feels uneasy with the presence of social satire or the existence of unease between the believers of the same religion to the point that there are some who questions the authenticity of the believer's faith towards their religion if they befriend or interact with the believers of other faiths (Nasaruddin Yunos, et al, 2018).

This matter is proven by a statement by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad during a press conference. He pleaded for the media to be more responsible and to not publish reports that may worsen the racial situation in the country. He, who is also the chairman for Pakatan Harapan, said there indeed exists several parties attempting to ignite racial sentiments in this country, however the media must play a role in ensuring that this matter does not get dragged out. Explaining even further, Dr Mahathir stated that the people of Malaysia should learn from the fire of racial enmity that can be seen in other countries (<http://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/isu-perkauman-media-jangan-burukkan-lagi-keadaan-tun-mahathir-216367>).

According to Shamsul Amri (2010), among the problems faced by Malaysia these days are related to the mistake of equating social unity with economic unity. The main characteristics of unity was not fully understood and left untouched, among them the elements of assimilation, accommodation, acculturation, and amalgamation. The assumptions often made in the allotment of the economic cake such as that was planned by the New Economic Policy were to work; therefore, Malaysia would automatically be able to reach a national unity. However, the results were not what was hoped for. National unity was transcribed with a narrow understanding and change has now become a form of competition to seize the economic rights.

At the same time, among the source of misunderstanding on co-living in Malaysia is caused by issues that are deemed as sensitive among the Malaysian society. These days, the scenarios often found in Malaysia on ethnic relations are under constant fire. These is seen as these issues are seen to contribute to perceptions that are less than desirable by a handful of the Muslim community including the religious authorities, as though painting several parties including political leaders are not focusing on the questions related to the principles that should be practiced in relations between race and religion.

In addition, according to Khairul Azhar Meerangani et al. (2013) who stated that among the problems found by Muslims preaching to non-Muslims that occur in this country is the over worry of the influence of other religions and the headache of understanding rituals and cultures of other religions.

This situation raises confusion among the Muslims towards the concept of race and religion, whereby is it allowed in Islam, do these actions picture a tolerant religion, and are customs in other religions considered as a religion practice, as well as raising several other questions. All these queries require a solid answer from an Islamic context so that the society may have a clear stance and attitude from their principles and practices. The question now is, can this be freely allowed based only on the concept of religious freedom? Therefore, the Muslim community should refer to the authorities such as muftis and *fatwa* committees for related matters (Wan Zulkifli et. al 2016).

Confusion is based on ignorance towards the differences between other religions and Islam itself. This is related to the low amount of understanding among the society on the science of religion comparison. As an effect, two forms of extremism occur in religion, whereby the individual becomes a Muslim who is liberal in every form and aspect of interactions with other religions including creed which then turns into the current polemic (Nazneen Binti Ismail, et. al. 2018).

Among the issues that occur among the society is a low emphasis on brotherhood based on humanity. They can be rather awkward and uncomfortable in giving help and to create a closer kinship if the other person is of different ethnic, race, and religion. Al-Qardhawi (1987) asserted that if this problem is not overcome, it may cause the creation of other forms of resistance and enmity among them whether from a political viewpoint, vengeful conflict between religions hindering harmonious societal living, even fracturing brotherhoods among each other within the community and nation.

History has proven that there have been several ethnic conflicts in Malaysia, among them the events of May 13 1969 (Parker, 1979) due to dissatisfaction from the distribution of the nation's wealth, the events of Kampung Medan of March 2001 (Muhamad KamarulKabilan dan Zaharah Hasan, 2005) which occurred due to an intolerance during a clash of importance between two parties involving religious affairs which had a critical impact (Utusan Malaysia, 26 November 2006), the events of Kampung Rawa of 1998 (Muhamad KamarulKabilan dan Zaharah Hasan, 2005) due to the lack of respect between the practices of other ethnic religions.

According to a report by the *Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional*, there were 327 cases related to social conflicts between the years of 1996 – 2002. Based on the total, 81 cases were related to inter-ethnic fights, 76 cases were political, 65 cases were religious, 38 cases were related to security, and the remainders were social conflicts such as neighbourhood, education, and so forth.

One form of extremism is when a Muslim individual is rigid towards non-Muslims. In other words, a Muslim who is more comfortable with their own lifestyle, which is to live in a Muslim-majority country such as Malaysia, but at the same time feels apprehensive in mixing with non-Muslims around them (Nazneen Binti Ismail et. al, 2018).

Other than that, there is also a fraction of the Malaysian society who has a rigidity when following the practices of a specific *mazhab*. Oftentimes this may cause inconveniences when dealing with the non-Muslim community. This matter is emphasised in the context of living in a melting pot society, where the Muslim community will be able to completely avoid dealing with other humans, including those who are not Muslims.

### Research Methodology

This research is conducted based on the online questionnaires among respondent who have been exposed to the Islamic values of interaction, approximately 554 respondents in total. The research conducted is a survey study using a quantitative method. The questionnaire is used as a research instrument to measure the level of interaction value practices. The researcher chooses to use a Likert five-point scale to measure the research items in this research which are: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Unsure, (4) Agree, and (5) Highly Agree. The questionnaire describes the measurement of the respondent' perspectives or those exposed to the customs of Malaysia. According to Cohen et al (2007), the Likert scale is suitable to be used to measure the views given on certain practices, perceptions, and attitudes.

The results and analysis conducted can inform the spread of frequency distribution, whether the respondent has ever learnt about interaction values. Are they able to integrate good interaction values within themselves and how will they be able to integrate these values within their lives? This matter is important so that they may receive the correct and accurate knowledge and understanding on how being civilized may be instilled in their daily lives.

Data collected are analyzed and coded quantitatively by using SPSS on the questionnaires answered by the respondent. This is to ensure the researcher will be able to understand more clearly the issues being researched.

Analysis is also conducted by determining the theory/hypothesis from the data collected (*grounded theory*). The hidden information within the text (*discourseanalysis*), analysis on the keys such as words, body language, and so forth (*semiotics*), and understanding towards the perspective/views and experiences of the individual or student (*interpretative phenomenological experience*) have also been delved into.

### Research Findings

Based on the research conducted, the author has found that most of the respondent have shown that they are able to integrate good values in creating a harmonious social networking atmosphere in Malaysia. The items for harmonious values are explained in detail based on the following tables.

#### Respondent' profile

All the data from *Google FormsApp* were keyed in into the SPSS to become the main database. A revision was also carried out to eliminate the respondent who failed to answer more than 10% the total number of questions asked. Thus, the final number of the respondent for this study is 554 from 556 participants involved, which is a reduction of 2 respondent only. The gender frequency shows that around 139 males (25.1 percent) and 415 orang females (74.9 percent). The number of female respondents exceeds the males and this is seen as normal in public universities. The summary of gender can be seen in Table 1.2

**Table 1.2 Respondent Gender Distribution**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
male	139	25.1
female	415	74.9
Total	554	100.0

Most of the respondent are 20 years of age (50.7 percent). This is followed by respondent aged 21 years old(37.5 percent), aged 22 years old(6.5 percent), 23 years old (1.8 percent), 19 years old(1.1 percent), 24 years old(0.7 percent), 25, 26 and 28 respectively 0.4 percent. Meanwhile, respondent who did not answer these questions totaled 3 persons (0.5 percent). Table 1.3 shows the summary of the respondent' age distribution.

**Table 1.3 Respondent Age Distribution**

Age	Frequency	Percent
19.00	6	1.1
20.00	281	50.7
21.00	208	37.5
22.00	36	6.5
23.00	10	1.8
24.00	4	0.7
25.00	2	0.4
26.00	2	0.4
28.00	2	0.4
Missing Data	3	0.5
Total	554	100.0

Majority of the respondents are from national secondary schools (58.1 percent). Next, we have those from religious secondary schools (17.9 percent) and from other streams (23.6 percent). 2 respondents had not answered this question (0.4 percent). The summary of the respondents' stream can be seen in this Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4 Respondent School Stream Distribution**

Stream	Frequency	Percent
SMKA	99	17.9
SMK	322	58.1
Others	131	23.6
total calculated	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	0.4
Overall total	554	100.0

The summary of the demographic background of the respondents, that varies in terms of the gender, age, faculty and school stream can be seen in Table 1.5.

**Table 1.5 Respondent Demography**

Respondent Demography		Respondent Distribution	
		N	%
Gender	Male	139	25.1
	Female	415	74.9
Age	19-20	287	51.8
	21-22	244	44.0
	23-24	10	2.5
	25-26	4	0.8
	27-28	4	0.8
	Missing Data	3	0.5
Stream	SMKA	99	17.9
	SMK	322	58.1
	Others	131	23.6
	Missing Data	2	0.4

### Data Validity

The data validity of the study is the first thing that needs to be accounted for when choosing the study instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Clean data was then tested using the Factor Analysis Test and the Reliability Test to make sure that the item suitability is ensured and that it follows the objective of the study and the item reliability value for the next analysis continues.

### The Factor Analysis Test

By looking into the questionnaire items, it is found that three main variables are labelled as Interaction Value, Practice and Challenges, so we refer to Table 2.1. Meanwhile, the summary of the items is in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.1 Factor Analysis Output**

	Component		
	1	2	3
M	.516		
N	.513		
R	.366		
Y	.366		
AB	.436		
AI	.320		
AO	.534		
AR	.511		
AU	.557		
AV	.521		
AY	.462		
AF		.337	
AP		.510	
AX		.420	
P			.333
T			.414
V			.354
AA			.434
AD			.515
AE			.489
AK			.304
AQ			.546

Extract Method: *Principal Component Analysis*.

Rotation Method: *Varimax and Kaiser Normalization*.

**Table 2.2 Items of Inculcation of Harmonious Value In Ethnic Relations**

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Factor?</b>
1	M	I like to have people around me, although they are of different race	Interactional Value
2	N	Sometimes when I read about people being murdered in other countries and when I see how they live in poverty, I feel sad and touched	Interactional Value
3	R	Without any strong religious background, this life no longer interests me	Interactional Value
4	Y	When I am humiliated, I try to forgive and forget about it	Interactional Value
5	AB	I yearn for a peaceful and harmonious country	Interactional Value
6	AC	I am happy to solve my friend's problem, although they come from a different race	Interactional Value
7	AI	I believe that the different ideas about what is right or wrong in a society is relative and accepted in that society	Interactional Value
8	AO	I sympathies with people who are more unfortunate than me, although they are of different religion, race and ethnicity	Interactional Value
9	AR	I have the tendency to have good thoughts about other people	Interactional Value
10	AY	My behaviour is guided by my religious ideas	Interactional Value
11	AU	I appreciate the country's heritage	Interactional Value
12	AV	I respect the country's official religion	Interactional Value
13	AF	I feel that I can handle my emotion when I face the difference of opinion between different ethnic groups.	Practice
14	AP	I often interact with my friends of different race	Practice
15	AX	I like to eat at 'mamak' eateries	Practice
16	P	It appears that I will not be able to be in the same room/neighbourhood with other races	Challenge
17	T	Some people have the view that I am very cold and I am too petty when I am being with my friends of other races.	Challenge
18	V	When I interact with other races, I always feel uncomfortable	Challenge
19	AA	I have problems in controlling my anger towards other races and ethnic groups.	Challenge
20	AD	I am better than most other people and I know that fact.	Challenge
21	AE	I am a productive individual who always try to contribute to the country's growth	Challenge
22	AK	I only believe in any international information through the television	Challenge
23	AQ	I am greater than other people	Challenge

### i. Reliability Test

The reliability of the study data is the internal consistency owned by the items used in a study (Creswell, 2005). This consistency refers to the extent to which the score of every item connects with one another. The result obtained from the reliability test shows that all the variables have a very good *AlphaCronbach* value.

Even though the value for the Practice is low, this value can only lean on 3 questions only. This confirms that all these variables have an acceptable reliability value and can be used for the next analysis. Table 2.3 below shows the *AlphaCronbach* (*a*) value for all the variables used in this study.

**Table 2.3 Reliability Test Findings**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Reliability Coefficient</b>	<b>Number of Item</b>
Interaction Value	.833	12
Practice	.453	3
Challenge	.587	8

### Discussion

The generation today is born around the years 1980-2000s, and already they have shown some mixed ways of thinking and behaviours. Hedonism, free lifestyle, also the loss of ethics in the social media are a set of examples that is birthed from this mix-up. Rhenald Khasali (2018) mentioned that the generation today is the strawberry generation, depicted as a very interesting generation, but very fragile as they do not have a strong mentality and way of thinking, also strong values in facing today's challenges. Based on the study outcome on the inculcation of the Interactional Value among respondents, all in all, it is at a very high level. This illustrates respondents' understanding about the real Interactional Value that can produce a harmonious life among the people that come from multiple ethnic groups. The next discussion will further prove the items contained in the Interactional Value, Practice and the Challenge.



### 1. Like to be surrounded by various races.

Next, the study shows that 276 respondents (49.8 percent) agreed that they like to be surrounded by other ethnic groups. 136 respondents (24.5 percent) strongly agreed, followed by 120 respondents (21.7 percent) neutral, 19 respondents (3.4 percent) disagreed, and one respondent (0.2 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 Like to be surrounded by various races**

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	1	.2
Disagree	19	3.4
neutral	120	21.7
Agree	<b>276</b>	<b>49.8</b>
Strongly Agree	136	24.5
Calculated Total	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	.4
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

### 2. Sad and touched to see murder and poverty in other countries.

Other than that, the study shows that 267 respondents (48.2 percent) agreed that they were upset to see the murders and poverty in other countries, and 237 respondents (42.8 percent) strongly agreed. Then only 38 respondents (6.9 percent) were neutral, 5 respondents (0.9 percent) disagreed, and 4 respondents (0.7 percent) strongly disagreed. Table 3.4 shows the summary.

**Table 3.4 Sad and touched to see murder and poverty in other countries.**

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	4	.7
Disagree	5	.9
neutral	38	6.9
Agree	<b>267</b>	<b>48.2</b>
Strongly Agree	237	42.8
Calculated Total	551	99.5
Missing Data	3	.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

### 3. Strong religious belief

Study finds that 204 respondents (36.8 percent) agreed that they have a strong religious belief. 191 respondents (34.5 percent) strongly agreed, followed by neutral 113 respondents (20.4 percent), 34 respondents (6.1 percent) disagreed, and 10 respondent (1.8 percent) strongly disagreed. This is summarised in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5 Strong religious belief**

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	10	1.8
Disagree	34	6.1
neutral	113	20.4
Agree	<b>204</b>	<b>36.8</b>
Strongly Agree	191	34.5
Calculated Total	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	.4
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Have a forgiving attitude.

The study finds that 215 respondents (38.8 percent) chose to be neutral in adopting a forgiving attitude, followed by 202 respondents (36.5 percent) agreed, 72 respondents (13.0 percent) disagreed, 46 respondents (8.3 percent) strongly agreed, and 18 respondents (3.2 percent) stated that they strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7** Have a forgiving attitude

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	18	3.2
Disagree	72	13.0
neutral	<b>215</b>	<b>38.8</b>
Agree	202	36.5
Strongly Agree	46	8.3
Calculated Total	553	99.8
Missing Data	1	.2
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Yeans for a peaceful, harmonious country.

The study finds that most of the respondents or 408 respondents (73.6 percent) strongly agreed that they yearn for a peaceful and harmonious country. This is followed by 133 respondents (24.0 percent) who agreed, then neutral 7 respondents (1.3 percent) and a respondent each (0.2 percent) for disagreed and strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.9.

**Table 3.9** Yeans for a peaceful, harmonious country.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	1	.2
Disagree	1	.2
neutral	7	1.3
Agree	133	24.0
Strongly Agree	<b>408</b>	<b>73.6</b>
Calculated Total	550	99.3
Missing Data	4	.7
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Having fun solving problems of friends from a different race

There are 268 respondents (48.4 percent) who agreed that they have fun solving problems of their friends from a different race. Meanwhile, 184 respondents (33.2 percent) strongly agreed, followed by neutral 88 respondents (15.9 percent), 9 respondents (1.6 percent) disagreed, and another respondent (0.2 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.10.

**Table 3.10** Having fun solving problems of friends from a different race

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	1	.2
Disagree	9	1.6
neutral	88	15.9
Agree	<b>268</b>	<b>48.4</b>
Strongly Agree	184	33.2
Calculated Total	550	99.3
Missing Data	4	.7
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Can accept religious differences.

Next, 260 respondents (46.9 percent) were neutral about them accepting different religions, followed by 250 respondents (45.1 percent) agreed, 36 respondents (6.5 percent) strongly agreed, 5 respondents (0.9 percent) disagreed, and 3 respondents (0.5 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.11.

**Table 3.11** Can accept religious differences.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	3	.5
Disagree	5	.9
neutral	<b>260</b>	<b>46.9</b>
Agree	250	45.1
Strongly Agree	36	6.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Sympathies with other races, religions and ethnic groups.

The study finds that 274 respondents (49.5 percent) agreed that they sympathies with other races, religions and ethnic groups. Then 236 respondents (42.6 percent) strongly agreed, and 34 respondents (6.1 percent) were neutral, 5 respondents (0.9 percent) disagreed, and 3 respondents (0.5 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.13.

**Table 3.13** Sympathies with other races, religions, and ethnic groups.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	3	.5
Disagree	5	.9
neutral	34	6.1
Agree	<b>274</b>	<b>49.5</b>
Strongly Agree	236	42.6
Calculated Total	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	.4
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Think positively towards others.

The next analysis finds that 259 respondents (46.8 percent) agreed that they think positively towards others. Meanwhile, 195 respondents (35.2 percent) were neutral, 81 respondents (14.6 percent) strongly agreed, 17 respondents (3.1 percent) disagreed, and 2 respondents (0.4 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.14.

**Table 3.14** Think positively towards others

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	2	.4
Disagree	17	3.1
neutral	195	35.2
Agree	259	46.8
Strongly Agree	81	14.6
Overall total	554	100.0

Behaviour following religious obligations.

The study also finds that 258 respondents (46.6 percent) agreed that their behaviour follows religious obligations. 112 respondents (20.4 percent) strongly agreed, then 169 respondents (30.5 percent) were neutral, and 14 respondents (2.5 percent) disagreed. Refer to Table 3.17.

**Table 3.17** Behaviour following religious obligations.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	14	2.5
Disagree	169	30.5
neutral	<b>258</b>	<b>46.6</b>
Agree	112	20.2
Strongly Agree	553	99.8
Calculated Total	1	.2
Missing Data	554	100.0

Appreciating the heritage.

The study finds that 315 respondents (56.9 percent) agreed that they appreciate the heritage. 163 respondents (29.4 percent) strongly agreed, then 67 respondents (12.1 percent) were neutral and respectively 4 respondents (0.7 percent) disagreed and strongly disagreed. See Table 3.15.

**Table 3.15** Appreciating the heritage.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	4	.7
Disagree	4	.7
neutral	67	12.1
Agree	<b>315</b>	<b>56.9</b>
Strongly Agree	163	29.4
Calculated Total	553	99.8
Missing Data	1	.2
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Respecting the country's official religion.

The study finds that most of the respondents which is 327 respondents (59.0 percent) strongly agreed that they respect the country's official religion. This is followed by 188 respondents (33.9 percent) who agreed, 34 respondents (6.1 percent) neutral and a respondent (0.2 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.16.

**Table 3.16** Respecting the country's official religion

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	1	.2
Disagree	34	6.1
neutral	188	33.9
Agree	<b>327</b>	<b>59.0</b>
Strongly Agree	550	99.3
Calculated Total	4	.7
Missing Data	554	100.0

### Practice

1. Able to control emotions when disputing with other ethnic groups.

The study finds that 299 respondents (54.0 percent) agreed that they can control emotions when disputing with other ethnic groups. 180 respondents (32.5 percent) were neutral, 63 respondents (11.4 percent) strongly agreed, 8 respondents (1.4 percent) disagreed, and another respondent (0.2 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.21.

**Table 3.21** Able to control emotions when disputing with other ethnic groups

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	1	.2
Disagree	8	1.4
neutral	180	32.5
Agree	<b>299</b>	<b>54.0</b>
Strongly Agree	63	11.4
Calculated Total	551	99.5
Missing Data	3	.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

2. Often interact with friends from other ethnic groups.

The study finds that 241 respondents (43.5 percent) agreed that they often interact with friends from other ethnic groups. 176 respondents (31.8 percent) were neutral, 114 respondents (20.6) strongly agreed, 16 respondents (2.9 percent) disagreed, and 4 respondents (0.7 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.22.

**Table 3.22** Often interact with friends from other ethnic groups.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	4	.7
Disagree	16	2.9
neutral	176	31.8
Agree	<b>241</b>	<b>43.5</b>
Strongly Agree	114	20.6
Calculated Total	551	99.5
Missing Data	3	.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Like to eat at 'mamak' eateries.

The study finds that 202 respondents (36.5 percent) acted neutral that they like to eat at 'mamak' eateries. This is followed by 163 respondents (29.4 percent) who agreed, 78 respondents (14.1 percent) disagreed, 70 respondents (12.6 percent) strongly agreed, and 41 respondents (7.4 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.23.

**Table 3.23** Like to eat at ‘mamak’ eateries

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	41	7.4
Disagree	78	14.1
neutral	<b>202</b>	<b>36.5</b>
Agree	163	29.4
Strongly Agree	70	12.6
Overall total	554	100.0

### Challenge

Not able to be in the same room/ neighbourhood with other races

The study finds that 214 respondent (38.6 percent) neutral on they are not able to be in the same room/ neighbourhood with other races. Meanwhile 166 respondents (30.0 percent) disagreed, where 74 respondents (13.4 percent) agreed and strongly disagreed, and 23 respondents (4.2 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.26.

**Table 3.26** Not able to be in the same room/ neighbourhood with other races

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	74	13.4
Disagree	166	30.0
neutral	214	38.6
Agree	74	13.4
Strongly Agree	23	4.2
Calculated Total	551	99.5
Missing Data	3	.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Being cold and too petty with friends from other ethnic groups.

The study finds that 276 respondents (49.8 percent) disagreed that they are cold and too petty with friends from other ethnic groups. Meanwhile, 131 respondents (23.6 percent) strongly disagreed, 117 respondents (21.1 percent) were neutral, 27 respondents (4.9 percent) agreed, and 2 respondents (0.4 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.28.

**Table 3.28** Being cold and too petty with friends from other ethnic groups.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	131	23.6
Disagree	276	49.8
neutral	117	21.1
Agree	27	4.9
Strongly Agree	2	.4
Calculated Total	553	99.8
Missing Data	1	.2
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Not comfortable interacting with other races.

The study finds that 255 respondent (46.0 percent) disagreed that they are not comfortable interacting with other races. Meanwhile 134 respondents (24.2 percent) were neutral, 118 respondents (21.3 percent) strongly disagreed, 42 respondents (7.6 percent) agreed, and 2 respondents (0.4 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.29.

**Table 3.29** Not comfortable interacting with other races

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	118	21.3
Disagree	255	46.0
neutral	134	24.2
Agree	42	7.6
Strongly Agree	2	.4
Calculated Total	551	99.5
Missing Data	3	.5
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Finding it hard to control anger towards other races and ethnic groups

The study finds that 283 respondents (51.1 percent) disagreed that they find it hard to control anger towards other races and ethnic groups. 142 respondents (25.6 percent) strongly disagreed, 107 respondents (19.3 percent) were neutral, 19 respondents (3.4 percent) agreed whereas 3 respondents (0.5 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.30.

**Table 3.30** Finding it hard to control anger towards other races and ethnic groups

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	142	25.6
Disagree	283	51.1
neutral	107	19.3
Agree	19	3.4
Strongly Agree	3	.5
Overall total	554	100.0

Feeling that one is better than others.

The study finds that 277 respondents (50.0 percent) chose to be neutral about 'Feeling that one is better than others'. 145 respondents (26.2 percent) disagreed, 68 respondents (12.3 percent) agreed, 45 respondents (8.1 percent) strongly disagreed, and 16 respondents (2.9 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.31.

**Table 3.31** Feeling that one is better than others

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	45	8.1
Disagree	145	26.2
neutral	277	50.0
Agree	68	12.3
Strongly Agree	16	2.9
Calculated Total	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	.4
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Feeling productive and always making an effort to contribute to country's growth.

The study finds that 262 respondents (47.3 percent) were neutral in feeling productive and in always making an effort to contribute to country's growth. 208 respondents (37.5 percent) agreed, 46 respondents (8.3 percent) strongly agreed, 36 respondents (6.5 percent) disagreed, and 2 respondents (0.4 percent) strongly disagreed. Refer to Table 3.32.

**Table 3.32** Feeling productive and always trying to contribute to country's growth.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	2	.4
Disagree	36	6.5
neutral	262	47.3
Agree	208	37.5
Strongly Agree	46	8.3
Overall total	554	100.0

Believe in international information only through television.

The study finds that 270 respondents (48.7 percent) disagreed that they believe in international information only through television. 151 respondents (27.3 percent) were neutral, 99 respondents (17.9 percent) strongly disagreed, 27 respondents (4.9 percent) agreed, and 6 respondents (1.1 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.33.

**Table 3.33** Believe in international information only through television.

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	99	17.9
Disagree	270	48.7
neutral	151	27.3
Agree	27	4.9
Strongly Agree	6	1.1
Calculated Total	553	99.8
Missing Data	1	.2
<b>Overall total</b>	554	100.0

Feeling that one is greater than others.

The study finds that 243 respondents (43.9 percent) were neutral that they feel that one is greater than others. Meanwhile, 166 respondents (30.0 percent) disagreed, 89 respondents (16.1 percent) strongly disagreed, 43 respondents (7.8 percent) agreed, and 11 respondents (2.0 percent) strongly agreed. Refer to Table 3.34.

**Table 3.34** Feeling that one is greater than others

	Frequency	percent
Strongly disagree	89	16.1
Disagree	166	30.0
neutral	243	43.9
Agree	43	7.8
Strongly Agree	11	2.0
Calculated Total	552	99.6
Missing Data	2	.4
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>554</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Discussion

The findings in general were in tandem with the true interaction values and practices when facing the multitude of challenges these days to create a harmonious life in Malaysia. It does not only involve Malay Muslim respondent who practice interaction values based on Islam and Malay culture, but also seeing non-Muslim respondent comprising of various ethnic backgrounds whether they are Chinese or Indian, they are seen as able to practice good interaction values based on their own beliefs and practices.

Analyses for each item, in various interaction value dimensions and its practices strengthen the research findings. This is clearly shown when the findings show that almost all the items return a mean score for interaction value appreciation and high levels of practice. Among them are the value of firm grasp on the teachings of religion enabling them to create interactions with each other, sympathy value towards others despite a difference in race, ethnicity, and religion, a forgiving nature, positive perception towards others, tolerance towards other races, loving a peaceful, harmonious country, and respecting the heritage value and the nation's official religion. This shows that interaction value and its practices show a higher appreciation by the respondents.

The findings of the research are in line with the recommendations presented by the teachings of religions, especially Islam. In Islam, for interactions with non-Muslims, there are several principles that should be given attention based on al-Quran and al-Sunnah. There, one can find the *syariah* formula related to the standing on understanding, association with non-Muslim communities, and relations with various other ethnics and countries.

Based on the findings of the author, most of the respondents understand and can practice the concept of co-living or *Fiq al-Ta'asyusy* in Arabic, referring to how Muslims and non-Muslims live together in a country. This coexistence will not exist unless one emulates a polite and courteous attitude. Life such as this will not work unless there is an understanding, a desire to build a social network among each other in a tradition known as *ahl al-dhimmah* which is now known as *al-muwatinun* or citizen, or Muslims who live with people who request for a sanctuary or protection under an Islamic leader peacefully under the *al-ta'yirah* system.

According to the views of Sheikh Hussein Ali Mustapha (2014), the concept of ARAB refers to Islam as the universal religion that brings a message to the people, a message that commands justice and disallows injustice, and puts peace as basis of Earth, and calls out for a positive coexistence among human beings in a brotherhood, as well as tolerance within all citizens without accounting for race, skin colour, and beliefs.

Other than that, the research findings also indicated most of the respondents, especially the Muslims, as seen to have a firm grasp on religion and they can absorb into an interactional lifestyle with a society with a various ethnicities and religions. Therefore, for them, if any practices and customs do not go against the Islamic creed and teachings will not be prohibited to the Muslims. This matter may then create tolerance. However, tolerance or compromising on Islamic elements towards religion, practice, and culture for non-Muslims is not seen as flexible in every way without referring to the *akidah* principle and the concept of halal and haram in Islamic *syariat*.

This is the reason why Islam is not able to compromise if the Islamic principles are violated by any other parties, as well as a need to understand the concept of religious freedom as is stated in the Federal Constitution. This matter is seen to be in line with the findings of the author who stated that most of the respondents understand the official religion as is written in the Federal Constitution. The research findings are also almost in line with the findings as stated by Uthman El-Muhammady, 2010, who stated that non-Muslim religious figures such as the Dalai Lama himself has painted that religious tolerance does not mean interfering in other religions but to respect one another. This is as in the author's research, the majority are of the opinion that they believe in the differences of opinions

and ideas on what is true and false within a community that is relative and is accepted by the community itself.

The research findings also prove that most of the respondent, especially the Muslims, follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad SAW when implementing relations between individuals and the community based on humanity that can be overcome despite differences in religion, ethnicities, skin colour, and status while staying far from prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination among human beings (Hani al-Mubarak dan Syauqi Abu Khalil 1997). From a humanity viewpoint, the author's research findings find that the majority of the respondent have a wide understanding on the matters that can be assumed as tolerance between the Muslims and non-Muslims. This is closely linked to the respect for humanity values and not to instill generalized values from an *akidah* and religion standpoint. What is practiced by the respondent is that they are seen as not showing any negative reactions towards the followers of other religions or those with different ethnicities and races. In fact, they would be willing to lend a hand based on their humanity to those who are in need despite the religious, racial, ethnic, and culture differences.

The research findings have also found that most of the respondent, specifically the Muslims, understand and learn towards creating a good perception and assumption among each other as human beings, including those who are of different religions, races, or ethnicities. This is in line with the views of al-Karim Zaydan (1998) who spoke on the openness of Islam towards religious freedom so long as the boundaries do not strain relationships within the multi-religion community. Other than that, Islam does not forbid their followers from building their own house of worship. This permission is dependent on the type of habitation area.

### Conclusion

This research has successfully proven how far a community is able to instill interaction values within a coexisting living that comprises of various religion, ethnicities, and cultures. This is due to the research that uses an instrument that is developed to identify knowledge, and their understanding towards the understanding of interaction value to create harmonious ethnic relations within the communities in Malaysia.

With the presence of this data in the current research, the society will be able to receive a guideline on the better understanding of interaction values in creating harmonious ethnic relations within the communities in Malaysia specifically in the social field. This will ultimately identify the true problems within the Muslim community, which has the potential to threaten the harmonious coexisting living when interacting with a community that stands of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures.

Interaction value is a crucial aspect in forming attitudes and character within oneself. Interaction values are supported by characteristics such as a firm grasp on religion, good intentions towards others, sympathetic, helpful, loves tolerance and peace, gentle, and so forth. These interaction values can be integrated to sustain good relations between every human being without accounting for race, religion, and culture within the society. In facing the wave of modernization, a change in attitude and character of someone who accepts technological innovations can bring about the development of today's society. Following that, the efforts to solidify interaction values in a culture of various ethnicities in Malaysia should be done by also considering Islamic values that run concurrently with the development of the modern community. Technological advancement and instilling of true interaction values in Malaysia should be together and should not be pushed aside in the name of retaining ethnic harmony.

This realization among the multi-ethnic community is crucial in creating a nation that is not only technologically advanced, but also for the advancement of the race itself whereby both of it are the basis of the advancement of human civilization.

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