

Leaders' Animosity and Leaders' Enviousness: An Analysis on Factor Associated with the Growing Tense Ethnic Relations in Sabah, Malaysia

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received 19 February 2018

Received in revised form 16 March 2018

Accepted 25 April 2018

Available online 13 May 2018

Animosity and enviousness are two different psychosocial variables which connotes one state of mind towards others. Despite the difference, at its core, both variables plays crucial role in the emergence of tense ethnic relations in a society characterised by ethnic diversity. This paper analyses the local peoples' perceptions about the role played by both variables in the growing uneasy ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia by focusing on the question of whether it is the leaders' animosity or leaders' enviousness that plays significant role in this context. The information was gathered through mixed-method design, particularly through the use of self-administered questionnaires and interviews with the key informants. While information gathered through self-administered survey questionnaire were analysed using SPSS 20, information gathered through interview with the key informants were not been analysed using any analytical technique rather used to support the findings generated through self-administered survey questionnaire. Based on the analysis, it appeared that both leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness were perceived by the respondents as to have played significant role in the growing of ethnic tense relations in Sabah. Nevertheless, of the two factors it is the leaders' animosity that most significantly impacted the phenomenon of growing ethnic tension in Sabah. The findings thus suggests that in order to prevent the existing ethnic relations from becoming more tenuous necessary efforts to reduce animosity and enviousness among the leaders must be implemented with the concentration on leaders animosity influence reduction.

Keywords:

Leaders' animosity, leaders' enviousness,
ethnic relations

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1. Introduction

It is without doubt that the people of Malaysia in general are always interested in the ideas of what Tajfel and Turner [1] called "us" versus "them". This in turn made ethnic relations in this country strongly characterised by prolonged tension. Nevertheless, even if it is part of the Malaysian federation, the East Malaysian regions of Sabah which is located on the Island of Borneo, and separated from West Malaysia where the executive and judicial branches of federal

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government are located by 600 kilometres of water (South China Sea) traditionally the exception to this phenomenon. Not only were they visit each other during the festivals or to question whether the food served was halal (foods and drinks that are permissible for Muslim to eat or drink under Islamic law of Sharia'ah) or non-halal, but due to high mixed marriage it was common to see several people from different ethnic groups in one family who shared a 'rumah' (house) or 'rumah panjang' (long house), gardens, playgrounds and kitchen. For this reason, many described East Malaysia as the 'multicultural paradise' [2, 3].

However, the high ethnic tolerance and harmony in Sabah gradually declines [4]. This suggests that ethnic relations in this territory are increasingly characterised by tension. Historical analysis on ethnic relations in Sabah by scholar such as Luping [5] and Chin [6] often portrayed that this prevailing phenomenon is associated with leaders' attitude, in particular the political leaders (even though they never talk directly about the leaders' attitude). This is because, the leaders, as Dike [7] argues are the wave makers and therefore a society with bad attitude leaders will likely to experience ethnic disputes or to be more specific affected by strong ethnic tension. Attitude influence the leaders' choice of action and response to challenges, thus if the leaders' attitude is bad then their action and response to any challenges will tend to become evil. This includes the leaders move to manipulate ethnic divide in their effort to gain electoral victor during election. For example, in their effort to gain and/or maintain electoral victor during election the present political leaders of Barisan Nasional coalition such as Pairin Kitingan of Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (Berjaya), Musa Aman of United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) and Teo Chee Kang of Liberal Democracy Party (LDP) tend to manipulate ethnic divide sentiment.

But how exactly the leaders' bad attitude impacted on the growing influence of tense ethnic relations? Despite the significance of other elements of attitude, this paper argues that it is exactly the element of animosity and enviousness that strongly impacted the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah. In fact, the previous literature often portrayed that animosity and enviousness are the element of attitude affected political leaders that burst tense ethnic relations in many countries such as in Burundi, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Syria. Al Haj [8], Hale [9], Humphereys [10], Green, Preston and Janmat [11], Berger-Schmitt [12], Lemarchand [13] and Rabushka and Selpslie [14], for example demonstrated that such leaders' attitudes are the key factors often led to the development, escalation and diffusion of tense ethnic relations in many modern countries (even if they have never talked directly about leaders animosity and enviousness). Animosity, as many social scientists such as Windom [15] argues is a sense of resentment. When there is an animosity between two people [leaders] everything that supposed to produce healthy relationship is blocked by an attitude of resentment that was created by inner anger of that persons [leaders]. The element of enviousness, on the other hand as Menkoff and Gerke [16] argue refers to a sense of jealousy, and that when there is jealousy between the peoples in a society ethnic conflict will be ignited or perpetuated. This paper examines the significance of leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness on the growing of tense ethnic relations in the Sabah context.

2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the local peoples' perceptions about the role played by leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness in the growing uneasy ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the general perception among the local peoples on the influences of leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness on the growing uneasy ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia.

2. To determine the relationship the two factors (the leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness) and the growing uneasy ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia based on the local peoples' perceptions about such phenomenon.

3. To determine which of the identified factor (the leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness) is most significantly impacted the growing uneasy ethnic relations in Sabah based on the general perceptions about the ethnic relations phenomenon.

3. Methodology

This study by nature is a cross-sectional study that applies mixed-method, a method that involves collecting and analyzing data or information through the integration of quantitative and qualitative approach [17]. For this reason, the data of the study comprises of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was gathered through self-administered questionnaire, but the qualitative data/information was gathered through interview with key informants as such contributes in further understanding [18] the leaders' animosity and enviousness link with ethnic relations. The self-administered questionnaire comprised of four sections namely A. Respondent's background, B. Respondents perception on leaders' animosity, C. Respondents' perception on leaders' enviousness and D. Respondents' perception on ethnic relations in Sabah. It had been pretested among 50 respondents as to obtain its validity and reliability. Despite the existence of many techniques for validity and reliability test, expert reference and Cronbach's Alpha test were used to test the validity and reliability of the self-administered questionnaire respectively. Accordingly, apart from the endorsement by the expert, it appeared that the Cronbach's Alpha value for section B is .8760, .9216 for section C and .7666 for section D (the reliability of the section A has not been tested as it is just a normal practice to have this section in any quantitative research). Based on this outcome the questionnaire has been regarded as valid and reliable for the examination of respondents' perception on the relationship between leaders' attitude and ethnic relations in Sabah.

Similar process of acquiring the validity and reliability for interview with the key informant has not been conducted as the information gathered through interview would be used to support the quantitative findings only. Nevertheless, there have been a set of ethical principle employed during interview as to ensure that whatever information given by the key informer is valid and reliable for this study namely autonomy and voluntary participation, and anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, there were 100 respondents who were identified answered the self-administered questionnaire, and later a total of 10 out of 100 individuals were then chosen for an interview sessions. As soon as the data gathered, analysis procedures have been conducted according to the type of data. The data gathered through self-administered questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with the application of t-test and multiple regression techniques. On the other hand, the information gathered through interview with the key informants were interpreted as to provide further explanation or support the findings generated through self-administered questionnaire.

All respondents of the study were selected using non-probability sampling technique as each subject in the population has unequal chances to be chosen as the research sample. Unequal chances to be selected as a respondent emerge as the subject in the populations came from different location, the rural and the urban. To be more specific, the non-probability sampling

technique applied in this study is the purposive sampling technique. It refers to a sampling procedure where the researchers decided to choose the respondents based on the characteristics of the population that is the local people of Sabah at the age of more than 40 years old. The age of more than 40 years old was used as the key criteria for respondents selection because the researcher believe that at that age the individual should have observes the process of growing ethnic tension in Sabah and the way the leaders' attitudes commonly affected such phenomenon. With such criteria, the required size of respondents as earlier explained was identified without the need of bigger sample size. In fact, the decision to use this type of sampling procedure was driven by the need to avoid choosing specific size of respondents that may represent the unidentified size of population. Although, it is normal among the researcher to link such technique with qualitative research only, but such argument does not necessary prevent the researchers from using it for mixed-method design. In fact, some researchers such as Bryman [19], Brannen [20] and Bryman [21] opined that the purposive sampling technique can be used in study that combining both qualitative and quantitative.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study presented and discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Respondent Background

Majority (70 individuals, 70.0%) of the respondents in this study were male and only 30% (30 individuals) were females with the median age of 42.17. Of the total (100 individuals), 60 individuals (60.0%) were married, 38 individuals (38.0%) were single and 2 individuals (2.0%) were divorced. Moreover, in terms of educational attainment level, among the respondents 20 individuals (20.0%) have attended university/college, 53 individuals (53.0%) have attended secondary school, 27 individuals (27.0%) have attended primary school. Despite the presence of information pertaining to respondents' background, it is important to stress here that this study does not treated these information as vital rather as an additional information. The resounding reason is that, the study is focusing on answering the research question only, thus analysis on respondents' background and its link with the phenomenon of ethnic relations become unnecessary.

4.2. Leaders' Animosity and Leaders' Enviousness Impacts on Ethnic Relations

This study found that majority of the respondent perceived leaders' animosity as the key factor led to the growing tense ethnic relations or to be more specific ethno-religious relations in Sabah, Malaysia. The respondents also perceived that the growing tense ethnic relations in Sabah has been the result of leaders' enviousness. Such perceptions are reflected in the result of data analysis on the correlation coefficient between the two factors, leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness and the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah shown (See Table 1). The analysis shows that the correlation coefficient between leaders' animosity and ethnic relations in Sabah is positive and significant ($r = 0.447$). The analysis also shows that the correlation coefficient between leaders' enviousness and ethnic relations in Sabah is positive and significant ($r = 0.381$). This suggests that both leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness have positive and significant impacts on the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia.

Table 1

Correlations between Leaders' Animosity, Leaders' Enviousness and Ethnic Relations

Variables	The growing of ethnic relations in Sabah		
	Mean	SD	Correlation Coefficient (r)*
Leaders' Animosity	44	13.2	0.447
Leaders' Enviousness	39	12.6	0.381

*The study consider r value of more than 0.300 as an acceptable value for strong relations between two factors/variables. Accordingly, the relationship between two or more different factors or variables will be described as insignificance when r value is less than 0.300.

When asked about their opinion on why was it the leaders' animosity that usually ignite the tense ethnic relations, the key informants tended to agree that there was no strong will among the local leaders to cooperate in various activities as they hated each other. The key informants also often portrayed that the leaders have a sense of envy towards one another, especially between the Muslim and non-Muslim leaders. The 75 years old Kadazandusun man, for example stressed that "*most of the political leaders in Sabah today are not really interested in working together for the sake of the rakyat (citizens), rather they hate and envy towards each other*".

Such condition then motivated the commoners from Muslim and non-Muslim communities to see one another as a rival rather than companion due to leaders influence. This is especially true when the political leaders of specific ethnic group in their quest for political power demanded their follower who are also from the same ethnic background to take necessary effort in preventing the leaders of other ethnic groups from gaining political power through election. Such effort include urging all members of their ethnic group to not to vote electoral candidate from other ethnic community during election so that they would not be able to gain power. Therefore, it is not a surprise that leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness played significant role in the rise of tense ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia.

The multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 even shows the leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regression ($R = 0.771$) and a multiple correlation square of $R^2 = 0.700$. This shows that 70.0% of the total variance in the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah is accounted for by the combination of leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness. Additionally, the analysis also shows that the multiple regression data produced an F -Ratio of 242.012 ($F = 3, 97$) at the significant value of < 0.05 . It thus suggests that both leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness are exactly the predictors of growing tense ethnic relations in Sabah, Malaysia.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis on Leaders' Animosity, Leaders' Enviousness and Ethnic Relations

Multiple R (Adjusted) = 0.771

Multiple R^2 (Adjusted) = 0.700

Stand error estimated = 6.721

Source of Variation	df	F-Ratio	Sig
Regression	3	242.012	< 0.05
Residual	97		
Total	100		

Nevertheless, though they have made significant impacts on the growing of tense ethnic

relation in Sabah, the analysis on relative contribution of leader's animosity and leaders' enviousness suggests that it is the leaders' animosity that most significantly impacted the phenomenon of growing ethnic tension in this region. As can be seen in the Table 3, the relative contribution of both factors on the phenomenon of growing ethnic tension in Sabah are difference. The leaders' animosity contributed about $\beta = .467$; $t = 12.446$; Sig. <0.05 , but the leaders' enviousness contributed only $\beta = .432$; $t = 11.672$; Sig. $\beta <0.05$. Based on such e information, it clearly shows that value of β and t for leaders' animosity is larger than the value of β and t for leaders' enviousness. It thus suggests that it is the leaders' animosity that significantly affected the phenomenon of growing ethnic tension in Sabah.

Table 3

Contribution of Identified Factors to the Growing Tense Ethnic Relations in Sabah

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T-Ratio	Sig.
	β	SE β	B		
Leaders' Animosity	1.002	.091	0.467	12.446	< 0.05
Leaders' Enviousness	0.678	.052	0.432	11.672	< 0.05

However, despite the fact that the leaders' animosity and leaders' enviousness have made significant relative contribution to the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah, it appeared that it was the leaders' animosity that played a more significant contribution to the growing of tense ethnic relations in this territory. In responding to such findings, when asked what caused leaders' animosity to play a more significant role in the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah, the key informants often argued that the key reason has been the feeling of hatred towards each other among the leaders, especially in context of success in gaining control over political and economic power. The 43 years old key informant who located in Kota Kinabalu, for example, noted that *"politicians are the same; their sense of animosity is solid. That is why they always interested in making sure other politicians are unable to gain power. But, not all politicians are affected strongly by enviousness"*. That is, in order to achieve this, the leaders are often interested to use any method to ensure such power eventually become theirs. This include by manipulating ethnic difference and ethnic hatred during elections. As the 60 years old key informant of the study explained, *"our leaders often manipulate ethnic difference and ethnic hatred for their own benefits. This is why ethnic tension becomes clearer in Sabah"*.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the result of the study revealed that the growing tense ethnic relation in Sabah is generally perceived by the locals as the result of not only leaders' animosity but also leaders' enviousness. Nevertheless, it appeared that the leaders' animosity played a more significant role in the growing of tense ethnic relations in Sabah than the leaders' enviousness. The result is not surprising because before the establishment of formal political system in this region which required leaders from different ethnic groups to compete each other for state political power, ethnic difference was not a major issue in Sabah. However, quickly after the establishment of formal political system that based on consociational democracy in this region, ethnic divide slowly becomes the marker of Sabah politics and thereafter ignited tension between different ethnic groups.

Based on the findings, though it cannot be generalised as to have been the reflection of perception among the people in Sabah due to the insignificant in its sampling size, it shows that in order to prevent the existing ethnic relations from becoming more tenuous in Sabah, necessary efforts to reduce animosity and enviousness among the leaders must be implemented. It must be much more effective way of reducing the existing tense ethnic relations if such effort concentrating on the leaders' animosity influence reduction as it has been the factor most significantly affected such phenomenon. This study thus suggests that more systematic and in-depth examination on how to reduce, if not eliminate the sense of animosity and enviousness among the leaders is immensely valuable. Arguably, conducting such study would help minimize the limitation exists in this study.

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