



Individualism as Threat to Patriotism: An Outlook on Students as Social Media User

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author SNMB designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors SNMB and MZAB managed the analyses of the study and managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this paper is to investigate the perception of patriotism concept among students who also a social media user and how the individualism values can possibly be a threat to patriotic values among them. Data collected using qualitative research methods by implementing convenience sampling methods. A total of six students were involved in the interview session. The findings of the research suggested that the informants agreed the most common concept of patriotism are pride and love towards the country and individualism has connection with freedom of speech, autonomy and uniqueness. The spreading and sharing of global values that fought personal rights more important than the right of the community through the internet and the social media caused the erosion of patriotism in modern society but not necessary give impact to their patriotic values. Freedom to respond, use and commenting in social media including sensitive issues like race and religion give new challenges to the unity of the Malaysian people. Therefore, existence of the patriotism is an important medium in defending a country with its own identity.

Keywords: Patriotism; individualism; globalization; social media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided by countries around the world and one of a synonym effect of globalization is the proliferation of new information technologies, The Internet Revolution [1]. Due to the development of information technology lead to the world to shrink with the access to information is just the tip of the fingers. The development of technology and the sharing of infinite information creates a challenge to person's culture, social, thinking and life. Cultures such as fun for material and lust, life-style and expression of freedom and the struggle against individual rights beyond the rights of the community are shared without boundaries. Cultural assimilation without being restricted by national borders can occur where the majority culture will be absorbed into the minority. Logically, more dominant western cultures will grow and absorb easily into developing countries such as Malaysia as well as will affect the cultural and identity.

In addressing global challenges, Malaysia is also in the light of creating a technology-savvy information society. Along with the development of Web 2.0, internet is seen as an obligation in facilitating daily business and communicating [2]. As of December 2018, 28.7 million which 87.4% of Malaysia population were internet users. It showed an increase from the year 2016 which accounted for only 76.9% of the internet user. Social media are very synonymous as one of the ways to interact in global era. Among the popular are Facebook, Instagram and Tweeter. This simple, unrestricted access without boundaries, without or less monitoring in giving opinion, seeking information and receiving information give pros and cons impact on how society will act and respond.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Individualism is a culture that emphasizes personal importance is the most important thing compared to common interests [3]. The development of individualism culture began in Europe during the French Revolution [4]. The main idea of individualism culture is to place individual values higher than the value of a community [5]. It is self-oriented, that is, the importance of maximizing the welfare of the self, individual and independent of the community [6]. In the context of social politics, the individualism culture emphasizes the need of a nation to nurture and enhance individual development and

to ensure their well-being in giving opinions and views. It recognizes that the country has no right to interfere with the affairs of its community but to ensure that there is no violation of the rights of other individuals [7]. The four fundamental traits of individualism, i.e. [8].

- i. Relative individuals who are loosely associated with themselves as collectively free,
- ii. Driven by their own priorities such as needs and rights
- iii. Tends to see the advantages and disadvantages of interacting with the community
- iv. Their personal goals are more important than the goals in the group.

In the other hand, patriotism known as the concepts promoting the value of group are more important than individual value. The spirit of patriotism is a subjective thing based on a different history, political environment, society and economy. Determining value is very important as it is guided by the sharing, the reasonableness, the satisfaction of one's actions and the social entity with the goals to be achieved as a whole [9]. It is supported by Kleinig, Keller and Primoratz [10] that patriotism is a spirit of love and loyalty to a so-called state or country entity with three main focus areas of action:

- i. The patriotism of a patriot is to the country but not necessarily to the government;
- ii. The love of a person to his country is more than his love for another country and this sense is channeled with appropriate actions such as maintaining economic, political and social prosperity and prosperity;
- iii. A person has a sense of pride in his country and thus fosters a very strong and deep sense of attachment.

Furthermore, Kleinig [11] argues that a country desperately needs its loyal people and is willing to make sacrifices in making the country prosperous. This is supported by Gill, Ramli and Talib [12] stating that patriotism is contained within the spirit of loving the country, the spirit of compassion, discipline and willingness to sacrifice. Brubaker [13] emphasized that patriotism can be valuable in four aspects that can help develop a more populist nationality, provide support for social policies, foster integration and also serve as an examination of

foreign policy development. It is a positive feeling about love, devotion, pride and duty to support and protect the homeland and it is contrary to the globalization goal of adapting the universal identity [14]. Hammond [15] explains patriotism in the age of globalization has a broader definition of patriotism not only the love of the homeland but the love of love for the region and other countries by mutual respect for each other, tolerance and always striving to maintain the peace of the world. It is against the basic principle of patriotism, namely national identity, love of homeland and its own culture beyond anything else.

Individualism seems to have expanded in the course of recent decades, yet most research reporting this move has been restricted to the investigation of a bunch of profoundly in developed nations [16]. Individualism promoting by social media are contradicted with the nature of patriotism. In general, the definition of patriotism is often associated with love and obedience to the homeland. Patriotism is a kind of loyalty of a person to his country, irrespective of the costs, benefits and uncertainties, and it requires the individual to sacrifice personal interests for others [17].

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to investigate and explore the behaviour of individualism and its effect on perceptions of patriotism among students who are also social media users. Using phenomenological research by Creswell [18], it can help the researcher to understand, investigate and explain the individual experiences on the phenomenon. In the context of this study, the behaviour of individualism is seen to be widespread and does it pose a threat to the formation of a spirit of patriotism that is clearly opposed to individualism. Semi-structured interview methods are used in data collection as Robson [19] argues that this is an appropriate method when considering respondents' experience in discussing the phenomenon. In the context of this study, construct validity involves collecting data through the triangulation of the reading of several documents including previous studies, journals, books and individuals as suggested by Yin [20] and Creswell [21] and also peer debriefing suggested by Janesick [22].

The population of this research consists of students in local university in Malaysia and a total of 6 informants were involved as sampling

through the convenience the most common of all sampling techniques for large population [23]. In determining the number of respondents to be interviewed, Guest, Bunce and Johnson [24] stated that six (6) to twelve (12) respondents were sufficient to elaborate on the themes they were trying to study and to interpret and had sufficient reliability and validity. All informants have allowed this interview to be recorded.

4. RESULTS

There are three main themes used in answering the research questions which is the concepts of patriotism, individualism behaviour in social media, and the impact of individualism behaviour on patriotism among social media user especially students. The informants known as "I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4., I.5, and I.6" explained about their understanding of the themes raised: the concept of patriotism, the nature of individualism and patriotism in the context of social media users. It involves the discussion on how they express the spirit of patriotism, the discussion of individualism such as freedom in determining what is good and bad while managing the freedom of uploading status, comments and views and the connection between this individualism behaviour with how they portray patriotic value in their social media account.

Theme 1: Patriotism Concepts

All informants have been questioned about the extent to which they understand about the concept of patriotism. Questions about patriotism such a pride and love to the nation. The students were asked about what they understand about patriotism, how they are proudly promoting multi culture and ethnic harmony in social media.

In the context of this study, students explained that feelings of affection towards the country because of their birthplace and sharing the culture and history. Long-term partnerships generates pride and love for the community [25]. For example, I.2 said "I know, patriotism is like emotions bonding...it is hard to show but deep inside me, I know I love my country". Likewise, other informant I.4 said "I love Malaysia. Its hurts me if others country condemning my country..."

Meanwhile, in the context of love and pride for the country most informants do not mind promoting ethnic harmony and multi culture in Malaysia on their social media but in other hands, it is just more to bandwagon activities because everyone is doing it like I.6 said "yes, I

will do the same ... If I didn't do it then I would not be in the current situation ... so yes I did ...", and I.1 said "yes just share links from friends" ...

Theme 2: Individualism behaviour in social media.

The informants have been questioned about the nature of individualism in social media such the autonomy of freedom to speech, uploading posting and giving opinion. Most informants agree they have total right on their social media account and that no one can prevent them from voicing their opinion on any matter. For example, I.1 said, "...I'm totally agreed because it is my right and my responsibility" ...Meanwhile, I.2 said "why should anyone else forbid me from using my social media...that's how I express my feelings when I'm dissatisfied with something ... it's hard for everyone not to ...". Informant I.5 respond as "social media is my right ... Anyone who doesn't like my posts, doesn't have to be my social media friend..."

According to I.3 freedom of speech is one of the characteristics of democracy supported by the country. He said that "we are a democracy, so of course I have no problem with my posts ..."

However, informant 1.4 said the user are responsible on whatever he or she posted in his or her social media. He said " ...social media user should understand and consider sometimes people misunderstand our view ... so be careful ..."

This finding is in line with the recommendations presented Grossmann and Santos [26] individualism can be defined as people looking after themselves and their immediate family only, one's identity is in the person, always looking for information to maximize their personal utility.

Themes 3: The Impact of Individualism Behavior on Patriotism.

The rapidly expanding access to information technology brings together negative impacts especially on national resilience. National security threats are no longer subject only to military crimes but include digital age crimes such as cyber crime and misuse of internet facilities to spread defamation. Failure to filter out the information obtained can lead to conflict. According to Cahyono [27] the freedom to give opinions and ideas without any potential control creates conflicts that can lead to a breakdown of national security. In this context of studies,

patriotism refers to maintaining harmony among multiethnic people. Informants have been asked about how they deal with sensitive issues in social media which can contribute to prejudice, stereotype and racism. Most informant consider individualism behavior such as freedom of posting, expressing public opinion will affect the view of patriotism in term of ethnic harmony, but they believe its happen only in cyberspace and not in reality. For example, I.4 said "even in a fight in the cloud, it does not reach the real world...". Other informant such I.5 adding, "...social media is my medium of voicing what I feel rather than knowing what people feel about me."

5. DISCUSSION

From the findings, individualism is not a threat to patriotism. Only four informants out of six showed a substantial rise in individualist practices through social media and two informants agree that individualism they showed in social media is not necessarily mean they are not patriotic. Even though they believe on individualism values to fight for such as freedom to speech, autonomy on social media, but they also believe it is a duty to maintaining harmony among friends from different culture. Individualism is a global phenomenon but there are exceptions to some countries in the group of developing economies such as Malaysia [28]. It is important to the government to strengthen patriotic values among the peoples. This can be done by implementing civic and moral values which advocates patriotic character through education. Like Malaysia, the National Philosophy of Education emphasizes the importance of applying the values of pure in the national education system. It is reinforced by drawing up the ultimate goal of the National Education Policy is to create a loyal and united Malaysian nation. Philosophy and national education policy are an effort in producing knowledgeable, responsible and contributing Malaysians to the development and progress of the nation holistically [29]. This can be showed from the result, all informants are aware, know about patriotism concepts and three of them are show how they're feeling and concern when other are criticizing and look down on Malaysia capability. Patriotism is a person's love and affection for his country. Usually it carries a positive value that leads to behavioural attachments such as emotion, love, obedience, commitment and willingness to fight for national security [30].

6. CONCLUSION

The spirit of patriotism is seen as one of the important mediums in ensuring the security, sovereignty and harmony of a country. It is acknowledged that high patriotism among the people will have an impact on the well-being of the people and the country as it did in New Zealand, Japan, Korea and Singapore. It is undeniable that the spirit of patriotism reflects positive emotions but that the tendency of extreme patriotism to form negative patriotism. Youth in particular is an important community in pursuing and maintaining Malaysia as an independent state.

The issue of strengthening the spirit of patriotism among the people are not new. Hence, in line with the rapid development of information technology, efforts to empower patriotism in society must be enhanced. The cultivation of the spirit of patriotism can not only be perceived by one-sided effort, but it must be instilled in every individual from smaller social agencies such as parents and family members. Deeper understanding and appreciation of the importance of patriotism as a national defence fort must be strengthened. Patriotism can no longer be regarded as a rhetoric but as a guideline that forms the personal, spirit, behaviour and manner of society to prosper and uphold the homeland. It also covers a diverse dimension of political, social, economic, and educational. Therefore, for Kleinig [31], having a community of high patriotism is an obligation that must be enlightened by a country.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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