

Citizenship Knowledge Among Secondary School Students In Peninsular Malaysia

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Abstract

The aim of this research which was carried out throughout the Peninsular of Malaysia is to identify the level of citizenship knowledge among secondary school students in Peninsular Malaysia according to gender and ethnicity. Citizenship knowledge among students which is under investigation is comprised of three aspects, namely the establishment of a sovereign country, democratization and ethnic diversity. The research design was a survey using a quantitative approach. The instrument used for this research was a questionnaire while the number of respondents recruited for this study was 1812 secondary school students from various ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis of Manova by using SPSS software. The findings show that the level of citizenship knowledge among the students based on two of the aspects studied, namely the establishment of a sovereign country and democratization, are at a moderate level while the ethnic diversity aspect is at a medium high level. Overall without citizenship knowledge, students are at a moderate level. The findings also show that there are significant differences in citizenship knowledge of students based on gender and ethnicity. With regards to gender, it is found that male students show higher levels of citizenship knowledge with regards to the aspect of the establishment of a sovereign country and democratization compared to female students. In the meantime, female students showed higher levels of knowledge in terms of ethnic diversity than male students. With regards to ethnicity, Malay students showed higher levels of citizenship knowledge on democratization and ethnic diversity compared to Chinese and Indian students. Meanwhile, Indian students show the highest level of knowledge in terms of the establishment of a sovereign country compared to Malay and Chinese students. The findings of this study can affect the education process of the country in producing knowledgeable and skilled citizens in line with the aspiration of the National Education Philosophy in Malaysia. Hence, the implementation of citizenship education needs to be improved in order to increase the level of students' citizenship knowledge.

Keywords: Citizenship knowledge; Ethnic; Establishment of sovereign country; Democratization; Ethnic diversities.



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1. Introduction / Background

Citizenship Education is an important matter which is given emphasis in a country. In Malaysia, Citizenship Education is important in making Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, skilful, noble in character, and responsible (KPM). Hence, inculcation of citizenship values is implemented in Malaysia through the Ministry of Education Malaysia. KPM introduced the subject, namely Civic Education and Citizenship (PSK) in the year 2005 to apply citizenship values among students. However, in the year 2017, this subject is no longer taught to the form one students after the Standard Curriculum for Secondary Schools was introduced (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015). This means that this subject will no longer be taught at the secondary school level by the year 2022. Nevertheless, citizenship education will be applied and taught in the subject of History.

The Secondary School Standard Curriculum Framework (KSSM) is based on six basic principles and one of them is the principle of humanity. The principle of humanity aims to produce citizens for the 21st century to master and conceptualize knowledge, develop intellectual finesse, live up to the fundamental values of democracy and foster problem solving skills (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015).

Citizenship Education is very important to be taught especially in our country Malaysia as we are comprised of different ethnicities, cultures, and customs. Among the largest ethnic groups in Malaysia are Malays, Chinese and Indians and there are various ethnics of Sabah and Sarawak. There are three largest ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian, and there are various ethnic groups among native indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak. The existence of ethnic diversity in Malaysia is a result of the British colonization which had brought

in labour from abroad because of the development of tin and rubber companies in Malaya at that time. Hence, a plural society, a community of diverse cultures and customs, has been formed in this country. Nevertheless, if tolerance is practiced, it can guarantee the prosperity and stability among various ethnic groups in our country. Citizenship Education is important in producing good citizens who understand and respect the traditional customs of people from various races.

According to [Ten and Volman \(2007\)](#), citizenship education is seen as an alternative to establish students' competency level that enables them to pursue various social tasks. Citizenship competency covers various aspects, such as knowledge, skills and attitudes that all citizens in the country must essentially possess these days. Hence, citizenship education provides the foundation for students to train and contribute to the country in order to develop the country.

2. Problem Statement

So far, there is little amount of research that has been carried out about citizenship knowledge in our country. This fact was reiterated by [Mohd M. I. and Mansor \(2013\)](#) who stated that research and data on citizenship are still insufficient. Hence, a detailed study should be undertaken to identify the level of citizenship knowledge among Malaysians. Nevertheless, this current research has only examined the students in secondary schools as most of them are going to pursue their studies at higher learning institutions, and they are they are going to be the asset as human capital of the country in the future. However, there still exists research in the past such as a study by [Mohd M. A. et al. \(2015\)](#) which indicates students' level of citizenship knowledge that was moderate. This research used an instrument which was used in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a study on citizenship based on instruments depicting the real situation in our country. In addition, this study is necessary because the issue of citizenship is a current issue not only in our country but also in all countries of the world. The government of Malaysia is seriously committed about citizenship knowledge that it has made it compulsory for citizenship values to be applied among students through the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) by introducing PSK in the year 2005 and now citizenship values are continued through KSSM.

3. Previous Research

A number of past studies were found to be related to students' level of knowledge, understanding and appreciation towards citizenship values. Research done by [Zahara \(1985\)](#), [Rizal \(2002\)](#), and [Mohd M. A. et al. \(2015\)](#) iterate that students' level of knowledge, understanding and appreciation towards citizenship values is still not solid and is at a moderate level. A research carried out by [Suzana \(2012\)](#) found that ethnic relations in higher learning institutions were still weak. They do not feel comfortable when they were in the same area even though they recognize one another. The students also experienced difficulties in their interactions while sharing important facilities among themselves. This matter became a problem may be due to different factors such as taboo and different religious practices that cause them unwilling to share and interact freely with one another. These findings were supported by a research done by [Hamidah \(2011\)](#) who found that the level of social relation among first year students at UTM was also at a moderate level.

4. Research Objective

This research was carried out with the aim to identify the level and differences of citizenship knowledge among secondary school students from different ethnic groups according to gender and ethnicity. The constructs under study are citizenship knowledge according to three aspects, namely establishment of a sovereign country, democratization, and ethnic diversity.

5. Methodology

The research design was a survey using a quantitative approach. The instrument used for this research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire instruments were rearranged based on previous studies such as [Hambali \(2014\)](#), [Ten et al. \(2011\)](#) and [International Association for the Evaluation IEA \(2001\)](#) Civic Education Study (2010), and the data were analyzed by using SPSS software. The respondents were comprised of 1812 secondary school students, males and females, from various ethnic groups. According to gender, there were 819 male students (45.2%) and 993 female students (54.8%). According to ethnicity, there were 1058 Malay students (58.4%), 594 Chinese students (32.8%) and 160 Indian students (8.8%).

6. Research Results

This study was carried out to determine the level and differences of citizenship knowledge among secondary school students based on ethnicity and gender. Descriptive statistics involving frequency, percentage and mean scores are used to determine the level and differences of students' citizenship knowledge according to different aspects, namely establishment of a sovereign country, democratization, and ethnic diversity. The results of the descriptive statistics are as follows.

Overall, the level of citizenship knowledge among students can be summarized as follows.

Table-1. The level of students' citizenship knowledge based on the aspects of establishment of a sovereign country, democratization and ethnic diversity

No	Students' citizenship knowledge	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
1	Establishment of a Sovereign Country	3.29	0.60	Moderate
2	Democratization	3.15	0.73	Moderate
3	Ethnic Diversity	3.59	0.70	High Moderate
	Overall	3.35	0.58	Moderate

Table 1 shows the highest level of students' citizenship knowledge is from the aspect of ethnic diversity (mean = 3.39, and SD = 0.70). This is followed by establishment of a sovereign country (mean = 3.29 and = 0.60) and democratization (mean = 3.15, and SD = 0.73). Overall results show that students' citizenship knowledge is at a moderate level (mean = 3.35, and SD = 0.58).

The findings show that students have the knowledge about ethnic diversity in this country. Students possess the knowledge of other cultures from various aspects, namely religious practices, heritage and festivals of people from races different than theirs in Malaysia. This demonstrates a very positive circumstance to promote harmonious environment and well-being of a multi-ethnic nation. However, students are less mindful of the historical account of the formation of multi-ethnic society in Malaysia. As such, it is necessary to put enough effort in order to ensure that citizenship knowledge among students can be improved so that they can become good citizens.

The results of statistical inference through MANOVA test is as follows:

Table-2. MANOVA test on the different levels of students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of students' citizenship knowledge, establishment of a sovereign country, democratization, and ethnic diversity based on different gender

Students' citizenship knowledge	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Type III sum of squares	df	Sum of squares	F	Sig.
Establishment of a Sovereign Country	Male	819	3.32	0.65	1.111	1	1.111	3.070	0.080
	Female	993	3.27	0.56					
Democratization	Male	819	3.21	0.77	5.088	1	5.088	9.595	0.002
	Female	993	3.10	0.69					
Ethnic Diversity	Male	819	3.50	0.73	10.891	1	10.891	22.509	0.001
	Female	993	3.66	0.67					

Table 2 shows that there are significant differences based on democratization [F = 9.595 and sig = 0.002, p<0.05] and ethnic diversity [F = 22.509 and sig = 0.001, p<0.05] according to gender. From the aspect of mean scores, it indicates that male students (mean = 3.21) obtained a much higher level with regard to democratization compared to female students (mean = 3.10). In the meantime, female students (mean = 3.66) attained a higher level with regard to ethnic diversity compared to male students (mean = 3.51). Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the aspect of establishment of a sovereign country [F = 3.070 and sig = 0.080, p>0.05] based on gender. From the aspect of mean scores, it shows that male students (mean = 3.32) has a mean score which is quite similar to female students (mean = 3.27).

In term of gender, the results of this study indicate that male students are more dominant at mastering the aspects of democratization compared to female students. Male students are more aware of the political administrative system based on the concept of democracy, which is the characteristic of parliamentary democracy being practiced in our country. Similarly, male students also know more about the concept of Constitutional Monarchy, the administration as well as election systems practiced in our country. This result may be explained by the fact that male students tend to be more interested in current political affairs which eventually led them to take into account the system of administration in the country. However, in terms of ethnic diversity, there are similarities between the results shown by female students in this study and those described by [Fazilah \(2008\)](#) who found that female students are more likely to have higher cognitive readiness towards ethnic tolerance compared to their male counterpart.

Table-3. MANOVA analyses show the different levels of students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of students' citizenship knowledge, establishment of a sovereign country, democratization, and ethnic diversity based on different ethnicities

Students' citizenship knowledge: Aspects	Ethnic	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Type III sum of squares	df	Sum of squares	F	Sig.
Establishment of A Sovereign Country	Malay	1058	3.31	0.60	3.935	2	1.967	5.455	0.004
	Chinese	594	3.23	0.61					
	Indian	160	3.37	0.55					
Democratization	Malay	1058	3.18	0.74	3.305	2	1.653	3.109	0.045
	Chinese	594	3.09	0.73					
	Indian	160	3.16	0.61					

Ethnic Diversity	Malay	1058	3.63	0.70	6.507	2	3.254	6.688	0.001
	Chinese	594	3.50	0.71					
	Indian	160	3.60	0.66					

Table 3 shows that there are significant differences according to establishment of a sovereign country [F = 5.455 and sig = 0.004, p<0.05], democratization, [F = 3.109 and sig = 0.045, p<0.05] and ethnic diversity [F = 6.688 and sig = 0.001, p<0.05] based on ethnicity. According to the aspect of mean scores, it is shown that the level of Malay students (mean = 3.31 and mean = 3.63) is much higher in terms of democratization and ethnic diversity compared to Chinese students (mean = 3.09 and mean = 3.50) and Indian students (mean = 3.16 and mean = 3.60). Meanwhile, Indian students' level of knowledge (mean = 3.37) is higher in term of establishment of a sovereign country compared to Malay students (mean = 3.31) and Chinese (mean = 3.23).

In order to see the differences in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of establishing the sovereignty of a country, democratization and ethnically based diversity in more detail, the Post Hoc Scheffe test was carried out and the results are indicated in the following table

Table-4. The Post Hoc Scheffe indicates differences in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspects of establishing the sovereignty of a country, democratization and ethnically based diversity

Variable	(I) Ethnic	(J) Ethnic	Mean differences (I-J)	Standard Deviation	Sig.
Establishing the sovereignty of a country	Malay	Chinese	0.08	0.03	0.026
		Indian	-0.06	0.05	0.447
	Chinese	Malay	-0.08	0.03	0.026
		Indian	-0.15	0.05	0.022
	Indian	Malay	0.06	0.05	0.447
		Chinese	0.15	0.05	0.022
Democratization	Malay	Chinese	0.09	0.04	0.045
		Indian	0.03	0.06	0.908
	Chinese	Malay	-0.09	0.04	0.045
		Indian	-0.07	0.06	0.597
	Indian	Malay	-0.03	0.06	0.908
		Chinese	0.07	0.06	0.597
Ethnic Diversity	Malay	Chinese	0.13	0.04	0.001
		Indian	0.03	0.06	0.875
	Chinese	Malay	-0.13	0.04	0.001
		Indian	-0.10	0.06	0.275
	Indian	Malay	-0.03	0.06	0.875
		Chinese	0.10	0.06	0.275

Table 4. shows that there is a significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge in terms of the formation of the sovereignty of a country among Malay ethnic students and Chinese ethnic students with mean difference of = 0.08 and sig = 0.026 (p <0.05). Students' citizenship knowledge among Malay students in terms of the formation of the sovereignty of a country is shown to be higher compared to that of Chinese students. There is a significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge in terms of the formation of the sovereignty of a country among Chinese ethnic students and Indian ethnic students with mean differences of = -0.15 and sig = 0.022 (p <0.05). Indian ethnic students have students' citizenship knowledge in terms of the formation of the sovereignty of a country which is higher compared to Chinese students. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge based on other ethnicities in terms of the formation of the sovereignty of a country.

There was a significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of democratization between Malay ethnic students and Chinese ethnic students with mean difference of = 0.09 and sig = 0.045 (p <0.05). From the aspect of democratization, it is shown that Malay ethnic students have students' citizenship knowledge which is higher than that of Chinese students. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of democratization based on other ethnicities.

There was a significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of ethnic diversity between Malay ethnic students and Chinese ethnic students with mean difference of = 0.13 and sig = 0.001 (p <0.05). From the aspect of ethnic diversity, it is shown that Malay ethnic students have students' citizenship knowledge which is higher than that of Chinese students. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in students' citizenship knowledge from the aspect of ethnic diversity based on other ethnicities.

Overall, the results of the study show that Indian ethnic students have citizenship knowledge which is relatively higher compared to Malay ethnic students and Chinese ethnic students in term of the formation of the sovereignty of a country. However, the results of the research also show that Malay ethnic students are also better at mastering citizenship knowledge from the aspect of ethnic diversity compared to Indian ethnic students and Chinese ethnic students. In spite of this fact, all students in daily secondary schools are taught according to the same syllabus in the PSK. However, students from various ethnic background have different backgrounds from the aspects of family, culture and lifestyles. Therefore, these aspects more or less have influence on the results of research which are related to mastering the citizenship knowledge among students based on their ethnic background.

7. Discussion

One of the characteristics of a good citizen is that a person has knowledge of his country. According to recent research by Hicks (2001), (Print, 2012) and Mohd M. A. *et al.* (2015), they all state that the characteristic of a good citizen is to know about the government in his country. However, the overall knowledge of citizenship among students in secondary schools is still at moderate level which is not satisfactory. Students are still lack of knowledge about establishment of a sovereign country and democratization in the context of Malaysia.

This situation is very disturbing as the new generations who were born after independence have never felt or empathize with the painful experience which their forefathers went through to attain independence. This is even more awful, and coupled with a lack of knowledge about the history of the country; this will cause citizens to increasingly lose their identity. Thus, through the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (KPM) starting from the year 2013, the students are required to pass the subject of History so they try to earnestly study the history of the country. At the same time, however, the students' knowledge of ethnic diversity was somewhat satisfying compared to aspects of establishment of a sovereign country and democratization. This shows that the students have knowledge about diversity of cultures within the various ethnic groups in our country. Nevertheless, in a study conducted by (Hamidah, 2011) she found that the relationships between students from different ethnicities in IPT are still sour and almost becoming bitter. This situation has manifested because students have lack of knowledge about ethnic diversity in terms of history, cultural differences and customs among people of different races despite living in an independent country. This situation will make it difficult in the efforts to unite the people from various ethnic groups in the country.

The democratization aspect is also important in shaping good citizenship. Malaysia is a country that practices parliamentary democracy. Among the characteristics of parliamentary democracy is the Constitutional Monarchy, elections and so on. Elections in a democratic system, for example, involve the practice of making decisions, and in the context of schooling, students are exposed to the selection of leaders at the school level such as prefects and class leaders. The findings of the study on citizenship knowledge from the aspect of democratization are also at a moderate level among the students of all ethnicities. This situation may be because students have not been exposed to democratic practices. A study by Hessel *et al.* (2016) found that opportunities for young people to engage themselves in making decisions collectively and to gain democratic experience is somewhat limited in schools. Hence, the findings of this study are similar with those of the previous study. Therefore, this study found that students were less knowledgeable in terms of knowledge of a democratic country. This shows that the level of democratic knowledge among students is less satisfactory. The level of students' awareness about their responsibilities as citizens who practice democratic principles has not yet reached a level that can be proud of (Hamidah, 2011).

This study finds the level of knowledge about the establishment of a sovereign country and democratization shown by male students is higher than female students. This finding further reinforces the study and found that the level of male citizenship knowledge was higher than that of female students. As a whole for all students, the level of knowledge about democratization is less satisfactory except the element of elections. This means students are more aware of the aspects of the election in this country. The results found that male students are more knowledgeable than girls in terms of election. This phenomenon can occur due to the tendency of men to show interest in politics and elections which may affect male students in school compared to female students. Meanwhile, the results showed that Malay students were more knowledgeable about the election. This situation is in line with the findings of the study by which found that Malay youths are at a high level in terms of their skills to evaluate a particular matter in relation to political issues.

Female students have a higher level of knowledge of ethnic diversity compared to male students. Various elements are highlighted in the aspects of ethnic diversity, namely the history of the establishment of various ethnic communities since British colonization of our country. In addition, the element of knowledge about other ethnic cultures is also discussed in the aspect of ethnic diversity. The findings of this study support the study conducted by Fazilah (2008) which found that female youths are more likely to have higher levels of cognitive readiness than men towards tolerance behaviour in the interaction between different ethnicity.

1. Implication and Contribution of the Research

The implication of this study on the Ten Dam citizenship competency model is that it is very important for the features of citizenship competency to be cultivated as a culture in schools and to be implemented as daily practices among students as well as teachers.

This research contributes towards the citizenship competency model from the aspect of pedagogical planning in order to ensure most important skills that are necessary to become competent citizens in the scope of democratized county are being updated and strengthened. This is because competent citizens are required to have special skills which are generally and usually obtained indirectly through educational system.

8. Conclusion

Overall, students' citizenship knowledge is still at a moderate stage for students of all ethnicities, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian, and from both genders, male and female. However, male students show a higher level of citizenship knowledge compared to female students with regards to the aspect of establishment of a sovereign country and democratization. This result can bring major implications to the country. Previous research also shows a moderate level of citizenship knowledge and behaviour portrayed by students from various ethnicities in IPT. This

situation is very much worrying as students are the generation which will continue the country's agenda in leadership as well as the direction of the country in the future. Hence, the implementation of citizenship education needs to be improved to ensure that the level of citizenship knowledge is at a higher level in order to produce a generation which has good citizenship characteristics in the future.

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