SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS HARMONY DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA: AN INTERPRETIVE STRUCTURAL MODELLING FOR MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

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Abstract

The subject of inter-religious relationship among different religious adherents is crucial in determining social peace and harmony in a multi religious country like Malaysia. The aim of this research is to develop a sustainable socio-religious harmony development model of the Malaysian multi-religious society based on its critical and significant factors. The study capitalized on experts' views and adopted the Design and Development approach as methodology which was conducted in three phases. The first phase utilized the Fuzzy Delphi technique to develop the main socio-religious harmony factors. The outcome of this phase provided the pertinent socio-religious harmony factors to be used for the model development. The second phase adopted the Interpretive Structural Modelling technique to develop the socio-religious harmony model based on the factors determined by the experts. The third phase was the evaluation and the interpretation of the model through the development of the Conica matrix to further analyze the strength and classification of each factor in the model. The findings of Phase one finalized 23 socio-religious harmony factors. Phase two resulted in the model showing the network of factor relationships which proposed factors and clusters of factors which need to be addressed in sequence to develop socio-harmony among religious adherents. The output of phase three indicated that the model showed the factors 'Mutual respect', "Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings", "Inter-religious social justice towards other religion", "Awareness on others' beliefs", and "Peaceful feeling" were proposed to be leading factors to be addressed first. The experts agreed that the network of factors could be divided into three phases: Initiation Phase (n= 10), Intervening phase (n= 3), and Sustaining Phase (n=10). These findings could implicate in the key elements to develop socio-harmony among religious adherents as reference for the relevant authorities to improve the situation appropriately to the critical element of relation shown from the result of the model.

Keywords: *Socio-religious harmony, Inter-religious, Interfaith, Interpretive Structural Modelling, Fuzzy Delphi*

Introduction

Since its independence, it has always been a challenge and a dilemma to a multi-religious country like Malaysia to maintain harmony and peaceful coexistence among the varied religious adherents. It becomes more complex when dealing with inter-religious issues because the issues are no longer dealing with theological problems; rather it is related more to the problem of living together and social interaction. Mohd Farid Mohd Shahran[1] highlighted that among the problematic inter-religious issues pertained to the issue of identifying location for religious worship buildings (e.g. mosques, temple, churches, etc), conflict between the judicial system of civil and syariah courts especially dealing with religious conversions among individuals from one religion to another religion in the aspect of constitutional rights, inheritance, child custody, burial of newly converts and others Other issues could also be exemplified through matters of halal certificate by non-Muslim businessmen, the usage of Arabic and Quranic terminologies, funeral process, and Islamic propagation[2].

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[1] Shahran MF. (2008), Dialog Antara Agama dan Peradaban: Pespektif Agama dan Tamadun. Kertas kerja Muzakarah Pendisiplinan Dialog Antara Agama dan Peradaban. Kuala Lumpur, Institut Pemikiran Islam Malaysia.
[2] Shah DA, Sani MA. (2010), *Freedom of Religion in Malaysia: A Tangled Web of Legal, Political, and Social Issues*. NCJ Int'l L. & Com. Reg., pp.36-647.

As the fragility of religious and social diversity could compromise the political and economic stability of the country, efforts were deployed to ensure that strong government and racial integration remain intact to facilitate and accommodate further development of the nation. Malaysia has designed several policies and implemented many efforts to preserve the social harmony in the country. Among the government initiatives were the '1Malaysia' policy, Rukun Negara, the formation of the Department of National Unity of Integration (JPNIN), Institute for Ethnic Studies (KITA) and many other efforts. In the year 2010, the ministry cabinet sanctioned the establishment of the Committee to Promote Understanding and Harmony among Religious Adherents (JKMPKA) initiated by the late Datuk Hajah Ilani Binti Dato' Haji. The committee is now chaired by Dato' Azman Amin bin Hassan[3]. This was to assist the government in promoting understanding and harmony among the religions in Malaysia as efforts to foster relationships and maintain peace with the aim for social stability. The efforts reflected the local government commitment in maintaining harmony among the multi-religious community. The harmony relation among religious adherents is also a major concern at the international level.

In Malaysia, Islam is the most widely professed religion with the proportion of 61.3%. As a multi-racial nation, other religion embraced are Buddhism (19.8%), Christianity (9.2%) and Hinduism (6.3%). The right to religion is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. The guarantee of such right is of utmost importance because Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi religious country. With such diversity in race and religion, the right to religion is clearly stated in the Malaysian Federal Constitution[4]. Article 3 (1) provides that "Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religion may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation." Furthermore, it is declared under Article II (1) that: "Every person has the right to profess and practiced his religion and, subject to clause 4, to propagate it". Article II (4) basically prohibited the propagation of any religion doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam. All these articles are very important to preserve the harmony of the citizens in the perspective of socio-religious relation[5].

Nevertheless, though religious violent is yet to occur, the tension is there. The tongue wagging conflict in Malaysia seems still controllable by relying on government efforts to manage the issue and conflicts[6]. Ahmad, Zaid[7] added that it is the ability of a plural and diversified of Malaysian society to live in peace and harmony relatively that talks about multiculturalism and co-existence within the society could be exemplified and engaged. However, Shamsul argued that how sustainable the efforts in containing the tension among the society and the government is in doubt. The increase in tension level due to propagated issue, media provocation, and government intervention, if not being measured and handled accordingly, could affect the stability of the nation. Appropriate and continuous steps need to be taken or not taken to avoid provocation that could end up destructing social harmony. This study aimed at contributing to propose a systematic and holistic framework of intervention to address the development of socio-harmony among multi-religious adherents in Malaysia through the development of the socio-religious harmony development model. The model developed through a panel of experts targeted to be used as a guide for the authorities and relevant stakeholders to take proper precaution steps to improve the situation base on the critical element/factors contributing to social harmony among the multi-religious adherents. Furthermore, it can be utilized as a guide in making crucial decisions with regards to inter religion relation. The inclusive nature of the model will furnish an inclusive steps and approaches suggested to be taken by the authorities at all levels of the society particularly in social strategic planning.

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[3] Jawatankuasa Mempromosikan Persefahaman dan Keharmonian Antara Penganut Agama. Retrieved from http://www.jpnin.gov.my/ms/jawatankuasa-mempromosikan-persefahaman-dan-keharmonian-antara-penganut-agama-jkmpka, 2016
[4] Federal Constitution. Retrieved from http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/FC/Federal%20Consti%20(BI%20text).pdf, 2010, pp. 25-28
[5] Sintang S, Khambali@ Hambali KM, Baharuddin A, Senin N, Shaharud-din S, Yon WA, Malek B, Ahmad M, Nor MR. The Dialogue of Ḥikma: Generating Harmony in Muslim–Non-Muslim Relations. Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 24(2), 2013, pp.213-224.
[6] Shamsul, A.B, (2013) No More Conflict, but Unity Remaims Elusive in Malaysia. *EastAsia Forum*. Retrieved from http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/09/20/no-more-conflict-but-unity-remains-elusive-in-malaysia/
[7] Ahmad, Zaid. "Multiculturalism and religio-ethnic plurality: the Malaysian experience." *Culture and Religion*, 2(8), 2007, pp.139-153.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This research was intended to develop the socio-religious harmony factor model to serve as a fundamental platform to develop a sustainable religious harmony relation and interaction among the Malaysian multi-religious society. The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

Phase 1: Determining Socio-religious Factors
1. What are the most significant socio-religious factors which need to be address to determine the socio-religious harmony index among religious adherent in Malaysia?

Phase 2: Development of the Model
1. What is the relationships among the socio-religious harmony factors based on the interpretive structural collective views of the experts?

Phase 3: Evaluation of the model- Interpretation of the model
1. What are the experts' views on the most significant socio-religious factors which need to be address prior to other factors based on the Structural Socio-religious Harmony Development Model?
2. How would the socio-religious factors be classified in developing a systematic and holistic sustainable intervention in developing socio-religious harmony among multi-religious adherents in Malaysia?

Methodology

The development of the social harmony among multi-religious adherents in Malaysia model was based on the integrated views and opinions of panel of selected experts. Based on the three development phases as stated earlier, the study adopted the design and development research approach[8] to develop the model. Design and development research method was formerly known as developmental research[9]. The research method was introduced to test theory and validate its practicality[8]. However, later on, the method was also employed to design and develop interventions such as programs, instructional and learning factors, products, and systems to overcome complex situational problems and to understand further the characteristics and processes of the interventions' design and development[10]. This rationalizes the use of the research approach in this study to satisfy the aim in the design and development of the socio-religious harmony model. The design and development research approach involved three phases:

Phase 1: Determining Socio-religious factors. The model was developed based on main factors for socio-harmony development among multi-religious adherents in Malaysia which needed to be addressed as elements for the model. The elements could alternatively base on interventions, regulations, factors, or policy statements as elements for the model, but the experts concertedly preferred the model to be developed based on main factors to be addressed in developing the socio-religious harmony among religious adherents since this study serves as a preliminary stage in developing a systematic sustainable intervention to address present and future socio-religious harmony issues. The researchers adopted the Fuzzy Delphi technique to manage experts' views to develop collective inputs on the significant factors to develop socio-harmony among religious adherents. The procedure for Fuzzy Delphi technique is as follows:

  i. **Selection experts**. This is described in the next section.
  ii. **Determine Linguistic scale**. In order to address the issue of fuzziness among the experts' opinion, a linguistic scale is determined to frame the respondents' feedback. The linguistic scale is similar to a Likert scale with an additional of fuzzy numbers given to the scale of responses based on triangular fuzzy number. For every response, three fuzzy values were given to consider the fuzziness of the experts' opinions : minimum value ($_{m1}$), most plausible value ($_{m2}$), and maximum value ($_{m3}$). In other words, the linguistic scale

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[8] Richey, Rita C. and James D. Klein (2014), *Design and development research: Methods, strategies, and issues*. Routledge, 2014.
[9] Richey, Rita C., James D. Klein, and Wayne A. Nelson (2004), "Developmental research: Studies of instructional design and development." *Handbook of research for educational communications and technology*, 2, pp.1099-1130.
[10] Plomp, Tjeerd, and Nienke Nieveen (2007), "An introduction to educational design research." *Proceedings of the Seminar Conducted at the East China Normal University [Z]. Shanghai: SLO-Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development*.

is used to convert the linguistic variable into fuzzy numbers. The level of agreement scale should be in odd numbers (3, 5, or 7 point linguistic scale). The higher the scale, the more accurate the response analysis could be. In this study, a 7-point linguistic scale was used.

iii. **Calculating Average Fuzzy values of Experts' responses.** The experts' responses with the correspondent fuzzy number scales for each questionnaire item on their view of the model were inserted in an excel spreadsheet. A sample is shown in Table 2. This is to obtain the average for m_1, m_2, and m_3.

iv. **Calculating Threshold value.** The next step was to calculate the difference between the experts' evaluation data and the average value for each item to identify the threshold value, 'd' using the formula as below:

$$d\left(\tilde{m}, \tilde{n}\right) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{3}\left[(m_1 - n_1)^2 + (m_2 - n_2)^2 + (m_3 - n_3)^2\right]}.$$

The threshold value is important to determine the consensus level among the experts. According to Cheng and Lin[11], if the threshold value is less than or equal with 0.2, then all the experts are considered to have achieved a consensus. The overall group consensus should be more than 75%; otherwise a second round of fuzzy Delphi needs to be conducted.

v. **Deffuzification and Ranking.** The final step of the procedure of the evaluation phase is called the defuzzification process. The defuzzification value for each questionnaire item was calculated using the following formula:

$$A_{max} = 1/4 * (a_1 + 2a_m + a_2)$$

Phase 2 was the model development phase where a panel of experts collaborated to develop the sustainable socio-religious harmony development model. Interpretive Structural Modelling technique (ISM) was employed to aid the experts to develop the model.

In terms of procedure:

i. First, the experts will determine the most significant factors for sustainable socio-religious harmony development model based on index result and Nominal Group technique. The methodology flow for this technique is shown in Figure 1 (attached file).

ii. Next, the experts will determine the contextual relationship and relation phrase with respect to how the socio-religious harmony factors should be connected with each other. The contextual relationship defines what is to be accomplished (goal) and any boundary conditions or constraints along the way. The relation phrase determines how the relationships between socio-religious harmony factors are analyzed during construction of the ISM. The contextual relationship and the relation phrase were determined by the consensual experts' opinion on how the socio-religious harmony factors should be connected.

ii. Secondly, the Structural Self-interaction Matrix (SSIM) of the socio-religious harmony factors will be developed, which shows the connection among elements. This will be conducted using the aid of ISM software. Pairs of elements could be displayed by the software to allow the experts to decide through voting on the relationship before the next pair of elements was displayed. This process was repeated until all the elements were paired.

iii. Thirdly, the ISM model was generated. This was done by the software after the pairings of elements were successfully conducted among the experts. The software generated the model based on the concept of pair wise comparison and transitive logic.

Phase 3 was the evaluation and interpretation phase. Based on the model, a reachability matrix or what is called as 'Conica matrix' was developed. Based on the 'Conica' matrix, a MICMAC analysis was conducted by plotting all the performance initiatives on an X-Y axis graph based on their respective dependent powers and driving powers

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[11] Cheng, Ching-Hsue, and Yin Lin. "Evaluating the best main battle tank using fuzzy decision theory with linguistic criteria evaluation." *European journal of operational research*, 142(1), 2002, pp.174-186.

derived from the model. The model was then further deliberated based on the model and the output of the MICMAC analysis. This phase also served to evaluate the model through the interpretation.

Sample of Study

In this study, a panel of 12 experts were selected as participants. The participants of this phase for Fuzzy Delphi were the same participants for Interpretive Structural Modeling session (ISM) in developing the sustainable socio-religious harmony development model in Phase 2. The participants were a panel of experts as key informants for the model. A correct selection of experts was vital for the success of the study since the output of the study was based on experts' opinion[12] . Dalkey and Helmer[13] defined experts as individuals who are knowledgeable in a certain field; while Adler and Ziglio[14] stressed that the selection of experts should be based on four 'expertise' requirements: I) knowledge and experience with the issues under investigation; ii) capacity and willingness to participate; iii) sufficient time to participate in the study; and, iv) effective communication skills. Based on the above experts' criteria of selection, the selection of the participants for this study depended on four criteria:

1)   Experts should possess a doctorate degree in interfaith studies with at least 10 years' experience in the subject matter (for academicians);
2)   Experts should have knowledge and practical involvement in interfaith discourse;
3)   Experts should be able to represent their respective religious group in terms of views, rights, and aspiration (for religious group) or represent their respective organization (e.g. NGO, government)
4)   Experts who are willing to participate and give full commitment in the study; and
5)   Experts have interest in the aim and the result of the study.

Hence, for this study, the experts for both NGT and ISM sessions finally consisted of three (3) academicians, one (1) religious leader or main top level representative for each main religion :Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai, and Christian, one (1) from none government organization (NGO), three (3) from government agency/policy makers (e.g. IKIM, IKLIN, JPNIN, Ministry) totaling 12 participants. Based on the criteria, the experts were selected. Since the element of the model consisted of socio-religious factors and aimed at socio-religious harmony, the majority of the experts were content experts.

Findings

Result of Phase 1
Based on the findings, the final list of factors for socio-religious harmony factors are as shown in Table 1. The factors were ranked based on their respective defuzzification values as shown in the table.
Table 1

List of Socio-religious Harmony Factors Ranked and Prioritized

QUESTION	DEFUZZY	INDICATORS
1	13.18	Mutual respect
2	12.98	Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings
3	12.68	Inter-religious social justice towards other religions

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[12] Rowe, Gene, and George Wright (2001), Expert opinions in forecasting: the role of the Delphi technique. *Principles of forecasting*. Springer US, pp. 125-144.
[13] Dalkey, Norman, and Olaf Helmer (1963), An experimental application of the Delphi method to the use of experts. *Management science*, 9(3), pp.458-467.
[14] Adler, Michael, and Erio Ziglio (1996),. *Gazing into the oracle: The Delphi method and its application to social policy and public health*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

4	12.53	Provocation
5	12.5	Cohesiveness of the community
6	12.4	Community engagement
7	12.05	Appreciation
8	11.93	Awareness on others' beliefs
9	11.83	Non-violence
10	11.75	Feeling safe and secured
11	11.65	Religious tolerance
12	11.58	Physical and non-physical socio-religious conflict
13	11.45	Trustworthiness
14	11.45	Peaceful feeling
15	11.35	Social trust
16	11.18	Religious prejudice and stereotypes
17	11.18	Co-existence
18	11.08	Comfortable
19	10.83	Socio-religious tension
20	10.8	Religious Discrimination
21	10.63	Dialogue and Understanding
22	10.5	Acknowledgement
23	10.15	Shared values of neighbourhood and friendship

The threshold value calculated was 76% which was more than the minimum 75% consensus value. This means that the participants (expert panel members) selected for this study were highly appropriate for the intended study as they shared common grounding in terms of knowledge, experience, shared-grounding of context of problem, and commitment to contribute. The final list of the factors contributed by the experts in this phase was inserted into Interpretive Structural Modelling exercise in Phase 2 to develop the model. The findings of this phase one finalized 23 socio-religious harmony factors.

Result of Phase 2
Development of Socio-Religious Harmony Model
Based on the Interpretive Structural Modelling session, the model in Figure 1 was resulted. The model shows the networking or rather the interconnection among the socio-religious harmony factors which serves as a guiding mechanism on how socio-religious harmony could be promoted and developed among the multi-religious adherents in the country.
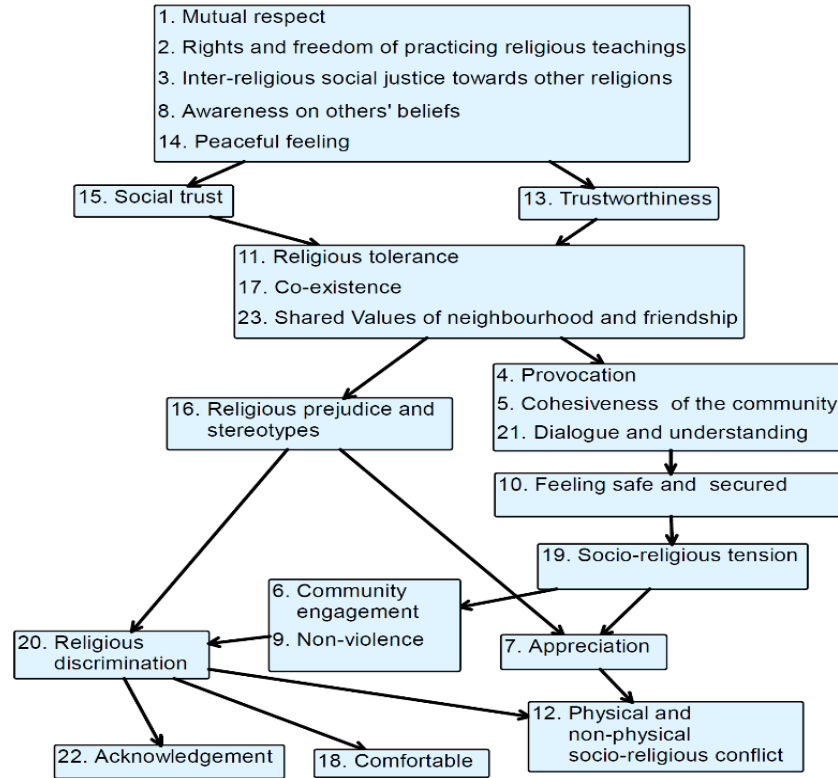
Figure 1. Socio-Religious Harmony Draft Model

This phase resulted in the model (Figure 1) showing the network of factor relationships which proposed factors and clusters of factors which need to be addressed in sequence to develop socio-harmony among religious adherents. The output of phase three indicated that the model showed the factors 'Mutual respect', "Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings", "Inter-religious social justice towards other religion", "Awareness on others' beliefs", and "Peaceful feeling" were proposed to be leading factors to be addressed first.

Result of Phase 3- Evaluation and Interpretation of the Model

Based on the model in Figure 2, the socio-religious harmony factors can be classified according to four clusters based on their driving powers and dependence powers. The classification was divided into four categories (Mandal & Deshmukh, 1994): a) Independent socio-religious harmony factors; b) Linkage socio-religious harmony factors; c) Dependent socio-religious harmony factors; and d) Autonomous socio-religious harmony factors as shown in Figure 2.
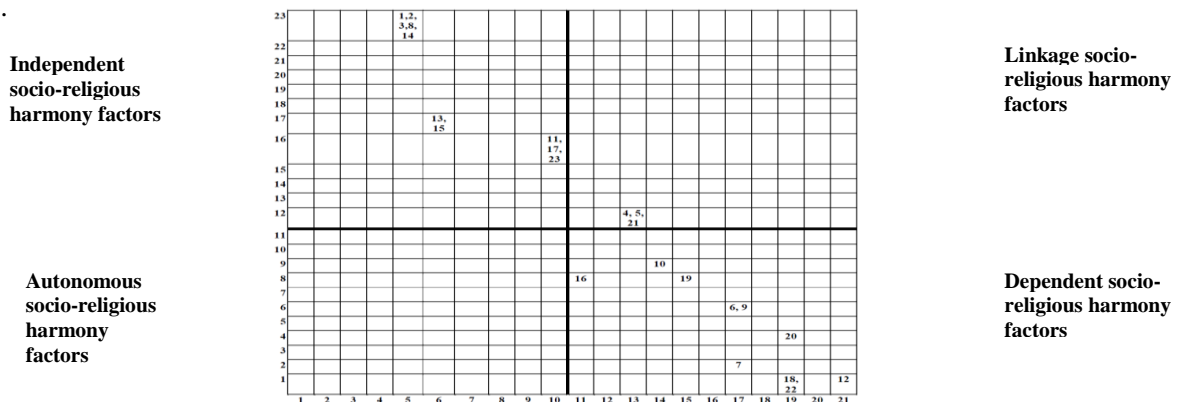

Figure 2. Conica matrix of socio-religious harmony factor model.

The levels of the socio-religious harmony factors among multi-religious adherents and the cluster classifications are the most important sections in understanding the contributing factors to socio-religious harmony among the multi-religious adherents. The driving power and the dependence power as presented in the driver-dependence matrix diagram in Figure 3 gives valuable insights into the importance and the interrelationship among the socio-religious harmony among the multi-religious adherents. The aim of this classification is to analyze the driving power and dependence power of the socio-religious harmony factors. The first cluster consists of the 'Independent socio-religious harmony factors'. Socio-religious harmony factors which fall into this cluster have the highest driving power but with weaker dependence power. Nevertheless, the factors under this cluster are the most significant leading other factors in terms of priority. As observed in Figure 3, socio-religious harmony factors 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 23 (refer to Table 1 for description of factors) were classified under this category.

The second cluster or the Linkage socio-religious harmony factors consists of factors that have strong dependence and driving power. These socio-religious harmony factors are being labelled as important links between the Dependent socio-religious harmony factors and the Independent self- socio-religious harmony factors. Socio-religious harmony factors 4, 5, and 21 (refer to Table 1 for description of factors) are categorized under this cluster. The third cluster consists of Dependent socio-religious harmony factors that have weak driving power but strong dependence power. Socio-religious harmony factors 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 22 (refer to Table 1 for description of factors) are classified in this cluster. The matrix interprets that these socio-religious harmony factors can be considered significant in contributing to development of socio-religious harmony in the presence or in support of other factors in the Linkage cluster and especially from the Independent cluster. The final cluster, which is the Autonomous socio-religious harmony factors cluster, classifies socio-religious harmony factors that have both weak driving power and dependence power. Based on Figure 2, there is absence of socio-religious harmony factors categorized under this cluster. The Conica matrix otherwise interprets elements under this classification have low significance value (weak links) in relation to other self-elements in the model.

Based on the evaluation of the model through the cluster classification via Conica matrix in Figure 2, the experts viewed that the model could be further refined as shown in Figure 3. The experts agreed that the network of factors in the model can be divided into three phases: The Initiation Phase which consists all socio-religious harmony factors in Independent Factor Cluster, The Intervening phase consists all three socio-religious harmony factors grouped in the Linkage factor cluster, and the Sustaining Phase which includes the next ten socio-religious harmony factors from Dependent cluster as shown in Figure 3.
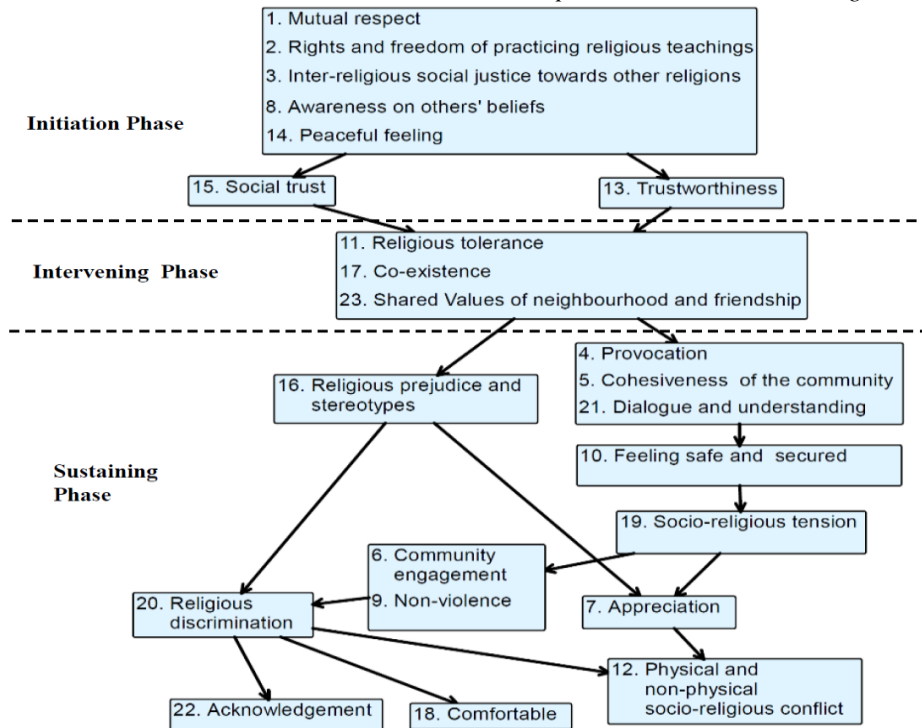
Figure 3. Refined Socio-religious Harmony Development among Multi-religious Adherents

Discussion

The model in Figure 3 shows that socio-religious harmony factors 1 (Mutual Respect), 2 (Rights and freedom of practicing religious teachings), 3 (Inter-religious social justice towards other religions), 8 (Awareness on others' beliefs) and 14(Peaceful feelings) are indicated as the most significant socio-religious harmony factors and most influential in affecting other socio-religious harmony factors. The fact that all these factors are in the same box indicate that these factors need to be addressed simultaneously by the authorities or relevant parties at the initial stage in developing socio-religious harmony among the plural and diverse religious adherents in this country. The model suggested that all efforts and resources need to be invested firstly and primarily on promoting all religious adherents to have mutual respect (factor 1) for each other with the support of the authorities (e.g. both the government and religious authorities) in safeguarding the rights and freedom for all religious practices (factor 2). The model maintains that in order for mutual respect among religious adherents, awareness among religious adherents on others' beliefs (factor 8) needs to be promoted and developed alongside mutual respect. These factors essentially inter-promote social justice among the inter-religious groups (factor 3). With these factors addressed and in place, peaceful feelings (factor 14) among them will be established which in turn becomes a factor in promoting mutual respect, awareness, social justice, and freedom to religious practices among the multi-religious adherents. This findings supports previous studies in the connection among mutual respect, social justice, and peacefulness as a foundation for harmony development among diverse religious adherents[15][16][17][18][19]. For example, Deutsch[17] argued that mutual respect within a diverse society established through fairness and justice is a basis for peace. Perceptual Control Theory[20] posits that individuals or a group of society tends to behave and function based on their own beliefs, desires, goals, motivations, their own preferences. The common belief system in any society holds

[15] Berry, John W. (2013), Research on multiculturalism in Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 37(6), pp. 663-675.

[16] Dandy, Justine, and Rogelia Pe-Pua (2015), Beyond Mutual Acculturation. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie.*

[17] Deutsch, Morton (2015), A psychological basis for peace.*Morton Deutsch: Major Texts on Peace Psychology*. Springer International Publishing, pp.33-52.

[18] Gupta, Joyeeta, et al (2010), The adaptive capacity wheel: a method to assess the inherent characteristics of institutions to enable the adaptive capacity of society.*Environmental Science & Policy* 13(6), pp.459-471.

[19] Suhana Saad, (2012), Re-building the concept of nation building in Malaysia.*Asian Social Science* 8(4), 2012, pp. 115.

[20] Powers, William Treval (1973), *Behavior: The control of perception*. Chicago: Aldine, 1973.

onto the maxim, 'treating other people the way you expect others to treat you'. However, the Perceptual Control Theory suggested that for a lasting and successful social living, one should treat others the way the others want to be treated. This is parallel to the findings of the model, where mutual respect, awareness on other's beliefs and social justice towards other religion address the need for one particular religious society to treat other religious groups based on the preferences of the groups being treated as guiding principle in developing a lasting and harmonious society in the multi-religious context. Subsequently, the model (Figure 3) also suggested that the groups of factors as mentioned (factors 1, 2, 3, 8, 14) when addressed appropriately would aid in addressing or lead to social trust (factor 15) and trustworthiness (factor 13) among the religious adherents. All these factors discussed here constitute the group of socio-religious harmony factors at the 'Initial Phase' in developing and sustaining inter-religious harmony among the multi-religious adherents in this country.

Another important point to stress is that since the factors in this 'Initial stage' are also under the Independent cluster, the factors are also known as the main driving socio-religious harmony factors which are important in driving other socio-religious harmony factors. In other words, without these factors, other socio-religious harmony factors are irrelevant. While past studies identify and investigated these socio-religious harmony factors individually or in clusters, this study, through the model (Figure 3) demonstrates what and how these socio-religious harmony factors (1, 2,3,8,13,14, and 15) are integrated in the manner of significance as main drivers of socio-religious harmony factors in relation with other factors (in Linkage and Independent Clusters) in developing a sustainable socio-religious harmony among multi-religious adherents. Based on the model, these socio-religious harmony factors are interconnected to drive or lead other factors.

The factors in the Initial phase are important to build a platform to address the factors at the 'Intervening phase' (refer to Figure 4). For instance, addressing mutual trust, awareness of each other's beliefs, social justice, and trustworthiness at the Initial phase would lead to religious tolerance (factor 11), co-existence (factor 17), and shared values of neighbourhood and friendship (factor 23) among the multi-religious adherents. Another way to interpret the model at this phase is that the factors at the Intervening phase (factors 11, 17, and 23) should be addressed subsequently after the factors in the Initial phase have been taken into action. Nevertheless, the experts of this study agreed that the factors in the initial phase lends a basis for religious tolerance, co-existence, and shared values among the multi-religious adherents to be achieved and sustained. This findings also supports past studies in placing the importance of mutual respect and social justice in promoting tolerance among religious adherents capitalizing on shared values[21] [22]. In sum, the model interpreted that as essence of achieving and maintaining social harmony among different religious adherents of respective religion, all levels of society from individuals, groups of communities, to the authorities need to play their roles in concert. Structural functionalism posits society as a complex system where each part of society need to work together to promote solidarity and stability like organs to a body[23].

The last section of the model (Figure 3) contains network of factors which constitutes the 'Sustaining phase'. Factors 4(Provocation), 5(Cohesiveness of the community), 6 (Community engagement), 7(Appreciation), 9(Non-violence), 10(Feeling safe and secured), 12(Physical and non-physical socio-religious conflict), 16(Religious prejudice and stereotypes Social trust), 18(Comfortable), 19(Socio-religious tension), 20(Religious Discrimination), and 22(Acknowledgement) are categorized in this phase. The factors here are subsequent factors suggested to be addressed as interventions in sustaining socio-religious harmony. For example, in maintaining socio-harmony development among the religious adherents, authorities, stakeholders, and the community as a whole need to effectively manage provocations, religious prejudice and stereotypes, religious discrimination, socio-religious tension, and other physical or non-physical socio-religious conflicts. Complying to socio-religious harmony development, Deutch[17] stressed that conflict resolution does not mean suppression of conflicts or controversies but rather civilizing them where controversies should be regarded as 'lively not deadly' (p.34). As such issues are

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[21] Sultan Khan (2013), Religious Co-existence: Tolerance and Contestation Amongst Hindu and Muslim Faith Groups of Indian Origin in South Africa. *Journal of Sociology Social Anthropology* 4(1-2), pp.149-157.
[22] Mason, Andrew (2010), Integration, cohesion and national identity: theoretical reflections on recent British policy.*British Journal of Political Science* 40(4), pp.857-874.
[23] Gerber, M (2010), *Sociology 7th Canadian Ed.* Pearson: Canada Inc.

favourably managed not eradicated. However, in the light of developing a long lasting socio-religious harmony among the multi-religious society, the model shows that managing issues or conflict pertaining to socio-religious as mentioned here become relevant provided that factors in the Initial phase and the Intervening phase have been addressed. This means that without addressing first the factors as suggested in both earlier phases, merely relying on 'quick-fix solutions' such as by solving socio-religious issues or conflicts only when they occur could only bring temporary relief to the situation. However, in the long run, this would not favour the development of long lasting socio-religious harmony among the society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The outcome of the study through the development of a socio-religious harmony development model not only proposed 23 socio-religious harmony factors to promote and develop harmony among multi-religious adherents in Malaysia but more importantly proposed how these factors connected with each other to render a holistic view on factors to build a sustainable harmony society. Through the output of the model, the experts viewed that certain factors need to be addressed simultaneously rather than in isolation in dealing with a complex situation like socio-religious harmony. While any socio experts could express or list prominent factors which are essential in socio-harmony development, the views could be limited to personal experience, knowledge, and perspective. However, through systematic managing of integrated views of stakeholders from various background, office, experience and knowledge, a wider view and more holistic solution could be proposed as described in this study through the development of the socio-religious harmony model. However, this model is a prototype model in viewing how socio-religious harmony among religious adherents could be initiated focusing on factors specifically for Malaysia. In other words, the model could result differently for a community or a country with different types of society. Further studies could also be conducted in exploring further into the model in its practicality in its intended goals. The study could be replicated using more experts from different background and expertise to compare for similarities or differences in findings for further evaluation. The model could also be developed in specific community environment for customized solutions.

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