Living Together as One Nation for Social Cohesion: Fostering Active Citizenship Skill to Indigenous Youth Community through the Eyes of Teacher and Authority

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ABSTRACT

The multicultural society in Malaysia needs to cultivate active citizenship skills to ensure togetherness and national solidarity. The minority group of the indigenous community bears a similarly essential role in building the national identity, affinity, and compassion as a nation. UNICEF empowered this active citizenship aspect in their life skills framework to shape the individuals' ability, attitudes, and social-emotional competencies, enabling their participation in communities, engaging in continuous learning, safeguarding themselves, and promoting healthy and positive social relationships. Nevertheless, some indigenous youths are reluctant to embrace the active citizenship spirit with most of society and prefer living in the comfort of their community boundaries. This has resulted in a lack of social cohesion among Malaysians as a multiracial society. From the viewpoint of four teachers and two authorities, this qualitative research aims to construe the current situation of active citizenship skill acquisition among the indigenous youth population in Malaysia. Two semi-structured interview sessions were conducted based on four fundamental subject matters: 1) participation and empathy; 2) social communication; 3) respect and support; and 4) talent contribution to elucidating the meaning of active citizenship skills. The findings deduced that the indigenous youth community gradually developed active citizenship skills. However, more effective approaches, access, and encouragement are required for a sustainable life skill-building programme and long-lasting solutions fostering social cohesion.

Keywords: active citizenship, indigenous, life skills, multiracial society, social cohesion, youth

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a Southeast Asian country comprising thirteen states and three federal territories. Under one colorful umbrella, Malaysians of various backgrounds coexist harmoniously while practicing tolerance. The South China Sea separates Malaysia into Peninsular Malaysia or West Malaysia and East Malaysia (Borneo). As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, Malaysia proudly stands in the eyes of the world with its uniqueness. The Malays made up about half of the total population of this country, while the Chinese, Indians, and indigenous people made up the rest of the population, peacefully living together in this beautiful tropical land. This melting pot of cultures distinctly symbolizes the concept of 1Malaysia introduced in 2009 by the former Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak, which aimed to promote ethnic harmony, national unity, and efficient governance. This ideation behind the tagline is expected to

strengthen the nation's bond, togetherness, and values of the beloved Malaysian family, regardless of religion, race, and ethnicity (Singh, 2021).
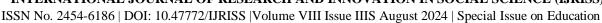
The "Orang Asli," the "Orang Ulu," and the "Anak Negeri" groups constitute the Malaysian indigenous population. According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA, n.d.), there are 18 subgroups of "Orang Asli" within the *Negrito (Semang), Senoi* and *Aborigen-Malays* group as of 2017, representing 0.7% (210,0000 people) population of Peninsular Malaysia. However, the Malays are not categorized as indigenous people as they are the majority and politically, economically, and socially dominant. The indigenous people in Sarawak, one of Malaysia's states, are known as natives. This group of natives comprises *Kenyah, Kayan, Kendayan, Lunbawang, Punan, Bisayah, Kelabit, Berawan, Kejaman, Ukit, Sekapan, Melanau and Penan*. These groups account for 70.5% (1,932,600 people) of the Sarawak population.

Even though Malaysia has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this community faces great life challenges, socially and economically. Masron et al. (2013) stated that the indigenous group lives with their unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs. Their challenges were the lack of political representation and participation, economic marginalization and poverty, lack of access to social services and discrimination. In addition, young marriages are common occurrences in this society. Thus, these challenges distort the academic quality of the under-aged, as evidenced by a high percentage of school dropout cases (Wan, 2020).

Education challenges for the indigenous population have become more intense due to the COVID-19 pandemic, severely impacting the lives and futures of the indigenous. The closure of universities, academic institutions, colleges, and schools has tremendously affected the quality of education for everyone, including the indigenous population (Blaskovits et al., 2023). Moreover, the transition of education platforms from face-to-face to virtual has caused hassle due to poor internet connectivity (or total lack of connectivity) and digital equipment facilities inaccessible (Chen, 2020). The struggles are real for rural school children and parents specifically. They would try to ensure a good internet connection, sometimes by trekking to make-shift huts on hillocks, using small boats to cross the river to another area with better connectivity, and even climbing up big hills and trees (Dzafri, 2020). These basic examples may affect the quality of education indigenous school children receive. Subsequently, these scenarios may hinder indigenous youth's active citizenship skills development.

Thus, the role, commitment, and support for better education of teachers, schools, and authorities are crucial to fostering active citizenship skills among the indigenous youth. This paper aims to answer whether participation, empathy, and diversity are essential factors in building the active citizenship skills of indigenous youth. Based on the feedback from the interview sessions, high-spirited teachers of indigenous origin are determined to give their best to ensure better social cohesion and active citizenship skills among the indigenous school children and at par with other non-indigenous children. They unanimously agreed that the Indigenous school children would participate better if taught by their own "people."

Global changes in today's world have led to an unprecedented crisis in citizenship values. For instance, conflict, viciousness, and radicalization are ubiquitous in society (Zelinka et al., 2023). Such crises have given prominence to education's role in sensitizing students about their rights and duties to promote tolerance, peace, and mutual respect. Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 was developed with a clear target to transform the education system and equip students holistically to succeed in the 21st Century, an era with abundant opportunities and challenges. According to the blueprint, values, ethics, and a sense of nationhood need to be instilled in students, allowing them to make the right decisions for themselves, their families and their country. They must be prepared to endure and overcome life's inevitable challenges. However, this might present a great challenge to the indigenous population.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) vision to transform the world can be adopted to enhance the quality of life of the indigenous towards promoting global citizenship. Of the 17 SDGs of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on Sustainable Development (n.d.), four SDGs were deemed applicable and ideal for integration into this study for transforming the lives of the indigenous youth: Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Goal 13 (Climate Change), and Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

This paper provides significant insights into understanding, exploring, and discovering active citizenship skills in the indigenous youth community through the eyes of their teachers and relevant authorities. The following sections of this paper present the literature reviews, research methodology, research findings and discussions, the study's implications and significance, limitations and future direction; it ends with the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia is a unique country with a diverse multiracial and multicultural society. In particular, Peninsular Malaysia indigenous peoples are a minority group. Malaysia promotes inter-ethnic peaceful relations and adopts an integrated development agenda that ensures everyone's inclusivity (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). Stanley (2003) defined social cohesion as members' willingness to cooperate for survival and prosperity. According to the Economic Planning Unit (2021), Malaysia ranked the 20th country in the world for the most peaceful in the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2020. This country has diligently preserved national unity and social cohesion and prioritized peace in its nation-building efforts.

Civics and citizenship education (CCE) can empower young people to become active citizens. Malaysian curriculum and pedagogy for indigenous and non-indigenous students should implement teaching styles through service-learning activities or community actions. These activities could increase students' cohesion and involvement in the broader community (Birdwell et al., 2013).

Sustainable development (SD) has been recognized as a vital strategy for guiding global economic and social transformation. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprise 17 goals and 169 sub-goals for guiding development in all regions of developing and developed countries (Rudra & Kurian, 2018). SD theory was evaluated and developed in three stages: the embryonic period (before 1972), the molding period (1972–1987), and the developing period (1987–present) (Lélé, 1991; Mebratu, 1998; Xiaoling, 2018). The first stage focused solely on the sustainable use of natural resources. In the second stage, the first human environment conference was to signify the SD concept and systematically discuss economic, social, and environmental issues (Shi et al., 2019). In the last stage, SDGs were expanded into four pillars: economy (goals 8, 9, 10, and 12), society (goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 11, and 16), environment (goals 2, 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15), and governance (goal 17) (Lu et al., 2015).

The Ministry of National Unity was established in 2020 to ensure the SDGs achievement by further enhancing Malaysia's national unity and social cohesion. The theme of the National Unity Blueprint is "Unity in Diversity". The three main objectives of the blueprint are strengthening unity and national integration according to the Federal Constitution and National Principles, building a national identity with a sense of belonging and compassion (e.g. responsible and respectful of each other) and producing Malaysians who enculturate unity (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). Thus, the government promotes inter-ethnic harmony and peaceful relations by adopting a development plan that ensures nobody shall be abandoned, including the minority groups of indigenous peoples (Economic Planning Unit, 2021).

Furthermore, three critical factors for active citizenship skills empowerment were emphasis; diversity, empathy, and participation. Children develop the necessary skills and maximize their learning opportunities
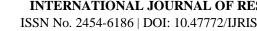
through effective classroom participation. Essential participation skills are learned in early childhood stages (UNICEF MENA, 2017). Participation, also known as participative, is defined as participating in and influencing activities, decisions, and processes (adapted from UNICEF, 2001). Indigenous students with a sense of belonging will participate in the classroom activities. In addition, teachers should incorporate teaching aids, such as visual aids, music, and appealing illustrations, in delivering knowledge and information and providing ample opportunities for indigenous children to participate actively in the teaching and learning process (Wahab & Mustapha, 2015). For instance, indigenous students can ask questions or volunteer to assist the teacher by participating in the in-class activities. Participation is a core life skill that enables indigenous youth to play an active role in society by improving community life and the environment and taking responsibility for others through meaningful political participation or involvement at the community level (UNICEF MENA, 2017).

Secondly, empathy is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2020) as the ability to share the experiences or feelings of others by thinking about what it would be like to be the person. Empathy also refers to one's ability to respond to the ideas and emotional conditions of others. It is a crucial element of citizenship education because it helps indigenous students achieve academic excellence and promotes unity and teamwork by maintaining relationships with other communities (UNICEF MENA, 2017). Empathy education emphasizes cultivating a culture that values inclusion, responds to victims of violence (bullying) in thoughtful and practical ways, and fosters respect for others and a sense of responsibility towards one another (UNICEF MENA, 2017). Furthermore, empathy is a significant element in a student's social communication development for community relationships and participatory citizenship towards people of different races. Schools are communities where young people learn discussions, interactions, and cooperation as the main factors for future citizenship (Sampermans et al., 2021). The children learn effective interaction, respectful communication, and social behaviors with other social groups. Thus, indigenous children would feel empowered and capable of participating as citizens through learning tolerance from a young age.

Finally, diversity can be categorized according to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, and other characteristics (UNICEF, 2014). Individuals need to recognize one another's differences and respect other people's uniqueness. Social cohesion in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-faith societies poses challenges, particularly in education, income marginalization, and poverty, leading to conflict (Stanley, 2003). To overcome these problems, Malaysians must respect diversity by practicing tolerance and accepting differences through recognizing and encouraging equal dignity without condescending others (UNICEF, 2014). Respect refers to accepting cultures and customs that differ from one's own and an obligation to avoid offending others. Education is the most effective tool for instilling moral values early on. Children need to learn respect towards their parents and teachers, and other community members. The majority of teachers in indigenous schools are from non-indigenous backgrounds. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering moral values through lesson topics or activities in the class; thus, they should act as role models for the students (Sari, 2013).

The primary goal of Malaysia's educational system is to produce talented and capable citizens who contribute and propel the country forward economically (CIPD, 2019). However, there are numerous issues with the education of indigenous children. According to Nor (2009), low proficiency in basic literacy (3Rs—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) and a lack of interest in school are two main reasons among indigenous children causing difficulties in furthering their education or obtaining higher-paying jobs. Notably, the enrollment number of indigenous children in school is increasing. The overall enrollment of indigenous children in primary and secondary schools was 15,894 in 1994; the number doubled to 38,000 in 2017 (MOE, 2017). Furthermore, from 2000 to 2008, only 98 indigenous youth were accepted to the Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTA) compared to 408 in 2011 (Deli & Yasin, 2016). The numbers are relatively low, suggesting a slow development in the education of indigenous youth; yet, it is still a

progression, giving them hope to participate and contribute to the nation's development.

Many indigenous children have grown up successful, making Malaysia proud and inspiring others. For example, Professor Dr Bahari Belaton is the first indigenous person appointed as the dean of Universiti Sains Malaysia. He is from Perak's *Semai* tribe, and his success inspires other indigenous youth to pursue higher education (Mohd Pauzi, 2020). Meanwhile, Zumika Azmi, 19, and Sasha Azmi, 17, are Malaysian cricketers from the *Temiar* tribe of Gua Musang, Kelantan. They made history when they helped the national cricket team win the bronze medal in the T20 SEA Games, defeating Singapore by 52 runs in nine overs (JAKOA, 2021). The talents and efforts of the indigenous community should be celebrated, and they deserve a better quality of life.

METHODS

This study employs qualitative analysis and a homogeneous sampling technique, focusing on school teachers and indigenous-related authorities in the subject context. The exploratory nature of the qualitative approach allows data collection in a broader scope (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, this study is mainly derived from the interpretivist philosophy, employing small samples but in-depth investigation, allowing the researchers to understand the phenomenon being studied better. Therefore, the ethnography approach of the qualitative approach is deemed most appropriate for this study to emphasize the perceptions and views of teachers and indigenous-related authorities regarding the active citizenship skills of the indigenous youth community. Furthermore, this study demonstrably explores a phenomenon of a group of people (indigenous youth community in Malaysia) in their natural environment and living concept. A series of semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with four school teachers (denoted as Teacher A to Teacher D) and two representatives of indigenous-related authorities (denoted as Authority A to Authority B) experienced in supervising indigenous youth education and social welfare. A letter of intent to perform the interviews was prepared and forwarded to the District Education Office before the virtual meeting as the qualitative procedural requirement. Approximately one to two hours are required to complete each interview. The development of the interview questions is guided by UNICEF MENA (2017), UNICEF MENA (2020), and the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) framework designed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), which help to conceptualize the research idea. Certain parts of the question were modified slightly to suit the Malaysian indigenous context. The University's ethics committee has endorsed all questions before disseminating them to the interviewees for their initial impression.

The interview questions mainly focused on gathering the perceptions and views of the respondents regarding the present context of active citizenship skills (living as one nation). UNICEF highlighted this element to achieve the Sustainable Goals Development Objective No. 4. Accordingly, four units of analysis guided the interview questions: respondents' perception of the indigenous youth participation and empathy values; perception of social communication with other races; insight on mutual respect and volunteerism for diversity; and lastly, talent contribution of the indigenous youth community in nation-building. In addition, all interviewees were encouraged to share their experiences and viewpoints, hence giving them options in responding.

The interview sessions took place at the respondents' respective offices in their schools and the District Education Office at Cameron Highlands and Kuala Lipis, Pahang. Several video conferencing calls via the Google Meet application were made to conduct the interview sessions. Upon respondents' consent, all responses were recorded using the platform function and stored in Google Drive. The Nvivo 12 and the Word application of Microsoft software were used to transcribe the interviews. Data gathered were analysed to identify and further examine the information therein. The interviews' patterns were divided according to the four units of analysis; only relevant information was extracted to be coded, sorted, and synthesized

accordingly. In addition, data analysis was based on an in-depth understanding of all literature sources to identify and match the common patterns reported in the various reports and reviews of previous studies. Critical points were retrieved from the analysed data. Only reliable results to develop the active citizenship elements under the Life Skills concept, particularly for the Malaysian indigenous youth community, were presented in this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study's findings were extracted from the interviews conducted with four teachers and two authority personnel from the District Education Office and Teacher Education Institute. The participating teachers are from the indigenous community, representing the primary and secondary schools with some experience teaching students from the indigenous community. The findings are segregated into four unit analyses: participation, empathy, diversity; social communication; respect and assistance; and talent contribution. The interviews aim to gain in-depth information and meaningful thoughts on active citizenship and social cohesion among the indigenous youth in schools. The following sub-sections further discuss the interviews' responses based on the four elements fostering active citizenship skills among the indigenous youth community in Malaysia (UNICEF MENA, 2017).

Participation and Empathy as a Sense of Diversity

Development and participation, empathy, and diverse behavior are crucial for human development and active citizenship (UNICEF MENA, 2017). More importantly, these skills are imperative in a multicultural society, as seen in Malaysia with the various cultures and multi-ethnic groups (Assim et al., 2020). However, in this study, the result from the interview data, based on the respondents' feedback, indicates that indigenous students need to gain these skills. According to their observation and experience, most indigenous students need more confidence and are nervous about blending in with other races due to the differences in cultures, lifestyles, and languages. Thus, the majority group outside this community should adapt and try to understand the minority culture, values, and language to inculcate their sense of participation and comfort in being with the other communities. Nevertheless, one respondent stated that the students were able to portray empathy and sportsmanship behaviour among themselves:
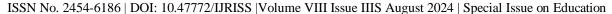
"I can say that the indigenous students are timid and very careful with outsiders. They are more comfortable being in their tribe; however, they will approach us if we learn and understand their language and culture" – Teacher A

"…I think they still feel shy and not confident to be part of a diverse environment with different lifestyles, cultures, and languages as the main issue" – Teacher B & Teacher D

"From my experience, they have empathy value as they are willing to put aside their self-interest; for example, my student let go of his chance of winning a sports competition with his friend" – Teacher C

"We need a creative and unique method by blending into their community, learning their language, culture, using a kinesthetic method and so on to approach them, especially the children to attract and train them about other values, lifestyle, collaborative participative, etc." – Authority A

The lack of these skills may stem from the different cultures, environments, and values, creating difficulties for indigenous youth to adapt to their surroundings (Sawalludin et al., 2020). They are more familiar with nature and their forefathers' lifestyles, causing skepticism toward others outside their community (Mohd Salim et al., 2020). Accordingly, this situation calls for a creative approach to attract their attention, as one respondent (Authority A) resolutely mentioned. A different technique is required instead of conventional teaching to convey values or knowledge. The design and implementation of programmes or activities

encouraging participation, understanding, and variety of skills must be guided by knowledge and consideration of a particular social group's primary concerns and patterns. It would facilitate recognising and accepting diversity, cultural, and religious differences for peaceful coexistence (Kaur et al., 2017). This notion is distinctly mentioned in one of the five major aspirations of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 for education transformation planning, highlighting the need for the education system to provide shared values and experience by embracing diversity (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). In short, incorporating cultural elements in the curriculum activities is crucial for achieving social cohesion.

Building the Social Communication for Social Cohesion

Social communication skills are crucial for personal development, which empowers individuals to be adaptable and competitive (Khambayat, 2017; D'souza & Vijaya Kumari, 2018). Furthermore, students' effective social communication skills would lead to imminent higher-order social outcomes; hence, attaining a knowledgeable society, social cohesion, and economic development (UNICEF MENA, 2017). However, the qualitative result of this study indicates potential difficulties for Indigenous students in projecting their social communication and interacting with people beyond their community. The respondents highlighted different languages, wariness, and lack of trust toward outsiders as the main issues contributing to their poor social communication skills. On the other hand, a respondent emphasizes that aboriginal students could gradually gain social communication skills and better interaction with others when exposed to education in early childhood. The following are some of the related responses:

"Communication is the bigger problem for these indigenous students due to different languages; besides, they are shy and cautious towards outsiders" – Teacher A & Teacher D

"…some of them slowly socialize and communicate with outsiders, and I do not think there will be a problem if they attend formal education early" – Teacher C

"They have sensitive feelings and are easily offended, so the outsiders need to be careful when communicating with them" – Authority A

"We need to gain their trust and confidence by winning their heart first, and then they will tend to socialize and communicate with others" – Authority B

Several studies support this finding (e.g., Ramli & Mohamad, 2013; Nordin, et al., 2018; Assim et al., 2020; Sawalludin et al., 2020), which noted that social communication is one of the significant hindrances preventing outsiders from interacting and establishing effective social communication with the indigenous community and vice versa. Nevertheless, this issue can be quickly resolved by the indigenous exposure to outsiders and interaction using mainstream languages, such as Malay and English, through outreach programmes by the government, NGOs, private sectors, and individuals, including researchers and academicians (Md Nor et al., 2011; Mohd Salim et al., 2020). In addition, nurturing social communication skills is vital; it leads to other essential skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, negotiation, and cooperation (Akin et al., 2017), particularly when engaging and living in a plural society (Assim et al., 2020).

Nurturing Solidarity through Mutual Respect & Volunteerism

Living in a diverse and multicultural community requires mutual respect and assistance when needed. It is a crucial interpersonal life skill that encapsulates good and positive manners, such as helping, sharing, volunteering, cooperating, and showing social solidarity (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Ma'rof, & Hamsan, 2020). This study found that the indigenous students could establish a sense of respecting others and a willingness to assist. However, this behavior is stronger, and the companionship or attachment leans more

toward their tribe or community. The respondents indicated that different cultures, languages, lifestyles, environments, and perceptions towards strangers are some factors that potentially reflect their demeanors toward other races. Therefore, the effects of socio-psychological environments, acceptance of different communities, their perception of outsiders, and the treatment they received would shape their behaviors and attitudes (Ma'rof, & Hamsan 2020). The following transcribed responses explained this standpoint:

"They are so protective…older students often stand out to defend the young ones. They often helped each other to succeed" – Teacher A

"I can see some of them respect others without hesitance and willing to sacrifice their interest to their friends"– Teacher C

"…they are often in a conflict; not to say that they are unable to get along with others, but more importantly how others accept them and how we can shape their character" – Authority A

Accordingly, a psycho-social approach should be emphasized because it could ease the ethnic groups' differences and encourage positive behaviors, such as being respectful and keen to assist others; hence, leading to social cohesion. Despite its complexity, these ethically responsible behaviors are imperatively critical to developing solidarity and unity among diverse communities (Corzo & Castañeda, 2017; UNICEF MENA, 2017). Failure to manage or understand diversity could lead to conflicts, discriminatory practices, inequality, magnifying ethnic groups' differences (Kaur et al., 2017). Prior research (e.g., Foronda et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2017) conceptualized respecting others and tailoring others' needs as cultural sensitivity elements that can be instilled through thoughtfulness, empowering knowledge, understanding and employing awareness of self and others while being part of a diverse community.

Talent Contribution to Nation Building

Talent is another essential aspect of the individual's cognitive skills and one of the fragments of active citizenship (UNICEF MENA, 2017). It is regarded as vital human capital that implies factors such as training, education, skills, and knowledge, depending on individuals' ability and inclination to learn (Azman et al., 2016), individual ability, capacity, performance, and potential (Calle-Duran & Fernandez-Alles, 2021). Therefore, highly talented individuals with strong awareness and civic engagement (Akin et al., 2017) towards society are expected to use their knowledge, skills, ability, and knowledge to contribute significantly to build up their community's potential (Calle-Duran & Fernandez-Alles, 2021). In the interviews, the respondents of this study revealed that despite a significant number of indigenous students often quitting schools, some who could be successful in academic and life careers tend to give something back to their community and the nation. They inspire and motivate their indigenous community and other races that personal development and success are attainable. The following responses explained further:

"…my friend studied overseas in an engineering programme; we often called him to talk at events and motivate our community to achieve success in life" – Teacher A

"As an indigenous person, I am proud to serve my community with my knowledge and skills so that they are also can improve" – Teacher B

"Many indigenous people have achieved success in life, and they offer their service regardless of background or races…to serve the best to the society in this nation" – Teacher C

"From my experience, those successful indigenous people often become role models to their community, dedicating their effort to improve their community's lifestyle and socio-economic condition" – Authority A

It is hard to change their mindset, attitude, and lifestyle to attain a better life outside their comfort zone, but

having a successful person from their community can open their mind. – Authority B

These statements suggest that indigenous people could contribute and benefit others with their ability and capacity as human capital to improve their community and the nation. This is possible by integrating values and principles with a continuous learning process as the initial point for establishing good coexistence (Corzo & Castañeda, 2017). Notably, successful individuals of the indigenous community could be a catalyst for the transformation towards a better quality of the human and physical environment. Echoing the findings of Nordin et al. (2018), advancing and strengthening the socio-economic status of the indigenous community would be far more effective with a talented human capital among them that serves as an icon or a role model for progressive changes. Therefore, it is crucial to develop plans to inculcate their self-confidence, promote progressive and proactive attitudes, broaden their knowledge, and improve their self and technical skills (Mustapha, 2020) towards producing more talented individuals.

Implication of the Study

School is pivotal in providing opportunities and preparing active and informed indigenous citizens. The study's findings indicate that a life skill education framework may prepare the Indigenous youth community to be active citizens. Citizenship education should be taught in an integrated and holistic way that will benefit students as individuals, community members, citizens, and professionals throughout their lives. Given the complexity and variety of interconnected global issues such as a pandemic, widespread inequality and climate change, preparing our young people to meet these challenges as informed and empowered citizens is crucial. Integrating interdisciplinary life skills and competencies as part of the education curriculum would prevent students' separation and increase their potential to discover their capabilities, especially in thinking critically about the world and making empowered and informed decisions. Indigenous youths can gain knowledge, understanding, and experience and become active adult citizens while studying. The education is about the formal curriculum that focuses on traditional academics and workforce development and about life by preparing students to be informed and engaged citizens.

Teachers must ensure they actively engage in practical citizenship activities in schools and the community. This study is expected to bring the implication of new curriculum development globally and principally in Malaysia to spur active citizenship among the indigenous youth community. The curriculum design should set out what students need to learn and do to become active and informed citizens as any core subject. In addition, it should allow an inclusive teaching practice that considers students' abilities and actively provides opportunities for them to participate in citizenship education. They must be given adequate opportunities to explore issues and link to a broad cross-section of societal needs. By getting involved with citizenship education, a new generation of indigenous youths will be equipped and empowered to face the challenges ahead and strive for a world demand personally, at a community level, and on a global scale. Skills such as participation, empathy and diversity, social communication, mutual respect, volunteerism, and talent contribution are crucial to keeping the Indigenous youth active, well-informed, and responsible (Sampermans et al., 2021).

The new curriculum design should prepare the next generation to be effective citizens of a democratic society through a systematic, intentional, and holistic approach. Preparing for active citizens includes providing opportunities for students to practice their life skill behaviors. This could include participation in experiencing external activities but still link to the school curriculum (for example, community activities, civic institution visits, and sports) as part of important curriculum elements and teaching strategies. The curriculum may be taught through class-based, whole-school, and community activities through the informal curriculum. Given the importance of education in fostering citizenship skills among Indigenous youth, this study will contribute an indicator that could assist the government in identifying the education system's effectiveness on indigenous students and determining the content and skills that should be addressed at each education level. By preparing indigenous youth with appropriate knowledge, mindsets, and skills that enable

effective citizenship, they can improve the world. The government needs to understand and acknowledge the value of indigenous cultures so that students can develop awareness and understanding of the diverse society they live in and engage purposefully as citizens in the future.

The educational process leading to active citizenship has been concerned with learning about citizens' rights and responsibilities within the state, attitudes, and values that help develop positive relationships between individual citizens and the community. The effectiveness of citizenship education will help the indigenous youth community seize opportunities to enhance their quality of life, from community-mindedness to participation in local organizations, from national activism to global awareness. Citizenship education will also increase their ability to understand, accept, and tolerate cultural differences. This study is significant in providing insight into what it meant to be a citizen while ensuring the well-being of the uneducated but intelligent and high-spirited people is protected and not overlooked.

The study is also deemed invaluable to other authorities involved directly or indirectly in the Indigenous community development, like Malaysia, such as the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA). The role of JAKOA is to implement a comprehensive development approach that involves socio-economic development, education, health, and human capital development in a planned and continuous manner for the indigenous people. It aims to increase their income, expand infrastructure facilities and social amenities, and improve their well-being, hoping to produce a new generation of educated and dynamic indigenous people. Thus, the JAKOA could plan and implement necessary social-economic programs to support the indigenous youth community's integration with other cultures and societies. JAKOA also needs to be more proactive and collaborate with other NGOs to provide better education facilities, which are required to make schools a good place for indigenous children to study, and this will surely build a perfect quality of education. More importantly, to ensure that this minority community is not left behind with the country's current rapid development.

Many of the global issues indigenous communities need to deal with are new to them. To give them the ability to engage meaningfully with these issues, education and capacity building of the indigenous communities is of utmost importance. Effective citizenship education is imperative for the Indigenous youth. Citizenship education can transform society into more thoughtful and engaged citizens, making communities more competitive and part of the mainstream's national development.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the education transformation significantly impacts citizenship education. Education is designed to give students self-confidence, knowledge, understanding, and skills to develop their civic identity and live as progressive citizens in their local and broader communities while creating a brighter future and contributing to society. It helps raise students' awareness about their rights and duties and anchors them to their communities. Thus, numerous commitments and efforts have been put into citizenship education. However, less extensive investigation has been conducted to determine the education system's impact on the indigenous youth community; efforts were mainly to foster their active citizenship skills. Therefore, this study examines active citizenship skills in the indigenous youth community through the eyes of their teachers and related authorities.

The indigenous youths must understand all aspects of citizenship and the obligations required to be a good citizen. This study explores the perceptions and opinions of four school teachers and two representatives from indigenous-related authorities regarding the indigenous youth community's active citizenship skills. The information gained shed some light on the importance of citizenship and how it benefits them and their communities. The findings reveal three underlying elements for active citizenship skills empowerment:

participation, empathy, and diversity among indigenous youths.

The findings also strengthen the extant literature by highlighting that the acquired active citizenship skills would empower indigenous children to grow into confident adolescents and adults and effectively manage themselves and their environment. A formal education system will facilitate their exploration of various scenarios, generating and developing ideas, researching and experimenting, and practicing problem-solving using knowledge, skills, and understanding of values related to citizenship. Generally, increased knowledge will typically lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors.

It is necessary to establish short- and long-term strategies for effective pedagogy, such as learner-centered approaches, which depend primarily on the role of teachers. The strategies also require appropriate learning materials to support the pedagogies and environment for equitable and quality learning opportunities. Therefore, efforts from both educational and institutional perspectives are required. Both parties need to provide a knowledge-sharing environment and build a methodology with specific experience based on the proposals for educational innovation. A priority must be given to improving education quality at all levels, mainly to ensure relevant learning outcomes.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Although this study has significant contributions, it is not free of limitations. This study is qualitative rather than generalizing. The focus is to understand the concept of citizenship grounded in activities/curriculum, responsibility, and independent values emphasized in educational policy on the students' active citizenship. Alternatively, forthcoming studies could employ quantitative approaches and analyses to support and validate the findings.
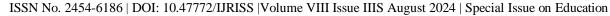
This study's findings may not fully represent the full spectrum of minority indigenous youth communities in Malaysia. In addition, the views and opinions about the effect of organisational culture in schools on students' life skills were only gathered from six representatives of teachers and indigenous-related authorities. Thus, future studies should consider including more prominent and representative samples to strengthen the current findings.

Human beings are a complex blend of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour. People constantly interact with others, their inner selves, and the environment. Through life skills education, students' competencies are enhanced by using available resources. Future research could be extended further by focusing on the other three dimensions of the Life Skills Framework, which focuses on skills learning to be, learning to do, and learning to know; it is not limited to active citizenship skills, which promote active citizenship.

The indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia can be categorized into three main groups, namely the "Negritos", "Senoi", and the "Proto-Malays", each of which has various sub-ethnic groups. However, the sample used in the study is only focused on the indigenous race in the state of Pahang. Therefore, it represents a limited discussion on the citizenship skills found in indigenous races in other states in Malaysia. Future research should investigate whether citizenship skills for indigenous youth communities based in Pahang are similar to those in different places in Malaysia and other comparative countries.

FUNDING

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The authors declare that (s) he has no relevant or material financial or non-financial interests related to the research described in this article.

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