

Royal Address as a Linguistic Device for the Construction of National Identity

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ABSTRACT

Royal addresses constitute a form of formal institutional discourse through which a monarch articulates values, directives, and visions fundamental to national development. As a linguistic device, the royal address serves not only as an instrument of governance but also as a culturally embedded text that constructs and reinforces national identity. This study examines the role of language in the royal addresses of Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah as a medium for the formation of national identity and the cultivation of shared cultural values in the Malaysian context. Specifically, it analyses the linguistic markers present in the royal address to identify value components that reflect and reinforce national identity. Employing a qualitative approach through descriptive textual analysis, the study draws on the royal address delivered at the Opening of the First Meeting of the Fourteenth Perak State Legislative Assembly, retrieved from Sultan Nazrin's official portal. The analytical framework is based on Lickona's Components of Good Character Model, which consists of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. This model is used to examine how the Royal Address instils moral values by shaping the people's understanding, emotional appreciation, and practice of good character. This study identified 44 linguistic markers distributed across all three components, with moral action emerging as the most prominent (39%), followed by moral feeling (36%) and moral knowing (25%). Linguistic markers such as "*mencapai persepakatan*" (reaching consensus), "*masa hadapan negeri jangan dimusnahkan*" (do not destroy the future of the state), and "*semangat bekerjasama*" (spirit of cooperation) encapsulate values of unity, national dignity, and civic responsibility which is the pillars that are constitutive of Malaysian national identity. The findings affirm that royal addresses transcend their administrative function, operating as powerful cultural texts that consolidate collective identity and shared values within Malaysia's pluralistic society, consonant with the foundational principles of the Rukun Negara.

Keywords: royal address, values, thoughts, national identity, good character

INTRODUCTION

The royal address is a policy speech delivered by a king or sultan, serving as a source of reference for the national administrative governance, public institutions, and the people. Beyond its administrative function, a royal address also operates as an institutional and symbolic discourse through which moral guidance, civic responsibility, collective belonging, and national aspirations are communicated. In this sense, a royal address does not merely transmit royal mandates; it also functions as a linguistic device that shapes public understanding, reinforces shared values, and contributes to the construction of national identity. In the Malaysian context, the royal address carries strong moral and symbolic authority because it is closely associated with the institution of monarchy, national harmony, and the well-being of the people. However, the content of royal addresses may be manipulated when quoted selectively or removed from its original context. This issue is evident in the misuse of Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah's address, delivered when His Royal Highness was the Raja Muda of Perak, with the title Raja Nazrin Shah, at the Second Malay Educational Congress on March 27, 2005, at Berjaya Times Square Hotel and Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur (Bernama, 2024). The address was later circulated in fragments by irresponsible parties, particularly through the expression "*Amanah Membina Negara*" (Trust in

Nation Building), in a manner that made it appear as though the speech belittled certain races while exclusively promoting the empowerment of the Malay race.

Such decontextualised interpretations have the potential to threaten national unity by igniting racial and religious tensions. In contrast, the address itself offers an in-depth reflection on the factors that influence the strengths and weaknesses of the Malay race. It emphasises the importance of possessing a liberated soul, a free mind, positive values, the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and strong national confidence (*Pejabat Dewan Negara Perak*, 2024). These elements indicate that the address should not be understood as a narrow ethnic discourse, but rather as a value-oriented discourse that promotes moral awareness, intellectual development, civic responsibility, and nation building. Although previous studies have examined royal and political speeches as instruments for constructing national identity, limited attention has been given to how moral values are linguistically instilled through royal addresses, particularly in the Malaysian monarchical context. Therefore, this study aims to examine how Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah's royal address functions as a linguistic device for the construction of national identity. Specifically, the study analyses how moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action are represented in the address to shape the people's understanding, internalisation, and practice of values related to nation building. This study is significant as it provides a contextual and linguistic reading of the royal address, thereby preventing fragmented interpretations that may distort its intended meaning and contributing to the broader study of royal discourse, moral value formation, and national identity construction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have shown that national identity is not a fixed or natural entity, but a discursive construction shaped through language, history, symbolism, and shared values. In political and royal discourse, national identity is often constructed through linguistic choices that define collective belonging, establish moral direction, and position the speaker as a symbolic representative of the nation. This is particularly evident in royal addresses, where the monarch does not merely communicate political messages, but also performs a unifying, moral, and cultural role for the people. Ardeleanu (2020) examined the construction of favourable national identity in the political speeches of King Michael I of Romania. The study analysed five Christmas and New Year's messages broadcast between 1960 and 1989 through Free Europe and The Voice of America. Drawing on Wodak et al. (1999) discursive construction of national identity, particularly constructive strategies, Ardeleanu found that King Michael used language to construct a common political present and future for Romanians during the communist regime. The speeches employed nationalistic vocabulary, first-person pronouns such as "I" and "we", emotional adjectives, historical references, and appeals to unity. These strategies encouraged the Romanian people to remain optimistic and to pursue independence and sovereignty. The study is significant because it demonstrates how royal discourse can function as a motivational and moral force during political oppression, while simultaneously constructing a collective national identity.

A similar concern with royal discourse and national identity is found in Berntson's (2014) comparative study of speeches by King Abdullah II of Jordan and King Mohammed VI of Morocco during the Arab Spring. Using a theoretical framework derived from Hall, Kolakowski, and Wodak et al., the study examined five instruments of national identity construction: national spirit or Volksgeist, historical memory, foundational myth, narration of a common political past, and linguistic construction of a common political present and future. The findings show that both monarchs constructed national identity, but through different emphases. King Abdullah II relied more heavily on historical memory and continuity, while King Mohammed VI focused more on constructing a common political present through appeals to reform, unity, and cooperation. This study is useful for the present article because it highlights that royal speeches construct national identity differently depending on political context, historical memory, and the monarch's rhetorical purpose.

Demiri and Fangen (2019) expanded the study of royal discourse by examining 55 Norwegian royal New Year's speeches delivered by King Olav V and King Harald V between 1960 and 2014. Their study was grounded in Billig's notion of banal nationalism and the concept of shared "common places". The findings reveal a shift in the construction of Norwegian identity, from a more homogeneous Christian-cultural image to a more inclusive and multicultural understanding of nationhood. The monarchs' speeches functioned as a space for negotiating what it means to be Norwegian in a changing society. Importantly, the study also shows that the monarch may function as a moral educator, particularly by encouraging tolerance, inclusiveness, and awareness of diversity.

This finding is highly relevant to the present article because it supports the view that royal addresses do not only represent national identity; they also shape moral values that sustain national belonging.

More recently, Abu Freiha and Al-Qaralleh (2026) analysed King Abdullah II's address to the Eighteenth Parliament using Positive Discourse Analysis. The study focused on how evaluative language contributes to national unity, moral alignment, and civic belonging. Using the appraisal categories of attitude, engagement, and graduation, the authors found that the King's speech constructs nationalism as a moral, emotional, and collaborative project. Inclusive pronouns, positive evaluative vocabulary, repetition, and moral appeals were used to create solidarity between the monarchy and the people. The study concludes that royal discourse can perform unity and moral authority through language, not by coercion or dominance, but by building emotional legitimacy and collective responsibility. This directly supports the present article's focus on the Royal Address as a linguistic device that instils moral values and contributes to national identity construction.

Although not directly concerned with national identity, the study by Oudesluijs and Yáñez-Bouza (2023) offers an important linguistic perspective on how identity is constructed through specific forms of language. Their study examined direct address and self-reference in Mary Hamilton's eighteenth-century correspondence with George, Prince of Wales, and Charlotte Gunning. Using historical sociopragmatics, the authors found that forms of address, nicknames, terms of endearment, signatures, and self-reference were strategically used to construct identity and negotiate social relationships. This study is relevant because it shows that identity construction operates not only at the macro level of nationhood, but also through micro-level linguistic choices. For the present article, this reinforces the need to examine specific linguistic features in the royal address, such as pronouns, evaluative expressions, directives, moral appeals, and references to collective responsibility.

Taken together, these studies establish several important points. First, royal and political speeches are powerful sites for the discursive construction of identity. Second, national identity is often built through references to history, shared values, unity, collective memory, and future aspirations. Third, royal discourse has a distinctive moral dimension because the monarch often speaks as a symbolic figure of continuity, stability, and national belonging. However, most previous studies have focused on national identity through historical narratives, constructive strategies, positive discourse, or symbolic nationalism. Less attention has been given to how royal discourse instils moral values as part of identity formation. Therefore, the present article addresses this gap by examining the Royal Address as a linguistic device that constructs national identity through the formation and reinforcement of moral values among the people.

Concept of 'Value'

Value is one of the crucial elements in shaping a nation's identity. In the context of Malaysia, which comprises diverse races and ethnicities, the value of a 'national' identity is emphasized through mutual understanding and consensus based on the principles enshrined in the "Rukun Negara" (National Pillars). The appreciation of each principle has been embedded within individuals through the family institution and further reinforced via formal education in schools as well as the mass media. The values and mindsets intended to be nurtured within society can be observed through public discourse, such as speeches by leaders and heads of state. Khairul Azman Mohd Suhaimy and Mansor Mohd Noor (2013) explain that the agenda or transformation process of national development which steers toward education, technology, economic prosperity, and social stability could be seen in the speeches of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad based on Max Weber's sociological theory. Aside from Max Weber's sociological theory, the analysis of core thoughts and values can also be examined through the perspectives of Aristotle and Lickona.

Aristotle (in Palmour, 1986) states "value as the life of right conduct," implying that value represents a life of correct and righteous behaviour, whether for oneself or when living within a society. Nevertheless, some individuals possess moral knowledge, yet the nurturing and practice of these values are not reflected in their daily lives due to various factors, such as the wave of modernization and environmental influences. Furthermore, the values formed are sometimes grounded in external cultures, such as westernization or popular culture trends that are blindly followed. This phenomenon was once noted by Aristotle, who mentioned that society tends to forget these values because of modernization. In relation to this, the understanding of value components must be strengthened to shape individual personal values.

Lickona's Components of Good Character

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Lickona's Components of Good Character Model (1992), which consists of three interrelated components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In Lickona's model, good character is not formed merely through knowledge of moral values, but through the integration of cognitive understanding, emotional internalisation, and behavioural practice. The model identifies moral knowing as the cognitive dimension of character, moral feeling as the affective dimension, and moral action as the behavioural manifestation of moral values. The diagram (Figure 1) shows that these three components are mutually connected rather than operating as separate domains.

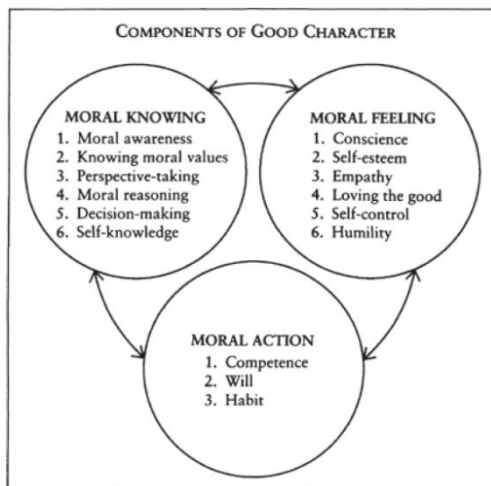


Figure 1 Lickona's Components of Good Character Model

In the context of this study, Lickona's model is used not to measure individual morality, but to analyse how moral values are linguistically constructed and instilled through the royal address. A royal address may be understood as a form of authoritative and symbolic discourse that communicates desirable national values to the people. Through selected linguistic choices, the address does not merely convey information; it also shapes the audience's moral understanding, evokes emotional attachment to shared values, and encourages collective action. Therefore, the Royal Address functions as a linguistic device that contributes to the construction of national identity by promoting values such as unity, responsibility, loyalty, respect, moderation, integrity, and social harmony.

a) Moral Knowing

Moral knowing refers to the way the royal address introduces, explains, or rationalises moral values that are important for national life. This includes the articulation of values, the identification of social problems, the explanation of moral responsibilities, and the use of reasoning to guide the people's understanding of what is considered good, appropriate, and desirable. Lickona associates moral knowing with moral awareness, knowledge of moral values, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, decision-making, and self-knowledge. These elements are useful for examining how the royal address constructs a shared moral consciousness among the people.

b) Moral Feeling

Moral feeling refers to the affective dimension through which the royal address encourages the people to emotionally appreciate and internalise national values. Lickona emphasizes that knowing what is right does not necessarily guarantee right conduct; therefore, the emotional side of character is essential in motivating moral behaviour. In this study, moral feeling is examined through linguistic expressions that evoke empathy, concern, pride, humility, love for the nation, respect for others, and commitment to the common good. This dimension is particularly significant because national identity is not constructed only through rational understanding, but also through emotional attachment to shared values, history, community, and nationhood.

c) Moral Action

Moral action refers to the translation of moral understanding and emotional commitment into conduct. In Lickona's model, moral action is closely related to competence, will, and habit, which enable moral values to be practised consistently. In the analysis of the Royal Address, this component is used to examine how the discourse guides the people towards responsible civic behaviour, social unity, mutual respect, and ethical participation in national life. Linguistically, this may be realised through calls for action, advice, directives, collective obligations, and repeated emphasis on desirable conduct.

Thus, Lickona's model provides a relevant theoretical basis for analysing how the Royal Address instils moral values as part of national identity construction. The model allows the study to examine the process by which values are first made known, then emotionally internalised, and finally oriented towards collective moral action. In this sense, the construction of national identity in the royal address is understood as a moral-linguistic process, whereby language functions to shape not only what the people know about national values, but also how they feel about and act upon those values. Accordingly, the model enables this study to examine the royal address as a moral discourse that constructs national identity through three progressive processes: the articulation of values, the internalisation of values, and the mobilisation of values into collective action.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using textual analysis as the main method of inquiry. This approach is appropriate because the study focuses on textual data, specifically the royal address of His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah. This study adopts an exploratory case-study orientation by focusing on a single royal address delivered by Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah. The selected address is not intended to represent all Malaysian royal discourse. Rather, it provides a contextually bounded case through which the linguistic articulation of moral values and national identity can be examined in depth. Its significance lies in the address's engagement with national governance, social responsibility, and collective conduct during the COVID-19 period, making it particularly relevant for examining the relationship between language, moral character, and national identity. The data were obtained from the official collection of Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah's royal addresses, accessed through the official website, <https://sultannazrinshah.com/>. The website, which is managed by His Royal Highness's Senior Private Secretary, contains a collection of royal addresses dating back to 2004.

In this study, the selected data consist of the royal address delivered during the official opening of the Perak State Legislative Assembly in 2020. The royal address was selected through purposive sampling because it was delivered during a period marked by political polemics at the federal level, which subsequently influenced governance at the state level. The State Legislative Assembly was chosen as the context of analysis because of its institutional role in administering the state and safeguarding the welfare, well-being, and prosperity of the people. Besides that, it also was delivered during a period of significant national disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and contains sustained references to governance, civic responsibility, social solidarity, and the well-being of the people. These characteristics make the text analytically relevant for examining how moral values are linguistically mobilised in the construction of national identity.

The unit of analysis in this study consists of linguistic markers found in the royal address. These linguistic markers include words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that reflect value formation. Each identified marker was labelled according to its location in the text using page, paragraph, and line references. This labelling system enables systematic identification and retrieval of the data during the analysis. The analysis was guided by Lickona's Components of Good Character Model (1992), which comprises three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In this study, moral knowing refers to linguistic expressions that construct understanding, awareness, reasoning, and knowledge of values. Moral feeling refers to expressions that evoke emotional attachment, empathy, concern, humility, and appreciation of values. Moral action refers to expressions that encourage the practice of values through responsibility, commitment, discipline, and collective action. Therefore, Lickona's model was adapted as the analytical framework for examining how the royal address instils moral values among the people.

The data analysis involved several stages. First, the royal address was read repeatedly to gain an overall understanding of its context, themes, and communicative purpose. Second, linguistic markers related to value formation were identified and extracted from the text. Third, each marker was coded according to the three components of Lickona's model: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Fourth, the coded data were interpreted to determine how the selected linguistic markers contribute to the construction of national identity. A total of 44 linguistic markers were identified as reflecting the three components of value formation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding process was conducted systematically through repeated reading, careful categorisation, and comparison between the extracted data and the analytical framework. An audit trail was maintained using page (H), paragraph (P), and line labels (B). This process ensured that each interpretation was grounded in the textual evidence and aligned with the theoretical framework of the study. Through this methodological procedure, the study examines not only the presence of moral values in the royal address, but also how these values are linguistically constructed, internalised, and mobilised as part of national identity formation (See Table 1).

Table 1 Analytical framework for value formation component in the royal address

Component Values	Operational Definition	Linguistic Indicators
Moral knowing	Expressions that construct awareness, understanding, and reasoning about values	Explanatory statements, value-related terms, references to knowledge, wisdom, responsibility, and national awareness
Moral feeling	Expressions that evoke emotional appreciation and internalisation of values	Affective expressions, empathy, concern, humility, pride, gratitude, and love for the nation
Moral action	Expressions that encourage the practice of values in social and national life	Calls for action, advice, directives, obligations, commitments, and references to collective responsibility

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah's royal address based on the Value Formation Model adapted from Lickona's *Components of Good Character Model*. Table 2 presents the distribution of value formation components identified in the royal address. The following are the results of the study on Sultan Nazrin's royal address based on the Value Formation Model. Table 2 illustrates the components of value formation contained in his royal address.

Table 2 The use of value formation components in the royal address

Value Formation Component	Total (%)
Moral Knowing	11 (25%)
Moral Feeling	16 (36%)
Moral Action	17 (39%)
Total	44 (100%)

Table 2 shows that moral action is the most dominant component in the royal address, with 17 occurrences (39%), followed by moral feeling with 16 occurrences (36%) and moral knowing with 11 occurrences (25%).

This distribution indicates that the royal address is not merely informative in nature but is strongly oriented towards the mobilisation of values into practice. The dominance of moral action suggests that the address places emphasis on responsibility, commitment, discipline, and concrete action that must be undertaken by the state administrative machinery in ensuring the welfare, well-being, and prosperity of the people. The dominance of moral action is closely related to the institutional context of the address, which was delivered during the official opening of the State Legislative Assembly. As the State Legislative Assembly functions as an important administrative and legislative institution at the state level, the royal address serves as a moral and civic mandate to guide members of the assembly in fulfilling their responsibilities. In this context, moral action reflects the expectation that values should not remain abstract principles, but should be translated into governance, public service, and ethical leadership. This finding is consistent with Lickona's view that good character requires not only knowing and feeling what is right, but also acting upon it through competence, will, and habit.

The second most frequent component is moral feeling, which accounts for 16 occurrences (36%). This suggests that Sultan Nazrin's royal address also gives considerable emphasis to the affective dimension of value formation. Moral feeling is reflected through expressions that evoke concern, empathy, love, humility, respect, and a sense of shared responsibility towards the people and the nation. This affective dimension is important because national identity is not constructed solely through rational understanding, but also through emotional attachment to shared values, collective belonging, and concern for the common good. In this regard, the royal address functions as a moral discourse that seeks to nurture emotional alignment between the ruler, the state administrative machinery, and the people. Meanwhile, moral knowing records 11 occurrences (25%). Although it is the least frequent component, its presence remains significant because moral knowing provides the cognitive foundation for value formation. In the royal address, moral knowing is reflected through statements that remind the audience of moral responsibilities, social realities, civic duties, and the principles that should guide public administration. This component enables the audience to understand the values that are being emphasised before these values are internalised through moral feeling and translated into practice through moral action.

Overall, the findings show that Sultan Nazrin's royal address constructs value formation through a progressive relationship between knowing, feeling, and acting. Moral knowing introduces and explains the values required for nation building; moral feeling encourages the audience to internalise those values emotionally; and moral action mobilises the audience to practise those values through responsible governance and social conduct. The strong presence of moral feeling and moral action indicates that the royal address functions beyond a ceremonial speech. It operates as a linguistic device that instils moral values, strengthens civic responsibility, and contributes to the construction of national identity. The findings show that the royal address constructs national identity not by merely defining who the people are, but by shaping what the people should know, feel, and practise as members of a moral and responsible national community. The following section discusses selected excerpts from Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah's royal address that reflect the three value formation components identified in the analysis.

Moral Knowing

Within the moral knowing component, Lickona (1992) identifies several elements, including moral awareness, knowledge of moral values, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, decision-making, and self-knowledge. In this study, moral knowing is observed through linguistic expressions that construct awareness, reflection, and understanding of values. The following excerpt reflects the element of moral awareness:

Setiap yang berlaku di alam maya ini mengandungi pengajaran. (H7, P20, B1)

(Every occurrence in this world contains a lesson).

The linguistic marker "*mengandungi pengajaran*" (contains a lesson) functions as a reflective expression that invites the audience to interpret events not merely as disruptions, but as sources of moral learning. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the statement encourages the people to view crisis through moral awareness and self-reflection. Rather than assigning blame, the address guides the audience to recognise that every event carries lessons that require wisdom, patience, and responsible judgement. This excerpt represents moral knowing because it activates the cognitive dimension of value formation. The people are reminded to understand the

meaning behind social challenges and to respond to them with reflection and moral reasoning. In relation to national identity, the expression constructs the people as a reflective moral community, one that can learn from crisis and transform adversity into collective wisdom. This aligns with the role of royal discourse as a form of moral guidance, where the monarch's words help shape public understanding and civic consciousness.

Moral Feeling

Lickona (1992) explains that moral feeling refers to the affective dimension of character formation, including conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility. In this study, moral feeling is identified through expressions that evoke emotional awareness, moral restraint, concern, and responsibility. The following excerpt demonstrates the elements of self-control, conscience, and collective dignity:

"...masa hadapan negeri jangan dimusnahkan kerana kepentingan peribadi, kerana percaturan politik yang keterlaluan, atau kerana dorongan sifat tamak dan haloba untuk mengumpulkan kekayaan diri, bagaikan tidak mengenal batasan." (H3, P5, B7-9)

(... the future of the state must not be destroyed for personal interests, due to excessive political manoeuvring, or driven by greed and avarice to accumulate personal wealth, as if knowing no boundaries).

The expression "*masa hadapan negeri jangan dimusnahkan*" (future of the state must not be destroyed) carries a strong affective force because it evokes concern over the future of the state. The phrase does not merely describe political misconduct; it appeals to the conscience of the state administrative machinery by reminding them that the future of the state must be protected. This reflects moral feeling because the address seeks to cultivate emotional responsibility towards the state and the people. The phrases "*kepentingan peribadi*" (personal interest), "*percaturan politik yang keterlaluan*" (excessive political manoeuvring) and "*sifat tamak dan haloba*" (greed and avarice) further strengthen the element of self-control. These lexical choices represent negative moral tendencies that must be restrained by those entrusted with power. The warning against greed, excessive political manoeuvring, and personal interest constructs a moral boundary between ethical leadership and self-serving governance. In this sense, the address instils moral feeling by encouraging the audience to reject destructive desires and to uphold humility, restraint, and public responsibility. At the level of national identity, this excerpt constructs leadership as a moral trust rather than a personal privilege. The state's future is positioned as a collective responsibility that must not be sacrificed for individual gain. Therefore, the royal address forms an affective bond between governance and moral accountability, reminding leaders that loyalty to the state and the people requires emotional commitment, self-restraint, and ethical consciousness.

Moral Action

The moral action component refers to the translation of moral understanding and moral feeling into practice. According to Lickona (1992), moral action consists of competence, will, and habit. In this study, moral action is identified through linguistic markers that signal commitment, responsibility, consensus, and the willingness to act for the common good. The following excerpt reflects the element of will:

"Pada 10 Mac juga, Beta turut menerima menghadap tiga orang ketua parti politik peringkat negeri, yang mewakili United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) dan Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), memaklumkan bahawa ketiga-tiga parti telah mencapai persepakan untuk menubuhkan kerajaan baharu di Negeri Perak." (H3, P4, B1-5)

(On March 10 as well, I also received an audience with three state-level political party leaders representing the United Malay National Organisation [UMNO], Parti Islam Se-Malaysia [PAS], and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia [BERSATU], informing that the three parties had reached a consensus to establish a new government in the State of Perak).

The key linguistic marker in this excerpt is "*mencapai persepakan*" (reached a consensus). The phrase indicates a movement from political difference towards collective agreement. Although the excerpt reports an institutional event, the act of reaching consensus reflects moral action because it demonstrates the willingness

of political actors to prioritise the continuity of state governance over partisan division. The word “*persepakatan*” carries the value of cooperation, compromise, and collective responsibility. This excerpt reflects the element of will because the formation of a new state government requires political willingness to act within constitutional and administrative procedures. The agreement among different political parties shows that moral action in governance involves not only individual intention, but also collective commitment to stability, order, and public welfare. In this context, the royal address frames consensus as a moral and constitutional act that safeguards the well-being of the people. In relation to national identity, the excerpt constructs the state as a community that must be governed through constitutional loyalty, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Political differences are acknowledged, but they are subordinated to the greater need for stability and continuity. This suggests that national identity is not only built through shared values, but also through the practice of those values in governance. The royal address therefore presents moral action as the practical expression of unity, responsibility, and respect for constitutional order.

These three excerpts show that Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah’s royal address constructs value formation through a progressive moral sequence: moral knowing encourages the people to understand and reflect upon social realities; moral feeling nurtures emotional responsibility and ethical restraint; while moral action translates these values into collective commitment, constitutional loyalty, and responsible governance. Thus, the royal address functions as a linguistic device for the construction of national identity by shaping the people not merely as political subjects, but as a moral community guided by reflection, restraint, responsibility, and collective action.

The findings also indicate that the royal address functions beyond the transmission of moral instruction. As institutional discourse, it positions moral conduct as an element of national responsibility. Values such as awareness, empathy, discipline, responsibility, and collective action are not presented solely as individual virtues but as qualities required for the stability and prosperity of the nation. In this sense, national identity is constructed through the alignment of personal character with collective obligations. The repeated references to the people, the state administration, national principles, and shared responsibilities establish a discursive relationship between the individual and the nation. The address constructs the ideal national subject as one who possesses moral awareness, demonstrates concern for others, and translates such values into responsible action. Royal discourse therefore provides institutional legitimacy to particular moral values by presenting them as necessary attributes of citizenship and national belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is limited by its focus on a single royal address and therefore does not seek to establish generalisable patterns across Malaysian royal discourse. The findings are contextually bounded by the historical, political, and social circumstances surrounding the selected text. In addition, although the analysis was guided by clearly defined theoretical categories, the interpretation of linguistic expressions remains partly dependent on researcher judgement. The findings should therefore be understood as an in-depth account of how moral values and national identity are constructed within one significant institutional text. Based on the findings, the royal address delivered by Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah contains core ideas related to national identity values, as reflected through the components of value formation: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The analysis shows that the address does not merely function as a ceremonial or administrative speech but also serves as a moral discourse that guides the state administrative machinery and the people towards responsible governance, social harmony, and collective well-being. The dominance of moral feeling and moral action indicates that His Royal Highness places strong emphasis on the internalisation and practice of values, rather than on value awareness alone. This suggests that the construction of national identity in the royal address is shaped not only through what the people should understand, but also through what they should feel, uphold, and practise as members of a responsible national community. Every mandate articulated in the address carries ethical significance, particularly in ensuring the continuity of state governance, safeguarding the prosperity of the people, and strengthening unity within a multiracial society.

The findings also show that the values embedded in the royal address are aligned with the principles of the Rukun Negara, particularly Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, the Supremacy of the Constitution, and Courtesy and Morality. Through these values, the royal address constructs national identity as a moral and civic

responsibility that must be understood, internalised, and translated into action by every individual. Therefore, the royal address can be regarded as a linguistic device that contributes to the construction of national identity by instilling values of reflection, restraint, responsibility, loyalty, unity, and ethical conduct. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of royal discourse by demonstrating how moral values are linguistically constructed and mobilised in the formation of national identity. It also highlights the importance of interpreting royal addresses within their full textual and contextual meaning, rather than through fragmented or selective readings that may distort the intended message. Future studies could extend the present findings by examining other royal addresses by Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah or comparing royal addresses delivered across different Malaysian monarchs, periods, social circumstances, and institutional occasions. A longitudinal analysis would enable researchers to identify continuities and changes in the linguistic construction of moral values and national identity. Comparative research involving royal addresses from different Malaysian states or speeches delivered by political and cultural leaders could further clarify how institutional position influences the representation of citizenship, morality, and national belonging. Future studies may also integrate critical discourse analysis or theories of nationalism to examine more explicitly the relationships among language, authority, ideology, and identity.

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