

Humanistic Values and Humanistic Values-Based Practices in Multi-Ethnic Communities for Social Cohesion in Malaysia's People's Housing Programme

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ABSTRACT

Social cohesion remains a critical challenge in Malaysia's increasingly diverse urban communities, particularly within the People's Housing Programme (PPR), where residents from different ethnic and religious backgrounds live in close proximity. While previous studies have primarily emphasised structural, socioeconomic, and policy-related determinants of social cohesion, limited attention has been given to the shared humanistic values that underpin harmonious interethnic relationships. This study aims to identify the core humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices shared among multi-ethnic communities in high-rise PPRs across Peninsular Malaysia. A semi-quantitative approach employing the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was adopted, involving residents' association committee members from the Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southern regions of Peninsular Malaysia. Through structured discussions and consensus-based voting, twelve humanistic values and eleven humanistic values-based practices were identified. The core values include mutual respect, mutual assistance, tolerance, mutual trust, compassion, caring, sincerity, courtesy, honesty, humility, unity, and openness. The corresponding practices include participating in community activities, greeting and visiting one another, providing contributions, strengthening communication networks, respecting others, understanding other religions, and celebrating cultural and religious festivals together. The findings demonstrate that social cohesion is sustained through shared moral principles translated into everyday social behaviour. The study contributes theoretically by distinguishing between humanistic values and value-based practices while providing contextually grounded instruments for assessing value-based social cohesion within Malaysia's multicultural communities.

Keywords: Humanistic values, Humanistic values-based practices, Social cohesion, Multi-ethnic community, People's Housing Programme (PPR), Nominal Group Technique.

INTRODUCTION

National unity is a fundamental pillar of national development and remains central to Malaysia's Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (*Wawasan Kemakmuran Bersama 2030*, WKB2030), which emphasises inclusive well-being across the country's multi-ethnic society (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2019). Nevertheless, cultural and religious diversity within increasingly complex urban environments presents continuing challenges to social cohesion, particularly in relation to ethnic and religious relations. When tolerance and mutual understanding are lacking, social relationships may weaken, increasing the risk of social fragmentation (Mansor, 2012).

Humanistic values play a crucial role in fostering harmonious relationships within culturally diverse societies. However, previous studies have largely examined humanistic values from the perspective of individual religions without adequately addressing Malaysia's pluralistic religious landscape (Ahmad Shukri et al., 2017). This limitation may contribute to interreligious tensions arising from inadequate understanding of different religious norms and practices (Denison, 2020). Consequently, there is a need for a more holistic framework based on universal human values shared across different religious traditions to strengthen social cohesion (Sheehy, 2015; Szromek, 2020).

In Malaysia, ethnic and religious relations continue to face various challenges. The National Unity Policy and the National Unity Blueprint 2021–2030 identify social deficits in these dimensions as key issues requiring sustained attention to preserve national harmony (Ministry of National Unity, 2021). Moreover, socioeconomic disparities, particularly among the urban B40 population, may either strengthen or weaken interpersonal relationships within local communities (Jayasooria, 2020).

The People's Housing Programme or known as *Program Perumahan Rakyat* (PPR) represents one of Malaysia's most ethnically and religiously diverse urban residential environments. Despite this diversity, incidents involving the placement of religious items in shared public spaces (BERNAMA, 2016), the disposal of waste at places of worship (Mokhtar, 2019), and disputes surrounding the demolition of religious buildings (Kumar, 2019) demonstrate that challenges to community cohesion persist. Similarly, research conducted among PPR communities in the Klang Valley found that fragile social relationships and value-related tensions remain evident, potentially increasing the likelihood of social conflict (Denison, 2020).

Although recent scholarship increasingly recognises shared collective values as a fundamental foundation for social cohesion and national unity (J. Cui et al., 2017; Christopher et al., 2017), studies in Malaysia have devoted limited attention to identifying the locally shared values that underpin harmonious interethnic relationships, particularly within urban PPR communities (Abd Aziz et al., 2016; Ahmad Shukri et al., 2017). Instead, existing research has predominantly focused on socioeconomic conditions, housing environments, public safety, government policies, and community development (Denison Jayasooria, 2020; Faten Nadhirah, 2019; Junaidi et al., 2018; Mohd Nasir Selamat et al., 2018; Saripah Osman, 2018; Nurfariza Mohd Radzi et al., 2017). Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding the specific humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices shared across Malaysia's multi-ethnic communities that contribute to social cohesion. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the core humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices shared among multi-ethnic communities to strengthen social cohesion within high-rise People's Housing Programme (PPR) communities in Peninsular Malaysia.

Humanistic Values

Humanistic values are fundamental principles that guide individual attitudes, decisions, and behaviours within society (Nowack & Schoderer, 2020). They encompass both individual values (Sack, 2017; Breidahl et al., 2018) and societal values (Hofstede, 2013; Schwartz, 2014), which are shaped by personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and religious teachings. In the Malaysian context, these values play a crucial role in shaping social interactions within a culturally and ethnically diverse society (Tan, 2017).

The sharing of common values provides an essential foundation for social cohesion because values are translated into behaviours that either strengthen or weaken relationships among individuals and communities. Behaviour grounded in shared humanistic values has been shown to reduce social divisions (Buyuker et al., 2018), facilitate constructive decision-making, and prevent conflict (Szromek, 2020). Similarly, J. Cui et al. (2017) demonstrated that religion-based values significantly influence community behaviour, highlighting their importance in promoting harmonious social relationships.

Unlike behaviour driven primarily by organisational norms or external incentives, behaviour rooted in humanistic values is intrinsically motivated and reflects individuals' commitment to the shared moral principles upheld within society (Sheehy, 2015). Consequently, such behaviour tends to foster stronger and more sustainable interpersonal relationships. In contrast, behaviour motivated primarily by personal rewards or self-

interest often produces more fragile social relationships that are less resilient in culturally diverse settings (Sheehy, 2015; Christopher et al., 2017; J. Cui et al., 2017; Szromek, 2020).

Religious traditions also provide important moral foundations that shape human values. Christianity emphasises virtues such as patience, gentleness, and the courage to uphold truth as essential qualities for harmonious community life (Szromek, 2020). Islamic teachings similarly promote wisdom, inclusiveness, and mutual respect, encouraging peaceful coexistence within diverse societies (Rohana et al., 2017). Likewise, Hinduism advocates values such as peace, non-violence, and inner tranquillity, which strengthen moral resilience and discourage behaviours that may contribute to social conflict (Kamble et al., 2014). Despite their theological differences, these religious traditions share common moral principles that encourage compassion, respect, and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that value-based behaviour contributes to social integration and the reduction of social deficits. Silvia and Chris (2020), for example, found that shared values strengthen civic identity, while Zaidin et al. (2014) showed that spiritually grounded behaviour enhances cooperation across ethnic and religious groups and supports national integration in Malaysia. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature has examined the contribution of individual religions separately rather than identifying the universal values shared across multiple religious traditions. Consequently, limited attention has been given to understanding how common humanistic values can function as a collective foundation for strengthening social cohesion within religiously and ethnically diverse communities (Ponizovskiy et al., 2020; Dragolov et al., 2020; Nowack & Schoderer, 2020; Azlina et al., 2011). Addressing this gap requires a more holistic perspective that identifies the shared values underpinning harmonious relationships across different religious and cultural groups. Such an approach is particularly relevant in Malaysia's multicultural context, where common humanistic values may provide a unifying normative framework capable of strengthening community resilience, promoting peaceful coexistence, and supporting national aspirations for social harmony and improved quality of life.

Accordingly, this study seeks to identify the core humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices shared among multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities in order to strengthen social cohesion within high-rise People's Housing Programme (PPR) communities in Peninsular Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a semi-quantitative approach using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to identify the elements of humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices. The NGT is a structured group decision-making method designed to elicit opinions and achieve consensus among participants through a voting process (Delbecq et al., 1975). It is also widely recognised as an effective idea-generation technique for exploring issues, problems, and specific social phenomena (Dang, 2015). Accordingly, the NGT process in this study was conducted through a series of face-to-face workshop sessions.

The NGT workshops were subsequently organised according to the four main geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia, namely the Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southern Regions. A total of four NGT workshop series were conducted across Peninsular Malaysia between September 2022 and January 2023. The primary objective of these workshops was to generate ideas for developing the elements of the main components of the humanistic values and humanistic value-based practices instrument. Table 1 presents the principal components of the instrument.

Table 1: Main Components of the Humanistic Values Instrument

No.	Main Components
1	Humanistic values among PPR communities
2	Humanistic values-based practices among PPR communities

Nominal Group Technique Participants

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) can be conducted either with a large group or in smaller groups to facilitate effective communication throughout the NGT process (Dobbie et al., 2004). Furthermore, participants selected for an NGT session should satisfy several essential criteria (Siti Farhah & Saedah, 2015; Mohd Ridhuan, 2016), namely:

1. Possess relevant background knowledge or expertise in the subject area.
2. Be willing to participate voluntarily.
3. Demonstrate good communication skills.
4. Have more than five years of experience in the relevant field.

Accordingly, the participants selected for this study were required to meet the following criteria:

1. Be committee members of the Residents' Association in high-rise People's Housing Programme (PPR) communities.
2. Voluntarily agree to participate in the NGT process.
3. Be capable of expressing their opinions and generating ideas effectively.
4. Have resided in a high-rise PPR community for more than five years.

Previous studies have suggested that the recommended number of participants for an NGT session ranges from 7 to 14 individuals (Ramlie et al., 2016) or 6 to 12 individuals (Harvey & Holmes, 2012). Accordingly, the NGT sessions in this study were conducted in a single group for each of the four regions, namely the Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southern Regions. Each regional group comprised between six and ten participants. Table 2 presents the demographic background of the NGT participants from each region.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of NGT Participants by Region

Region	NGT Participant	Position	Ethnicity	Length of Residence in PPR
Central	P1	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Malay	20 years
	P2	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Malay	20 years
	P3	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Malay	6 years
	P4	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Malay	7 years
	P5	Committee Member, Sri Semarak Public Housing Residents' Association	Malay	6 years
	P6	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Indian	17 years
	P7	Committee Member, Desa Rejang Public Housing Residents' Association	Chinese	17 years
Northern	P1	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	20 years
	P2	Secretary, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	15 years
	P3	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	15 years
	P4	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	10 years

Eastern	P5	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	12 years
	P6	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Indian	12 years
	P1	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	6 years
	P2	Deputy Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	6 years
	P3	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	5 years
	P4	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	6 years
	P5	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	7 years
	P6	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Indian	7 years
Southern	P1	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	10 years
	P2	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	10 years
	P3	Chairperson, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	13 years
	P4	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	8 years
	P5	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Malay	7 years
	P6	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	8 years
	P7	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Chinese	6 years
	P8	Committee Member, PPR Residents' Association	Indian	5 years

Procedure For Identifying Human Values And Human Values-Based Practices

Preparation of the NGT Workshops

The selection of an appropriate venue is an important consideration in the implementation of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). A comfortable and conducive environment facilitates the generation of high-quality ideas and enables participants to respond effectively to the questions posed during the session. In this study, the NGT workshops were conducted at different venues across the four geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia.

Several factors were considered when selecting the workshop venues, including accessibility to facilitate participants' attendance and the availability of participants at suitable times. In addition, the workshops required an appropriate setting, specifically an enclosed venue equipped with adequate tables, chairs, and technical facilities to support the NGT activities. Accordingly, Table 3 presents the venues and implementation schedule of the NGT workshops by region.

Table 3: NGT Workshop Venues

No.	Region	Venue	Date	Time
1	Central	Community Hall, Desa Rejang Public Housing, Setapak, Kuala Lumpur	30 September 2022	2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
2	Northern	Meeting Room, Keensway Park National Unity Preschool, Bukit Mertajam, Penang	8 October 2022	9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
3	Eastern	Meeting Room, Terengganu State Department of National Unity and National Integration	10 October 2022	9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
4	Southern	Community Operations Room, Desa Mutiara PPR, Johor Bahru, Johor	7 January 2023	2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

NGT Procedure

The implementation of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) involved face-to-face meetings and discussions with all participants. To facilitate the workshop and ensure that the sessions proceeded smoothly, one moderator and several facilitators were appointed. The NGT workshops in this study were chaired by the researcher's supervisor, who served as the moderator, while the researcher acted as the facilitator responsible for coordinating and managing the overall implementation of the NGT sessions.

Each NGT workshop commenced with an introductory session during which the moderator, facilitators, and participants introduced themselves by providing basic information such as their names, age, place of residence, occupation, and personal background. The moderator then explained the objectives of the workshop, the background of the study, and the procedures of the NGT process to ensure that all participants clearly understood the workshop protocol and the requirements for achieving its objectives.

Before proceeding with the discussion, the moderator confirmed that all participants understood and agreed to the workshop procedures. The workshop then began with a series of questions developed from the main components of the Humanistic Values Instrument, which had been established through an extensive review of the literature. Each question was clearly explained to ensure that participants fully understood its intended meaning before responding. Table 4 presents the questions posed to the NGT participants across the four regions based on the main components of the Human Values Instrument.

Table 4: Questions Used in the NGT Sessions Across the Four Regions

No.	Main Component	Question Used in the NGT Session
1	Humanistic values among PPR communities	List the humanistic values that you believe are essential for fostering positive interethnic relationships within your community.
2	Humanistic values-based practices among PPR communities	List the humanistic values-based practices that you personally engage in to promote positive interethnic relationships within your community.

The questions were presented to participants one at a time to enable them to focus on generating ideas for each question individually. Since two questions were administered, the NGT procedure was repeated twice. After each question had been presented and clearly explained, participants were given sufficient time to independently generate as many relevant ideas as possible and record them in writing. The ideas generated by the participants were subsequently presented to the group for discussion. During this stage, participants collectively reviewed each proposed idea to determine whether it was appropriate and relevant to the question. Through this process, a consensus was reached regarding the inclusion or exclusion of each proposed element.

Following the discussion, only those ideas that achieved consensus among all participants were retained as the principal elements of the Humanistic Values Instrument. Participants were also encouraged to propose additional elements that they considered relevant and appropriate for inclusion in the instrument. The process of determining whether a proposed element should be incorporated into the instrument was conducted through a voting phase, during which participants collectively evaluated each item. Consequently, the NGT procedure consisted of several distinct phases. Table 5 summarises the activities undertaken in each phase of the NGT procedure.

Table 5: Activities in Each Phase of the NGT Procedure

No.	Phase	Activities
1	Briefing Phase	- The moderator provided an overview of the study and explained the NGT procedure. - The moderator explained the main components of the instrument to be developed and the questions related to each component. (Duration: 15 minutes.)

2	Idea Generation Phase	- Each participant independently generated as many relevant ideas as possible without discussing them with other participants. - Participants recorded each idea individually in a concise written form. - Writing materials, including paper, marker pens, and other necessary stationery, were provided to all participants. - Duration: 15–20 minutes.
3	Idea Sharing Phase	- All ideas generated by the participants were collected and presented to the group. - Each participant explained the ideas they had proposed without being influenced by the opinions of other participants during the workshop. - The intended meaning of each idea was determined based on the explanation provided by the participant who originally proposed it. - Duration: 20–30 minutes.
4	Discussion Phase	- The moderator presented all ideas generated during the previous phase. - Participants were invited to provide comments and feedback on the ideas presented. - Ideas conveying similar meanings were merged following the consensus of all participants. - Duration: 15 minutes.
5	Voting Phase	- Participants were provided with a voting form to evaluate the proposed ideas. - Each participant rated the appropriateness of every idea using a five-point Likert scale. - Only ideas that received high appropriateness ratings were retained as elements of the instrument. - The voting forms were analysed immediately, and the voting results were presented to the participants. - Participants reached a final consensus regarding the voting outcomes and the inclusion of the selected elements. - Duration: 20 minutes.

RESULTS

Humanistic Values and Humanistic Values-Based Practices Identified

Tables 6 and 7 present the lists of **humanistic values** and **humanistic values-based practices** that achieved consensus among NGT participants across the four regions for inclusion in the research instrument.

Table 6: Humanistic Values Identified Across the Four Regions

Central Region	Northern Region	Eastern Region	Southern Region
- Mutual respect - Mutual assistance - Tolerance - Mutual trust - Compassion - Caring - Sincerity	- Mutual respect - Mutual assistance - Tolerance - Compassion - Caring	- Mutual respect - Mutual assistance - Tolerance - Mutual trust - Sincerity	- Mutual respect - Mutual assistance - Tolerance - Honesty - Openness

8. Being a positive role model 9. Honesty 10. Humility	6. Unity	6. Kindness 7. Openness	6. Unity
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Table 7: Humanistic Values-Based Practices Identified Across the Four Regions

Central Region	Northern Region	Eastern Region	Southern Region
1. Mutual assistance 2. Participating in community activities 3. Asking about others' well-being 4. Visiting one another 5. Providing contributions	1. Mutual assistance 2. Participating in community activities 3. Greeting one another 4. Mutual understanding 5. Demonstrating positive role modelling 6. Celebrating cultural and religious festivals together 7. Respecting others 8. Maintaining positive assumptions about others	1. Mutual assistance 2. Participating in community activities 3. Sharing opinions 4. Greeting one another 5. Visiting one another 6. Learning about other cultures 7. Providing contributions 8. Asking about others' well-being 9. Strengthening communication networks	1. Mutual assistance 2. Participating in community activities 3. Providing contributions 4. Sharing opinions 5. Greeting one another 6. Visiting one another 7. Strengthening communication networks

Subsequently, Table 8 presents the results of the voting phase for each component that achieved consensus for inclusion in the Humanistic Values Instrument and the Humanistic Values-Based Practices Instrument. A voting form was distributed to all participants to evaluate the suitability of each proposed element for inclusion in the instrument. Participants rated each element using a five-point Likert scale, where:

1. 1 = Strongly disagree
2. 2 = Disagree
3. 3 = Moderately agree
4. 4 = Agree
5. 5 = Strongly agree

Table 8: Results of the Voting Phase for the Human Values Instrument and Human Values-Based Practices Instrument: Central Region

No.	Component	Element	Total Score (n = 7)	Percentage (%)	Evaluation Status
1	Human values among PPR communities	Mutual respect	35	100	Accepted
		Mutual assistance	35	100	Accepted
		Tolerance	35	100	Accepted

		Mutual trust	34	97	Accepted
		Compassion	33	94	Accepted
		Caring	34	97	Accepted
		Sincerity	33	94	Accepted
		Positive role modelling	34	97	Accepted
		Honesty	34	97	Accepted
		Humility	33	94	Accepted
2	Human values-based practices among PPR communities	Mutual assistance	35	100	Accepted
		Participating in community activities	35	100	Accepted
		Asking about others' well-being	35	100	Accepted
		Visiting one another	35	100	Accepted
		Providing contributions	35	100	Accepted

Based on Table 8, all elements under the two main components of the Humanistic Values Instrument were accepted by the NGT participants from the Central Region ($n = 7$) as appropriate for inclusion in the research instrument. The highest level of agreement for the accepted elements was 100%, while the lowest was 94%. These findings indicate that all proposed elements exceeded the minimum acceptance threshold of 70%, as recommended by Mohd Ridhuan (2016), Zarina (2021), and Mardiah (2021).

Table 9: Results of the Voting Phase for the Human Values Instrument and Human Values-Based Practices Instrument: Northern Region

No.	Component	Element	Total Score ($n = 6$)	Percentage (%)	Decision
1	Human values among PPR communities	Mutual respect	30	100	Accepted
		Mutual assistance	30	100	Accepted
		Tolerance	30	100	Accepted
		Compassion	27	90	Accepted
		Caring	27	90	Accepted
		Unity	25	83	Accepted
2	Human values-based practices among PPR communities	Mutual assistance	30	100	Accepted
		Participating in community activities	30	100	Accepted
		Greeting one another	30	100	Accepted
		Mutual understanding	25	83	Accepted
		Demonstrating positive role modelling	30	100	Accepted
		Celebrating cultural and religious festivals together	24	80	Accepted
		Respecting others	30	100	Accepted
		Maintaining positive assumptions about others	23	77	Accepted

Based on Table 9, all elements under the two main components of the Humanistic Values Instrument were accepted by the NGT participants from the Northern Region ($n = 6$) as appropriate for inclusion in the research instrument. The highest level of agreement for the accepted elements was 100%, while the lowest was 77%. These findings indicate that all proposed elements exceeded the minimum acceptance threshold of 70%, as recommended by Mohd Ridhuan (2016), Zarina (2021), and Mardiah (2021).

Table 10. Results of the Voting Phase for the Humanistic Values Instrument and Humanistic Values-Based Practices Instrument: Eastern Region

No.	Component	Element	Total Score (<i>n</i> = 6)	Percentage (%)	Decision
1	Human values among PPR communities	Mutual respect	30	100	Accepted
		Mutual assistance	30	100	Accepted
		Tolerance	30	100	Accepted
		Mutual trust	28	93	Accepted
		Sincerity	23	77	Accepted
		Kindness	28	93	Accepted
		Openness	23	77	Accepted
2	Human values-based practices among PPR communities	Mutual assistance	30	100	Accepted
		Participating in community activities	30	100	Accepted
		Sharing opinions	30	100	Accepted
		Greeting one another	30	100	Accepted
		Visiting one another	30	100	Accepted
		Learning about other cultures	23	77	Accepted
		Providing contributions	30	100	Accepted
		Asking about others' well-being	30	100	Accepted
		Strengthening communication networks	25	83	Accepted

Based on Table 10, all elements under the two main components of the Human Values Instrument were accepted by the NGT participants from the Eastern Region (*n* = 6) as appropriate for inclusion in the research instrument. The highest level of agreement for the accepted elements was 100%, while the lowest was 77%. These findings indicate that all proposed elements exceeded the minimum acceptance threshold of 70%, as recommended by Mohd Ridhuan (2016), Zarina (2021), and Mardiah (2021).

Table 11. Results of the Voting Phase for the Human Values Instrument and Human Values-Based Practices Instrument: Southern Region

No.	Component	Element	Total Score (<i>n</i> = 8)	Percentage	Evaluation Status
1	Human Values of PPR Communities	Mutual Respect	40	100	Accepted
		Mutual Assistance	40	100	Accepted
		Tolerance	40	100	Accepted
		Honesty	36	90	Accepted
		Openness	34	85	Accepted
		Unity	35	88	Accepted
2	Human Values-Based Practices of PPR Communities	Mutual Assistance	40	100	Accepted
		Participating in Activities Together	40	100	Accepted
		Making Contributions	40	100	Accepted
		Sharing Opinions	32	80	Accepted
		Greeting One Another	37	93	Accepted
		Visiting One Another	34	85	Accepted
		Strengthening Communication Networks	32	80	Accepted

Based on Table 11, all elements under the two main components of the Humanistic Values Instrument were accepted by the NGT participants from the Southern Region ($n = 8$) as appropriate for inclusion in the research instrument. The highest level of agreement for the accepted elements was 100%, while the lowest was 80%. These findings indicate that all proposed elements exceeded the minimum acceptance threshold of 70%, as recommended by Mohd Ridhuan (2016), Zarina (2021), and Mardiah (2021).

Subsequently, the elements accepted by participants across the four regions (Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southern) were compiled and compared to identify similarities and differences among the regions. This comparative analysis was undertaken to determine the final set of elements to be included in the Humanistic Values Instrument developed for this study. Tables 12 and 13 present the comparison of elements across the four regions and the final elements selected based on the NGT findings from each region. Table 14 presents the final set of elements included in the Humanistic Values Instrument.

Table 12. Comparison of Humanistic Values Elements Across the Four Regions and the Final Elements Selected for the Humanistic Values Instrument

Central Region	Northern Region	Eastern Region	Southern Region	Final Element
Mutual respect	Mutual respect	Mutual respect	Mutual respect	Mutual respect
Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance
Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
Mutual trust	–	Mutual trust	–	Mutual trust
Compassion	Compassion	–	–	Compassion
Caring	Caring	–	–	Caring
Sincerity	–	Sincerity	–	Sincerity
Positive role modelling	–	Kindness	–	Courtesy
Honesty	–	–	Honesty	Honesty
Humility	–	–	–	Humility
–	Unity	–	Unity	Unity
–	–	Openness	Openness	Openness

Table 13. Overall Findings on Humanistic Values-Based Practices Across the Four Regions and the Final Elements

Central Region	Northern Region	Eastern Region	Southern Region	Final Element
Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance
Participating in community activities	Participating in community activities	Participating in community activities	Participating in community activities	Participating in community activities
–	–	Sharing opinions	Sharing opinions	Sharing opinions
Asking about others' well-being	Greeting one another	Greeting one another / Asking about others' well-being	Greeting one another	Greeting one another
Visiting one another	–	Visiting one another	Visiting one another	Visiting one another
Providing contributions	–	Providing contributions	Providing contributions	Providing contributions

–	Mutual understanding	Learning about other cultures	–	Understanding other religions
–	–	Strengthening communication networks	Strengthening communication networks	Strengthening communication networks
–	Maintaining positive assumptions about others	–	–	Maintaining positive assumptions about others
–	Respecting others	–	–	Respecting others
–	Celebrating cultural and religious festivals together	–	–	Celebrating cultural and religious festivals together
–	Demonstrating positive role modelling	–	–	Courtesy

Table 14. Final Elements of the Humanistic Values Instrument and Humanistic Values-Based Practices Instrument

No.	Component	Elements
1	Human values among PPR communities	1. Mutual respect 2. Mutual assistance 3. Tolerance 4. Mutual trust 5. Compassion 6. Caring 7. Sincerity 8. Courtesy 9. Honesty 10. Humility 11. Unity 12. Openness
2	Human values-based practices among PPR communities	1. Mutual assistance 2. Participating in community activities 3. Greeting one another 4. Visiting one another 5. Providing contributions 6. Understanding other religions 7. Strengthening communication networks 8. Maintaining positive assumptions about others 9. Respecting others

		10. Celebrating cultural and religious festivals together
		11. Courtesy

Main Findings and Interpretation

The present study identified a set of shared humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices that characterise multi-ethnic communities residing in high-rise People's Housing Programme (PPR) communities in Peninsular Malaysia. Contrary to previous studies portraying PPR communities as environments characterised by social tension, dissatisfaction, and weakened interpersonal relationships (Fuentes, 2017; Marzudi et al., 2019; Jayasooria, 2020; Dass, 2021; Bahaudin, 2021; Omar et al., 2022; Khalidi, 2022), the findings demonstrate that residents continue to uphold a strong foundation of shared humanistic values that is consistently translated into everyday social practices. This suggests that social cohesion within PPR communities is sustained not solely through physical proximity or government-led housing initiatives, but also through shared moral values that regulate interpersonal interactions across ethnic and religious boundaries.

The identification of common humanistic value are including mutual respect, mutual assistance, tolerance, compassion, honesty, sincerity, and openness, together with corresponding humanistic values-based practices, demonstrates that harmonious coexistence within multicultural communities is supported by both internal moral principles and their behavioural expression. These findings indicate that social cohesion is not simply the absence of conflict but rather the presence of shared values that encourage individuals to engage in positive, cooperative, and respectful interactions despite differences in ethnicity, religion, and cultural background. Such findings reinforce the argument that sustainable community relationships are strengthened through value-based social behaviour rather than through structural or institutional arrangements alone.

The distinction identified in this study between humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices also contributes to the conceptual understanding of value formation within multicultural societies. Consistent with Schwartz's (1992) conceptualisation, values function as abstract normative principles that guide individual judgement and behaviour, whereas practices represent the observable enactment of those principles in everyday social life. In the present study, humanistic values constitute the underlying moral framework that shapes interpersonal relationships, while humanistic values-based practices represent the behavioural mechanisms through which those values are expressed. This conceptual distinction provides a clearer theoretical foundation for understanding how shared values are translated into behaviours that strengthen social cohesion.

More importantly, the findings suggest that shared humanistic values should not be regarded merely as desirable moral ideals but as practical social resources that contribute to community resilience. The consistent emergence of similar values across all four geographical regions indicates that these values are not confined to particular ethnic, cultural, or regional groups. Instead, they appear to represent a collective moral framework shared by Malaysia's multicultural communities. Such consistency strengthens the empirical validity of the Humanistic Values Instrument developed in this study and supports its potential application as a contextually grounded tool for assessing value-based social cohesion within diverse community settings.

Historical Development Of Human Values In Malaysian Society

The shared humanistic values identified in this study can be better understood within the broader historical development of Malaysian society. The consistency of these values across all four geographical regions suggests that they are not recent social constructs but have evolved through centuries of interaction among diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities. Rather than emerging independently within individual ethnic groups, the findings indicate that many of these values have been gradually institutionalised through long-standing processes of cultural exchange, social adaptation, and coexistence. This historical continuity may explain why values such as mutual respect, tolerance, compassion, and mutual assistance remain widely recognised across Malaysia's multicultural communities today.

The formation of these shared values can be traced to the early Malay kingdoms, including Funan, Srivijaya, and Majapahit, where sustained interactions with Indian and Chinese civilisations facilitated the exchange of cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and systems of governance (Mohd Zain, 2021). These interactions did not merely introduce new cultural influences but also encouraged the gradual development of shared social norms that enabled diverse communities to coexist peacefully. Consequently, cultural diversity became an enduring characteristic of the Malay Archipelago long before the establishment of the modern Malaysian state.

This process was further strengthened during the Malacca Sultanate, which functioned as one of the region's most important centres of trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. As merchants and settlers from China, India, the Middle East, and neighbouring regions interacted with local communities, opportunities for cultural adaptation and social integration increased considerably (Mohd Zain, 2021). The emergence of culturally hybrid communities, such as the Peranakan Chinese and the Chetty Indian communities, illustrates how prolonged interaction facilitated mutual adaptation rather than social segregation. These historical developments suggest that the foundations of social cohesion in Malaysia were established through continuous intercultural engagement rather than cultural homogeneity.

The spread of Islam during the Malacca Sultanate further reinforced this process by embedding principles of justice, benevolence, and social responsibility within the governance and social organisation of Malay society. The Islamic principle that *"a just ruler is to be obeyed, whereas an unjust ruler is to be opposed"* reflects the central role of justice and ethical leadership in maintaining harmonious social relationships (Abdullah & Bahaman, 2017). Rather than functioning solely as religious ideals, these principles became embedded within broader social norms that encouraged cooperation, fairness, and mutual responsibility among members of increasingly diverse communities.

Viewed collectively, these historical developments suggest that the shared humanistic values identified in the present study are deeply embedded within Malaysia's socio-cultural evolution. The consistency of the identified values across geographically distinct PPR communities therefore reflects not only contemporary community practices but also the cumulative influence of centuries of intercultural interaction, religious pluralism, and nation-building. This historical perspective provides an important explanation for why similar human values continue to underpin social cohesion despite the country's considerable ethnic and religious diversity.

Ethno-Religious Foundations of Humanistic Values

The findings further suggest that the shared humanistic values identified across the four geographical regions are closely associated with Malaysia's unique ethno-religious context. Although the country's ethnic communities differ in their cultural traditions and religious beliefs, they share a common emphasis on moral principles that encourage harmonious social relationships. Rather than functioning independently, ethnic cultures and religious teachings appear to reinforce one another in shaping shared behavioural norms. This convergence provides an important explanation for the consistency of the humanistic values identified among multi-ethnic PPR communities despite their diverse demographic composition.

Across Malaysia's major religious traditions, values such as compassion, mutual respect, tolerance, honesty, justice, responsibility, and concern for others are consistently emphasised, albeit through different theological perspectives. Islam promotes justice, kindness, compassion, and peaceful coexistence with people of different faiths, as reflected in the concept of *Fiqh al-Ta'ayush* (Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan, 2018). Similarly, Buddhism encourages compassion and ethical conduct through the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts (Lew, 2015), while Confucian philosophy promotes harmonious social relationships through virtues such as *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety), and *zhi* (wisdom) (Fatimi & Mohd Zamani, 2006). Hinduism likewise advocates universal moral principles including *Ahimsa* (compassion), *Dharma* (responsibility), and *Kshama* (tolerance), all of which encourage peaceful interpersonal relationships and social responsibility (Masitah et al., 2016). Christianity similarly promotes compassion, moderation, forgiveness, and love for others as essential foundations for community life (Kaitjily & Mulyani, 2022).

Despite their theological differences, these religious traditions converge in promoting behaviours that strengthen interpersonal trust, cooperation, and mutual respect. This convergence is particularly noteworthy because the values identified in the present study including mutual respect, compassion, tolerance, honesty, sincerity, and mutual assistance are consistently reflected across these diverse religious traditions. The findings therefore suggest that the shared values identified among PPR communities are not exclusively associated with any single religion or ethnic group but instead represent universal moral principles that have been collectively internalised within Malaysian society.

The influence of religion is further reinforced by long-established cultural traditions among Malaysia's diverse ethnic communities. Within Malay society, for example, values of courtesy, humility, and respect are deeply embedded in everyday social interaction and are reflected in traditional expressions such as the Malay *pantun*, which celebrates noble character and refined speech (Fatimi & Mohd Zamani, 2006). Likewise, Chinese cultural traditions emphasise harmonious interpersonal relationships, collective well-being, and reciprocal obligations, while Indian cultural traditions encourage moral responsibility and self-discipline through religious and philosophical teachings. Indigenous belief systems practised by the Orang Asli and the indigenous communities of Sabah and Sarawak similarly promote respect for nature, communal responsibility, and harmonious coexistence between human beings and their surrounding environment (Mohd Mizan & Shuhairimi, 2004). Collectively, these cultural traditions reinforce the moral teachings promoted by religion and contribute to the continuity of shared humanistic values across generations.

Taken together, these findings support the proposition that Malaysia possesses an ethno-religious value system, whereby ethnic traditions and religious teachings interact to form a shared normative framework that guides social behaviour. Rather than viewing ethnicity and religion as separate or competing sources of values, the present findings indicate that both dimensions operate synergistically in cultivating common moral principles that transcend ethnic and religious boundaries. This shared value system helps explain why the same humanistic values emerged consistently across all four regions despite differences in local demographic composition. More importantly, it suggests that social cohesion in Malaysia is sustained not only through institutional mechanisms or public policies but also through deeply embedded moral norms that have evolved through centuries of cultural interaction and religious pluralism.

Theoretical Contributions

Beyond identifying the core humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices shared within Malaysia's multi-ethnic communities, the present study offers several theoretical contributions to the literature on human values and social cohesion. First, the findings reinforce Schwartz's (1992) proposition that values function as abstract principles guiding human behaviour while extending this perspective by empirically distinguishing between humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices. Although previous studies have generally conceptualised values as determinants of behaviour, they have rarely operationalised the behavioural manifestation of those values as a separate construct. The present study demonstrates that values and practices represent two conceptually distinct but closely interconnected dimensions. Humanistic values constitute the internal normative beliefs that shape individual judgement, whereas humanistic values-based practices represent the observable behaviours through which those beliefs are expressed in everyday social interactions. This distinction provides a clearer conceptual framework for understanding how values contribute to the development of social cohesion within multicultural communities.

Second, the findings contribute to the growing body of literature on social cohesion by demonstrating that shared moral values constitute an important mechanism through which harmonious relationships are maintained in ethnically and religiously diverse societies. Existing studies have frequently examined social cohesion from structural, institutional, or socioeconomic perspectives, emphasising factors such as housing conditions, public safety, social capital, governance, and community development. While these factors undoubtedly influence community relationships, the present findings suggest that social cohesion is equally sustained by an underlying system of shared moral values that guides everyday interpersonal behaviour. This perspective expands existing discussions by highlighting the normative dimension of social cohesion, which has received comparatively limited empirical attention within the Malaysian context.

Third, the study introduces empirical support for understanding Malaysia's multicultural society through the concept of an ethno-religious value system. Rather than treating ethnicity and religion as separate explanatory factors, the findings indicate that both dimensions interact in shaping a common set of moral values shared across different communities. Despite differences in theological beliefs and cultural traditions, the convergence of values such as mutual respect, compassion, tolerance, honesty, sincerity, and mutual assistance suggests the existence of a shared normative framework that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. This finding contributes to the broader discourse on multiculturalism by demonstrating that cultural diversity does not necessarily imply value fragmentation; instead, diversity may coexist with substantial consensus regarding the moral principles that regulate social life.

Finally, the development of the Humanistic Values Instrument and the Humanistic Values-Based Practices Instrument represents an important methodological contribution to future research on social cohesion. Unlike many existing instruments that measure values in general or focus on specific religious or cultural groups, the instruments developed in this study were derived through a consensus-building process involving representatives from multiple ethnic communities across four geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia. Consequently, the instruments provide contextually grounded measures of value-based social cohesion that are sensitive to Malaysia's multicultural environment. They also offer a foundation for future empirical studies examining the relationships between human values, community behaviour, and social cohesion across different social settings.

Taken together, these theoretical contributions suggest that social cohesion should be understood not only as a structural or institutional outcome but also as a value-based social process rooted in shared moral principles that are translated into everyday behaviour. By integrating the concepts of humanistic values, humanistic values-based practices, and the ethno-religious value system within a single conceptual framework, the present study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how multicultural societies sustain harmonious social relationships despite ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity.

Practical Implications And Future Directions

The findings of this study have important implications for policymakers, community practitioners, and researchers seeking to strengthen social cohesion within multicultural societies. The identification of a shared set of humanistic values and humanistic values-based practices suggests that efforts to promote social cohesion should extend beyond improvements in physical infrastructure or socioeconomic conditions. While housing quality, public facilities, and economic opportunities remain essential for community well-being, the findings indicate that sustainable social cohesion also depends on cultivating the moral values that shape everyday interpersonal interactions. Consequently, initiatives aimed at strengthening community relationships should integrate value-based interventions that encourage mutual respect, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and shared responsibility among residents from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The Humanistic Values Instrument and the Humanistic Values-Based Practices Instrument developed in this study provide practical tools for assessing the moral and behavioural dimensions of social cohesion within multicultural communities. These instruments may assist government agencies, local authorities, housing administrators, and community organisations in identifying strengths and potential areas for intervention within diverse residential settings. In the Malaysian context, the instruments may support programmes implemented under the National Unity Policy (Ministry of National Unity, 2021), community empowerment initiatives, neighbourhood engagement programmes, and other social development strategies that seek to foster harmonious inter-ethnic relationships.

Beyond the Malaysian context, the findings also contribute to international discussions on multiculturalism and community development. Many contemporary societies are becoming increasingly ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse due to global migration, urbanisation, and demographic change. Within such contexts, maintaining harmonious social relationships requires more than institutional policies. It also requires the cultivation of shared moral principles that transcend cultural differences. The present findings therefore suggest that value-based approaches may complement existing structural and policy-oriented strategies for strengthening social cohesion in culturally diverse societies.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. The instruments were developed based on expert consensus involving representatives from four geographical regions in Peninsular Malaysia. Although these regions represent substantial ethnic diversity, the findings may not fully capture the perspectives of all communities across East Malaysia or other multicultural contexts. Furthermore, the present study focused on instrument development rather than empirical validation of the causal relationships between humanistic values, humanistic values-based practices, and social cohesion. Future studies should therefore validate the proposed instruments using larger and more representative samples and examine their psychometric properties across different demographic groups. Further research may also investigate how humanistic values influence social cohesion through behavioural mechanisms using structural equation modelling or longitudinal research designs.

Overall, the present study demonstrates that social cohesion within Malaysia's multicultural communities is underpinned by a shared system of humanistic values that has evolved through centuries of cultural interaction and religious pluralism. These values are translated into everyday humanistic values-based practices that strengthen interpersonal trust, mutual respect, cooperation, and harmonious coexistence across ethnic and religious boundaries. By integrating historical development, ethno-religious influences, and behavioural manifestations within a single conceptual framework, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the normative foundations of social cohesion while offering contextually grounded instruments for future research and community development initiatives.

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