

Managing Diversity in Malaysia: Readiness of Non-Malay Youths to Join the Malaysian Armed Forces

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i7/14424> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i7/14424

Published Date: 17 July 2022

Abstract

This article examines the readiness level of non-Malay youths in Malaysia in joining the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) with regard to several factors, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. The findings presented are based on a quantitative study involving a total of 1033 respondents who are currently pursuing formal education at selected secondary schools in Malaysia. In general, the study discovered that attitude and subjective norms of respondents towards the ATM are at a moderate level while their perceived behavioural control towards joining the ATM in the future is low. There is a significant difference on respondents' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control towards the ATM based on where they live permanently. Respondents residing in rural areas were seen to have a slightly higher readiness than respondents residing in urban areas in joining the ATM in the future based on the attitudes, subjective norms and perceptions of behaviour control factors among them. To summarise, the findings of the study verify that the issue on the involvement of the non-Malay in the ATM, in particular among the youths, is indeed a national issue that has previously been raised. In fact, the findings of the study indicate that this issue will remain relevant as a subject of interest that can be studied further from time to time. Therefore, the current study suggests that efforts to foster positive attitudes and increase subjective norms and perceived behavioural control for a career in the ATM should be carried out continuously in a more structured and systematic way to increase the readiness of non-Malay youths in Malaysia to join the ATM. This is important in order to celebrate ethnic diversity in the nation defense sector as well as to foster the spirit of patriotism among non-Malay youths in Malaysia.

Keywords: Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, Malaysian Youth, Patriotism, Ethnic Diversity, Malaysian Armed Forces

Introduction

The Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) is the main military force in the national defense sector. The main mission of the ATM is to establish and create a military force that is predisposed to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of the country (Annual Report of the Ministry of Defense Malaysia, 2018). In other words, the ATM is the nation's stronghold defense in ensuring that Malaysia remains as a sovereign nation and free from external threats and foreign infiltration. The ATM covers three main military branches-the Malaysian Army (TDM), Royal Malaysian Navy (TLDM) and Royal Malaysian Air Force (TUDM). The organisational structure of the ATM is led by the Commander of the Armed Forces.

In the context of a plural society in Malaysia, a balanced participation in the ATM among the members of the multi-ethnic community is an ultimate indicator of patriotism. It symbolises the high patriotism level of the Malaysian society in defending the country's sovereignty. Although the spirit of patriotism can be expressed in many ways, no one can deny that a balanced participation from a multi-ethnic community in the ATM affirms the patriotism level of the nation's plural society towards the country. This is due to the fact that the ATM is associated with noble sacrifice and one's willingness to part with family and even risk one's own life to protect the country.

To explain this issue further, Osman (2004) states that a manifestation of the spirit of patriotism is displayed when one is determined to defend the sovereignty of the nation wholeheartedly by risking one's life in a war, as in the case of military personnel. According to Ku Hasnita (2009), although this is not an indication that the achievements of other members of the multi-ethnic community in Malaysia in other fields such as economy, education, sports and culture could not be associated with the spirit of patriotism, it should be understood that the nation's achievements in these areas would have been made difficult if the country is often faced with conflicts caused by war, confrontation and chaos. She added that an effective defense sector (including the role of the army) will create a positive national climate that will enable areas of national development such as economy, technology, education, agriculture, sports and others to grow and be viable. Therefore, the military's role (as the last resort) is to be willing to fight in a war to safeguard the nation's peace and security, just as an insurance policy serves to protect one's interests (Liew, 2019). Thus, a balanced participation among members of the multi-ethnic community in the ATM is indeed an indisputable topic and is necessary, particularly when topics related to patriotism, national unity, ethnic integration and other words with similar connotations are currently being hotly debated in the country.

A random survey on several mass media reports revealed that the issue on the participation of non-Malays in the ATM is a hotly debated issue. A parliamentary reply dated 18 March 2010, quoted from Bernama, showed that the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) acknowledged the low participation level of non-Malays in the ATM despite showing a slight increase, with the participation of non-Malays being at 17,521, equivalent to 15.25% of the total ATM strength (Liew, 2010).

The statement made by the Air Force Commander, General Tan Sri Roslan Saad, as quoted in Astro Awani (2016), indicated that the participation of non-Malays in Air Force (RMAF) in each recruitment session was only at a 10% level. According to him, this scenario was worrying as

many marketing programmes had been implemented. The same scenario is also observed in the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN). According to RMN Assistant Chief of Staff Human Resources, out of the 14,123 existing low-ranking members, only 53 were Chinese, 183 were Indians while the rest were Malays or other ethnic groups (Utusan Malaysia, 2016). Press statement by the RMN also mentioned the poor participation of the non-Malays despite the many programmes conducted, including advertising in Chinese-language newspapers.

When officiating the ATM's *Ops Perisai Akidah* ceremony and the launch of *Ahli Sunah wal Jamaah Akidah* book at MINDEF Auditorium, ATM Commander, General Tan Sri Raja Mohamed Affandi Raja Mohamed Noor, stated that the ATM had never denied the opportunity for any ethnic group in Malaysia to join the ATM. In fact, he further stated that it is the ATM's wish to see more non-Malays joining the defense organisation to strengthen the unity among ATM members in particular, and the community in general (Malaysiakini, 2018).

This is the reason for the official registration of the Malaysian Army Chinese Veterans Association (MACVA) on 31 August 2016. Its role is to attract Chinese youths to join the ATM (Metro, 2016). According to MACVA Chairman, Bridged General (B) Dr. Leong Weng Foon, MACVA would focus on enlisting young Chinese into the ATM through visits to schools and universities, and by forging partnerships with various associations in organising talks, motivational camps and seminars. Through these programmes, he said, MACVA could share knowledge and expertise, experience while serving in the ATM and inculcate important aspects of nation building such as patriotism, leadership traits, creative thinking and camaraderie among the younger generation in a multiracial society.

At the same time, the appointment of Senator Liew Chin Tong, a Chinese, as the Deputy Minister of Defense on 17 July 2018, did not only make a mark in the country's history, but it was also seen as an encouragement to other non-Bumiputeras in Malaysia to join the ATM. This was acknowledged by Yang Berbahagia (YB) Mohamad Sabu, the then Minister of Defense, Malaysia. He reinforced the idea that the national defense sector should not be monopolised by only the Bumiputeras; thus, he also urged the participation of non-Bumiputeras in the ATM, especially among the Chinese and Indians which currently, is still seen as lacking (Bernama, 2018).

Despite the various promotional activities being carried out actively by ATM, MACVA or other NGOs (if any), apart from the appointment of Senator Liew Chin Tong as the previous Deputy Minister of Defense, the non-Malays in the country remain reluctant to join the ATM (Bernama, 2018). Although there is some truth to the perception and argument that if the ATM management is run smoothly, concerns over the pattern of participation involving the multiple races in Malaysia in the ATM will be a minor issue (Liew, 2019). However, in the opinion of the author, patriotism, unity and ethnic integration is one of the utmost important matters and should overrule other considerations since this involves the well-being of the country. Therefore, this article strives to examine the level of readiness of non-Malay youths in Malaysia to join the ATM.

Literature Review

Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a person's behaviour is determined by behavioural intentions which are partly influenced by the attitudes, subjective norms and perceptions of their control over the individual's behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This theory is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) which adds a new variable, perceived behavioural control. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have studied the relationship between beliefs, attitudes and behaviours by developing an attitude structure model. This theory is based on several assumptions that individuals generally act according to the logic of reason, information gathered and consideration of the effects of their actions.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, an individual's confidence in certain matters is influenced by the individual's attitude on certain behaviours, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. These three components are interdependent and act as the determinants of an individual's intention on whether or not to execute a task. Ajzen (1985) also argues that perceived behavioural control influences the intention directly and is also likely to influence the behaviour of a person who initially intends to do something, but later decides against it due to his own perceived behavioural control.

Perceived behavioural control refers to the degree of control that a person expects from a behaviour (Chen, 2007; Kang et al., 2006). Ajzen (2001) states that perceived behavioural control is the degree to which a person is confident of being able to act on something planned. This is divided into two aspects i.e., the manner in which a person is able to control the behaviour and the confidence that a person feels about his or her ability to perform it. According to Ajzen (2002), perceived behavioural control can be seen as a particular consideration in the intention of an individual's behaviours and actions.

Based on searches using keywords ["Malaysian Armed Forces" AND "Chinese" OR "non-Malay"] and ["Malaysia Royal Army" OR "Malaysia military" AND "Chinese" OR "non-Malay"] in Google Scholar database and Scopus, we found two scholarly writings that can be classified as being classical, written on the issue. One was by Lim (1989) who wrote the article "Why the Chinese give cold treatment to positions in the Malaysian Armed Forces", and another by Enloe (1978) on "The issue saliency of the military-ethnic connection: Some thoughts on Malaysia." Lim's (1989) study at the University of Malaya Library, Malaysia employed a qualitative approach with library research techniques sourced from secondary data, while the primary data involved findings from interviews with several military personnel, magazine editors and a few government officials. As for Enloe's (1978) writing, only a small part (one page) of the preamble (preview) could be found. The full article is unavailable due to database subscription issues.

With regard the study stated by MINDEF in the parliamentary reply dated 18 March 2010 which explained the reasons for the poor participation of non-Malays in the ATM, the original source of this study could not be determined as there is no further information on it (see Liew, 2010). At this stage, it is not our intention to obtain the original source of the MINDEF study on the assumption that primary data on staffing in the ATM are difficult to obtain and are considered as confidential as described by (Samsu and Nor, 2009).

Other scholarly findings on the issue raised in this study are more general as the objectives do not specifically examine the participation of non-Malays in the ATM (such as Embi & Rasimi, 2006; Samsu & Nor, 2009).

Lim's (1989) study on "Why do the Chinese give cold treatment to positions in the Malaysian Armed Forces?" claimed that the lack of non-Bumiputeras in the ATM should not be taken lightly as it would cause a serious 'set back' to the government in its efforts to achieve unity. According to him, the ATM can play an important role in the government's efforts to achieve national integration by giving Malaysians the right to prove their love for the country by joining the ATM. However, this right is not embraced by all levels of the society, especially the Chinese, thus complicating the efforts to foster national unity due to the widening racial gap in Malaysia.

Lim (1989) continued by comparing the data of military personnel according to race between 1971 and 1988, in which the number of non-Malay military personnel was remarkably low, especially in the officer service corps. According to him, this situation should not be taken lightly, apart from admitting that it is unfair to blame the ATM for not working hard enough to attract the non-Malays to join the ATM as a number of promotional activities had been carried out by the ATM and political leaders. Nonetheless, the cold response still continued, especially among the Chinese. He cited the incident in 1981 in which only 83 Chinese applied to join the ATM as regular recruits, and the number of applicants only made up 1% of the total number of applications. He also referred to the statistics from 1980-1986 which showed that the participation of Bumiputeras was 82.5%, Chinese (5.7%), Indians (6.8%) and others (5%).

A question was raised by Lim (1989) as to whether the unbalanced number of participation (majority were Malays) would ensure that the national defense is one hundred percent safe. He argued that history had proven that a country with a plural society should have a multi-racial military so that the composition of the people according to race, age and gender is balanced. He took an example of what had transpired during the second world war, where all members of the US military were whites, resulting in a decrease of their respective constitution in other sectors which then led to various other problems to the country.

Lim's (1989) study adopted two main theories, the Ascriptive Theory (see Buchanan, 1997) and Situational Theory (by Grunig, 1966 in Kim, 2011). Based on the Ascriptive Theory, he examined cultural factors that hinder the Chinese from joining the ATM. This is due to the fact that the Chinese way of thinking was heavily influenced by Confucius (557-479 s.m), a Chinese philosopher who strongly opposed any form of warfare. Lim (1989) explained that Confucius' writings have been practised by the Chinese society since childhood, and the Chinese are concerned about their children practising the 'filial piety' concept. If the children wish to make a decision that is against the wishes of the parents (such as joining the ATM), usually both parents will say that "A good child does not join the army". As a result, according to Lim (1989), these young Chinese faced a dilemma and had to cancel their intentions in order to comply with the wishes of their parents. Nonetheless, Lim's (1989) study found that cultural factors did not play a part in hindering the Chinese from joining the ATM. Instead, he discovered that the main factors were economic and political factors. According to him, cultural factors were only used to 'mask' the economic and political factors.

According to Lim (1989), the Ascriptive Theory associated with the cultural factors was unable to explain the reasons that some Chinese would allow their family members to join the ATM while at the same time, some others would object to their children's wish to join the ATM even though both practise the same culture. According to him, the Situational Theory helps explain the lack of participation from the Chinese in the ATM as it is mainly due to economic and political factors in the country. This is because the Situational Theory relates the factors of a person's self-situation and his environment as the causes for a person in making a decision. Furthermore, Lim's (1989) study found that although their living conditions were poor and difficult, they (the Chinese) were still not interested to join the ATM in order to improve their economic situation. The Chinese, according to him, seem to 'despise' a career in the ATM although it may offer better opportunities. To them, the benefits or offers (such as the salary) in the ATM are insufficient compared to what they could get from the job market in the private sector.

Commenting on the political factor, Lim (1989) raised his doubts on the willingness of the Chinese to join the ATM even if the government placed a sudden hike in the salaries and benefits. However, he did not deny that some might be attracted. His findings show that Chinese who want to join the ATM face employment dilemmas, especially with government policies on opportunities to improve their economic status (such as promotion opportunities) that are said to be inappropriate. This limited opportunity is due to the small number of Chinese military personnel in the ATM. The findings of Lim's (1989) interview with an informant (military personnel) revealed the existence of an 'informal' policy being used in the selection system of military personnel which acts as a way to control certain groups from joining the ATM. He concluded that the government with its military recruitment system had succeeded in 'scaring' the Chinese with this unofficial policy so that the number of military personnel among the Chinese would always be lower than that of the Malays. Although Lim (1989) acknowledged the government's wish to see more Chinese (in general, the non-Bumiputeras) to join the ATM, at the same time, he found that there were concerns on the part of the government about having a high number of Chinese as military personnel as they were seen as a threat to the political position of the Malays at that time.

A random analysis of a small part of a (one page) preview from Enloe's (1978) article on "The issue of salience of the military-ethnic connection: Some thoughts on Malaysia" saw the writer commenting on the reality that very few military forces represent the civil society population of a country despite the general assumption that a military organisation of a country is a 'national' organisation. According to her, the imbalance of ethnic groups in the civil society in military institutions for example, is often a focus in countries with pluralistic ethnicity. She raises the questions of how the military forces of a country can differ in terms of the ethnic composition of its citizens, and its effects on the role of military politics as well as political advantage of each ethnic community.

Analytically, Enloe (1978) explains that there is a universal tendency in military organisations to believe that they belong to the authorities and that they do not reflect the entire population, with the aim of protecting something. She describes this tendency as an economic-political backwardness. Taking the examples of independent countries which are relatively developed industrially, she found that there was a huge number of only some ethnic groups in the military organisations, and they were not represented by those from other

ethnic groups. This can be seen if one infiltrates into a given military organisation and conducts own observation based on the ranks between officers or infantry corps or in their air force. Therefore, she claimed that the military-ethnic connection is not only analytically significant in developing countries with multi ethnicity such as Trinidad and Syria, it but also has a significant value if explored in the context of other industrial countries with multi ethnicity such as the United States, the Soviet Union (before the split) and Canada.

Recently, we discovered a study which relates to the issue at hand. It was conducted by Yong et al (2021) on the identification of the key beliefs of private university students towards joining the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). The study investigates the beliefs of students from private universities in Malaysia on the Malaysian Armed Forces and their enlistment intentions as a career in the armed forces appears to be an unpopular career choice among non-Malay youths. The study involved 133 respondents and was focused on identifying variables that influence non-Malay university students' intention to join the MAF. The framework of this study was adapted from the Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour (DTPB) by (Taylor and Todd, 1995). The study reveals some interesting conclusion and information. Firstly, it was found that measures of intentions do indeed predict enlistment, with some elements being stronger predictors than the others. Secondly, it confirmed that youths without prior service or experience in civil defence organisations would rely on self-efficacy when deciding whether to enlist or not. Interestingly, subjective norms, decomposed into religiosity, media and peer/superior influences, showed a mixed source of information. For sample respondents, religiosity played a small role in influencing the intention to enlist. Thus, it is possible that for the majority of non-Malay respondents in this study, religion does not play a major part in their decision making.

Thus, on the grounds that it is a national interest to attract young people, especially the non-Malays in Malaysia to join the ATM, the relevance of the objectives of the Malaysian Army Chinese Veterans Association (MACVA) that has been registered, the appointment of Senator Liew Chin Tong as the Deputy Minister of Defense and the limited scientific findings on the local context (e.g. Lim's study, 1989; Enloe, 1978; Yong et al., 2021) as well as findings that cannot be generalised to represent all non-Malay races in Malaysia (e.g. Lim's study, 1989), this article examines the readiness of non-Malay youths in Malaysia to join the ATM based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Methodology

This study applied the quantitative approach. Data were collected from respondents using self-administered questionnaires. A simple random sampling was used involving 1033 non-Malay student respondents from selected secondary schools aged between 15 and 18 years. A list of schools in five zones, namely north, south, east and west for Peninsular Malaysia, and Borneo for Sabah/Sarawak was obtained through the official website of the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Each zone involved a state in which two schools, one from an urban area and the other in a rural area, were selected. The samples of respondents by state under the Peninsular Malaysia zone involve Kedah (northern zone), Johor (south), Selangor (west) and Pahang (east) while the Borneo zone involves Sabah and Sarawak. Respondents among secondary school students were selected based on the ground that they still have ample space to choose a career with the ATM in the future. Other IHL students (in universities other than Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia) who major in education also have the opportunity

to choose a career in ATM. The complete measurement instrument of this study was based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1985), and it will present the findings on respondents' willingness to join the ATM based on the three factors, namely attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to measure the level of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM. An independent t-test was used to determine the existence of significant differences in respondents' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM based on the selected demographic variables.

Results and Discussion

Respondent's Profile

Table 1 summarises the distribution of demographic profiles of selected respondents. 70.3% of the respondents in the study were male, and 29.7% were female. The distribution of their place of residence showed that 46.7% of them resided in urban areas while 53.3% resided in rural areas. The ethnic breakdown of non-Malay respondents showed that the majority (80.6%) were Chinese; 11.6% were Bumiputeras from Sabah/Sarawak and the remaining 7.7% were Indians. The age group of youth involved can be categorised as early youths (15-18 years) and youths who are still in school (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2015) where the majority of the respondents (80.7%) were 16 years old, 11.9% were 17 years old, 5.4% were 15 years old, and the least 1.9% were 18 years old. The occupation of the respondents' fathers showed that 48.9% were self-employed, 34.0% were in the private sector, 8.8% were unemployed and 8.3% were employed in the government sector. The occupation record of respondents' mothers showed that the majority (47.5%) were unemployed, 22.4% were in the private sector, 16.7% were self-employed and 13.5% worked in the government sector. Respondents were also asked if they had ever participated in campaigns/ programmes organised by the ATM. Majority (99.3%) responded by saying 'No' and few (0.7%) answered 'Yes'. If given the option to join the ATM, 42.7% of the respondents chose to join the Army, 39.5% chose the Air Force, and the remainder (17.8%) chose the Navy.

Table 1

Selected Demographic Profile of Selected Respondents (n = 1033)

Background	Percentage
Gender	
Male	70.3
Female	29.7
Permanent residence	
Urban	46.7
Rural	53.3
Ethnicity	
Chinese	80.6
Indian	7.7
Bumiputeras from Sabah/ Sarawak	11.6
Early Youths	
15 years old	5.4
16 years old	80.7
17 years old	11.9
18 years old	1.9
Father's Occupation	
Government sector	8.3
Private sector	34.0
Self-employed	48.9
Unemployed	8.8
Mother's Occupation	
Government sector	13.5
Private sector	22.4
Self-employed	16.7
Unemployed	47.5
Have participated in campaigns/ programs organised by ATM	
Yes	0.7
No	99.3
If given the opportunity to join the ATM, which branch would be chosen	
Army	
Air Force	42.7
Navy	39.5
	17.8

Determining the Level of Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control of Respondents towards the ATM

A 5-point Likert scale with (5) Strongly agree to (1) Strongly disagree indicators was used to assess respondents' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM. The levels of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were determined by calculating the total mean of the measurement constructs and dividing it with the number of items for each construct to get the overall mean. The study found that the respondents' subjective attitudes and norms towards the ATM were at a moderate level, with $[M = 3.1866, SD = .58236]$ and $[M = 2.5519, SD = .78225]$. Meanwhile, the respondents' perceived behavioural control towards the ATM was at a low level, with $[M = 2.4158, SD =$

.87834]. Table 2 shows the determination of the level of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM based on the overall mean of the measurement constructs.

Table 2

Levels of Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control of Respondents towards the ATM (n = 1033)

Level	Number	Percentage	Mean	SD
Attitude			3.1866	.58236
Low (1.00-2.33)	70	6.8		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	781	75.6		
High (3.67-5.00)	182	17.6		
Subjective Norms			2.5519	.78225
Low (1.00-2.33)	447	40.7		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	519	52.3		
High (3.67-5.00)	67	7.0		
Perceived Behavioural Control			2.4158	.87834
Low (1.00-2.33)	488	47.2		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	445	43.1		
High (3.67-5.00)	100	9.7		

Table 3 shows the descriptive distribution of respondents' attitudes towards the ATM. The study showed that out of the 11 measurement items, only 2 items had a high score among the respondents, which are 'ATM is a very important organisation for national security' [M = 3.85] and 'Ethnic/racial balance in the ATM is vital for a country like Malaysia' [M = 3.67]. The remaining nine items showed a moderate mean score.

Table 3

Respondents' Attitudes towards the ATM (n = 1033)

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1.	The ATM is a very important organisation for national security.	3.85	1.092
2.	Involvement in the ATM reflects a high level of patriotism in a person.	3.64	1.031
3.	Income/remuneration in the ATM is comparable to other careers/professions.	3.07	.994
4.	Joining the ATM can improve my social status (being respected) in the society.	3.30	1.006
5.	I am willing to seek information about career in the ATM.	2.59	1.124
6.	I view the dangerous nature of work involve in the ATM as a minor issue.	2.58	1.108
7.	I will try to respond to the government's call to join the ATM.	2.58	1.126
8.	I see the ATM as the last career resort.	2.67	1.127
9.	A career in the ATM remains relevant even though Malaysia has long achieved its independence.	3.33	1.064
10.	Ethnic/racial balance in the ATM is very important for a country like Malaysia.	3.67	1.140
11.	I feel the opportunity to join the ATM is wide open for non-Malay youths.	3.12	1.093

**Items in bold are reverse scored*

Table 4 below shows the descriptive distribution of respondents' subjective norms towards the ATM. The study showed that all items had a moderate level score each except for three items which had a low score i.e. 'Friends gave me useful advice to join the ATM' [M = 2.29]; 'My school/university alumni who have joined the ATM inspired me to join the ATM' [M = 2.32]; and 'I am inclined to join the ATM even though none of my family members/ close relatives is a member of this organisation' [M = 2.33].

Table 4

Respondents' Subjective Norms towards the ATM (n = 1033)

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1.	My family does not stop me from joining the ATM.	2.60	1.199
2.	I am interested to join the ATM even though none of my family members/close relatives has joined this organisation.	2.33	1.054
3.	I have clear understanding of the government's policy on the participation of non-Malays in the ATM.	2.66	1.084
4.	The ATM has made adequate announcements to invite non-Malay youth to join the ATM.	2.85	.994
5.	The ATM's image portrayed in the mass media attracts my interest to join this organisation.	2.50	1.078
6.	My school/university alumni who have joined the ATM inspire me to join the ATM.	2.32	1.014
7.	My friends give useful advice for me to join the ATM.	2.29	1.064
8.	I am confident of being appreciated by my community if I join the ATM.	2.67	1.105
9.	I think my community will view me as a successful person if I join the ATM.	2.75	1.128

Table 5 below shows a descriptive distribution of respondents' perceived behavioural control towards the ATM. The study showed that all items had a moderate level score except for two items which had a low mean score. They are 'I believe I am ready to start my career in ATM' [M = 2.20] and 'I believe it is easy for me to start a career in ATM' [M = 2.32].

Table 5

Respondents' Perceived Behavioural Control Factor towards the ATM (n = 1033)

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1.	I believe it is easy for me to start a career in the ATM.	2.32	1.081
2.	I believe I am ready to start my career in the ATM.	2.20	1.071
3.	I feel that I can face all the challenges to be part of the ATM.	2.42	1.094
4.	I understand all the requirements needed to be a part of ATM.	2.50	1.053
5.	I am confident there will be someone who will inspire me to join the ATM.	2.58	1.132
6.	If I want to explore career development opportunities in the ATM, I am sure there is someone who can help me.	2.65	1.090
7.	I am capable of making a decision to join the ATM without being influenced by anyone.	2.50	1.161

An independent t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in respondents' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM based on location of permanent residence. The analysis found a significant difference on the respondents' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM between respondents residing in an urban area and those residing in a rural area. Findings show the attitude of urban respondents at [M = 3.1301, SD = .59387] compared to rural respondents at [M = 3.2359, SD = .56805; $t(1033) = -2.915$; $p = .004$]; subjective norms of urban respondents at [M = 2.4523, SD = .77009] versus those in rural areas at [M = 2.6390,

SD = .78308; $t(1033) = 3.854$; $p = .000$]; and perceived behavioural control of urban respondents at $[M = 2.3352, SD = .85420]$ compared to rural respondents at $[M = 2.5538, SD = .88721; t(1033) = -4.020; p = .000]$. This indicates that positive attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM are higher among respondents residing in rural areas compared to those residing in urban areas. Table 6 summarises the differences in attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control among the respondents towards the ATM based on their permanent residence profile.

Table 6

Differences in Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control of Respondents towards the ATM based on Permanent Residence Location (n = 1033)

Profile		n	Mean	SD	t	p
Attitude						
Permanent residence	Urban	482	3.1301	.59387	-2.915	.004
	Rural	551	3.2359	.56805		
Subjective Norms						
Permanent residence	Urban	482	2.4523	.77009	-3.854	.000
	Rural	551	2.6390	.78308		
Perceived Behavioural Control						
Permanent residence	Urban	482	2.3352	.85420	-4.020	.000
	Rural	551	2.5538	.88721		

Findings made by the current study show that two factors, namely attitudes and subjective norms of respondents towards the ATM were at a moderate level, and respondents' perceived behavioural control was at a low level. This indicates that non-Malay youths have not yet shown a strong willingness to join the ATM. Ajzen (1985) argues that perceived behavioural control influences a person's intention or action. He also believes that a person's confidence in a certain matter is greatly influenced by the person's attitudes towards it, and the subjective norms and perceived behavioural control embraced by a person.

Despite the respondents' positive attitude by stating that the ATM is an important organisation for national security and agreeing that ethnic balance in the ATM is pertinent for a country like Malaysia, there are several aspects related to their attitudes that seem to contradict each other. This is displayed by their attitudes of not being too enthusiastic to respond to the government's call to join the ATM and to seek information about careers in the ATM. In fact, their attitudes which reflect a moderate perception towards careers in the ATM being always relevant even though Malaysia has long achieved its independence is also inconsistent in this context.

Comments have been made in previous studies on the respondents' attitudes which showed a moderate perception in the current study on the statement that income/remuneration in the ATM is comparable to other careers/professions. Lim (1989) expresses his doubts on the willingness of the Chinese to join the ATM even if there is a sudden increase made by the government on the salaries and benefits in ATM posts although he does not deny that some

might be attracted. He found that despite their harsh or poor living conditions, they (the Chinese) were not interested to join the ATM to improve their economic condition. The Chinese, according to him, appear to 'despise' a career in the ATM although the ATM could offer better opportunities for them.

The involvement of a person in the ATM reflects a high level of patriotism in a person is also perceived moderately from the perspective of respondents' attitudes. In his explanation, Taib (2004) stated that risking one's life in war as done by military personnel with the sole purpose of defending the sovereignty of the nation and country is the manifestation of pure patriotism. Thus, all respondents should fully acknowledge a person's involvement in the ATM as a reflection of the person's high patriotic level. Although Hasnita (2009) argues that this does not mean that the achievements made by the country through the participation of members of the multi-ethnic community in Malaysia in other fields such as economy, education, sports, culture and others cannot be associated with the spirit of patriotism, she highlights the fact that the country's achievements in these other areas would have been made difficult if the country are often faced with conflicts such as war, confrontation and chaos. She added that an effective defense sector (including the role of military personnel) will create a positive national climate and enable national development in areas such as economy, technology, education, agriculture, sports and others to grow and be viable.

Hence, the attitude factor that causes a certain behaviour to be performed is determined by a person's beliefs about the benefits or outcomes of a behaviour that the person has evaluated (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002). A person's belief that a behaviour will result in a positive outcome will cause a person to have a positive attitude towards the behaviour; on the other hand, a person's belief that a behaviour will result in a negative outcome will cause a person to have a negative attitude towards the behaviour. Thus, a person's intention to perform an action occurs when the person evaluates it positively (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitude is a strong predictor in determining the intention of youth to join the military. The relationship between attitude and intention is widely supported by empirical evidence, including meta-analytic research and studies conducted in a military context (Farley et al., 1981; Legree et al., 2000; Sheppard et al., 1988; Hogg & White, 2000).

The subjective norm factor in the current study showed a low respondents' perception towards social pressure, their family members and friends in particular, while their perceptions towards community recognition and ATM's image and publicity were at a moderate level. Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social pressure from an important reference in doing or not doing a certain behaviour (Netemeyer et al., 1991). It is constructed from a person's beliefs about the expectations of important other parties or reference groups (i.e., family members, friends, teachers etc.) about a certain behaviour as well as their tendency to agree with the norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In other words, a person is said to perform a certain behaviour if the surrounding environment encourages it. On the other hand, if a party who is an important reference for the person does not agree with the behaviour, it is unlikely the person will perform such action.

In the context of the current study, the participation of non-Malay youths in the ATM in the future will never occur in isolation. This means that the subjective norm factor needs to focus on increasing the readiness of non-Malay youths to join the ATM. Past studies have shown

that youth's decision to do something is made after they have consulted other important and trusted parties in their social networks (Emanuel et al., 2005). In fact, other studies have also proven the existence of an acceptable relationship between subjective norms and a person's behavioural intentions (Berg et al., 2000; Bissonnette & Contento, 2001). In addition, the current study also showed that ATM's publicity in the mass media acts as an influential reference to attract the participation of respondents in the ATM to be at a moderate level. Yong et al (2021) states that it is difficult to find any advertisements on military recruitment in the mass media in Malaysia. They claimed that the lack of information in the mass media contributes to the low level of awareness about the Malaysian Armed Forces.

The findings on respondents' perceived behavioural control in the current study showed a low level of confidence among them in the act of joining the ATM. This indicates the lack of confidence among the respondents to 'be with' the ATM when selecting their career. Perceived behavioural control refers to the degree of control that a person expects from a behaviour (Chen, 2007; Kang et al., 2006). Ajzen (2002) states that perceived behavioural control refers the degree to which a person is confident of being able to perform a planned action. This is divided into two aspects i.e., the manner in which a person can control the behaviour and the level of confidence a person feels about his or her ability to perform the action. Perceived behavioural control can be seen as a particular consideration in the intentions of a person's behaviours and actions (Ajzen, 2002).

The findings of the current study also showed a significant difference in the attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control of the respondents towards the ATM between respondents residing in urban and rural areas. The non-Malay youths living in rural areas have slightly better performance with regard to the attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control towards the ATM than those living in urban areas. Attempts to relate these findings with those of previous studies done in the local context were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, findings of this study are similar to the study conducted by Kuvlesky and Dameron (1971) who found that black and white youths living in rural areas were generally positive towards the military.

Conclusion

The involvement of non-Malay youths in the ATM service is still a national issue that needs to be properly managed as their participation in the government sector, especially the ATM force, will accelerate the process of ethnic integration and national unity. All parties (other than just the government) should work hand in hand to find ways to increase the participation of non-Malay youths in the ATM. The findings of the current study clearly prove that the readiness of non-Malay youths to join the ATM is still worrying. The country is expected to continue experiencing difficulties in managing the issue of ethnic diversity in the ATM if these findings are taken lightly by all involved parties. The most worrying aspect is the possibility that reckless parties would try to break apart the integration and unity of the country by manipulating and taking advantage of the aforementioned issue.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Research Management Centre, Universiti Putra Malaysia (GP-IPM/2020/968600).

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