

Experience as Moderating Effect on the Relationship between Attitude and Perception with Behaviour of Religious Tolerance among Youths in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the moderating effects on the relationship between the attitudes and perceptions of youth religious tolerance behaviour. Typically experience affects perceptions and attitudes, and attitudes and perceptions are important components in studying the individual behaviour. A total of 500 respondents were randomly selected for this study consisted of youth aged between 15 to 24 years of ethnic Malays, Chinese and Indians. The instrument used was a questionnaire socio-religious tolerance and data were analysed using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 24.0. The results showed that the experience is not a significant moderator of the relation between perception and behaviour, attitude and religious tolerance behaviour. Level of attitudes and perceptions of respondents' religious tolerance are high, but the religious tolerance behaviour is moderate. All three of these constructs are related to each other. However, attitudes have a stronger relationship with religious tolerance behaviour compared with the perception and religious tolerance behaviour. Results from this study showed attitude is more related with behaviours compared to the perception and behaviour of religious tolerance. The implications of this study showed that although the experience is an important factor in behaviour, but for the youth experience in religious tolerance is still less than the older people experience. So, the experience factor does not affect the youth.

Keywords: Attitudes, Perceptions, Behaviours, Experience, Religious Tolerance

1. Introduction

The objective of the study is to discuss upon the issues of the influence of experience in religious tolerance behaviour among youths in Malaysia. Religious tolerance indeed is a highly discussed and debated issue as it is the foundation of the national unity and harmony (Talib and Gill 2012). Without concrete religious tolerance, hence a nation might turn chaotic with

mountain of religious conflict issues. Generally, current world nation is deemed to be flooded with the aforementioned issue, such as the discrimination set in motion towards the minority ethnic of Muslim Rohingyas, for which they have been oppressed and maltreated by the ruler, military, monks, as well as by Buddhist community simply due to internal political conflicts (Hamzah et al. 2016; Omar, Mat and Othman 2016). To add, Muslim Rohingyas have been discriminated in almost all aspect area of lives, such as religious practices, cultures, restriction in daily activities, jobs, facilities, educations, murders, as well as torments. Worse comes to worst, their citizenships are even denied.

In the West however, issues pertaining religious tolerance of different faith believers are mainly involved headscarves issue among Muslim women, mosque construction issue, Islamic school establishments, handshaking between men and women, lectures of homosexuality and its status in Islam, the act of teaching Islamic education at school and issue of public holidays among Muslims (Van Der Noll 2014; Gieling, Thijs & Verkuyten 2012; 2010). In Malaysia on the other hand, the issue of hudud implementation seems to be capturing the attention of the nation for the last decade, (Abd. Rahim et al. 2011; Yaakub et al. 2016; Harun et al. 2016) the usage of the word of 'Allah', (Amat Misra and Awang 2012; Wan Hassan, Muslim and Alias 2013; Mohd Nor 2011; Manap et al. 2013), issue of youth couple named Alvin and Vivian and their actions of demeaning Islam, (Karmini 2013), positioning swine heads at Rawang and Sentul mosques, and not to forget, the crisis of Sri Mariamman Shah Alam temple (Ramli and Jamaludin 2011). From all circumstances as above mentioned, henceforth, it can be deduced that the issue pertaining religious tolerance whereof is frequently uttered and raised up regardless of wherever the geographical location it may be. In the meantime, religious tolerance issue is relatively centred in nations with multi religious practices, though undeniably, the issue is however a considerably precious experience for each and every individual or community which has ever experienced it.

Numerous researches from either from home or abroad have been studying about religious tolerance. Abroad studies generally focused on religious tolerance in a societal level (Brower 2014; Bendroth 2007; Rofiq 2000; Mu'alim, Awang & Abu Bakar 2015; Lercaro 2016; Adriansén 2007; Spinner-Halev 2015; Beck 2013; Bakker 2010), societal acceptance of multi religious practices (Merino 2010; Gieling et al. 2012; Van Der Noll 2014), factors contributing to religious tolerance (Aarøe 2012), religious tolerance in education (Sadi & Basir 2013; Hayes, McAllister & Dowds 2013; Potgieter, Van Der Walt & Wolhuter 2014; Ekanem & Ekefre 2013; Obiunu 2014; Van Der Walt 2016), the influence of Islam in religious tolerance and ethnic (Milligan et al. 2014), effects of religious tolerance (Dowd 2016; Van Der Walt 2016), effort towards society with religious tolerance (Bangs 2010; Van Tongeren et al. 2016), and the challenges of multi religious practices (Gelb & Longacre 2012; Zavala-Pelayo & Góngora-Mera 2016).

Those mentioned stated studies are indeed more or less similar to our home studies, which are religious tolerance in a societal level (Fadzil 2011; Syed Mohamed 1971; Awang 2003; Ab. Rahman 2003; Md Yusof 2006; Talib 2010; 2013; Talib & Ismail 2006; Talib & Gill 2012; Talib et al. 2013; Talib et al. 2013), practices of religious tolerance (Mohd Khambali @ Hambali & Mohd Haled 2008), relationship of Christians with Muslims (Mohd Nor 2011), factors and efforts towards achieving religious tolerance (Abu Bakar 2013; Awang & Mohamad Ramli 2011a; 2011b; Abdul Rahman 2011), the relationship between culture socialisation and religious tolerance (Khareng & Awang 2012; Khareng 2011), issues and challenges in religious tolerance (Abdul Rahman & Mohd Khambali@Hambali 2013), comparison between different religious groups and religious tolerance (Kasmo, Usman, Taha,

Salleh & Alias 2015), tolerance concept in religion psychology (Ismail 2012), Islamic and Western tolerance (Naseri 2014), and Buddhist experiences in a nation with majority of Muslims (Ismail 2006).

From those studies, hence it can be seen that the researchers mainly conducted studies on religious tolerance among local society, society acceptance upon other religions embracer, effects, factors and the challenge of religious tolerance. However, none of those studies were discussing about effect of the experiences in religious tolerance towards one's attitude on tolerance. For example, a Muslim worker is not permitted to cover his or her accordingly as guided by Islam throughout his or her working hours. This situation has called upon the awareness of Muslims to be extra cautious in applying any respective job offered which operated by other religion embracers, except from Islam.

On that basis, the researcher will delve in the potential of experience as moderating effect on the relationship between attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour. The moderating effect is utilised in generating the result in determining whether experience effects religious tolerance behaviour or otherwise.

2. Literature Review

Based on a study by Talib (2010; 2013) and Talib et al. (2013), the findings indicated that religious tolerance behaviour among peninsula societies are at moderate level, whereas Sabahan and Sarawakian on the other hand are at high level. The findings also suggested that all ethnics and religious embracers are at moderate level of religious tolerance behaviour, except for Indians and Hindu embracers as they are found to be at the low level of religious tolerance behaviour. The behavioural levels are measured through the frequency of attending wedding ceremonial, religious ceremonial, visits of their deceased friend from different religious background and their willingness to be friends with other religious background friends who lived around the neighbourhood.

Study on attitude in religious dialogues which inclining to religious tolerance have been conducted by Amat Misra and Awang (2012) has shown that the samples of the study are portraying positive attitudes towards religious dialogues. According to Khareng and Awang (2012), environmental factors do influence the attitude and view on perceiving a subject matter. For instance, the conflict in Thailand could influence societies' attitudes and views in interpreting the particular matter in their daily lives. Talib (2010; 2013) also have conducted a study on religious tolerance, for which the findings of the study has found that the samples of the study are at a high level of religious tolerance. The religious tolerance in the respective study has been measured through several dimensions, likewise; the significance of having friends and neighbours from different religious backgrounds; the significance of attending wedding ceremony, attending festive ceremony; and the significance of paying last respect to friends from different religious background.

From studies conducted by Talib (2010; 2013) and Talib et al. (2013), the findings of both studies suggested that Sabah and Sarawak communities are rather acutely high and positive perception towards religious tolerance, for which those studies were utilising the same scale that purport to measure the following constructs: beliefs that all religions are equally truthful; beliefs that all religions promote good and noble values; beliefs that all people have to be respected regardless of their religious background and beliefs the significance of religious tolerance. Mohamed (2014) indicated that Empiricism experts like Berkeley and Locke emphasised that human abilities in forming a perception on an issue is

solely obtained from his or her past experiences. Mohamed (2014) further added that human generally acquire his or her attitude simply from learning process, as well as experience.

As the studies regarding the attitude, perception, experience and behaviour towards religious tolerance are scrutinised, hence the question arises whether of there is a relationship between attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour among youths in Malaysia and the relationship strengths if the relationship is ever established within those variables as aforementioned. Apart from that, another question may arise is whether of experience could contribute to the relationship of those variables.

3. Research Objective

There are three objectives of the current study, which are: to identify the perception level, attitude and religious tolerance behaviour; to identify the relationship between attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour and to determine whether of experience as the moderating effect to attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour among youth in Malaysia.

4. Research Methodology

Procedures and sampling

The sample of the study consist of youth community aged between 15 and 24-year-old from various ethnics in Malaysia. The samples are also students representing from five states in Malaysia, namely Perak, Selangor, Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Malacca. Samples selection is made through stratified random sampling method, for which the researcher divided the population into five states and each and every state consist of three ethnic groups. Then by simple random sampling method, the samples are the selected from each and every small population (Creswell 2014). This sampling technique was utilised, considering the imbalance characteristics of the samples in the population (Creswell 2014). For instance, the populations of Malays, Chinese and Indians are rather unequal in Malaysia, for which Malays population are at far larger of amounts as compared to the other two major ethnics in Malaysia like Chinese and Indians. Therefore, this circumstance hence would lead to the dominance of perceptions from Malays rather than other ethnics. Thus, the stratification method would enable Chinese and Indian ethnics to represent their population accordingly. Respondent selections were made of 5:3:2 of ratio, whereof the samples consist of Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnics respectively. The ratio was established from Malaysian population ratio, whereby Malays generally consist of 54.56% of the whole Malaysian populations. At the same time both Chinese and Indians consist of 24.57% and 7.33% of Malaysian populations respectively (Department of Statistics 2011). The data were collected in survey forms, where the pilot study, construct validity and the reliability of the survey was first established beforehand the distribution of the questionnaire to the samples. Lastly, data analyses were run in descriptive and correlational analysis in manner by utilising SPSS software 23.0 and AMOS 24.0 software. In order to analysis the data by AMOS software, CFA (confirmation factor analysis) had first to be established, then followed by measurement model and structural model.

Instrument

The questionnaire was categorised into two major parts that contain of demographic background of the respondent, while another part was subcategorised into four dimensions, facets or constructs, which are: perception; attitude; experience; and religious tolerance

behaviour. Part B carries of five items, for which all those items have been developed by Talib (2010). Each domain is categorised into three levels, which are low level, moderate level and high level. The scores for the levels are as follows:

Table 1:
Mean score interpretation of constructs

Level	Score mean
Low	1.00 to 2.33
Moderate	2.34 to 3.66
High	3.67 to 5.00

The reliability for each construct is based on Alpha Cronbach value which exceeds more than 0.7 (Hair et al. 2010; Awang 2014).

Confirmation Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA is meant to serve the three purposes, which are to test the model fit, convergent validity and construct reliability. CFA findings suggested that there are several items that need to be deleted in order to achieve fit index as assigned by Global Fit Indexes. Two items for each construct have been deleted and the results are stated as accordance to the below figure.

Table 2:
CFA results for attitude, perception, experience and behaviour

Constructs	Item	Factor loading	Construct (CR)	Reliability	Average Extracted (AVE)	Variance
Perception	A33	0.752	0.865		0.683	
	A34	0.892				
	A35	0.829				
Attitude	A43	0.623	0.759		0.514	
	A44	0.778				
	A45	0.740				
Experience	B13	0.842	0.889		0.728	
	B14	0.920				
	B15	0.793				
Behaviour	A62	0.614	0.842		0.645	
	A63	0.890				
	A64	0.875				

Normality Test and Outliers

The normality test for the multivariate data of this study is normal, whereby the skewedness value is between -2 and +2 while the kurtosis value is within -7 to +7 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013), hence indicating that there was no significance need for an outlier test.

5. Result and Discussion

Perception Level, Attitude Religious Tolerance Behaviour

Table 3:

The level of perception, attitude and behaviour towards religious tolerance

Construct	Mean	SD	Level
Perception	4.246	0.809	High
Attitude	3.765	0.837	High
Behaviour	3.396	1.091	Moderate

Perception level and respondents' attitudes towards religious tolerance which is at the high level is relatively larger than the number of respondents with moderate level of perception. The result of the current study is thereof in line with the study conducted by Talib (2010; 2013). The findings of the current study also suggested that respondent' perceptions are relatively higher than attitudes and respondents' behaviours. The findings therefore indicate that the respondents only possess relatively good perceptions, though their religious tolerance attitudes on the other hand portrayed slightly otherwise, even though it is still at the level of high. Behaviours on the other hand is at moderate level. This signifies that respondents' behaviours are contradicting from their attitudes and perceptions. However, there are some respondents who behaved as accordance to their high perceptions and attitudes of religious tolerance.

The table below indicates the value of the mean and the standard deviation for perception, attitude and behaviour of the respondents from item by item. From the stated findings, it can be seen that most of the respondents stated that all religions call for good and noble values, therefore the values are significantly shared by all religions. Respondents also suggested that every person shall practise religious tolerance and it is vital to respect an individual regardless of his or her religious background. Other than that, the findings also suggested that most of the respondents are friends of at least a friend from different religious background. While only half of the respondents are firmly believed that all faith of religions are equally truthful. This is because, Muslims have been perceiving that Islam is one and only truthful religion. Muslim respondents also are found to be less likely to attend festive ceremony or paying a visit to an acquaintance with a different religious background.

Table 4:

Mean and standard deviation of items

Items	Mean	SD
Perception		
1) Everyone needs to share the good values of all religions	4.216	0.981
2) All religious followers should be tolerant to others	4.280	0.907
3) All must show respect for the religion or faith of others	4.358	0.925
Attitude		
1) Religious festivals held by acquaintances from different religions should be attended	3.714	1.035
2) Wedding functions for acquaintances of different religion should be attended	3.766	0.991
3) You should pay your last respects to acquaintances of different religions who have died	3.814	1.036
Behaviour		
1) You are happy having neighbours from other religious faiths	3.788	1.121
	3.266	1.305

2) You always attend open houses events connected with religious festivals held by acquaintances from different religions	3.140	1.351
3) You always attending wedding functions held by acquaintances from different religions		

Relationship between Attitude and Perception with Behaviour of Religious Tolerance

Overall, there is a significant relationship between attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour as shown in the below table. Though there is a relationship between these constructs, yet the strength of the relationship is rather moderate. While at the same time, the relationship between perception and religious tolerance behaviour is weak.

Table 5:

Relationship between attitude and perception with behaviour

Relationship between variables	R	P
Attitude and behaviour towards religious tolerance	0.526**	0.000
Perception and behaviour towards religious tolerance	0.375**	0.000

Significant at level $p \leq 0.05$

The research findings also suggested that between attitudinal construct and perception construct, attitudinal construct is found relatively strong relationship with religious tolerance behaviour as compared to its counterpart, namely perception construct. This situation is therefore suits with the definition of perception, whereby perception is defined as involving stimuli or senses and perception is however yet involving any behaviour (Drs Sunaryo 2002). Attitude on the other hand is a construct which influence the behaviour (Brostrand 2006). Though there is a relationship between perception construct and attitudinal construct with religious tolerance behaviour, yet the relationship strength established is rather moderate in level. However for attitude and its relationship with perception and religious tolerance behaviour is at a weak level.

Experience as Moderating Effect between Attitude and Perception with Religious Tolerance Behaviour

In order to determine whether of experience (either low or high) might have a moderating effect to the relationship between attitude and perception in religious tolerance behaviour, analysis on moderating effect was conducted. In analysing the moderator, the very first step is by analysing the whole model. Moderating effect test was seen by comparing the models of unconstrained (variant group) and measurement residuals (invariant group). If the unconstrained model is better than measurement residuals model, hence the moderating effect is therefore exist. The second step is by testing whether of χ^2 has a significant difference or otherwise. For this particular test, the comparison model that was presenting 'assuming model unconstrained to be corrected' in AMOS analysis findings have to be analysed.

As the moderating effect test was conducted throughout the whole model structures, then a test of the moderating effect onto individual route shall be conducted. The researcher was utilising Hair (2010) criteria in determining the moderating effect for the individual route. For Hair (2010), the route is operated by a moderator if beta in group 1 is found to be significant, whereas beta in group 2 is rather not significant. However, if beta for both groups are found significant, either group hence shall be positive while another one shall be negative.

The following is the result of CMIN (χ^2) which has been compared in order to test experience as a factor onto the whole model.

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Unconstrained	42	171.099	48	.000	3.565
Measurement residuals	21	238.119	69	.000	3.451

Both models are found significant ($p < .05$), though unconstrained model is found to be slightly better over the measurement residuals model through its CMIN (χ^2) value. From the table, it can be seen that the value of CMIN for unconstrained model is slightly lower than the CMIN value of measurement residuals model. The next step was to test whether χ^2 carries a significant difference or otherwise. The test results are as follows:

Model	DF	CMIN	P	NFI Delta-1	IFI Delta-2	RFI rho-1	TLI rho2
Measurement residuals	21	67.020	.000	.029	.029	-.003	-.004

$\Delta \chi^2 = 67.020 (238.119-171.099)$; $df = 21 (69-48)$; $p = .000$, research findings suggested that there is a significant differences ($p < \alpha$). In conclusion, experience carries as a moderating effect onto the whole model (either low or high).

As the moderating effect was tested onto the whole model structure, then moderating effect towards the individual route then was tested. The test was conducted for attitudinal route and religious tolerance behaviour, and the route between perception and religious tolerance behaviour.

As accordance to the finding analyses for both groups of experiences as per suggested by AMOS, hence the analyses are as follows:

Table 6:

Experiential Level as Moderating Effect for Attitude, Perception and Behaviour

Attitude → Behaviour		
	B	P
Low	0.600	0.000
High	0.743	0.000
Perception → Behaviour		
	B	P
Low	-0.333	0.001
High	-0.275	0.000

Based on the research findings, the result suggested that experiential level (low or high) is **not a moderator** for both attitude and perception towards religious tolerance behaviour.

The analyses thereof signifies that experience towards religious tolerance does not influence the relationship between attitude and perception with religious tolerance behaviour of the respondents. This situation is therefore in line with the statement brought up by Mahamed (2014), according to him, the Empiricists like Berkeley and Locke whose stated that humans' perceptions are only the result of experience and generally attitude is as well the result of experience and learning process. Without experience, the relationship

between attitude and behaviour of an individual is still similar. The same circumstance occurs between perception and human's behaviour. The implication of the current study is therefore shows that though experience is considered as a factor in relation to behaviour, yet for youths, the role of experience in religious tolerance is however less likely play a major factor in religious tolerance.

6. Conclusion

The samples of the current study portray a high level of perception and attitude towards religious tolerance, yet in terms of behaviour towards religious tolerance however resembles at a moderate level. Between attitudinal component and perception component, hence there is a significant relationship with religious tolerance behaviour. However, there is a moderate strength of the relationship between attitudes with behaviour, while the relationship between perceptions with behaviour is significantly weak. Respondents' attitudes are relatively connected with behaviour as compared to perception. Experiential construct towards religious tolerance do not influence the attitude, as well as the perception of the respondents in practising religious tolerance. The implication of the study indicates that experiential factor does not play a major role in determining youth's religious tolerance behaviour. Therefore, youths have to be exposed upon the awareness of religious tolerance in societal level, hence religious tolerance attitude among the youths could be increased. This therefore, would lead to the increase of the religious tolerance behaviour among the youths. The responsible authorities and figures like the government, mass media, educators, and the society itself may need to play a role to ensure the effectiveness in instilling the awareness towards the youths upon the vitality of religious tolerance among multiple religious society.

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