

Examining the Human Dignity Factor and the Public's Attitudes Towards LGBT in Malaysia

Collin Jerome^{1*}, Su-Hie Ting¹, Jacinta Jiin-Yih Yeo²

¹ Faculty of Language and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

² Academy of Language Studies Universiti Teknologi MARA UiTM (Sarawak), Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: jcollin@unimas.my

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Abstract: Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in Malaysia, which pay attention to the various aspects of their lives and livelihoods. Although several studies have examined the attitudes of the Malaysian public towards LGBT, these studies have identified religion and gender role beliefs as the key factors that influenced those attitudes. The present study extended this line of research by examining the human dignity factor that shaped Malaysians' attitudes towards LGBT. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 14 participants and based on a series of questions relating to their attitudes and opinions of LGBTs. The analysis of the data revealed three dominant themes: (1) LGBTs were accepted on the basis that they were human beings, (2) LGBTs should be respected for what they were, what they believed in, and how they lived their lives, and (3) LGBTs should be treated equally and not be discriminated against. The findings of the present study suggest the need to consider human dignity as one of the key factors that may have contributed to the steadily increasing trend towards public acceptance of LGBTs in present-day Malaysia.

Keywords: LGBT, attitudes, human dignity, public acceptance, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals are part and parcel of many contemporary societies today. Despite the long struggle for rights and liberties, there have been gradual improvements as can be seen in the growing acceptance of LGBT individuals across the globe.

A recent study by the Pew Research Center (2020) found that there was an increasing acceptance of LGBT individuals in many countries over the past two decades. The results were compared to those reported by a series of similar studies that the research center conducted since 2002. Out of the 34 countries surveyed, 16 stated that homosexuality should be accepted by society. These include countries such as Mexico, Japan, South Korea, South Africa, and Kenya. Younger adults from 22 countries were reported to be more likely than their older counterparts to say that society should accept homosexuality. The study also found that people in less wealthy and developed economies were less accepting of homosexuality than those in wealthier and more developed economies.

Although Malaysia was not included in this recent study, the findings from the Pew Research Center's study in 2013 may be useful. 86% of Malaysians who were surveyed in that study stated that homosexuality should not be accepted by society, compared to 9% who claimed