



## Are We Different? Evaluating Cultural Values of Local Ethnic Groups in Sarawak, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Although multiethnic groups form the national culture of Malaysia, they are still very different from one another in terms of their cultural values. This study aimed to examine the cultural values of five major local ethnic groups working in the budget hotel sector in Sarawak, Malaysia. It also investigated the differences in the cultural values among the five local ethnic groups. In an empirical survey, the Cultural Values Scale was administered to 119 employees throughout Sarawak. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess the differences in cultural values. The findings revealed that all ethnic groups scored high in all cultural dimensions. However, there were significant differences in the cultural values among the five ethnic groups. The results and discussion have been included in this study. This study is noteworthy for researchers exploring the cultural values of the minor ethnicities in Sarawak and Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Workforce, Diversity, Cultural Values, Ethnicity

### Introduction

Workforce diversity is a buzzword in this era of globalization. It encompasses various differences, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, ability, function, language, lifestyle, region, and tenure (Kossek and Lobel 1996). This term has become a topic of interest because it helps organizations be more competitive and have better decision-making abilities as well as higher creativity and innovation (Green et al. 2002). It also increases employees' job satisfaction and commitment toward the organization (Hughes and Rog 2008; Strachan, French, and Burgess 2009). However, if workforce diversity is not tackled with caution, it may hurt the organization in various ways, including an increase in conflict and miscommunication among employees.

In the case of Malaysia, the slogan "Malaysia, Truly Asia" clearly reflects the multiethnic features of the country, which consists of diverse ethnic groups, including the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. In terms of cultural values, Malaysians are said to form a collectivistic society with high power distance and masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Thus, workforce diversity is undeniably a norm for organizations in this country. When employees use their own cultural values and beliefs to communicate in a diverse workforce, they handle well the attitudes and behaviors of their colleagues from the same ethnic background, resulting in an increase in mutual trust and productivity within the organization. However, understanding the cultural values and beliefs of other ethnic backgrounds is