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A Review on Readiness of Non-Malay Youth in Joining Malaysian Armed Forces

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Abstract

The Malaysia Armed Forces have historically been dominated by Malay personnel, with limited representation from non-Malay communities. However, recent years have seen a growing interest among non-Malay youth in joining the armed forces and contributing to national defense. This review aims to synthesize the existing literature on the readiness of non-Malay youth to join the Malaysia Armed Forces and identify the factors that influence their decision. The review examines a range of studies that have investigated the topic of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the armed forces, including both quantitative and qualitative studies. The studies suggest that while there is a willingness among non-Malay youth to join the armed forces, they face various barriers and challenges that limit their participation. These barriers include a lack of awareness and information about military careers, cultural and linguistic barriers, and perceptions of discrimination and unequal treatment within the armed forces. The review also identifies several factors that influence non-Malay youth's readiness to join the armed forces, such as family support, positive perceptions of the military, and the availability of career opportunities within the armed forces. The review highlights the need for efforts to increase awareness and information about military careers among non-Malay communities, address issues of discrimination and unequal treatment within the armed forces and create a more inclusive and diverse armed forces that reflects Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. In conclusion, this review contributes to a better understanding of the readiness of non-Malay youth to join the Malaysia Armed Forces and the factors that influence their decision. It also highlights the importance of promoting diversity and inclusivity within the armed forces, which is crucial for building a strong and unified national defense.

Keywords: Readiness, Non-Malay Youth, Barriers, Malaysia Armed Forces

Introduction

The Malaysian Armed Forces play a crucial role in protecting the sovereignty of the nation and maintaining national security. Despite the government's efforts to promote the military as a viable career path for young Malaysians, the issue of non-Malay participation in the military remains a challenge. Previous studies have identified various reasons for the low

participation of non-Malays in the military, such as socio-cultural factors, institutional barriers, and perception of the military among non-Malays. For instance, a study by Aziz (2019) revealed that non-Malays constitute only 10% of the total personnel in the Malaysian Armed Forces, with the majority serving in the Navy and Air Force. The under-representation of non-Malays in the military raises questions about the diversity and inclusivity of the institution, as well as the effectiveness of the military's efforts to recruit and retain talent. The lack of diversity in the military can also limit the pool of potential recruits and create an imbalance in the representation of various ethnic groups.

Therefore, this review article aims to examine the readiness of non-Malay youth to join the Malaysian Armed Forces, specifically the Malaysian Army, and the factors that influence their decision-making process. The review will focus on personal, socio-cultural, and institutional factors that affect the decision to join the military. Additionally, the review will identify challenges faced by non-Malay youth in joining the military and recommend possible solutions to address these issues. By examining the readiness of non-Malay youth to join the military, this review aims to contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence the decision-making process of potential recruits and promote greater diversity and inclusivity in the Malaysian Armed Forces. Overall, this review article will shed light on an important issue and provide insights into how the Malaysian Armed Forces can address the issue of non-Malay participation to better serve the country's security needs.

Literature Review

Related study

Several studies have explored the reasons behind the under-representation of non-Malays in the Malaysian Armed Forces. One of the main factors identified is the perception of the military among non-Malays. Many non-Malay youth perceive the military as a Malay-dominated institution, which limits their interest in pursuing a career in the military (Aziz, 2019). Additionally, non-Malays may feel that the military does not offer sufficient opportunities for their professional growth and advancement (Siddiquee, 2017).

Another factor that affects non-Malay youth's readiness to join the military is the socio-cultural context in which they live. The culture and traditions of different ethnic groups in Malaysia may influence their decision to join the military. For instance, the Chinese community may prioritize education over military service, which may discourage young Chinese Malaysians from pursuing a career in the military (Aziz, 2019). Similarly, the Indian community may be influenced by their traditional caste system, which discourages them from joining the lower ranks of the military (Siddiquee, 2017).

Institutional factors also play a role in the under-representation of non-Malays in the military. For instance, non-Malays may face discrimination and bias during the recruitment process, which may deter them from joining the military (Aziz, 2020). Moreover, the military may not have sufficient outreach programs to attract non-Malay youth, and the lack of diversity in the military may create an unwelcoming environment for non-Malays (Siddiquee, 2017).

In a study by Ibrahim and Sulong (2016), it was found that non-Malay youth in Malaysia were less interested in joining the military compared to Malay youth. The authors argued that this could be due to the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution, which may limit non-Malay youth's identification with the military as an ingroup. The study also found

that the Chinese community placed a higher emphasis on education and professional growth, which may discourage young Chinese Malaysians from pursuing a military career.

Similarly, a study by Ahmad and Yusop (2019) found that Indian youth in Malaysia were less interested in joining the military due to the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution and the belief that the military offers limited opportunities for professional growth. The study also found that the traditional caste system in the Indian community may discourage them from joining the lower ranks of the military.

In a study by Mat et al (2019), it was found that non-Malay youth in Malaysia perceived the military as an outgroup and had a negative attitude towards the military. The study suggested that the negative attitude may be due to the perception of discrimination and bias during the recruitment process.

In terms of the military's efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity, a study by Abidin et al (2018) found that the military has made efforts to recruit more non-Malay youth and provide equal opportunities for professional growth. However, the study also found that the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution still persists among non-Malay youth and may limit their interest in pursuing a military career.

To address the issue of non-Malay participation in the military, several initiatives have been launched by the government and the military. For instance, the government has introduced policies to promote diversity and inclusivity in the military, such as the Malaysian Armed Forces Chinese New Year Open House, which aims to engage the Chinese community and promote cultural exchange (Aziz, 2020). The military has also introduced programs to attract non-Malay youth, such as the Royal Malaysian Navy's Officer Cadet Scheme, which aims to recruit non-Malay officers (Aziz, 2019).

Despite these efforts, the under-representation of non-Malays in the military remains a challenge. Therefore, there is a need for continued research to identify the factors that influence non-Malay youth's decision to join the military and to develop effective strategies to promote greater diversity and inclusivity in the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) proposes that individuals' self-concept is based on their membership in various social groups, and the identification with a particular group can influence their behavior and attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the context of the Malaysian Armed Forces, social identity theory can explain why non-Malay youth may be less interested in pursuing a military career compared to Malay youth.

According to SIT, people tend to identify with social groups that they perceive as similar to themselves, and this can lead to the formation of ingroups and outgroups. Non-Malay youth who perceive the military as a Malay-dominated institution may not identify with the military as an ingroup, which can limit their interest in pursuing a military career. Additionally, the perception of the military as an outgroup may lead to a negative attitude towards the military and discourage non-Malay youth from considering it as a career option.

Furthermore, SIT proposes that the identification with a particular group can lead to a bias towards the group and discrimination against outgroups. In the context of the military, non-Malay youth may perceive discrimination and bias during the recruitment process, which can further reinforce their negative attitude towards the military and limit their interest in pursuing a military career.

SIT also proposes that the social context and the salience of group identity can influence behavior and attitudes. The socio-cultural context in which non-Malay youth live may influence their decision to join the military. For instance, the emphasis on education and professional growth in the Chinese community may discourage young Chinese Malaysians from pursuing a military career. Similarly, the traditional caste system in the Indian community may discourage them from joining the lower ranks of the military.

Overall, social identity theory provides a useful framework for understanding the factors that influence non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. By understanding the role of social identity in shaping behavior and attitudes towards the military, the military can develop effective strategies to promote diversity and inclusivity in the institution and attract non-Malay youth to pursue a career in the military.

Methodology

This review article aims to examine the issue of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. To achieve this aim, a comprehensive review of relevant literature was conducted. The review was conducted using a systematic approach that involved searching electronic databases, such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus, for relevant articles published in English between 2010 and 2022. The search terms used included "Malaysia Armed Forces," "non-Malay," "Malay," "recruitment," "readiness," and "diversity." The inclusion criteria for the articles were that they should be empirical studies, review articles, or theoretical papers that focused on the issue of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. Articles that were not written in English, were not relevant to the topic, or were published before 2010 were excluded. The identified articles were screened based on their relevance to the research question, and duplicates were removed. The remaining articles were assessed for their quality using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool. The tool was used to assess the quality of the articles based on their methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of results. The articles were then synthesized based on their key findings, and the themes that emerged were identified. The themes were organized based on the planned theoretical framework, and the implications of the findings for the issue of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces were discussed. Overall, this review article utilized a systematic approach to identify relevant literature and synthesized the findings to provide insights into the issue of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Findings and Discussions

The review of literature on non-Malay readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces revealed that there is a perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution, which limits non-Malay youth's identification with the military as an ingroup. This perception may stem from the socio-cultural context of the community, where ethnicity and religion play a significant

role in shaping one's identity. As such, non-Malay youth may perceive the military as an institution that does not represent their interests and values.

In addition, the review found that the traditional caste system in the Indian community may discourage them from joining the lower ranks of the military. This indicates that socio-cultural factors are significant barriers to non-Malay youth's readiness to join the military.

Furthermore, the review highlighted the perception of discrimination and bias during the recruitment process as another factor that limits non-Malay youth's interest in pursuing a military career. This perception may stem from the lack of diversity in the recruitment process and the perception that the military favors Malays.

Despite these challenges, the review found that the military has made efforts to recruit more non-Malay youth and provide equal opportunities for professional growth. However, the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution still persists among non-Malay youth and may limit their interest in pursuing a military career.

The review also supports the application of social identity theory in understanding the factors that influence non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. Social identity theory posits that individuals derive their identity from their membership in social groups and that this membership shapes their attitudes and behavior towards members of other groups. In the case of non-Malay youth's readiness to join the military, their membership in a particular ethnic or religious group may shape their attitudes towards the military as an institution that does not represent their interests and values (Tan et al., 2021; Lim & Lim, 2021).

Overall, the findings of this review highlight the need for the Malaysian Armed Forces to address the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution and provide more opportunities for non-Malay youth to join and advance in the military. This can be achieved through initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity in the recruitment process and provide equal opportunities for professional growth. By doing so, the Malaysian Armed Forces can attract a more diverse pool of talent and improve their readiness to defend the nation.

Conclusions

The review article focuses on the readiness of non-Malay youth to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. The article highlights the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution, which limits non-Malay youth's identification with the military as an ingroup. This perception is influenced by socio-cultural factors, such as ethnicity and religion, that shape one's identity. In addition, the traditional caste system in the Indian community may discourage them from joining the lower ranks of the military. The review also highlights the perception of discrimination and bias during the recruitment process as another factor that limits non-Malay youth's interest in pursuing a military career. Despite these challenges, the military has made efforts to recruit more non-Malay youth and provide equal opportunities for professional growth. However, the perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution still persists among non-Malay youth and may limit their interest in pursuing a military career. The review supports the application of social identity theory in understanding the factors that influence non-Malay youth's readiness to join the Malaysian Armed Forces. The findings of this review highlight the need for the Malaysian Armed Forces to address the

perception of the military as a Malay-dominated institution and provide more opportunities for non-Malay youth to join and advance in the military. This can be achieved through initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity in the recruitment process and provide equal opportunities for professional growth. By doing so, the Malaysian Armed Forces can attract a more diverse pool of talent and improve their readiness to defend the nation.

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