

QUEST FOR EDUCATION AND THE PROBLEMS FACING SUDANESE STUDENTS IN THE DIASPORA: THE MALAYSIAN SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Malaysia has become a major destination for Sudanese youth particularly, for education purposes. There are, however, some impending social problems that have erupted therefore adversely affecting their existential relationship with the host society. The diversified nature of these problems has apparently transcended their entire expectations. This paper identifies the increasing challenges and prevalent social problems among Sudanese youth in Malaysia and gives suggestions for mutual acceptance and tolerance.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH: This study adopts mixed methodologies including qualitative and quantitative, as well as comparative methods. The target groups are two categories of Sudanese youths, i.e., those who came at a mature age for study purposes (undergraduate, postgraduate and training) and those students, between the ages of 15 and 25 years, who were born in Malaysia. An attempt will also be made to engage in general discussions on the philosophy, concepts and theories of diaspora in the light of the Sudanese youth's precarious situation in Malaysia.

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FINDINGS: Based on the empirical data, cybercrime, cyber-bullying, drug abuse, online-shaming, racial tension, cross-marriages, Third Culture Kids (TCK) syndrome, and problems of integration seem to be the major challenges of Sudanese youths in Malaysia.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE: While existing research is based on the general problems and concerns of the African diaspora globally, this research is one of the earliest attempts focussing on a specific group of Sudanese youths in Malaysia. There is a dearth of knowledge about the problems and challenges of African and Sudanese youths in Southeast Asia in general, and Malaysia in particular, and this research is an attempt to fill this gap.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: Recommendations are made to improve mutual acceptance and tolerance between Sudanese youths and the host community and further enhance bilateral relations/socialization and reorientation of Sudanese youths as stakeholders in the host country. The research proffers suggestions that could be adapted beyond the Sudanese diaspora communities to that of other African diaspora communities currently residing in Malaysia

KEYWORDS: Sudan; Youth; Problems; Diaspora; Malaysia; Africa

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INTRODUCTION

The meaning of 'youth' has been used fluidly in academic literature. According to UNESCO, the definition of youth accommodates some dynamics without a fixed age-group, but based on 'transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as a member of a community' (Aquilino, 1997). According to Nilan and Feixa (2006), youth refers collectively to a wide chronological scale – young people of both sexes in the age range from 12 to 35 (or even 10 to 30 in some countries). According to them, age range indicates the extent to which the cultural age category of 'youth' has expanded to include some who are legally recognized elsewhere in society as children, and some who are legally recognized elsewhere in the society as adults.

For the purposes of this study, youth is defined based on the African Youth Charter (African Youth Charter, 2006). Therefore, youth or young people shall refer to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years. The charter (African Youth Charter, 2006) also defines the term 'diaspora' to mean people of African descent and heritage living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship, and who remain committed to contributing to the development of the continent and building of the African Union (DOC.EX.CL/164(VII)). The need for empiricism in diaspora youth studies has been emphasized in (Collins *et al.*, 2010), although the study

focuses on cultural identity among Sudanese youths in Calgary, Canada, it could serve as a methodological basis for the current study, which is intended to examine the problems of Sudanese youths in Malaysia.

The current legal issues and social problems engulfing Sudanese youths in Malaysia are not uniquely related to them alone; they are also relevant to other African youths in general, either in Malaysia or elsewhere across the region of South East Asia. A point of caveat is necessary when speaking about Sudanese youths. Admittedly, and similar to any other distinctive social group, there is a markedly observable and an almost universal phenomenon about the 'Sudanese way' of speaking the Arabic language, general social mannerisms, culture, and even the way they observe the Islamic religion. It is thus shocking to note that the majority of these youths have little of what one would fluidly term as "Sudanese Culture". That is so, although the majority of these youths hold Sudanese nationality. Few of them have visited Sudan, let alone lived there for any extended periods of their lives. A good number of them were born and raised either in Saudi Arabia or in one of the Gulf countries that are rife with their own inimitable social problems.

These youths, although Sudanese by origin, have acquired a hybrid culture that could hardly be described as Sudanese. Similar to any other diasporic youth, the identity of some of the Sudanese youths in Malaysia has been reshaped as a result of factors such as direct contact with other cultures and identities, as they journeyed from one country to another, or simply due to globalization factors. Getting in contact with yet another social mesh that has nothing in common with Middle Eastern countries, except religion, is yet another daunting experience to Sudanese youths in Malaysia. For most of them the transition period and adaptation to the Malaysian social climate is not always a pleasant experience. The reason being that some of these youths come from stricter and rather dogmatic Middle East societies to a relatively relaxed and open society, which would be most appropriate to 'culture shock'.

Sudanese youths come to Malaysia for different purposes. Some of them come looking for jobs, others for business or economic ventures, a few of them are there as asylum seekers, while the majority come to Malaysia for educational purposes. The length of their stay may vary depending on the purpose for the visit. However, the purpose might change after entry; this also depends on newly found aspirations of each individual while still in Malaysia. Their stay in the country may be shortened or prolonged depending on whether they come for periodic studies or accompanying their parents who work there, or they continue to work after they have finished their studies. Some of them get married to locals after they have finished their studies, secured a job and continue to reside in Malaysia.

Another category comprises of those youths who have immigrated to Malaysia for more extended periods of time. These are the ones who were born or moved at a very young age to their adopted country and carried on through to their tertiary education. They form a class of their own since they are brought into a totally different environment with different mannerisms and the language they speak,

i.e., their Arabic language is average but they are fluent in English and some of them speak the Malay language with little foreign accent. However, it should be remembered that empirical findings suggest that in whatever category we place Sudanese youths, or for whatever purpose they come to Malaysia or whatever period they spend, all would still experience a similar type of socio-legal problems within Malaysian society.

Some of the socio-legal problems encountered by the Sudanese youths in Malaysia are of their own creation. A youth is likely to get into trouble with the police authorities if apprehended driving without valid licence or abusing drugs. It is a fact that a good number of them are drug addicts. However, some students tell alarming stories of instances where the police deliberately plant incriminating substances, e.g. drugs, either in their vehicles or in the apartment where they live in order either to solicit bribery, or simply out of spite for the fact that they are blacks/Africans. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that some students, especially females, are lured to perform immoral activities by Nigerians who would later threaten to expose them if they do not work as drug mules for them.

The list of misbehaviours by Sudanese youths is not a short one. Some of them entered Malaysia with false documents and forged certificates. The offences range from simple driving licence offences, non-renewal of visas to remain, to those of swindling, theft, and drug abuse and even murder. Immoral activities are also observed such as prostitution (both male and female), illicit cohabitation, etc. Some of these students ended at the verge of psychological breakdown, others even committed suicide.

BRIEF OVERVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The growth in the use, study and understanding of the concept of diaspora is also closely related to nationalism and religious or cultural resurgence, prompted by the minority-majority dichotomy in the real world. Although there have been some attempts to downplay the concept as useless, its significance continues to be appreciated globally (Manger and Assal, 2006). Robust discourse on the 'rootedness' in anthropological research has contributed to deconstructing the globalization argument being employed to weaken the concept and consequently strengthen it (Malkki, 1992).

The fluid character of the diaspora concept, volatility of transnational living, diversity of "diasporic" experience and the question of homeland are some of the militating factors encountered in the efforts to define diaspora (Cohen, 2008). This has led to the lack of a precise definition of the term, while its usage across disciplines translates to different understandings. Therefore, the appropriate usage of the term could be endorsed to refer to (1) groups representing alien residents; (2) expellees; (3) political refugees; (4) expatriates; (5) immigrants; and (6) ethnic and racial minorities (Safran, 1991). It is, however, doubtful to appropriately consider 'ethnic or racial minorities' in a given country of origin, such as 'Orang Asli' in

Malaysia as 'diaspora'. Foreign students, such as those Sudanese in Malaysia, whether on long or short term programmes of study, could surely qualify as diaspora.

Within the context of African youth, Fanjoy (2013) examined the concerns of a binary distinction between forced and voluntary migration as it affects youths of southern Sudanese origin. The study explored issues relating to community organization and shifting forms of affiliation, cultural identity, long distance nation building, transnational marriage and return migration. Van Liempt (2011) studied the mobility difficulties of Somali migrants who moved from the Netherlands to the UK in order to curb ethnic dispersal.

Although global African diaspora is treated with some degree of homogeneity in academic literature (Akyeampong, 2000, 2005; Harris, 1996), it has been argued that there exists abundant heterogeneity, dynamism and variation in the identity and character of the African diaspora (Manger and Assal, 2006). The diverse nature of African diaspora could easily be observed in Malaysia whereupon the Nigerians (West Africa), the Sudanese (Central/East Africa) and the Somalis (East Africa) registered the highest presence but for different reasons. The more serious and important question about the role of the diaspora in redefining politics, economics and financial development of their countries of origin, Akyeampong (2000) is yet to be discussed in a different study.

Irrespective of the divergent views on the diaspora concept, it has been noted that the concept may be viewed, as a paradigm shift, for supplementing minority and race relations discourse in Critical Race Theory (CRT) studies (Epperson, 2004). In other words, transnationalism, connectivity and mobility have enriched diasporic language and heightened political discourses between the host country and country of origin. For example, few crimes committed by Sudanese youths in Malaysia, or unfounded accusations by the Malaysian police of some Sudanese youths, have led to some serious discussions and dissatisfaction from both sides.

The relationship between diaspora studies and CRT is reflected in the interplay of race, law and state power in the Malaysian community. This is manifested in the prevailing societal stereotyping, negative backlash, and racial discrimination, often compounded by unfettered state powers in the hands of law enforcement agents. It is pertinent to note that CRT theory has its origins in legal scholarship. However, the legal dimension to the challenges faced by the Sudanese diaspora in Malaysia, explains the ironically double-edged role of law in both combatting and fostering racial tensions within a given society.

Transnationalism, mobility and connectivity are apparently central to the development of the 'diaspora' concept. These concepts have become imperatives for robust diaspora engagements among 'diaspora' communities and their host countries. Transnationalism is further enhanced by dual or multiple citizenship (a number of Sudanese actually possess dual nationality), which may be a springboard for transnational networks in business, education, politics among others (Hannam *et al.*, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The previous section has presented the conceptual framework where the philosophy, concepts and theories of diaspora have been analysed considering the plight of the Sudanese youth in Malaysia. As a natural corollary of the analysis, this part of the study presents the methodology used in analysing the relevant issues relating to problems faced by the Sudanese youth in Malaysia.

DATA COLLECTION

The target respondents in the quantitative part of this study are Sudanese youths residing in Malaysia, some of whom came as educational migrants, dependant migrants, and economic migrants. Adopting the definition of youth given in the conceptual framework of this study, it is envisaged that the relevant data needed in this study could be elicited from this sample taken from a diverse population of Sudanese in Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed widely through the social media and other online platforms. Others were distributed during programmes organized by Sudanese youths in Kuala Lumpur. Given that no sample frame is used, 54 respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method. Due to the meagre responses from the respondents, the data were supplemented by obtaining qualitative data through unstructured interviews among selected Sudanese families in Malaysia.

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by the author based on the literature and trends on African diaspora in Malaysia and elsewhere. Apart from the conceptual part of this study, the primary data collection instrument for this study is the questionnaire. The focus of the instrument is to elicit relevant information on the socio-cultural problems facing Sudanese youths in Malaysia. Using a 5-point Likert attitudinal scale, the respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with a number of statements relating to their experiences in Malaysia as part of the diaspora community. For coding purposes '1' indicates 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Never, while 'Strongly Agree' or 'Always' is coded as '5'. There are other general questions that are meant to elicit qualitative responses on the unique experiences of the respondents.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic profiles, as shown below in Table 1, indicate a general reflection of the Sudanese youth in Malaysia, and incidentally, 50% of the respondents are males while the other 50% are females (latent discovery showed that females outnumber the males), and 83.3% of the respondents are mostly under 40. This is typical of the population in Malaysia where females usually outnumber the males in any given sample. With regards their country of birth, it is clear that majority of the Sudanese youth (75.9%) were born in Sudan, while others may also qualify as TCKs as defined and recognized in migration studies.

The level of education of the respondents is also very useful in getting relevant data for this study. With 98.1% of the respondents being well-educated with at least a

Diploma, bachelor's degree, Master's or doctoral degrees, one would expect highly informed responses in this study. This shows the level of education and potential of Sudanese youths in Malaysia. Whether such latent potential is tapped into by the host country is an important area of further investigation in future research.

In order to get useful data that reflects the reality in Malaysia, respondents must have been living in the country for at least one year. It is thus clear from the demographic data presented in Table 1 that 96.3% of the respondents have been living in Malaysia for at least one year. Furthermore, from the visa status of the respondents as indicated in the data, 72.2% of them are educational migrants, while 18.5% are either economic or labour migrants. It is therefore envisaged that the distribution of respondents along these unique demographic divides would have some positive impact on the quality of data gathered from which one would be able to draw meaningful inferences.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequencies (%)
Gender	
Male	50
Female	50
Marital Status	
Single	75.9
Married	22.2
Divorce	1.9
Age	
18-24	33.3
25-30	25.9
31-39	24.1
40-50	13
51 and above	3.7

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Continued)

Demographic Variables	Frequencies (%)
Level of Education	
Diploma	1.9
Degree	44.4
Masters	37
PhD	14.8
Others	1.9
Country of Birth	
Sudan	75.9
Malaysia	5.6
Others	18.6
Duration of Stay in Malaysia	
Less than 1 year	3.7
1-5 years	27.8
6-10 years	24.1
11-20 years	27.8
Above 20 years	18.5
Visa Status	
Student Pass	72.2
Employment Pass	18.5
Dependant Pass	13
Diplomatic Pass	0
Social Pass	1.9
Others	3.7

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Continued)

Demographic Variables	Frequencies (%)
Frequency of Visits to Sudan	
Never	9.3
Once	5.6
Twice	16.7
More than 3 times	24.1
Often	44.4

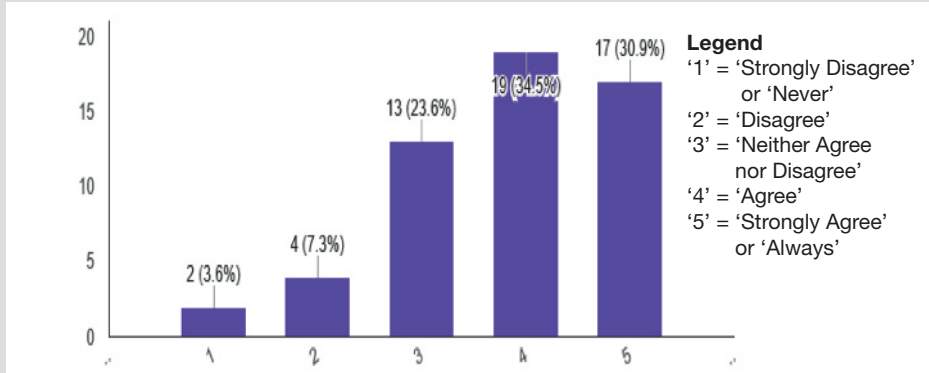
Source: Author's computation

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data obtained were analysed through general simple descriptive statistics without necessarily utilizing complex statistical tools such as SPSS (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Such basic analysis is adopted in order to effectively present the data in relatively simple tables, graphs and charts, which could be easily understood by a wider audience for more productive feedback. Since the survey elicited for both quantitative and qualitative data, these two types of data were triangulated with conceptual findings in previous studies, as well as participants' observations of the researcher's over 25 years of residence in Malaysia. Therefore, the simple descriptive statistics were analysed based on two core themes that contain a number of categories with their respective variables. The two core themes are: perceptions and understanding of the Malaysian society, and socio-legal challenges and individual safety.

PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY

For this category, two sub-categories have been identified – social integration, and family and marital issues – which have been specifically selected based on some of the challenges facing Sudanese youths in Malaysia. As background question, when the respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction of their stay in Malaysia when compared to their home country, it was surprising to note that a majority of 64.8% agreed that they enjoyed their stay in their host country (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: I Enjoy Living in Malaysia

Source: Constructed from questionnaire

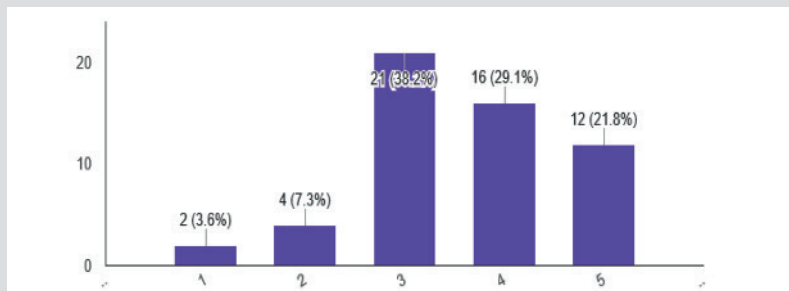
This question was made a preliminary question in order to avoid bias in the responses provided by the respondents. It is quite clear that despite all the challenges faced by Sudanese youths in Malaysia, they are comfortable residing in the country to a reasonable extent, and they enjoy their stay. This may be partly due to the social amenities and numerous tourist destinations in the country, and these advantages, which are usually cherished by youths, seem to outweigh more serious issues such as racial discrimination and other numerous legal problems associated with their stay in the country. This important finding may have serious implications on African diaspora studies, with particular reference to a psychological juxtaposition between what is obtained in one's home country and the host country in terms of general relaxation and freedom to enter any social relationships and away from political problems. This is in addition to any social amenities that affords one a meaningful life abroad. Although most of these youths live reasonably better lives than that obtainable in their home country, one must admit that such "better life" is being provided for by their parents who themselves are either economic or labour migrants elsewhere. What opportunities lie ahead for such youths when they plan to enter the labour market leaves much more to be desired, as Malaysia has limited opportunities for foreign graduates. For the educational migrants, although few get employed after acquiring advanced postgraduate degrees such as a PhD, foreign graduates in Malaysia are expected to return to their home countries. At least, however, they acquire their educational degrees in a relatively stable environment with all associated academic and intellectual support.

CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

Living in a country like Malaysia, which is demographically multi-racial, multi-

religious and apparently multi-cultural, would seem as if it is easy to adapt to the Malaysian way of life regardless of one's socio cultural background or migration motivations. However, despite what has been reflected in the results obtained from the participants (relating to the easy adaptation to the Malaysian society and which indicates a positive response), a closer look at the real life reveals something very much to the contrary.

Figure 2: Easy Adaptation to the Malaysian Society



Source: Constructed from questionnaire

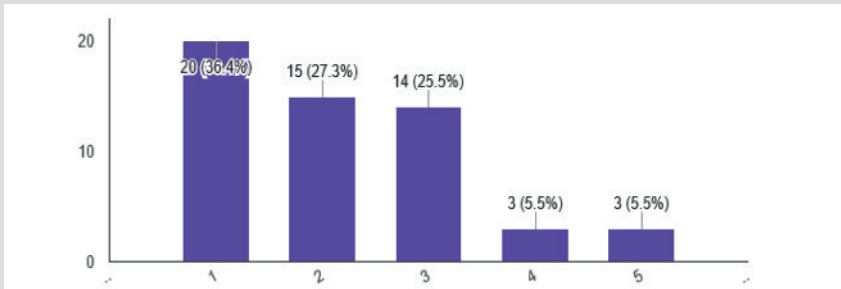
Figure 2 above shows that about 65.4% agree that they can easily adapt to the Malaysian society. The reason for this is that most Sudanese residing in Malaysia are Muslims who are largely influenced by the Islamic culture in their own home country. With a 97% Muslim population in Sudan, such Islamic character could be easily transposed to Malaysia. Although Muslims constitute about 61.3% in Malaysia, Islamic symbols and institutions dominate every part of Malaysian society. In fact, Article 3(1) of the Malaysian Federal Constitution provides that "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation". This is similar to Article 1 of the Sudanese Constitution that also recognizes Islam as the religion of the majority while other religions are allowed to be practiced. This provides a good basis for the seemingly easy cultural and religious integration of Sudanese youths into the Malaysian society despite occasional racial slurs.

However, when another group of students, who did not participate in the questionnaire, were interviewed on their willingness to assimilate into Malaysian society and the similarity between the Malaysian and Sudanese cultures, their responses show different results, which reveal that the reality on the ground may be different from mere academic, constitutional and cultural comparisons. In fact, many students who were interviewed, as they were unable to answer the

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questionnaire, bluntly put it that they found it difficult to adapt to the Malaysian way of life and preferred to remain outsiders. Figure 3 below illustrates that majority of the respondents believe the two cultures are not similar in any way. About 63.7% of the respondents believe the two cultures are not similar, while 25.5% neither agree nor disagree with the notion that the Malaysian culture is similar to the Sudanese culture.

Figure 3: Malaysian Culture is Similar to the Sudanese Culture



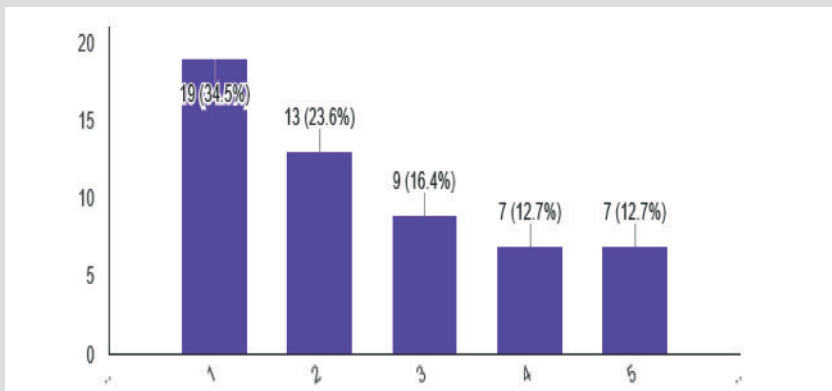
Source: Constructed from questionnaire

In order to probe the level of social integration, four key variables identified in the survey are food, friends, language, and participation in local events and ceremonies. This is in line with “Classic assimilation theory” that “includes general assumptions about the absorption of ‘extrinsic’ cultural characteristics (such as language, dress and tastes for particular foods or music)” (Shandy and Fennelly, 2006, p.29). The results show the level of willingness on the part of Sudanese youths to integrate into Malaysian society. There is definitely a correlation between the level of integration of the Sudanese community and acceptance by the local community.

When the respondents were asked whether they have friends who are Malaysians, only 60% agreed. This has some implications on the extent of integration of the Sudanese youths. The remaining 40% might be living in silos and might be facing some cultural shocks. Similarly, about 56.4% agreed they were comfortable attending Malaysian ceremonies and events. This is not so different from the previous question on friendship. A similar trend is observed in the question relating to Malaysian cuisine. Just about 52.7% of the Sudanese youth agreed that they enjoy local Malaysian cuisine. This is not unconnected with the increasing Arab restaurants in Kuala Lumpur being a choice tourist destination for many Arabs. Therefore, the Sudanese youths find all their native dishes locally available in Malaysia and may not need to explore the local Malaysian cuisine.

According to Apter (1991), language is one of the key determinants of socio-cultural integration. In the survey conducted, the variable on language reveals that only 25.4% of Sudanese youths speak the official Malaysian language, Bahasa Malaysia. Figure 4 below shows the startling results on the level of proficiency of the official Malaysian language. This, in itself, is indicative of a looming miscommunication that could breed mutual mistrust.

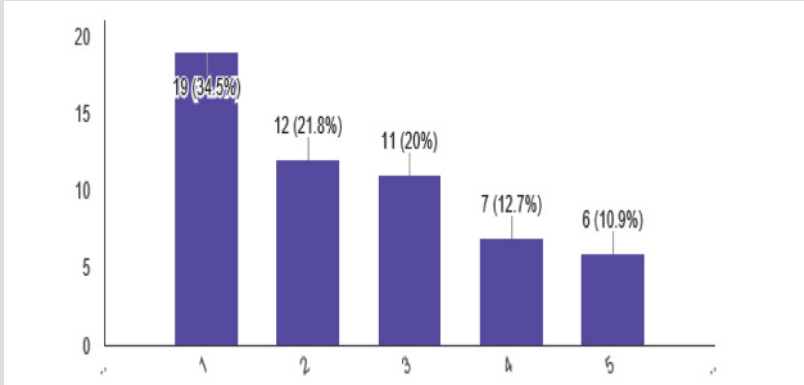
Figure 4: I Speak Bahasa Malaysia



Source: Constructed from questionnaire

MARRIAGE

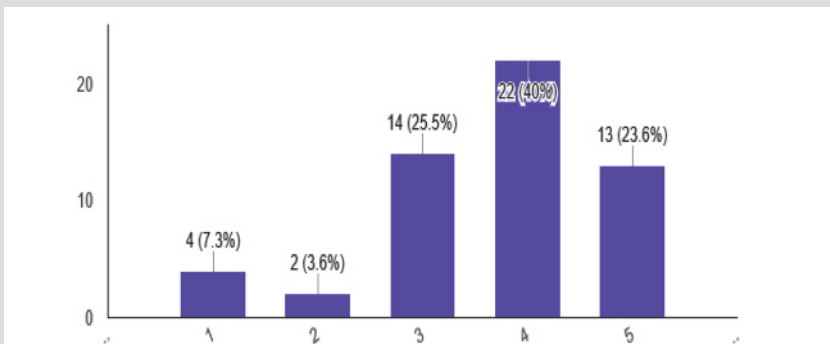
'Interracial marriage is generally considered as a major determinant factor of cultural assimilation.' This has been documented in numerous studies (Al-Johar, 2005). In the context of Malaysia, although there are interracial marriages among Malaysian Malays, Chinese, and Indians, cross-national marriages are becoming prominent. Nevertheless, there are very few cross-national marriages between Malaysians and Sudanese. In the survey, only 23.6% of the respondents agreed that they could marry Malaysians, while 32.8% indicated they could consider encouraging a member of their families to marry a Malaysian. Figure 5 below shows the responses on the question whether they can marry a Malaysian.

Figure 5: I Can Marry a Malaysian

Source: Constructed from questionnaire

The trends in the responses reveal that there is not much socio-cultural integration between Malaysian and Sudanese youths. Although there are no data to scientifically support the claim, it is, nevertheless, commonly observed by many that Malaysian youths are a bit reserved and are not really into interacting with foreigners, particularly Africans, while Sudanese youths exhibit cultural suspicion and do not really want to integrate into Malaysian society.

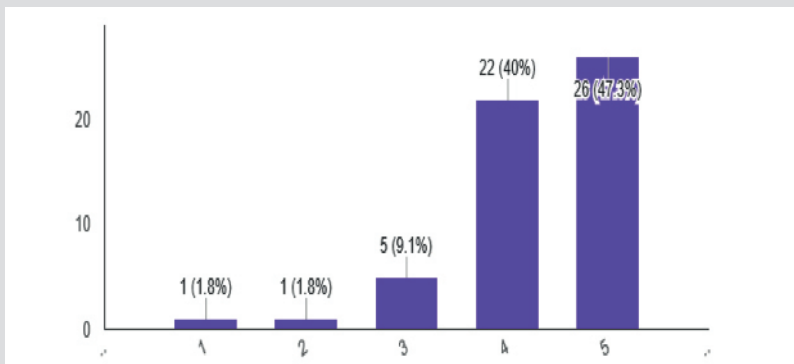
However, the level of intra-racial marriages among the Sudanese in Malaysia is also not as high as one would have expected, although Figure 6 below shows that the respondents are aware of such marriages. This might probably be due to the level of interaction among Sudanese youths in Malaysia.

Figure 6: I know of inter-marriages among Sudanese in Malaysia

Source: Constructed from questionnaire

From observations over the years, there is a higher level of interaction among Sudanese students in higher education institutions who are merely educational migrants than those who came with their parents as dependants of labour and economic migrants. This is reflected in the responses presented in Figure 7 below, which reflects the demographics presented earlier. About 87.3% of the respondents agreed that they interacted with other Sudanese families in Malaysia. In addition, about 54.6% of the respondents revealed that they interacted with other diaspora communities in Malaysia. This in itself has the tendency of negatively affecting the level of intra-Sudanese and intra-African marriages in Malaysia.

Figure 7: I Interact with Other Sudanese Families in Malaysia



Source: Constructed from questionnaire

SOCIAL CHALLENGES AND INDIVIDUAL SAFETY

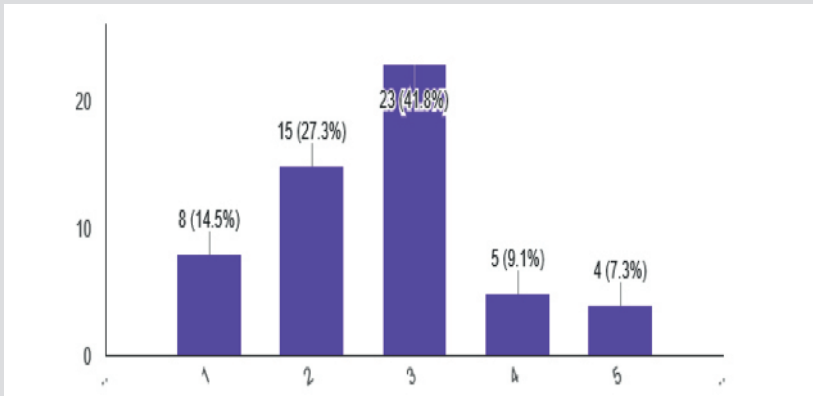
The second core theme of this study, which is related to the challenges faced by Sudanese youths in Malaysia, is social challenges and individual safety. For this core theme, four sub-categories have been identified: voluntary community services; public safety, racial tensions and slurs; policophobia; and cybercrime.

Voluntary Community Service

In order to be accepted in any society, one sometimes needs to go beyond a mere existential relationship within a society. One terrible factor for most foreigners in a host country is that most of them look for and complain if they fail to realize certain rights. Seldom does one come across an individual or a group of migrants who would take upon themselves a duty and a positive role to play in the development and maintenance of security and order in the host society. To be accepted, one must contribute to the society itself and build the much needed trust overtime. It is interesting to note that about 70% of the respondents agreed that non-Malaysians should be involved in voluntary community services in Malaysia, while 72.7%

specifically preferred to personally participate in such activities for community development. At the same time, 45.5% of the respondents believed they could volunteer in future to develop the Malaysian community where they lived. However, it appears that most of these youths are not usually invited to get involved in such activities. This is reflected in Figure 8 where only 16.4% of the respondents contended that the Malaysians freely intermingle with them and involve them in communal activities.

Figure 8: Malaysians freely intermingle with and involve Sudanese youths in their communal activities

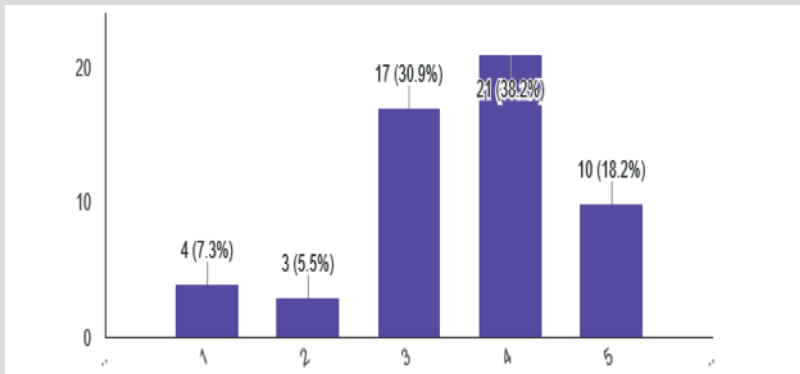


Source: Constructed from questionnaire

This trend of segregation and social exclusion on both sides of the coin has some implications on public safety. Mutual suspicion will be developed and may implode within the society if it is not properly managed.

Public Safety, Racial Tensions and Slurs

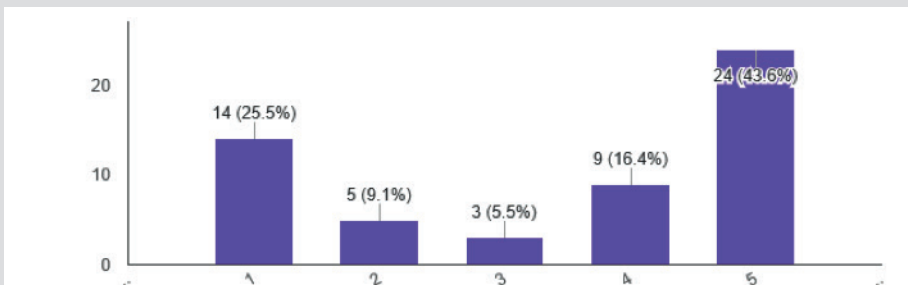
Public safety, racial tensions and slurs have dominated many studies on African diaspora, particularly in Europe and America. There is also mutual suspicion between the host community and the migrants, and this has been the root cause of most hate crimes. One can imagine how many Sudanese youths feel safe and protected in public places. Figure 9 shows the results of this question, as only 56.4% feel safe and protected in public places. Similarly, Figure 10 below shows that 43.5% of the respondents feel that they have been discriminated against by being called 'negro', thus creating a continuous psychological problem for them.

Figure 9: I feel safe and protected in public places

Source: Constructed from questionnaire

Since many Sudanese youths feel unsafe and unprotected in public places, there may be some other dimensions into this social problem. Racial tensions and slurs are increasingly common in host communities where African diaspora reside. For instance, only 21.9% of the respondents in the survey believed Africans are accorded with respect in public places in Malaysia. Similarly, while a negligible 12.7% of the respondents believed Sudanese youths are treated equally with Malaysian youths in public places, 54.5% revealed that they have been discriminated against on the basis of their nationality.

One important racial slur among most African diaspora communities across the world is the use of certain derogative words against Africans. It is not surprising to note that 60% of the Sudanese youths revealed that they have once be called “Negros” or ‘Orang Hitam’ (black person) on the Malaysian streets.

Figure 10: I have once been called a Negro in Malaysia

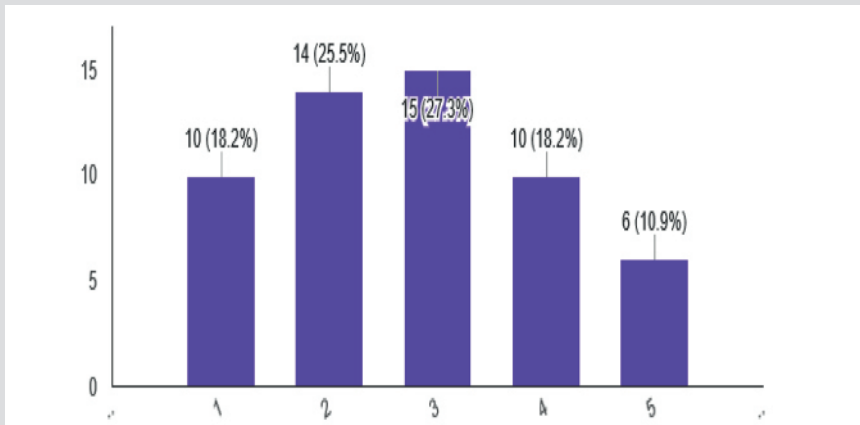
Source: Constructed from questionnaire

It is pertinent to add that most Malaysian youths who use these kind of derogative words against Africans in general, and Sudanese in particular, do not really know or understand the exact connotations of the words they use.

POLICOPHOBIA

The fear of sighting a police officer, or the fear of the police (otherwise known as “Policophobia”), is a continuous psychological problem that haunts most African youths in Malaysia. This situation is not so different from the recent violent encounters between the police and African Americans in the US (Benedict *et al.*, 2000). As shown in Figure 11, a total of 71% of the respondents were not comfortable seeing Malaysian police around them. This is why only 14.6% of the respondents believed they would approach the Malaysian police to report cases of bullying experienced by them. The reason for this may relate to the perceived bias in the way such cases would be treated if Malaysians were the culprits.

Figure 11: I am comfortable seeing a Malaysian police officer around



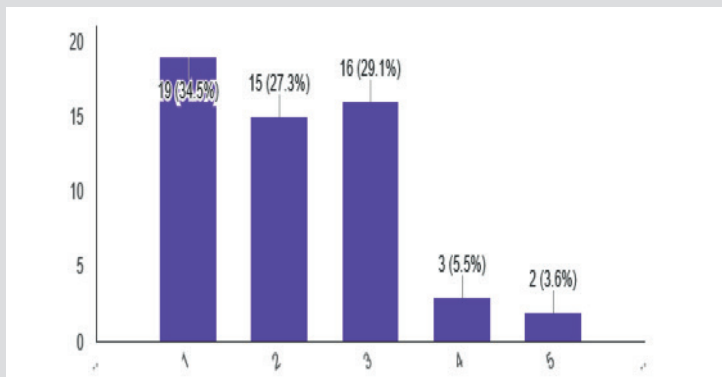
Source: Constructed from questionnaire

Cybercrimes and Bullying

Another major challenge facing Sudanese youth, which is an extension of the general problems involving Africans in Malaysia, is cybercrime and bullying. While bullying is a usual thing experienced by Africans among their host communities, cybercrime is more of a covert disposition where many Africans have defrauded many Malaysians. This itself has led to bullying or attacks of innocent Africans on the Malaysian streets since it is always very difficult to differentiate among Africans of different nationalities. In fact, many semi-educated Malaysians believe Africa is

a country, and that every black person they see on the streets is from that “Africa” country. Although from a quick search of the law reports, a Sudanese has never been involved in cybercrimes, there are numerous cases involving Nigerians who are not in any way different in their looks from Sudanese. This does not mean there are no situations where Sudanese have been involved in cybercrimes but have not been caught. As shown in Figure 12, the respondents in the survey agree that 9.1% of Sudanese are involved in cybercrimes.

Figure 12: Sudanese youths are involved in Cybercrime



Source: Constructed from questionnaire

While 18.2% of the respondents believed that Malaysians attract some Sudanese youths to cybercrimes, 18.2% said some Sudanese youths make their living in Malaysia through cybercrimes. There are also other situations where Sudanese youths are victims of cybercrimes. For instance, 12.8% of the respondents revealed that they know of Sudanese youths who have been victims of cybercrimes.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, the paper explored the multi-faceted problems of Sudanese youths in Malaysia. The illusionary perception of African diaspora in general, and Sudanese youths in particular, revealed negative drifts such as cybercrime, drug abuse, racial tension, Third Culture Kids (TCK) syndrome among others, which are found to be the by-product of their existence. As an implication of the social problems drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative analysis, it was found that the majority of these youths have the tendency to derail or face discrimination and discernment from the host community. Consequently, social tension and discord become an increasing problem among the youths and the host community,

and the implication goes beyond disunity to criminality and exploitation. Although the findings could be constructed as a problem facing African diaspora around the world irrespective of their host country, this study has focused on Sudanese youths in Malaysia.

However, we argue that in a globalized world, social integration is a key to harmonious coexistence in the diaspora. It is therefore recommended that improved reciprocal harmony and tolerance between the host community and Sudanese youths is one sure way out of the woods. The findings and recommendations of the research can aptly be extended to other African youths that find themselves in Malaysia. Social reorientation and integration through a policy framework will largely address these challenges and promote communal coexistence among the Sudanese youths within Malaysian society.

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