

## THE LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE AMONG MALAYSIAN

Erie Nur Fatihah Nor Hafizam<sup>1,a</sup>, Abdul Rauf Ridzuan<sup>2,b\*</sup>, Nur Alia Elyna Abdul Ghafar<sup>3,c</sup>,  
Maisarah Azani Fadli Abdul Haqq<sup>4,d</sup>, Muhammad Afiq Irfan Mohd Azizi<sup>5,e</sup>  
Indra Prawira<sup>6,f</sup>, and Fatimah Yazmin Yahaya<sup>7,g</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, UiTM Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>BINUS University, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup>[abdulrauf@uitm.edu.my](mailto:abdulrauf@uitm.edu.my)

<sup>c</sup>[2022898892@student.uitm.edu.my](mailto:2022898892@student.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>d</sup>[2022899098@student.uitm.edu.my](mailto:2022899098@student.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>f</sup>[indraprawira@binus.ac.id](mailto:indraprawira@binus.ac.id)

<sup>g</sup>[yazminyahaya@uitm.edu.my](mailto:yazminyahaya@uitm.edu.my)

\*Corresponding Author: [yazminyahaya@uitm.edu.my](mailto:yazminyahaya@uitm.edu.my)

---

**Abstract:** *The world now is bound to be more different compared to 50 years ago. While there is a modest rise in number of people who choose to marry spouses from different ethnic group in the country, the practice itself has been generally portrayed as a problematic and wanting especially in the Peninsular Malaysia. This study is conducted to investigate the level of acceptance towards interracial marriage. Many believe that interracial marriage has a potential to create tensions between the spouses due to their differences in ethnic background and culture. Based on our quantitative study conducted on 308 respondents, many still doubt the effectiveness of this inter-ethnic marriage making them to be averse on this issue.. This study is applying a method of quantitative research, by answering a short survey consisted of 27 questions. Based on the findings, The overall mean of the level of acceptance of interracial marriage is high ( $M=3.25$ ), and the overall mean of the understanding of interracial marriage is high ( $M=3.26$ ). This shows that interracial marriage is being accepted in Malaysia.*

**Keywords:** *Interracial marriages, Acceptance, Malaysia*

### 1. Introduction

A matrimonial union between individuals from two different races is referred to as an interracial marriage (Gullickson, A. ,2006). Depending on whether race or culture are used to define it, it can be viewed as a form of miscegenation (i.e., mingling of different races) or exogamy (i.e., a union outside of one's social group).The word "race" is used to describe the major divisions of the human species. Its primary goal is to make distinctions between groups based on physical traits like skin colour and hair texture. Culture, on the other hand, shapes how individuals live out their individual belief systems; as a result, culture offers a more dynamic perspective on this topic. Race and culture are embodied by all people, thus it's crucial to comprehend how they affect various aspects of life.

Given this rise in racial and cultural integration, counselors must be prepared to address multiple levels of issues unique to interracial marriages, including being able to distinguish between cultural issues and common issues. Interracial couples seek for counselling help for reasons such as finances, fidelity, and child rearing; however, the societal landscape of racial intolerance and the sometimes unintentional push for assimilation adds an extra difficulty for interracial couples because it is giving a multiplicative effect to contextual factors (McFadden, J., 2001).

However, there are disadvantages of interracial marriage. According to (Brooks, 2022a) one of the disadvantages that have been discovered are lack of acceptance. Lack of acceptance means that interracial couples often face discrimination from family, friends, and society. They will be subject to ridicule or derogatory remarks. In extreme cases, interracial couples are physically attacked just because the attackers feel offended and did not like their marriages. We live in the 21st century, where the issue of racism and racial profiling should already be in the past. But some parts of the society are still narrow-minded on the issue of race that affects interracial marriage of two people from different races.

In addition, disadvantages of interracial marriage may be caused by different parenting styles. They say love conquers all. That's not true in all cases, especially in marriage. Interracial marriage is particularly challenging because it is the coming together of people from two different worlds. Therefore, it will reflect in the way they raise their children. For instance, every African or Asian mother knows that giving brain-resetting slaps is an effective way to raise stubborn children properly. But their Caucasian partners may have a different view. This causes conflict between couples which could result in bigger problems if they don't compromise.

Benefits that can be gained from interracial marriage are diverse and healthier genes in biracial children. A 2015 study by the University of Edinburgh (Peter Joshi, 2015) shows that biracial children born with a more diverse genetic background tend to have sharper thinking skills and better height. Also, they tend to have better lung capacity, educational attainment, and general cognitive ability, which correlates to their genetic diversity. In addition, possible recessive diseases from an interracial couple will not be passed on to their children, which creates a healthier genetic composition in a child.

Next is that they can be exploring new culture. This includes cuisines, languages, lifestyles, and new people, which can expose one to a better worldview and learn many things through it. Life is good when we experience new things and change our lifestyle to be better in all aspects. Interracial couples can also experience new holidays and enjoy the feelings of having a large family. For instance, a Chinese woman married to an Indian man will enjoy the Diwali festival while he will enjoy the Chinese New Year holiday (Ridzuan et al., 2022).

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Due to the importance of interracial marriage in a multiethnic culture, it has been a topic of discussion and research in Malaysia (Nagaraj, 2009). Even though the population of Malaysia is diverse, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, and a number of indigenous communities (Shaima, 2022), intermarriage between different ethnic groups is not as common as one might anticipate. Interracial marriage poses societal issues because of a variety of reasons, including cultural customs, religious beliefs, and the influence of family and community norms. Cultural traditions play a significant role in shaping societal attitudes towards interracial marriage in Malaysia.

The preservation of cultural identity and practices within ethnic communities often leads to a preference for endogamous marriages, where individuals marry within their own ethnic group. This preference can be attributed to a desire to maintain cultural traditions, language, and customs passed down through generations (Foo, 2016).

Besides, religion also influences the acceptance of interracial marriage in Malaysia. The majority of Malaysians adhere to Islam, which places importance on marrying within the same faith. Some interpretations of Islamic teachings may discourage or frown upon interfaith marriages, leading to resistance or societal disapproval (Mustafa, 2017).

The fear of societal judgment, ostracism, or strained relationships with family and community members can discourage individuals from pursuing interracial marriages (Hui, 2018). These elements frequently play a role in the development of racial and ethnic boundaries, which leads to opposition to or reluctance towards intermarriage. For interracial couples seeking legal acknowledgment and acceptance of their unions, administrative barriers and legal limits might present additional difficulties (Kerney, 2021).

## **2. Methods**

### 2.1 Research Design

This research is a quantitative cross-sectional survey in Malaysia. A set of self-administered questionnaires were developed using Google Form and distributed online through various social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and through e-mail.

### 2.2 Sample

Purposive sampling was used in this study. The targeted respondents were students, government servants, private workers, self-employed individuals, housewives, retirees, and unemployed individuals. They are 18 years old and older. The total number of respondents was 328 based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size calculation of 571,200 people (Mahidin, 2022) with a 95% confidence level and a 5% significance level.

### 2.3 Research Instrument

The demographic section of the questionnaire contains 27 items. The questionnaire is linked to the study's research objectives. The questions include rating scales ranging from **1 to 4** (*Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4)*), as well as MCQs. The respondents found the questions to be clear and easily comprehensible due to their legitimacy and credibility. Furthermore, the questions were logically organized to prevent any confusion during the question-and-answer session.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The researchers utilized the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 software to analyse the data. The data analysis process encompassed survey creation and data

upload. The survey questions were designed to align with the study's objectives of assessing the level acceptance of interracial marriages. The questionnaire was distributed to the initial 50 respondents to assess research validity. Once 411 responses were obtained, the survey was closed and the data was analysed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean calculated by the researcher.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
<b><u>Sex</u></b>		
Male	137	39.9%
Female	191	60.1%
<b><u>Age</u></b>		
18-23 years old	107	32.6%
24-29 years old	123	37.5%
30-35 years old	61	18.6%
36-40 years old	15	4.6%
41-46 years old	13	4.0%
47 years old and above	9	2.7%
<b><u>Marital Status</u></b>		
Single	258	78.7%
Married	61	18.6%
Divorce	9	2.7%
<b><u>Current Residing State</u></b>		
East Coast Region (Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu)	33	10.1%
Northern Region (Perak, Perlis, Kedah, Penang)	53	16.2%
Central Region (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Putrajaya)	143	43.6%
Southern Region ( Melaka, Johor)	87	26.5%
East Malaysia (Sabah,Sarawak)	12	3.7%
<b><u>Occupation</u></b>		
Government Sector	30	9.1%
Private Sector	82	25%
Student	154	47%
Retiree	1	0.3%
Unemployed	27	8.2%
Self - employed	26	7.9%
Housewife	8	2.4%
<b><u>Race</u></b>		
Malay	267	81.4%
Chinese	30	9.1%
India	13	4.0%
Iban	9	2.7%
Kadazan Dusun	9	2.7%

<b><u>Religion</u></b>		
Islam	270	82.3%
Hindu	4	1.2%
Buddha	21	6.4%
Christian	33	10.1%
<b><u>Do you believe in interracial marriage</u></b>		
Yes	286	87.2%
No	42	12.8%

Table 1.0 Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

Table 1 on the above shows the demographic characteristics of the participants who believe in interracial marriage. The results indicate that many respondents who completed the survey were female with the percentage of (60.1%). The accumulative age group with the highest percentage was among the 24-29 years old (37.5%). Other than that, most of the respondents are single, with the percentage of (78.7%) and students, with the percentage of (47%). Majority of the respondents resided in the Central Region of Malaysia, specifically in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya, with the percentage of (43.6%). In term of race, the Malays conquered the majority of the respondents that participate in this survey with the percentage of (81.4%), and people who follow Islam as their religion participate the most with the highest percentage (82.3%). Last but not least, majority of the respondents believe in interracial marriage, with the percentage of (87.2%).

## **SECTION B: THE LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE**

<b>THE LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I found that marriage between two different races is acceptable	3.27
I will marry my partner even if they are from a different race	3.24
I believe we can get positive outcomes from interracial marriage	3.31
I believe that interracial marriage can benefits two other people from different countries and races	3.39
I believe that interracial marriage can have different racial backgrounds	3.40
I believe that interracial marriage should be normalized in Malaysia	3.22
I believe that the culture between two different races will not clash	3.10
I believe that media should contribute to the acceptance of interracial marriage	3.23
I found that interracial marriage should be encouraged religiously	3.12
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>3.25</b>

Table 2.0 The Level of Acceptance Towards Interracial Marriage

From the table above, (M=3.40 ) that implies interracial marriage can have different backgrounds is the highest of acceptance towards interracial marriage. This can be proven by a study conducted by (Livingston and Brown, 2017) shows that when miscegenation prohibitions were abolished in the US in 1967, 3% of all weddings included a partner of a different race or ethnicity. Inter-marriage rates have progressively increased since that time. The second highest mean is respondents believe that interracial marriage can benefits two other people from different

countries and races (M=3.39). This can be shown from how they can respect and learn their partner race and culture (Li et al., 2017). The overall mean for the level of acceptance towards interracial marriage is (M=3.26). It is enough to prove that respondents highly accepted interracial marriage. This can be proven by a recent study from Pew Research center that In our society, more intermarriages are seen as a shift for the better by more than four out of ten Americans (43%) than as a change for the worse by approximately one out of ten (11%) (Pew Research, 2017).

### **SECTION C: THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE**

<b>THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Interracial marriage breaks the norm of discrimination towards other races.	<b>3.21</b>
Interracial marriage promotes cross-cultural understanding among races	<b>3.30</b>
Interracial marriage promotes racial equality	<b>3.21</b>
Interracial marriage promotes acceptance between races	<b>3.32</b>
Interracial marriage creates strong bond between races	<b>3.32</b>
Interracial marriage can dismantle the racial stereotypes	<b>3.20</b>
Interracial marriage bring impact in social economic status in individual	<b>3.24</b>
Interracial marriage promotes inclusivity and diversity within the community	<b>3.28</b>
Interracial can change the stigma from the public	<b>3.31</b>
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>3.26</b>

Table 3.0 The Level of Understanding Towards Interracial Marriage

From the table above the highest mean is (M=3.32) which refer to interracial marriage promotes acceptance between races and interracial marriage creates strong bond between races. This shows that most of the respondents agreed that interracial marriage can build up a good bond between races and enhance the acceptance of other races culture. This can be proven with the article of Interracial Relationships : Diversity and Struggles by Sneha Tete, 2023, that says “Courages to learn each other’s native language can build vocabulary and chemistry. This strategy strengthen your bond further, helping you navigate your way through social prejudices and discriminations”. The second highest mean in the table is (M=3.31) that implies to interracial marriage can change the stigma from the public. A new Pew Research Center survey finds that roughly four-in-ten adults (39%) now say that more people of different races marrying each other is good for society (Mitchell T., 2017). The overall mean for the level of understanding towards interracial marriage is (M=3.26) that is high enough to prove that respondents are good in understanding the concept of interracial marriage. This can be proven with an article from Tatler, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, almost 11 per cent of total marriages in 2019 (22,134 out of 203,821 marriages) involved brides and grooms of different ethnic groups, an increase from nine per cent in 2018 (18,620) ( Loh L., 2021).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the findings, we can conclude that the public in Malaysia is highly aware about the Interracial Marriage.

This shows that the level of acceptances and the level of understanding on interracial marriages in Malaysia is high. However, Interracial marriages are becoming more and more accepted in society, which reflects progress towards equality and a more accepting mentality.

While it is true that some people may still have prejudices or unfavourable attitudes about interracial marriages, it is crucial to confront and get rid of these biases. A more peaceful and inclusive society can be achieved by embracing variety and fostering understanding among people of different races.

Regardless of race or nationality, it is imperative to promote an environment where everyone is treated with respect and decency. We can help create a society that values equality and respects the diversity of cultures by recognising love and encouraging interracial relationships. An important step towards equality, inclusion, and the appreciation of variety has been made with interracial marriage.

In conclusion, By accepting and praising interracial marriages, we promote a culture of respect, appreciation, and harmony and open the door to a better future in which love knows no racial bounds.

## 5. Acknowledgments

This work was supported by UiTM TEJA Grant, (GDT2023/1-3) UiTM Cawangan Melaka.

## References

- Dava, E. (n.d.). Ethnic mix-match couples are able to fit seamlessly into society. [www.thesundaily.my.https://www.thesundaily.my/local/ethnic-mix-match-couples-are-able-to-fit-seamlessly-into-society-CE8336400](https://www.thesundaily.my/local/ethnic-mix-match-couples-are-able-to-fit-seamlessly-into-society-CE8336400)
- Fleetwood, D. (2023a, May 30). Quantitative research: What it is, Tips & Examples. QuestionPro. <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-research/>
- Foo, Y. C. (2016). Ethnic boundaries in Malaysia: Identity, culture, and rights. In N. Ganesan, V. M. Renganathan, & S. S. Tey (Eds.), *Ethnic relations and nation-building in Southeast Asia: The case of the ethnic Chinese* (pp. 47-74). Springer Singapore.
- Government of Canada, S. C. (2021, September 2). 3.2 sampling 3.2.3 non-probability. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/edu/power-pouvoir/ch13/nonprob/5214898-eng.htm>
- Gullickson, A. (2006). Black/White interracial marriage trends, 1850-2000. *Journal of Family History*, 31(3), 289. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1353/dem.2006.0033>
- Hui, C. H. (2018). Attitudes toward interethnic and interfaith marriage among young adults in Malaysia. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(4), 1113-1134.
- Intermarriage in Malaysia - researchgate. (n.d.). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266874418\\_Intermarriage\\_in\\_Malaysia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266874418_Intermarriage_in_Malaysia)
- Li, X., Cao, H., Lan, J., Ju, X., Zheng, Y., Chen, Y., Zhou, N., & Fang, X. (2017). The association between transition pattern of marital conflict resolution styles and marital quality trajectory during the early years of Chinese marriage. *Journal Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(1), 153–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517721380>
- Loh, L. (2021, September 15). Malaysia day 2021: Interracial Malaysian Couples on Cross-Cultural Love. Tatler Asia. <https://www.tatlerasia.com/the-scene/people-parties/malaysia-day-2021-interracial-couple-mixed-marriage-malaysia-love-stories>

- Masalamommas. (2016, December 30). 9 benefits of being in an intercultural marriage. masalamommas. <https://masalamommas.com/2016/02/17/9-benefits-intercultural-marriage/>
- McFadden, J. (2001). Intercultural marriage and family: Beyond the racial divide. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 9, 39-12. <http://psychology.iresearchnet.com/counseling-psychology/multicultural-counseling/interracial-marriage/>
- Mitchell, T. (2017, May 18). 2. public views on intermarriage. Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/05/18/2-public-views-on-intermarriage/>
- Murray State's Digital Commons. (n.d.-b). <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1390&context=bis437>
- Ossai, N. (2022, June 24). Interracial marriage: Meaning, benefits, disadvantages and statistics. Skabash! <https://www.skabash.com/interracial-marriage>
- Reviewed by Dr Nancy B IrwinDr Nancy B Irwin, X Sneha Tete Expertise: RelationshipsExperience: 4 yearsSneha has a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Hyderabad, Tete, S. T., PsyD, More, & Coach, C. R. (2023, June 11). Interracial relationships: Diversity and struggles. STYLECRAZE. <https://www.stylecraze.com/articles/interracial-relationships/>
- Ridzuan, A.R., Ridzuan, A.R. and Ridzuan, M. (2018). Research Methods and Communication Research. *Malaysian Journal of Media and Society*. 1, 133-139. Retrieved from <https://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/ejo>
- Ridzuan, A.R., Jeffuzan Geo, H., Hassan, H., Ab Rahman, Z., Othman, N., Zulkarnain, A., and Luthfia, A. (2022). Social Media Platforms in Promoting Effectiveness Campaign During Covid-19. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 2617, 060017, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0119799>