

THE LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS OF UNITY GOVERNMENT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Malaysia is a multicultural country that aspires to do great things economically. Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, prime minister of Malaysia since 2022, has been active in efforts to strengthen national unity and develop the country. This research aims to determine the effectiveness of a unity government, which consists of two different political views and parties. Despite the success of the unity government from the previous PRU, the majority of Malaysians still doubt the effectiveness of the new government due to different perspectives and objectives from each political party. Raosoft's Sample Size Calculator was used to establish a minimal necessary sample size. The research is quantitative in nature and was conducted using the Google Forms platform with the participation of 300. Based on the findings, the level of effectiveness towards unity government is high ($M=2.98$), and based on the data presented, the level of understanding towards Malaysia MADANI is also high ($M=2.81$).

Keywords: Effectiveness, Unity Government, Malaysia MADANI, Understanding, Politics.

1. Introduction

Malaysia has experienced political turmoil since 2020, beginning with the resignation of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the 7th Prime Minister. This was prompted by political dissatisfaction and rumors of a movement called Langkah Sheraton, which aimed to rethrow the government. The Sheraton Move involved defections from the ruling coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH), leading to the formation of a new coalition called Perikatan Nasional (PN) (Ku Syafiq Ku Fozi, 2022). The collapse of the PH government resulted in Dr. Mahathir's resignation and the appointment of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as the eighth prime minister (Ku Syafiq Ku Fozi, 2022).

The Sheraton Move sparked mixed reactions, with supporters viewing it as political maneuvering and critics questioning the legitimacy of the new government. The PN government faced instability within its members, which eventually led to Muhyiddin's resignation. Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob succeeded him as the new Prime Minister, following the support of the majority of MPs (Ku Syafiq Ku Fozi, 2022).

In the 15th General Election held in November 2022, ethnicity remained the dominant factor influencing electoral outcomes. Research showed that Malaysian voters still voted along ethnic lines, overshadowing other factors such as economics, class, age, gender, and region (Iseas – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020). The election resulted in a hung parliament, as no major candidate secured a parliamentary majority. This led to the formation of a unity government, where parties from different political spectrums came together to establish an administration when no group could secure a sufficient majority (Chen H., Stambaugh A., 2022)

The recent development in Malaysia is the introduction of Malaysia MADANI, a comprehensive initiative aimed at making policies and implementations more humane. It emphasizes public input and feedback and combines traditional practices with modern approaches to address new challenges. MADANI is based on six principles: Sustainability, Care & Compassion, Respect, Innovation, Prosperity, and Trust, with each principle supporting the others. The goal of MADANI is to bring about significant reforms and create a more developed and prosperous Malaysia through openness to change and consideration of recommendations from all levels of society (Prime Minister Office, 2023).

1.1 Problem Statement

Malaysia has witnessed unprecedented political instability with four different governments since 2018, diverting attention from critical issues like the economy and public health (Ostwald, 2023). While the present government has implemented measures to combat corruption and promote social integrity, public scepticism remains a concern.

The Unity Government, formed by the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, and the East Malaysian bloc, has added drama to politics but faces challenges due to divergent goals (Case, 2023). This raises fears among the public that their daily lives will be negatively impacted by the political instability. To regain public trust, the government must address the slowing economy and high cost of living, as stability and improved living conditions are paramount (Ridzuan et al., 2022).

Public confidence in the Unity Government has been undermined not only by the uneasy alliance between divisive political groups but also by high-profile politicians facing corruption accusations. Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, for example, is facing multiple charges, further eroding trust (Zulkifili, 2022). The public is concerned that politicians may create chaos for the economy and people's lives to force another General Election, as seen in the Sheraton move (Kamarulzaman, 2020). This has resulted in declining investor confidence, slowed economic growth, and a loss of public trust, making it challenging to implement policies to address the economic crisis.

The Malaysia Madani slogan has been met with mixed reactions, with some praising it as a positive step towards a more progressive and inclusive Malaysia, while others have criticised it as being too vague and lacking in substance. According to (Corbett, 2023), The goal of the slogan is to strengthen links amongst Malaysians of all ethnic backgrounds by emphasising freedom of speech and advancing integrity, respect, caring, and compassion. However, some critics have argued that the slogan is too vague and does not offer any concrete plans for how to achieve its goals. They have also pointed out that the term "madani" has been used in the past by Islamist groups to promote a more conservative and restrictive vision for Malaysia (Noorshahrizam, 2023). Despite these concerns, many Malaysians support the Malaysia Madani slogan because they view it as a step in the right direction toward a more just and equitable society (Harinderan, 2023).

2. Methods

2.4 Research Design

In this research, the method of quantitative research is used. Online surveys were handled and provided through the use of public platforms such as Instagram and Whatsapp. By using these public platforms, it eases the researchers in data collection and respondents from various categories of people as this study focuses on the public response in order to gather the information on the topic covered.

2.4 Sampling Technique

This investigation employed the non-probability sampling technique known as convenient sampling. The study used a non-probability sampling technique, a useful sample approach. In a non-probability sample, according to McCombes (2021), individuals are picked based on non-random criteria, and not everyone has an equal chance of being included. Participants in the poll are drawn from the general population and come from a wide range of professions, including those in the public and private sectors, self-employment, education, full-time homemakers, retirement, and the jobless (Ridzuan, Ridzuan, and Ridzuan, 2018). Using Raosoft Calculator Software, 32 million Malaysians may be equal to 284 responders with a 91% confidence level (The Research Advisors, 2006).

2.4 Research Instrument

13 items make up the questionnaire's demographic section. The questionnaire is related to the study's objectives in terms of research. There are rating scales from 1 to 4 (strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and highly agree (4)), matrix, and multiple-choice (MCQ) questions. Respondents find it simple to comprehend and provide answers to the questions because of their validity and plausibility. It was logically organized as well to avoid any confusion during the question-and-answer session.

2.4 Data Analysis

Statistical Package of Social Science, or SPSS, version 23 software was used to analyze the data. The actions of creating the survey and submitting the data are both a part of the data analysis process. The study's objectives, which aim to identify The Level of Effectiveness Towards Unity Government in Malaysia and The Level of Understanding Towards Malaysia "MADANI", are tied to the questions in the poll. The first 50 respondents are given a questionnaire to assess the research's validity. The poll will run until 300 responses have been collected, at which point the data will be transferred to SPSS for evaluation and analysis (Ridzuan, Ridzuan, and Ridzuan, 2018). Using descriptive statistics, researchers looked at the frequency, percentage, and mean.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

3.1 Demographic Background

The sample's demographics are defined in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, marital status, occupation, household income, residing area current region of residence, and 5 basic questions about the general election and the government. The 300 respondents' demographics are shown in Table 1. According to the results, the majority of those who responded to the questionnaires

are male (58%) aged between 18-23 (56.7%), Malay (95%), Central Region, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya (57%), Single (71%) M40, RM4851 - RM10970 (41.7%) and students (50.7%).

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by demographic (N=300)

DEMOGRAPHIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sex:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	126	42
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	174	58
Age:		
<input type="checkbox"/> 18-23	170	56.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 24-29	36	12
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-35	11	3.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 36 and above	83	27.7
Occupation:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Government Sector	38	12.7
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector	89	29.7
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	152	50.7
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed	7	2.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	12	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Full time housewife	1	0.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Retired	1	0.3
Ethnicity:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Malay	285	95
<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	5	1.7
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	4	1.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Others (Bumiputera Sabah, Bumiputera Sarawak, Orang Asli, etc)	6	2
Region:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Region (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak)	36	12
<input type="checkbox"/> East Coast Region (Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang)	28	9.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Central Region (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya)	171	57
<input type="checkbox"/> Southern Region (Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor)	49	16.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Sabah & Sarawak	16	5.3
Current Residing Area:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Area	240	80
<input type="checkbox"/> Rural Area	60	20
Marital Status:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Single	213	71
<input type="checkbox"/> Married	85	28.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	2	0.7
Household Income:		
<input type="checkbox"/> B40 (Less than RM4850)	122	40.7
<input type="checkbox"/> M40 (RM4851 – RM10970)	125	41.7
<input type="checkbox"/> T20 (RM10971 and above)	53	17.7

Within the same section, five questions were posed in Table 2. To find out the respondent's thoughts and opinions regarding the latest Malaysia general election and the

current government, these questions were put to them. Table 2 shows respondents' opinions toward the latest general election and government. According to the findings, the majority of the respondents who completed the questionnaires completed their responsibility as Malaysians by casting their vote during the recent general election (91.3%). The majority of respondents (95.7%) believed that voting for the general election will determine the future of Malaysia and most of them were satisfied with the recent election (68%). Last but not least, 66% of the respondents were happy with the current government and the majority favored Kerajaan Perpaduan which consists of Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional for the upcoming State Election (71%).

Table 2: Respondent's opinion toward the latest general election and government

QUESTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Have you ever cast your vote for the recent general election?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	274	91.3
<input type="checkbox"/> No	26	8.7
Do you happen to believe the voting during the general election will determine the future of Malaysia?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	287	95.7
<input type="checkbox"/> No	13	4.3
Do you ever feel satisfied from the recent General Election?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	204	68
<input type="checkbox"/> No	96	32
Are you happy with the current government?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	198	66
<input type="checkbox"/> No	102	34
In the upcoming State Election, which parties coalition that you will favor at most?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Kerajaan Perpaduan (Pakatan Harapan+Barisan Nasional)	213	71
<input type="checkbox"/> Perikatan Nasional	87	29

Table 3 shows that (M=3.07) is the highest mean for the level of effectiveness toward unity government. The question itself, as well as the number of respondents, demonstrates that unity government is believed effectively able to promote social harmony in Malaysia. TheStar, an English-language newspaper in Malaysia quoted the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the celebration of the recent Chinese New Year "Harmony and tolerance between races are the bonds that will propel the country forward"(The Star, 2023). The Wire posted in their article regarding "Why Social Harmony is Important for a Healthy Economy", conflict draws attention away from the real issues (Arora, 2020). Without social harmony, real issues such as healthcare, unemployment and corruption are being left out due to limited resources both human and monetary spent on responding to conflicts. The overall mean for the level of effectiveness towards unity government is (M=2.98) which is the exact mean that is required to prove the effectiveness of unity government. This can be proven by Malaymail which said Anwar's unity government was seen on the stronger footing than rival Perikatan due to the right tone for political alliance heading for state elections (Noorshahrizam, 2023).

Table 3: The Level of Effectiveness towards Unity Government

ITEMS	MEAN
Unity government can promote social harmony	3.07
I believe the unity government could attract more foreign investors	3.07
I believe unity government can effectively enhance economic development in Malaysia	3.04
I believe unity government can resolve challenges faced by Malaysia	3.02
Unity government can achieve political stability in Malaysia	2.99
Diversity of political in unity government can lead to a better decision-making	2.97
I believe the unity government could avoid another political drama in the future	2.84
I believe the concept of unity government are well received by Malaysians	2.83
OVERALL	2.98

According to the data in Table 4, the majority of respondents do understand the importance of Malaysia's MADANI concept for the future development of Malaysia (M=2.95). Malaysia MADANI is believed to move the nation forward to a more sustainable future. TheStar quoted the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that Malaysia Madani will focus on a sustainable future while maintaining the nation's heritage by not leaving the core values and morals that shaped Malaysians (Ling, 2023). Overall the mean for the level of understanding towards Malaysia Madani is (M=2.81) which indicates that most Malaysian do understand the importance and concept of Malaysia MADANI. Malaysia MADANI can resolve the problems of all people which would be a great concept due to Malaysia's multiculturalism(Malaysia MADANI can resolve problems of all people,2023). Malaysia MADANI is an effort to steer the nation to put a name and glory on the world stage.

Table 4: The Level of understanding towards Malaysia MADANI

ITEMS	MEAN
I believe that Malaysia MADANI is important for the future development	2.95
Malaysia MADANI promotes equal rights for all individuals regardless of their background	2.89
I am aware the initiatives and policies related to Malaysia MADANI	2.85
I believe that Malaysia MADANI could strengthen our foreign basis especially in regional conflicts	2.82
I understand the concept of Malaysia MADANI	2.81
I believe the concept of Malaysia MADANI are reliable than the concept of 1 Malaysia	2.78
I believe that Malaysia MADANI can reduce corruption in Malaysia	2.70
I believe Malaysia MADANI's principles are well implemented in Malaysia	2.68
OVERALL	2.81

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, our research questions findings can be arranged as per following:

ITEMS	N	MEAN
The level of effectiveness towards Unity Government	300	2.98
The level of understanding towards Malaysia MADANI	300	2.81

The effectiveness of the unity government in Malaysia is high, as surveys indicate a positive overall mean score. Malaysians from diverse backgrounds trust the unity government, which was formed in December 2022 to reduce political tension. The research shows that different political parties could come together and establish beneficial policies for the nation.

However, some people have concerns regarding the appointment of Dato' Seri Zahid Hamidi, who faces corruption charges, as Deputy Prime Minister, which contradicts the government's agenda of fighting corruption. The Pakatan Harapan coalition, during the General Election 15 campaign, promised to combat high-level corruption cases, but no action has been taken against individuals involved in the mismanagement of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) scandal. This lack of accountability has weakened the Royal Malaysia Navy's deterrence power in the South China Sea territorial dispute.

The formation of a unity government has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it encourages collaboration among political parties with different ideologies, promoting inclusivity and reducing political polarization. It facilitates consensus-building and effective policymaking, addressing important cross-party issues. This could potentially resolve long-standing racial tensions in Malaysia. On the other hand, the unity government's integrity is questioned due to the inclusion of individuals facing corruption charges.

The Malaysia Madani policy has played a significant role in fostering national unity and social cohesion. It has bridged societal gaps, encouraged cultural diversity, and promoted mutual respect among Malaysians. This policy focuses on economic development, social harmony, and a sustainable environment, aiming to create a prosperous and equitable Malaysia. The economic development aspect aims to create a dynamic and competitive economy, while the social harmony aspect promotes a cohesive society free from discrimination. The sustainable environment component aims to protect natural resources for future generations. The success of Malaysia Madani depends on the cooperation of all Malaysians. Although some may view it as ambitious or politically motivated, it is believed to be the most inclusive and impactful policy to date. Collaboration and tolerance among Malaysians of all backgrounds are crucial for achieving its mission and agenda.

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