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During the Movement Control Order in Malaysia**

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CO-CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION DURING THE MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

In Malaysia, school activities were disrupted from 2020-2021 due to the enforcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the country. It caused many things to be temporarily disrupted including co-curriculum activities at school. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine pupils' perceptions of the co-curriculum activities carried out by the school during the MCO and the effect of those activities on national integration among the pupils. It was quantitative research using a set of questionnaires as its research instrument. The research location was at Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia where five secondary schools were selected. A total of 487 pupils, consisting of 243 Form two pupils and 244 pupils Form four pupils represented various ethnic and religious backgrounds. As a result, the study found that the national integration process was incorporated well through the co-curriculum activities even though the activities were conducted through online mediums. Overall, the score level was High for the majority of the results. Thus, it showed that even though the implementation of MCO had limited the process of national integration through co-curriculum activities, however, the implementation went well. The difference was, that the co-curriculum activities were conducted through online methods.

Keywords: Co-curriculum; National Integration; Secondary Schools; MCO.



A. Introduction

Malaysia is a unique country that consists of various ethnicities, languages, cultures, and even religions. Apart from the Malays, Chinese, and Indians, there are also other ethnics such as the Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan, Orang Asli, and other *Bumiputera* (natives) who inhabit Sabah and Sarawak (Embong, 2006). However, it cannot be denied, that conflicts and problems that arise due to the diversity of the community still exist. The incident of May 13, 1969, was the culmination of the problem of unity that stemmed from inter-ethnic discord. This incident has given an impression of how understanding and consensus between ethnic groups still need to be improved from a young even when the country has achieved independence (Baharuddin, 2012; Asmara et al., 2023).

The Malaysian post-independence has shown the diversity of society in Malaysia where they began to adapt and mix due to the increasingly active migration and urbanization process. Nevertheless, contemporary issues related to the problem of unity still exist in the community. In this regard, the diversity of society in a country can be considered an advantage because of its uniqueness. However, it became a challenge in the context of nation-state building and the formation of the *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysia Nation). In this matter, diversity is a challenge to unify the society as a whole, especially in the process of forming a national identity (Ting, 1987; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

According to Ting (1987), the process of creating national integration in a society is not an easy task because the integration process is a complex matter. However, it is not impossible if it is started as early as the school level. Thus, the implementation of national integration starting from the early stages through schools should be emphasized to prevent any racial issues from occurring in society. In the school context, co-curriculum activity is one of the easiest ways to create national integration among pupils.

Co-curriculum activity is an activity that is planned and carried out outside of the classroom (Hamzah & Ayob, 2015). Co-curriculum activities at school include activities such as sports and games, clubs and associations, uniformed bodies, and any activities outside the classroom.

These activities vary based on the school's academic calendar and are coordinated by teachers (Nasukha et al., 2023).

Through the various activities and programs that are held, the values of tolerance and the spirit of unity can be fostered among pupils as a result of their participation in the activities. For example, it could be seen during the football competition which would be attended by pupils from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. However, cooperation could be fostered because to win the competition, there should be cooperation among the individuals who participate. Not only that, the spirit of inter-ethnic unity can also be instilled in the supporters. Indirectly, integration among pupils occurs when pupils can recognize and get along well regardless of ethnicity. In short, the process of integration would have occurred in every co-curriculum activity held at school.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, co-curriculum activities in schools were conducted physically. This makes it easier for teachers to monitor and ensure the integration process is going well through any activities. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world back in late 2019, the co-curriculum activities in Malaysian schools were also temporarily disrupted. The disruption was followed by the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) by the government which was implemented to curb this deadly pandemic. When the cases kept on rising and threatening the nation, it impacted the co-curriculum activities at schools too. Therefore, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia - KPM*) has instructed schools to carry out teaching and learning activities including co-curriculum activities through online mediums (Salleh et al., 2021; Yordan & Fahyuni, 2021). The need for social distancing and lockdown to prevent virus transmission has consequently caused many educational modes to the virtual mode as the only relevant solution during the pandemic (Moorhouse, 2020; Khoiri & Nasution, 2022; Elizabeth et al., 2023).

It resulted in all the school co-curriculum activities being instructed to be conducted through online methods or home-based teaching and learning (*pengajaran dan pembelajaran di rumah - pdpr*). As a comparison, there are a few



academic research that study online methods or home-based teaching and learning during the COVID-19 period. Luna et al., (2022) study found that distance teaching and learning modes through online instruction such as Worktext with whiteboard in Google Meet and recording of classroom discourse were the best modes of learning. Furthermore, Susanto and Dwijayanto (2022) found out that during the COVID-19 period, the attachment of school-age children to gadgets and social media can be directed at strengthening moderate Islamic values through several educational contents.

Moreover, in the research Giray et al., (2022) found out that many Filipino college students find online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic to be a positive experience such as it provides various conveniences, eliminates the necessity of public transportation the COVID-19 pandemic, among others, a more significant number of respondents believe otherwise. The majority of the respondents shared a general difficulty adjusting to the new online learning setup because of problems related to technology and Internet connectivity, mental health, finances, and time and space management. A large portion of students also got their motivation to continue studying despite the pandemic from fear of being left behind, parental persuasion, and aspiration to help the family (Giray et al., 2022). The latest commonly used teaching and learning online methods such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, and WhatsApp (Imran & Mardhiah, 2023; Asman & Muda, 2023).

In short, national integration could exist in the form of the implementation of co-curriculum activities in schools. It would be carried out through the participation of pupils in the term of activities, programs, competitions, associations, or uniformed unit and organization bodies in schools. Through these activities, the values of tolerance and respect between the different ethnic groups could be fostered. Therefore, it shows that co-curriculum activities are one of the effective tools in fostering the value of national integration among the younger generation at the school level although the physical co-curriculum activities were disrupted when the country faced the pandemic which followed by the MCO implementation to control the COVID-19 outbreak.

B. Method

This study was conducted in Malaysia, particularly in Tanjong Malim district, the state of Perak. The study involved secondary school pupils around Tanjong Malim. Five secondary schools were selected for the study. The schools were *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Methodist*, *Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Katholik*, *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Khir Johari*, *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Proton City* and *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bandar Behrang* 2020. The methods of collecting and analyzing the data are explained below.

In this study, the researcher used a quantitative approach through experimental studies, and the numerical data was collected and analyzed with statistical tests. This data is measured to prove the reliability of the data used to test theories, build facts, and state the existence of relationships between variables (Chua, 2014). According to Cresswell & Cresswell (2018), quantitative research is a type of educational research where the researcher decides what to study, asks specific questions, narrows the scope of the question, and collects quantifiable data from participants.

Therefore, the researcher chose to conduct a study using quantitative methods because of the suitability of the research as well. The researcher has chosen cluster sampling in this study. According to Chua (2014), when a study is conducted on a population that involves a large area and a large number of subjects in the population, and a list of subjects cannot be obtained, and then cluster sampling could be chosen. The study was conducted physically using the questionnaire forms. It was conducted from May to July 2022, just after the MCO was ceased by the government. The questionnaire forms were disseminated with the help of a counseling teacher at each school involved. In this study, 487 respondents were involved. The process of analyzing the data used the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 and once the data is analyzed, it is shown in a table and the form of Mean, Standard deviation, and Level.

According to Yahaya et.al (2007), the population is the entire group of people, objects, or events that have little commonality in general



and it must be defined specifically. Thus, a sample refers to a part of the population without considering whether it can be representative of the population or otherwise. The research populations involved in this study were pupils from forms two and four of the secondary schools selected. The selection of research respondents was based on the advice from the school's top management which only allowed pupils who were not involved in any major exam to participate in the research. The total selection of respondents was 487. The total selection of respondents was based on the population table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

A set of questionnaires as a research instrument was used for data collection purposes. The researcher used primary and secondary data to obtain a set of completed and detailed data. Primary data refers to the collection of data and then analyzed to produce results. Therefore, the primary data was obtained from a questionnaire that was distributed to the five selected secondary schools in Tanjong Malim. Meanwhile, the secondary data refers to scientific collection from various sources and scientific materials. The forms of questions presented in the questionnaire are closed-ended questions. This type of question is easy to analyze and suitable for the respondent to answer because the respondent is required to choose one of several answer options given.

For the questionnaire, it has been set by using a five-indicator Likert scale, namely scale 1 - strongly disagree, scale 2 - disagree, scale 3 - neutral, scale 4 - agree and scale 5 - strongly agree. The questionnaires were divided into four parts. Section A was about the background and demographic of the respondents, which includes race, gender, level of study, religion, and school. While Section B, was about the curriculum activities. Section C was about national integration and the last section which is Section D was about the implementation of the movement control order in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the respondent background who was involved in the study.

Table 1. The respondent background (n = 487)

Category		Frequency	Percentage
Ethnic	Malay	324	66.5

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Chinese	92	18.9
	Indian	71	14.6
	Total	487	100
	Male	240	49.3
	Female	247	50.7
Level of study (Form)	Total	487	100
	Two	243	49.9
	Four	244	50.1
Religion	Total	487	100
	Islam	323	66.3
	Hindu	73	15
	Buddhist	80	16.4
	Christian	8	1.6
	Sikh	1	0.2
	No religion	2	0.4
School	Total	487	100
	SMK Bandar Behrang 2020	95	19.5
	SMJK Katholik	93	19.1
	SMK Methodist	100	20.5
	SMK Khir Johari	101	20.7
	SMK Proton City	98	20.1

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

a. Co-curriculum activities (Section B)

Table 2 shows the mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia. Based on the table, the highest mean score can be referred to items no. 2 and 3 which are *'The activities in the uniform unit foster the spirit of unity among multi-ethnic friends'* and *'Be a member of the uniform units in school won't harm my ethnic identity'*. Both of the items score the highest mean which is 4.18 while both items score 0.665 and 1.441 for the standard deviation. For the lowest mean score, it can be referred to item no. 9 which is *'The activities in sports and games become fun with the mixture terms of Malay, Tamil and Mandarin'* with a mean score of 4.00 and a standard deviation of 0.873.



Table 2. The mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	Being active in a uniform unit allows me to be close with multi-ethnic friends.	4.12	0.745	High
2.	The activities in the uniform unit foster the spirit of unity among multi-ethnic friends.	4.18	0.665	High
3.	Be a member of the uniform units in school won't harm my ethnic identity.	4.18	1.441	High
4.	Being active in the pupils association allows me to be close to multi-ethnic friends.	4.09	0.727	High
5.	The activities in the pupils association foster the spirit of unity among multi-ethnic friends.	4.16	0.654	High
6.	Be a member of the pupils association in the school won't harm my ethnic identity.	4.09	0.747	High
7.	Being active in sports and games is the way I close relationships with multi-ethnic friends.	4.19	0.770	High
8.	The activities in sports and games encouraged me and my multi-ethnic friends to socialize.	4.17	0.760	High
9.	The activities in sports and games become fun with the mixture of terms of Malay, Tamil, and Mandarin.	4.00	0.873	High
10.	Being active in the pupils club allows me to be close to multi-ethnic friends.	4.01	0.770	High
11.	The activities with the pupils are the way I have close relationships with multi-ethnic friends.	4.02	0.752	High
12.	The activities in the pupils club become fun with the mixture of terms of Malay, Tamil, and Mandarin.	3.94	0.911	High
Average Mean		4.10	0.818	High

Based on Table 2, the pupil's co-curriculum activities during the MCO are at a high level. The activities in the uniformed unit give enthusiasm to the pupils who participate so that the unity between the various ethnicities in their circle can be fostered. However, the use of

mixed languages between Malay, Tamil, and Mandarin terms in sports and games is moderate. Some pupils socialize only in their groups until the use of mixed language terms no longer appeals to them.

b. National Integration (Section C)

Table 3 shows the mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia. Based on the table, the highest mean score can be referred to item no. 12 which is *'The different opinions would create a wonderful diversity during co-curriculum activities'*. The item scores the highest mean which is 4.23 and 1.441 for the standard deviation. The lowest mean score can be referred to item no. 10 which is *'I accept the opinions from anyone regardless of ethics during co-curriculum activities'* with a mean score of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 0.735.

Table 3. The mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	I can share my culture with multi-ethnic friends when participating in co-curriculum activities.	4.10	0.731	High
2.	Indirectly, I learned the multi-ethnic cultures through co-curriculum activities.	3.99	0.809	High
3.	Knowing the multi-ethnic culture through co-curriculum activities won't harm my identity.	4.07	0.776	High
4.	Co-curriculum activities made me aware to rely on friends regardless of ethnicity.	4.06	0.770	High
5.	I don't care if the teacher asks me to find a partner from a different ethnicity during co-curriculum activities.	3.99	0.904	High
6.	I am comfortable relying on others during co-curriculum activities regardless of ethnicity.	4.12	0.730	High
7.	I'm happy to be with friends regardless of ethnicity during co-curriculum activities.	4.06	0.651	High
8.	Co-curriculum activities become more fun with the presence of friends from various ethnicities.	4.15	0.757	High



No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
9.	The experience in co-curriculum activities becomes more meaningful with the presence of friends from various ethnicities.	4.06	0.741	High
10.	I accept the opinions of anyone regardless of ethnicity during co-curriculum activities.	4.06	0.723	High
11.	I never care about my friend' background when I accept their opinions during co-curriculum activities.	3.75	0.735	High
12.	The different opinions would create a wonderful diversity during co-curriculum activities.	4.23	1.365	High
Average Mean		3.72	0.740	High

Overall, according the Table 3, national integration among the pupils is at a high level. Pupils are more likely to give different opinions among themselves and this difference will naturally create a fun variety, especially in co-curriculum activities. Therefore, national integration among multi-ethnic pupils can be fostered even better. The majority of the pupils in the five schools included in the research show that they have nothing to do with their friend's backgrounds and they were fine to integrate with friends from different backgrounds during co-curriculum activities.

c. Movement Control Order (MCO)

Table 4 shows the mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia. Based on the table, the highest mean score can be referred to item no. 5 which is '*During MCO, the use of Whatsapp, Telegram and Google Meet were the mediums that connected me and friends from different ethnics*'. The item scores the highest mean which is 3.88 and 1.030 for the standard deviation. For the lowest mean score, it can be referred to item no. 5 which is '*Co-curriculum activities through PdPR during MCO encouraged me to meet friends from different ethnics*' with a mean score of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 1.018.



Table 4. The mean score for the co-curriculum activities of the pupils during the MCO in Malaysia

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	Co-curriculum activities through PdPR during MCO encouraged me to meet friends from different ethnicities.	3.54	1.018	High
2.	Co-curriculum activities through PdPR during MCO fostered the spirit of unity between me and my friends from different ethnicities.	3.57	0.984	High
3.	I feel more often to meet friends from different ethnics virtually during co-curriculum activities through the PdPR when the MCO was implemented	3.59	0.948	High
4.	During MCO, I had more fun connecting with friends from different ethnicities through WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Meet during and after co-curriculum activities.	3.74	1.030	High
5.	During MCO, the use of WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Meet were the mediums that connected me and friends from different ethnicities.	3.88	0.984	High
6.	During MCO, the use of WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Meet made me know more friends from different ethnicities compared to if I did the activities physically.	3.72	1.028	High
Average Mean		3.67	0.999	High

Overall, for Table 4, the use of applications that affect pupils' involvement in co-curriculum activities during the MCO is at a high level. Pupils are more likely to use 'WhatsApp', 'Telegram' and 'Google Meet' applications to engage in co-curriculum activities. The pupils think that using the application makes it easier for them to connect, discuss co-curriculum activities, and get to know their friends from different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, national integration among multi-ethnic pupils can be sown easily without any element of coercion. In short, the applications have become the most preferred choice by today's society, including pupils.



2. Discussion

For the discussion, Tables 2, 3, and 4 clearly show that co-curriculum activities through the online method went well as shown in Mean, Standard deviation, and Level. It is also a justification that national integration in Malaysia among the secondary pupils in the selected schools for this research is still in progress regardless of the method used during the learning session. There is some academic research as a comparison to show some of the findings that relate to this study.

Co-curriculum activities at school and the COVID-19 pandemic are two interconnected things. The same is true with the level of mental health. The level of mental health nowadays is becoming more alarming as a result of lifestyle and technological advances. This can be seen even more during the phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a huge impact on the mental health of every individual around the world, especially school pupils. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world suddenly, co-curriculum activities cannot be conducted face-to-face and teaching objectives are difficult to achieve. Hence, interactive teaching aids also play such an important part in making the learning process attractive and effective (Mahat et al., 2020; Sidharta et al., 2023). However, this study shows that the online method has become a new way of learning to get the learning attractive.

The research by Ang et al. (2022) showed that the level of stress among pupils following the co-curriculum practical course at IPG was at a mild to moderate level. From the point of view of comparative studies, this study focuses a lot on co-curriculum activities that can strengthen unity as well as reduce the level of stress among pupils. But apart from the stress problem, the research conducted by Giray et al. (2022), found that online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to be a positive experience for students.

On the other hand, the activities carried out in schools also require teachers who are trained in handling the activities. Issues related to trained teachers can be seen in Hassan and Abdullah's (2016) study which

discusses teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Physical Activity, Sports, and Co-Curriculum Assessment (PAJSK). Normally, with school-based assessment, teachers are empowered to implement the PAJSK assessment as best as possible. The results of the study show that teachers have a negative perception of the implementation of PAJSK in schools. This is so because teachers are still lacking in skills to carry out assessments based on this curriculum.

The findings of the study state that teachers' readiness for the new assessment system in schools is at a moderate level. This proves that the teachers in the school are less prepared, lack knowledge, and are not skillful in implementing PAJSK so extracurricular activities are less effective among pupils. Co-curricular activities such as uniformed units, sports, clubs, and so on must be participated by every pupil because it benefits them a lot, in this study, it was found that extracurricular activities can build national integration among pupils.

Awareness of the importance of carrying out co-curriculum activities at school is very important. Many studies have been conducted to identify the effectiveness of co-curriculum management in educational institutions. Based on a study conducted by Michael and Ambotang (2019), the results of their study found that student involvement in co-curriculum activities can shape the pupil's personality. This can be highlighted through excellent co-curriculum management and activities that interest pupils. This is because there is a positive relationship between the role of the co-curriculum advisor and the amount of pupil involvement in the co-curriculum activities that are carried out will be able to highlight the talent and excellence of pupils who are involved. Therefore, the management of organized co-curriculum activities at school is very important. This is also closely related to co-curriculum activities carried out in schools to form national integration among pupils of various ethnicities.

From the point of view of risk management when co-curriculum activities are implemented, the study conducted by Kalaiselvan and Daud (2021) stated that it is very important especially when it involves personal



safety. The study discusses the implementation of a planned co-curriculum capable of overcoming any risk and threat to pupils' safety, especially when pupils spend time engaging in sports and games on the school field. Therefore, risk management is very important in providing a suitable playing area or space. The results of their study also show that the level of risk management is at a high level with an overall mean score of 4.66 and this proves the primary school teachers in the area involved in that research understand the concept of risk management. From another point of view, the matter related to risk also needs to be emphasized if implemented among pupils from different ethnic backgrounds (Siregar et al., 2022).

In addition, co-curriculum activities provide benefits to school pupils in getting to know new friends of different ethnic backgrounds and being able to unearth their talents. This can be explained in the study of Ghani et al. (2020) who describe a new understanding of how active participation in co-curriculum activities improves pupil leadership skills. The results show that the involvement of school pupils is moderate in co-curriculum activities while the participation of pupils in uniformed units is higher when compared to clubs, associations, and sports. This is because the learning process that involves co-curriculum activities also goes through the communication process between pupils in the school environment. Through involvement and interaction in co-curriculum activities, pupils can learn to lead their peers and indirectly develop their leadership skills (Giray et al., 2022; Musyafaah et al., 2022). Not only that, the pupils gradually develop their leadership skills by learning to obey rules, practice effective communication, find the courage to make decisions, and apply positive values in themselves.

From another point of view, the implementation of co-curriculum activities during the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on the soft skills of pupils at school. In the study of Mohamad et al. (2022), the results of the study found that the level of pupil involvement is moderate in extracurricular activities and the level of acquisition of soft skills is also

moderate. Commonly, co-curriculum activities are carried out basically to ensure that co-curriculum objectives are achieved. Co-curriculum activities can not only relieve pupils' stress after studying in class, but their involvement can give them experience to improve their soft skills.

Therefore, COVID-19, co-curriculum activities, and national integration are related to each other. In addition to that, mental health, the preparation of trained teachers, the formation of pupils' personalities through co-curriculum activities and many more also contribute to the effectiveness and problems in implementing co-curriculum activities at school. However, this study clearly shows that the process of national integration among secondary school pupils was on the right track despite the online learning process due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, the result shown for co-curriculum activities, national integration, and MCO scored high average mean in all Sections. This research found that co-curriculum activities that are implemented in schools can be a medium to form a national integration among pupils from different ethnic backgrounds in school. Even though during the phase that the nation needs to face the COVID-19 pandemic, the pupils were still eager to participate in virtual co-curriculum activities with their teachers and friends. Through this research as well, it was found that pupils are more likely to use platforms such as *Google Meet*, *WhatsApp*, and *Telegram*. Therefore, co-curriculum activities have become a priority in the education system at all levels because of the activities' role in fostering national integration as an addition to the education process.

The involvement of pupils as a young generation and people in this country in co-curriculum activities can instill good values in them. At the same time, they will interact with each other and get to know unfamiliar friends and eventually be able to strengthen their friendship. This matter is based on the wishes of the Ministry which stipulates that every pupil must participate in co-curricular activities of at least 1 sport, 1 club, and 1 uniform



unit. It also could create talent and cultivate leadership skills in addition to fostering national integration. Based on the data obtained from the Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025), it shows that the participation rate in co-curriculum activities is high. Through this plan, the national education system has made major changes to co-curriculum activities and made these activities a mandatory thing to be taken seriously by every pupil.

Therefore, this study shows that co-curriculum activities, national integration, and the use of digital applications during the MCO are at a high level. The level of awareness of teenagers towards changes in the national education system needs to be emphasized in their learning schedule and its implementation needs to be carefully planned and more seriously by all involved. Apart from that, all equipment and constraints in its implementation whether in terms of teacher training, equipment facilities, infrastructure, support, finance, and others need to be handled immediately. The role of the teacher in making it a success is to attract pupils to learn in a fun school environment.

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