

Tolerance for diversity and happiness in Malaysia: What is the missing link?

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Abstract

Tolerance for diversity has widely been recognised as one of the important inputs in creating a happy nation. This input is even more crucial in a multiracial, multi-religious and multi-cultural country like Malaysia. The question is can tolerance itself nurture a happy country? Does it need a mediator? This paper attempts to reveal the knot between tolerance and the pursuit of happiness in Malaysia by focusing on freedom. Based on the World Value Survey (WVS) Wave 6 data with a Malaysian sample of 1300 respondents, we first extract the score objects of freedom and tolerance using the method of categorical principal component approach (CATPCA). Then, we test the integration between freedom and tolerance in pursuing happiness by cross-sectional ordered logistic/probit modeling. In addition, we break down the component of freedom based on different aspects of life (e.g. at work, political, and economic) as a sensitivity analysis to verify the robustness of contributions of freedom to happiness. The results show that freedom is necessary for tolerance to have favorable impact on Malaysian happiness. In particular, the perceived freedom at work and political freedom positively contribute to the likelihood of being happier. As such, it rings the bell of the importance of safeguarding political freedom in creating a tolerant society for the sake of happiness of Malaysians. Besides, employers could play a role in tackling their employee's happiness by granting them a freer working environment.

Keywords: Happiness; Tolerance; Freedom; World Value Survey; Cross-sectional ordered logistic/probit model