

The Relationship Between Appreciation and The Attitude of Local Peoples Towards Foreign Workers

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ABSTRACT

As an effect of globalization, it was easier to see foreigners everywhere furthermore with the help of the advancement of technology of information and transportation. This was especially true nowadays as we can see the trends of increase in foreign workers. Usually, these foreign workers are subject to bad impression from the locals especially in the case of an increase in crimes rate, job opportunity and wage differences. Even though the foreign workers are usually subjected to bad impression, we cannot deny that they also bring benefits to the country's economy and some locals did appreciate it. This paper aims to identify the relationship between appreciation and the attitude of locals towards foreign workers. This study will employ secondary data in order to identify the relationship between them. It was expected that, from the finding, we can conclude that appreciation will have a positive relationship towards the attitude of locals towards foreign workers. The result is expected to indicate whether appreciation is related to the attitude towards foreign workers or not. This paper will contribute to future research and the body of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The number of Malaysians who are not willing to take the job considered as 3D's are increasing every year, Malaysian are not really interested in working at 3D sector because of the heavy work which is usually uncomfortable

but results to low wage. Other than that, the education state in Malaysia is improving each year, which inspired the local people to pursue more lucrative and higher status white-collar jobs. This caused the industries that lack the workforce to outsource it from outside which will increase the number of foreign workers.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) reports that the number of foreign workers, aimed at both documented and undocumented foreign workers, increased from 1.8 million in 2013 to 2.2 million in 2016, but unfortunately, we actually experience a shortage of labour in the plantation sectors which is the palm oil plantation industries. Datuk Seri Richard Riot Jaem (Povera, 2018, Jan 9) claimed that in Sarawak the state government has been incurring losses of RM1 billion annually in the palm oil industry since 2012 due to uncollected fresh fruit bunches (FFBs) arising from a shortage in the number of harvesters.

Not only in Sarawak, but Sabah is also affected by the shortage of labour in the palm oil industries. In order to solve the problem, the Sabah government intended to increase the number of foreign plantation workers in Sabah. In June 2018, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal moved the Immigration Department and a Special Committee to solve the problem by issuing special work passes for foreign plantation workers, to legalise the process of foreign worker's work permits (Jeffrey, 2018, June 27). While the government tried to increase the palm oil plantation foreign workers to meet the requirement, the opinion of local people is also very important, as to keep the local's feelings as by increasing the foreign workers some locals might feel threatened in term of economy, social and whatnot. So, to know how the locals feel, the attitude of local people towards foreign workers in the palm oil plantation industries are deemed important.

What is attitude? Attitude can be defined as a favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction toward something or

someone exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings, or intended behaviour (Myers, 2002). So, we can say that the attitude of locals towards foreign workers can be identified based on how the locals look towards the foreign workers in general, whether in a positive view or a negative view. Now, numerous past studies about the attitude of local people towards foreign workers used the perceived threat and ethnocentrism (ethnic exclusion) as a variable to measure it. What we want to do in this paper is to introduce another variable to measure the attitude of local's towards foreign workers that were not really discussed before, which is appreciation. It was hoped that this paper can pave a new way on how to study the attitude.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, our dependent variable is Attitude Towards Foreign Workers. According to Richard (2017) attitude is a psychological construct, it is a mental and emotional entity that inheres in or characterizes a person. This attitude is an acquired state through experience. As a person goes through more experience their mental state or attitude should have changed according to what his or her perception of things that affected his or her physically or mentally. In other words, it was an individual state of mind regarding a value and it's precipitated through a responsive expression towards a person, place, thing, or event which in turn influences individuals thought and action. It entails individual state of mind regarding a value and it takes action through a responsive expression towards a person, place, thing, or event which in turn influences individuals thought and action.

Rustenbach (2010) conducted a study where anti-immigrant attitudes were used as the dependent variable. The study was conducted in Europe. The independent variables chosen in the study include cultural marginality, neighbourhood safety, contact theory, human capital, political affiliation, political interest, economic competition,

societal integration, interpersonal trust and foreign direct investment. The method incorporated in the study was a collection of secondary data using face to face interview. All the variables showed a significant relationship with the anti-immigrant attitudes except for cultural marginality and contact theory. A similar study was conducted in Japan by Rosenbluth, Kage, and Tanaka (2016). The study was conducted in Japan. The researchers used employment status, demographic data, political view, contact theory, ethnocentrism and perceived number of foreigners as the independent variables. The dependent variable was positive attitudes towards immigration. The result revealed that socio-economic variables like employment status and demographic data were insignificant. Among the independent variables used was the ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism seems to create the highest impact on the positive attitude towards immigration. This was followed by the perceived number of foreigners.

The possibility of the threat for the special rights of the locals was included as an independent variable together with the socioeconomic variables by Rajiman and Semyonov (2004) in Israel. Their dependent variable in the study was the attitudes towards granting social and economic rights to foreign workers. Stratified sampling method on 800 Jews and 300 Arabs from the range of 25 years old to 65 years old was incorporated. The Jewish character of forgoing their rights was the most important and significant variable. They fear competition in terms of economic resources.

A study on the attitude towards immigrants and multiculturalism was conducted by Ward (2008) in New Zealand. The researcher used Contact theory and multicultural ideology as the independent variables. Survey method administrated by research assistants using a computer-assisted telephone. The result revealed that when the locals appreciate the multicultural diversity in

their country, the acceptance of the foreign and immigration policy was good. This also helps in diminishing the perceived threats by the local. The study was extended in 2011 by Ward, Masgoret, and Vauclair (2011). In this study, the independent variables like valuing immigrants perceived threat and endorsement of integration as the independent variables. The result revealed that lower-level workers have a negative perception with a stronger endorsement of integration and perceived threat. But the surprising outcome was that when the density of the immigrant increases, the overall attitude towards the immigrant becomes positive. This could be due to acceptance.

Paas and Demidova (2014) did a similar study on the attitude towards immigration in Estonia and Russia. The variables were divided into economic and non-economic variables. The data was incorporated as secondary data obtained from the European Social Survey fifth-round database. The economic variables were economy meanwhile the non-economic variables were culture and living place. Estonia showed a better response in accepting immigrants compared to Russia. Moreover, the variations on the attitudes are also influenced by variables.

There is a lot of studies about the local's attitude towards the foreign worker, out-group or migrant, especially in the country that have high sense nationalism and countries that receive a high number of foreign workers like Japan, Israel, New Zealand and in the European country. In order to study the attitude towards immigrants or foreign workers, the method usually used are survey questionnaires, with a face to face interview followed by a survey through a telephone interview.

To explain or measure the attitude, a lot of variables have been introduced. In the study of attitude towards foreign workers, there are two paths that we can see from the past study, which is to explain the attitude measured

using theories or using an actual variable like an endorsement, economy, social, political and perceived threat. Now we'll discuss from the theory perspective first. As there's a lot of variables have been used along the way, there are few variables that used the most in the study of attitude towards immigrants or foreign workers, which is the perceived threat followed by economic competition then contact theory and ethnocentrism. From this, we can see that these few variables are quite important for the study to measure the attitude.

From the past study, we know that there's a lack of study that relates the appreciation and attitude towards foreign workers. The closest one is the variable 'valuing immigrant'. This valuing was measured by few items "favourable-unfavourable perceptions", "liking of immigrants", and the "recognition of their contribution to New Zealand society". The overall meaning of valuing immigrant is almost the same with appreciation. In this study, appreciation will be incorporated as an important variable to influence the acceptance of foreign workers. Appreciation is a positive evaluation or positive attitude towards some object/things (Cross, 2005; Ham, 2009; Maio, Olson, Bernard, and Luke, 2003). In this paper, our subject is foreign workers. For example, when the foreign workers did something that contributes to the economy, development or even social the local people will have a positive evaluation towards the foreign workers. This ascertains that experiences of appreciation can increase the positive mood and feeling of connection to the appreciated stimulus like the feeling of awe or wonder (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fagley, 2001). More often than not, appreciation needs the experience to kick in, so the experience of appreciation will be a foundation that will affect the attitude later.

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