



## Races Understanding on Minor Festival in Malaysia

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### Abstract

There is countless local festival in Malaysia. We all know that Malaysia is known for its multicultural heritage. In Malaysia we have different races and religious, each one of it celebrated different festivals according to their culture. Malaysia is a multicultural country because in Malaysia we have Islam, Buddha, Hindu, Singh, Christian and etc. Furthermore, people nowadays only know the main festival that are shown in the television or that are stated in the calendar. Do they know the minor festival that is celebrated by the different races and religious? Next, the main festival that is celebrated by the Muslim is Eidul Fitri which is celebrated every year right after the fasting month is over. Minor festival is festival that is celebrated through strict religious believe (Soh 2012). The minor festival that is celebrated by the Muslim is Eidul Adha and Prophet Muhammad Mawlid. Eidul Adha is a festival that is a sign of hajj in principles of Islam for Muslim all around the world. During the festival all the Muslim will pray the Eidul Adha pray and slaughter the selected animal to show thankfulness to Allah SWT. In addition, as for the Hindu the main festival that they celebrated are deepavali. It is the festival of light. Other celebrations by the Hindu are thaiponggal and thaipusam. They celebrate thaipusam to give respect to the Hindu god (Lord Murugan). They fasting during Thaipusam because it is their believe on to clean their soul they must fasting and only eat vegetables for a month. Furthermore, Thaiponggal is a four-days-long harvest festival celebrated in Tamil Nadu, a southern state of India. People have been planting and gathering food, there has been some form of harvest festival. Pongal is one of the most important popular Hindu festivals of the year. On the other hand, Singh is the least minority in Malaysia and for that we are not aware on what festival or celebration that they celebrated. The festival that they celebrated is Vaisakhi and Hola Mahalla. Vaisakhi has been the time when farmer have put their sickles to harvest and celebrated the coming New Year. It is a festival that is celebrated with more energy, pomp and fanfare. It becomes a holy day because it marks the birth of the Khalsa fraternity. As for the Hola Mahalla festival it is celebrated on the first day of the lunar month of the Chet in the Nanakshahi calendar and sometimes coincides with the Sikh New Year. Next, Buddha there are several celebration that they celebrated but the minor festival is Chap Goh Mei, Moon Cake Festival and Wesak Day. Chap Goh Mei is a festival that shows the ending of Chinese New Year. It is a celebration that holds a massive prayer with big colts burned. As for the Moon Cake Festival is a celebration that celebrating the victory of Chinese people defeats the Mongol invaders at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. Mooncake is serving as special dish and lanterns parade at night. Next, Wesak Day or also known as Vesak is celebrated by Buddhist around the world and sometimes referred as Buddha's birthday, Buddha Day or Buddha Punima on Sunday. Christian main festival are Christmast that are celebrated every the end of the year in December. But we must also know that there are other festival that they celebrated which is Easter and Good Friday. The Easter is the day where the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb on the third day after his cruxifixion. As for Good Friday is the day where the Christian holiday commemorating the cruxifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary. Lastly, there are so many festivals that exist that are celebrated by other people and us as a good Malaysian we must be aware and learn because we are living in a multicultural country.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a country that is known for its food and the multiracial people. People nowadays are lack of general knowledge on the festival and celebrations of other races. Especially for the younger generations, their knowledge on the festivals and celebrations of other religious or cultural in Malaysia are very minimal. Furthermore, the lack of awareness among ethnic in a multicultural heritage are also minimum. They only know the main festivals that will be shown on television or that are stated in the calendar.

We as a group of students that are aware of this situation found a way to overcome this problem by creating a brochure, conducting an interview session with people from all races and do an online survey to introduce about others minor festivals and celebrations in Malaysia. Most of it are either religious or cultural in origin and are swathed in traditions and rituals. On top of that, the population of the minor race is less than the main races in Malaysia and not all the minor races celebrated the festivals because of the modern era. Other races are free to profess and practice any religion in an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance. Next, the brochure is a way to spread and expose people with the information on the minor festival and celebration of all the religion and races in Malaysia. The information in the brochure explains the actual meaning of the festivals. Furthermore, an interview session with people from different races is conducted to know whether other races know about other races festivals besides the main festivals. Indirectly this activity is a way to spread the knowledge on the minor festivals that are celebrated by other races in Malaysia. On the other hand, we also do an online survey that asking whether the people especially the younger generations know about the minor festivals that are celebrated by the multicultural people in Malaysia. The online survey is for the age of 19<sup>th</sup> and above. Lastly, the objective of this program is to exposed and spread the knowledge about the minor festivals and celebrations in religious and cultural in Malaysia. Next, to cultivate spirit about the multicultural heritage and many festivals that are celebrated nationwide regardless the different races and believe. Furthermore, it is also a way to emphasis of other main religions including Buddhism, Hindism, Sikhism and Christianity. It is also to overcome stereotypes of community mindset, thinking and understanding.

## 2. MINOR CELEBRATION IN MALAYSIA

### 2.1 EID AL-ADHA

#### What does Eid al-Adha celebrate?

Festival marks the end of Hajj and involves animal sacrifice as a symbol of Prophet Ibrahim's sacrifice to Allah. Despite his love for the boy, Prophet Ibrahim duly prepared to carry out Allah's command (Arora 2018).

#### When Eid al-Adha is celebrates?

The date of Eid al-Adha also varies in accordance with the Islamic lunar calendar, falling on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijjah.

#### How is Eid al-Adha celebrated?

In Muslim countries, Eid al-Adha is a public holiday that involves animal sacrifice, known as *Qurbani*, prayers and family gatherings. The day begins with morning prayers, followed by visits to family and friends and the exchange of food and gifts. Muslims traditionally greet each other on the day by wishing one another "Eid Mubarak" (means Blessed Eid) or one of many regional variations on the blessing.

### 2.2 MAWLID AN-NABI

#### What does Mawlid celebrate?

Muslims around the world are celebrating mawlid, also known as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Mawlid is a special holiday for many in the Muslim faith (Arora 2018).

#### When is Mawlid celebrating?

Mawlid an-Nabi is celebrated on the 12th day of Rabi al-Awwal, the 5th month accordance with the Islamic lunar calendar.

#### How is Mawlid celebrated?

The mawlid was then celebrated more heavily, with huge gatherings of people in one place, special gift giving and a monstrous feast. Muslims traditionally sing songs and say special prayers for Prophet Muhammad on Mawlid.

### 2.3 WESAK DAY

#### What does Wesak Day celebrate?

Wesak, also spelt *Vesak*, is a day celebrated by Buddhists around the world. Buddhists in Malaysia celebrate Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death on Wesak Day (Arora 2018). It is sometimes referres to as Buddha's Birthday, Buddha Day or Buddha Purnima.

#### When is Wesak celebrating?

Wesak Day is celebrated on Sunday that is closest to May's full moon.

#### How is Wesak celebrated?

Wesak begins at dawn when Buddhists gather in temples. They meditate on the precepts of Buddhism. Those who follow these precepts should honour life, show generosity, embrace celibacy and use speech wisely. Attendees at Wesak Day services also make donations and pray. They offer flowers and candles. Many Buddhists go to the Malaysian Buddhist Association building and quened patiently to take turns to bathe and wash a statue of Buddha.

They believe this ritual will cleanse their souls and purify them. Those who visit the building also light candles shaped like lotuses and ask for Buddha's blessings. They say prayers and end their celebration with a vegetarian meal.

## 2.4 HUNGRY GHOST

### What does Hungry Ghost celebrate?

Hungry Ghost Festival is a festival of the Chinese in Malaysia (Arora 2018). The festival is known as *Zhong Yuan Jie* in Mandarin and *Phor Tor* in Hokkien. This festival is Taoism fused with folklore and local superstition. Just as the West features Halloween for ghost and ghouls, the Chinese have a holiday to honor the departed spirits of the underworld and it called the Chinese Ghost Festival.

### When is Hungry Ghost celebrating?

The Chinese Ghost Festival is also called "Half July" in lunar calendar. It is a popular occasion celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month.

### How is Hungry Ghost celebrated?

Many Taoist temples have prayers, religious activities, offerings and singing operas performances and puppet theaters will be conducted throughout the month and held at their premise. The opera will go on even though no audience as it is to entertain the wandering spirits. Food offerings such as Ang Ku Kueh are some of the usual offerings. Joss sticks burning and food offerings on roadsides are meant for the wandering spirits. Food offerings, families also burn "hell money" for use by their departed ancestors in the afterworld. Open-air concerts called *Koh Tai* in Hokkien as well as Chinese Operas are for the entertainment of the wandering ghosts as well as the Gatekeeper of Hades, a fierce affigy erected facing the stage, with offerings of food before it. The Festival culminates on the end of the 7th lunar month with a ritual "closing of the door of hell" ceremony.

## 2.5 THAIPUSAM

### What does Thaipusam celebrate?

*Pusam* refers to a star that is at its highest point during the festival (Arora 2018). This celebration is one of the main Hindu celebrations in Malaysia and the biggest festival in the world as a day of thanksgiving and paying penance, dedicated to the Hindu god, Lord Murugan.

### When is Thaipusam celebrating?

Thaipusam is celebrated on the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (in January or February). Customarily, Thaipusam is celebrated during the month of Thai when the moon waxes its zenith (full moon). Apparently, there are several places in Malaysia where this celebration takes place like at Batu Caves.

### How is Thaipusam celebrated?

On the eve of the celebration, devotees would gather at the temple to witness the ceremonial "bath" of Lord Murugan. The chariot then begins to move out of the temple grounds and at the same time, thousands of devotees will accompany the silver chariot on its long journey, some carrying the *kavadi* as a vehicle of self-inflicted penance. *Kavadi* bearers or the devotees who have been pierced are believed to attain spiritual strength to enable him to do incredible feats. He dances with the *kavadi* on their shoulders and metal skewers pierced through his cheeks.

## 2.6 PONGGAL

### What does Ponggal celebrate?

Ponggal is the harvest festival to give thanks to the Sun God named *Surya*, for a bountiful harvest (Arora 2018).

### When is Ponggal celebrated?

Ponggal is celebrated on the first day of the Tamil calendar in the month of Thai. The Festival is celebrated in mid-January. The festivities can be caught at large Hindu temples.

### How is Ponggal celebrated?

The first day (*Thai Pongal*), it is celebrated for the harvested crops and share with friends and relatives. The main feature of this festival is the boiling of milk in a clay pot until it overflows when the family members gathered round the pot shouting, "*Ponggal Ponggal*" then add rice to it. In Tamil means boiling and overflowing. The second day (*Mattu Ponggal*), cows are worshipped and given the offerings. This is the time when villages decorate the cows and also the elders seek God's blessing for their children. The cow is a sacred animal in the culture of India. The day is dedicated to honour the cows for their contribution in our lives. The cows are given a bath, their horns painted and they are decorated with garlands. There is also the martial sport, "*Jallikattu*", for the bullocks. They are allowed to run in an arena and youths try to catch them.

## 2.7 VAISAKHI

### What does Vaisakhi celebrate?

Vaisakhi is a historical and religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism (Arora 2018). It is also the celebration of the harvest festival in giving thanks for crops yielded in Punjab, where the *Khalsa Paanth* was formed by the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who formulated Sikhism as a religion in 1699.

### When is Vaisakhi celebrating?

Celebrated on April 13 or 14 every year, thousands of Sikhs visit the 135 gurdwaras across Malaysia to celebrate Vaisakhi.

### How is Vaisakhi celebrated?

Typically, Sikh households start the day with the entire family members getting up early in the morning. After refreshing, the family gathers for a small prayer at home and then wears colourful new attires to go to the Gurdwara and celebrate the birth of Sikhism as a collective faith. Sikhs will pay their respect to Guru Granth Sahib, who is regarded by Sikhs as the final, sovereign and eternal living Guru following the lineage of the ten human Gurus of the Sikh religion. Various healthy delicacies are served for breakfast including chapati, yogurt, dhal, pickles and Punjabi „cha“ (tea).

## 2.8 HOLA MOHALLA

### What does Hola Mohalla celebrate?

The festival was founded by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru (Sukhmandir 2017). The Guru was in the midst of fighting both Aurangzeb of the Mughal Empire and the Hill Rajputs, and had recently established the Khalsa Panth. On 7 March 1701, Guru Gobind Singh started a new tradition by overseeing a day of mock battles and poetry contests at Lohgarh Fort. The tradition has since spread from the town of Anandpur Sahib to nearby Kiratpur Sahib and the foothills of the Shivaliks, and to other Gurdwaras around the world.

### When is Hola Mohalla celebrating?

Holla Mahalla (also spelt as Hola Mahalla) is a Sikh festival which takes place on the first lunar month of Chet which usually falls in March. This follows the Hindu festival of Holi.

### How is Hola Mohalla celebrated?

In Punjab, the event which normally lasts for weeks in Punjab consists of camping out and enjoying various displays of fighting prowess and bravery followed by kirtan, music and poetry. The event was started by, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji who started the Khalsa order in 1699 in Anandpur Sahib. Covered in colours from head to toe, the sea of merry-makers were indistinguishable from each other as men and women, young and old, demonstrated unity and multiculturalism. The festival of colours to me means a celebration that washes away all your sorrows and puts gladness in our hearts, so in that way it is also a message of forgiveness.

## 2.9 GOOD FRIDAY

### What does Good Friday celebrate?

Many Christians around the world observe Good Friday on the Friday before Easter Sunday (Reiss 2017). It commemorates Jesus Christ's Passion, crucifixion, and death, which is told in the Christian Bible. It is the day after Maundy Thursday. Good Friday, also known as holy Friday, Long Friday, Sad Friday and great Friday in other parts of the world, commemorates the day Jesus Christ was crucified by the Romans.

### When Good Friday is celebrated?

Usually, Good Friday falls between 20th March and 23rd April which may vary every year. The day is considered to be the black day for all Christians as it marks the death of Jesus Christ. Good Friday is the second day of the Easter Triduum, which begins with Maundy (or Holy) Thursday and culminates in the Easter vigil mass held at midnight on the day after Good Friday.

### How is Good Friday celebrated?

Malaysian Christians gather in churches around the country for services to mark the "saddest day" in the Christian calendar. Many churches hold several services, including one at 3pm (the hour Christ is traditionally said to have died). On the day of Good Friday most Christians spend their day offering prayer, fasting and in meditation for the pain and suffering that Christ went through on the cross. Apart from that there are many other customs and traditions that are followed by the people. On this day of sorrow even the bells at the church are not rung.

## 2.10 EASTER DAY

### What does Easter celebrate?

Christians celebrate Easter on a Sunday as it was the day Jesus rose from the dead, after being crucified on a Friday two days before (Reiss 2017).

### When is Easter celebrated?

Easter is usually celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon, after the spring equinox. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ's death and resurrection occurred around the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first full moon following the spring equinox. This led to Christians celebrating Easter on different dates each year. For the Western churches, the earliest Easter can fall is on March 22, and the latest it is on April 25.

### How is Easter celebrated?

They typically wear the colour white on this day as it symbolises the resurrection in the form of light. Easter comes at the end of Lent, a period marked by the three pillars: prayer, sacrifice and fasting. Just like Aidilfitri, which is a celebration of the end of a month of fasting, the forty days of Lent are in preparation for Easter. In addition to the traditional fasting from food, many choose to fast from specific vices like jealousy. Resisting the temptation of such things is a lesson in patience, and helps us to be in greater solidarity with the poor.

## 3.0 PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Malaysia is known as a multicultural country, race and religion. People nowadays are lack of general knowledge on the festival and celebrations of other races. Especially for the younger generations, their knowledge on the festivals and celebrations of other religious or cultural in Malaysia are very minimal. Furthermore, the lack of awareness among ethnic in a multicultural heritage are also minimum. They only know the main festivals that will be shown on television or that are stated in the calendar. Lack of exposure and knowledge about all festivals and celebrations of others religious or cultural in Malaysia in our communities and young generation nowadays. Less of awareness among ethnic in multicultural heritage, many religious festivals is also public holidays and are celebrated nationwide regardless of race or belief.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are as follows exposed and spread knowledge about minor festivals and celebrations in religious and cultural in Malaysia, cultivate spirit about multicultural heritage, many religious festivals are also public holidays and are celebrated nationwide regardless of race or belief and overcome stereotypes of community mindset, thinking and understanding.

### 4.0 METHODOLOGY

This research wants to find out the knowledge of Malaysian from three major races on the minor festivals in Malaysia. In order to determine samples understanding on this issues survey through questionnaire and interview being used. 124 samples used in the survey through Internet for 3 weeks. To support the survey data the team did interview on site at Pantai Telok Kemang.

#### 4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

The online survey is put up in the Internet for 3 weeks and the total of responses is 124 people from all races religions and ages. Questions :

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What is your races?

- a. Malay : 90.3 %
- b. Chinese : 5.6 %
- c. Indian : 0.8 %
- d. Singh : 0 %
- e. Others : 3.2 %

What is your age?

- a. 18 – 25 : 53.2 %
- b. 26 – 35 : 35.5 %
- c. 36 and above : 11.3 %

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What is your religion?

- a. Islam : 92.4 %
- b. Hindu : 0.9 %
- c. Buddha : 6 %
- d. Christian : 0.9 %

Gender?

- a. Male : 37.1 %
- b. Female : 62.9 %

Nationality?

- a. Malaysian : 75 %
- b. Bumiputera : 25 %
- c. Others : 0 %

Everyone knows that muslim celebrate Eid Fitri as their main celebration.

Do you know any others festival?

- a. Yes : 97.5 %
- b. No : 2.5 %

Do you know the different between Eid Fitri and Eid Adha?

- a. Yes : 91.7%
- b. No : 5.8 %
- c. Maybe : 2.5 %

Do you know others celebration for Buddha's besides Chinese New Year?

- a. Yes : 83.6%
- b. No : 4.9%
- c. Maybe : 11.5 %

Reasons for celebrating Wesak Day?

- a. To fins a life partner : 4.9%
- b. For cleansing soul by bathing the Buddha statue : 95.1%

Do you know the meaning of Thaipusam Celebration?

- a. Hold a parade and marching to the temple : 22.1%
- b. Showing appreciation to Lord Murugan ( Son of Shiva ) : 77.9%

What is the Thaiponggal celebration means?

- a. To prepare & cook a dish from early dawn : 17.4%
- b. Thanksgiving and harvest festival dedicated to the Sun God : 82.6 %

What is Vaisakhi?

- a. To celebrate the founding of the Singh community know as „ Khalsa “ : 68.9 %
- b. To celebrate the birth of their god : 31.1 %

What is Easter Day?

- a. To believe of the Easter bunny for spreading the love and fun giving chocolate egg to childrens : 54.9 %
- b. The day of Jesus Christ being reborn : 45.1 %

Do you aware that we live in a multiculture race and religion country?

- a. Yes : 97.5 %
- b. No : 0 %
- c. Maybe : 2.5 %

Do you know the reasons for muslim celebrating Maulidur Rasul?

- a. To remember the date of birth of Prophet Muhammad SAW : 94.3%
- b. Celebrating the new year in the islam calendar : 5.7%

Why the muslim celebrating Eid Adha?

- a. To celebrate the starting month of Hajj : 13.8 %
- b. Commemorate the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to follow Allah SWT commad to sacrifice his son : 86.2 %

Which one is the Buddha's celebration?

- a. Chap Goh Mei & Mooncake Festival : 43.9%
- b. Wesak Day & Hungry Ghocht Festival : 56.1%

What do the most activity for Hungry Ghost Festival?

- a. Pray and offering the ghost and spirit of the death food & entertainment : 89.4%
- b. Hold a Lantern parade : 10.6%

Why on Thaipusam the hindu's carrying Kavadi?

- a. As a decoration for festival : 3.3%
- b. Behalf of need healing & balancing spiritual debts of sins : 96.7%

Do you know the name of the Singh festival?

- a. Yes : 19.8 %
- b. No : 65.3 %
- c. Maybe : 14.9 %

Christmas is the main festival that celebrated by the Christian but do you know that there are some others festival?

- a. Yes : 66.9 %
- b. No : 16.5 %
- c. Maybe : 16.5%

Why Christian celebrating Good Friday?

- a. To remember the day of Jesus Christ being cruxixion and his death at Cavary : 76.2 %
- b. To celebrate the holy of Friday : 23.8 %

From the data analysis shown based on the online survey majority samples from different race do not know the minor festival from the major festival. This ignorance due to nobody cares and wants to know minor festival from other races. Data shown only samples from same race know and understand minor festival from their own race. Since Malay is the majority from data analysis shows Malay is the highest number of races that know and recognize minor festival from other religion and race.

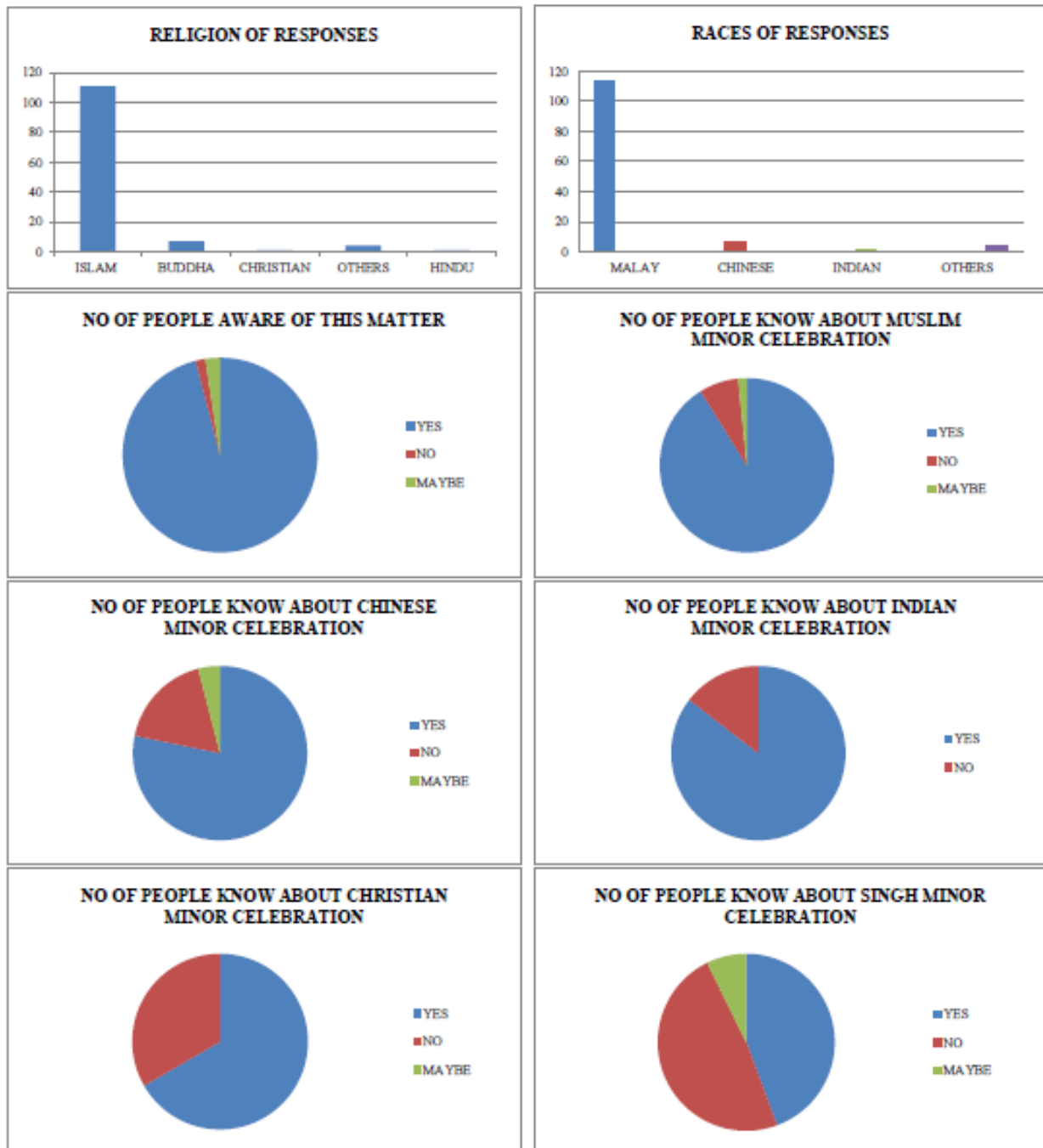


Picture 1 Eid Celebration



Picture 2 Thaipusam

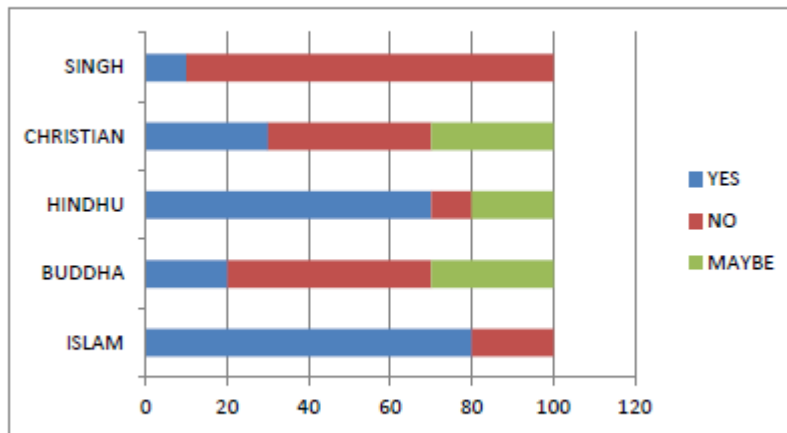
### 4.2 Online Survey Session Result





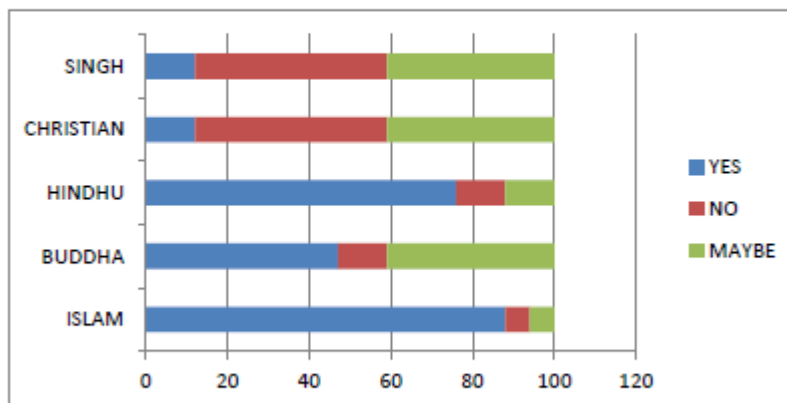
### 4.3 Personal Interview Session Results

#### WOMEN



BAR CHART : NO OF WOMEN KNOWS ABOUT MINOR

#### MEN



BAR CHART : NO OF MEN KNOWS ABOUT MINOR FESTIVAL

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be made from this study of the minor festival in Malaysia is that mostly netizen in Malaysia do not know the minor celebration and festival in Malaysia then the main festival that are celebrated by the multiracial races in Malaysia. Furthermore, the investigation or studies that we had carried out have shown that mostly people in Malaysia are not aware and expose about the information or detail about the minor festival and celebration in our country. So by doing this activity we get a chance to spread the information from the interview and give a brochure that contain information about the minor festival and celebration. Lastly, this study helps us to get more information and we learn more about other races and religion in Malaysia. Moreover, this study also helps us to be more sensitive and respect other culture, religion and understanding between Malaysian.

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