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**Impacts of the Xiaohongshu on Perceptions of National and Cultural Identities
Among Malaysian Chinese Secondary School Students**

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, the global social media platform Xiaohongshu has a potential impact on the cultural and national identity perception of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students through the wide dissemination of Chinese movies and TV dramas and propaganda about the current situation of China. Although this group shares roots with the Chinese in China, their identity and cultural experiences have changed due to the vicissitudes of time, space and environment. This study aims to gain insight into the dynamic process of national and cultural identity perception among Malaysian Chinese secondary school students in a social media environment, especially on Xiaohongshu. Through in-depth interviews, questionnaires and content analysis, this study reveals how social media affects individual identity construction to provide reference and inspiration for future social media education.

Keywords: Malaysian Chinese secondary school students, National identity, Cultural identity, Social media, Media effect theory, Cognitive effect,

STUDENT DECLARATION FORM

Department of Journalism

Academic Honesty Regarding Final Year Projects

The following are examples of academic dishonesty extracted from “Student Handbook” that are more applicable to final year projects.

- plagiarism, i.e., the failure to properly acknowledge the use of another person’s work;
- submission for assessment of material that is not the student’s own work;
- collusion, i.e., obtaining assistance in doing work which is meant to be solely the student’s own work;
- use of fabricated data claimed to be obtained by experimental work, or data copied or obtained by unfair means;

It is important that the student reads the Student Handbook and understands the seriousness of academic dishonesty. The student should pay particular attention on how to avoid plagiarism.

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “**Impacts of the Xiaohongshu on perceptions of national and cultural identities among Malaysian Chinese secondary School students**” prepared and submitted by Liu Yunjing in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.

Dr. Tan Huey Pyng

Date: 09/02/2024

Supervisor

Supervisor' s name

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Since ages, the mainstream media has been the primary means of communicating information to people, it is also an important part of someone's life. According to Luedecke and Boykoff (2017), the scope of mass media includes traditional media such as television, newspapers, radio, magazines, books, and flyers, as well as emerging media such as social media and the Internet. Over the past few decades, the media consumption patterns of Malaysian Chinese youth have undergone a sea change. From the pre-millennium era of print media to today's digital era of social e-commerce, their media experience has evolved significantly.

According to Rosmani et al. (2020), electronic mass media in Malaysia originated in 1946. The first is radio, the development of radio in Malaysia, which began in 1946 through Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) and expanded widely until now there are numerous channels; The second is television, which was introduced by RTM on September 16, 1963 and began to spread widely. Beginning in the 1990s, the Internet was rolled out in Malaysia, and in 1996, when Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TMB) joined, computer usage and ownership increased significantly. In 2016, Malaysia's Internet connection rate reached 77.6%, with people preferring to use Twitter or Facebook for social networking.

At the same time, China's digital technology is booming. In recent years, China has seen an information and communications technology (ICT) revolution, surpassing the United States as the world's largest telephone market in 2003, and as of February 2008, the number of

Chinese Internet users had surpassed that of the United States (Zhang & Zheng, 2009). The evolution of social media has revolutionized the way billions of people communicate, thanks to the advancement of Internet information technology. Social media, through the internet

and mobile technology, meets the need for more contact between organizations, businesses, and individuals (Zhou & Wang, 2014). Social media is ideal because it reflects the attributes of engagement, interaction, openness, and transparency (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

With the development of China's financial and network technology, social media exploded in China and several influential social media were born, such as WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu (Yu & Alizadeh, 2023). Recently, the number of overseas users of Chinese social media (CSM) such as Douban, Xiaohongshu and Weibo has increased significantly (Hu et al., 2020). A plethora of social media platforms have emerged, with XiaoHongshu being one of the most influential.

Xiaohongshu, an online shopping and social networking platform founded in China in June 2013 and the site claims to have 200 million users as of January 2019 (Xiaohongshu, n.d.). There are desktop and mobile terminals in the Xiaohongshu community, and combined with video and live streaming functions. Users can also share product reviews and text introductions of tourist destinations, and it is regarded as China's improved version of Instagram (Tang, 2022). As of 2019, XiaoHongshu has more than 300 million registered users and more than 85 million monthly active users (Xiaohongshu, n.d.). 70% of the users

of the platform are the post-90s generation, and nearly 70% of them are women (Ipsos, 2020). The app allows users and influencers to post, discover, and share product reviews, most related to beauty and health (Chen, 2021). Travel bloggers also regularly post content about travel and leisure destinations on the platform (Digipanda, 2020). Xiaohongshu also operates RED Mall, which sells international products to Chinese users.

According to the authors' observation, due to the large number of clips from Chinese films and TV dramas and propaganda about the current situation in China that are widely disseminated on Xiaohongshu, and the fact that Xiaohongshu is a social media platform that is currently open to the whole world, and that most of the account owners are of Chinese nationality, Malaysian Chinese are more likely to be receptive to such content in terms of language condition. Although Malaysian Chinese share the same contextual background as those present in China, the identity and culture of Malaysian Chinese has changed over time, space and circumstances (Yow, 2016). So when Malaysian Chinese youths are on social platforms filled with values from mainland China, it is easy for Malaysian Chinese youths to blur their national and cultural identities.

In the digital age, the popularity of social media platforms has had a profound impact on individuals and society. As the Chinese secondary school students in Malaysia are facing the challenge of cultural identity and national identity, this study aims to explore the potential impact of Xiaohongshu on the perception of national identity and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students in this context.

1.2 Problem Statement

National and cultural identities, as the basic elements of the interaction between individuals and society, are crucial to the construction of individual identity. In Malaysia, the cultural differences between different ethnic groups and the multilingual environment make the construction of national and cultural identities complex and multi-layered.

Anderson's book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* states that national identity is an "imagined community" formed through shared history, culture and values (Benedict, 2008). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) emphasizes the construction of social identity among groups, which is particularly important in multicultural Malaysia. In the current social media environment, Xiaohongshu, as a powerful social platform, may have a unique media effect on the national and cultural identity of secondary school students through its content form.

When it comes to the connection between Malaysian Chinese and those present in China, it is not only about cultural inheritance, but also about deep historical and bloodline ties.

According to a study by Matondang (2016), the gradual transformation of Malaysian Chinese identities is a multi-faceted and gradual process. In the face of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic social background, they not only retain the Chinese tradition in the traditional fields of culture, language, religion, but also show the transformation of identity in all aspects of integration into Malaysian society. After a long sociocultural process and cultural

dialogue, the Malaysian Chinese created a new mixed culture through the interaction with the internal pressure of transnational identity and the external Resinicization (Ang, 2005).

In the age of social media ubiquity, various social platforms have risen rapidly across the globe, in Malaysia, the trend is just as significant. As of 2016, internet coverage in Malaysia has reached 77.6%(Rosmani et al., 2020), while nearly 90% of internet users have registered social media accounts in 2017(Wok & Mohamed, 2017). Based on the report “Use of Social Media by Children and Adolescents in East Asia, Malaysia Edition”, in 2018, 92% of children were able to access the Internet, and out of these, 91.8% accessed the Internet through a smartphone (UNICEF, 2020).

Based on the above situation, some Chinese social media from China is also becoming popular in Malaysia. When it comes to the use of Xiaohongshu in Malaysia, especially among Chinese secondary school students, although there is a lack of direct literature and data, research in related fields still provides some insights. As of 2022, the percentage of Xiaohongshu users under the age of 18 has reached 13.4%(qian-gua.com, 2023). Take WeChat, an app for smartphone and tablet users that is also tailored for social media platforms. The mobile social app WeChat has 549 million monthly active users worldwide. In Malaysia, WeChat and others have a 95% smartphone penetration rate (Abu Bakar, 2016). It can be seen that Chinese social media is being widely used by Malaysians.

At the same time, the rise of social media platforms has led to a new focus on young people's cultural identity (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Xiaohongshu, as a social shopping

platform, may influence user identity and behavior by promoting products with specific culture and values and user-generated content. Thus, two research objectives of this study are introduced.

1.3 Research Objectives

Despite the impact of globalization and digitalization, the shaping of the national and cultural identities of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students on digital platforms remains a relatively little-studied area. In particular, the social media platform Xiaohongshu has flourished globally, but its use among Chinese secondary school students in Malaysia and its impact on their national and cultural identities remains poorly investigated. In this context, this study aims to fill the research gap, explore the use of Xiaohongshu in Malaysian Chinese secondary school students, and analyze its potential impact on national and cultural identities.

In terms of specific research objectives, the overarching objective is to gain insight into the perceptions of Malaysian Chinese students about their ethnic and cultural identity, and whether these perceptions are influenced or influenced by their decision to come into contact with Xiaohongshu. By interviewing and analyzing students' perspectives, attitudes, and perceptions, this study aims to reveal how digital platforms shape and influence their sense of identity.

Secondly, how secondary school students use this digital tool to show their national and cultural identities on Xiaohongshu has been studied, including the types of content published by individuals on the platform and the presentation of cultural elements. Finally, this study focus on the social dimension of secondary school students' display of national and cultural identities on Xiaohongshu, and how such display forms a sense of national and cultural identities in digital social media, which includes the interaction mode among users on the investigation platform, including social behaviors such as comments, likes and sharing, and how these interactions build a sense of shared experience and identity. Through an in-depth study of the social identity formed by this social media, the expectation of this study is to understand how digital platforms play a role in influencing the national and cultural identities of secondary school students.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the above research objectives, in this study, this study explored in depth three key research questions to enhance the understanding of national and cultural identities of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students and reveal the potential influence of Xiaohongshu in this process.

First, this study focus on understanding how Malaysian Chinese students perceive their national and cultural identities. The question relates to individuals' perceptions and feelings

about their own identity, as well as their understanding of Malaysia's cultural traditions and multi-ethnic background.

Secondly, this study explored whether Xiaohongshu has an impact on Malaysian secondary school students' national and cultural identities. Digital platforms have become an important medium for shaping individual identity on a global scale, and Xiaohongshu may play a unique role in this process.

Finally, this study focus on how secondary school students construct, express and share their national and cultural identities on the Xiaohongshu. The question involves how digital media a creative space for students can be to present and share their unique understanding of peoples and cultures in the form of words, pictures, and videos.

1.5 Research Significance

Exploring the impact of social media on adolescent national and cultural identities has been a growing field in the social sciences (Jensen, 2011). However, there is a significant gap in the literature, and there is a lack of research on the specific impact of platforms like Xiaohongshu on the identity formation of secondary school students in Malaysia. The study aims to fill this gap and provide new insights into the intricate relationship between social media, particularly Xiaohongshu, and identity and cultural awareness among younger generations.

The digital age has brought new forms of communication and cultural exchange, and social media platforms play a key role in shaping youth perceptions and identities (Ahmed et al., 2022). Xiaohongshu featuring fashion, lifestyle and culture are emerging in the field. By studying this social media platform, this study aims to give Malaysian secondary school students, especially those of Chinese descent, a clear perception of their national and cultural identities.

Understanding the effect of Xiaohongshu on teenagers is more than just an academic study; It has practical implications for education and social cohesion. With an in-depth look at the ways in which the platform impacts identity, this study is expected to be able to shed light on potential gaps or challenges in the current Malaysian educational environment.

In addition, by gaining an in-depth understanding of how Xiaohongshu affects the national and cultural identities of secondary school students in Malaysia, this study may help promote cultural diversity and respect. In an increasingly interconnected world, it is essential to foster inclusive societies that sensitively understand and respect different cultures (M. Y. Lee & Greene, 2004). This study aims to contribute to the achievement of this wider social goal by equipping young people with sensitivity and understanding in multiculturalism.

In addition, during the age of globalization, individuals from a single culture are able to meet other cultures or engage in intercultural interactions and thus exchange their experiences with each other. This interaction may also change the person's identity, with

regard to his or her nationality and culture. Good citizenship education, as early as early childhood, is one of the options to counter the harmful results of globalization, especially with respect to the construction of national identity (Rizkiyani, 2018). Through the study of the Chinese secondary school students in Malaysia, it is helpful for educators to realize the importance of educating young people with correct national and cultural identities.

In conclusion, the significance of the study lies in its potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Malaysian Chinese students perceive their national and cultural identities, and whether their perception is influenced by their decision to come into contact with Xiaohongshu. By addressing gaps in the field of research, this study aims to contribute not only to academic knowledge, but also to the promotion of a more inclusive and culturally sensitive society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 National and Cultural Identities

National and cultural identities are seen as core components of individual identity, although national and cultural identities are hotly debated topics in almost all countries today. Many scholars have different opinions about these controversies.

A "nation" is a named human population, sharing a historical territory, a common mythology and historical memory, and laws and obligations shared by all its members (Wodak, 2009). National identity is the quality of any collective that causes its members to identify with it. What causes members to identify with the group includes two broad aspects: first, the characteristics of the individual components of the group, such as a common language, culture, or ethnicity, that cause them to identify with each other; second, the characteristics of the group itself, such as its establishment, narrative history, and role in the international community, lead to a sense of shared interest in the destiny of the whole (Dittmer, 2004).

Culture is an important part of the social fabric and can be defined as the way of life of that society, including every moment and relationship and connection of an individual from birth to death. Culture is also a social product that everyone develops after learning, and this product is usually full of emotion (Altugan, 2015).

In the context of this discussion, some scholars have already had a discussion on national and cultural identities. Parekh challenges these and related assumptions by arguing that

national identity is not a substance, but rather a set of tendencies and values that are neither fixed nor arbitrarily changing, requiring periodic redefinition throughout history (Parekh, 1995). However, this identity is defined not only from the inside, that is, from the characteristics shared by the compatriots of the nation, but also from the outside, that is, by distinguishing and differentiating the nation from other nations or ethnic groups. National identity is meaningful only through comparison with others (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

In addition, other scholars have suggested that cultural identity, often thought of as a fixed and exclusive entity with an inherently positive moral claim, is particularly problematic (Kim & Kim, 1994). Cultural identity is also considered to be an integral part of an individual's self, which may influence an individual's social and personal functioning (Bhugra, 1999).

2.2 Adolescent Education and Personal Identity

Previous studies have shown consistency in educating adolescent about national and cultural identity.

According to Eid (Eid, 2015), training young people to be active citizens must be a core value of schools and educational institutions. Therefore, citizenship education is very important because every society needs people who can contribute effectively to the future health of the local, national and global communities. A study covering Europe states that

cultural and linguistic diversity in societies is an important resource, and that the goal of education must be to "awaken the young", so establishing national and cultural identities for students is a means of preserving cultural heritage (Faas, 2007).

Based on this, some scholars have pointed out that cultural and material environment affects the way young people live and think, and it is important to place young people in their country and cultural context under similar social and cultural background (Donnelly & Evans, 2016). Besides, the modern educational institution, as a social and educational setting, creates actual conditions for students to build their national and cultural identities. It is critical to prevent displays of intolerance and support the creation of the personality's national-cultural identity during the maturation process.(Matvienko, 2020).

2.3 Malaysian Chinese Community Status

As of July 2023, 70.1% of Malaysia's population is Malays, 22.6% Chinese, and 6.6% Indian. People who do not fall into one of these three major categories are classified as "other" groups.(Statista, 2023). Malaysia's multicultural background is a unique historical and cultural environment for the Chinese community.

According to Clark (2000), ancestor worship, like many other elements of Malaysian Chinese culture, while in many ways strongly similar to the original Chinese cultural system from which it has historically originated, is in fact very different from this cultural

system: it is an expression of the unique Malaysian Chinese culture and an integral part of the rich multi-ethnic fabric of modern Malaysian society. Some scholars have suggested that after the arrival of Chinese ancestors in Malaysia, some Chinese Muslims found themselves overwhelmed between the predominantly non-Chinese Muslim community and the predominantly non-Muslim Chinese community, and for survival purposes or political designs, they quickly integrated into one of the groups (Ma, 2005), which also became one of the religious backgrounds of the Chinese community in Malaysia.

Using the lens of multicultural citizenship can help to understand Malaysian Chinese as well as the country at large. In recent years, Chinese Malaysians have expressed their political aspirations and demands to rid themselves of the stigma of racial restrictions and envision a more inclusive multicultural citizenship for Malaysia as a nation state (Yow, 2017). Some scholars are pessimistic about Chinese politics in Malaysia, arguing that it has been on a downward spiral since independence and that the Chinese community has now been completely marginalized. In particular, it is largely powerless in all key policy areas affecting the Chinese community. Under these circumstances, the political strategy of the Chinese political parties changed to the politics of "service" and "fear" (Chin, 2001).

Certainly, there exist scholars who hold a favorable stance towards Malaysian politics and policies. Due to Malaysia's ethnic politics, ethnic preference policies affect most areas of the country, including social, political and economic fields, especially the Chinese language education in Malaysia (Xia et al., 2018). Conversely, Tan et al. (Tan & Teoh, 2015) argue

that the different positions taken by the MCA and Chinese educators on issues related to Chinese language education further complicate this collaboration. This different stance reflects the political limitations of MCA in advancing the cause of Chinese education. MCA, as a coalition partner, must adhere to the elite accommodation model adopted by the coalition. This inclusive approach cannot meet the firm demands of Chinese educators on China's educational issues. In addition, previous studies also pointed out that the development of Chinese education in Malaysia faces many problems and challenges. Chinese primary schools are clearly not being treated fairly and equally by the government, as shown by the inadequate distribution of development funds and the acute shortage of trained teachers, for which Chinese primary schools have to rely heavily on charitable donations from the Chinese community (Raman et al., 2015).

2.4 The Impact of Social Media on Education

Seventy percent of teens reported using social media multiple times a day as their favorite method of communication, along with texting and face-to-face interaction (Rideout & Robb, 2018). Social media helps promote active learning by exposing students to their own learning process and requires them to engage in a higher level of thinking for critical evaluation of content, connection with previous knowledge, control and reflection on metacognitive strategies (Bransford et al., 2000). Active participation in social media can also increase student motivation and engagement in various content areas

(Schwarz & Caduri, 2016). More than that, social media "provides people with the opportunity to act as agents in their own learning" (Moje, 2016).

Even if there are many promising examples of academic communication opportunities driven by social media, keep criticism in mind (Greenhow et al., 2019). One of the biggest drawbacks of social media in education is privacy issues, such as the disclosure of personal information on the site; Since social media is based on online communication, students may lose the ability to communicate in person; Many bloggers and authors post wrong information on social networking sites, which can also mislead students (Siddiqui, 2016). Social media can also lead to false self-diagnosis (Akram & Kumar, 2017).

2.5 Immigration and Cultural Identity

Different approaches to categorizing immigration status may lead to different results of studies conducted on these populations. In the literature, two primary definitions are commonly employed to delineate individuals with a connection to a country distinct from their current residence. The first, "foreign-born," designates individuals born in a country other than their present abode, offering a static categorization irrespective of the immigration status of their parents or grandparents. This widely utilized definition, however, excludes second and third-generation immigrants. In contrast, the second definition, "foreigner," pertains to individuals affiliated with or demonstrating allegiance to

another country. Notably, this status is subject to change over time, contingent upon the legal requisites of each country. Such legal parameters often hinge on the historical ties between nations (Gimeno-Feliu et al., 2019). According to Joppke (1998), migration opens up new Spaces of mobility and facilitates the normalized exchange of information, resources and population, and migration thus becomes a permanent and structural presence.

Since migration is an international movement (UN Migration, 2019) from one region to another, it often involves cultural conflicts and integration. A key debate in the study of Indigenous-migrant relations concerns the barriers to integration posed by ethnic-cultural differences and socioeconomic disadvantage. Specifically, differences between groups in the strength of norms and sanctions that regulate the social interactions of members outside the group. These "closed" norms create a distance between race and culture (McDoom, 2019). Although the process of socialization is usually carried out in the context of adapting to life in a new cultural environment, it must be stressed that it can also happen unintentionally during intercultural meetings and contacts, and whenever there are intercultural contacts and encounters, cultural conflicts of a different nature can arise (Bodziany, 2008).

Cultural integration means that people of one culture absorb the essence of another culture while maintaining their own culture. They not only do not lose their own culture, but also do not completely reject the new culture, but integrate the two (Kessler, 2023). Schools are the first place where all second-generation immigrants come into contact with indigenous

and native cultures, and schools are important integration mechanisms. Second, because many adults spend most of their lives in couples (or families), it is of particular interest to observe couples' behavior, especially to observe different patterns of integration between individuals in conracial couples and partners in mixed marriages, where cultural adaptation and integration are necessary (Kohler, 2012).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

To explore the influence of Xiaohongshu on the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students, it is necessary to use the cognitive effect in media effect theory to help deeply understand the media's shaping of individual identity. Cognitive effects refer to the effects of media exposure on individual mental processes or products of mental processes, usually involving the acquisition, processing, and storage of information (Potter, 2012). Under this theoretical framework, this study deeply explored the driving force of “Xiaohongshu” as a medium for the identification of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students.

The theory of cognitive effects emphasizes that media exerts an influence on the cognition of individuals through direct and indirect ways, thus shaping their understanding of the real world. A new comprehensive model of cognitive media effects is roughly composed by examining the main existing research threads in the field of cognitive effects, namely

agenda setting, framing, and priming (B. G. Lee & McLeod, 2020). However, these models are all related to the ability of the media to tell people "what to consider" (Iyengar et al., 1984). Therefore, the theory emphasizes the influence relationship between the individual and the media, especially in the modern society with rich information.

The cognitive effect in media effect theory involves the influence of Xiaohongshu on information acquisition. User-generated content and community interaction on the platform may provide students with new knowledge and perspectives, and affect their perception of national history and cultural traditions. Individuals seek information in the media and interact with the media to shape their perceptions of the country and culture (Xu & Wu, 2015). Chinese secondary school students in Malaysia may obtain information related to their culture and country through the Xiaohongshu, so as to form a specific identity.

Most importantly, media effect theory emphasises the impact of media on audience perceptions and attitudes, and cognitive effect is a key concept in this theoretical framework, referring to the impact of media on individual knowledge, beliefs, and cognitive structures. As national and cultural identities are seen as part of cognition, the theory serve as a underpinning for explaining the relationship between media and national and cultural identity, while providing a strong theoretical basis for deepening the understanding of the influence of such social media.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, the research targets young social media users in Malaysia especially Chinese secondary school students, so the research is conducted in Malaysia. To better answer the research questions and verify the hypotheses, this study chose to adopt the method of qualitative research, that is, use the in-depth interview mode, and purposefully select Chinese secondary school students in Malaysia for data collection.

In studying the interaction between Malaysian Chinese secondary school students and Xiaohongshu, the qualitative research method was chosen to gain insight into their experiences, views and perceptions on this digital media platform. Qualitative research methods have multifaceted strengths to provide a deep understanding of individual experiences, to better explore complex social phenomena, and to accommodate cultural diversity, which is essential for studying complex topics such as national and cultural identities.

One of the great strengths of the qualitative approach is its ability to gain a deep understanding of individual experiences (Merriam, 2002). Through in-depth interviews, observation and text analysis, we can break through the surface and dig deeper into the emotions, attitudes and opinions of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students when using Xiaohongshu. This deep understanding helps capture their unique experience of national and cultural identities. Qualitative research is suitable for studying

complex social phenomena and diverse cultural backgrounds (Mohajan, 2018), and provides researchers with a tool to be able to more fully understand the growing experience of different individuals in different cultural environments. This is crucial for conducting research in a cross-cultural context.

Semi-structured interviews is used to explore topics in depth, enabling participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses. In view of the qualitative research used in this study, this study purposefully select the interview subjects, namely, the Malaysian secondary school students who use Xiaohongshu. Referring to the research objectives of this study, the interview questions starts from the following aspects: 1. Ethnic and Cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese students 2. Influence of social media on cultural identity: 3. Expressing identity and cultural identity on social media platforms. The 16-20 interview questions were designed and slightly adjusted according to the feedback and situation of different interviewees.

As for the data collection tools, the recorder and notebook were used during the interview, the purpose of which was to be more flexible in collecting information and facing unexpected situations during the interview.

Finally, all collected information and data is analyzed using the method of thematic analysis. This approach has many advantages and is suitable for research questions that face complex national and cultural identity and media influence. The thematic analysis method is a flexible and open approach that allows researchers to induce themes from data without

being bound by a priori theory (L. Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Given that the subjects involved complex cultural identities and media influences, the flexibility of this approach would provide greater freedom for this study to more accurately capture the real experiences of the participants. Thematic analysis is able to present the true voices and perspectives of

the participants (Nowell et al., 2017). By extracting themes and sub-themes, the rich experiences of the participants in terms of cultural identity and media use can be well displayed, making the findings more relevant to the lives and perspectives of the actual participants.

3.2 Sample and Sampling

This study focuses on the influence of Xiaohongshu on the national and cultural identities cognition of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students. Therefore, the sample is aimed at the group of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students. It is worth noting that purposeful sampling method is adopted in this study, that is, the sample should meet three conditions. First, the sample must be Chinese in Malaysia; Second, it must be in secondary schools; Third, the sample must have the experience of using Xiaohongshu. Purposeful sampling refers to the selection of "typical" cases (Poulis et al., 2013), which can reduce the waste of resources in the research process.

Compared with comprehensive sampling or random sampling, purposeful sampling can obtain specific samples more economically, saving time and cost. In addition, purposeful sampling is an ideal choice when researchers wish to gain insight into specific groups or populations with specific characteristics. This approach can help researchers delving into special situations or phenomena to obtain more detailed information.

In interview studies, sample size is usually demonstrated by interviewing participants until "data saturation" is reached (Francis et al., 2010). Some scholars believe that "saturation" is basically achieved after 12 interviews and definitely achieved after 30 interviews (Galvin, 2015). Therefore, 15-25 samples are expected to be interviewed in this study to guarantee that data saturation is achieved.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection is a key stage in any research endeavor and is the basis for analysis and interpretation (Green et al., 2007). In order to fully understand the cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students, this study used data collection methods of in-depth interviews, and text analysis. This combination is able to provide multiple perspectives that dig deep into individual experiences, group interactions, and content on digital media platforms.

It is worth noting that since the sample is secondary school students, they may not have the ability to understand the concept of "national and cultural identity", so the author simplify the definition of this concept under the original framework and explain it to the respondents. In addition, when asking interview questions, the interview questions also be based on the life background and experience of the interviewees, so as to avoid the technical terms too esoteric for the interviewees to understand.

In-depth interviews are a key means of acquiring individual experiences and perspectives (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). One-on-one conversations with the participants provided insight into their feelings about cultural identity, the impact of family and community, and the specific role of the Little Red Book in their lives. In addition, by analyzing, tracking, and understanding students' speech, interaction, and content creation on digital media from the texts on the Xiaohongshu platform, this not only makes their behavior on the platform easy to understand, but also helps to identify themes and patterns. Before the interview, an interview guide according to the objectives of this study was designed to prevent the interview from going off-topic and causing bias in data collection.

3.4 Data Analysis

First, the collected data collated, which include transcripts of face-to-face or remote interviews, transcripts of focus group discussions, and text data collected from

Xiaohongshu. Ensure data is complete, clear, and anonymized to protect participants' privacy. Prior to starting formal thematic analysis, initial familiarization of the data was performed by reading interview transcriptions, textual content, or other forms of data in order to establish an intuitive perception of the overall dataset. Mark possible themes, patterns, and important ideas while recording preliminary ideas. Based on the previous, start to identify the theme. Similar data are organized together to form conceptual themes. This may involve sorting the data, collating it, and then identifying themes that are reflected in the data. A topic can be a specific idea, emotion, behavior, or experience. The next step is to review and define the identified topics, ensuring that each topic is internally consistent and has substantial content. This helps ensure that topics can realistically reflect patterns and meanings in the data. Finally, an in-depth analysis of each topic is conducted to ensure that the inherent meaning and implications of the topic are understood. This may include looking at specific pieces of data under the topic, looking for patterns and understanding how the topic relates to the research question and background theory.

3.5 Expected Outcome

Although it is not possible to accurately predict the results of specific studies, possible trends and directions of findings can be inferred because the results depend directly on the findings of the data and thematic analysis. Due to the multicultural background of Malaysia, there may be rich cultural experiences and identities among participants.

Secondly, Xiaohongshu may have a certain influence on the cultural identity of the participants, which may include the ambiguity of their nationality and cultural identity caused by the specific content on the platform. Third, on the Xiaohongshu platform, it may be found that participants express and reinforce their cultural identity through social interaction and content resonance. There may be some common themes or topics that allow them to make connections and share their cultural experiences with each other. There may be individual differences among participants, and factors such as age and education level may have different effects on cultural identity and Xiaohongshu use.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles need to be fully considered and respected when conducting research, especially when personal information and subjective experiences of participants are involved. Before starting the study, ensure that participants fully understand the study purpose, process, possible risks and benefits, and voluntarily agree to participate, they should understand that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty (Petrova et al., 2016). Secondly, it is very important to protect the privacy of participants, ensure that no information that can identify individuals is disclosed in data analysis and reporting, and use anonymous ways to present research results. It is important to note that as the study deals with cultural identity, it was ensured that the cultural differences of the participants were respected and understood in the study. Avoid the use of offensive or

stereotyping language, and ensure that research tools and methods are fair to participants from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, it was ensured that the mental health and well-being of the participants in the study was safeguarded. Appropriate support and guidance were provided for questions that might touch on sensitive topics to ensure that participants were not harmed by their participation in the study. Establishing transparency helps build trust relationships and makes participants more willing to share their experiences (Oza et al., 2006). In addition to these, this study followed all applicable regulations and ethical guidelines, including obtaining research ethical approval, to ensure that everything in the research process is legal and compliant. It is worth mentioning that this study ensured that all participants were treated fairly in the study without discrimination or bias based on their individual characteristics or views. Finally, consider the possible impact of the research on society and ensure that the research design and application of the results are consistent with societal values and ethical standards.

4. Findings and Analysis

NO.	Pseudonym	Age	Form	School (State)	Duration of using Xiaohongshu
1	Abby	15	4	SMK Labuan (Sabah)	1 year
2	Billie	16	5	SMJK Heng Ee Cawangan Bayan Baru (Penang)	2 years
3	Cheryl	17	5	SMK Triang (Pahang)	3 months
4	Dobby	13	2	SMK Munshi Sulaiman (Johor)	1.5 years
5	Eilish	15	4	SMJK Heng Ee Cawangan Bayan Baru (Penang)	9 months
6	Frederick	17	5	SMK Telok Panglima Garang (Selangor)	1 year
7	Grace	14	3	SMK Telok Panglima Garang (Selangor)	3 years
8	Henry	14	3	SMJK Chong Hwa (Kuala Lumpur)	1 year
9	Isabel	16	4	SMK Merbau (Sarawak)	5 months
10	Jennifer	16	5	SMK Tanjong Sepat (Selangor)	2 years
11	Kelvin	14	2	SMK Munshi Sulaiman (Johor)	11 months
12	Lily	15	3	SMJK Krian (Perak)	14 months
13	Mathew	15	4	Sekolah Menengah Tinggi Chung Hua Seremban (Sembilan)	3 years
14	Nora	12	1	SMK Tanjong Sepat (Selangor)	2 years
15	Olivia	15	3	SMK Labuan (Sabah)	7 months
16	Peter	13	2	SMJK Chong Hwa (Kuala Lumpur)	2.5 years

17	Quinn	17	5	SMK Munshi Sulaiman (Johor)	3 years
18	Raphael	14	3	SMK Jalan Damai (Penang)	1.5 years
19	Sam	16	5	Sekolah Kebangsaan (L) Methodist (ACS) Klang (Selangor)	2 years
20	Thomas	14	2	SMJK Heng Ee (Penang)	2 years

In this study, purposive sampling was used to find 20 Malaysian secondary school students who were enrolled in secondary school and had experience in using Xiaohongshu; above is the information sheet of all respondents. Among them, 65% (13 respondents) are from the SMK, 25% (5 respondents) from the SMJK, and 10% (2 respondents) from the Chinese Independent Secondary School. All of them had six years of Chinese primary education before moving on to their respective secondary schools.

4.1 Existing identity construction before Xiaohongshu influence

Understanding and constructing personal identity is a complex process involving many factors. Especially for students, school and family play a key role in this process. This section explored the impact of Chinese primary education and family education on the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students.

Chinese primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' national and cultural identity. In Malaysia, many Chinese students receive six years of primary education in Chinese. This experience is not only about learning Chinese language and culture but also a process of identity construction. In this learning stage, students are not only exposed to

traditional Chinese culture but also profoundly influenced by language, values and social norms of behavior. This kind of education has established a basic identity related to Chinese culture for them and made them have a deeper cognition and sense of identity to their own cultural background.

Secondly, family education is another important factor. In the family, the words and deeds of parents and elders have a profound impact on children's identity. Malaysian Chinese families usually attach importance to the passing on of traditional culture, instilling cultural values in their children through activities such as daily life, family gatherings and festive celebrations. This kind of home education not only helps children to establish emotional identification with the culture but also deepens their emotional connection and cognition of the country.

In this study, most respondents showed a clear perception of their national and cultural identity. This cognition is gradually formed under the joint influence of school and family education. The Chinese education and family cultural inheritance they have received since childhood have made them identify themselves as Malaysian Chinese and have a deep understanding and respect for Chinese traditional culture. This steadiness of identity reflects the importance of education in the construction of individual identity.

However, it is worth noting that about 20% of respondents are uncertain about their national and cultural identity. This uncertainty may originate from the complexity of individual experiences and feelings and may also be affected by social circumstances and external factors. These students may feel ambivalent or vacillating about their identity and consider

themselves to be Chinese-born in Malaysia because of their family background, personal experience or social perception. As the respondent Isabel said, "Sometimes I am not sure whether I am Chinese or Malaysian, because I like China very much and I have been to China many times. When I lived in China, I felt more at home than when I lived in Malaysia."

Chinese primary education and family education play a crucial role in constructing the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students. Together, these two influence the individual's understanding and sense of identity of their own cultural identity. Through in-depth research and discussion, we can better understand and support the growth and development of adolescents in the process of identity construction.

4.1.1 The foundation of cultural identity laid by Chinese education

School education has a significant impact in shaping student identity, especially in special education settings such as Chinese Primary schools. Chinese Language Primary School provides students with the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and language, thus laying the foundation for their cultural identity. This section explores the importance of Chinese primary education for the cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese students, combining the insights and experiences of the respondents to explore their exposure to and understanding of Chinese culture during primary school.

As a special educational institution, Chinese Primary School emphasizes the study of Chinese culture and language and provides a unique learning environment for students. "In primary school, we learned a lot about Chinese culture and history, such as Chinese traditional festivals and ancient poems," respondent Cheryl recalled. This kind of education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the enlightenment and shaping of their cultural identity. In this environment, students gain insight into Chinese values, traditional customs, and historical contexts that have had a profound impact on their Chinese cultural identity.

The learning experience at Chinese Primary School gives students a basic identity related to Chinese culture. Through classroom teaching and cultural activities, they gradually formed an emotional connection and sense of identity with Chinese culture. Many of the respondents mentioned their exposure to and understanding of Chinese culture during their primary school years. According to respondent Lily, "I learned to cut paper and write Chinese New Year couplets in primary school, which are all part of Chinese culture." Respondent Kelvin said, "Primary school teachers teach us how to write Chinese calligraphy and introduce us to Chinese ancient poetry outside the textbooks. It was very interesting and sparked my interest in Chinese culture."

Through the study of Chinese traditional festivals, historical stories and literary works, students gradually understand the profound connotation of Chinese culture, thus forming a recognition and identification of their cultural background.

In the context of children, education can be viewed as an ongoing process that supports their development, enabling them to apply and utilize their knowledge in preparation for the future (Idris et al., 2012). Chinese primary school education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about shaping and inspiring students' identity. This kind of education allows students to be exposed to multiple cultures from an early age, and develops their cross-cultural awareness and respect for different cultures. Respondents generally agreed that the Chinese primary school education had laid a solid foundation for their cultural identity, allowing them to face their cultural identity with more confidence and pride in their subsequent study and life. Respondents Grace and Henry both said, "In a multi-racial country like Malaysia, we benefit from the knowledge of Chinese culture we learned in primary school to not confuse our identity. As part of the Chinese nation, we are proud to have such a rich and beautiful cultural background."

However, Chinese primary education also faces some challenges and controversies, such as how to balance the relationship between Chinese culture and Malaysian indigenous culture, and how to cultivate students' multicultural vision and open mind. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents agreed that Chinese primary school education provided them with valuable learning opportunities to learn more about and value their cultural identity as they grew up. Respondent Mathew stated, "The school also allowed us to learn about local culture and Chinese culture. I learned about the differences between Malaysian culture and Chinese culture. I think the school is able to balance the two and not just focus on one or the other."

4.1.2 The subtle influence of family education

Family education is an important channel shape for shaping the national and cultural identity of middle school students, and its subtle influence plays a key role in the growth process of children(Fedorenko et al., 2020). The words and deeds of family members not only convey cultural values but also profoundly affect children's feelings and identification with their motherland.

When talking about family education, many interviewees emphasized the importance their families attach to the country and culture. For example, interviewee Quinn shared his experience of national identity in his family, saying, "My parents often talk to me about our country, Malaysia, and they are full of love and pride for our country, which gives me a stronger sense of identity for my own country as well. For example, Hari Raya and Chinese New Year, we visit each other to celebrate and share food, which is very friendly and fun. We share all the customs of the festival with our neighbors of other races, and we share the same joy. I think this is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural feature of Malaysia."

This emotional transmission is not only verbal but also reflected in all aspects of family life. Through daily family exchanges, festival celebrations and the inheritance of family traditions, parents show their children that they cherish and inherit the culture of their motherland, which deeply affects their children's sense of identity.

Family education does not only convey cultural values, but also shapes children's behavioral norms and social awareness. In Chinese families in Malaysia, values such as respecting other races and their cultures. The transmission and practice of these values enable children to gradually establish their identity with the country and culture in the family environment. For example, respondent Jennifer mentioned, "In the family, we are taught to respect our cultural traditions and values, especially we need to understand that we are Malaysian Chinese, to know our country, and to know our cultural roots. This education made me proud and deeply influenced my national identity."

Family education and school education complement each other and jointly promote the formation of national and cultural identity of secondary school students. Schools provide knowledge and education, while families provide children with a building block of emotion and identity. This double influence makes children gradually establish a deep-rooted cultural identity in the growth process, which is not only the inheritance of the past, but also the guidance and shaping of the future. As the respondents Jennifer expressed, "My family and school education have made me understand and value my country and culture more. This recognition is not only my identity, but also my future direction."

The family's teaching and cultural inheritance provide a solid foundation for children to confidently express their identity and values in social life. This kind of family education affects each child's growth process subtly and becomes an important part of their identity.

4.1.3 Wavering national and cultural identities

In the study, it is found that the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students showed diversity and complexity. Although the majority of the respondents hold Malaysian Chinese identity and have a firm perception of their national and cultural identity, about 20% of the respondents are still uncertain about their perception of nationality, and some even consider themselves to be more Chinese than Malaysian.

This diversity reflects the complexity and the influence of many factors in the process of individual identity formation. Among the respondents, Abby's perspective reveals the root of this cognitive difference. "Although I was born and raised in Malaysia, my parents often emphasize our Chinese heritage and culture," she said. "Sometimes I feel I am being more Chinese than Malaysian, especially after some unfair treatment. It is very confusing that people of other races always tell us that we should go back to the country from which our ancestors came." Abby's words show the role of family education in shaping an individual's national and cultural identity. Her parents' cultural inheritance and emphasis have made her have a deeper cognitive and emotional connection to her Chinese ancestry, which forms a cognitive contrast and swing with her growing up in Malaysia.

However, this wavering national and cultural identity also reflects the influence of social context and individual experiences. Faced with unfair treatment in the social environment or the complexity of identity, some secondary school students may be more inclined to emphasize the connection with Chinese culture to seek a sense of identity and self-cognition.

This emotional connection is in contrast to the social environment and cultural atmosphere in Malaysia, further deepening the complexity of their national and cultural identity.

Respondent Billie said, "There are many different ethnic groups in Malaysia, but as far as I am concerned, the Chinese often receive unfair treatment from the Malays, so I am more yearning for life in China because we have the same culture and appearance as the Chinese, everyone is the same and equal."

To sum up, the formation of national and cultural identity of middle school students is a complex process influenced by many factors. School and home education together provide a cognitive and emotional foundation for their country and culture. In this process, factors such as family background, personal experience and social environment are intertwined, which affect the individual's cognitive and emotional connection to the country and culture.

4.2 Influence, generate, and differ

It can be observed from the research data that the social media platform Xiaohongshu plays an important role in the construction process of Chinese identity among young respondents.

Through the use of the Xiaohongshu, these young people are gradually exposed to information about China's history, culture, daily life, architectural style and degree of modernization. Their duration of use ranged from as little as three months to as long as three years, in line with how long they owned the device.

As a social sharing platform, Xiaohongshu provides a way for these young people to understand and contact Chinese culture. On the platform, they can browse introductions about Chinese history and traditional culture, learn about aspects of Chinese daily life, and explore China's unique architectural style and modernization process. Respondent Nora stated, "On Xiaohongshu, I can actually see a lot of interesting things about China, such as food and lifestyle, etc. The people in the videos seem to be very happy, which is totally different from the stereotype that China is very repressed and rigid. The acquisition of such information is not only the accumulation of knowledge, but also the opening up of perspectives on the diversity of China, prompting them to develop a certain degree of interest and curiosity about China.

In addition, Xiaohongshu provides a platform for these young people to interact with Chinese online friends. According to the survey, up to 50 percent of respondents have made Chinese online friends through Xiaohongshu. Such cross-cultural communication and interaction not only promoted the exchange of language and culture, but also made them have a deeper understanding of China, thus changing some of their views and perceptions of China. "I met a friend from China on Xiaohongshu and we often talked about the differences between Chinese and Malaysian cultures. I was surprised to find that many of my favorite games were launched in China, and my friends often played them with me." Interviewee Peter said.

In this process, as a global social media platform, Xiaohongshu is not only a disseminator of information but also a shaper of cultural identity. Through the use of Xiaohongshu, young

respondents began to understand China from different angles and dimensions and expanded their cognition and understanding of China. This kind of positive cultural exchange and information transmission helps to promote cross-cultural understanding and communication and provides new perspectives and experiences for young people's identity construction.

However, the use of Xiaohongshu may also bring some challenges and implications. The information dissemination of social media platforms is often one-sided, especially in the context of big data, the push of information flow will be more and more accurate or single according to the use preference, which may be exaggerated or lack of comprehensiveness.

Raphael, the respondent said, "I got my own smartphone about a year and a half ago and started using Xiaohongshu on the recommendation of a friend. I was attracted by the content of Xiaohongshu about dress matching and makeup. The more I read, Xiaohongshu recommended more relevant content to me, and it even calculated what color clothes I like. "

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Interviewee Grace said, "I found out about Xiaohongshu after watching a YouTube AD when I just got my first smartphone." Respondent Lily also said, "My iPad was given to me by my

mother, and Xiaohongshu was recommended by my mother, because you can find a lot of learning materials on it."

As a social sharing platform, Xiaohongshu provides a way for these young people to understand and contact Chinese culture. "On this platform, I often watch videos about Chinese history and traditional culture. I like to learn about the daily life of Chinese people and explore the unique architectural style and modernization process of China, because it is different from the living environment I am usually exposed to." Respondent Dobby said. The acquisition of such information is not only the accumulation of knowledge, but also the opening up of perspectives on the diversity of China, prompting them to develop a certain degree of interest and curiosity about China.

In this process, as a global social media platform, Xiaohongshu is not only a disseminator of information, but also a shaper of cultural identity. Through the use of Xiaohongshu, young respondents began to understand China from different angles and dimensions, and expanded their cognition and understanding of China. This kind of positive cultural exchange and information transmission helps to promote cross-cultural understanding and communication, and provides new perspectives and experiences for young people's identity construction.

4.2.1 Influence caused by Xiaohongshu content

In today's digital society, the rise of Xiaohongshu not only changes the way people obtain information, but also plays an important role in cross-cultural communication and identity construction.

Respondent Frederick shared his experience with Xiaohongshu, saying, "On Xiaohongshu, I often see some introductions about traditional Chinese culture and history, such as ancient architecture and traditional festivals. These contents have made me more interested and curious about Chinese culture." This kind of information dissemination and sharing enabled him to learn about China's history and culture through the platform, which stimulated his strong interest in China. This broadening of perspective helps him to understand and recognize Chinese culture more comprehensively.

In addition, Xiaohongshu also provides him with an opportunity to make Chinese friends and conduct cross-cultural communication. He described, "I got to know some Chinese friends on Xiaohongshu, and we often communicate about various topics. Through them, I have a deeper understanding of life in China, and my Chinese friends tell me a lot about Chinese culture that I don't know." Through the interaction with Chinese friends, he not only improved his understanding of Chinese life but also came into contact with many details and characteristics of local culture, further expanding his cultural vision.

Nora, another respondent, said that Xiaohongshu has many wonderful things about China. "I like to see things about my favorite stars on this app, and I usually like Chinese stars the most.

I think China's cultural and entertainment market is very rich, there are a lot of interesting things, very attractive."

The influence of Xiaohongshu is not only to expand the interviewees' understanding of China, but also to include their yearning and praise for China. Respondent Sam said he envied China for its high-tech products and modern cities full of tall buildings, which made his life very convenient.

Such cross-cultural communication and interaction further promoted the interviewees' understanding and identification with China. Through the content and communication on Xiaohongshu, they are able to understand China from multiple dimensions and perspectives, understand its uniqueness and empathize with it. This positive cultural exchange promotes their cognitive and emotional connection to China.

4.2.2 Identity after experiencing influence

In the study, it was found that the identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students was profoundly influenced by their experiences. According to the survey data, 80% of the respondents who firmly identified themselves as Malaysian Chinese still firmly identified their nationality as Malaysian despite their deeper understanding of Chinese culture. This recognition reflects their emotional connection and sense of identity with the place where they lived and grew up.

Eilish, the interviewee, expressed firmness in her nationality: "Despite my interest in Chinese culture, I consider myself Malaysian, this is where I lived and grew up, and I have a deep affection for it." This view underlines their emotional bond to Malaysia and the value they hold for their home country. They are glad that Malaysia has preserved Chinese education so that they can receive education and influence from their mother culture in Southeast Asian countries far away from China, so as to have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

However, 20% of the respondents have a wavering situation of national identity and are more yearning for China and express a strong identification and yearning for China. Interviewee Abby described her yearning for China: "The China I saw on Xiaohongshu makes me feel very close, and I am more prone to consider myself Chinese, because our Chinese culture and appearance are the same as Chinese people." "And now China is developing so well, so many tall buildings and high technology, and the cities and towns are very busy, I like that atmosphere." Abby's words show her yearning and identification with Chinese culture and development, and also reflect her perception of China's modernization and prosperity.

This wavering national identity may be partly the result of the digital age of big data's precise monitoring of individual browsing preferences and information push. Big data analytics can accurately capture individual browsing preferences, and then push customized information to users, so that they are more exposed to China-related content. This solidification and circulation of information may strengthen respondents' yearning and sense of identity with China, which in turn affects their national identity.

4.3 Refactor, share, and diverge

After experiencing the construction of identity by school and family, and an gaining in-depth understanding and thinking of Chinese culture through the Internet, Malaysia Chinese secondary school students have gradually formed a unique national and cultural cognition.

This recognition is not only an individual's understanding of their own identity but also their integration and understanding of Chinese culture and Malaysian society.

These Malaysian Chinese secondary school students shared their insights and perceptions with others, consolidating and expanding their own cognition through communication and discussion. In the process of sharing, they also individually integrate into the chosen cultural environment. This kind of sharing is not only an expression of individual cognition but also an important way of cultural exchange and dissemination. Through communication with others, they examined their cognition from different perspectives and angles, which deepened their understanding and experience of Chinese culture and Malaysian society.

This process of refactoring, sharing, and diverging is an evolving and enriching one. Through their own efforts and exploration, Malaysian Chinese secondary school students have formed a unique and rich understanding of the country and culture and also promoted the dissemination and exchange of culture. Their experience is not only the construction of individual cognition but also the embodiment of cross-cultural understanding and identity. In this process, some problems worth discussing have gradually emerged.

4.3.1 Share insights with others

In the process of research, it was found that Malaysian Chinese secondary school students shared their insights and experiences through communication with Chinese netizens, and further expanded their cognition of Chinese culture and society. This cross-cultural exchange covers a variety of areas, including following stars, studying and hobbies, as well as the similarities and differences between the respective countries. In this process of communication, most of the respondents respect each other's differences with themselves, but some of them have negative feelings about their own identity and seek recognition.

According to the survey results, the interviewees' chats with Chinese netizens mainly focus on following stars, studying and hobbies. This kind of communication not only promotes the dissemination and exchange of culture, but also narrows the distance between respondents and Chinese netizens. At the same time, they also discuss the similarities and differences of their countries, and deepen their understanding of each other's culture and society.

In this communication process of seeking common ground while shelving differences, 80% of the respondents showed mutual respect and inclusiveness. They appreciate each other's culture and opinions, but they also enjoy sharing their own opinions and experiences. For example, respondent Grace said, "I often talk about following the stars and studying with my Chinese friends. We share the culture and customs of each other's countries. This kind of communication makes me feel very friendly."

in terms of Malaysian Chinese culture and how they are being different from those in China, Frederick also said a lot about his opinion, "Chinese people usually dress up very delicately, And Malaysian Chinese like to wear more casual, shorts and slippers and so on. Malaysian Chinese prefer to mix different languages to express themselves more easily than only use Mandarin."

However, 20% of the respondents denied their identity as Malaysian Chinese in such exchanges and turned to Chinese netizens for identity validation. This phenomenon reflects the identity distress and anxiety that individuals may have in cross-cultural communication. Some of the respondents may have begun to question their own national and cultural identity because of their affection or yearning for Chinese culture. For example, respondent Billie expressed her confusion: "I like Chinese culture, but I don't feel completely Malaysian, sometimes I ask my Chinese friends where I am from." The information dissemination and personalized push of social media may further aggravate this distress, making individuals doubt and uneasy about their own identity and culture.

4.3.2 Reasons for the results of different national and cultural identities

The formation of the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students is influenced by a variety of factors, which lead to the comparison and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the two countries between different individuals.

First of all, the respondents who firmly identified themselves as Malaysian-Chinese, took the initiative to compare the pros and cons of the two countries, and made it clear that their nationality was Malaysian and not Chinese. This recognition comes from school and family education. Schools and families have stressed to them that although China is their ancestral homeland, they should be clear about their nationality and identity as part of their migration to Malaysia. This educational background and emphasis made these respondents more inclined to closely link their identity with Malaysian nationality, and also prompted them to have a deeper perception and experience of the advantages of Malaysian society and culture.

"Although China is our ancestral home, I have been living in Malaysia for a long time. I consider myself a Malaysian and should actively contribute to the development of Malaysia." This view shows their feelings and identification with Malaysia, as well as a clear recognition and understanding of the identity relationship between China and Malaysia.

On the other hand, those respondents who were undecided, saw more advantages than disadvantages in China, while perceiving more disadvantages than advantages in Malaysia. This evaluation is often influenced by the network and real-world environment in which they operate. On the Internet, they may have more exposure to China's development and prosperity, see China's high-rise buildings and scientific and technological progress, and thus have a yearning for and identification with China. The perception of Malaysia's shortcomings may be derived from the challenges and problems in real life, such as the uneven socio-economic development and the complexity of the cultural environment.

The respondent Thomas also reflected this view: "In my opinion, our Chinese roots are still in China, and Chinese people pay attention to 'falling leaves to return to their roots'. I am more inclined to identify myself as a Chinese." This perception reflects the waverers' recognition of China's advantages and concern for Malaysian issues, and also reflects the influence of their environment on their identity and national perception.

In summary, the formation of the national and cultural identity of Malaysian Chinese secondary school students is influenced by a variety of factors, including education at school and home, online environment and experience in real life. These factors lead to different views and evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of the two countries by different individuals, reflecting the complexity and diversity of identity construction. In this process, the influence of education and environment plays a key role in shaping the individual's perception and understanding of the country and culture.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Thoughts and discussions about the current situation

The identity of Malaysian Chinese youth is a complex and profound issue. In today's society, education is one of the most important factors in shaping the identity of the young generation. Firstly, the education of identity is crucial for young people's cognition and understanding. In Malaysia, the persistence of Chinese education in schools and communities has provided opportunities for Chinese young people to understand and learn about Chinese culture. By learning the Chinese language, young people learn not only the language, but also the history, culture and values of China. This kind of education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the shaping and strengthening of identity.

Secondly, the Malaysian Chinese community's insistence on Chinese education enables the younger generation to understand and experience traditional culture more deeply. In this process, young people are exposed to the essence of traditional Chinese culture, learn traditional poetry, literature, and art, and immerse themselves in that atmosphere of culture. This cultural inheritance not only enriches their knowledge but also enhances their sense of identity and pride in Chinese culture.

It is worth noting that the Chinese language education has not shaken the identity of the Chinese youth with Malaysian citizenship. Despite their exposure to the Chinese culture through their schools and communities, they still see Malaysia as their home and country. This reflects the tolerance and understanding of multiculturalism among Malaysian Chinese

youth, who are able to find a balance between the two cultures and consciously combine their national identity with their cultural identity.

However, some young people may face confusion and challenges with identity. This group of people may feel unfair and mistreated in the social environment, leading to doubts and anxiety about their national and cultural identity. Discrimination and exclusion in society may cause them to have confusion and confusion about their identity and feel unable to fully integrate into mainstream society. This phenomenon needs to be taken seriously and society should be committed to creating an inclusive and diverse environment where every young person can confidently affirm their own identity and cognition.

The identity of Malaysian Chinese youth is influenced by many factors such as education, cultural inheritance and social environment. Education not only provides knowledge and skills, but also shapes the minds and perceptions of young people. Cultural inheritance enriches their vision and experience, and enhances their sense of identity with Chinese culture. However, injustice and discrimination in society may hurt some young people, causing them to have confusion about their identity. Therefore, building an inclusive and diverse social environment that respects and understands each person's identity is key to social and cultural progress.

5.2 Suggestions

The ambiguity of Chinese identity in Malaysia is an important issue worthy of attention and resolution. The authorities and the Ministry of Education should deeply explore the real causes of this problem and take effective measures to solve it, so as to promote the harmonious and diversified development of society.

First of all, the government should face up to the root causes that lead to the ambiguity of Chinese identity, including discrimination and injustice in the social environment. The government can address these problems by formulating more inclusive and pluralistic policies, strengthening protection and support for ethnic minorities, and eliminating discrimination in society, thus creating a more just and inclusive social environment. In addition, the government should strengthen social education, promote respect and understanding of people with different cultural backgrounds, and encourage people to work together to build a united and harmonious society.

Secondly, according to the results of this study, the reason for the fuzzy identity of some middle school students lies not in the teaching medium language but in the perceived social environment, such as the unfairness of the policy (especially the suppression of Chinese education) felt by the respondents. In order to maintain the friendship between various ethnic groups in Malaysia and maintain the pluralistic cultural atmosphere, it is necessary for the government to appropriately increase the support for Chinese education. For example, more financial support and solidarity can be given to SMJK or Chinese Independent Secondary School, so that local Chinese can feel more inclusive warmth and sense of belonging.

In practice, the government and the Ministry of Education should make efforts to face up to and solve the problem of fuzzy identity of Malaysian Chinese. This will not only help solve the current identity problem, but also lay a solid foundation for future social development.

5.3 Limitations in the study

Deficiencies found in research are very common, and presenting them helps demonstrate research honesty and room for improvement.

1. Not comparing research differences across regions may limit a comprehensive understanding of Chinese identity in Malaysia. The historical, cultural and social environment of different regions may have different effects on the identity of individuals. However, in the context of this study, secondary schools in Malaysia uniformly use the syllabus required by the government, so there is not much difference in schooling. Future research could consider adding a regional comparison perspective to deeply explore the differences between different regions and more fully understand the formation process of Malaysian Chinese identity.

2. Since the differences between regions were not considered in the study, the interview questions may not have been carefully summarized in terms of regions.

To improve the validity and depth of the study, future research could consider and design the interview questions more comprehensively.

By reflecting on and improving the shortcomings existing in the research, the scientific and reliability of the research can be improved, and the cognition and understanding of the identity of Malaysian Chinese can be further enriched and improved. It also helps to promote the development of related research in the future to provide more effective strategies and measures for solving identity problems.

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