

A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF MIGRANT  
WORKER'S MALAY LANGUAGE LEARNING  
APPROACHES, AND CULTURAL  
ADJUSTMENT PROCESS  
IN MALAYSIA

ABDUL MUJEEB KHAN

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2023



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun  
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF MIGRANT WORKER'S MALAY  
LANGUAGE LEARNING APPROACHES, AND INTERCULTURAL  
ADJUSTMENT PROCESS IN MALAYSIA

ABDUL MUJEEB KHAN



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun  
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

THE THESIS SUBMITTED PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2023



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun  
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi



Please tick (✓)  
Project Paper  
Masters by Research  
Master by Mixed Mode  
PhD

✓

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the 28th day of August 2023

i. Student's Declaration:

I, Abdul Mujeeb Khan (P20182002348) FPM (PLEASE INDICATE STUDENT'S NAME, MATRIC NO. AND FACULTY) hereby declare that the work entitled A Cross-Cultural Study of Migrant Worker's Malay Language Learning Approaches, and Cultural Adjustment Process in my Malaysia original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part been written for me by another person.

Mujeeb  
Signature of the student

ii. Supervisor's Declaration:

I PM DR. Abdul Talib Bin M. Hashim (SUPERVISOR'S NAME) hereby certifies that the work entitled A Cross-cultural Study of Migrant Worker's Malay Language Learning Approaches, and Cultural Adjustment Process in Malaysia (TITLE) was prepared by the above named student, and was submitted to the Institute of Graduate Studies as a \* partial/full fulfillment for the conferment of Doctor of Philosophy (Educational Sociology) (PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE), and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work.

28/08/22  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of the Supervisor

PROFESOR MADYA DR. ABDUL TALIB HASHIM  
Jabatan Pengajian Pendidikan  
Fakulti Pendidikan dan Pembangunan Manusia  
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris



**INSTITUT PENGAJIAN SISWAZAH /  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**BORANG PENGESAHAN PENYERAHAN TESIS/DISERTASI/LAPORAN KERTAS PROJEK  
DECLARATION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION/PROJECT PAPER FORM**

Tajuk / Title: A cross-Cultural Study of Migrant Worker's  
Malay Language Learning Approaches and Cultural  
Adjustment process in Malaysia

No. Matrik / Matric's No.: P20182002348

Saya / I: Abdul Mujeeb Khan  
(Nama pelajar / Student's Name)

mengaku membenarkan Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek (Kedoktoran/Sarjana)\* ini disimpan di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun) dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan seperti berikut:-

acknowledged that Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Tuanku Bainun Library) reserves the right as follows:-

1. Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek ini adalah hak milik UPSI.  
*The thesis is the property of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*
2. Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk tujuan rujukan dan penyelidikan.  
*Tuanku Bainun Library has the right to make copies for the purpose of reference and research.*
3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan Tesis/Disertasi ini sebagai bahan pertukaran antara Institusi Pengajian Tinggi.  
*The Library has the right to make copies of the thesis for academic exchange.*
4. Sila tandakan ( ✓ ) bagi pilihan kategori di bawah / Please tick ( ✓ ) for category below:-

☐ **SULIT/CONFIDENTIAL**

Mengandungi maklumat yang berdarjah keselamatan atau kepentingan Malaysia seperti yang termaktub dalam Akta Rahsia Rasmi 1972. / Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972

☐ **TERHAD/RESTRICTED**

Mengandungi maklumat terhad yang telah ditentukan oleh organisasi/badan di mana penyelidikan ini dijalankan. / Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done.

☒ **TIDAK TERHAD / OPEN ACCESS**

Mujeeb  
(Tandatangan Pelajar/ Signature)

Prof. Madya Dr. Abdul Talib Hashim  
(Tandatangan Penyelia / Signature of Supervisor  
& (Nama & Cop Rasmi / Name & Official Stamp)

Tarikh: 28/8/2023

**PROFESOR MADYA DR. ABDUL TALIB HASHIM**  
Jabatan Pengajian Pendidikan  
Fakulti Pendidikan dan Pembangunan Manusia  
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

Catatan: Jika Tesis/Disertasi ini **SULIT @ TERHAD**, sila lampirkan surat kebenaran bertulis dari pihak berkuasa/organisasi berkenaan dengan menyatakan sekali sebab dan tempoh laporan ini perlu dikelaskan sebagai **SULIT** dan **TERHAD**.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praises and adoration belong to Allah (SWT) who helped me to achieve this great milestone in my education pursuit, to this I say سُبْحَانَكَ يَا اللهُ ، وَالْحَمْدُ لَكَ ، يَا اللهُ أَكْبَرُ (Subhaanallaahi, Walhamdu lillaahi, Wallaahu 'Akbar - Glory is to Allah, praise is to Allah, Allah is the Greatest!)

I must acknowledge my parent's prayers for all my success in life as well as for completing this important educational landmark.

I would like to express my wholehearted and sincere gratitude to my supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Talib Muhammad Hashim and my Co-Supervisor, Associate Professor, Dr. Muhammad Yousuf for their guidance and supervision throughout the entire process of completing my dissertation titled Cross-Cultural Study on Migrant Worker's Malay Learning Approaches, Intercultural Adjustment Process and Related Social Issues in Malaysia

I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to the Supervisory Committee members, especially Associate Professor, Dr. Mohhamad Mai for his thesis evaluation and constructive feedback and Professor Amir Hasan Dawi for his guidance.

I would like to express my special thanks to all my friends and colleagues who have contributed in any way to the completion of my thesis. Special thanks to migrant workers for their time and interest to participate in this research and making it possible to accomplish the study.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Malaysia for allowing me to pursue my education.



## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how migrant workers (MWs) from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan adjust to Malaysian culture, including their well-being and language acquisition. It also examines potential differences in their learning approaches and if MWs received orientation/training on Malaysian culture and language or not. Using the qualitative methodology and phenomenological approach, thirty MWs were interviewed about their lived experiences which were selected via purposive (snowball) sampling technique. The thematic analysis indicated 42 themes. NVivo -12 software was used to measure response frequency to integrate quantitative elements for a better understanding of the data. The results discovered that initially in new culture MWs preferred socializing with other MWs from their countries and believed in the superiority of their own culture. MWs have faced well-being issues like uncertainty, culture shock, isolation, worries, stress, and language difficulties. They were not given orientation on Malaysian culture and language before/after migrating. They experienced difficulties in communication, thus, began to learn Malay unaided for survival purposes, utilizing methods like sign language, Google Translator, and language books, without the aid of a teacher. Further, they asked co-workers and other MWs the meaning of words in the Malay language. MWs learned to speak the basics of Malay language within the first two years, and above, and acquired partial Malay language reading and writing skills. With time and developing understanding of the Malay language, they progressed toward intercultural adjustment. Comparing the learning and adjustment approaches among MWs, Nepalis tend to have more difficulty socializing with locals, Pakistanis struggled with adjusting to different lifestyle, and Bangladeshis faced challenges in improving their living and working conditions due to language and cultural differences. This study highlights need of cultural orientation and language training to help MWs for intercultural adjustment in Malaysia. Policymakers in Malaysia and MWs' sending countries should consider this.





## **KAJIAN SILANG BUDAYA TENTANG PENDEKATAN PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA MELAYU DAN PROSES PENYESUAIAN BUDAYA PEKERJA ASING DI MALAYSIA**

### **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka cara pekerja asing (PA) dari Bangladesh, Nepal, dan Pakistan menyesuaikan diri dengan budaya Malaysia serta kesejahteraan dan perolehan bahasa mereka. Kajian ini juga menyelidik tentang potensi kesukaran dalam pendekatan pembelajaran dan sama ada PA menerima orientasi atau latihan tentang budaya dan bahasa Melayu atau tidak. Dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dan pendekatan fenomenologi, 30 orang PA yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan bertujuan (bola salji) telah ditemubual tentang pengalaman hidup mereka. Analisis bertema telah menghasilkan 12 tema. Perisian NVivo-12 telah digunakan untuk mengukur kekerapan maklum balas untuk menggabungkan unsur kuantitatif bagi membolehkan data difahami dengan lebih jelas. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pada peringkat awal berada dalam budaya baharu, PA lebih suka bersosial dengan PA yang datang dari negara yang sama dan percaya dengan keunggulan budaya mereka sendiri. PA berhadapan dengan masalah kesejahteraan seperti ketidakpastian, kejutan budaya, pengasingan, kebimbangan, tekanan, dan kesukaran bahasa. Mereka tidak diberikan orientasi tentang budaya dan bahasa Melayu sebelum atau selepas penghijrahan. Mereka mengalami kesukaran dalam berkomunikasi maka mereka mulai mempelajari bahasa Melayu dengan usaha mereka sendiri demi meneruskan kehidupan dengan menggunakan pelbagai kaedah seperti bahasa isyarat, Google Translator, dan buku-buku berkaitan bahasa, tanpa bantuan seorang guru. Kemudian, mereka bertanya kepada rakan sekerja dan juga orang lain tentang makna perkataan-perkataan. PA belajar untuk bercakap bahasa Melayu asas dalam masa dua tahun pertama dan kemudian, memperoleh sedikit kemahiran membaca dan menulis dalam bahasa Melayu. Dengan berlalunya masa dan pembinaan kefahaman tentang bahasa Melayu, mereka menunjukkan kemajuan dalam penyesuaian antara bangsa. Perbandingan dari segi pendekatan pembelajaran dan penyesuaian, PA Nepal cenderung menunjukkan lebih banyak kesukaran untuk bersosial dengan masyarakat tempatan, PA Pakistan berhadapan dengan cabaran untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan perbezaan gaya hidup dan PA Bangladesh mengalami kesukaran untuk meningkatkan taraf hidup dan keadaan tempat kerja mereka disebabkan oleh perbezaan bahasa dan budaya. Kajian ini melihatkan keperluan orientasi budaya dan latihan bahasa untuk membantu PA menyesuaikan diri dalam pelbagai bangsa di Malaysia. Hal ini mesti ditimbangkan oleh kerajaan Malaysia dan juga kerajaan negara PA.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK</b>	ii
<b>DECLARATION OF THESIS</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	vi
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xvi
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Background of the Study	2
1.2.1 Global Phenomenon of Migration	2
1.2.2 Causes of Migration	3
1.2.3 Global Migration Statistics	4
1.2.4 Migration Statistics in Malaysia	6
1.2.5 Migration and Culture	6
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.3.1 Experiential Learning among MWs in Malaysia	10
1.3.2 Ethnocentrism and Ethno-Relativism among MWs in Malaysia	12
1.3.3 Migrant Worker’s Wellbeing Issues	13



1.4	Research Objectives	25
1.5	Research Questions	26
1.6	Significance of the Study	26
1.7	Conceptual & Operational Definitions	27
1.7.1	Conceptual Definition of Ethnocentrism	27
1.7.2	Operational Definition of Ethnocentrism	28
1.7.3	Conceptual Definition of Ethno-relativism	29
1.7.4	Operational Definition of Ethno-relativism	30
1.7.5	Conceptual Definition of Experiential Learning	31
1.7.6	Operational Definition of Experiential Learning	31
1.7.7	Conceptual Definition of Intercultural Adjustment	32
1.7.8	Operational Definition of Intercultural Adjustment	33
1.7.9	Conceptual Definition of Wellbeing Issues	33
1.7.10	Operational Definition of Wellbeing Issues	35
1.8	Conceptual and Theoretical Framework	36
1.9	Summary	38

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	39
2.2	Theoretical Framework	40
2.2.1	Bennett's Theoretical Model of Intercultural Sensitivity	40
2.2.2	Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) William B. Gudykunst's Theory (1988)	54
2.3	Discussion on Theoretical Framework	73
2.3.1	Review of Past Studies on Intercultural Adjustment	78
2.4	Literature Review on Migrant Worker's Wellbeing Issues	83

2.4.1	Migrant Workers' Cultural Shock in New Culture	83
2.4.2	Intercultural Uncertainty and Worry among MWs	88
2.4.3	Migrant Workers' Communication Problems in Foreign Country	92
2.4.4	Misunderstanding in Context of Migrant Workers	96
2.4.5	Migrant Worker's Living Conditions	98
2.5	International Legal Framework related to MW's Rights	106
2.5.1	Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals and MW's Rights	110
2.6	Summary	111

### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	113
3.2	Research Design	114
3.2.1	Exploratory Research Design	114
3.2.2	Qualitative Research Method	114
3.2.3	Rationale for Using Exploratory Qualitative Research Methodology	115
3.2.4	Phenomenology	118
3.2.5	Transcendental Phenomenology	119
3.3	Role of the Researcher	121
3.3.1	The Research Team	124
3.4	The Research Plan	125
3.4.1	Participant's Selection/Inclusion Criteria	125
3.4.2	Sampling Procedure	126
3.4.3	Characteristics of Study Participants	129
3.4.4	Guide Questionnaire for Interviews	130

3.4.5	Interview Guide Questionnaire Validation	133
3.5	Pilot Study	134
3.6	Ethical Considerations	136
3.7	Data Collection	138
3.7.1	Pre-interview Preparation and Planning	138
3.7.2	Establishing Rapport with participant/interviewee	138
3.7.3	Conducting Interviews	139
3.8	Data Analysis Procedure	140
3.8.1	Transcribing the Data	141
3.8.2	Coding and Organizing the Data	141
3.8.3	Clustering Coded Data/Themes	142
3.8.4	Presenting Results	142
3.8.5	Drawing Conclusions	143
3.8.6	Quantifying Qualitative Data	144
3.9	Method of Using NVivo in the Study	145
3.10	Validity of the Results	146
3.10.1	Lens Used by the Researcher	147
3.10.2	Triangulation	147
3.10.3	Member Checking	148
3.10.4	Peer Debriefing	149
3.11	Determining Reliability	149
3.11.1	Interrater Reliability	150

## CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1	Introduction	152
4.2	Data Analysis	153

4.2.1	Demographic Characteristics of the Participants	153
4.2.2	The Themes	159

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Introduction	269
5.2	Synthesization of Findings	270
5.3	Discussion of Findings	272
5.3.1	Objective 1, MW's Orientation about the Malaysian Culture	272
5.3.2	Second Objective, Migrant Workers' Malay Language Learning Approaches in Malaysia	277
5.3.3	Objective 3, Intercultural Adjustment Process among Migrant Workers in Malaysia	285
5.3.4	Objective 4, MW's Interrelated Social Issues in Malaysia	296
5.3.5	Perception of Cultural Differences among Migrant Workers	313
5.3.6	Fifth Objective, Comparison of Differences of Adjustment Approaches among MWs in Malaysia from three countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, & Pakistan)	318
5.4	Summary of Results	325
5.5	Significance and Implications of the Research	329
5.6	Recommendations for Future Research	330
5.6.1	Recommendations for MW's Sending/Home Countries (Bangladesh, Nepal & Pakistan)	332
5.6.2	Recommendations for MW's Receiving Country (Malaysia)	332
5.7	Conclusion	333

<b>REFERENCES</b>	337
-------------------	-----

## APPENDICES

## LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
4.1	MW's Orientation/information Gaps Related to Malaysian Culture	165
4.2	Percentage of frequency of MW's responses regarding Malay language course	181
4.3	Frequency (%) of Sub-themes under MW's Learning Preferences	195
4.4	Frequency (%) of Sub-themes under Ethno-centrism	208
4.5	Frequency (%) of Sub-themes under Ethno-relativism	220
4.6	Frequency (%) of Themes & Sub-themes under MW's Initial Experience	242
4.7	Frequency (%) of Themes under Cultural Differences	257
4.8	Frequency (%) of Themes under Adjustment Approaches for MWs from three Countries	267





## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No.		Page
1.1	Conceptual Framework	36
1.2	Theoretical Framework	37
2.1	A Developmental Approach for Intercultural Sensitivity	53
2.2	Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory	59
2.3	Kolb's Experiential learning style theory	64
2.4	Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle	72
4.1	Age Group of Participants	154
4.2	Country Wise Level of Education among MWs	155
4.3	Country Wise Job Sector among MWs	156
4.4	Country Wise Skills among Participants	157
4.5	Country Wise Duration of Stay among Participants	158
4.6	MWs' Orientation and cultural educational gaps related to Malaysian Culture	166
4.7	MW's difficulties during initial months after arriving in Malaysia	170
4.8	MW's Information about Malay Language	183
4.9	Percentage of Occurrence of each Theme under Learning Preferences	196
4.10	MW's learning preferences – Malay language learnt Methods and Related Difficulties	197
4.11	Percentage of Occurrence of each Theme under Ethno-centrism	209
4.12	Percentage of Occurrence of each Theme under Ethno-relativism	221



4.13	Frequency (%) of Themes & Subthemes under MW's Initial Experience	244
4.14	Frequency (%) of Themes & Subthemes under MW's Initial Experience	245
4.15	Percentage of Occurrence of each Theme under Cultural Difference	258
4.16	Percentage of Occurrence of each Theme under Adjustment Approaches for MWs from three Countries	268

## LIST OF ABRIVATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndromes
AUM	Anxiety, Uncertainty Management (Theory)
DMIS	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Theory)
ELT	Experiential Learning Theory
ENA	Ethno-national Attitudes
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICC	Inter Cultural Competence
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization on Migration
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
MWs	Migrant Workers
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs



## LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEX

- A Interview Guide Questionnaire
- B Pilot Study Results
- C Consent Form
- D Participant's Research Debriefing Information





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



This chapter consists of several components. The researcher has described the introduction and background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The chapter covers importance of the study, operational, and conceptual definitions of the terms Ethnocentrism, Ethno-relativism, MW's well-being concerns, Experiential learning, and Intercultural adjustment processes based on Bennet's Theory of intercultural sensitivity. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks are also given in this chapter.





## 1.2 The Background of the Study

### 1.2.1 Global Phenomenon of Migration

Migration for employment is a global phenomenon. The movement of people from one place to another is as old as human history. According to the United Nations, “a migrant worker refers to “a person who is to be involved, is involved or has been involved in a compensated movement in a state of which he or she is not a national” (Kronfol, Saleh, & Al-Ghafry, 2014, p 2). The type of migration includes the boundary crossed (national, international, political, and administrative), duration of stay (temporary, permanent), and distance (regional, national, and international) (Bempong et al., 2019). Regardless of their point of origin or eventual destination, migrants funnel into one of four major immigration streams: labor immigration – permanent, temporary, or circular; secondary immigration, which is dominated by family reunification; humanitarian or forced immigration, including asylum seekers, and refugees; and irregular immigration, which captures the illegal entry, stay, and/or employment of persons within a country (Messina, A. M., 2017).

The labor immigrants or migrants are used interchangeably throughout the academic, practitioner, and policy literature. In terms of workers, according to the United Nation’s International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, "migrant worker" refers to a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national (Sargeant, M., 2009). Hence, the term Migrant Workers (MWs) is used in this research to denominate labor immigrants.



### 1.2.2 Causes of Migration

People, often from developing countries and from countries having conflicts, wars, and disasters, are on the move in search of a better life. Migrant workers (MWs) make up a significant part of this landscape of human movement. (Zaman & Habiba, 2004). Many countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia are densely populated, developing nations that export workers to reduce unemployment and earn money through remittances. Many people have left their home countries due to factors like job scarcity, low living standards, environmental issues, and poor economic prospects. These conditions have contributed to an increase in migration. There are numerous causes of migration such as poverty, less income or no job opportunities, and better economic opportunities (Kohler & Schwilch, 2019). Generally, the push and pull factors that are



causes of migration influence individuals' and communities' decisions to migrate.

**Push Factors** Migration from source countries in the Asian region often occurs under circumstances of poverty, unemployment, underemployment, economic and political instability, internal conflicts, landlessness, and the deterioration of the environment - to escape natural disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, etc.

**Pull Factors** are positive aspects that attract people to move to a place e.g., good employment opportunities, demand for workers, social environment, etc. Countries that hire foreign workers benefit from paying them less and offering them fewer benefits than they would give to local workers. Developed economies employ MWs due to a shortage in the domestic labour force and their reluctance to perform difficult jobs. (Cancun, 2015). The labour migration is mainly driven by a combination of these





push and pull factors such as unemployment, poverty, and promotion of manpower export by the governments in sending countries and workers' demand in receiving countries. For example, in Malaysia, the nationals have abandoned three D (Difficult, Dirty, and Dangerous) jobs. Therefore, to perform these jobs, the government must depend on workers from other countries.

### 1.2.3 Global Migration Statistics

A report by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO says that in 2013 around 232 million people, which is 3% of the world's population, lived outside their home country, based on the United Nations' migration statistics. The scope and intensity of migration are increasing due to the globalization process. Now migration has become an essential, inevitable, and integral part of today's economy. In 2017, the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs Population Division estimated that there were 258 million international migrants. During the period from 2000 to 2017, the total number of international migrants increased from 173 to 258 million persons, an increase of 85 million (49 percent). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) showed that there were 271.6 million international migrants in 2019. This is an increase compared to previous years. This makes international migration a key feature of globalization and a central issue on the international agenda (UNESCO report). Half of this increase took place in countries of the developed regions (the "North"), while the other half took place in the developing regions (the "South"). The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that out of the total number of global migrants, 164





million people were MWs in 2017 who fall into the labor migration stream. Labor migration has a rise of 9 percent since 2013 when they numbered 150 million. The term "migrant worker" often refers to people who work for low wages, possibly because it is associated with low pay (Iruthayaraj & Pappusamy, 2014). The most common category of MWs is temporary contract workers who remain in a foreign country for a limited and set duration. About 111.2 million women out of the total of 164 million working women worldwide live in rich countries such as Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, and the United States. This is approximately 67.9%. About 18.6% or 30.5 million live in upper-middle-income countries such as Algeria, Brazil, Libya, and Tunisia. Whereas, around 10.1% or 16.6 million, and 3.4% or 5.6 million women reside in lower-middle-income and low-income countries, respectively.



23.9 percent in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe, and 13.9 percent in Arab countries. MWs are also heavily concentrated in Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and Central and Western Asia, where they exceed 5%. (ILO, 2017) In terms of numbers, Asia, and the Pacific hosts around 80 million MWs. There are 9.9 million international migrants in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with almost 6.9 million of them moving among countries within the same region (UN Women, 2017).



### 1.2.4 Migration Statistics in Malaysia

According to International Organization on Migration (IOM) estimates, in the ASEAN region, Malaysia is one of the largest MWs receiving countries. From 2010 to 2017, the number of legally-documented foreign workers in Malaysia increased from 1.7 million to 2.2 million. At the end of 2018, there were an estimated 2 to 4 million undocumented foreign workers in Malaysia. Thus, there are an estimated 4-6 million MWs in Malaysia (including registered and estimates of non-registered). This makes up about 30% of the total workforce in the country. Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan are among the major manpower-exporting countries in South Asia. In 2017, South Asian nationals living abroad mainly went to countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, the United States, Iran, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, Oman, Canada, Malaysia, and Australia (according to UNDESA). These destination countries reflect a few prominent MW corridors of both low-skilled and semi-skilled temporary migrants in construction, domestic work, services, and other sectors in the Middle East and South-East Asia, including Malaysia (ILO, 2018).

### 1.2.5 Migration and Culture

Migration is a diverse phenomenon. People move to different parts of the world, such as workers from underdeveloped countries migrating to industrialized nations in Asia with high incomes. Each country has its own culture and languages to communicate with each other. Differences between people within any given nation or culture are much greater than differences between groups. Many things shape who we are and how



we behave in foreign cultures - our education, social status, religion, personality, beliefs, experiences, and even the love we receive at home (Gregorio B., 2014).

There are various cultural and societal norms and cultural values in each country that differ from one another. Migrant workers come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They may work in countries where the language and culture are unfamiliar to them. New cultural interactions can impact MWs and their well-being, as they navigate different cultural values and norms, which can make it challenging for MWs to have an intercultural adjustment in a foreign country. This study in Malaysia aims to investigate how MWs go through intercultural adjustment process to adjust in the local culture, their orientation on Malay language and how they learn Malay, their experiential learning approaches while going through well-being issues in the country.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

As stated above, the increase in modern migration is due to economic and political globalization strategies and policies. Within the Asian region (including South East, East, South, and Central Asia), international labor mobility has become increasingly important in terms of national-level economic development. Asia has the largest number of international migrants of any continent – around 80 million. Between 1990 and 2017, it increased by 31 million, the largest growth in the world (UNDESA, 2017). Eighty-nine (89%) of the growth could be attributed to intercontinental flows – most international migrants in Asia had been born in the region. Sixty-one (61) million of the world's migrants have moved to Asia, making it the largest inter-regional



migration flow in the world. (Maruja et al., 2019). In Asia, MWs move from developing countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, and Myanmar. They migrate to industrialized countries such as South Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, and oil-rich Gulf countries.

The population of Migrant Workers (MWs) comprises a substantial labor force in Malaysia. The inflow of international migration into the Malay Peninsula is not a recent phenomenon. During British colonial rule, capitalist economic enterprises were introduced, along with necessary infrastructure. Chinese laborers were brought to the colony of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States starting in the 1820s. (P. Iruthayaraj & D. Pappusamy, 2014). Since independence in 1957, the ‘push-and-pull’ factors at the international level in the region caused workers to immigrate to Malaysia for employment (P. Iruthayaraj & D. Pappusamy, 2014). Malaysia’s resources and strategic location have made it a major destination country for migrants. Malaysia’s economic performance peaked in the early 1980s through the mid-1990s, as the economy experienced sustained rapid growth average of almost 8% annually. High levels of foreign and domestic private investment played a significant role as the economy diversified and modernized (Fact sheet, State Department 2016). As a result, the country receives most workers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, etc. In Malaysia, Nepalese, and Bangladeshis are 3rd largest migrants amounting to (Nepalese 411,364) (Bangladeshis 2, 37,991) followed by Pakistanis roughly 100,000 by the end of 2017. Malaysia depends on MWs to fill low-wage jobs in various job sectors.





Malaysia's rapidly expanding economy, increasing urbanization, and relatively low labor force participation among women continue to create major demand for MWs. More and more Malaysians do not want to work in jobs they find dirty, difficult, or dangerous. This leads to a need for migrant workers in fields such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and some service jobs. (Philip S. Robertson Jr, 2008). Malaysian's no willingness to perform 3-D jobs increased the country's dependence on MWs. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the Malaysian population is 32.73 million in the first quarter of the year 2020. As mentioned before, there are around 4-6 million undocumented MWs, which make up 30% of the country's labor force.

Migration has a great impact on the economic, social, cultural, and personal perception of the life of an individual (Kaur B. Singh et al., 2011). In sending countries, MWs are influenced by social structures and patterns of development such as poverty, large family size, and lack of job opportunities. Migrants are mainly composed of low-skilled and high-skilled workers who come to Malaysia from various countries in search of job opportunities. Malaysia has been a preferred country for MWs to make a living for reasons such as workforce, geographical factors, government policy, and others (Bin, 2016). MWs are mainly less or uneducated, and they come from remote areas in their respective countries. MWs, both men and women, often arrive in Malaysia without proper education or training, and without knowing the language or culture of the host country. They enter a new environment all alone, as many receiving countries do not allow them to bring their spouses, family, or children.





There are many studies conducted around the world on various issues related to MW's problems. These problems are general and social in nature and context. In addition to social issues, it is crucial to investigate whether MWs receive cultural training before departing their home countries or upon arriving in Malaysia. How do MWs acquire proficiency in the Malay language? What are their learning approaches from their experiences, and how do they progress through the intercultural adjustment process in a foreign country? This study aims to look at how MWs adapt to a new culture and how they learn through experience. How they reach the intercultural adjustment while managing the well-being issues mainly in the context of cultural differences. Kolb (1984) argues that learning goes beyond descriptions of socialization or change by describing a holistic process of intercultural adjustment to the environment (p. 31). In this study, the researcher looked at how MWs learn the Malay language in the context of experiential learning. The goal was to understand MW's learning preferences, intercultural adjustment, and well-being while in Malaysia. If we explore and bracket their life experiences, and learning styles the way they have successfully dealt with enigma within a new country that could provide a baseline knowledge and a model for any modern society. To obtain this knowledge, the study has focused on the following areas:

### 1.3.1 Experiential Learning among Migrant Workers in Malaysia

Learning is “a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of *experience* and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning” (Rodriguez & Raquel, 2011). The change in the learner may happen at the level of knowledge,





attitude, or behaviour. As a result of learning, learners come to see concepts, ideas, and/or the world differently.

As it is understandable from the name, experiential learning involves learning from experience. According to Kolb (1984, p.31) learning can be defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming the experience. Kolb (1984, p. 31) also explains that learning goes beyond descriptions of socialization or change by describing a holistic process of intercultural adjustment to the environment. Kolb's experiential learning concept describes the central process of human intercultural adjustment to the social and physical environment.



Research often cites the ability to learn as a reason for expatriate failure or success in adapting to a new culture (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2006; Spreitzer et al., 1997) and argue that successful expatriation requires significant learning from essential transitions and experiences. Effective learning appears important for successful intercultural adjustment to cross-cultural settings because learning describes the primary force for intercultural adjustment to culture (Kolb, 1984). For over 20 years, research has described how expatriates adjust and become socialized to overseas assignments (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2006).

However, very little research has focused on a linkage between MW's intercultural adjustment and learning process in terms of local language and preferred learning styles. One of the main benefits of knowing the local language is that it allows people to communicate with everyone and initiate socialization with local





people. When a person has transferred to a different culture, the new culture will affect a person's way of learning because the environment requires the acquisition of skills for survival (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). That is, expatriates' learning styles will likely move from the original style dominated by the home culture to a revised style that matches that of the host culture.

Malaysia offers an array of new experiences every day for MWs to explore. However, there is a need for comprehensive knowledge of how they learn and what their typical learning styles are.

This study explores how people from different cultures become accustomed to a new environment by examining their language learning experiences and preferred methods of learning. It applies Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) from 1984, which includes learning cycles and styles. This study analysed how MW adjusted to Malaysian culture and society, moving from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism using Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Even though they faced social problems and uncertainty in this new culture.

### 1.3.2 Ethnocentrism and Ethno-Relativism among MWs in Malaysia

**Ethnocentrism** - In Sociology, ethnocentrism has been defined as the belief in the inherent superiority of one's ethnic group or culture. It is a tendency to view other ethnic or cultural groups from the perspective of one's own. Ethnocentrism means that one may see his/her own culture as the correct way of living. If someone believes that



their way of life is the only natural way, it can be considered ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism may not, in some circumstances, be avoidable. All people often have instinctual reactions toward another person or culture's practices or beliefs. (Schultz, et al., 2009).

**Ethno-relativism** means seeing your own culture in relation to other cultures and considering that your beliefs, values, and behaviours are just one way of looking at things among many other ways. Anyone might have this ability after going through the various stages from ethnocentrism (Denial, Defense, Minimization) to ethno-relativism (acceptance, intercultural adjustment, integration).

This study explores how immigrants from three South Asian countries integrate into Malaysian culture and the role that social factors play in their adjustment process. The researcher studied how migrants from three countries experience cultural differences and integrate into Malaysia.

### 1.3.3 Migrant Worker's Well-being Issues


The dictionary meaning of well-being is the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. Well-being refers to a state of optimal health, happiness, and overall life satisfaction. It encompasses a range of dimensions, including physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Well-being means feeling good and functioning well. It includes being happy, growing as a person, having control over your life, having a purpose, and having good relationships. It is a long-lasting situation that enables the



person or population to grow and prosper (Ruggeri et al., 2020). MWs experience various kinds of well-being issues; some of them are explained below.

### 1.3.3.1 Inter-cultural Issues

MWs belong to various cultural backgrounds. When they arrive in Malaysia, it means they have entered a new world. Every place has a unique culture that sets it apart from other places, such as language, customs, education, climate, food, and clothing. MWs find it different in Malaysia compared to their own cultures, and they experience difficulties. People who migrate to a different country require to give importance to handling problems or issues in an intercultural environment. Uncertainty is a crucial

 05-4506832 factor in forecasting the occurrence of intercultural problems leading to adjustment and social issues (Logan, Steel, & Hunt, 2016).

The intercultural experience involves the behaviour, attitude, and thinking of individuals in handling issues surrounding them between two or more different cultures. Interracial involvement is essentially a methodological approach and the content of the field is very varied, but it emphasizes broadly cultural generality (Malpass, 1977). Culture has also affected the thinking of an individual which results in differences in the use of judgment (Weber & Hsee, 1999). Culture is also defined as attitudes, behaviors, and symbols shared by people with other people.



### 1.3.3.2 Migrant Workers' Worries

Migrating from one country to another can be physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting. MWs must cope with and adapt to a different sociocultural context. Differences in food, traditions, religion, law, language, politics, climate, transportation, interpersonal interactions, dress, and relations between the sexes can be disorientating, especially when MWs receive minimal knowledge about the destination country they are traveling to. Studies have shown that acculturative pressure can lead to significant problems when changes in sociocultural context exceed individual's capacity and resources to cope with the changes. (Ahmed, Farah et al. 2014). Loneliness and lack of social support also lead to stress and worry. It is natural to want to be cared for and understood. MW's vulnerability increases by the fact that



social networks that were once in place in one's country of origin are no longer there. tbupsi

MWs often lack support in the destination country, making it difficult for them to receive advice, information, or assistance, including transportation to medical facilities when necessary. Among spouses, families, and friends there is often a sharing of experiences and knowledge, including information on health along with how to access health services. Alone in destination countries, MWs no longer have others to watch over their well-being in the same way. (Guruge, Sepall & Nazilla Khanlou, 2014). All these factors lead to loneliness and worry. Being a migrant worker comes with many uncertainties such as the fear of losing one's job, financial insecurity, getting sick, being deported, and suffering abuse from one's employer. All of these issues can become a source of extreme worry and social challenges.



According to ILO, while international migration can be a productive experience for most people, many MWs suffer poor working and living conditions. Migrant workers may have better employment terms than in their home countries, but they usually have worse conditions than locals in the host country. Despite international standards to protect them, their rights as workers are too often undermined.

**Stress** is a physiological response connected to an external event. For the cycle of stress to begin, there must be a stressor. This is usually some kind of external circumstance, like a work deadline or a scary medical test. (Melanie Greenberg, 2017).

**Worry** is what happens when people's mind dwells on negative thoughts, uncertain outcomes, or things that could go wrong. (Melanie Greenberg, 2017).

In MW's daily life, poor living and working conditions, cultural adjustment problems, and uncertainties lead to social issues, stress, and worrisome. Studies have shown that migrant workers experience high levels of stress due to various social and environmental factors, including losing social status, facing discrimination, and being separated from their families. MW's social well-being deteriorates. When MWs experience deterioration, it can lead to health problems. These problems may include physical and mental stress, resulting in conditions such as back pain, headaches, and mental illness. In more severe cases, it can lead to conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and even suicide. Discrimination and social isolation are risk factors for the development of psychological distress. (Mucci, N et al., 2020).



### 1.3.3.3 Migrant Worker's Uncertainty

Uncertainty has been defined as the state of being uncertain; doubt; hesitancy when people are not sure about something. Uncertainty exists in daily life; however, MWs experience many uncertainties throughout their migration process. Many migrants arrive at airports with a lot of uncertainty. Many people arrive without the ability to fill out immigration forms, answer questions from immigration agents, or have someone available to receive them, which leaves them stranded. They remain uncertain about their job placement, working and living conditions, overall environment, and culture.

The system of cheap, imported labour to do jobs in the construction, shipping, manufacturing, and service industries works effectively. When times are good, it means jobs that locals usually shun can be filled, but when the economy is weak, it is easy to cut back on foreign workers. MWs remain uncertain about their job security. Employers have the authority to cancel a worker's work permit at any time. However, workers are not legally permitted to change employers or seek other jobs if they lose their current job. If an employer cancels a work permit, the workers are required to leave the country immediately. So, they remain at the mercy of employers. The contractor may have a project today, but down the road will they still have projects? That depends on the economy and political situation. There are numerous uncertain factors regarding job security that still persist. Since job security remains a question mark, a bigger worry about many migrants is the debts they have racked up securing jobs.



#### 1.3.3.4 Migrant Worker's Intercultural Adjustment in Malaysia

Moving to a new place and starting a new job brings a lot of stress and challenges. It can be tough to adjust to a new culture, social environment, language, lifestyle, and living situation without any support. Therefore, there are high chances of suffering from social problems and uncertainty for MWs. (Mucci, N. et al., 2019). MWs, live and work in a foreign country which is more stressful for them as compared to the local workers. They need to stay in a country that has a different cultural background than they are used to. Working abroad requires adjustment to the culture of the host country (Shotaro Doki et al., 2018).

**MWs' Communication** - A language is a way of communication that involves the use of particular human languages. In Malaysia, people mainly speak Malay as a way of communication as well as some other local languages. Most MWs arrive in Malaysia without any knowledge of the local language spoken in the host country. MWs from different nationalities and ethnic groups have unique ways of expressing themselves and interpreting the actions of others. These differences come from their diverse cultural backgrounds and customs. Thus, cross-cultural misunderstandings occur which can lead to health and safety problems. (Philip D. Bust, 2013). MWs often encounter challenges when it comes to conveying their concerns and comprehending safety and health instructions due to linguistic barriers. This can not only lead to misunderstandings but also put these workers at potential risk of accidents or injuries.



Adequate measures need to be taken to address these language barriers and ensure that clear communication is established to guarantee the safety and well-being of all workers, regardless of their language background. This can be problematic when they are ill or working in hazardous environments. If MWs don't speak the local language, it can be difficult to connect with the community, and MWs might feel isolated and misunderstand what others are saying.

**MW's Misunderstanding** - Miscommunication among MWs can cause misunderstandings, which refer to incorrect understanding or misinterpretation of meaning or intent. The majority of MWs cannot speak the local languages of the host country, and some who learn the basics of the language also remain unable to comprehend the meanings. Thus, there are high chances of misunderstandings on both



sides by the migrants and by the local communities due to a lack of proper

communication. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019) has found that Malaysians have negative and false perceptions of MWs and low support for their rights. Due to negative perceptions among the public, MWs are usually disrespected and blamed for the increase in crime in the country. Not being able to communicate well in the local language can cause problems such as misunderstandings, mistreatment, and difficulty at work. This can even affect a person's overall well-being and job security. Working in a multicultural environment can be risky to both physical and mental health. Stressful work demands, discrimination, bullying, and feeling insecure about the job might contribute to this risk (Milner et al., 2018). Being in an unfamiliar place where MWs don't have friends or family can make it hard to find a place to stay and communicate with others. This can cause MWs to feel depressed, confused, and anxious and can also lead to adjustment problems and illnesses. The







presence of unfamiliar people who practice different cultural norms can lead to misunderstandings within Malaysian society, or the society may experience problems themselves. It seems that there may be misunderstandings and cultural issues between MWs and the local community in Malaysia.

### 1.3.3.6 Migrant Worker's Cultural Shock

Culture shock is the feeling that someone gets when they move to a place that has a different culture from their own. It can also happen when they visit a new country, move to a new social environment, or change their way of life. (Macionis J. & Linda G., 2010). Culture shock is originally an emotional reaction that is a result of not being able to understand, control or predict one's behaviour. In other words, when someone is not able to understand something new - one's behaviour, the person emotionally will get confused or even stressed. (Rafika D, et al., 2018). It is not easy for MWs to directly get fit with new places and new people. They do not know what to say or what to do in the new environment, how to act around people they are not familiar with, or even how to speak/talk to them. The NGOs reveal that mobility together with newfound freedom/anonymity contributes to changes in sociocultural norms. Many migrant workers in foreign countries have admitted to being initially attracted to women who wore revealing clothing, such as short skirts. However, over time, their preferences changed.

According to Louise Stewart & Peter, A Leggat (2020), the six aspects of cultural shock described by Oberg are as follows:



- (1) Strain due to the effort required to make the necessary adaptations to the unfamiliar situation.
- (2) A sense of loss and feelings of deprivation about friends, status, profession, and possessions.
- (3) Rejection by and/or rejecting members of the new culture.
- (4) Confusion about role, role expectations, values, feelings, and self-identity.
- (5) Surprise, anxiety, and even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences; and
- (6) Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope in the alien situation.

Cultural shock can take various forms, including food culture shock. When experiencing a new culture, one can encounter unexpected items on the menu. They may even see things that they think are gross but are considered a delicacy in other countries. These unfamiliar eating conditions, food customs, and strange new dishes can lead to feelings of discomfort and culture shock. For instance:

- In some countries like Thailand and Africa, people eat wild field rats roasted on a stick.
- In China and some Chinese restaurants around the world, chicken feet are common, especially in Dim Sum restaurants.
- Horse meat and blood sausage (boudin), although not an everyday food item, is normal in France.



### 1.3.3.7 Practices of Pre-departure Orientation for MWs

The pre-departure orientation or training program is a broad term that prepares individuals for their upcoming experience as MW in a foreign country. It covers a variety of topics and provides them with an overview of what to anticipate while living and working abroad. These pieces of training can help MWs start their mission smoothly and be prepared to adjust to a new culture upon arrival. Most MWs from their home countries receive pre-departure briefings to improve their job skills and to represent their country positively by behaving appropriately while working abroad. Depending on the country's policy on labor migration, the pre-departure pieces of training are done differently and by various agencies. Private recruitment agencies sometimes hold pre-departure programs that do not cover important topics like the language of the host country, cultural adjustments, or well-being. The pre-departure programs under government departments also do not cover these important topics.

### 1.3.3.8 Summary of Migrant Worker's Well-being Issues

In the above few paragraphs, the researcher has discussed in detail MW's well-being and related issues separately. All the issues together are summarized as follows. This study has developed an in-depth understanding of these areas and provided recommendations for solutions. The inflow of many foreigners into Malaysian society can be a cause of social problems not only for Malaysians but for MWs themselves. People from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan face difficulties when they come to work in Malaysia. One of their main problems is the language barrier. Since





they are not acquainted with Malay or any other languages spoken in Malaysia, it's difficult for them to interact with the locals and comprehend their work directives. These workers have different education, upbringing, and different health concepts. They can suffer from homesickness due to living away from their family and own country. Malaysian society also can have difficulties in accepting the social and cultural diversity which MWs bring with them.

When MWs come into a new and different culture from their own they can face various problems related to job and job contracts (substitution of contracts, no placement, no work, no salary), language barriers (lack of communication with locals, isolation), living and working conditions (No occupational health and safety measures at workplace, accommodation issues, economic problems, (no paid sick leave, unlawful wage deduction, no salary for many months), sexual problems (single entry visa-cannot visit family, not allowed to bring family or spouse), documentation, work permit and passport related issues (no renewal of work permit by the employer, employers keep the passport), no understanding of Malaysian social norms (No social support and protection), cultural problems such as conflict with local culture and within themselves, uncertainty, etc. Uncertainty and all these problems possibly can lead to problems related to their well-being. In uncertain situations, people are unable to predict with complete confidence what will happen. Psychologists have suggested that being intolerant of uncertainty, also known as difficulty coping with not knowing, could affect the mental health of MWs.

A migrant worker can suffer from intercultural issues and adjustment problems in Malaysia due to cultural shock. Migrants might not have an understanding of the





adaptation to new surroundings due to uncertainties and their previous learnings and mindsets. Migration seems to impact people from different cultures and poor inner intercultural adjustment might result from cultural shock (Khaled & Gray, 2019). The lack of alignment between the cultural backgrounds of migrating individuals and the host culture is highly likely to be a risk factor for stress among MWs.

Cultural differences can lead to stress and uncertainty when trying to understand someone from another culture. This can affect communication, language, opinions, and points of view. Some examples of cultural differences include how societies view individualism vs. collectivism, independent vs. dependent personalities, social attribution, and emotional experience and values (Sng, O. et al., 2018).



Based on the above discussion and previous research on the Malaysian population of 4-6 million MWs, the researcher found that there is a lack of thorough scientific studies on this topic. There is a need to study the sociological factors that contribute to MW's well-being and adjustment, especially regarding their ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism process. Additionally, their experiential learning styles are largely unknown, making it even more crucial to study this population and their unique experiences. Thus, this study has filled the knowledge gaps in the abovementioned context.

Furthermore, the aim of this study was to look at the process progress/journey from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, observe their experiential learning styles, and identify intercultural adjustment issues among MWs from Bangladesh, Nepal, and



Pakistan. The study also aimed to compare the cultural adaptability between MWs from three different countries which is captured in the data analysis and results significantly.

This study has mainly explored information from respondents who are working as MWs in Malaysia from three countries in the following domains:

1. Migrant worker's orientation about Malaysia Culture.
2. Migrant worker's Malay language learning approaches in Malaysia.
3. Intercultural adjustment process among Migrant Workers in Malaysia.
4. Interrelated well-being issues among migrant workers in Malaysia.
5. MW's perceptual and adjustment differences among three nationalities.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are stated below:

1. to discover Migrant Workers' orientation about the Malaysian culture.
2. to figure out Migrant Workers' Malay Language Learning approaches in Malaysia.
3. to investigate the intercultural adjustment process among Migrant Workers in Malaysia,
4. to explore interrelated well-being issues among migrant workers in Malaysia
5. to compare the difference in adjustment approaches among MWs from three countries in Malaysia.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The research will comprehensively explore five questions from MWs who have been working in Malaysia:

1. Have MWs received any orientation about Malaysian Culture?
2. How MWs learn the Malay language in Malaysia, and what are their learning approaches?
3. How MWs acquire intercultural adjustment in Malaysia and adjust to Malaysian society?
4. How MWs overcome interrelated well-being issues in Malaysia?
5. What is the difference in adjustment approaches among MWs from three countries?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by exploring the well-being concerns that affect MWs when adjusting to the cultural norms of Malaysian society. By filling this gap in information, it can be grasped better how to assist the smooth integration of MWs and thus encourage a more diverse and inclusive community. The study offers a contribution to creating an understanding of MW's well-being problems and related issues, and to discarding misunderstandings in society. The knowledge and information obtained from this study helped in developing recommendations for effectively dealing with these issues. Migration is related to the economic and social development of sending and receiving countries. An individual migrates to a country for a job opportunity, study abroad, and others. Numerous

intercultural issues, including discrimination, finances, language, culture, well-being, etc. can have a huge impact on an individual's migration and on society overall (Mucci et al., 2019). The migration process has far-reaching effects for an individual as well as for society based on social, political, and economic differences. Additionally, from the data analysis of this study, broader research can be applied not only in Malaysia but in other countries as well. The recommendations based on research results will help in improving the economic and social security conditions in Malaysia. Studying MW's language learning and preferred learning styles in a new culture can help them feel more comfortable in their new environment. This can benefit them in various areas, such as finding a job, volunteering, continuing their education, or taking care of themselves and their families. The findings of this study can inform policies and programs that support the successful integration of MWs into their new cultural contexts.

## 1.7 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

### 1.7.1 Conceptual Definition of Ethnocentrism

The concept of ethnocentrism is based on Milton J. Bennett's theory and Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which was introduced in 1986. Ethnocentrism is the idea that one's own culture is the main standard by which other cultures may be measured or viewed. An ethnocentric person is concerned with how similar others' cultural practices, symbols, and beliefs are to their own. The ethnocentric person considers that his/her culture is the normal way that things are done (Duane Cloud, 2016). Ethnocentrism comprises three stages: Denial, Defense, and





Minimization, which are basically attitudes toward cultural differences. When people go into a new culture first, they might deny the cultural differences. During the defense stage, ethnocentric individuals may view the beliefs and practices of others as primitive or wrong. They may also struggle to understand or appreciate different cultures. When people progress toward the minimization stage, they underestimate the differences.

### 1.7.2 Operational Definition of Ethnocentrism

In social science, ethnocentrism means judging other cultures, practices, behaviors, beliefs, and people based on the standards of one's own culture or ethnicity, rather than the standards of other cultures. Since this judgment is often negative, some people also use the term to refer to the belief that one's culture is superior to, or more correct or normal than, all others—especially regarding the distinctions that define each ethnicity's cultural identity, such as language, behavior, customs (Mc. Cornack, et al., 2017). In common usage, it can also simply mean any culturally biased judgment (LeVine, R.A. 2017). As a result of the diverse cultural backgrounds of MWs in Malaysia, there is a risk that they might view Malaysian culture through the lens of their own cultural values, leading to the misconception that their way of life is superior. In this study, the researcher collected data from MWs to learn about their impressions of Malaysian culture during their first few months in the country.





### 1.7.3 Conceptual Definition of Ethno-relativism

The concept of ethno-relativism is also based on Milton J. Bennett's theory and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS 1986). Conceptually, ethno-relativism is a competing idea and a belief that the culture of people serves particular needs and must be looked at in terms of the world the people inhabit. This is often the perspective of social scientists who work with people. For instance, Casey is an ethno-relativist or cultural relativist; she prefers to look at other cultures in terms of what their practices bring to them. She believes that if a tribe paints their faces for religious ceremonies, there must be a good reason why they do that. Is there a practical reason for it, or is it symbolic? If symbolic, where do the symbols come from? These questions allow a closer examination of the practices of others than ethnocentrism. This



05-4506832 does not imply that a relativist, like Casey, does not have strong beliefs of her own. ptbupsi

Rather, other cultures are simply not judged with reference to one's own culture. Again, this often must be trained in people. (Ethnocentrism vs. Cultural Relativism, 2016).

Overcoming ethnocentrism involves more than “getting used to” cultural differences. After having been raised in one culture, sudden immersion in a different culture can trigger a series of complex emotions and reactions. For some, it can come as a shock that their worldview is not universal but is instead just one of many equally valid worldviews. For others, fundamental differences among people from different backgrounds can be difficult to accept. Still, others will immediately admire the “beautiful” and “exotic” characteristics of a foreign culture, and may even temporarily shun their own background. Regardless of initial attitude towards cultural differences,





it is important to develop genuine intercultural sensitivity in order to be an effective worker in a foreign land. (Ethnocentrism vs. Cultural Relativism. (2016, July 15).

#### 1.7.4 Operational Definition of Ethno-relativism

Ethno-relativism has been defined as an acquired ability to see many values and behaviors as cultural rather than universal. Considering cultural practices as relative to context rather than imposing own frame of reference (judging based on own experience). Someone with an ethno-relative view will try and think about a cultural practice from the perspective of the culture in question rather than judging based on their own experience (Bennett, Milton., 2017). The fundamental concept ethno-relativism is learning and understanding more about the differences between cultures, their attitude to and experience of different cultures develops and reduces cultural sensitivity. With experience, people may move along the spectrum, and their ability to engage in respectful intercultural communication is enhanced. For example, they may adapt their behavior to suit the norms of a particular cultural setting e.g., Wearing appropriate clothing when visiting a religious site - covering their heads in Masjid. Proponents of cultural relativism also tend to argue that the norms and values of one culture should not be evaluated using the norms and values of another (Josef Bleicher., 2017). The researcher in this study sought to delve into and gain insights into how MWs gradually embrace ethno-relativism over time, within the framework of this definition. How they overcome the journey from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism in Malaysia.





### 1.7.5 Conceptual Definition of Experiential Learning

In Educational Sociology, experiential learning is defined as learning through experience, and more specifically, as learning through reflecting on doing (Felicia & Patrick, 2011). The concept of experiential learning is based on Kolb's experiential theory of 1984. In his theory, Kolb explains that experiential learning experiences are the source of learning and development. It is a fundamentally different view of learning compared to traditional educational methods. Looking at things differently can bring about new ideas for education. This can include how we balance learning with work and other activities, as well as how we approach creating knowledge. Its emphasis is on the central role that experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, 1984). The conception of experiential learning is an established approach in the tradition of adult education theory. David Kolb's four-stage model of experiential learning is a fundamental presentation of the approach (Reijo Miettinen, 2000). Kolb's four-stage learning cycle and learning styles which are explained in chapter two (02).

### 1.7.6 Operational Definition of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience (Felicia, Patrick, 2011). Learning is acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviors, skills, attitudes, and preferences (Richard Gross, 2022). Experience refers to conscious events in general, more specifically to perceptions, or to the practical knowledge and familiarity that is produced by these processes. Experiential learning is concerned with





more concrete issues related to the learner and the learning context (Nicomachean, 1911).

### 1.7.7 Conceptual Definition of Intercultural Adjustment

Intercultural adjustment is, in part, a socialization process. The intercultural adjustment has been defined as the process through which persons in cross-cultural interactions change their communicative behavior to facilitate understanding. The process of cross-cultural adjustment involves a dynamic unfolding of our innate drive to achieve internal equilibrium even when faced with challenging and sometimes hostile environmental conditions. The interaction between an individual and their environment involves various factors that influence communication. These can include environmental conditions as well as ethnic and personal factors that affect the way a person interacts with their surroundings. Some of the factors may be more pertinent than others in specific cases of cross-cultural adjustment. In certain situations, an individual's ability to adjust and succeed in a new culture may depend heavily on their openness, strength, and positive attitude. These qualities can empower them to triumph over even the most unwelcoming host environment. In other cases, very little adjustment and adaptive change may take place in strangers whose ethnic community offers an almost complete insulation from having to face the host cultural challenges. Central to this adjustment process is host communication competence, the ability to communicate in accordance with the norms and practices of the host culture and actively engage in its social communication processes (Kim, Young Yun., 2008).





### 1.7.8 Operational Definition of Intercultural Adjustment

The adjustment of an immigrant or migrant worker can be described as the stage at which a person feels at ease and capable of functioning effectively despite being in a foreign environment (Halim et al., 2014, p. 124). Basic concepts regarding adjustment in a foreign culture contain the multidimensional sociocultural impression:

- First dimension (general adjustment) concerns the psychological comfort associated with the cultural environment of the host country (for example, food, climate, and living conditions).
- The second dimension (adjustment to work) refers to psychological comfort in relation to norms, work expectations, and differences in values. The third and last dimension of social adjustment (interactional adjustment) contemplates the psychological comfort associated with the characteristics of the citizens/local population of the foreign country, as well as with different styles of communication (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989).

### 1.7.9 Conceptual Definition of Wellbeing Issues

The conceptual definition of well-being has been developed by various scholars in the fields of psychology, sociology, and philosophy, among others. Carol Ryff's (1989) definition proposes that well-being has six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose, and personal growth. While other scholars have put forth varying definitions, there is a consensus that well-being





encompasses a multitude of dimensions and extends beyond the mere avoidance of illness or disease. It encompasses a sense of positive functioning in various aspects of life, such as relationships, work, leisure, and personal development. The absence of disease or illness is only one aspect of well-being. Well-being involves many different aspects of a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social well. Life satisfaction and happiness are closely related to well-being. Well-being may be summed up as how you feel about your life and yourself (Better Health Channel, 2020). However, there is ongoing debate and refinement of the conceptual definition of well-being, as researchers continue to explore and deepen their understanding of this complex and important concept (Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., et al 2020).

In the context of migrant workers there are several wellbeing issues and problems as their life in a foreign country is often harsh and isolated. They travel alone to the host/receiving country and stay away from their loved ones and support networks; often unaware of local laws, languages, and customs; and frequently denied the same rights as national workers; their migrant status implies a lack of social support networks, language barriers, and limited access to services and support organizations (Hall, B. J., Garabiles, M. R., & Latkin, C. A. (2019). According to Hall et al., (2019), International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that migrant workers typically receive low salaries, work long hours, and have limited rest periods. Their marginalized status presents numerous and compounding challenges to their well-being. Living abroad can be challenging, and it is not uncommon for MWs to face a range of well-being issues such as cultural shock, uncertainty, communication problems, misunderstandings, harsh living conditions, and limited access to healthcare and social protections. All these issues are explained in Chapter 2.





### 1.7.10 Operational Definition of Wellbeing Issues

An operational definition of well-being specifies how well-being can be measured or observed in a concrete and measurable way. There are many ways to operationalize well-being, depending on the specific goals and context of the research. Some common indicators of well-being include self-reported satisfaction Carol Ryff (1989). However, in this study, the researcher has identified types of well-being issues that MWs suffer from in Malaysia by using self-reported methods. Because past research has found that stressors such as financial hardship and lack of access to healthcare caused migrant employees to exhibit more often occurring mental health problems (particularly depressive symptoms) than local workers (Hasan et al., 2021). Due to a lack of social and familial support in the nation of relocation, migrant employees are more prone to experience psychosocial risks at work. Due to linguistic and cultural limitations, it is also common to experience a lack of support from superiors and coworkers (Ronda-Pérez et al., 2014). Thus, in this study, the researcher asked open-ended questions related to overall well-being issues such as cultural variability, uncertainty, adjustment, work-related stress, income, working conditions, transportation, family relation, recreational activities, etc. By asking questions, the researcher provided MWs with an opportunity to self-report and share their experience of how they feel about it.



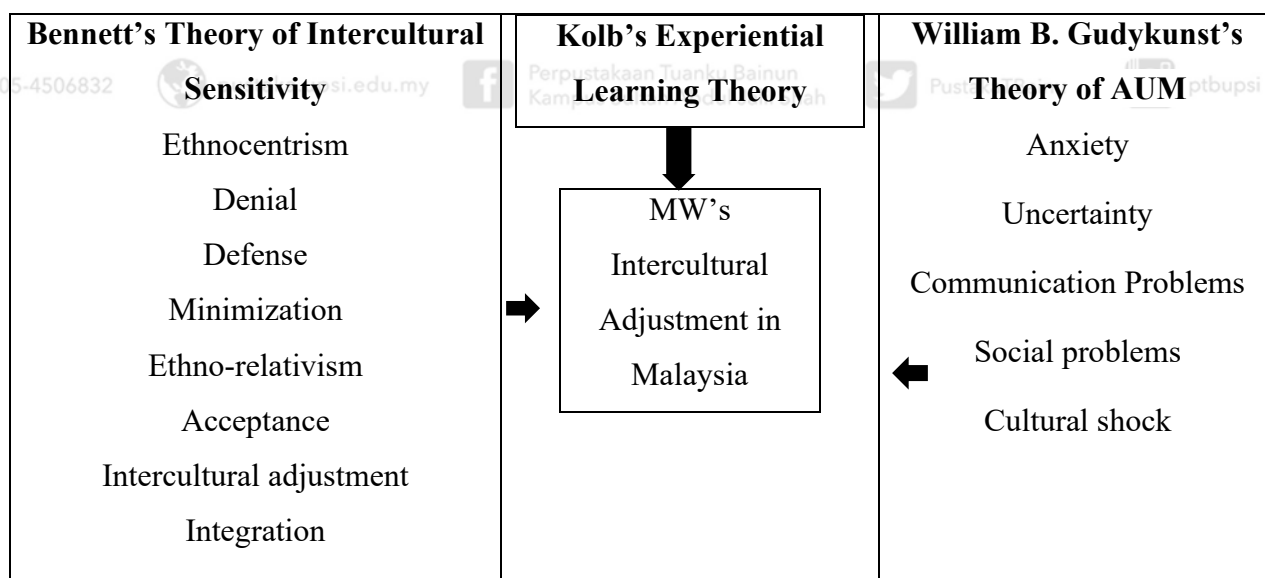


## 1.8 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The present study has a concept of obtaining holistic knowledge about MW's intercultural adjustment in Malaysia by looking at their experiential learning styles and progressing from ethnocentrism towards ethno-relativism while handling well-being issues. Therefore, three theories are identically relevant and important to get guidance from and look at the subject through the lenses of these theories which are given in the following figure:

**Figure 1.1**

*Conceptual Framework*



*Source: Figure 1.1 is based on concept of the study developed by the researcher.*

Figure 1.1 is to determine the relationship between MWs' issues encountered in Malaysia in relation to Bennett's theory of Intercultural Sensitivity, which will describe their adjustment process and related issues starting from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism. Considering other theory of Anxiety and Uncertainty Management by

William B. Gudykunst the researcher will examine migrant workers' perceptions of social issues such as Anxiety, Uncertainty, Communication Problems, Social Problems, and Cultural shock, based on the research questions and research objectives. The lens of Kolb's theory of experiential learning will be used to define migrant workers' learning styles. The figure shows the structure of the concept and the conceptual process of the study.

**Figure 1.2**

*Theoretical Framework*

Name of Theories	Concepts of Theories	Study Dimensions	Relevance/Benefits of Theories with study
<b>Bennett's Theoretical and Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DIMS) by Milton Bennett (1986)</b>	<b>Based on intercultural adjustment process from Ethno-centrism: 1-Denial, 2-Defence, 3-Minimization to Ethno-relativism: 4- Acceptance, 5- Intercultural 6-Adjustment, 7-Integration</b>	<b>Understanding intercultural adjustment process among MWs in Malaysia</b>	<b>Connected with stages of MW's intercultural adjustment, perception</b>
<b>Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) William B. Gudykunst's Theory (1988)</b>	<b>Anxiety/worry, uncertainty management, reaction to strangers, situational process, self-identity</b>		<b>Communication with strangers in new culture and social issues, worry</b>

*Source: Figure 1.2 is based on concept of the study developed by the researcher.*

Figure 1.2 explains how concepts of theories relate to study dimensions and what are the benefits or relevance of theories with the study.

## 1.9 Summery

In conclusion, the researcher has explained in detail the background of the study and the problem statement. There is a set of five research questions that need to answer in this study. The study has five objectives presented in this chapter. The chapter covers conceptual definitions of the main terms used in this study as well as conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study.