# SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS ON MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN MALAYSIA

**FARHANA IZZATI BINTI YAHEYA**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**
**UNIVERSITI MALAYA**
**KUALA LUMPUR**

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**FARHANA IZZATI BINTI YAHEYA**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILISOPHY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**
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**KUALA LUMPUR**

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# SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS ON MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN MALAYSIA

## ABSTRACT

The transformation of migrant workers into migrant entrepreneurs is now being a common sighting. Migrant enterprises operate in various locations, such as wet markets, grocery stores, night markets, and restaurants. This issue is interesting to study, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic due to heightened stigmatisation towards migrants observed on social media. This research aims to evaluate social media opinions and perceptions associated with migrants' entrepreneurship. Social media is a powerful tool to change people's perceptions and reactions towards any issue or group. A subject or event such as migrants' entrepreneurship can trigger many other chain actions and reactions from the public and authorities. Social media opinions were gathered to identify and classify public perceptions of who migrant entrepreneurs are, what types of businesses they conduct, and where their business locations are. This study will also evaluate and analyse social media reactions in the local context, environment, and period. Social media comments were captured to observe public perception towards migrants' entrepreneurship in the COVID-19 environment. The observation was conducted on eight official government agencies' Facebook pages, with 218 Facebook posts related to migrants' entrepreneurship to collect data in netnography. Common themes captured in the comments related to COVID-19 shaped public opinions on the topic. Migrants' entrepreneurship competes with the local markets when operating in businesses not allowed for foreigners. Migrant enterprises received adverse reactions on social media despite being frequented by locals during movement control orders. Negative comments and hostility are common towards migrants in the digital world. Even the authorities who

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are in charge of governing migrant workers and small traders/ enterprises could not escape the backlash from social media users due to their lack of actions in managing migrants' involvement in business. Improvements in migrants' entrepreneurship governance are needed. Practically, by controlling unlicensed businesses, license rentals, pass abusers and PATI in the country, which are the reasons behind the transformation of migrant workers into migrant entrepreneurs—specifically, loopholes in the legislation and unproductive enforcement actions. The impacts of corruption and abuse of power have created other issues, such as the improper governance of migrant workers in Malaysia. Social media can shape public opinion towards a subject. However, it can also help create a good image for government authorities.

**Keywords**: migrants' entrepreneurship, ethnic business, netnography, migrant workers transformation, online ethnography

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**KOMUNIKASI MEDIA SOSIAL MENGENAI USAHAWAN ASING SEMASA PANDEMIK COVID-19 DI MALAYSIA**

## ABSTRAK

Transformasi pekerja asing kepada usahawan asing kini menjadi perkara biasa. Perusahaan migran beroperasi di pelbagai lokasi seperti di pasar basah, kedai runcit, pasar malam dan restoran. Ini adalah fenomena menarik untuk dikaji terutamanya semasa pandemik COVID-19 berikutan peningkatan stigma terhadap pendatang telah diperhatikan di media sosial. Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menilai pendapat dan persepsi media sosial yang berkaitan dengan keusahawanan migran. Media sosial adalah alat yang sangat berkuasa yang boleh mengubah persepsi dan reaksi orang ramai terhadap sebarang isu atau kumpulan. Satu subjek atau peristiwa seperti keusahawanan migran boleh mencetuskan banyak tindakan berantai dan reaksi lain daripada orang ramai dan pihak berkuasa. Pendapat media sosial akan dikumpulkan untuk mengenal pasti dan mengklasifikasikan persepsi orang ramai tentang siapa usahawan pendatang, jenis perniagaan yang mereka jalankan dan di mana lokasi perniagaan mereka. Kajian ini juga akan menilai dan menganalisis reaksi media sosial dalam konteks, persekitaran dan tempoh tempatan. Komen media sosial dirakam untuk melihat persepsi orang ramai terhadap keusahawanan migran dalam persekitaran COVID-19. Satu netnografi telah dijalankan di lapan halaman Facebook rasmi agensi kerajaan, di mana 218 siaran Facebook berkaitan keusahawanan migran diperhatikan untuk pengumpulan data untuk menjalankan analisis tematik. Tema biasa yang ditangkap dalam ulasan yang berkaitan dengan pendapat umum berbentuk COVID-19 mengenai topik tersebut. Didedahkan bahawa keusahawanan migran bersaing dengan pasaran tempatan apabila mereka beroperasi dalam perniagaan yang tidak dibenarkan untuk warga asing. Perusahaan

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migran menerima reaksi negatif di media sosial walaupun sering dikunjungi penduduk tempatan semasa perintah kawalan pergerakan. Migran berdepan dengan komen negatif dan permusuhan dalam dunia digital. Malah pihak berkuasa yang bertanggungjawab mentadbir pekerja migran dan peniaga kecil/perusahaan tidak dapat lari daripada tindak balas daripada pengguna media sosial kerana kurangnya tindakan mereka dalam menguruskan penglibatan migran dalam perniagaan. Beberapa penambahbaikan perlu diambil oleh pihak berkuasa dalam menguruskan keusahawanan migran yang merangkumi pendekatan yang lebih berkesan dalam mengawal perniagaan tidak berlesen, penyewaan lesen, pendera pas dan migran tanpa izin di negara ini yang menjadi punca berlakunya transformasi pekerja migran menjadi usahawan migran. Paling penting, kelemahan dalam perundangan dan tindakan penguatkuasaan yang tidak produktif kerana hasil rasuah dan salah guna kuasa telah mewujudkan isu-isu lain dalam tadbir urus pekerja asing yang tidak betul di Malaysia. Media sosial mempunyai kuasa untuk membentuk pendapat umum terhadap sesuatu subjek tetapi potensi sebenar dalam mewujudkan imej baik pihak berkuasa kerajaan masih belum dimanfaatkan oleh mereka.

**Kata kunci**: keusahawanan migran, *netnography*, transformasi pekerja migran, etnografi atas talian

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BN | Barisan Nasional |
| PBT | Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan (City Councils) |
| CTA | Critical Thematic Analysis |
| DOSM | Department of Statistics Malaysia |
| 3D | dirty, dangerous, and demeaning |
| EMCO | Enhanced Movement Control Order |
| FB | Facebook |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IC | identity card |
| ICT | information and communication technology |
| JIM | Malaysia's Immigration Department |
| MCMC | Malaysian Communications And Multimedia Commission |
| MAMPU | Management Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department |
| MITI | Ministry of International Trade and Investment |
| MyKad | Malaysian Identity Card |
| MyPR | Malaysia Permanent Resident Identity Card |
| JPN | Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara (National Registration Department) |
| PH | Pakatan Harapan |
| PR | Permanent Resident |
| PRTK | Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja |
| RMCO | Recovery Movement Control Order |
| KDM | Royal Custom Department Malaysia |
| SME | small-medium enterprises |
| SMET | Social Media Engagement Theory |
| PLKS | Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara (Temporary Employment Visit Pass) |
| PATI | Pendatang Asing Tanpa Izin (undocumented migrants) |
| UKM | Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia |
| UMREC | Universiti Malaya Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Preamble

Facebook (FB) is one of the social media platforms its users utilise to gain information, communicate with other users, and act as a form of entertainment. The real potential of Facebook should be extensively utilised by government agencies, just like business entities or political parties. Government agencies mainly use Facebook pages to communicate and promote the activities of their organisations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media platforms can be a powerful communication tool. Information or announcements may instantly reach a wider audience in many well-connected locations with internet access. Its ease of use for timely information and announcements made it the best choice for sharing updates. A survey conducted by Newman et al. (2020) briefly before the pandemic, which continued during the early stages of the pandemic, made it exciting that Facebook and other social media come second after television news and online newspapers for news sources.

The same environment fits the findings for news sources in Malaysia during crises and disasters to share updates on television. Government agencies must communicate effectively during crises by forming a Media Control Centre with clear guidelines. Only the Prime Minister will be able to declare a disastrous situation. Crisis management procedures are well explained in the National Security Council's Directive No. 20: Policy and Mechanism in the Management of National Disaster and Relief, which guided the implementation of Act 342: Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease Act 1988. During the COVID-19 pandemic, television, radio, internet, and social media are used tremendously during the crisis to communicate the latest updates. Clear communication

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was made to the public on current situations, virus transmission, the risks of the virus, plans to mitigate the spread of the virus and most importantly, the actions needed to stop the virus from spreading.

In the early stage of the 2020 pandemic, the national government and news organisations were seen as trustworthy (Newman et al., 2020). Most government agencies utilise the media at this stage to convey messages about the current health situation and promote social distancing. However, within the same year, as people adapted to the new regular, mass media returned to being critical of the government. This situation may appear the same for social media. Researchers observed that being critical of the government was observed in their study of social media (Bellström et al., 2016; Mirbabaie et al., 2020)

Close contact with infected detainees caused outbreaks in detention centres. Residential buildings, wet markets, construction sites, factories, and shopping malls are typical work locations for migrant workers, as reported in numerous cases. Migrants are considered a vulnerable group based on their social and economic conditions. They received a stigmatised spotlight for spreading diseases to the community during the outbreak (AKM Ahsan Ullah, 2010; Kanapathy, 2008; Mirbabaie et al., 2020; Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim, 2011). There were research findings about accusations towards migrants of being potential disease-spreader, even before the pandemic (Kanapathy, 2006; Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim, 2011).

Migrant workers have higher risks of transmission due to their crowded and unclean communal living conditions. Some of them with COVID-19 symptoms refused to go for testing due to ignorance or fear. Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) was implemented in some areas to stop the spread of the virus, such as at Selangor Mansion



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(residential building) and Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur Wholesale Market). Implementing EMCO at Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur is also viewed as an effective measure to control illegal migrants' businesses at the wet market.

As businesses gradually reopened to ensure economic recovery in the country, migrant entrepreneurs and migrant workers who worked in wet markets were gaining public attention for their illegality in conducting businesses or being hired in markets. Posts about migrant entrepreneurs received many user reactions, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mixed reactions were received from the public about migrants' entrepreneurship during this time; some were supportive of the government's actions in handling the issues, while some were cynical because migrant entrepreneurs had run their businesses for many years. However, the actions taken were ineffective in controlling illegal or unregistered migrant businesses.

The opinions gathered from social media pages on migrants' entrepreneurship will receive comparable opinions from government authorities associated with managing migrant entrepreneurs. In this regard, users were interacting with Malaysia's Immigration Department (JIM) and other users by liking a post, sharing it, or posting comments on the posts. JIM received various criticisms from Facebook users on their official Facebook page. Most of the comments were related to one of the department's core business, managing migrants. This study will identify and analyse social media comments on official government agencies' Facebook pages to gather opinions on migrants' entrepreneurship. In addition, this study will also investigate the opinions of the public towards the authorities on issues related to migrants' entrepreneurship for criticism or support.

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Migrant workers filled labour shortages in 3D sectors. They can stay and work in this country with a Temporary Employment Visit Pass or *Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara* (PLKS). However, there are increasing concerns about transforming migrant workers into business owners, leaving their current jobs. While registrations of businesses are only allowed for citizens and permanent residents in Malaysia as stated in the Registration of Business Act (Act 197), non-citizens are allowed to register for private limited by shares companies (Registration of Businesses Act 1956, 2006). In the new global economy, migration has become one of the central issues that has received various public opinions in host countries. Therefore, issues related to migrants' entrepreneurship also received growing public attention.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Migrant workers are employed to do jobs that are not appealing to locals and to fill up labour shortages. Hiring temporary unskilled migrants to fill labour shortages in Malaysia is now seen as a permanent solution. Migrants' employment has not only changed the job structure in the country but has failed to curb the labour shortage problem.

It is essential to highlight the issue of self-employed migrants and those who venture into businesses. Economic crises and job displacement are factors highlighted as motivations for migrant workers' transformation into entrepreneurs or self-employment in Malaysia (Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Those authors mentioned that migrant workers shifted to entrepreneurship when they refused to be sent home after being retrenched or when they ended their work contracts. During previous economic crises, the government introduced programs such as "hire first, fire last" for Malaysians, and it directly affected foreigners, favouring retrenchment over locals.



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The situation is similar to previous studies in the Western context, where post-industrial conditions in the USA in the 1970s and industrial restructuring in the UK have affected the countries' economies. The job market encouraged migrants to start small enterprises (Waldinger et al., 1990). Consequently, migrants must cope with various problems in the labour market, such as local language deficiency, inexperience, age limitation and discrimination. They lacked job opportunities and stable careers compared to locals. These limitations put them at a disadvantage in finding new jobs during crises.

In the Western context, migrant entrepreneurs are focusing on ethnic products, operating in their ethnic enclave and targeting fellow compatriots. Thus leaving them with a smaller market segment. Only recently have European migrant enterprises ventured beyond ethnic niches into general and mainstream markets (Nur Suhaili binti Ramli, 2020; Rath & Schutjens, 2019).

While in some East Asian countries, they ventured into ethnic niches and non-ethnic products/ services (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011). In Malaysia, the businesses are not limited to ethnic niches. However, they are more diverse and target more significant markets with general products and services such as supermarkets and restaurants (Ganto et al., 2015; Mosbah et al., 2018; Nayeem Sultana, 2008).

One argument from previous studies on migrants' entrepreneurship is that migrants are motivated to leave their jobs, especially in the 3D sectors, to enter self-employment and businesses because they are not satisfied with their current jobs (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Rettab, 2001; Segal et al., 2005). However, migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia are



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venturing into businesses in the same sector as their previous employment and rejecting the reasons for job dissatisfaction (Bunmak, 2013; Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). The main issue of this research is the transformation of migrant workers into entrepreneurs.

The literature shows a gap between studies in the West and Asia of entrepreneurial motivations and products/ services offered. Research in the West is more focused on migrant entrepreneurs who are immigrants. In Asia, they migrated as temporary migrant workers, intending to return to their home country. They leave their salaried jobs to venture into businesses. At the same time, some stayed as workers—more raids were conducted during the pandemic to control migrants' entrepreneurial activities. Policy changes to limit the enterprise operations of migrants using their local spouse's business registration were announced during the pandemic. It is fair to say that consumers supported migrant enterprises before the pandemic. However, many were rejected and closed their doors to return to their home country during the pandemic.

The indirect consequence of joblessness during an economic crisis can encourage more migrant enterprise start-ups, which fits the current pandemic. Chain reactions from these changes can change the world's socioeconomic condition ahead, like what happened in the past. This thesis argues that socioeconomic conditions during the pandemic can influence the acceptance or rejection towards migrants' entrepreneurship. Before concluding, we must analyse migrants' entrepreneurship from a socio-economic context to guide this thesis. More arguments for clashing findings between past studies will also be discussed in-depth throughout the thesis.

### 1.3 Research Questions and Research Objectives



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This study evaluates social media opinions and perceptions associated with migrants' entrepreneurship. Social media is a powerful tool to change people's perceptions and reactions towards any issue or group. A subject or event such as migrants' entrepreneurship can trigger many other chain actions and reactions from the public and authorities. Social media opinions will be gathered to identify and classify public perceptions of who migrant entrepreneurs are, what types of businesses they conduct, and where their business locations are. This study will also evaluate and analyse social media reactions in the local context, environment, and period. The COVID-19 pandemic period (since February 2020) may also enhance the study's reactions to exploration. The research questions and research objectives in framing this research are listed in Table 1.1 below:

**Table 0.1: Research Questions and Research Objectives of Social Media Communications on Migrants' entrepreneurship during COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia**

| Research Question | Research Objective |
|---|---|
| RQ1: What are social media users' opinions on social media postings on the products sold/ services offered by migrants' entrepreneurship in terms of:<br>• Origins<br>• Location of business<br>• Goods and Services Offered | RO1: To investigate social media users' opinions on the products sold/ services offered by migrant entrepreneurs according to their origins and location of the business |
| RQ2: What are social media users' reactions towards migrants' | RO2: To analyse social media users' views on migrants' entrepreneurship, whether |

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| Research Question | Research Objective |
|---|---|
| entrepreneurship within the economic framework? | they are seen as economic threats or complementing the market. |
| RQ3: How do social media users react towards migrants' entrepreneurship within the social framework? | RO3: To examine online attitudes of social media users towards migrants' entrepreneurship. |
| RQ4: What are the current implementation and loopholes in legislation/ policy related to licensing and enforcement activities for the public (social media users) and the authorities? | RO4: To investigate the authorities', migrants', and public adherence to Malaysian law regarding licensing and law enforcement activities. |

### 1.4 Research Significance

The significance of this research from previous studies in the literature about negative opinions built towards migrants also increased during the pandemic, including migrants' entrepreneurship in the context of Malaysia. The reactions towards migrants, especially in the digital sphere, are worth the study. This research will uncover the opinions towards migrants in an economic and psychosocial sense. It is impossible to ignore the opinions towards government authorities when we study migrants.

Therefore, this research is also essential to study public criticisms towards authorities on the ineffective governance of migrant small businesses ventured by migrant workers who transformed into business traders while in migration. The development and progress of opinions towards migrants' entrepreneurship have not developed quickly. Although this research is limited to the time limit of the research scope, the opinions are influenced by

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other external factors such as history, social construct, culture, politics, education and religion, among others.

The study of opinions towards migrants will not be of such importance if it will not benefit both parties in the study, the migrants and the authorities. This research is essential to scientifically observe the integration of migrants into society, especially in the Malaysian context. It is not a popular topic of migration research in studying migrants' integration into society due to high stigmatisation and discrimination towards migrant workers, where the central issue of undocumented migrant workers is in favour of researchers. Thus, more research has been conducted to study the integration of migrants, including temporary migrant workers and those who integrated into society through business, because, in this digital world, everyone is more or less connected in the online public sphere. In the long term, this research can contribute to the body of knowledge of migration studies towards better governance of immigration and enterprise.

### 1.5 Research Scope

Facebook is the social media application selected for this research. Facebook posts are the instruments used for the study. Samples selected for this study are comments from Facebook users actively posting comments on public Facebook pages. The posts are limited to a specific subject: migrants' entrepreneurship. Social media can be a rich data pool for public opinion mining related to the research questions. Within the scope of research, convenience sampling was conducted to collect comments posted on public Facebook pages. The openness characteristic of social media platforms made them readily available and accessible for data collection.

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Selective postings on a single case study topic of migrants' entrepreneurship were carefully filtered and selected from 25 January 2020 and 31 December 2020. The data collection took place during the height of COVID-19 crisis. Three Chinese nationals originally from Wuhan who travelled to Malaysia from Johor Bahru were the first cases of COVID-19 detected on 25 January 2020 (N. H. Abdullah, 2020).

Thus, the start date for data collection is chosen from this date as the scope of this research is limited to the COVID-19 pandemic environment. The end date is selected to have a sufficient buffer between the posting and beginning data collection dates: 20 August 2021. The posts identified were from eight official government agencies' Facebook pages. However, the earliest posting date was 13 February 2020, and the final posting of 2020 was on 23 December 2020. The conceptual framework used to represent the research scope in Figure 1.1:

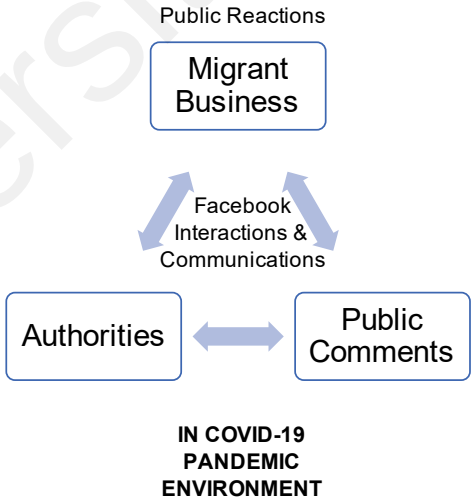


**Figure 0.1: Conceptual Framework for Social Media Communications on Migrants' entrepreneurship during COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia**

However, the framework for this research, which focuses on social media reactions, should not be restricted to a specific theory because users posted these comments



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voluntarily and independently with no control, restriction, or boundary on their opinions. Hypothetically, the opinions can be solid and diverse, not specific to a single theory. Therefore, this study is not restricted to a specific theoretical lens but integrates various theories to guide the research. Lawless & Chen (2019) used critical thematic analysis (CTA) to work on a more open framework in their research, both theory and method, because of its ability to be open to macro-level issues, structures, or forces. Through an inductive approach, theory and a guiding method set the scope of research from thematically identified themes.

### 1.6 Research Problems

There were many problems and obstacles in completing this research. The most obvious problem is the high number of data available. Data collected are Facebook comments, which are publicly available online. Usually, the sample size in a qualitative study can be limited to once it reaches a saturation point. However, because of specific algorithms on social media pages, it is tough to stop and limit reading comments. Facebook algorithms can influence the sequence or order of comments. Reading and collecting data from a post's most recently posted comments while ignoring the earlier comments is impractical because earlier comments may have gradually developed or influenced conversations and opinions. To develop the codes in thematic analysis, one must read up to 57,404 comments from 218 Facebook posts. This high number of data can create a possible human error in understanding the context and interpretation of the opinion. All the comments must be read at least twice before indexing and coding the quotations for data immersion.

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Besides that, another obstacle is in ensuring the ethicality of this research. The subject and environment of this research are delicate matters about migrants, considered a vulnerable group in social research and social media comments that are very much related to users' privacy. These issues were confronted first-hand by the Universiti Malaya Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) (UMREC). As a researcher, maintaining neutrality on this research topic and all concerns voiced by the committee must be justified delicately—firm and delicate actions taken towards suggestions by the committee. Chapter 2, Literature Review, includes discussions about this issue.

## 1.7 Thesis Chapters

The seven chapters for this thesis developed from its research objectives but controlled in the conceptual framework constructed earlier and illustrated in Figure 1.1 above. A mind map in Figure 2.1 illustrates the chapters of this research.

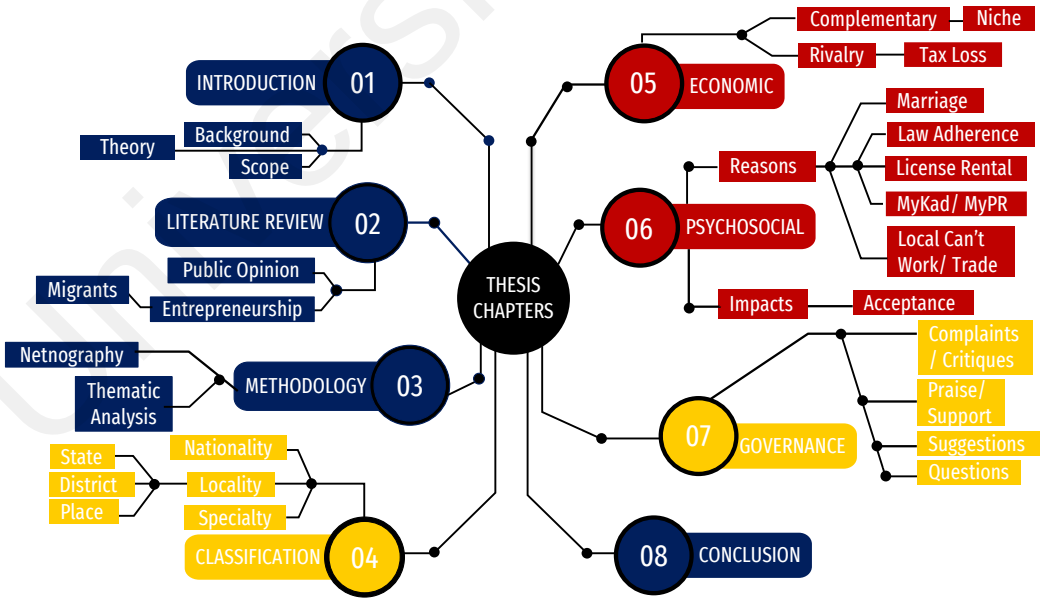


**Figure 0.2: Thesis chapters for Social Media Communications on Migrants' entrepreneurship during COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia**

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Chapter 1 of the thesis is the introduction and the background of the study. Chapter 2 of this thesis, Literature Review, will synthesise and relate the background studies with theories on migration, entrepreneurship, public opinion, and social media in Malaysian spatial limitation to ease understanding of findings and discussions in subsequent chapters. These literature topics introduced the fundamentals for the following chapters. Chapter 2 is vital for understanding the law and regulations behind a) migrant workers and b) enterprise management in Malaysia, followed by Methodology in Chapter 3.

Information provided in the literature includes current statistics on the nationalities of migrant workers and the sectors they are allowed to work in, as well as the current economics and entrepreneurship environment in Malaysia, which will be related to the results of migrants' entrepreneurship profiling in Chapter 4. There is no data on the number of migrant businesses in Malaysia due to the limitation of business registration for foreigners. Despite migrants' business presence in the public, limited information is available about them in the Malaysian context. Opinions collected in Facebook comments developed the profiles of migrant entrepreneurs, which include their nationalities, types of businesses, and locations, as presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

During a global pandemic that can change current economic and social conditions, public reactions towards migrants' businesses and immigration enforcement agencies can be used to learn about migrants' business trends in Malaysia. Although there is much research on migrants' businesses, few studies have investigated public reactions to migrants' businesses during a crisis.

This research can help improve immigration policies and programs due to the increasing numbers of migrants. Increasing numbers of migrants and anti-migrant sentiments should

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be managed by maintaining social cohesion and increasing social acceptance (Mirbabaie et al., 2020). Consider utilising public opinions, perceptions, and sentiments towards migrants to measure changes in social norms for better social cohesion. This study will discuss in depth the impacts of migrants' transformation from workers to entrepreneurs during their in-migration with the integration of both social science and economic point of view as a study done by (Ganto et al., 2015; Kirkwood, 2009).

The economic impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship, which include market demand and supply of products and services, job opportunities for both locals and migrants and possible tax/ revenue losses or gains by the government, will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. It will also analyse and explain opinions on the reasons behind and impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship from the economic point of view.

Migrant workers in Malaysia are often faced with some forms of discrimination or unfair treatment by their employers or even the local community. Past studies discussed social acceptance through upward mobility. Locals' acceptance of Bangladeshi migrant workers was discussed thoroughly (Dannecker, 2005; Rahman et al., 2014). Reza & Subramaniam, (2019) discussed Bangladeshi migrant workers lack of social acceptance by the locals despite their contributions towards the country's development by filling in the job market demands. Their involvement in entrepreneurship will be a form to shift upward in the social scale by being self-employed and improving their economic condition.

The third reason this study is critical is to find out how entrepreneurship will help improve the social acceptance of migrant workers in Malaysia. Chapter 6 of this thesis will discuss opinions on the social impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship on social acceptance or rejection towards migrants' entrepreneurs. A discussion on migrant-local marriages,



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MyKad and MyPR issuance, religion, history, culture, values, and ideology for social media users' commenting behaviour, including public criticism towards the authorities, to analyse the reasons for migrants' entrepreneurship through a social lens. The analysis will critically investigate loopholes in current laws and regulations in migrants' entrepreneurship.

Therefore, Chapter 7 of the thesis discusses the suggestions from the comments in the postings for improvements in current laws and regulations before the conclusion of this study.

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# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will highlight various literature reviews that frame this research. The five themes highlighted in the literature review are public opinion, social media, migration, entrepreneurship, and migrants' entrepreneurship.

### 2.1.1 Research Frameworks

The identified frameworks at the earlier stage of conducting this research are migrants' entrepreneurship, migrations, social media used by government agencies, public opinion formation, and online data mining, which constructed the conceptual and theoretical structure of the research. Figure 2.1 illustrates a thorough literature review on the topics.

There were two theories and concepts selected to guide the research, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, which are Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) and Social Media Engagement Theory (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016), as well as general frameworks of Public Opinion (Blumer, 1948) and Migrants' Entrepreneurship (Waldinger et al., 1990). Researchers must carefully consider these theories to avoid perspective bias while conducting netnography. Conducting a triangulation of theories can help identify biases.

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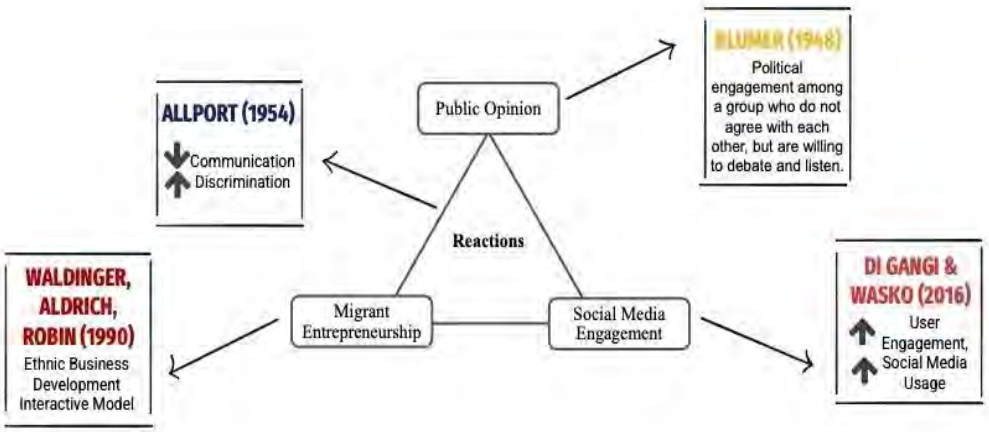


**Figure 0.1: Theoretical and General Frameworks of Social Media Communications on Migrants' Entrepreneurship during COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia**

## 2.2 Public Opinion

Public opinion is a generalisation at its best. It consists of complex observations, regular issues, and realistic problems; although it sounds basic and straightforward, it is hard to come up with a standard definition for public opinion (Lazarsfeld, 1957). The author also added that in public opinion research, scholars emphasise the empirical theories of public opinion while ignoring that public opinion is an open concept with many possibilities and variations. Classical scholars tend to ignore defining public opinions compared to modern scholars, but due to its generalisation, Blumer (1948) pointed out that proper definition is essential to distinguish the focus of study to aid investigations.

Blumer also listed characteristics of public opinion to be:

i) operating in a societal environment

ii) the society consists of different functional groups

iii) these functional groups act through available systems in the society

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iv) key individuals who will act upon the opinions have to assess influences, claims, demands, urgings and pressures of the opinions placed

v) opinions are placed in significant measures of a society in operation (groups' opinions), not collective opinions of individuals and most importantly

vi) public opinions are of diverse views and positions of issues, where individuals may encounter and have to act in response to them.

Therefore, for this thesis, public opinion is defined as the collective opinions of functional groups in a society that are accessible to individuals, where the opinions may require responses and decisions from key individuals (Blumer, 1948).

However, as cited by Lazarsfeld (1957) from Oncken (1914), public opinions may need actions by the states, or they may not have any political significance to them. It may be spontaneous or manipulated. These definitions will serve the concept of public opinion, as Hyman (2009) also states, where the public places greater attention on controversial problems of general concern and widespread feelings on issues. Tentatively, the most suitable concept to gather opinions on the contentious issues of migrants' entrepreneurship is public because it fits the criteria of public opinion by Blumer (1948) and Lazarsfeld (1957).

Media content analysis, such as newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts, polls and surveys, observational studies and focus groups, has long been used as an empirical tool to collect public opinions (Freeland, 2015). However, social media content analysis is reasonably new to public opinion research. Its reliability uses the same concept as media content analysis (D'Errico & Paciello, 2018; S. Lee et al., 2018; Tsoumou, 2020).

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This concept helps explore and gain a deep understanding of migrants' entrepreneurship by qualitatively collecting opinions and making meaningful analyses, which will require specific techniques and skills that we will discuss further in subsequent chapters. Public views of most citizens are not static. They may be influenced and changed over time and events (Higgins et al., 2010), more specifically by the economy (Higgins et al., 2010; Katona, 1957), cultural differences (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2020), implementation of law and legal systems (Flores, 2017), politics and culture (Almoqbel et al., 2019) and motivated by political inclination (Franz et al., 2019; Garz et al., 2020; Gorodnichenko et al., 2021).

While scholars are confirming how public opinion may change the course of events, Berelson (1949) classified how events may change public opinions in seven ways:

i) events can change the socio-economic conditions of the subjects that may change the political opinions on any issues, events may also
ii) change an individual's value conditions
iii) evaluation of external conditions without changing its fundamental values and objectives
iv) change an individual's conceptions of the methods to achieve their objectives
v) modify information received on an issue
vi) enlighten unexpressed opinion by forcing decisions
vii) provide a rationale and justification for previous opinion.

Events are defined loosely by Berelson (1949) where the author mentioned that events are real happenings in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic was an event that took place worldwide, which is the scope of this research. The event can change public opinion about an issue such as migrants' entrepreneurship. For this thesis, public opinion is chosen as



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the concept to study opinions and perceptions on migrants' entrepreneurship because how public opinions are broad and volatile. Lazarsfeld (1957) discussed how social scientists focus more on formulations and empirical data in finding evidence while often ignoring the general and broadness of classical traditions. He was backed by Herbst (1993) that researchers should view public opinion from a broad, speculative and historically informed writing and research. We are maintaining this research on migrant entrepreneurship as general and comprehensive as possible.

History came from many events, and knowing that events may change public opinion, a spatial limitation of time and environment sets for this thesis may limit our data to learn about public opinion formation. The broad concept of classical public opinion to analysis, Herbst (1993) implied that researchers use empirical data for analysis. Empirical data is vital to measure the intensity of the opinions formed with no interdisciplinary boundary. Lazarsfeld (1957) commented on the effects of events to change public opinion formation made by Berelson (1949), developed the hypothesis about this research.

Public opinion formation has repeatedly emphasised the importance of collective opinion of groups in a society. It is becoming an argument whether the most suitable research design for this research is ethnography or a case study. Case study research design is under consideration due to the scope limitation, time, events bound to this research, and a single field of study. Both designs require the researcher to interpret the common themes from opinions collected on social media platforms when users comment.

A while after the introduction of social media in the late 1990s and long before the birth of Facebook, Kozinets introduced the term Netnography in 1998. Researchers viewed data collected from the internet, and online communication is in its infancy. It has evolved



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and adapted quickly, coping with rapid development and transformations in social media and technology.

### 2.2.1 Facebook as an Efficient Tool for Opinions and Perceptions Study

Facebook began in 2004 as an online social network. Initially, Facebook users used to connect with friends on the platform, but its functions evolved. Facebook introduced new functions such as groups, fan pages, a marketplace, blogs and videos. With an average of 1.82 billion daily active users and 2.74 billion monthly active users in 2020, Facebook showed more users than in 2019 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Facebook Inc., 2020a). Facebook is used by its users not just to seek information or as a way of communication but also as a form of entertainment (Johns & Cheong, 2019). Multipurpose functions and its diversity of users made Facebook a suitable medium for social science study when S. Lee et al. (2018) found its' multipurpose functions are an excellent medium for gathering public opinions. Kosinski et al., (2015) and Snelson, (2016) published research on Facebook started as early as 2005, a year after its introduction, and it gained more popularity in 2007.

Social media users participating in a study are voluntarily exposed to content and are not obligated to a pre-set condition or message. Real-world, natural and non-laboratory field conditions, such as a Facebook page, allow users to accept or reject a message based on their psychological and social characteristics (Riffe et al., 2019).

At 32.73 million in 2020, 89.6% of Malaysia's population has access to the internet, and 98.0% of Internet users participated in social networking activities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020a, 2020b). Facebook is Malaysians' favourite social media



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platform, where 91.7% used Facebook, compared to YouTube (80.6%) or Instagram (63.1%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020a; Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), 2020).

Randomly collecting public opinions from public Facebook comments posted on a public Facebook page should be considered a representation of public opinion in Malaysia due to its selection as a preferred social media platform. Internet is accessible to a broad population in Malaysia, so using Facebook to represent the public is suitable. Statistics by the Malaysian Communications And Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2020) showed that 89.6% of Malaysians had access to the internet in 2020. The internet is accessible to 93.5% of the population in urban areas and 83.9% in rural areas. There is no published data on Facebook users in Malaysia in 2020. However, data from Miniwatts Marketing Group (2021) showed 28.49 million Malaysian Facebook subscribers as of 30th June 2021.

Most Malaysians use the internet to communicate, whether through text messaging (98.1%) or social networking (93.3%) (Malaysian Communications And Multimedia Commission (MCMC), 2020). People communicated with friends and family through social media during a lockdown, and many used social media to receive critical information from government agencies (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), 2020; Newman et al., 2020). Malaysians are actively engaged in social media activities, where social networking is the second online activity for internet users in 2020. Thus, it can be a channel to convey public opinions or discuss various social issues in Malaysia. It is essential to consider biases from publicly shared data from Facebook because of social desirability influences and user censoring (Franz et al., 2019) or potential biases (Kosinski et al., 2015).



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Sensitive issues such as racial or religious discourse are often not publicly discussed in Malaysia. Nevertheless, Khadijah Muda et al., (2022) observed social contracts on Facebook, where netnography was the method that they used. Social media can be a channel for discussing sensitive issues (D'Errico & Paciello, 2018; Ekman, 2019; Kozinets, 2015). The chosen words in Facebook comments or posts can bring meaningful findings of public opinions and opinion mining from texts in social media, which is gaining more attention from researchers (Maynard & Greenwood, 2014).

There are several ways to convey opinions on social issues, such as by using adjectives, adverbs and nouns that can be judgements, evaluations, affective (or emotional) states, beliefs or wishes (Karamibekr & Ghorbani, 2012). Words, sentences or paragraphs can be quantified or analysed to understand the whole meaning of its context. Greenberg & Hier (2001) observed patterns of news on migrants by quantifying the specific thematic coding of paragraphs representing the meaning behind issues.

The previous study analysed the frequency counts of the identities of quoted sources and the main points of view in each news coverage section. The themes were observed and quantified by their frequency counts validate the viewpoints of some individuals and groups. However, for an organisation's Facebook page, the posts may be influenced by its moderator's opinions or preferences. A moderator may be liable for the legal actions of a Facebook post (Ekman, 2019).

Therefore, it is crucial to have a proper guideline for a moderator of government agencies' Facebook pages. In Malaysia, a central agency develops, manages, and administers information and communication technology (ICT) and internet services for the public



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sector. Unit Pemodenan Tadbiran dan Perancangan Pengurusan Malaysia, Jabatan Perdana Menteri or Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department (MAMPU) is the regulating body that administers the rules and guidelines for ICT in the public sector.

Some of the more general guidelines for social media administrators of official government agencies pages are Garis Panduan Pelaksanaan Blog bagi Sektor Awam, Panduan Penyediaan dan Penyiaran Berita *Online* di Laman Web Agensi-Agensi Kerajaan and Amalan Terbaik Penggunaan Media Jaringan Sosial di Sektor Awam along with specific guidelines by each agency which shall not contradict the guidelines set by MAMPU.

The emergence of social media in the early 2000s created new research areas. Facebook is the most researched social media network, where content analysis of data obtained from social media content is the most used analytic method (Snelson, 2016). Content analysis calculates the frequency counts of the inductively/ deductively identified themes. However, academics often criticised thematic analysis methods and frameworks as not scientific enough.

However, to improve on this criticism, Lawless & Chen (2019) suggested a systematic process of critical thematic analysis to help establish new ways of communicating in the context of power, status-based hierarchies and marginalisation. Social media fits these environments as a free speech platform for users with different social categories. A critical approach is necessary to understand social construction in identifying everyday experiences that appear recurrent, repetitive and forceful (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

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## 2.3 Social Media Engagement Theory

Social media interactions among users and technical features of the platforms can influence users' engagement according to the Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET). The ability of Facebook to provide a platform for users to interact among themselves and in this research, the interaction of users with government bodies attracted more engagement in the platform. The definition of user engagement is "user's state of mind that warrants heightened involvement and results in a personally meaningful benefit" (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were more interactions and engagements on social media when users perceived social media platforms to meet their information needs (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Besides, emotional or strategic reasons can result in high Facebook engagement in news postings (Almoqbel et al., 2019).

Emotional sharing was so common during the pandemic that it led to emotional contagion, which can affect the emotional climate in a society (Steinert, 2020). According to Steinert (2020), 'digital emotions' are expressed online or through online content experiences. Social media platforms understand that emotions can keep users engaged, and unusual content can go viral and reach more social media, especially when it involves emotions.

While Di Gangi & Wasko (2016) emphasised the difference between psychological state and behaviour in defining social media user engagement, they concluded that users perceived their social media usage as risky and will be more likely to use social media platforms and more engagement. From SMET, negative emotions can capture more engagement and attention in social media, and we shall look into contact theory (Allport, 1954), to see if it still holds in today's online environment.

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## 2.4 Contact Theory

Social interactions increased users' possibility of negative comments, and those communicative interactions increased racist remarks in anti-immigration research (Ekman, 2019). Allport's (1954) contact theory was discussed by Pettigrew et al. (2011) when they questioned the lack of interest in studying harmful intergroup contact when people avoided contact in threatening situations. This research discussed contact theory for some of the findings.

According to the theory, with frequent contact, less prejudice occurs during the four favourable conditions. The conditions are the equal status of the groups, common goals, cooperation between the groups, and support from the authorities. Although the context was different between Allport's (1954) and this research, he emphasised that discrimination in face-to-face interaction is unlikely to occur to avoid embarrassment compared to contact in letters or phone calls.

Contact theory was used in this research because there was no face-to-face contact online. Allport's (1954) findings, especially in social, group, cultural, racial, and ethnic differences, visibility and strangeness of different groups, victimisation and frustrations of groups, stereotypes in various cultures, aggression and hatred, anxiety, and guilt, linguistic, religions and law were some of the discussions on the observation in the online environment.

In contact theory, Allport (1954) listed three steps of rejections: 1) verbal rejection, 2) discrimination and 3) physical attack, and these steps can progress from one to the next



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where we deem physical attack as the worst condition. This research observed online verbal rejection and discrimination towards migrants' entrepreneurship. Although the physical attack has not been observed (yet), there was online violence and aggression. Allport (1954) predicted that violence may follow suit in the latter step. Allport (1954) also listed prior occurrences that may accelerate physical violence in the future, which are:

i) People have pre-judgementally categorised the members of out-groups for a long time.

ii) Verbal complaints, suspicions and blaming towards the victimised minority have existed for a long time.

iii) Increased discrimination.

iv) Some external factors, such as fear of unemployment, affect the in-group.

v) People are frustrated with their inhibitions and reaching a boiling point. For example, they no longer feel they can or should face unemployment, rising prices or exploitation.

vi) Some of these people joined organised movements or informal organisations that supported the fights on the issues.

vii) Membership in organisations gives people courage and support to justify their irritation and anger when others see them as having the same perceptions.

viii) When a precipitating incident occurs, trivial things cause an explosion. The incident can be made up or exaggerated through rumour.

ix) Once violence breaks out, social facilitation induced actions by those who were present at the mob that they may have less self-control.

x) Several of these situations are already occurring in Malaysia's environment, although the severity of the rejections towards the out-group (migrant entrepreneurs and migrant workers) is still unknown. Optimistically, this



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research can be a starting point for more research in the future to better understand migrants' acceptance and assimilations, including those already awarded permanent residency status, MyPR.

## 2.5 Migration in Malaysia

People have different views towards migrant workers in Malaysia, which can be positive, negative, or a mix of both, depending on the context. Developing countries rely on migrant workers to fill the void in their labour shortages, mainly in 3D sectors. Malaysia is no exception to this solution, where 2,002,427 active unskilled migrant workers are working in the country by June 2019 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). Migrant workers are hired temporarily in Malaysia to do jobs the locals dislike but need to sustain the country's development. As the country's economy flourishes, many new low-skill, low-pay jobs are not appealing to the locals (Hugo, 2011).

Improving education levels made locals more selective and avoided menial jobs requiring physical strength and longer working hours (Athukorala, 2006). Women also join the formal workforce as they have better access to education, which involves the employment of domestic helpers to care for their families (Del Carpio et al., 2015). Kanapathy (2008) also claimed that improved education levels have increased reservation wages and demanded higher-paid jobs.

Malaysian government approved temporary migrant workers from 15 source countries to work in five formal sectors, including manufacturing, construction, plantation, agriculture, and services. In contrast, in the informal sector, they are domestic workers.

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Migrant workers work mainly in the manufacturing industry, with 699,430 active workers working legally.

Another 438,264 workers are working in the construction sector, 273,079 in plantation, 306,152 in services, 156,334 in agriculture and 129,168 as domestic workers. These statistics are of legal migrant workers working under PLKS in the first half of 2019. Indonesians take up the most significant number of migrant workers with 35.17% followed by Bangladeshis (28.41%), Nepalese (15.79%), Myanmar (6.28%), Indian (5.88%), Pakistanis (3.08%), Philippines (2.62%) and other nationals from Vietnam (0.91%), Thailand (0.73%), China (0.63%), Sri Lanka (0.32%), Cambodia (0.18%) and Laos (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019).

In a globalised world, individuals may migrate for a better economic and social life. Potential labour from less developed countries searched for opportunities in developed and developing countries. The four theories of international migration will give a general idea of why migration occurs in the modern world, possibly due to differential wages, better work environment, minimising risks in family earning, and the pull factors from demands of low-skill job creations in developed countries. It is a consequence of globalisation (Massey et al., 1993). Still, it will eventually lead back to Ravenstein (1889), which relates migration to economic betterment.

Malaysia has attracted migrant labour from its neighbouring Asian countries with its fast-growing economy and abundant job opportunities. Promises of jobs with better pay and work conditions seemed appealing to economic migrants. Modernisation created countless job opportunities since the 1970s when Malaysia transitioned from agricultural and mining to modern industries such as plantation, manufacturing, and services.



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Migrant workers were officially allowed to work in Malaysia in the 1980s after Malaysia signed the Medan Agreement with Indonesia (Kanapathy, 2004). However, Malaysia's high-productivity sectors have been in a labour force crisis for almost half a century. They were continuing the demands for the importation of labour (Azizah Kassim et al., 2014). To overcome this problem, most employers depend on low-skilled migrant workers to do unattractive jobs for the locals. Over the years, the government improved several policies to protect and govern migrant workers better.

### 2.5.1 Acts and Policies Governing Migrant Employment

The economy and job opportunities were abundant in the 80s and 90s, with a transition from agriculture and mining to modern plantation, mining, manufacturing, and services sectors before global economic recessions hit the country in 1997. Past research estimated that by 1997, Malaysia relied on 1.5 million migrant workers with legal work permits and another one million illegally (Kanapathy, 2006).

Kanapathy (2006) discussed that the economic situation could affect migrant flows. During the recession, the government took several actions to reduce the number of migrant workers. After almost four decades since the 1970s initial labour migrations into the country, the number seemed to dwindle in 2000, when 800,000 migrant workers worked legally. The government took several actions to achieve economic recovery after the 1985 and 1997 recessions by introducing and improving new Acts and Regulations to control migration. Still, it did not solve the problem of irregular migration (Kanapathy, 2006, 2008).

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Available Acts at the beginning of the first wave of labour migration, such as the Employment Regulation (Restriction and Employment Permit) 1969 and Immigration Act 1959/63, were used to govern expatriates. Crossings at the borders were unregulated until the early 1980s, when the number of registered migrants was low, with less than 4,000 workers triggering the public's concern about job opportunities. Due to global economic recessions in the early 1980s, unemployment and underemployment were not just other national issues, but the government addressed policies to minimise the impacts on labour markets. Besides continuing the Malaysian plans, the government improved several regulations on migrant workers' hiring from the mid-1980s to the 1990s.

One of the changes in policy and regulations was the introduction of private employment agencies to import labour and permit issuance in 1980—this regulation aimed to legalise employment and control irregular migrants. The government realised they failed to control migration flows when dealing with overseas recruitment agencies. Employment agencies in Malaysia will connect with employment agencies in source countries for recruitment, logistics, travel documents, and hiring paperwork, easing the tedious processes for employers. These steps increased the hiring of legal migrant workers. However, they failed to curb the movement of illegal migrants into the country (Azizah Kassim, 1996; Kanapathy, 2006, 2008).

A study by Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim (2011) quoted the estimates of illegal migrant workers to be increasing over the decades. Although the government needs to evaluate the policy changes, there are around 540,000 to 1.8 million illegal migrant workers estimated in 2009. The numbers should consider the ratio of five illegal migrant workers to every registered migrant worker in the 1980s three illegal migrant workers to every registered migrant worker in the 1990s and the 2000s. The number seemed to be



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one to one ratio. A recent report by E. L. Lee & Idris (2018) claimed a one to 2.5 ratio of registered to illegal migrant workers.

This increase in number and ratio is alarming to the government and the public. However, a study concluded that Foreign Workers Policy (Dasar Pengambilan Pekerja Asing) implementation in 1992 has helped to increase the employment of migrant workers through legal channels but failed to stop the increase in the number of illegal migrant workers over the decades (Azizah Kassim, 2014; Kanapathy, 2006, 2008; Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim, 2011).

Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim (2011) who studied policy implementations on irregular migrants found deficiencies in the existing policy for migrant workers, which were also concluded in another research, for example, by Kanapathy, (2008). Past studies identified exploitation and violation of policy by employers as one of the root factors of the increasing number of illegal migrant workers. However, the initial policy implemented in 1992 was selective, and penalties were limited to migrant workers; tougher sanctions toward employers were only introduced in 1997 (Kanapathy, 2008).

### 2.5.2 Entry Permit

Entry Permit is a permit to enter and remain in Malaysia under Section 10 of the Immigration Act 1959/ 63 [Act 155] (Immigration Act 1959/63, 2006) that can allow non-citizen to remain in Malaysia after the expiry of a valid pass, with no time limit as long as they have a valid passport. They can enjoy the perks of being citizens except to be involved in politics or elections. It is stated on the website that they can work, study, and

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do business in Malaysia without having to apply for other passes. JIM's website listed the four categories that can apply for an Entry Permit (Jabatan Imigresen Malaysia, 2022):

i) Investors and experts (A1)

ii) Professionals (A2)

iii) Spouse of Malaysian citizen and child/ children of Malaysian citizen below the age of six years old

iv) Point system

Investors must have at least USD 2 million worth of fixed deposit savings in a local bank with five years of placement. Experts are those with the expertise, talent and skills recognised as world-class by any international organisation, and professionals are individuals with outstanding skills in critical fields recognised by relevant agencies in Malaysia. Point systems are open to all non-citizens except those three categories mentioned above, PLKS holders or Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) participants. The point system will evaluate applicants based on their age, academic qualifications, Bahasa Melayu proficiency, duration of stay in Malaysia, working experience in Malaysia, familiarity with Malaysia, and value of investments with at least 65 marks and above out of 120 to be qualified for application.

The application fee for an Entry Permit is only RM120. Appealing for rejected applications must be in writing within 30 days to the Minister of Home Affairs. The Minister of Home Affairs can consider applications from the 'grey categories' of individuals who entered on compassionate grounds. Compassionate ground is very subjective and depends on the individual appointed as the minister at the time of application. The minister's appointment is of politicians, so the political party's viewpoints and beliefs can influence a ministry's policy.

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Entry Permit holders can apply for permanent resident status from JPN. The entry permit is the highest award the government grants non-citizens who can apply for permanent residence status while maintaining their original citizenship. Those fulfilling the eligibility requirements must apply for permanent resident status from JPN. These are listed below:

i) foreign wife to a citizen under Article 15 (1) of the Federal Constitution after residing in Malaysia for at least two years after the date of application.
ii) foreign child/ children to at least a citizen parent under Article 15 (2) or whose father is a citizen Article 15 (3) of the Federal Constitution.
iii) Other than wife/ children to a citizen under Article 19 of the Federal Constitution, resided in Malaysia for at least 10 to 12 years.

Although the constitution clearly states citizenship is granted to children of a permanent resident, even if the spouse is a non-citizen, subjected to the condition that their marriage is registered under any written law in force in the Federation. It was still not standard information known by the public. The comments section widely discussed the issue of citizenship for children of MyPR holders.

### 2.5.3 *Program Rekalibrasi Pulang* (Repatriation Recalibration Program)

The legalisation of illegal migrants, amnesty programs and total restriction of new recruitment were some of the changes that the government made to control illegal migrants during this period.

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Before implementing the foreign workers policy, legalisations were done in stages, starting in 1985, 1987 and later in 1989. Harsher actions were taken with *Ops Nyah I* (Expunge Operation) to stop illegal migrants' entry or exit through the country's borders starting in December 1991, followed by *Ops Nyah II* in July 1992.

Regularisation is conducted within a sufficient period to give enough time for applications from undocumented migrants. There were ongoing exercises through enforcement, surveillance, arrest, detention, and deportation of PATI in the country. In 1991, the annual levy was introduced for every sector and source country and later increased by 100% in 1995 to discourage low-skilled migrant workers. As debated by researchers, the policy in Malaysia to set a higher levy for sectors that face labour shortages will not solve the problem of over-dependence on low-skilled migrant workers (Kanapathy, 2008).

Besides legalisation, the introduction of levy and enforcement programs helped improve governance. The government granted official pardons for undocumented migrants to leave the country without being charged through several amnesty programs. Before imposing tougher sanctions, the government run amnesty programs for a specific time - in 1996, 1997, 1998, 2002, and 2004 – 2005. Researchers viewed amnesty programs as weaknesses in policies whereby some of the programs extended past their due dates (Kanapathy, 2008; Ragayah Haji Mat Zin & Azizah Kassim, 2011).

Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Education had conflicting policies in the 1990s. Some policies viewed migrants as a security threat, while some viewed them as an accelerator of the country's development. Policies that welcome tourists and promote international students also give other ways of legal entry and pass abuse to work in the country.

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In July 2011, another legalisation and amnesty program were launched, 6P Program is abbreviations of *pendaftaran* (registration), *pengesahan* (legalisation), *pengampunan* (amnesty), *pemantauan* (surveillance), *penguatkuasaan* (enforcement) and *pengusiran* (deportation). Through this program, the recorded biometrics information of illegal migrants can estimate the number of illegal migrants. Illegal migrants were distributed to work in required sectors after legalisation through this program.

In 2017, a similar program, the Enforcement Program (e-Kad), was introduced from 15th February 2017 until 30th June 2017 where illegal migrants were required to register with their employees and given temporary e-Kad to work in the country while completing all the required processes for PLKS application of the workers. Malaysian government gave a minimum of one year period to undocumented migrant workers for legalisation. The temporary card was valid until 15th February 2018. Until 10 pm on 30th June 2017, only 161 056 illegal migrant workers have registered with the program. It was far below the targeted 600,000 (Mohd Noor, 2019; Shuaib, 2017).

Meanwhile, during the pandemic, *Program Rekalibrasi Pulang* (Repatriation Recalibration Program) was introduced on 16th November 2020, which then changed into *Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja* (RTK) or Labour Recalibration Program . The program will continue until 31st December 2023. Initially, the *Program Rekalibrasi Pulang* in 2020 (Jabatan Imigresen Malaysia, 2020) was an initiative by the government for PATI to return to their country of origin voluntarily. Initially, the program ran from 16th November 2020 until 30th June 2021. The government improved the program to naturalise PATI who wish to stay in this country to work through *Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja* 1.0 (Jabatan Imigresen Malaysia, 2021). The program ran from 16th



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November 2020 until 31st December 2021 and extended until 31st December 2022. The program's renewal as *Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja 2.0* started on 27th January 2023 and continued until 31st December 2023 (Jabatan Imigresen Malaysia, 2023).

There are some changes in eligibility and other requirements during three years of the program's implementation. Only the latest version of eligibility, requirements, SOP and FAQ will be available on JIM's website, https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/myimms/main. There was also an improvement in the online system used within these three years. In the earlier stages, migrant workers must set an appointment on JIM's website, *Sistem Temujanji Online*, at https://sto.imi.gov.my for RTK application during RMCO.

In 2021, the application shifted online without having to set an appointment as Malaysia relaxed their movement control and social distancing procedures. Attached in Figure 2.2 below is the illustration of procedures for Repatriation Recalibration Program application at the earlier stage, Figure 2.3 for Labour Recalibration Program 1.0 and Figure 2.4 for Labour Recalibration Program 2.0 as current guidelines.

In the first version of *Program Rekalibrasi Pulang*, applicants must set an appointment on JIM's website and be physically present at JIM's office for application and documentation. *Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja* made many improvements, including online applications, payments, and document submission. After submission, migrant workers must go to JIM with their employers on a given date for ID verification, and migrants' thumbprints must be recorded in the system.

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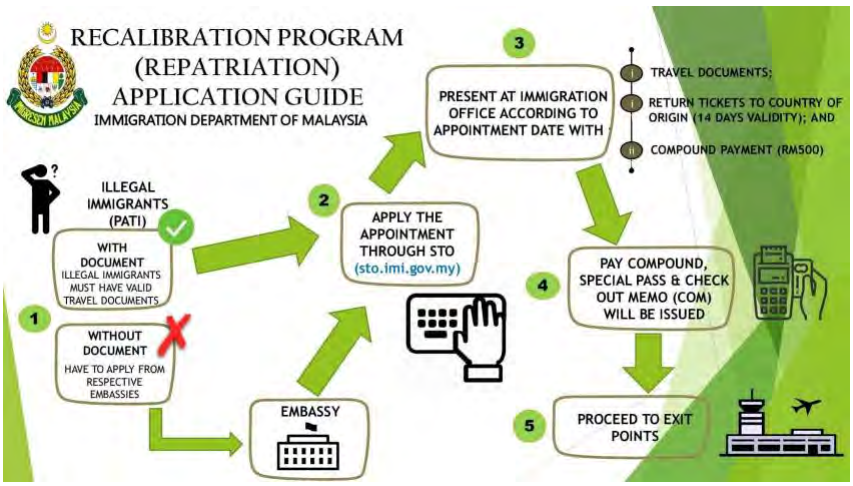


**Figure 0.2: Repatriation Recalibration Program**

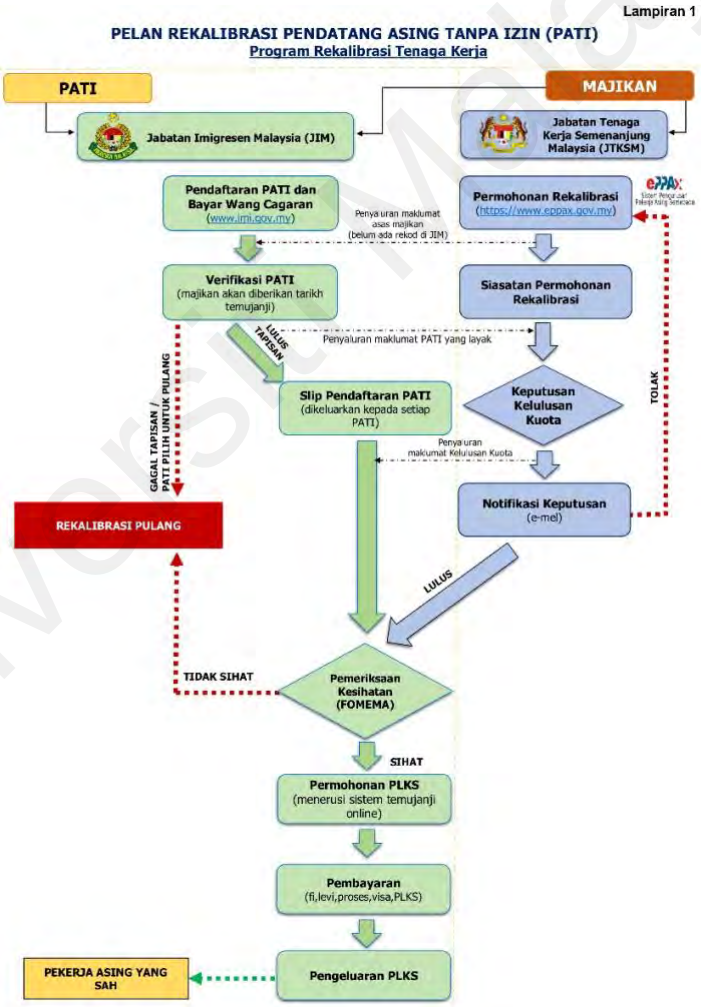


**Figure 0.3: Labour Recalibration Program 1.0 Poster from a Facebook Post**

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**Figure 0.4: Labour Recalibration Program 2.0**

Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja 1.0 had a RM500 security deposit and a RM1,500 recalibration fee. The fee remains RM1,500 in Version 2.0, with no security deposit to regularise PATI to work in Malaysia starting from 27th January 2023. The government has taken a more flexible approach as they see it as an effective way to solve the problem of migrant worker shortages, so there will be an instant supply of migrant workers among those already in this country. Besides that, they aimed to generate income from fines charged to PATI, which wished to stay and work in this country.

All payments must be made online or using a QR code and card starting from the pandemic. This SOP is excellent when employers do not have to bring cash or cheques, and government officers do not have to deposit the cash daily. Previously, there were also some incidents of payments made by employers using fake bank drafts, resulting in huge losses of time and money to the government.

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Although this new recalibration initiative may seem like a new program, it looks like another version of JIM's previously conducted Rehiring and 6P program. There were even social media users' comments that mentioned the many amnesty programs implemented by the government that resulted in migrant workers disrespecting the law and not being afraid to be in this country illegally.

From recalibration programs, be it for repatriation or even labour recalibration programs until the end of 2022, the government collected fines of up to RM700 million throughout its implementation (Ridauddin Daud, 2023). Another take-out from this program is that the government can start having more evident PATI when they come forward to register themselves. The government can replicate the same approach to find the exact number of migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia if we can evaluate the issue holistically and consider all other possibilities for 'regularising' migrants' entrepreneurship.

### 2.5.4 Citizenship and Permanent Residency

There are various passes and permits in the governance of migrants—their identification while in migration is legalised with their passports, visas and permits as non-citizens. In comparison, the official identification of citizens for any country will be their identity card. Malaysia's identity cards have different colours for different citizenship/non-citizenship statuses, where blue is for Malaysians' identity card holders (MyKad), red is identity card for permanent residence (MyPR), and green for MyKAS for those with temporary residence status whose citizenship cannot be verified.

The award of Malaysian citizenship is subjected to Part III of the Federal Constitution, which is in three parts: Chapter 1: Acquisition of Citizenship, Chapter 2: Termination of



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Citizenship, and Chapter 3: Supplemental. As stated in Second Schedule, Part 1 of the constitution, citizenship by operation of law is granted to every person who was born within the Federation before or on Merdeka Day (31 August 1957), every person born within the period of after Merdeka Day and before October 1962 (Malaysia Day), including to children of at least a parent who were either a citizen or permanently resident in the Federation, or who was not born a citizen of any country.

Citizenship is given to those born outside the Federation on or after Merdeka Day, whose father was a citizen at the time of his birth and either was born in the Federation or was at the time of the birth in service under the Government of the Federation or of a State. Additionally, a person of a citizen father who was born outside the Federation on or after Merdeka Day is a citizen but must be registered at a consulate of the Federation within one year or extended period allowed by the Federal Government.

Part III of the constitution subjects those born after Malaysia Day, where the person born within the Federation of whose parents, one at least is at the time of birth, is a citizen or permanent resident in the Federation. The same law applies to those born before and after Malaysia Day, outside the Federation, whose father must be a citizen, and who must register at a consulate within the stipulated time mentioned above. Those born in the territories comprised of the States of Sabah and Sarawak become citizens by registration or naturalisation in Sabah or Sarawak and are citizens of Malaysia.

### 2.6 Entrepreneurship in Malaysia

Various entrepreneurship definitions arise from different scholars. However, in this study, entrepreneurs are defined as "individuals (or groups) who started a new business for profit



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and employ at least one other paid employee" (Kirkwood, 2009). Migrant entrepreneurs in this study are temporary migrant workers who changed their status as employees to be their employers and make income.

Migrant workers may pursue available opportunities through entrepreneurship to reach their personal goals. Economic conditions of the country may decrease the demand and supply of migrant workers due to slower economic growth during economic crises (Kanapathy, 2006). Transformation to entrepreneurship is also an option for migrants' survival during economic crises, where some refuse to be sent home and stay as illegal migrants. These workers ventured into businesses to survive as migrants in the host country and to back this statement. More migrants started businesses between the 2002 and 2008 economic crises (Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Despite the increase in migrants' business start-ups during economic crises, Hung et al. (2011)found that economic crises may slow business operations in Malaysia and globally too (Jones et al., 2015; Kitching et al., 2009; Waldinger et al., 1990) .

However, Jones et al. (2015) claimed that ethnic businesses were unaffected during an economic downturn, which we may also consider as happening during COVID-19. Migrant workers' intentions and entrepreneurs' behaviour will evolve from merely surviving as illegal workers during the economic crisis to entrepreneurs who were starting new businesses to maintaining or expanding their business operations and survive in a competitive market.

Researchers in developed countries commonly studied entrepreneurship environment, opportunities and growth compared to Malaysia's context as a developing nation due to its limited institutional support of emerging education and training systems (Zamberi



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Ahmad & Xavier, 2012). According to them, Malaysia is a suitable country to study the entrepreneurship environment in the context of a developing country due to its economic growth and participation in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring (GEM) since 2006, a standard to monitor entrepreneurial activity assessment.

According to SME Corporation Malaysia, the two sectors as in Figure 2.5 define the small-medium enterprises (SMEs) (SME Corporation Malaysia, 2013, 2020):

i) Manufacturing: firms with sales turnover not exceeding RM50 million or full-time employees not exceeding 200; or

ii) Services and other sectors: firms with sales turnover not exceeding RM20 million or full-time employees not exceeding 75.

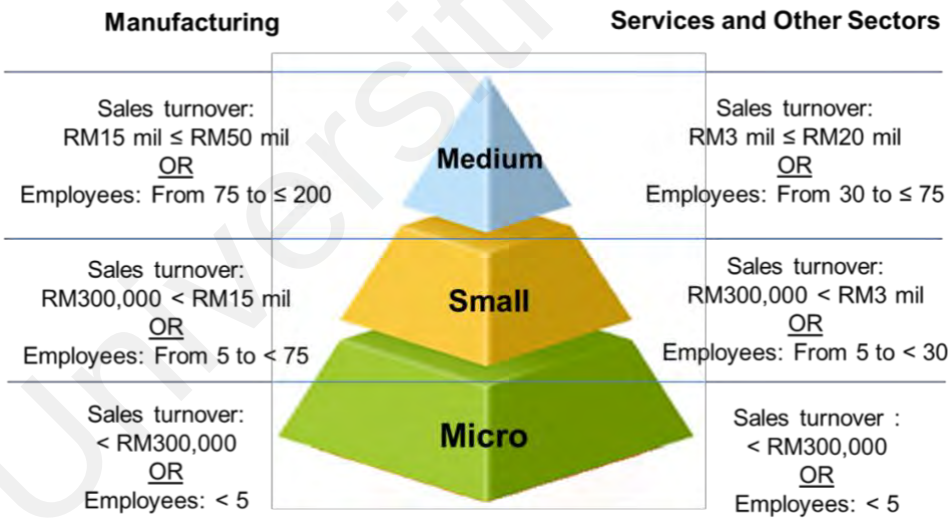


**Figure 0.5: Detailed definitions of SME categories**

Working in SMEs will give entrepreneurial migrant workers a chance to learn about business know-how, which can be helpful when they start their businesses.

### 2.6.1 Migrants' Entrepreneurship



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Dependence on labour importation is still increasing, yet economic crises may reduce migrant labour demand and supply (Kanapathy, 2006). The Asian economic crisis 1997 saw a total ban on migrants' recruitment, workers' retrenchment and migrants' repatriation. These changes in the supply and demand of labour importation, especially during economic crises, may create another scenario in the job market for legal or illegal migrant workers (Kanapathy, 2004; Mosbah et al., 2018). Limited job opportunities and higher competition with locals and migrant workers may foster self-employment through entrepreneurship for workers who refuse to return to the source country after being terminated (Azizah Kassim, 2014; Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012).

Migrants' business, ethnic business, ethnic entrepreneurship, migrants' entrepreneurship, transnational entrepreneurship, or business immigrant are some of the terms often used to categorise the phenomena of a group of people from a different origin than the country where they run their businesses. For this study, businesses conducted for profit and owned by temporary migrants in Malaysia were defined as migrant businesses. Past studies on migrants' entrepreneurship mainly focused on migrants in the USA and UK. However, lately, studies have been growing on migrant businesses in the EU and Australia (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Muniandy, 2015b). Most of the study finds that migrants are more likely to start an ethnic business of their origin and culture (Jones et al., 2015; Kitching et al., 2009; Riddle et al., 2010; Waldinger et al., 1990).

Migration into the USA, UK, EU and Australia is temporary migration turned mostly permanent settlers. At the same time, it is temporary migration, primarily for Asian countries, when migrants as low-skill labourers are hired on a contract basis for 5 – 15 years (Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011). Different findings, however, were



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found on migrant businesses in Asian countries. Studies done on South Asian migrants' businesses in East Asia show that they are venturing into ethnic and local markets alike. Some even expanded to a transnational level. Based on studies of Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in Japan and Korea, most entrepreneurs selected both ethnic business niches, such as halal food restaurants and assimilation through local business too (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011).

The situation in Malaysia is slightly different, where they ventured into both local and ethnic businesses, targeting the external market more than their ethnic enclave. Typical businesses are construction, convenience stores, restaurants, garment or furniture shops, saloons, and food stalls. A recent study by Nur Suhaili binti Ramli (2020) found similar findings, where migrant entrepreneurs are now entering non-ethnic businesses in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. Discussions of the characteristics and motivations of migrant entrepreneurs are extensive in the Western context.

An interactive model proposed by Waldinger et al. (1990) of Ethnic Business Development summarised the strategies of migrants' businesses into two dimensions: 1) opportunity structures of market conditions and access to ownership and 2) group characteristics for predisposing factors such as their situations pre-migration and resource mobilisation. Migrants' entrepreneurship exists when these factors are acting together, but their strategies for survival and business performance will be affected by the dynamic environment of the market.

Migrants' entrepreneurship start-up conditions and motivations in Malaysia were discussed by Golam Hassan, (2009) and Norehan Abdullah et al. (2012), where economic crises and job displacement motivate migrants to self-employment. They mentioned that

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migrant workers shifted to entrepreneurship when they refused to be sent home after being retrenched or when they ended their work contracts.

In a Western context, researchers commonly observed migrants' entrepreneurship from non-economic factors such as social networks (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011), where strong kinship and broad social networks increase the probability of entry and success. The situation is different in Malaysia, where there are only weak social ties with locals for enterprise start-ups (Mosbah et al., 2018; Nayeem Sultana, 2008).

Another difference in Malaysia is that the enterprises are not always enclosed in ethnic enclave environments but dispersed in all areas, compared to studies in ethnic enclaves in the UK, where ethnic niche markets specifically target ethnic consumers, thus reducing their potential customers (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011). A study was done by Muniandy (2015a)in Little Burma and Little Bangladesh ethnic enclave in Kuala Lumpur that Bangladeshi and Burmese migrants were not highly dependent on ethnic support and exclusivity due to the transnational nature of their businesses in the area.

The factors influencing Asian migrants to become entrepreneurs in British cities are unemployment, poverty, and discrimination (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011). In the UK, disadvantages such as the language barrier of certain educated ethnic minorities may reduce their employability to enter the labour market (Waldinger et al., 1990).

Nevertheless, the factors that may lead to migrant workers' transformation into entrepreneurs in Malaysia may be due to low wages and trying to have a better job environment (Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). In a non-migrant labour market, workers usually opt to find another job. However, for



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migrant workers, the current recruitment policy in Malaysia will limit this option because they will be allowed to change employers in the same sectors, under specific conditions only, with approval from the authorities.

Some migrant workers are motivated to enter self-employment when there is an opportunity to enter entrepreneurship. Providing opportunities to start an enterprise and try to gain more money will be good motivations for entry. An example is Thai restaurant workers who open their food stall or restaurant after gaining enough capital, knowledge and skills from their previous employment, as discussed in Bunmak (2013) and Muniandy (2015b). Most of the businesses chosen are small or informal businesses and petty trade, which require little to no skill which can be learned through informal, on-the-job training (Waldinger et al., 1990).

Past studies mentioned that migrant entrepreneurs will likely learn the required skills and business know-how from their previous employment. Commonly, migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia is in the same sector as their previous employment (Bunmak, 2013; Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). These workers could turn into entrepreneurs, especially in retail, restaurants, and construction of upward mobility.

Migrant workers are needed to fill in labour shortages in Malaysia, and they have contributed tremendously to the economic development of this country, whether directly or indirectly. However, locals' acceptance of their presence is somewhat mixed and not openly discussed; the labour market's lowest tier usually employs them. The chance of social integration into the community and social mobility by improving their status from workers to employers will benefit them in improving their social status in the host country.

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Waldinger et al (1990) has grouped migrant entrepreneurs who tried to improve their social status using the status withdrawal theory. Nevertheless, they also find that temporary migrants willing to do menial and demeaning jobs are only concerned with economic mobility rather than social status, which fits the type of Bangladeshis' migration to Malaysia.

Different social environments but with some language, culture and religious similarities between migrants and multi-ethnic Malaysians may increase the likelihood of migrant enterprises and success (Mosbah et al., 2018). A clear example is Arab Restaurants run by Arabs, Indonesian salons and spas, Chinese traditional medicine shops and Thai tom yum restaurants. Bangladeshi migrant workers, for example, will learn local languages to adapt better. Assimilation and partnership of migrants through marriage with locals were also discussed by Mosbah et al. (2018) and Nayeem Sultana (2008), where Muslim men (Indonesian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Arab or Muslim Indian) married local Muslim women to gain citizenship, permanent residency or business licenses. Migrant entrepreneurs' studies in Japan and Korea found the same findings (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011).

It is interesting to point out that there is a restriction for business registration for non-citizens in Malaysia, and non-citizens are only allowed to register companies that require solid financial capital of up to a million ringgit. However, the public observed that migrants operated small to medium-sized businesses openly in Malaysia despite this restriction; some are informal businesses, and some are legit businesses run under local owner's registration as mentioned by Azizah Kassim (2015b) and Golam Hassan (2009). Ownership of these businesses varies from sole ownership family to non-family partnership (Mosbah et al., 2018). Directions for developing policy suggestions and

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authoritative administration from migrants' entrepreneurship issues. Some issues are inter-marriage business ownership, sleep-partnership business owners, street vendor license rental, and other company registration issues for migrant owners.

#### 2.6.1.1 Migrants' Entrepreneurship Motivations

This thesis explored the factors affecting migrant workers' decision to transform from employees to self-employment through entrepreneurship and business ventures. Migrant workers may enter entrepreneurship after facing several issues and job dissatisfaction. Low-skill 3D jobs that offered low wages, longer working hours and unfavourable work conditions primarily hired migrant workers in Malaysia, for example, in the construction sector. Job satisfaction is one of the push factors that may lead employed workers to enter entrepreneurship (Rettab, 2001; Segal et al., 2005).

There were migrant workers in Malaysia who left their initial job because they could not understand their employment contract, were given lower wages than promised before migration and were forced to work long hours (Rahman et al., 2014; Reza & Subramaniam, 2019). The reasons why they left their initial job are clear, but the options available and their decisions for employment afterwards will be explored.

Opposing external forces such as job dissatisfaction, difficulty finding employment, insufficient salary, or inflexible work schedules pushed individuals into entrepreneurship. Pull factors are when individuals are attracted to entrepreneurship and seek independence, self-fulfilment, wealth, and other desirable outcomes (Ganto et al., 2015; Segal et al., 2005). Availability of opportunities and capital will ease entrepreneurial entry, but external factors that motivate an individual or a group of people to enter entrepreneurship



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and find ways to run the business will help to shape the management and leadership styles of enterprises (Hung et al., 2011; Naffziger et al., 1994).

Despite the available opportunities, knowledge and resources, entrepreneurs may succeed with sufficient human, financial, and social capital (Aldrich & Martinez, 2001). These capitals will be discussed further in the next chapter, along with the additional information capital, as discussed in a study on ethnic entrepreneurship (Rettab, 2001).

**a) Financial Capital**

Entrepreneurship happens when a person takes advantage of opportunities where others do not see some of these opportunities. Migrant workers who can take advantage of opportunities to start a business venture may have enough capital. Financial, human, social and information capitals were discussed thoroughly by Rettab (2001) for ethnic entrepreneurship entry and survival. Jones et al. (2015) mentioned that migrants are financially able groups that made migration possible; thus, they should have the financial capabilities to be entrepreneurs.

Migrant entrepreneurs may start their businesses when they have enough financial capital obtained from personal savings, loans from family and friends or advances given by previous employers to their workers to start their businesses. Bunmak (2013) and Kirkwood (2009) mentioned push factors when potential entrepreneurs received assistance from their current employers to start their businesses. Migrant workers' previous employers will be their business suppliers, creating their business networking. Their ex-employers, who are now their suppliers, are the social capital available for migrants' businesses.

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**b) Social Capital**

Migrant workers in Malaysia with a valid PLKS can only change jobs in the same sectors. Current and prospective employers must agree to apply for a transfer to a new employer. An unsuccessful application will result in repatriation. Migrant workers and employers who find this process troublesome may lead the migrant workers to work elsewhere without a valid pass, and they may fall into illegality. Hiring illegal workers poses severe legal implications to both employer and employee that will deter their employment (Bloch et al., 2015; Bloch & McKay, 2015).

Migrant workers may be unemployed in the host country, and self-employment through entrepreneurship may be a better option. Entrepreneurship to curb unemployment problems for migrants has been extensively discussed by scholars (Lintner, 2015; Nur Suhaili binti Ramli, 2020; Rath & Kloosterman, 2014; Rettab, 2001). Lack of education and required skills, limited local language proficiency and restrictions in the labour market are some factors that lead to unemployment for migrant workers.

Bangladeshi migrant workers are taking the opportunities to start businesses when they have sufficient social capital by using their strong and weak social ties (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011; Sarker, 2016). Strong ties through marriage with locals created opportunities for migrants to register for small businesses and to regulate their legality by using their spouse's name (Kanapathy, 2004; Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Muniandy, 2015b). After the colonial period, Chinese traders in Malaysia used weak ties with local friends through sleep-partnership and business relationships by renting local business licenses



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(Whah, 2007) and supposedly used by migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia too (Nayeem Sultana, 2008; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012; Sultana, 2008). The exploitation of migrants' social networks helped in market access, supply chain, labour resources and financial aids (Azizah Kassim, 2015b; Golam Hassan, 2009; Kitching et al., 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018).

Lack of institutional controls on informal businesses (Webb et al., 2009) and support for migrants' entrepreneurship entry (Rath & Kloosterman, 2014), may hinder migrant business expansion. The effects of Malaysia as a highly regulated market where the Companies Act 2016 (Act 777) and Registration of Business Act 1956 (Act 197) are used for companies and business registration, respectively. Registration of businesses is only allowed for citizens and permanent residents in Malaysia, while non-citizens are allowed to register for private limited by shares companies.

Private limited by shares of the total foreign owner(s) will need at least RM500,000 paid-up capital. Higher capital requirements for company registration made migrant businesses look for other opportunities to legalise their businesses. Some opted to use their spouse's name for company registration or other's business licenses (Azizah Kassim, 2015b; Golam Hassan, 2009). It is hard to prove any such malpractices as some business owners will claim that they are only employees at the said business establishment when asked by enforcement officers, and some may just look the other way. As discussed, corruption and policy manipulation will ease entry and facilitate growth in a highly regulated market (Dheer, 2017).

An open market in Europe with government assistance to help migrants achieve better economic status through entrepreneurship opposes the temporary migration situation in



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Southeast Asia and Asia. Government assistance and more open market situations in the US, UK and European countries for migrants' entrepreneurship have helped migrants solve unemployment issues due to their lack of education and language barriers (Rath & Kloosterman, 2014; Rath & Schutjens, 2019). Contrarily, assistance programs are not perceived as contributing factors for SME growth in Malaysia (Hung et al., 2011). Furthermore, despite Malaysia's highly regulated economy and restrictive business ownership, limited funding is available through government support programs for SMEs. Complicated application procedures resulted in unutilised funding and targeting of new start-ups.

Highly regulated economies will bring more challenges for entrepreneurs. They will give way to corruption to speed up formal processes in a collective society (Dheer, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to know the actual situation and modus operandi of migrant entrepreneurs for business entry in Malaysia. Illegal businesses in the informal economy exist due to a lack of enforcement (Webb et al., 2009).Costs and economic return of migrations, which were initially considered pre-migration decisions, will be adjusted into consideration to enter self-employment in the pre-entrepreneurship stage.

Transformation to entrepreneurship requires clear intentions that will lead to their actions and behaviour for a business start-up and their business survival strategy based on the external environment besides their entrepreneurial characteristics (Naffziger et al., 1994; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). These intentions are evolving at different stages of their entrepreneurship progress.

**c) Human Capital**



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Readily available migrant friends, perceived as their human capital, were hired to run their businesses as workers with cheap labour costs (Golam Hassan, 2009; Nur Suhaili binti Ramli, 2020; Rath & Kloosterman, 2014). Manipulation of available opportunities, for example, in reducing operation costs and organisational conflicts by hiring foreign workers of the exact origin, are some of the strategies that will help migrant entrepreneurs at different stages of entrepreneurship (Bloch et al., 2015; Bloch & McKay, 2015; Bunmak, 2013). Entrepreneurs need proper planning and strategies in starting a new venture, which evolved from business entry into surviving and maintaining or expanding the business, including for migrant entrepreneurs (Naffziger et al., 1994).

**d) Information Capital**

Migrant workers who venture into entrepreneurship are usually in the same sectors as their previous employment (Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Kirkwood (2009) found that the desire for independence is the main factor that motivates people to pursue entrepreneurship, followed by an increase in monetary reward, which Kirkwood grouped into pull factors for entrepreneurship motivation. However, Kirkwood also mentioned that those dissatisfied with their job will not start their business in the same sectors, but those who listed opportunity/ growth as their current motivations will likely enter entrepreneurship in the same sector (Bunmak, 2013; Kirkwood, 2009).

Migrant entrepreneurs acquire these skills while migrating. Migrants tend to work with their co-ethnic groups who own a small business to learn about the know-how of starting a business. Working in small companies gives them the chance to learn more about supply, market conditions, and strategies. Working for migrant entrepreneurs will benefit them

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better as it is in the same context as their prospective business (Bunmak, 2013; Jones et al., 2015; Waldinger et al., 1990).

The use of information technology capital in conducting business is proven to help in migrant businesses' operations. Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee (2011) showed various examples of migrant businesses online. Advancements in technology and cheaper costs for mobile phones and the internet have increased the number of smartphone users in Malaysia and reached a broader market through online businesses. Another interesting topic to study on migrant businesses is the use of technology and online businesses by migrant entrepreneurs, as discussed in Chapter 8 for future research. Past studies did not touch on this matter as internet accessibility was not as advanced and economical when previous research about migrants' entrepreneurship was published. The environment may have changed now with the bloom in e-commerce, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2.6.2 Migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia

Migrants can conduct their business legally with proper registration, ownership, and stringent requirements. Registration of business with foreign owners is allowed for foreigners with Permanent Resident (PR) status, or they can opt for registration of private limited by share company with paid-up capital of at least RM500,000 for advisory and consultancy businesses and RM1,000,000 for import-export, restaurant and trading businesses (Companies Commission of Malaysia, 2002).

A joint venture with a Malaysian partnership (with a 50% share) may require RM350,000 minimum paid-up capital with RM500,000 authorised capital. Strict requirements for



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companies' registration led many migrants towards the illegality of their business. Registration of businesses with small capital and fewer skills to be allowed for Malaysians is a control measure to create more economic opportunities. Golam Hassan (2009) and Norehan Abdullah et al., (2012), discussed about competitions between locals and foreign-owned businesses offering lower construction works prices. Strict requirements for registration of foreign-owned companies compared to locals can control the number of foreign businesses.

Registration for business by locals will only cost between RM30 – RM60. It will not require any information on their capitals (Registration of Businesses Act 1956, 2006). Ease of registration for businesses may create more opportunities, but there are chances of exploitation of locals' registration to shadow non-Malaysian business owners Ayadurai, 2011; Azizah Kassim, 2015a; Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Nayeem Sultana (2008) explained that Bangladeshi migrants' businesses used local spouse registration. However, businesses are also conducted without license registration (Muniandy, 2015b; Nayeem Sultana, 2008).

Migrants' businesses are not limiting registration and licensing to conduct their businesses. Economic migrants are not only being employed and salaried but are also venturing into businesses to make a profit. Migrants' businesses will employ fellow compatriots to reduce costs and generate more profit (Nayeem Sultana, 2008). Some may even employ illegal migrant workers from the same country of origin (Ayadurai, 2011; Bunmak, 2013; Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012) . These situations affected the labour market in the host country and caused economic and social impacts. However, Rath & Kloosterman (2014) stated that it is a common condition to manipulate social networks for economic benefits in entrepreneurship.



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Migrants' businesses received various reactions from the public in host countries. There are studies on reactions towards migrants established on locals' acceptance towards migrants, but researchers have not treated specific acceptance towards migrants' businesses in much detail. Generally, profits and growth measure acceptance towards migrants' businesses quantitatively. However, opinions and perceptions received towards migrants' businesses will give meaningful findings on the matter. Social media is an efficient study tool to reach a more universal and broader public opinion (Kosinski et al., 2015; Mirbabaie et al., 2020; Nadzir et al., 2019).

There is limited literature on migrant entrepreneurship in Malaysia, as mentioned by Mosbah et al.(2018) in their study of first-generation migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Migration in Malaysia started in the 1970s after the introduction of Malaysia's New Economic Policy but was only made official after the 1980s. Gradual migration into the country over the last 50 years should have shaped the current migration condition in Malaysia and predicted future changes towards the host country. Migration studies in the Malaysian context include migrants' characteristics, migration routes, work conditions, and the social and economic impact of migrants' employment. An increased number of migrants will increase the number of migrant businesses, as claimed by Nur Suhaili binti Ramli (2020).

Based on a systematic literature review on migrant entrepreneurship in Malaysia, retail and food services are two main sectors attracting migrant entrepreneurs (Bunmak, 2013; Everett et al., 2015; Ganto et al., 2015). Other sectors include logistics, hospitality, wholesale and distribution, import-export, education, furniture, saloon, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and services such as domestic worker, foreign worker, security



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and cleaning (Everett et al., 2015; Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Muniandy, 2015; Mustafa & Chen, 2007; Nayeem Sultana, 2008, 2008; Rahmandoust et al., 2011). Deductive reasoning guided code and theme selection for products and services in Chapter 4. Klang Valley and Johor Bahru are locations for past studies about migrant enterprises in Malaysia.

## 2.7 Economic Environment during Pre and Post COVID-19

A functional government and its citizens will benefit greatly when its economic activities strive and bloom. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decline in Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and worldwide. Economic migrants went to Malaysia to look for better economic opportunities. COVID-19, however, may have influenced the country's economic condition as it has also affected the world. Observers commonly note job loss and reduced income during the pandemic.

The Household Income Estimates conducted in 2020 can be a good indicator of the COVID-19 impact study on household income and the estimation of the incidence of poverty in Malaysia for 2020. Household income refers to the total income received by members of households in cash or in kind, which occurs repeatedly within the reference period (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020b). In 2020, the mean household income in Malaysia was reduced by 10.3% to RM7,089 than the previous year at RM7,901 (2019) due to the salary reduction (Department of Statistics Malaysia, n.d.).

As discussed in DOSM's findings, the reduction of income may be due to reduced working hours and increased skill-related underemployment, which resulted not only from job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation may change perceptions



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and reactions towards migrants negatively and migrants' entrepreneurs due to a change in politics or values. (Steinert, 2020) for example, discussing the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may result in political and values change. Economic changes may also be reviewed from insider-outsider perspectives for a massive health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. To better understand the differences between the two groups, a brief economic review of both insider (Malaysians) and outsider (migrants) countries of origin should be discussed to make sure that it has a basis for arguments in the observed data in comments. Economic indicators that will be used are gross domestic product (GDP), unemployment, inflation, and consumer price index (CPI) as in Table 5.1 below:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, every country worldwide was affected by slow economic growth, where a sharp but temporary decline was observed. It can be due to reduced domestic consumption, tourism and business travel, weaker trade and production demand, and supply disruption and demand spillover during lockdowns (Abiad et al., 2020). COVID-19 has a distinct impact, especially on tourism, where Chinese visitors are the majority of tourists, with 87 million in 2018, and the imposed tourism ban in early 2020 had a massive impact on some economies (Abiad et al., 2020).

Exports to China as the final and intermediate destination of products and services from certain Asian countries have influenced the negative GDP growth of these countries (Abiad et al., 2020). Negative GDP growth was observed in the first year of the pandemic between 2019 and 2020 for Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Pakistan, while Bangladesh and Myanmar also had slower growth (Worldbank.org, 2023b).Based on the data, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Myanmar had higher economic growth rates than Malaysia before the pandemic. However, there were high numbers of migrants in



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Malaysia originating from these countries, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Worldbank.org, 2023a). These countries were also economically moving forward before the pandemic, but many of their citizens migrated to earn more income in Malaysia.

During the pandemic, limited job opportunities are expected, which implies slower economic growth. Economic migration can be one of the best solutions to overcome unemployment, but the COVID-19 pandemic that has restricted the move of migrant workers from source countries may have managed to reduce the rate of unemployment in Malaysia and all other five countries in 2021 by providing jobs to those losing their jobs in the previous year.

The causal impact of slower economic growth on the job market is that migrants may also be affected by unemployment. There was an increased unemployment rate after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 for five countries, including the host country, except for Thailand, as represented in the data in Table 2.1. An increased unemployment rate may increase entrepreneurial activities, which are high in countries with high unemployment rates (Dheer, 2017).

**Table 0.1: Economic indicators for Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, and Myanmar for the Year 2019 – 2021**

| Indicator | Country | Malaysia | Indonesia | Bangladesh | Pakistan | Thailand | Myanmar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GDP | 2019 | 4.41% | 5.02% | 7.88% | 2.50% | 2.15% | 6.75% |
| | 2020 | -5.53% | -2.07% | 3.45% | -1.27% | -6.20% | 3.17% |
| | 2021 | 3.09% | 3.69% | 7.88% | 6.49% | 1.0% | -17.91% |
| Unemployment | 2019 | 3.26% | 3.59% | 4.38% | 4.83% | 1.53% | 0.41% |



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| Indicator | Country | Malaysia | Indonesia | Bangladesh | Pakistan | Thailand | Myanmar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2020 | 4.54% | 4.25% | 5.21% | 6.55% | 1.1% | 1.48% |
| | 2021 | 4.05% | 3.83% | 5.10% | 6.34% | 0.99% | |
| | 2022 | 3.73% | 3.55% | 4.70% | 6.42% | 0.86% | |
| Inflation, consumer prices (annual %) | 2019 | 0.66% | 3.03% | 5.59% | 10.58% | 0.71% | 8.83% |
| | 2020 | -1.14% | 1.92% | 5.69% | 9.74% | -0.85% | |
| | 2021 | 2.48% | 1.56% | 5.55% | 9.50% | 1.23% | |
| | 2022 | 3.38% | 4.21% | 7.07% | 19.87% | 6.08% | |
| CPI (2010 = 100) | 2019 | 121.5 | 151.2 | 179.7 | 182.3 | 113.3 | 168.2 |
| | 2020 | 120.1 | 154.1 | 189.9 | 200.1 | 112.3 | |
| | 2021 | 123.1 | 156.5 | 200.4 | 219.1 | 113.7 | |
| | 2022 | 127.2 | 163.1 | 215.9 | 262.6 | 120.6 | |

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**Figure 0.6: GDP Growth (annual %) for Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, and Myanmar between the year 2019**

Although unemployment may increase entrepreneurial activities, what matters the most for entrepreneurs is the economic success of their enterprises. The likelihood of economic return during the pandemic can increase from local consumption expenditure. Therefore, data on inflation and CPI were also included in Table 5.1 to relate GDP growth and expenditure during the first year before and after COVID-19.

Household consumption expenditure can be influenced by household income, government expenditure, inflation, and interest rates. COVID-19 has also increased public consumption of the need for medical expenses (Abiad et al., 2020) and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks or for conducting COVID-19 tests at hospitals/ clinics. This was partly true in Pakistan for the years 2020 and 2021. Still, after the economy had picked up in 2021, consumers reduced their spending on unnecessary

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expenditures and decreased interest payments (Government of Pakistan, 2020). Consumers were becoming wearier of their spending after the pandemic.

However, several government aids were proven to help in increasing domestic consumption expenditure besides more purchasing power from lower inflation and negative CPI such as what was observed in 2020 for Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021) and Thailand (Ministry of Digital Economy and Society National Statistical Office, 2021).

Inflation is defined as an increase in the overall level of prices in the economy that can be caused by an increase in the quantity of money (Mankiw, 2018). However, increasing money can stimulate the economy from overall spending and more demand for goods and services. Consumer price indexes were listed to help understand how inflation may have affected consumers' spending behaviour to prioritise between needs and wants. Tough economic times during economic crises and other factors will be discussed later. Therefore, the introduction will continue with a review of products and services that are considered necessary or luxurious.

### 2.7.1 Demand, Supply, and Market Equilibrium

Market equilibrium can be achieved when the demand and supply curves intersect, where the price balances the quantity supplied and demanded. Particular event changes in market equilibrium can shift demand and supply or even both in the market (Mankiw, 2018). This situation was observed during lockdowns, whereby the demand for goods sold in Acehnese's grocery shops was mentioned on Facebook.

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However, due to lockdowns, the supply of goods was also stalled due to business and industry closures. The price increase was also observed during the initial implementation of lockdowns due to limited supply and panic-buying. A market consists of buyers who determine the demand for products and sellers who supply products. Sometimes, a market can be highly or less organised (Mankiw, 2018). The migrants' entrepreneurship market is highly competitive, as with most other markets in the economy, when buyers know they can choose between several sellers for the products they need or want.

Migrants are perceived as having the characteristics of risk takers, who are more able and prepared for their self-decision to leave their homes and start a new life in a new society. These are the exact characteristics of entrepreneurs, which also helped them in the low-wage labour market compared to locals due to their motivation and the ability to adjust to change. It explained why migrant entrepreneurs accepted lower profits from small enterprises more than locals Waldinger et al. (1990). Migrant entrepreneurs are willing to sell at lower prices than other sellers to compete with local businesses (Jones et al., 2015; Kitching et al., 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). They reduced costs of goods and services for consumers and increased purchasing power (Ganto et al., 2015).

It is still open to study whether decisions to be employed or self-employed for migrants were made before migration or after they are out under certain circumstances at the destination country (Rettab, 2001). Migration theories have explored various factors that can lead to one's migration decisions. Most studies note that economic improvement with job opportunities overseas may improve migrants' lives. Situations like being unemployed, underemployed, under-waged or overqualified in destination countries may have influenced migrants to be self-employed and engaged in entrepreneurship.

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However, Rahmandoust et al. (2011) found that entrepreneurial reasons were made before migration. Entrepreneurship entry for migrants will require solid financial capital because it also involves the cost of migration to Malaysia. Theories of migration to improve economic conditions may have some adaptation when entrepreneurship is taken under consideration in the host country, whereby economic motives may not be the only factor.

In previous studies of temporary Bangladeshi migrant workers, they are often burdened with high migration fees (Abdul-Aziz, 2001; AHM Zehadul Karim et al., 2015; AKM Ahsan Ullah, 2010; Nayeem Sultana, 2008; Rahman et al., 2014). Their income will be remitted to their family to pay for migration loans, and their monthly expenditure will be kept at a minimum. Salaried migrant workers will need to remit some of their income to their families and, at the same time, to pay off their loans for migration costs.

Therefore, a longer time will be needed to save for their business capital (Muniandy, 2015b). Most migrant entrepreneurs acquired their financial capital through savings. They are willing to work longer hours. Sometimes, they are doing multiple jobs and leading a fundamental life. Some migrants would loan from their family and co-ethnic community (Waldinger et al., 1990). Not many migrants will bring in the capital's pre-migration. Some may need loans from banks, family, and friends to pay high migration fees.

**2.8 Political Instability during COVID-19**

As discussed in the previous chapters, public opinion can be influenced by personal political inclination (Franz et al., 2019) and recent events (Higgins et al., 2010. A significant event during the pandemic in 2020 was a political crisis caused by shifts in the coalition of political parties, often called Langkah Sheraton or the 'Sheraton Move'. In



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Malaysia, the Pakatan Harapan coalition was the government of the day until the end of February 2020.

It comprises political parties that won the majority of chairs in the 14th General Election. Based on I. Abdullah et al. (2020), the political spur started with the announcement of Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia's seventh Prime Minister, stepping down on 24th February 2020, followed by Parti Pribumi Bersatu (PPBM) quitting Pakatan Harapan coalition who made up the ruling government. It lost most seats in the coalition. Pakatan Harapan can no longer be the majority in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) to make up the government after 22 months in power.

This political drama did not stop there. Since it is impossible to call for a Parliament Sitting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, His Majesty Yang Di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA) appointed Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad as an interim Prime Minister before summoning all 90 Members of the Parliament (MP) on 25th February 2020 for a one-on-one interview. It was done to ascertain each MP's nomination of who will be appointed as the next Prime Minister. On 29th February 2020, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin was announced as the eighth Prime Minister by YDPA, who was sworn in at Istana Negara on 1st March 2020. This event was less than a month before the country went into lockdown on 18th March 2020.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted various dimensions involving migrants' entrepreneurship and the theories used in guiding this research and thesis writing in the following chapters. It focuses on five themes: public opinion, social media, migration, entrepreneurship, and



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migrants' entrepreneurship. The chapter also explores the research's theoretical underpinnings, including netnography as a research design. It discusses the concept of public opinion and its characteristics, particularly in the context of Facebook as a tool for studying opinions and perceptions in Malaysia. The chapter highlights the limitations and biases of using Facebook as a data source.

Chapter 2 also discusses the Social Media Engagement theory (SME), which examines how interactions and technical features of social media platforms influence user engagement. It highlights that engagement on social media increased during the COVID-19 pandemic when users believed the platforms met their information needs. Emotional content, particularly negative emotions, was found to be highly engaging and had the potential to go viral.

Additionally, the discussion in this chapter then shifts to the topic of migration and public opinion on migrant workers in Malaysia. It mentions that public opinion can be mixed with positive and negative views. It explains that Malaysia relies on migrant workers to fill labour shortages, particularly in low-skilled sectors, and acts and policies have been implemented to govern migrant employment. However, irregular migration remains a challenge, and migrant workers in Malaysia may turn to entrepreneurship to survive during economic crises. It highlights that ethnic businesses are often unaffected during downturns, and migrant workers may transition from illegal workers to successful entrepreneurs.

It further explores the entrepreneurship environment in Malaysia, addressing the challenges and opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs in the country. It discusses their motivations and characteristics, such as the importance of social networks and previous



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employment experience. It emphasises the significant contribution of migrant entrepreneurs to Malaysia's economic development but acknowledges the local population's mixed acceptance of their presence. One of the most important pieces of literature about migrant entrepreneurship is the discussion that delves into the strategies migrant entrepreneurs use to enter and legalise their businesses in Malaysia. It mentions their reliance on weak ties in social network theory that are often present in migration studies and are essential when we discuss the social dimensions of migrants' entrepreneurship.

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# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

An observational study used netnography to collect public comments from Facebook posts that were mainly related to migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Passive analysis was done by observing interactions in eight Malaysian government authorities' Facebook accounts/ pages. The case study topic is migrants' entrepreneurship.

A qualitative approach from a single case study during a bounded time setting is suitable for understanding the themes or explanations of the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Gintova (2019) and Reddick et al. (2017). Reddick et al. (2017) used a single case in a case study method to have an in-depth view of a situation. The Facebook pages selected were predetermined. Sites, topics, and people are sometimes interconnected to form a framework for netnography (Kozinets, 2015). The topic is migrants' entrepreneurship and how socio-economic aspects influenced public opinions developed towards the subjects in social media.

Kozinets (2015) suggested that netnography has high potential in market research business, and social science scholars have more opportunities to search for the truth about human beings, groups, identities, and social experiences in our current digital world. This research started in August 2020, when one of the most important factors was to observe the social media environment for possible common themes related to the subjects. The preliminary action was to holistically observe the social media environment to investigate important information by identifying the most suitable social media environment that can help achieve research objectives.

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### 3.1.1 Netnography

Virtual ethnography, digital ethnography, web ethnography, mobile ethnography, smartphone ethnography, and ICT ethnography are other names of ethnographic study in the online world. Kozinets (2015) redefined netnography as "a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the internet, including mobile applications".

Ethnographic research that combines archival and online communications work, participation, and observation with new forms of digital and network data collection, analysis, and research representation was netnography previous definition. It is impossible to avoid connecting the community or society in social science research. Human experiences should be studied as broadly as possible. Herbst (1993) suggests using broad perspectives in viewing public opinion. Kozinets (2015) finds that most netnographers are not limiting their scope of the investigation. Thus, the concept of public opinion fits netnography perfectly in studying social media users and opinions derived from the interaction of the online community, which frequently become very broad and vary.

Even the term 'community', which builds a society (an essential factor in studying public opinion), is a crucial requirement for ethnography. The online study was criticized due to its unstable nature in the digital world, but Kozinets (2015) defined community in a social media environment as con-social, where association in the community is incidental. Con sociality is not a strong bond, but it is friendly. Simply put, community in the virtual world

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is no longer ‘who we are’ as a community but ‘what we share’. Kozinet (2015) also adds that culture in netnography will have to be treated dynamically, where religion and ethnicity must be considered in its dynamism to be fluid, multiple and unpredictable. Netnography focuses mainly on three aspects of online social interactions: the sites, topics, and people (Kozinets, 2015), as specified in the previous chapter.

Netnographers are scholarly researchers who use online social exchange’s artefactual and communicative realities to understand the community culture in online social interaction (Kozinets, 2015). Researchers interested in this method will have to be open and accepting that the internet is constantly changing, which has impacted the pool of variables and the constructs to be more dynamic than ever compared to another setting. Its constant change may make netnography viewed as a new method that is scientifically inadequate.

While discussions between the qualitative and quantitative methods do not suffice or are lacking in something, Kozinets (2015) adds that netnography has all the capabilities required to question definitions, re-operationalizing constructs by introducing new and overlooked constructs or relationships in the area or scholarships, comparing it in the actual social world. Netnography is not just a methodology that involves online data collection. It also includes the analysis and interpretation of the data collection as a holistic research method.

There are four types of netnography: Symbolic Netnography, Digital Netnography, Autonetnography, and Humanistic Netnography. These types may be a form of a hybrid, a combination, or a new variant. The types of netnography are based on the synthetization, representation, and analysis of the research. Analysis can be Digital Netnography, which



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is computational and computer-assisted by using tools to mine, extract, pre-code, classify and visualize text, visual, audio or video data to develop cultural findings of the significant data insights. Digital Netnography uses human elements of participation and interpretation within them.

Autonetnography is a form of personal and introspective, focusing on subjectivities and positions of interpretation. Similar to interpretations of life experiences that capture insights into self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values and more significant social, cultural and political issues (Poulos, 2021).

The third netnography is symbolic netnography when the observations are presented in a technical or specialized voice, linguistically, and in a human role. This type was written in the earlier stages of Kozinets' netnography methodological findings when the internet and social media were in their infancy. Symbolic netnography identifies interesting sites, cultures, groups, and people whose meaning systems will be translated into values, practices, and online social rituals. Symbolic Netnography is the library of social experience and interaction of specific groups, nations, languages, cultures, and identity formations, which can be further elaborated through the analysis of the humanistic approach. It can create the basis for the site of interest, creating narratives of sharing and further exploration for the research to emerge and develop further.

Lastly, is Humanist Netnography or simply put by Kozinets (2015) as Traditional Netnography. The types of netnography chosen as a research method will depend on the data choices and analysis choices, influenced by what the researcher would like to see as the output of specific research. Humanist netnography is used for this research to balance

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data with human representation based on the principle of qualitative data mining. In Humanist Netnography, the observed comments were used the way they are, and human interactions on social media platforms were studied in the context of socioeconomic factors. Using Digital Humanities as its foundation to retrieve Facebook comments as a quantitative database, followed by Humanist Netnography for a qualitative, interpretive, experiential, emotive and generative methodology of digital data.

This research employed humanist netnography in its analytical steps by interpreting the comments, postings and replies based on common themes and connecting them to past studies and current events. Besides that, inductively developed codes and themes require human analysis and experiences. A machine language or programming will not be able to conduct this analysis to represent a human voice to the findings, especially when discussing human interactions and emotions. The interpretation by the netnographers will enable them to deeply elaborate on the findings through experience, nations, culture, identity formation, and languages.

It involves digital applications for humanities core methodology of complexities, medium specificity, historical context, analytical depth, critique, and interpretation. Humanist netnography and autonetnography have a specific and local human voice in their analysis. In comparison, digital netnography and symbolic netnography are more specialized, and general technical voices are tagged to the analysis.

Netnography is a suitable method to study in-depth public opinions on migrants' businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic setting. The 12-step netnography process by Kozinets (2015) was applied to collect and analyse data for this research. Humanist netnography takes the same concept as qualitative data mining. However, to have a more



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meaningful discussion in achieving the objectives of this research, the comments collected from netnography were then further interpreted into proper meanings using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to have more detailed, in-depth findings. Content analysis alone will not be sufficient if the objectives must investigate and analyse the data.

### 3.1.2 Thematic Analysis

Netnography is suitable for studying something stigmatic and marginalised due to its anonymity and pseudonymity (Kozinets, 2015). As humanist netnographers, interpreting the observed data requires assembling and describing the human element of online interaction using human intelligence and insight (Kozinets, 2015). The massive data to be analysed for this research has the risk of losing the human element from computerised tools or auto-coding using software. Therefore, thematic analysis is incorporated into netnography to organise and reduce data's complexity (Miza Athira Mohd Samlan et al., 2022) while maintaining coding techniques in netnography. Netnography also works well with other research methods, such as qualitative and quantitative methods, and even both methods (Kozinets, 2015).

Netnography involves coding and grouping the codes into common elements or patterns in social interactions—the same concept as in thematic analysis, where the codes are grouped into common themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) employed the analysis in this research. It is called the 6-phase thematic analysis, a top-down process to search for repeated patterns of meaning across data. The term 'patterns of meaning' requires researchers' judgement to determine the themes. The said themes can be deductively decided upon literature study for a specific topic or inductively identified codes or themes.



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There is no process difference between common elements in netnography and common themes in thematic analysis, but in thematic analysis, the themes can also be decided deductively. Braun & Clarke (2006) agreed with the limitation of the interpretative power of thematic analysis beyond the descriptions if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework. As we progress through this research and maintain Herbst's (1993) and Lazarsfeld's (1957) suggestions for generalisation in capturing public opinion, the identified themes are constructed inductively and deductively to answer the research questions.

Additionally, the themes and communication patterns are critically analysed to be linked to other social ideologies as implemented by Lawless & Chen (2019). There is flexibility in using the identified themes applied by Braun & Clarke (2006) and the more abstract themes from the critical framework of critical thematic analysis by Lawless & Chen (2019). This research implemented both frameworks to develop its method and theory themes. The integration of netnography and thematic analysis in the analysis process will be explained in detail in this chapter.

Thematic analysis was done to understand the opinion formations on migrants' entrepreneurship with the added complexities of emotions and thoughts that were then represented into actions or translated into words. Thematic analysis is the main component that will determine the different results that can be achieved from netnography because a different theme was selected for analysis to answer each research question. Thematic analysis is suitable for netnography as we cannot control the interactions in social media, and exciting themes will most likely emerge to be discovered throughout the process of netnography.

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In this research, thematic analysis was implemented to identify migrants' businesses, creating a society of migrant entrepreneurs from the data collected in a social media environment. The data were observed, collected, searched for the themes of repeated patterns, and coded deductively into specific themes to ease answering the research questions. Methods used by Braun & Clarke (2006) were used in making an excellent thematic analysis with their 6-step guide. The results from the analysis were used to explain the findings of this research.

### 3.2 Research Design

The observational study will try to understand the cultural construct of the online community through netnography on a specific topic of ethnic entrepreneurship. The extraction of attitudes, emotions, and appraisals from public opinions on migrants' entrepreneurship as the research subject, where comments from online communities (social media users) on a social media platform (Facebook) were observed, collected, and thematically analysed.

Codes were exploratorily created to group comments into common themes to begin the analysis. The direct meanings of the comments were captured and tagged with related codes to understand the overall meaning of the research subject (migrants' entrepreneurship). The codes explained some initial findings before a more in-depth explanation could be made in the explanatory analysis stage to answer a more complex matter in the research questions.

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The same methods were implemented by Reddick et al. (2017). In Gintova's (2019) research, codes were developed using the inductive method to answer research questions, while the deductive method was also used to form the codes based on the literature. Therefore, this study employs inductive (exploratory) and deductive (explanatory) methods to develop themes for the analysis. As this study employed netnography, the researcher also took field notes during data collection and analysis. Case descriptions from the researcher's interpretations were developed based on the relationships between codes that will bring case assertions for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were active interactions between social media users on government agencies' Facebook pages when they posted about migrants' businesses. These pages posted more news about the subject (migrants' entrepreneurship) than the previous year. This research will uncover social media opinions and perceptions of migrants' entrepreneurship.

### 3.3 Sampling

Selective postings on migrants' entrepreneurship topics were filtered from two types of Malaysian government agencies. Only postings related to migrants' entrepreneurship are selected. Facebook pages of two law enforcement agencies and six city councils were selected because these agencies directly govern migrants and businesses/ traders. Only six out of eight city councils were selected because they have a sufficient number of postings, high interactions, and high engagement with the postings. Publicly posted comments on selected postings are the samples in this research. Convenience sampling was done because all the publicly visible comments were read and mined from Facebook postings. These comments were readily available and accessible to be downloaded by a

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third-party website, https://exportcomments.com/, to ease data collection. No specific criteria or demographic information of the commenters was set to limit sampling.

### 3.3.1 Government Agencies Facebook Pages

An official Facebook page of government agencies is usually managed by their personnel(s), who can be in their public relations department or any department. Two types of agencies are selected for data collection:

i) law enforcement agencies

ii) city councils

The law enforcement agencies were selected because they are directly involved with managing migrants in Malaysia, while city councils were selected because they oversee small traders' licensing.

The agencies selected will be labelled accordingly to maintain the privacy and anonymity of users interacting on the pages. Two law enforcement agencies are labelled as ENF1 and ENF2, and another six city councils or *Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan* (PBT) in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, which were selected for this research, are labelled as PBT1, PBT2, PBT3, PBT4, PBT5 and PBT6.

#### 3.3.1.1 Law Enforcement Agencies

As accessed on 23 August 2021, ENF2 is one of the government agencies' most popular official Facebook pages, with over two million likes and followers. ENF1 is just as famous and has received over one million likes and followers. The number of likes and



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followers is listed in a general number to maintain page anonymity and to avoid Facebook users' identification if the pages are listed. These pages have all the essential information related to the department, including the department's address, telephone number, email, official website link, and operation hours. Users may also interact by sending direct messages to ENF1 via Facebook Messenger with a response rate of 'Typically replies within a few hours' appearing on the link.

There were also pre-type questions on an 'Ask box' with commonly asked questions related to the agency's functions, where users may start interacting with just a single click of an Ask button to direct them to a chat window in Messenger. There is an 'Additional Information' posted in Bahasa Melayu on its' 'About' tab for users with questions or complaints to be addressed to its respective Division/ State Offices/ Units through other mediums because its Facebook page is solely used to share the latest news on general activities of the department.

There were also links for easy access to the ENF1 online appointment system and Frequently Asked Questions about its services and transactions during the COVID-19 movement control order. Links to ENF1's other social media, such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram, were also posted. Hashtags were also used in most of its posts to get more user hits.

Additionally, ENF2 listed more detailed Terms of Use, Rules, and Regulations for acceptable and unacceptable types of comments that users can post on its page, as well as a disclaimer to be released from any liability of comments posted by its users. Most importantly, ENF2 stated on its Facebook page that it would only share information on any crimes through its email to protect the informer.

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However, any of the information or other comments will not be accepted as a police report if it is submitted through Facebook or email. ENF2 has a more attractive Facebook page where its promotional videos will play through the homepage. Seven Spotlight videos were featured on the homepage. ENF1 and ENF2 have photos, videos, and Live sessions posted on their homepage.

#### 3.3.1.2 City Councils

Six other official Facebook government agency pages were selected, including those of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur city councils. The city councils are selected randomly from cities commonly known as the Klang Valley. There are nine city councils in the Klang Valley. However, only six were selected because another three PBTs have only one posting on enforcement action towards migrant entrepreneurs throughout the year 2020.

PBT1 has more than 100,000 likes and followers, PBT2 has more than 50,000 likes and followers, PBT3 has more than 30,000 likes and more than 40,000 followers, PBT4 has more than 20,000 likes and more than 30,000 followers, both PBT5 and PBT6 has more than 30,000 likes and followers. Not much information is included on these pages besides their respective address, contact numbers, email, operation hours and links to their official websites.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data for this research are comments collected from pre-determined Facebook pages on a specific topic: migrants' entrepreneurship. As the research instrument, the researcher must



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watch the information and interaction and immerse in the experience through netnography. To determine the pages, the researcher searched for Facebook pages of enforcement agencies and city councils using the search tab on the researcher's Facebook page by typing the agencies' names in Bahasa Melayu.

Once the list of pages is displayed, the researcher typed on the Search Posts button for keywords related to migrants' entrepreneurship, which are 'peniaga asing', 'penjaja asing', 'peniaga warganegara asing', 'peniaga warganegara asing', 'penjaja warganegara asing', 'penjaja bukan warganegara', 'peniaga haram', 'penjaja haram' and 'pendatang haram'. The researcher scrolled through, observed, and read publicly available comments on the pages to build a general idea of the subjects.

Although it is stated as a violation of Facebook's Terms of Service on unauthorized data scraping, which is the use of automation to collect information on Facebook, third-party software was used, considering that the comments downloaded were only publicly available, the data downloaded from every Facebook post identified using related keywords at https://exportcomments.com/ to ease observation and as record keeping.

The comments are saved in Microsoft Excel document format and named according to the title of the postings as well as their date posted. The documents were saved into folders, named according to the Facebook pages, in a password-protected laptop that can only be accessed by the researcher.

Excel documents were then converted into .pdf and uploaded into Atlas.ti software for data observation. The decisions to choose the identified pages and postings were made by reading the comments and interactions between users and users-posters. The



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opportunities to collect data with certain similarities, regularities, patterns and even differences can induce intellectual discourse for the progress of this research. The possibility of data abduction techniques for the main subjects and connecting them to side discussions around the comments decided to choose the postings for netnography.

### 3.4.1 Sample Size

Netnography was conducted on 218 identified Facebook posts on migrants' entrepreneurship, which were posted between 13 February 2020 and 23 December 2020. The comments downloading process started from 20 August 2021 until 25 August 2021. The total number of comments posted on the postings is not the total number of comments downloaded and analysed by the software because it can only download publicly available comments.

The number of comments for analysis is less significant than the context of interactions in the postings. The number of comments can show the level of interaction and the posts' ability to attract and reach more Facebook users. All 49,571 quotations were coded from 57,404 comments, which were read at least twice before coding.

The summary for the eight Facebook pages selected on the number of posts selected, total number of comments for the posts, and the number of followers and likes (in general numbers) for each page are listed in Table 3.1 below:

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**Table 0.1: The number of every Facebook page's like and follower (in general numbers) for ENF1, ENF2, PBT1, PBT2, PBT3, PBT4, PBT5, PBT6**

| Page | ENF1 | ENF2 | PBT1 | PBT2 | PBT3 | PBT4 | PBT5 | PBT6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Posts** | 19 | 4 | 42 | 29 | 4 | 14 | 38 | 70 |
| **Comments** | 10,077 | 7,628 | 9,684 | 13,609 | 852 | 6,368 | 4,178 | 5,008 |
| **$\bar{x}$ comments/ posts** | 530 | 1,907 | 231 | 469 | 213 | 455 | 110 | 72 |
| **Page Likes** | >1mil | >2mil | >100k | >50k | >30k | >20k | >30k | >30k |
| **Followers** | >1mil | >2mil | >100k | >50k | >40k | >30k | >30k | >30k |

The table shows that pages with more likes and followers tend to have more comments posted by users. Generalisation was made by calculating the average comments for the number of postings, showing that ENF1 has the highest number of comments.

However, we can say that ENF2 has the highest level of user engagement. With only four postings, ENF2 has successfully captured the attention of more users who want to interact with their posts. The higher number of postings on this specific topic of migrants' entrepreneurship does not necessarily attract more users' engagement, as observed in this research. Although PBT6 has the highest number of postings on its page, it has the lowest engagement rate. We can assume that ENF2 received more comments and a higher interaction rate due to its high number of followers and page likes.

Usually, Facebook algorithms let followers receive news updates or when new posts are posted by the pages they have liked by appearing on followers' news feeds. However, it is subject to individual users' settings. More followers and people who liked a page created more opportunities for users' engagement in social media, including higher chances of comments being posted. However, PBT4, PBT5, and PBT6, which have the

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same average number of followers, experienced substantial differences in users' engagement levels.

These generalisations will be discussed further as we go along the chapters to explain the methodology and theoretical analysis of the findings. Moving forward in this chapter can appear too technical and detailed. It is essential to be thorough so researchers on any topic can replicate the same method.

The same method, netnography used in Chapter 4 through Chapter 7, was replicated using the same instruments, documents, timeline, and samples to maintain coherency throughout this research. Maintaining this research's environment and method resulted in more reliable observation, analysis and conclusions.

### 3.4.2 Netnography Process

There are many scholarships for online ethnographic study, online data collection and analysis, but as guidance in conducting this study (Kozinets, 2015), the 12-step process of netnography were used adaptably. Researchers are spoilt for choices when analysing the data from the four types of netnography.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, humanistic netnography was used to uncover human behaviour's complexities, medium specificity, historical context, analytical depth, critique, and interpretation. Netnography can be used to observe the online communication of individuals or groups through text, graphics, photographs, audio-visual, musical, commercially influenced and sponsored or not. (Kozinets, 2015) also emphasized the importance of immersion so the researcher will link her real self-life to

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the digital world of the research boundary to understand the culture of the groups and the people.

This research begins its methodology using the 12-step netnography (Kozinets, 2015). The 12 steps are applied to ease research progress and carefully organise the observations so the research may emerge and develop further. The 12 steps are Introspection, Investigation, Information, Interview, Inspection, Interaction, Immersion, Indexing, Interpretation, Iteration, Instantiation, and Integration. The first step starts with Introspection.

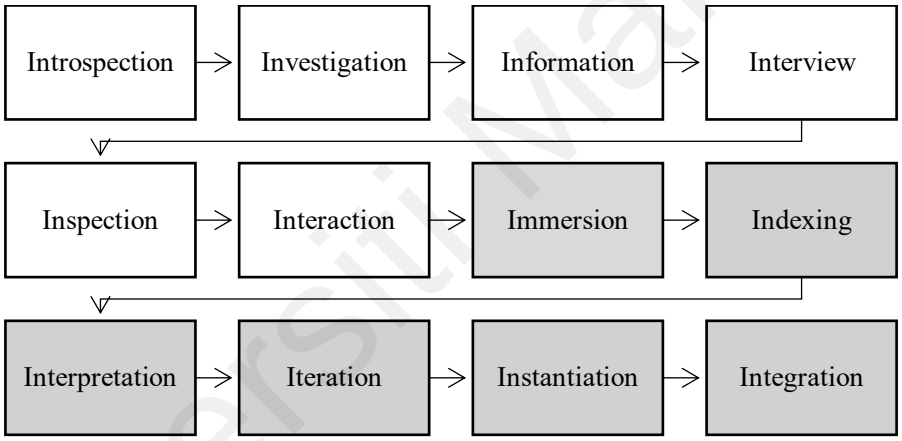


**Figure 0.1: 12-step Netnography Process**

The research incorporated thematic analysis into netnography in Step 7: Immersion. (shaded in grey), onwards for data analysis. The steps for netnography are listed in Figure 3.1 and explained in this chapter.

#### 3.4.2.1 Step 1: Introspection

Introspection is the first stage of the process, where research objectives and design are set. Site selections sometimes need some negotiation process with site owners or data



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managers. For observatory participation in a public site, clear ethical considerations for the site's remaining anonymous should be considered if there is no negotiation or informing the site owners.

During this data collection step, the topic of migrants' entrepreneurship was decided as a topic for research. As discussed previously, only six Facebook pages of PBTs in Klang Valley were selected after scrolling through the feed of all nine PBTs and clicking on any interesting postings and comment sections. What was observed in these pages is that Facebook pages' administrators or owners did not reply to comments or questions posted by other social media users.

It is an exciting note made on this observation that the agencies did not even bother to reply to questions, comments, accusations, or critics on social media, which created a powerful intellectual curiosity about the subjects. Prejudices were made that government agencies are not fully utilizing social media to benefit the public. Users' interactions on harmful and sensitive issues are creating an unhealthy online environment where curse words are frequently used. The observed reactions on social media have the potential for data gathering, but their negative comments suggested non-participatory observation implementation.

The spread of the virus, which was claimed to have originated from Wuhan, China, spurred xenophobic reactions worldwide, especially towards Chinese and migrant communities. The situation was quite similar in Malaysia, where migrant workers faced heightened negative perceptions during the early days of the pandemic. In this data collection stage, observe-to-know steps were taken for any possibility of researching

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public opinion on migrants' entrepreneurship in an online setting. This research interest should be researchable, and the topic should be researched within a specific framework.

#### 3.4.2.2 Step 2: Investigation

An investigation was the step of reading and the possibility of connecting with other researchers in the same area. Research questions and objectives were developed at this step, and a literature review was conducted.

Initially, data was collected from only one Facebook page because the number of comments that can be collected is already countless. However, two more Facebook pages were included, which may relate to migrants' entrepreneurship, to compare for data reliability. It then developed into adding another five Facebook pages. The addition was made because the pages are all PBTs with enough data for observation. This development will always be amendable as the subjects may emerge from online observation throughout the research.

#### 3.4.2.3 Step 3: Information

Information is when the literature of the research is known. The research's ethical and other social implications were realised to develop a socially accepted research practice. Kozinets (2015) adds that netnographers are usually interested in topics related to groups or sites rather than persons. These first three steps can be considered as pre-research steps.

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Ethics approval was submitted to Universiti Malaya Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) (UMREC) before data collection was conducted as it deals with vulnerable groups. From the committee meeting on 27 July 2021, several concerns were raised, such as Facebook algorithms, fake profiles that intentionally posted hate comments and possible harm to migrant populations from this research output. The call for meeting shed some light on possible harms and biases that were then addressed to the committee in another revision form.

UMREC finally approved ethics clearance on 11 August 2021, so the research can be conducted from August 2021 until August 202,4, subject to another approval if any amendment exists. UMREC also suggested contacting the Public Information Officer, United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), for some guidance on potential risks of analyses and publications related to marginalized groups.

The suggestions and comments received are an eye opener, as there will still be privacy issues, risks, and potential harm to society, even if the observational research is conducted in a public sphere of public comments on public issues. Therefore, this information step is crucial for sensitive topics, where the researcher will need to be well informed on the topics, the risks, and ways to mitigate the issues so the research will bring no harm. Research ethics must be revisited throughout the research process and even after publication to ensure that it will not harm the researcher, subjects and people involved in the research.

Despite these hurdles, complex online ethical procedures were manoeuvred by doing a thorough literature study, providing enough information, and interacting with related bodies. Therefore, for this non-participation, purely observational study, a form of



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interaction may help the research to progress more systematically. Meetings or interviews from human connections will help clear up the muddle despite the ease of digitalization and automation in the online world.

#### 3.4.2.4 Step 4: Interview

The interview is the step to familiarising oneself with social interactions and experiences that will be observed. In this step, the types of social interactions and experiences were recognised and familiarised. Field notes were taken in this step. Taking field notes is the same step that needs to be done in traditional ethnography research while conducting interviews.

Interview step is where an investigation was conducted, field notes were taken on any activities, and exciting findings were observed. In interview sessions, field notes were taken to describe and contextualize interview data, so what if it is in an observational study? Some of the field notes taken during this step are lists of common themes in users' interactions and the assumptions made about the nationalities of the commenters. Mostly, the languages used are Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia; thus, the assumptions were made, and notes were taken. The idea to group commenters into Malaysians and non-Malaysians is because there are usually arguments between users that sometimes progress into hate, dehumanizing and humble comments. The reasons behind these reactions may be related to each group's historical, ideological or even cultural background.

Timeline notes of significant COVID-19 progress were also taken in the posts, including dates of total lockdown and ease of movement control order. These timelines are essential to relate if there were more interactions during total lockdown since everyone spent their



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days at home and fewer comments were reported during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) or because older online news stories have lost their appeal. News stories are also included on some of the postings to check if other events resulted in particular sentiments on Facebook. For example, when there were cases of migrants contracting COVID-19 at Pasar Borong Selayang, comments on other pages were also blaming migrants for the spread of diseases in the country.

Interview steps also involve interviewing participants from the sites, whether the interview sessions are online or offline. Kozinets (2015) suggested online interviews have more social information than traditional phone interviews. In the initial interview stages, the interview was used to investigate people and sites. A combination of techniques created data collection strategies of triangulation amongst different and similar sources of sociocultural understanding. In this research, opportunities to interview Facebook page administrators as the research progresses and emerges may help answer research questions and uncover new phenomena, especially for RQ4.

For this research, an interview was conducted with the ENF1 Facebook page's administrator to triangulate the data. An hour-long interview session was conducted on 8th September 2022. The questions are open-ended and developed into exciting answers about the subject. Questions asked during the interview are:

i) Question 1: Who is in charge of the social media accounts?

ii) Question 2: What is the strategy and approach to social media communication?

iii) Question 3: What criteria are for news selection from online news portals to be shared on social media pages?

iv) Question 4: What are the approaches in handling reports or complaints in the comment section and messenger about:



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- Undocumented migrants or *Pendatang Asing Tanpa Izin* (PATI)?
- Accusations of corruption, abuse of power and inaction of the department?

v) Question 5: What offline platform is used to discuss and report complaints and suggestions posted on social media (for example, in Top Management's Meeting and Customer's Satisfaction Report Meeting)?

Offline interviews helped them better understand social interactions online, where online and the natural world could finally collide.

#### 3.4.2.5 Step 5: Inspection

Inspection evaluates and chooses from many interaction sites for the most prominent and exciting data. In the Inspection step, postings that mentioned keywords related to migrants' entrepreneurship were evaluated. Some of the postings and comments were linked to other Facebook posts. Thorough inspections were done on the posts to see if they were within the research scope. The links were also reviewed to observe and evaluate from broader perspectives.

Researchers' ability to evaluate and choose suitable sites will ensure data quality. In this step, it was found that there are two posts from PBT5 and a (1) post from PBT3 that has no downloadable comments. Therefore, these posts were not included in the research.

Inspections were done to find the pattern of each Facebook page's authors/ administrators' styles in reporting, editing, or writing the posts. It is essential to determine the voice of each post, the communication styles, and the approaches taken by the authorities of the Facebook pages. This will be the first step in analysing whether posts incite hatred,



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hostility, and dehumanization towards migrant entrepreneurs, and these should be coded accordingly to answer RQ3.

#### 3.4.2.6 Step 6: Interaction

Interaction will be considered for this research as Kozinets (2015) listed social interaction with others in the real social world or online. Besides interaction outside social media, a researcher must plan the participative nature of online social interaction with other people. This research will employ a non-participatory observational study; therefore, this step will be put with attention throughout the research process if it is required when data and research findings emerge and are developed to require more information from site owners. Kozinets (2015) adds that a written stance on the researcher's social participation should be put in the thesis to structure and supervise the researcher's ongoing participation.

Interaction is a tricky part of this research as it is a non-participative observation study. However, as the research progressed and new findings emerged from the data, interactions were needed to help achieve research objectives. As the research progressed and initial analysis of the data was done, to answer RQ3, an interaction was made with the administrators of ENF1 to inform them that observational research was conducted on its Facebook page. The patterns or types of posts for each page were analysed to determine the 'voice' of the authorities on Facebook, and the interactions were made after the data was collected. It validates the assumptions about the writing styles and what influenced the chosen words, images, and videos posted on the pages.

The difference between interaction and an interview is the nature of communication. An interview is when the researcher asks questions to informants while in a social media



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study, and interaction is when the researcher posts on a social media platform to inform page administrators or commenters that they are under observation for a study.

#### 3.4.2.7 Step 7: Immersion

Immersion will require a regular engagement schedule to notice intellectual online data. It is relating the online world to the social world for existing and possibly new theories or constructs. Immersion was the most time-consuming step for this research when it was conducted on 218 Facebook postings with more than 57,000 comments. However, as this is a qualitative study, the number of posts and comments may have insignificant merit. This research is no-contact, but immersion still requires utilising a personal Facebook account to get online on the pages. It differs from traditional ethnography, where researchers must immerse themselves in their observing environment.

Netnography was conducted according to the research timeline. Data was collected and downloaded on 15 August 2021 until 18 August 2021 because the software was paid for 3-day subscription programs that cost USD11.00. More than three months were spent reading all comments and, at the same time, analysing the data thematically. Kozinets (2015) warned against collecting large amounts of data because it will take the researcher's valuable time for data review, understanding, coding, and analysing. Digital or mechanical methods can be used to code and view data but at less contextual and particularistic levels.

However, as the comments were fascinating, every comment was read-coded using a software system, amassing the findings as suggested. Immersion will help capture and

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focus on high-quality data from high numbers of comments captured without losing the possibility of missing comments if narrower criteria for selecting Facebook posts are set.

Immersion is where Kozinets's (2015) netnography steps and thematic analysis synchronized. How immersion was implemented in this research will be explained further in the next section of data analysis. It would be impossible to do a thematic analysis if the researcher did not immerse in the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) mentioned that immersion in the data is vital to be familiar with the depth and breadth of the content in their thematic analysis.

The emerging themes and common patterns appeared more distinct as the research progressed. Data immersion was also done during data collection with the iteration step, which revisited, re-evaluated, and developed the broad information available in the comments. Immersion is important so that there is a limitation and boundary set to stay focused on the objectives within the research scope. However, at the same time, research progresses into inductively distinct themes. To better organize the findings for Chapter 6, the themes initially set in the initial chapters have progressed into new themes, which will also be explained further in the sub-chapter of data analysis.

#### 3.4.2.8 Step 8: Indexing

Indexing is the data collection step; a data collection strategy can help to ease the research. The findings can be improved by the skills to elaborate the data, co-creation, and creation practices. Research output from this step will be a clear, written set of guidelines representing decisions that have been made that will structure social observations.

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Immersion in netnography does not contradict immersion in thematic analysis, but they work together. In comparison, indexing in netnography focuses mainly on data collection strategy, whereas in thematic analysis, it is the second phase to generate initial codes. The index or codes we used in this research will clearly describe and elaborate data collection activities. Despite the large number of data collected, the most relevant, meaningful, and exciting data will be further analysed. Careful indexing and weighting of data will be done. The output of this step will be a clear guideline for the decisions made in structuring the observations for this research.

Generally, data are collected in research to help in achieving research objectives. Indexing is the data collection strategy applied in netnography by coding and elaborating a particular data, co-creating and creating the structures of social observations data (Kozinets, 2015). In understanding more about the impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship on the economy, the theme 'Specialty' was analysed to structure opinions about migrants' entrepreneurship and their product niches and to decide whether the enterprises act as complementary or rivals to local enterprises. The findings are discussed in Chapter 4 as migrants' entrepreneurship was profiled.

The keywords used to search for related comments for the coding process and the justification for the chosen themes will be discussed in detail. At the same time, we go through Data Analysis by using the 6-phases of thematic analysis in this chapter. Organization of data through indexing is essential to interpret better the findings based on common themes, including new themes that emerged from the observations that will be discussed in Chapter 6. This step is essential in both data collection and data analysis.

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To quickly identify and code the comments, the Search and Code function in ATLAS.ti can help the coder to search and code several data in many documents by typing specific words in the search button. The software will automatically search for the words in the pre-selected documents, and the most suitable codes can be selected and pre-added. If it fits the criteria, many codes can be added for a single data. Visual examples of document selection processes are previewed in Figure 3.2 to Figure 3.3 below.

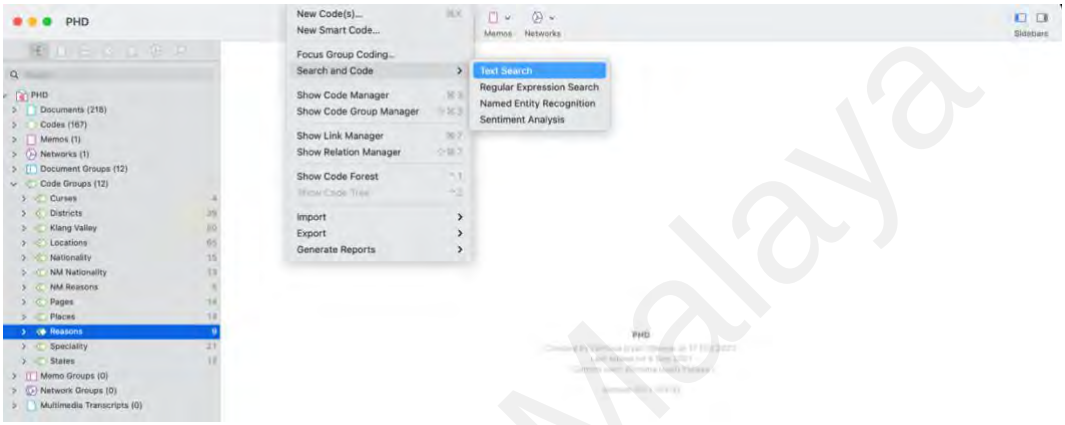


**Figure 0.2: Open the Project File and select 'Search and Code'' Text Search'**

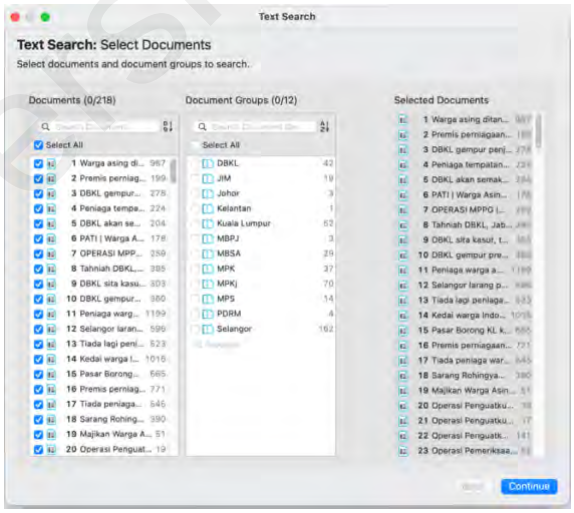


**Figure 0.3: Select all documents added to the project file to search related**

### 3.4.2.9 Step 9: Interpretation

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Interpretation demands a researcher to analyse, interpret and interpenetrate by continuously repeated incursions into theory and field site within the research questions so it will stay in focus. An interpretation was also made in thematic analysis during themes reviewing, defining, and naming. Humanistic interpretive analysis is maintained throughout this research.

In research, thought, reasoning and interpretation are informational raw data that need further processing (Kozinets, 2015). Interpretation will be explained further in the thematic analysis phase during the phases for themes searching, reviewing, defining, and naming. Interpretation is where Kozinets (2015) suggests that the researcher should decide if the best interpretive analysis or interpenetration method is humanistic, phenomenological, existential or hermeneutic. The decisions on which method is the most suitable will involve a variety of language theories. The most suitable method for this study is humanistic, as data are interpreted in its human context.

#### 3.4.1.10 Step 10: Iteration

Iteration is done by restating the representational form of the final output of research while allowing it to emerge and evolve. The iteration process continued in the data analysis process to ensure the themes selected and discussed were the most suitable to explain the phenomena in the findings, aligned with the theories, and methodically validated. The same concept applied during themes reviewing in thematic analysis.

Iteration or revisiting of the sites, people, and subjects was done during this phase. It is crucial to interpret and reinterpret to understand the data holistically for a qualitative study. In the iteration step, was when Facebook posts were read and re-read to find



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common themes and evaluate interactions while trying to relate the data to literature, theories, events, timelines, imagination, and perceptions.

#### 3.4.1.11 Step 11: Instantiation

Instantiation can represent the research in any of its stages differently. The four types of netnography, symbolic, digital, auto or humanist, can be used as guidance for this representation. Instantiation and integration of the observed data and the output can keep the research relevant until new findings can contribute to the body of knowledge on the research subjects.

Netnography is instantiated in space and on time. Instantiation needs the researcher to create a representational form of the final product, whether the netnography procedure taken is symbolic, digital, auto, or humanistic, as explained in the previous chapter. As in Humanist Human intelligence in netnography is used to analyse by keeping the analysis process to one's thinking. Even though the data is extensive, using software systems helped analyse, organize and manage research timelines well. Human elements for participation and interpretation are maintained in this research. This research is a Humanist netnography because the impact of the data in the final research is hoped to bring value to society.

#### 3.4.1.12 Step 12: Integration

Integration is the end effect of netnography research presentation. The results should be able to integrate with research questions, research representations with research sites, or even the final output of publication and conference presentation, out of the many ways to



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integrate the findings from the digital world into the real world. Netnography can be applied to exploring and integrating social and psychological aspects from real-life experiences and social media's digital world, such as Facebook.

The final step in netnography, Integration where a thesis publication is the penultimate, and the final output of this research is to benefit someone somehow. It is an integration of research answers to research questions, integration decisions and actions and integration of findings and discussion with recommendations to solve problems (Kozinets, 2015). It should not stop once the research is published but should continue to be integrated into the real world.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

This section will proceed with the analysis of netnography data. Only text comments in English, Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia were coded as data, while comments in other languages, spam, advertisements, emojis and .gif images were excluded.

#### 3.5.1 The 6 phases of Thematic Analysis

Step 7: Immersion is the step in netnography where the incorporation of thematic analysis synchronised as data familiarisation. The data that were identified, coded, downloaded and saved in .pdf format were then analysed by using thematic analysis, guided by Braun & Clarke (2006) 6-phases of thematic analysis as illustrated in Figure 3.4. Additionally, Lawless & Chen (2019) 2-step of open-coding and close-coding processes were implemented.

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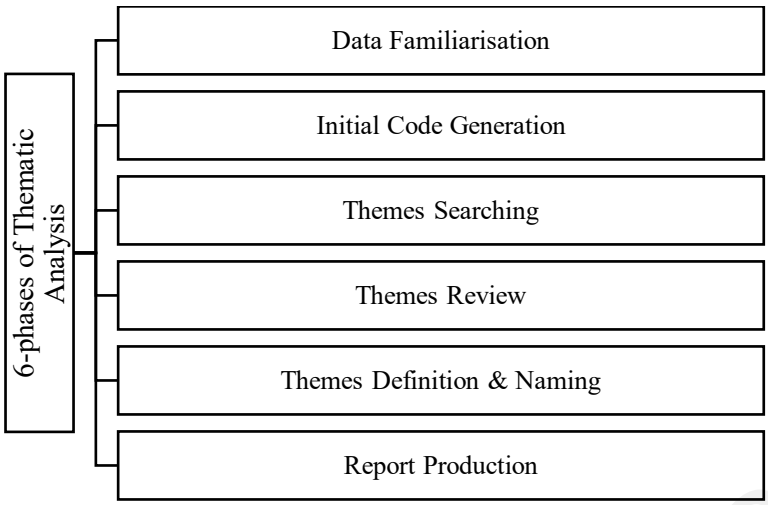


**Figure 0.4: 6-phases of thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is selected to answer the research question that emerged from the findings discussed in the following chapters. Its flexibility helps explore deeper into the meaning of the themes, 'Specialty' and 'Reasons', whereby the data coded for these themes will be further analysed to conclude whether migrants' entrepreneurship is competing or complementing the market. Thematic analysis is deemed to bring more meaningful findings when integrated with critical qualitative research perspectives.

#### 3.5.1.1 Data Familiarisation

For this research, Familiarisation of Data was done by one individual researcher to gain in-depth insights into each comment and conversation between users in a post prior to coding (Franz et al., 2019). Each post and text was read thoroughly to understand the context of the content, including intentional sarcasm. An intercoder reliability test is unnecessary because only one coder is involved in the coding process. However, it is noted that a single coder may miss a concept due to a single perception and interpretation (Riffe et al., 2019).

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Usually, the researcher reads the posts and comments thrice for the familiarization process, once online on Facebook pages while searching for data, second when reading offline downloaded files in Excel form and thirdly while reading in Atlas.ti. (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2020) for coding into themes. Although time-consuming, the software's ease of process aided a more organized data immersion. Despite the tendency to skip through some posts or comments, that did not happen when conducting this research. Each comment was read to see how online conversations and opinion formation progress through events, time, and context.

As mentioned earlier, data are coded deductively, and the literature provided in the previous chapter will help guide the themes. Field notes were also taken along this process to ensure that emerging ideas would be recorded and included in the analysis. For this research, the 218 posts are similar, although not all posts are posted from the same Facebook page. All eight pages are observed to push information to others with one-way interactions from the agencies to the public. The same was observed in Mergel (2013) and Reddick et al. (2017), where social media only creates more public engagement.

However, most of these pages will not reply to comments or follow people back because they do not want to appear as supporting or endorsing an individual and their opinions (Mergel, 2013). Their restrictive approach of not replying to comments and messages is to avoid innovative insights from the public of how government operations can be improved because there is another channel to submit such suggestions for actions.

Suen (2006) researched to assess the interactivity level of local governments' e-government practices in 2004. The research was conducted more than 15 years ago when e-government was still emerging, and the exact classifications are suggested for



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government agencies' Facebook page interactions. There are four levels of interactions (Suen, 2006) which are:

i) Level 1: One Way, Semi Interactive, where users have limited control over the content or information.

ii) Level 2: Two-Way, Semi-Interactive, where users may choose the information or services needed.

iii) Level 3: One-Way Interactive functions when the user can use live functions, such as making online payments on a website.

iv) Level 4: Two-Way Interactive function of live real-time interactions based on users' needs of information or services.

The interactions for Facebook pages in this research are mostly Level 1: One Way, Semi Interactive, where these pages only push information to their viewers. (Mergel, 2013) Research data found that almost 50% of the 25 respondents who were social media directors refused to play an active role when using social media. However, they kept a passive approach by listening and absorbing the comments. No original news or posts were created by moderators of ENF1 and ENF2 in the downloaded data for this research. ENF1 and ENF2 posted and shared only online news and videos from other pages, such as other government agencies, national TV channels and online newspapers.

Facebook for government agencies is available on Facebook for Government, Politics and Advocacy at https://www.facebook.com/gpa. There are free tools available on the platform for government agency users to create content on Facebook, such as live stream, videos, stories, frames, audience insights, page manager, messenger, and events. Its advertisements (ads) functions can even help to increase reach and insights. Every page has a page transparency button, where we can check if the pages have used the ads



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functions. We can even check if any pages used ads functions on https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/.

For example, searching all eight pages for ad information showed that PBT2 paid less than RM100 on 20 February 2021 – 24 February 2021 to promote assessment rates payment. The same was done by PBT4, which has spent around RM1,399 to run four ads since November 2020. One of the longest-running ads was for 14 days to promote its online services for business permit application and registration on 16 November 2020. PBT4 spent almost RM900 to reach a wider audience, where it was estimated to have been displayed on screen almost 300,000 times.

PBT pages showed more interactions and increased reachability by using ads on the pages. PBT pages usually post their own curated postings and information. For example, PBT6 created posts and reported its enforcement activities on Facebook using its own words. Out of 70 posts, only six were shared from other pages, such as Selangorkini.tv PBT2 posted on Facebook with the title For Immediate Release to answer viral news of corruption cases in the agency.

When observing the types of posts made by the pages, most of the posts are enforcement reports in controlling migrants' businesses, and there are not many shared online news postings from other pages posted by the moderators on their pages compared to ENF1 and ENF2. These initial observations promote the idea that there will be different interactions and communications between users for local councils and enforcement agencies pages. This is because there is always a form of sensationalism in the chosen words of newspapers, such as clickbait, that may attract different opinion formations compared to the words used by moderators on enforcement activities reporting that will

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use more neutral and factual words. These differences and similarities in observations are what netnography is all about when cultural changes emerge in the online environment between society. Three primary nodes were created based on who the commenters were:

i) posts

ii) Malaysians, or

iii) Non-Malaysians.

Posts are the author of posts. Malaysians are Malaysian users, determined by interpretation based on the Bahasa Malaysia language used to post comments. For assurance, users' profiles can be checked by reading information in 'About of', 'Lives in', 'From' and 'Education'. As Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia are the two most common languages used in comments, distinct spelling of words can differentiate between these two languages. Personal details of 'Education' for Indonesians will show SMA compared to SMK, which has the same secondary education level in Malaysia.

When vital information about users' origin is unavailable, 'Friends' will be checked to determine if most users' friends are coming from Malaysia or overseas and if they are coded as Malaysians or non-Malaysians. Other ways include to check 'Likes', 'Groups' and 'Photos' by users. Different initials were used to code the comments, 'M' for Malaysians and 'NM' for non-Malaysians. These were put in front of the codes to evaluate how online conversations progressed between groups.

#### 3.5.1.2 Initial Code Generation

After the familiarization process, a rough idea of the keywords for the codes from repeated occurrences will be detected. The data collected are rich with information,



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emotion, and perception. The experiences gained while familiarizing with the data and information from the literature guide the generation of initial codes. Initial codes created from the data are raw data and information that are obvious and interesting to the researcher.

The codes are the main ingredients of the themes in thematic analysis. If the codes are not identified precisely, the themes constructed may lose their context due to too much generalisation, and the analysis may lose its depth and breadth. For the analysis to answer RQ1, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, the data collected can be easily identified and straightforward because it involves the characterization and profiling of the subjects.

However, the use of computer-aided analysis in the software used for this research, such as conducting a Sentiment Analysis, will be complex since the data for this research are comments collected in Bahasa Melayu that also includes informal Bahasa Melayu used in everyday conversations and comments typed using short forms and abbreviations. The words also include several words commonly associated with the terms for the codes to code the comments.

Examples of the keywords used for the Nationality sub-theme, which were used to create a profile list of migrants' entrepreneurs' country of origin and the Specialty sub-theme, which was used to profile the types of business for migrants' entrepreneurship, are illustrated in Figure 3.5 – Figure 3.8.

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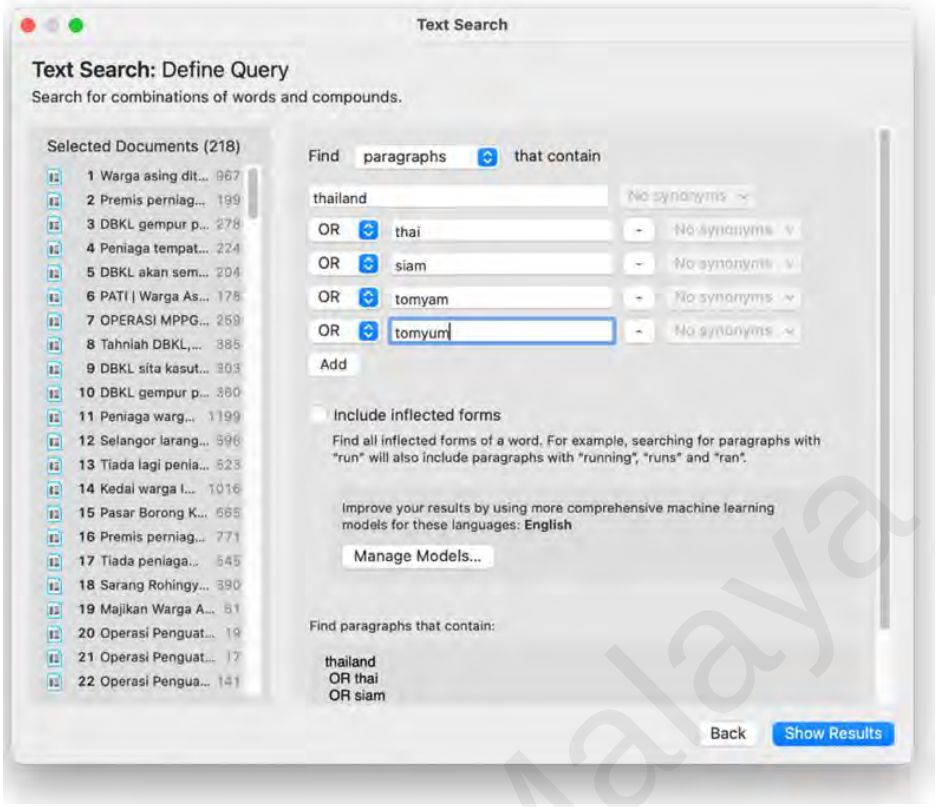


**Figure 0.5: Example to search for' Nationality' sub-theme: Thai entrepreneurs.**

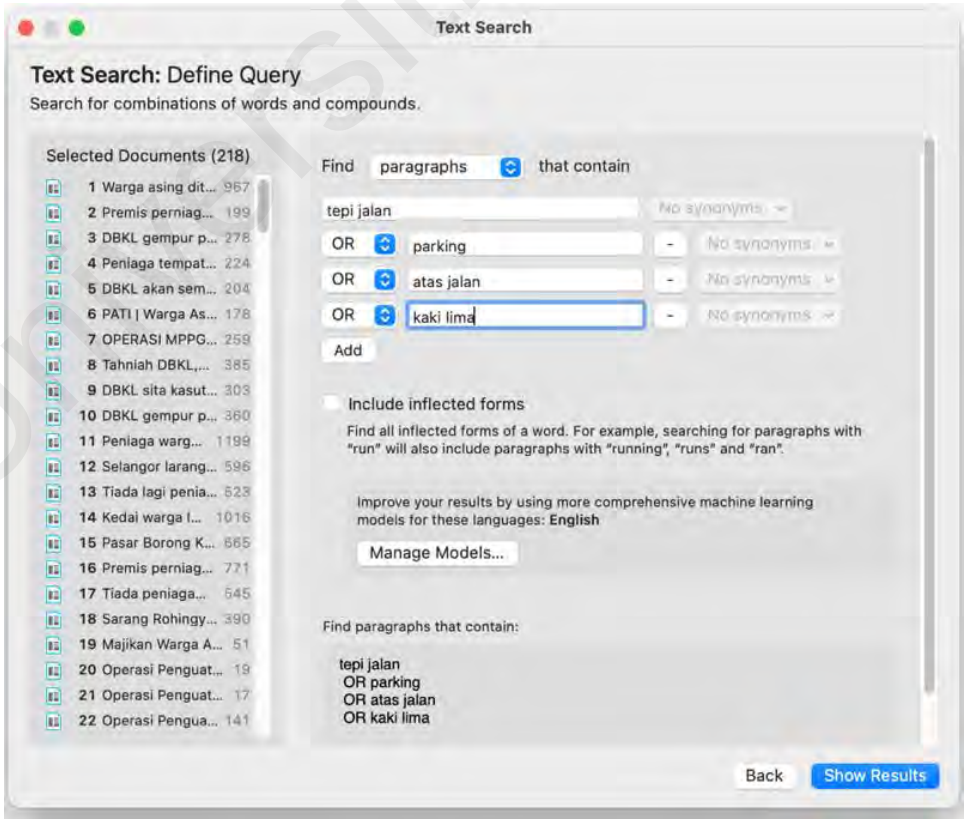


**Figure 0.6: Example of 'Specialty' sub-theme.**

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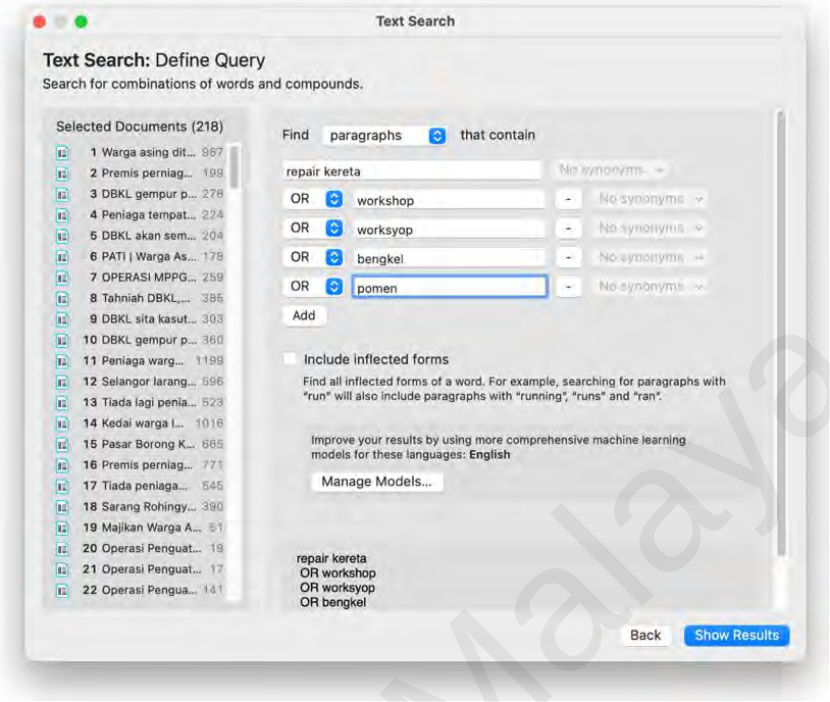


**Figure 0.7: Example of 'Specialty' sub-theme.**

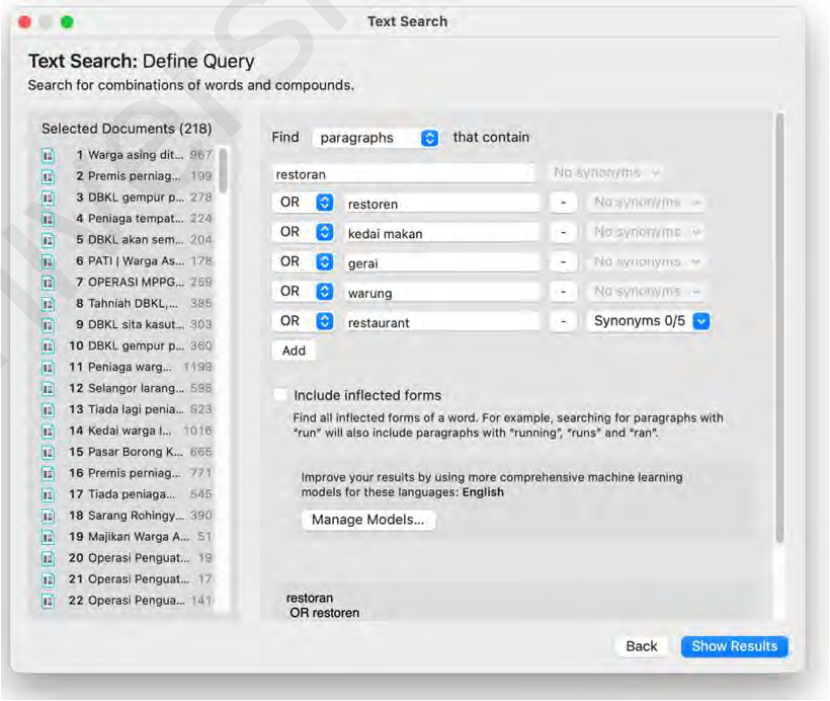


**Figure 0.8: Example 'Specialty' sub-theme for 'Restaurants'.**

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Three examples of the text searches function in ATLAS.ti are provided below for these three sub-themes that will be useful in profiling migrants' entrepreneurship in the next chapter. The auto-coding processes are visually described in detailed procedures in these steps: The themes examples are:

i) Example 1: Location sub-theme for Balakong/ Cheras Code in Figure 3.9 - Figure 3.11.

ii) Example 2: Nationality sub-theme for Aceh code in Figure 3.12 – Figure 3.14.

iii) Example 3: Reasons sub-theme for Local License Rental code in Figure 3.15 – Figure 3.17.

a) Example 1: Location Sub-Theme for Balakong/ Cheras code:

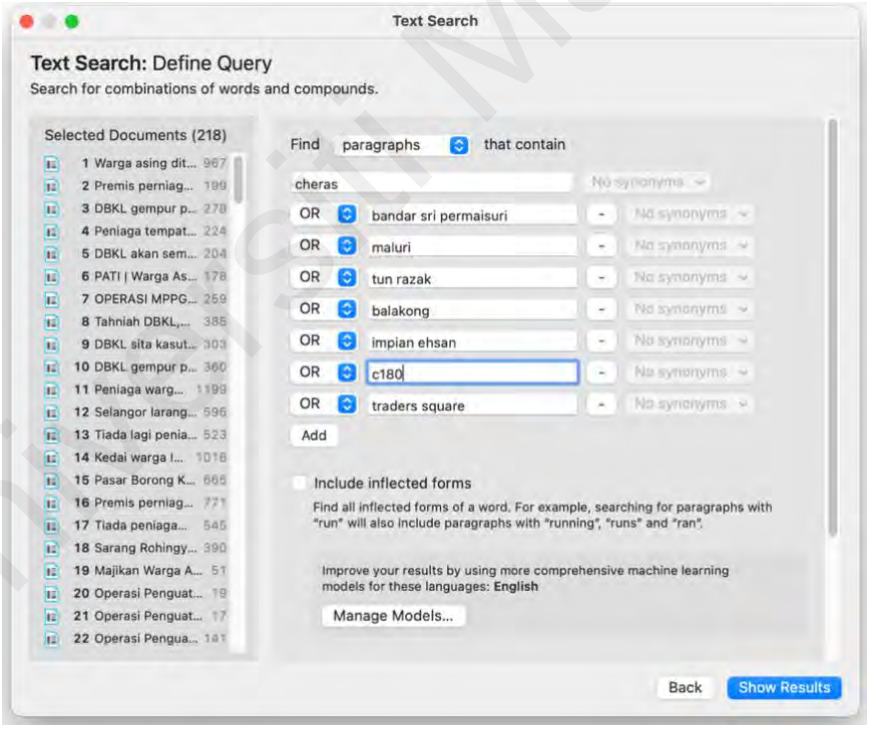


**Figure 0.9: Step 1: To search for the 'Districts' code, specific places, residential areas, and districts are included in the search words.**

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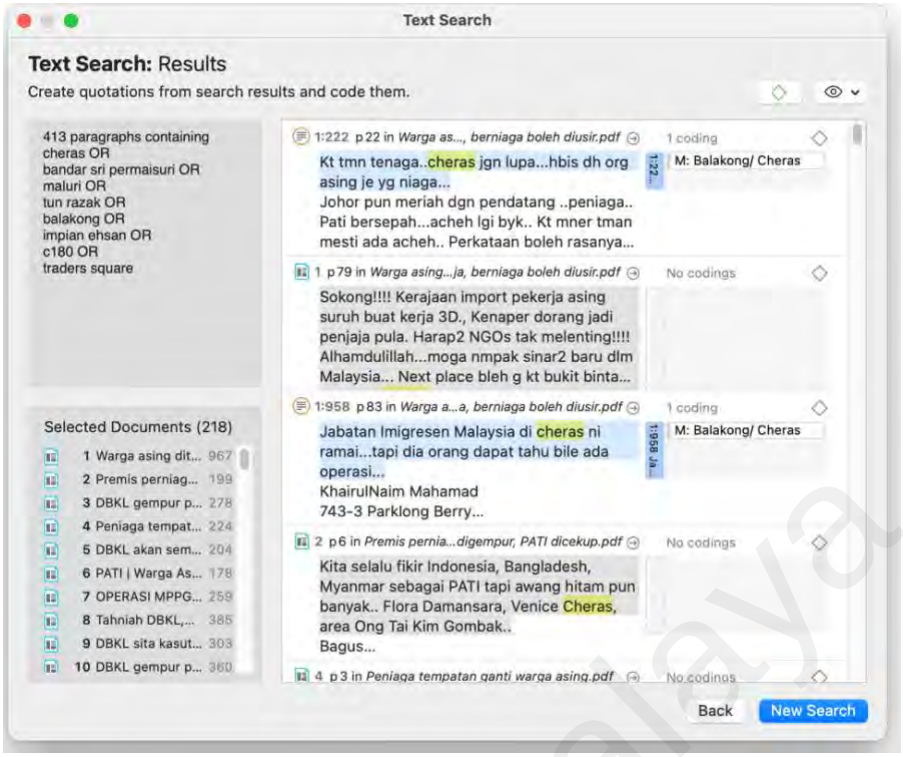


**Figure 0.10: Step 2: The data (comments) that contain the searched words will be displayed.**

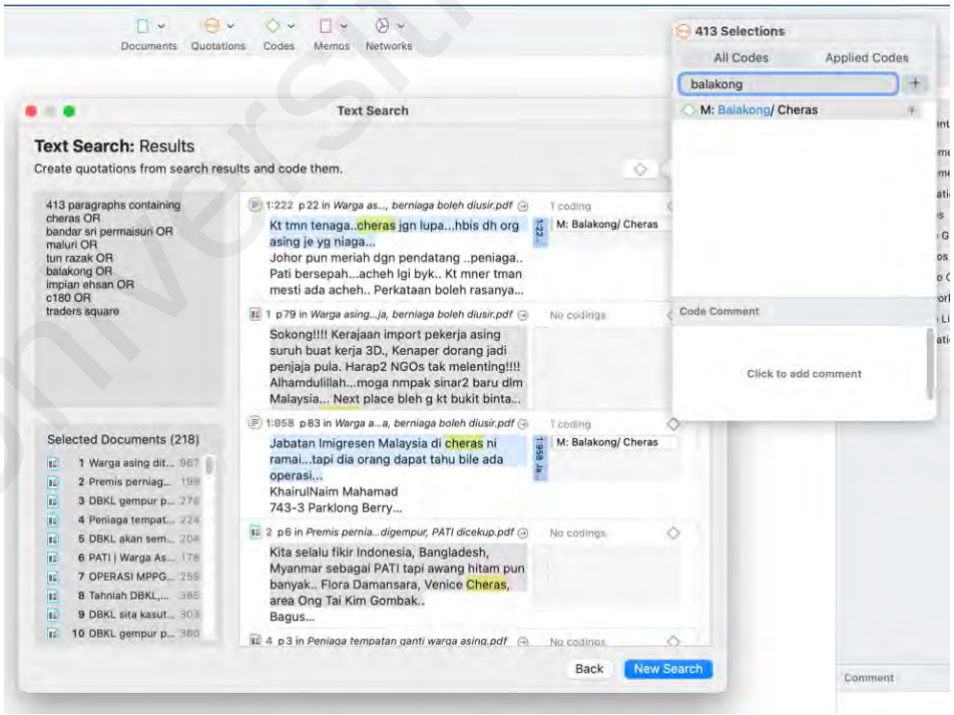


**Figure 0.11: Step 3: Code tagging.**

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b) Example 2: Nationality sub-theme for Aceh code

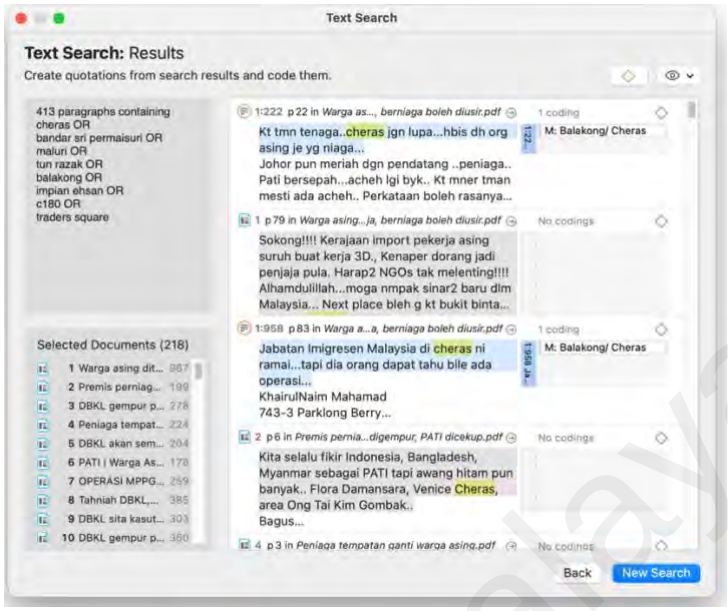


**Figure 0.12: Step 1: Three words are searched for, including commonly mistaken 'Aceh' spellings in Bahasa Melayu.**

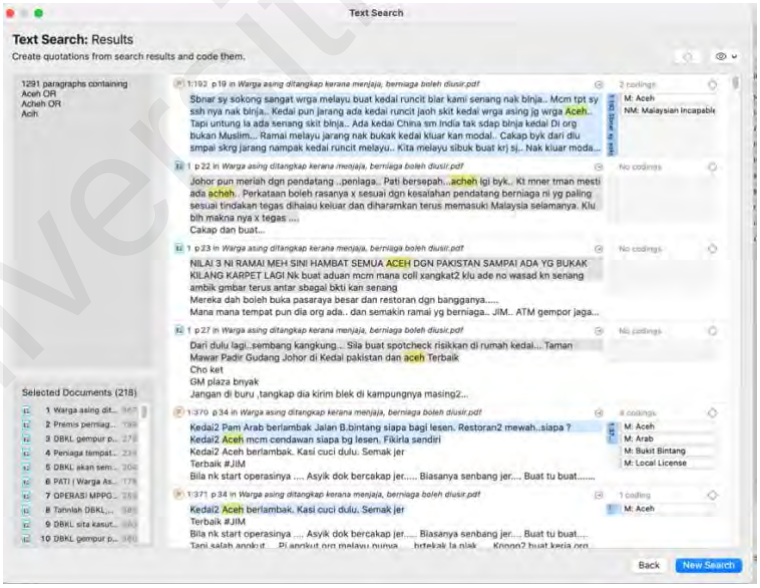


**Figure 0.13: Step 2: 1,291 Search results for 'Aceh' code will be displayed where three different spellings were used.**

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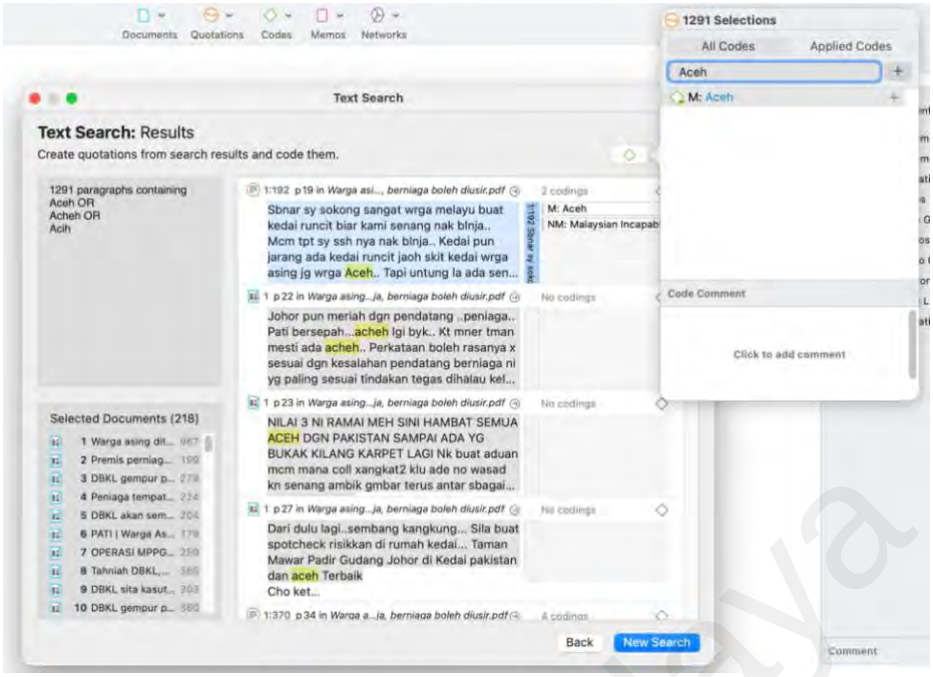


**Figure 0.14: Step 3: Clicking the code button and typing the code for the keyword will display codes identified**

c) Example 3: Reason theme for Local License Rental code

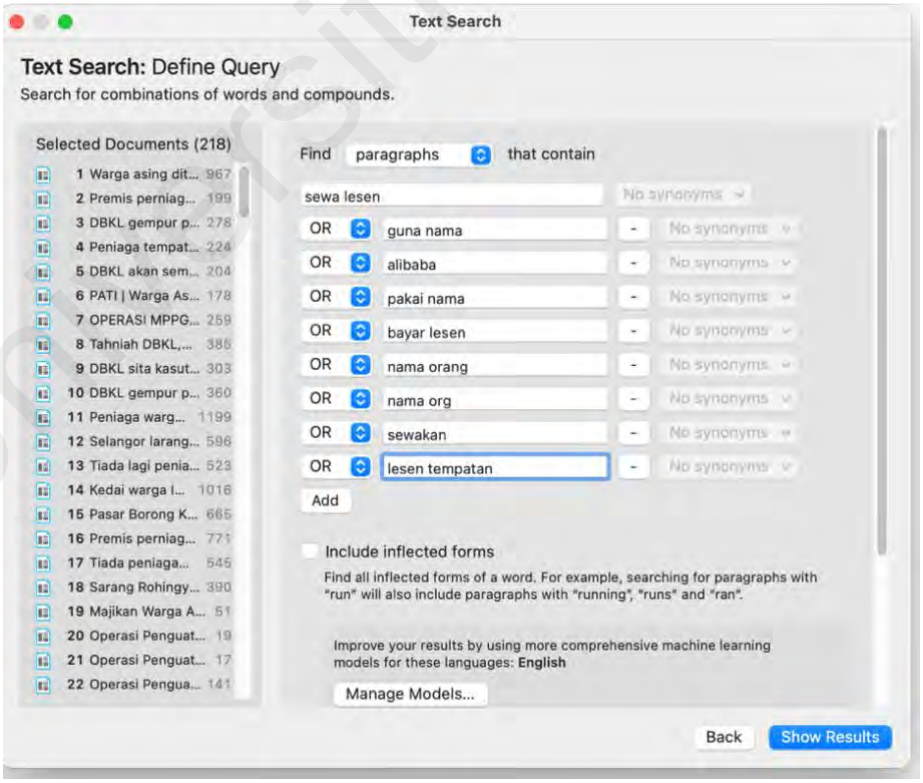


**Figure 0.15: Step 1: Text search of standard terms in the comments used to describe license rental.**

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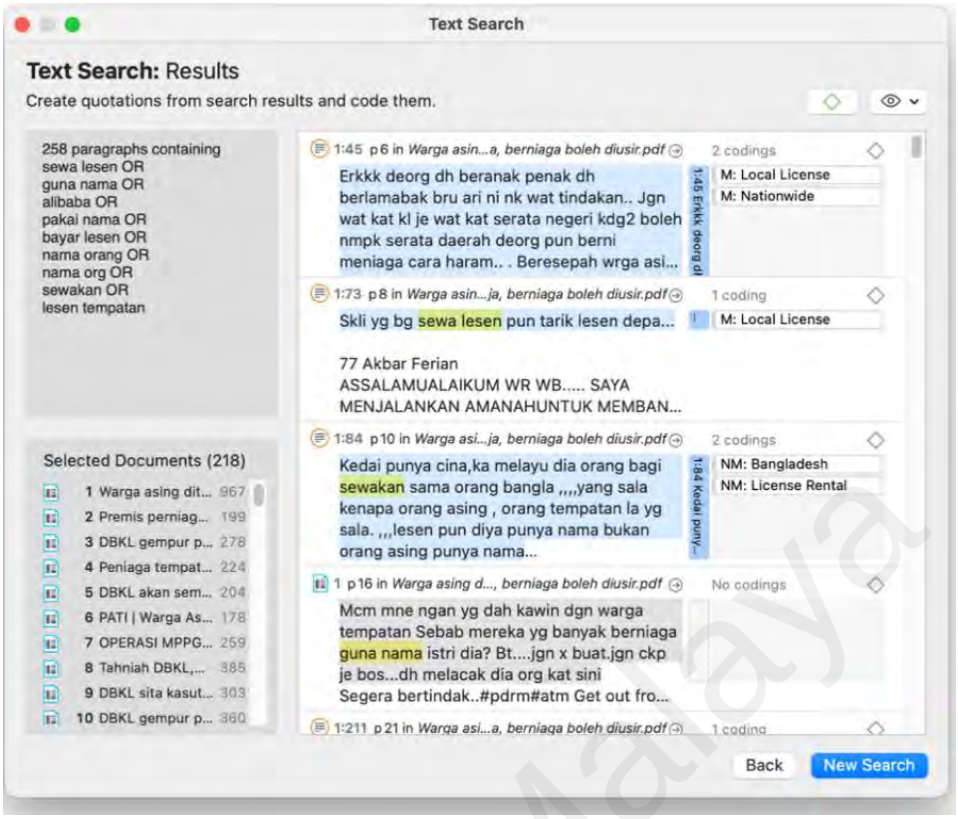


**Figure 0.16: Step 2: Text search results displayed.**

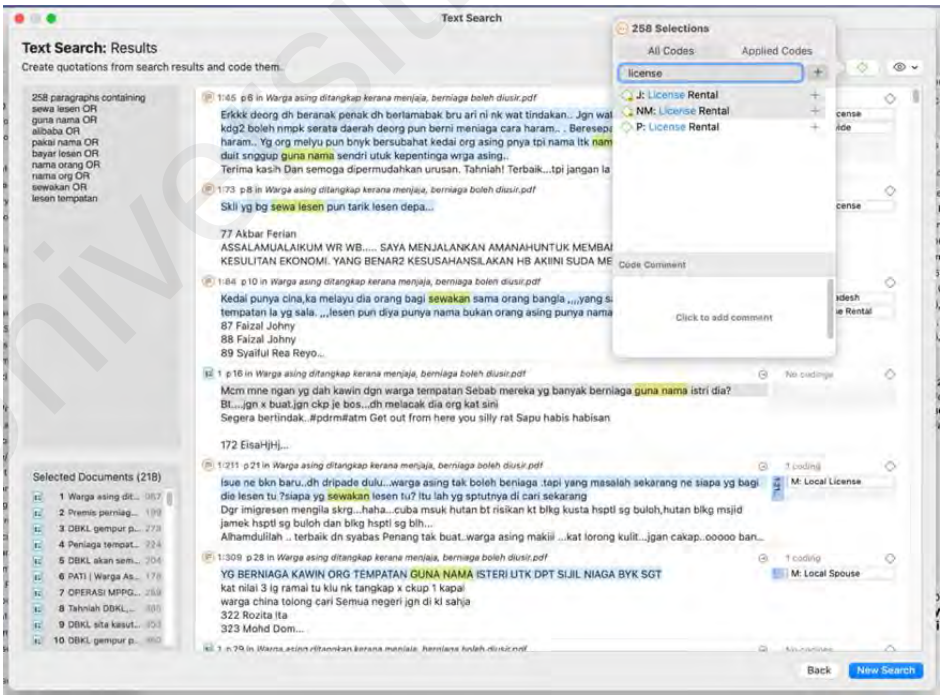


**Figure 0.17: Step 3: Type the keyword code on the code button.**

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Initial codes generated are the identifications of migrant entrepreneurs, their locations, and their types of businesses: nationality, speciality, and locality.

This analysis process was conducted to answer RQ1 in Chapter 4: Profiling Migrants' Entrepreneurship from Public Opinion on Facebook. The profiling is constructed from general observations on opinions and perceptions of social media users who wish to answer these questions:

i) Who are migrants' entrepreneurs?

ii) What do they do?

iii) Where are their enterprises located?

The steps of adding codes to the project are straightforward. In the Code tab, choose New Code and simply type the name of the code. The code should be comprehensible to the coder as it will be used throughout netnography and data analysis. Auto-coding may ease coding, but as netnography and thematic analysis require re-reading and re-visiting the data at least twice (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kozinets, 2015), data which were auto-coded but are not suitable for the codes will be detected when the coder is repetitively reading the data.

There are a total of 167 codes in this research. Initially, the researcher only coded 15 nationalities to analyse the opinions towards migrant entrepreneurs based on their nationalities, such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, and Cambodia. Migrants from Africa and Arab countries were coded with generic codes because their nationalities are more challenging to identify based on their physical features and the generalisations made in the comments for these

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groups. It is harder for the in-group to differentiate between different out-groups of the same stock (ethnic) (Allport, 1954).

Initially, codes for Indonesia also included comments containing Aceh, but Aceh is coded individually due to their repetitiveness. Besides ethnic groups of Acehnese, Rohingyas are also coded individually, not based on any country but as an ethnic group. The codes for nationality from comments of Malaysians and non-Malaysian Facebook users are represented in Word Clouds in Figure 3.18 and Figure 3.19 below.


**Figure 0.18: Codes in Nationality Sub-Theme from Malaysian commenters.**


**Figure 0.19: Codes in Nationality Sub-Theme from non-Malaysian commenters.**

The codes evolved into more specific codes for migrants' enterprises' localities, such as districts in Klang Valley, states in Malaysia, and specific places that commonly identify migrants' businesses. There are 65 location codes: 12 codes are states, 39 are districts,

and 14 are places. The codes for locations are specific to the names of states, districts, and places. There are 12 states instead of 14 in the list for states because it does not include Selangor and the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, as they are in Klang Valley. However, it is essential to mention that there is no code for the Federal Territory of Labuan because no comment mentioned migrants' businesses in Labuan. The codes are in Figure 3.20.


**Figure 0.20: States Sub-Codes in Locality Theme from Malaysian commenters.**

Detailed coding of Klang Valley includes its districts, cities and places. The lists of districts also include a few other districts outside of Klang Valley because of the high number of occurrences and exciting findings that will be useful in the analysis later. The codes are listed in Figure 3.21.


**Figure 0.21: Districts/ Cities Codes in Locality Sub-Theme from Malaysian commenters.**

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The specific places mentioned in the comments are coded into 14 codes. These places can be residential or business areas commonly associated with migrants' presence. The places are listed in Figure 3.22.


**Figure 0.22: Places Codes in Locality Sub-Theme from Malaysian commenters.**

However, generalisations for locations of migrants' businesses such as *pasar malam, pasar pagi*, shopping malls, and restaurants are not included, and they are coded in a speciality theme. For Motor/ Car/ Home, it is used when the comments mention that the businesses are conducted from their home, car, van, lorry, or motorcycle. The 21 types of businesses are commonly associated with migrants' entrepreneurship, which will be explained further in the subsequent phases. From the observation of comments, these are the businesses commonly conducted by migrants, and the list of codes is in Figure 3.23.


Figure 0.23: Products and Services Codes in Specialty Sub-Theme from Malaysian Commenters.



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#### 3.5.1.3 Themes Searching

Specific themes were used for each code based on the researcher's interpretations. Sub-themes were used to easily organise information that can be noted from the themes, as summarized in Figure 3.24, by individually reading and understanding the direct meaning of comments. In ATLAS.ti, the codes are then grouped into themes by assigning them into code groups.

The themes used in this research are briefly explained previously. Themes searching, as suggested by its name, requires the identification and broad analysis of themes for all the codes across the data set. These codes were grouped into two themes:

i) 'Reports' for data which contained comments on the information of migrants' entrepreneurship' which were used for migrants' entrepreneurship profiling; and
ii) 'Reasons' for data which contained opinions of migrants' entrepreneurship strategies and reasons or motivations.

'Reports' was collated within another three identified potential sub-themes. The following chapters will explain the rest of the codes and themes for this research. The codes may have different meanings but will develop meaningful similarities when grouped as a theme and linked between themes. There are three sub-themes for 'Reports':

i) 'Nationality'
ii) 'Specialty'
iii) 'Locality'

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Sub-themes are useful to directly capture any mention of the nationality of migrants, their locations or types of business, which will give a more meaningful analysis of the data. The locality is divided into another three sub-themes, which are:

i) 'States'

ii) 'Districts', and

iii) 'Places'.

As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006), sub-themes can be used to create structure or hierarchy within the data. This research uses sub-themes to create another layer of a vast theme: 'Reporting on Migrants', ' Entrepreneurs', and 'Location'. The identification of themes and sub-themes was the result of the refinement process of initial themes and sub-themes. The theme and sub-themes related explicitly to the classifications and characterization of migrants' entrepreneurship and their related codes are visually presented in Figure 3.24.

The initial themes selected and coded will be reviewed to improve the lists. This research used software to code massive data. It can facilitate the organization of the codes and themes to ensure that data interpretation and analysis are carefully conducted. The themes must be reviewed if the codes repeatedly occur if the patterns are identified or received enough justifications to form a theme, if the themes are distinctive enough, or if they can be merged with another theme. When reviewing themes, the data were re-read to check whether the themes were suitable and if there were missing codes or some that needed to be adjusted.

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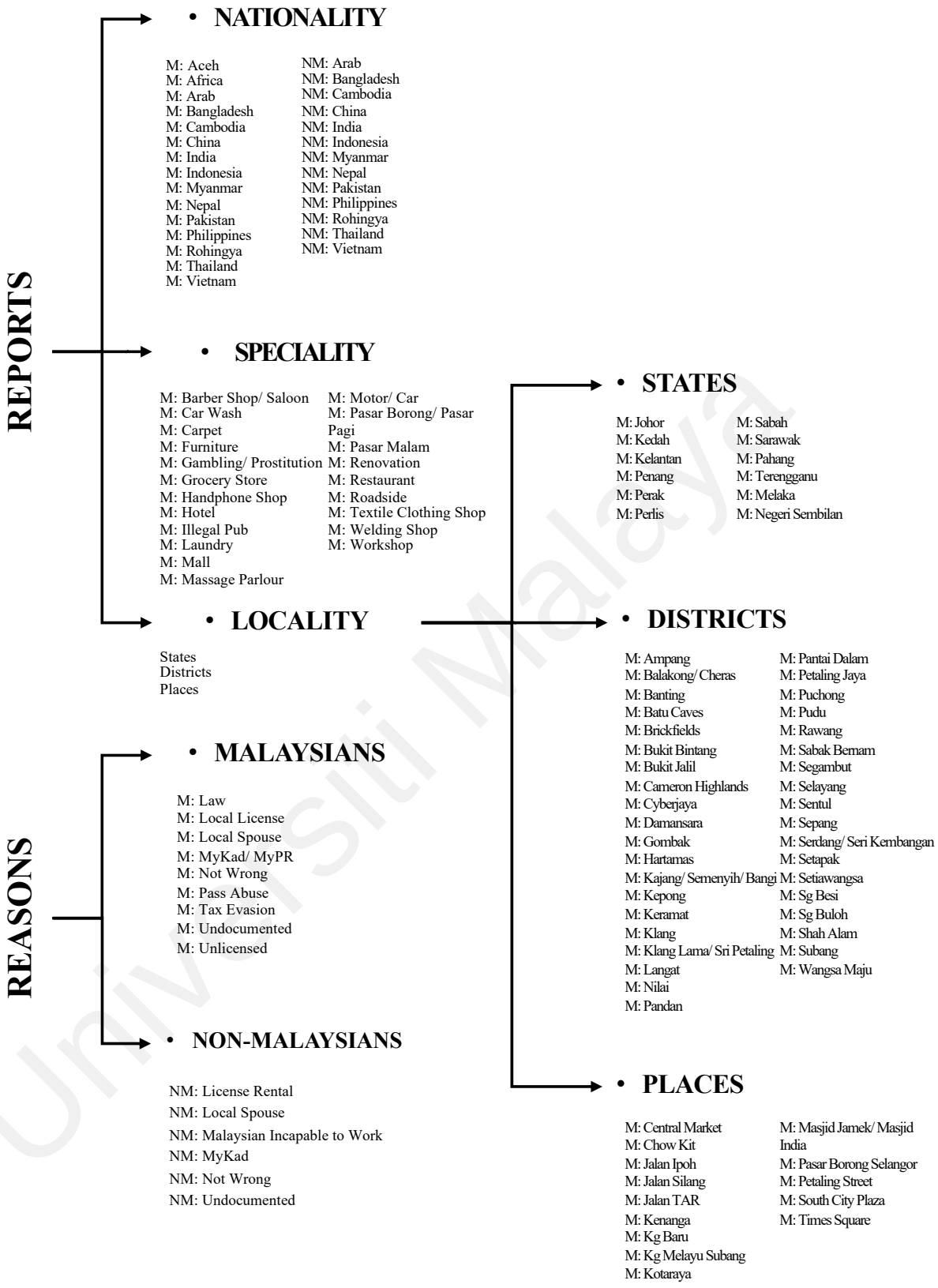


**Figure 0.24: Themes, Sub-themes and Codes used in Thematic Analysis of Social Media Communications on Migrants' entrepreneurship during COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia.**

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### 3.5.1.4 Themes Review

**a) Emerging of New Themes/ Sub-themes**

An example is when coding for comments containing Kajang, Bangi and Semenyih. Initially, they were coded separately but merged into a single code due to their locations in the same districts and under the management of the same city councils. Location as a theme was initially set to a single theme but then emerged into three sub-themes because it would be more meaningful and more prosperous to analyse the themes in their sub-themes. Some codes in the theme of the location were re-evaluated and changed to a speciality theme because of its generalisation of location criteria. The codes are pasar malam, pasar borong/ pasar pagi, restaurants and shopping malls.

Another theme extracted does not relate to the characterization and classifications of migrant entrepreneurs. However, they were meant to explain possible reasons for migrants to be entrepreneurial and the strategies of the enterprises. The theme is simply classified as 'Reasons'. This theme will be further elaborated in the following chapters on the socio-economic impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship. The codes grouped under 'Reasons' are listed in Figure 3.25 and Figure 3.26 below.


**Figure 0.25: Codes in Reason Theme from Malaysian commenters.**

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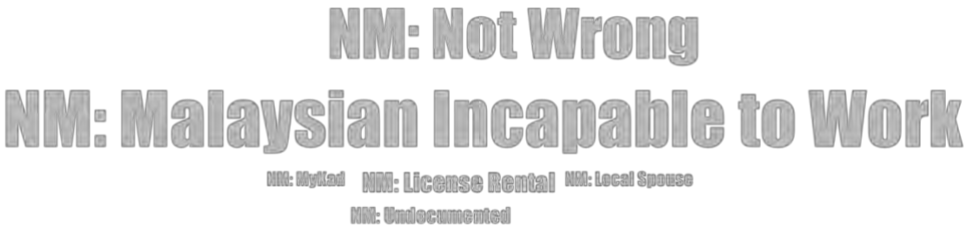


**Figure 0.26: Codes in Reason Theme from non-Malaysian commenters.**

In the themes review phase, themes can be improvised. Previously, there were 15 codes in the theme 'Reason'. After the themes review was made, eight codes were shifted to the 'Law' theme, and they will be discussed in Chapter 5. While another six codes in the 'theme 'Reason' are to be discussed in Chapter 6 are M: MyKad/ MyPR, M: Local Spouse, M: Not Wrong, NM: Not Wrong, NM: Local Spouse and NM: Incapable to Work or Trade. These themes will be explained further in the next phase, Themes Definition and Naming.

Malaysians and non-Malaysians have different opinions towards migrants' entrepreneurship; therefore, the comments were coded separately for Malaysians and non-Malaysians. There are nine codes for Malaysians and six codes for non-Malaysians, as grouped in Table 3.2 below.

Despite the similarities in the comments coded with the same code name, there is an apparent difference in the number of comments from Malaysians and non-Malaysians. That can be because most of the Facebook users connecting to these pages are Malaysians. Table 3.2 indicates the codes and their number of comments in parentheses.

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**Table 0.2: Codes in the Reasons Theme from Malaysian and non-Malaysian commenters.**

| **Malaysians** | **Non-Malaysians** |
|---|---|
| Legal Actions (1102) | |
| License Rental (902) | License Rental (44) |
| Tax Loss (520) | |
| Undocumented (519) | Undocumented (25) |
| MyKad/ MyPR (161) | MyKad/ MyPR (16) |
| Local Spouse (158) | Local Spouse (17) |
| Not Wrong (104) | Not Wrong (188) |
| Unlicensed (372) | |
| Pass Abuse (161) | |
| | Malaysians Incapable to Work/ Trade (218) |

The highest number of comments coded was from Malaysians on the legal actions when they viewed the law as too lenient, lacking practical enforcement actions or criticizing law enforcement agencies, followed by comments about local license rental to migrant entrepreneurs. The codes used are 'Legal Actions' and 'License Rental', respectively, whereby the criticism of the law and local license rental showed the same pattern of how locals and migrants manipulated the law and legislation to conduct unlicensed or unregistered businesses.

It was too evident that 8 out of 15 codes in the theme 'Reason' are mostly related to the law and regulations such as in 'Legal Actions', 'License Rental', 'Undocumented', 'Pass Abuse', 'Tax Loss' and 'Unlicensed', likewise, similar codes were observed from non-Malaysians in 'Undocumented', and 'License Rental'. From the observations and analysis

of these eight codes, a new theme emerged, and it was named ‘Law’ because the comments observed were opinions on specific laws and regulations related to migrants.

Themes generation requires data familiarization (a thematic analysis phase) and the researcher’s skills plus abilities for data interpretation (a netnography step). The themes generated must be verified with continuous iteration (a netnography step), and new themes may also emerge from the iteration.

As the theme of law is a new theme that emerged in the process, the codes must be decided upon when conducting the analysis. The code called Legal Actions in the theme Reason’ will be shifted to the new theme Law, which is better suited to this theme. The two phases of themes searching and review required the researcher to re-read comments and look for repetitions or patterns. Suppose the identified patterns are distinctive enough to be grouped into a theme. In that case, modifications will be made in the process of the theme ‘Law’ when similar patterns of codes are removed from the theme ‘Reason’ and added to a newly formed theme ‘Law’. By then, another review was needed to find if a possible new code had emerged and if it would be added to the theme.

The new theme, ‘Law’, contained comments coded with Legal Actions, License Rental, Undocumented, Pass Abuse, Tax Loss and Unlicensed. As the theme was reviewed, several more codes were deemed suitable to be added to the theme to understand the issues better with law and legal systems. Three more codes that were added to the law theme are Requesting Actions and Bribery. Requesting Actions and Bribery codes should be added to this theme because they are perceived as the direct impacts of enforcement agencies and their related legislation functions and malfunctions. The new code members of the three themes are visualized in Figure 3.27 below:



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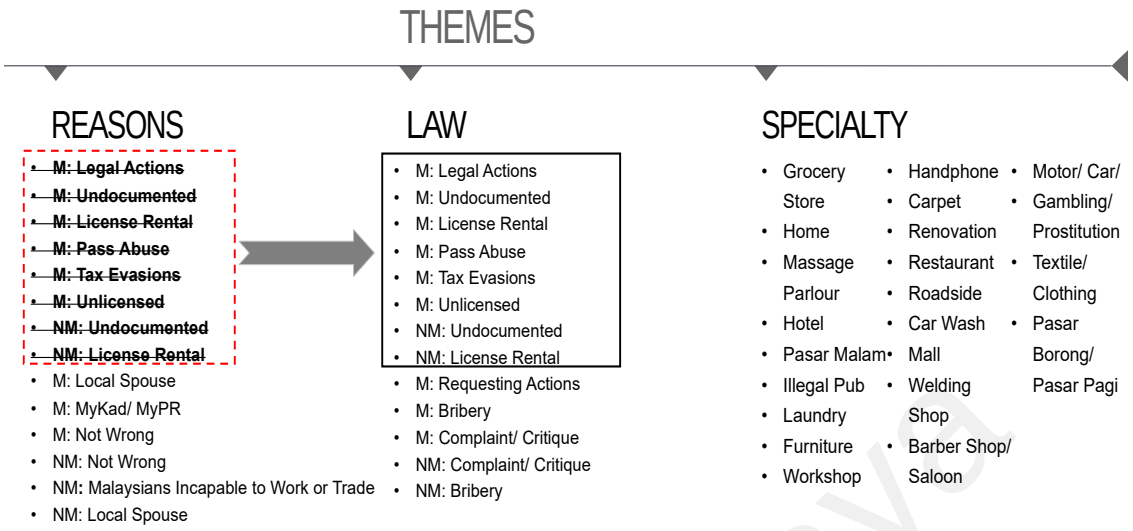


**Figure 0.27: An Emerging Theme Law and Updated Codes for the Theme Reasons and sub-theme Specialty.**

### 3.5.1.5 Themes Definition and Naming

Sub-themes for Reports were divided differently for Malaysians and non-Malaysians. Sub-themes for Malaysians are divided into three, Nationality, Locality, and Specialty, while non-Malaysians are divided into Nationality sub-themes because only information about migrants' nationality was commonly mentioned in a statement compared to Malaysians who usually give opinions or reporting on migrants' businesses and requesting enforcement actions at locations or business premises.

Locations of enterprises are further coded into general locations or a specific state/ district/ area/ place. Locations in Klang Valley were coded specifically into district/ area/ place due to the higher concentration of migrants and migrants' entrepreneurs in Klang Valley as the country's centre of economic activities. Locations outside of Klang Valley are coded based on their respective states. Nationality is coded based on nationality or a more general region, such as those from Arab and Africa.

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This is because the nationality of people from Arab and African regions is more challenging to distinguish based on physical appearance from each other compared to other parts of Asia. At the same time, migrants' ethnic groups are also used to define the sub-themes, such as Aceh and Rohingya. Muniandy, (2015b) in his ethnographic study, he clarified that identifying migrants' nationalities in his observation has limitations in stereotyping and identifying them. He justified that the ethnic categorization of the migrants is not from his own making, and those individuals may have their own identities and see themselves not on their nationalities only but may be of other things such as a parent, a Muslim, or Christians and so on.

However, as was mentioned in his study, stereotyping and identification of racial and nationality categories are very common in Malaysian Society. Thus, the generalisation and identification between Malaysians and non-Malaysians are needed for this study as the identification of race or ethnicity is embedded in the culture (Muniandy, 2015b). For example, the three categories of primary ethnicity in Malaysia are Malay, Chinese and Indian and the British's occupational segregation in Malaya.

Due to the limitations of this research, a non-interaction method could not confirm Facebook users' nationalities. However, etic perspectives were implemented to identify between Malaysians (coded as M) and non-Malaysians (coded as NM). In the description of themes below, the initial M and NM are followed by sub-themes, such as M: Nationality or NM: Reasons to differentiate the coded data between Malaysian and non-Malaysian users.

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Observations from the theme reasons found that Malaysians and non-Malaysians have differing opinion patterns and that the coding is done separately. To better define and list the names of themes, their codes and sub-themes are listed, described, and examined. The examples are comments which were translated from Bahasa Melayu or Bahasa Indonesia.

**a) Theme: Report. Sub-theme: Nationality, Locality and Speciality.**

**(Chapter 4: Profiling Migrants' Entrepreneurship from Public Opinion on Facebook)**

The theme 'Reasons' was defined as users' opinions behind the motivations or strategies for migrants to conduct businesses. Their opinions or reasons may also include the perceptions of why migrants could conduct businesses despite their illegitimacy and possible loopholes in the enforcement actions, regulations, or management that failed to stop migrants' entrepreneurs' business activities.

The code descriptions, definitions and examples are illustrated in Table 3.3 – Table 3.8. These themes are used to answer all four of my research questions and are listed according to the thesis chapters to help understand the analysis.

**Table 0.3: Themes and Sub-themes Definition, Codes Description and Examples for Chapter 4: Profiling Migrants' entrepreneurship from Public Opinion in Facebook.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Theme | 'Report' |
| Definition | Malaysians and non-Malaysians informal identification of migrants' entrepreneurship |
| Sub-theme | M: Nationality |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Theme | 'Report' |
| Code | M: Aceh, M: Africa, M: Arab, M: Bangladesh, M: Cambodia, M: China, M: India, M: Indonesia, M: Myanmar, M: Nepal, M: Pakistan, M: Philippines, M: Rohingya, M: Thailand, M: Vietnam |
| Definition | Malaysians informal report on migrants' originating from these regions/ countries/ provinces or of an ethnic group who operated businesses in Malaysia |
| Example | *There are many Nepalese in Klang. Many Acehnese and Bangladeshi are in Telok Panglima Garang. Many Nigerians are in Nilai and Sunway. Many Vietnamese are in Reflexology Centers. Oh! my Malaysia.*<br><br>*Many Burmese and Indonesian sellers in that area… if they are undocumented, can excessively wipe them out.* |
| Sub-theme | NM: Nationality |
| Code | NM: Arab, NM: Bangladesh, NM: Cambodia, NM: China, NM: India, NM: Indonesia, NM: Myanmar, NM: Nepal, NM: Pakistan, NM: Philippines, NM: Rohingya, NM: Thailand, NM: Vietnam |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians informal report on migrants originating from these regions/ countries/ provinces who operated businesses in Malaysia |
| Example | *What would you do with businesses monopolized by Bangladeshi? It's a pity that there are still unemployed Malaysians in Klang and Kota Raya.* |
| Sub-theme | Locality: States |
| Code | M: Johor, M: Kedah, M: Kelantan, M: Melaka, M: Negeri Sembilan, M: Pahang, M: Penang, M: Perak, M: Perlis, M: Sabah, M: Sarawak, M: Terengganu |

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| Theme | 'Report' |
|---|---|
| Definition | Malaysians informal report on migrants who operated their businesses in specific states in Malaysia |
| Example | *They've migrated to the East Coast, Sabah, and Sarawak… Existence of the high number of migrants' entrepreneurs in the East Coast made them wonder… So, this is the cause of it.* |
| Sub-theme | Locality: Districts |
| Code | M: Ampang, M: Balakong/ Cheras, M: Banting, M: Batu Caves, M: Brickfields, M: Bukit Bintang, M: Bukit Jalil, M: Cameron Highlands, M: Cyberjaya, M: Damansara, M: Gombak, M: Hartamas, M: Kajang/ Semenyih/ Bangi, M: Kepong, M: Keramat, M: Klang, M: Klang Lama/ Sri Petaling, M: Langat, M: Nilai, M: Pandan, M: Pantai Dalam, M: Petaling Jaya, M: Puchong, M: Pudu, M: Rawang, M: Sabak Bernam, M: Segambut, M: Selayang, M: Sentul, M: Sepang, M: Serdang/ Seri Kembangan, M: Setapak, M: Setiawangsa, M: Sg Besi, M: Sg Buloh, M: Shah Alam, M: Subang, M: Sunway, M: Wangsa Maju |
| Definition | Malaysians informal report on migrants who operated their businesses in specific districts in Malaysia |
| Example | *Pasar Pudu. Jalan Pasar. Pun berlambak Warga Asing. Kotor. Becak. Busuk. Jangan sampai merebak Virus disitu. Lagi satu Bangunan Richmore Pudu. Sarang Warga Asing.*<br>*Pudu Market, Jalan Pasar. There are many migrants too. Dirty, drenched, smelly. Don't spread the virus there. Another is Richmond Building; they are migrants' nests* |
| Sub-theme | Locality: Places |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Theme | 'Report' |
| Code | M: Central Market, M: Chow Kit, M: Jalan Ipoh, M: Jalan Silang, M: Jalan TAR, M: Kenanga, M: Kg Baru, M: Kg Melayu Subang, M: Kotaraya, M: Masjid Jamek/ Masjid India, M: Pasar Borong Selangor, M: Petaling Street, M: South City Plaza, M: Times Square |
| Definition | Malaysians informal report on migrants who operated their businesses in specific areas or locations in Malaysia |
| Example | *There are still many in Sentul, Petaling Street, Bukit Bintang, Jalan Alor, Pasar Keramat, Pasar Chow Kit, Setiawangsa, Selangor Mansion, shops in Masjid India. Those are the main areas of PATI.* |
| Sub-theme | Specialty |
| Code | M: Barber Shop/ Saloon, M: Car Wash, M: Carpet, M: Furniture, M: Gambling/ Prostitution, M: Grocery Store, M: Handphone Shop, M: Hotel, M: Illegal Pub, M: Laundry, M: Massage Parlour, M: Motor/ Car, M: Pasar Borong/ Pasar Pagi, M: Pasar Malam, M: Renovation, M: Restaurant, M: Roadside, M: Textile Clothing Shop, M: Welding Shop, M: Workshop |
| Definition | Malaysians' informal reports or opinions on types of businesses operated or items sold by migrants |
| Example | *Please come to One Selayang. There are migrants who owned laundry, grocery stores, handphone shops, all with valid licenses by DBKL.*<br><br>*Excellent, more enforcement, clear off PATI from Malaysia… check all carpet shots, grocery stores, furniture shops, there are other migrants too…* |

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**b) Theme: Report. Sub-theme: Speciality – Needs and Wants and Sub-theme: Law**

**(Chapter 5: Economic Complementary and Rivalry from Migrants' Enterprises)**

During the Themes Review, new sub-themes emerged from the Specialty theme in Chapter 4 which is 'Needs' and 'Wants'. The sub-themes helped to answer RQ2 in Chapter 5 of social media users' opinions towards migrants' entrepreneurship in the economic context. Nine codes were grouped into two sub-themes, 'Needs' and 'Wants'.

**c) Sub-theme: Needs and Wants**

For this research, the 'Needs' sub-theme is defined as businesses frequented by everyday people and products or services consumed or bought by almost everyone, significantly lower- and middle-income groups. The products and services are primarily necessities such as food, water, clothing, and shelter. Codes grouped under the Needs sub-theme are grocery stores, roadside sellers, restaurants, pasar borong/ pasar pagi (wholesale/ morning market), textile/ clothing shops, barber shops/ saloons, motorcycle/ lorry/ car or home sellers, shopping malls and pasar malam (night market) as listed in Table 3.4.

**Table 0.4: Codes and Keywords in Sub-Theme Needs.**

| **Theme** | **'Report'** |
|---|---|
| **Sub-theme** | **Speciality - Needs** |
| **Codes** | **Keywords** |
| Grocery Store (1145) | kedai, kedai runcit, supermarket, mini market, kedai Aceh, kedai serbaneka, minimart, pasaraya, pasar raya |

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| **Theme** | **'Report'** |
|---|---|
| **Sub-theme** | **Speciality - Needs** |
| **Codes** | **Keywords** |
| Roadside (925) | tepi jalan, parking, atas jalan, kaki lima |
| Restaurant (722) | restoren, restaurant, restoran, kedai makan, gerai, warung, kedai mamak |
| Pasar Borong/ Pasar Pagi (479) | pasar borong, pasar pagi, pasar, psr |
| Textile/ Clothing (116) | kedai baju, kedai jahit, kedai kain, tukang jahit, jual baju, jual kain |
| Barber Shop/ Saloon (107) | tukang gunting, potong rambut, gunting rambut, kedai gunting |
| Motor/ Car/ Home (107) | jual di rumah, naik motor, atas lori, atas motor, bonet kereta, rumah kongsi, Kawasan flat, basikal, roda tiga, motosikal, rumah kedai, shoplot, penempatan, perumahan |
| Mall (43) | mall, shopping mall, food court, dalam pasaraya, dalam mall, dalam kedai |
| Pasar Malam (34) | pasar malam, pasar mlm |

The 'Wants' sub-theme is a business frequented by specific consumers and products or services rarely consumed or bought infrequently by the public. The products and services are primarily things that people would choose to buy when they have the means but can live without them.

The lists of businesses coded into the sub-theme Wants are these 12 codes: gambling/ prostitution, car wash, workshops, massage parlour, handphone/ electronic shops, illegal



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pubs, carpet, furniture stores, renovation works, laundry shops, welding shops and hotels. The number of comments coded with each code is listed in parentheses. The keywords used in searching for comments that fit into these codes are also listed in Table 3.5.

**Table 0.5: Codes and Keywords in Sub-Theme Wants.**

| **Theme** | **'Report'** |
|---|---|
| **Sub-theme** | **Speciality - Wants** |
| **Codes** | **Keywords** |
| Gambling/ Prostitution (2068) | judi, perjudian, kedai mesin, kedai judi, pusat judi, kedai nombor, nombor ekor, jual nombor, mesin judi, judi online, kedai ayam, ayam, maksiat, pusat hiburan, tahi judi, pelacur, pelacuran, gro, pelayan, snooker, kedai game, wukong, toto, magnum, tokey, ahlong, along, wang berlesen |
| Car Wash (107) | cuci kereta, kedai cuci, basuh kereta, car wash |
| Workshop (96) | workshop, repair kereta, worksyop, bengkel, pomen |
| Massage Parlour (52) | kedai urut, tukang urut, urut, massage, pusat urut |
| Handphone Shop (28) | handphone, henfon, kedai handphone, repair fon, repair henfon, kedai fon, kedai hp, jual hp, jual handphone, komputer, computer, laptop, telefon, topup, elektronik, elektrik, electronic |
| Illegal Pub (21) | kelab malam, night club, pusat karaoke, arak, tempat minum, pub, minuman keras |
| Carpet (20) | karpet, carpet, Pakistan |
| Furniture (19) | perabot, kedai perabot, perabut, kilang perabot |
| Renovation (18) | buat rumah, tukang, renovate, renovation, keje kontrak, kerja kontrak, hardware, tukang rumah, cabinet, cabinet, repair rumah |

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| Theme | 'Report' |
|---|---|
| **Sub-theme** | **Speciality - Wants** |
| **Codes** | **Keywords** |
| Laundry (3) | dobi, laundry |
| Welding Shop (5) | besi, kedai besi, bengkel besi, grill, kimpalan |
| Hotel (3) | hotel |

Classifications for products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs into Needs and Wants and the reasons for migrant workers' transformation into migrant entrepreneurs. Comments coded with M: Legal Actions, M: Unlicensed, M: License Rental, M: Undocumented, M: Pass Abuse, M: Tax Evasion, M: Bribery, NM: License Rental, NM: Undocumented and NM: Bribery were grouped into a new sub-theme 'Law'.

**ii) Sub-theme: Law**

The report produced as the output of Chapter 5 aimed to answer RO3: to analyse social media users' views on migrants' entrepreneurship, whether they are seen as economic threats or complementing the market, whether they are seen as economic threats or complementing the market. It aimed to evaluate the economic impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship.

However, the analysis progressed to answer another research question, RO4: To investigate the authorities', migrants', and public adherence to Malaysian law regarding licensing and law enforcement activities. Thee law and legislation of contexts of this research will be discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis. The reasons for migrant workers' evolution into migrant entrepreneurs were coded and analysed into the Law Sub-Theme



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and Reasons Theme. Themes and sub-themes definitions, codes and examples are summarised in Table 3.6.

**Table 0.6: Themes and Sub-themes Definition, Codes Description and Examples for Chapter 5: Economic Complementary and Rivalry from Migrants' Enterprises.**

| **Sub-theme** | **'Law'** |
|---|---|
| Definition | Malaysian giving opinions, suggestions, complaints, criticism about the law or the authorities, including requests for actions to be taken by the authorities about migrants' entrepreneurship or migrants in general. |
| Code | M: Legal Actions |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions on suggestions or criticism about legal actions related to migrants |
| Example | *I have read in the Federal Constitution about our rights as Malaysians to uphold the law and the constitution… Citizens have the rights to expel refugees and PATI, but we have the authorities who were appointed such as the enforcement agencies ENF1, ENF2, ENF3 and others, don't wait until there's a chaos caused by migrants and refugees management due to the weaknesses of the law… People law is too dangerous.* |
| Keywords | *undang-undang, undang2, sebat, sebatan, rotan, halau, hantar balik, antar, balek, tangkap, dakwa, ketatkan, tegas, blacklist, usir, hukuman, hukum, denda, saman, sita, rampas, lembik, lemah, kuatkuasa, kuat kuasa, penguatkuasaan, penguatkuasa, batal, senarai hitam, senaraihitam, unhcr, pelarian, kebal, Menteri, kerajaan, government, gomen, procedure, prosedur, permudahkan, bagilah lessen, mudahkan lessen, birokrasi, bertahun tak dapat* |

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| **Sub-theme** | **'Law'** |
|---|---|
| Code | M: Unlicensed |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions on businesses conducted without permissions from the authorities whether they are unregistered, or illegal |
| Example | *What… Operating without a license… What license are they using, all this time… Enough with doing all these illegal operations… Think about your next generation and this country…*<br><br>*Whaaaattt… running a business without a license, what license are they using all this while... Should stop doing all these illegal jobs. Think about your children, grandchildren, and the nation….* |
| Keywords | *permit, lesen, takde lesen, takde permit, tanpa permit, tanpa lesen, penjaja haram, peniaga haram* |
| Code | M: License Rental |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions on migrants' businesses who operated by paying to locals in return of license registration |
| Example | *KWC Jalan Samping… Jalan Gelugor from the shops at the front to the mall are monopolized by the migrants… Unlicensed… Then, there is an old Chinese in contacts with PBT1 for license registration… and there are two Malay men who registered the license… He used to ride a 'kapcai' but now drives a fancy car Hilux… They collect monthly fees to renew the Bangladeshi shops' licenses… and many in KWC are without a license… Now the fault is not on migrants… our people just wanted to live lavishly…* |

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| **Sub-theme** | **'Law'** |
|---|---|
| Keywords | *sewa lesen, guna nama, Alibaba, pakai nama, bayar lesen, nama orang, nama org, sewakan, lesen tempatan, pajak lesen, permit* |
| Code | M: Undocumented |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions in PATI which include migrants/ migrants' businesses who have overstayed their visas or staying in Malaysia illegally |
| Example | *Better to just demolish Petaling Street, filled with migrants since long ago, also the hub for illegal migrants, rats.*<br><br>*There are many undocumented Pakistani migrants in Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman (Jalan TAR) are business owners, but they will escape when they knew there will be enforcement actions. They are very arrogant.* |
| Keywords | *PATI, haram, pendatang, pendatang haram, pelarian, kosong, orang kosong, takde dokumen, tanpa dokumen, tanpa permit, berlambak, bersepah, visa, permit, expired, palsu* |
| Code | M: Pass Abuse |
| Definition | Malaysian giving opinions on migrants who are conducting business with passes and visas not intended for business. For example: temporary work passes/ student visas |
| Example | *Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Rohingya, did not respect this country's law, they entered using tickets as tourists, but they started businesses and worked here as if they are in their own country, with some funds, got a* |

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| **Sub-theme** | **'Law'** |
|---|---|
| | *spot, they'd open a business, license or permit are ignored, bloody attitude….* |
| Keywords | *salahguna, salah guna, visa kerja, permit kerja* |
| Code | M: Tax Evasion |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions on how migrants' businesses may not pay taxes to the government and selling of contrabands without paying the required taxes |
| Example | *They have grocery stores, barber shops, handphone shops, metal workshops, textile shops and many others. They even have money remittance facilities. They do not pay taxes, but they too enjoyed the benefits and facilities for Malaysians, what an easy life they have in this blessed country. It is time to take actions.* |
| Keywords | *tax, cukai, tak bayar cukai, seludup, rokok, rokok haram, rokok seludup, kretek, keretek, d'blend, aral, arak haram, arak seludup, incometax, income tax, cukai pendapatan, lhdn, lembaga, lembaga hasil, hantar negara* |
| Code | NM: License Rental |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians giving opinions on migrants' businesses who operated by paying to locals in return of license registration |
| Example | *UserWH, locals rented their licenses and managed everything because they were afraid to invest on the business capital… hoping for large profit but don't want to learn the lessons from losses, waiting for government aids.* |

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| **Sub-theme** | **'Law'** |
|---|---|
| Keywords | *sewa lesen, guna nama, Alibaba, pakai nama, bayar lesen, nama orang, nama org, sewakan, lesen tempatan, pajak lesen, permit* |
| Code | NM: Undocumented |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians giving opinions on PATI which include migrants/ migrants' businesses who have overstayed their visas or staying in Malaysia illegally |
| Example | *Not impressed with JIM enforcement activities everywhere. It is impossible to deport all migrants because we should know the some of our ancestors' origin. Well done! JIM, at least there are actions towards PATI.* |
| Keywords | *PATI, haram, pendatang, pendatang haram, pelarian, kosong, orang kosong, takde dokumen, tanpa dokumen, tanpa permit, berlambak, bersepah, visa, permit, expired, palsu* |
| Code | M: Bribery |
| Definition | Malaysians reporting or mentioning about bribery, corruptions or misconducts by the authorities, the government, migrants, or the public |
| Example | *I agreed with this, Tan Sri War… Don't just talk about doing this and that, but corrupted officers who were protecting illegal migrants' entrepreneurs are not stopped. Arrest and fire corrupted officers in PBT1 who the reasons behind migrants' illegal enterprises are.* |
| Keywords | rasuah, sprm, suap, duit haram, duit kopi, duit tepi, bawah meja, kenyang, sogok, makan duit, makan tepi, masyuk, asyuk, dah bayar, kene bayar, kene byr, poket, |
| Code | NM: Bribery |

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| Sub-theme | 'Law' |
|---|---|
| Definition | Non-Malaysians reporting or mentioning about bribery, corruptions or misconducts by the authorities, the government, migrants, or the public |
| Example | *UserAH, true. If money can buy the law, the masterminds and those on the sites are there… Malaysia will not be free of PATI. That's why I have mentioned, money can buy anything, including the law.* |
| Keywords | rasuah, sprm, suap, duit haram, duit kopi, duit tepi, bawah meja, kenyang, sogok, makan duit, makan tepi, masyuk, asyuk, dah bayar, kene bayar, kene byr, poket |

**d) Theme: Reasons. Sub-theme: Local Spouse, MyKad/ MyPR, Not Wrong, Incapable to Work or Trade**

**(Chapter 6: Social Acceptance, Integration and Rejection of Migrants' Entrepreneurship)**

The themes and codes used to answer RQ3: to examine online attitudes of social media users towards migrants' entrepreneurship, are included in Table 3.7 below. Generally, this theme will analyse social impacts and the reasons behind migrants' entrepreneurship from a social perspective. It includes reasons for marriage, citizenship, and cultural differences between the in-group and the out-group.

The codes for this theme are M: Local Spouse, M: MyKad/ MyPR, M: Not Wrong, NM: Not Wrong, NM: Incapable to Work or Trade and NM: Local Spouse.

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**Table 0.7: Themes and Sub-themes Definition, Codes Description and Examples for Chapter 6: Social Acceptance, Integration and Rejection on Migrants' entrepreneurship.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Theme | 'Reasons' |
| Definition | Malaysian and non-Malaysians giving opinions about reasons behind migrants' entrepreneurship or migrants in general. |
| Code | M: Local Spouse |
| Definition | Malaysian giving opinions on migrants who are conducting business by using their spouse's license registration |
| Example | *There is a Bangladeshi grocery shop that has 16 other outlets… how is it possible to have that many… the wife is a Malaysian and Bangladeshi husband.* |
| Keywords | *pasangan, suami, laki, bini, isteri, istri, berkahwin, bernikah, nikah, kahwin, kawin, kawen, nama bini, nama suami, nama anak* |
| Code | M: MyKad/ MyPR |
| Definition | Malaysians giving opinions on migrants' with MyKad/ MyPR (original/ fake) |
| Example | *Many Pakistanis received Malaysian Identity Card, what's the story behind this?* |
| Keywords | *mykad, ic merah, ic palsu, ic biru, kad pengenalan, kad pengenalan palsu, penduduk tetap, jual ic, beli ic, fake ic, pr* |
| Code | M: Not Wrong |
| Definition | Malaysians justifying actions of running a business as a rightful act |
| Example | *Just making a living. Must work hard. Or they will be starving.* |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Keywords | *tak salah, biarlah diorg, cari makan, bukan nak kaya, jangan dengki, beri kelonggaran, bagi peluang* |
| Code | NM: Not Wrong |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians justifying actions of running a business as a rightful act |
| Example | *There are the riches and the poor, there are sellers and buyers. There are citizens and migrants. That's how things go… They need each other.* |
| Keywords | *tak salah, biarlah diorg, cari makan, bukan nak kaya, jangan dengki, beri kelonggaran, bagi peluang* |
| Code | NM: Incapable to Work or Trade |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians argument on how Malaysians are lazy, not able to do hard work, not interested and incompetent in business |
| Example | *Deport all Indonesian business owners even they are Muslims and from the same root. Let the Chines run businesses. Malays don't know how to run business. Let the Malays buy from the Chinese.* |
| Keywords | *memilih, pilih kerja, kerja senang, tak nak buka kedai, buat sendiri, pemalas, tak nak susah, tak mau, tak mahu* |
| Code | NM: Local Spouse |
| Definition | Non-Malaysian giving opinions on migrants who are conducting business by using their spouse's license registration |
| Example | *Salam, I would like to ask something. I have a very simple business in my hometown which is at a school selling drinks. I married a local. Will I be allowed to register for a license, or I may register under my wife's name… please share some information… Thank you.* |
| Keywords | *pasangan, suami, laki, bini, isteri, istri, berkahwin, bernikah, nikah, kahwin, kawin, kawen, nama bini, nama suami, nama anak* |

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**c) Theme: Reason. Sub-theme: Engagement**

**(Chapter 7: Public Opinions and Reactions Towards the Governance of Migrant and Entrepreneurship)**

Sub-theme Engagement grouped comments which interacted with the authorities to complaint/ criticise, to request action, to praise/ support, to give opinion or to respond to other commenters. Actions contained comments from users requesting the authorities to take action and implement the law related to migrants, businesses, or any of their functions. It can be observed from the data that some users used Facebook to complain about any inaction or request for actions to be taken.

The situation during COVID-19, where government offices were closed, and there were travel restrictions, made the public resort to other mediums to complain and request actions. Further research can be conducted to view the trend of users' engagement on Facebook by comparing users' interactions and their comments on Facebook before and after COVID-19 to conclude if there are any changes in the types of comments or communications on government agencies' Facebook pages.

The study, however, must also consider the voice or types of the posts posted by the authorities on their Facebook pages before and after COVID-19 because there were also more posts on enforcement actions towards migrant entrepreneurs post-COVID-19 that may create a negative voice towards the research subjects. However, to triangulate the data, interviews were conducted with ENF1, PBT1, PBT2, and PBT4 to learn their trends in social media postings.

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The codes used in Chapter 7 are M: Complaint/ Critique, NM: Complaint/ Critique, M: Requesting Actions, M: Responses to another user, M: Praise/ Support, and M: Opinion, summarised in Table 3.8.

**Table 0.8: Themes and Sub-themes Definition, Codes Description and Examples for Chapter 7: Public Opinions and Reactions Towards the Governance of Migrant and Entrepreneurship.**

| Code | M: Complaint/ Critique |
|---|---|
| Definition | Malaysians complaining, criticizing, or sharing their negative experiences or opinions about the authorities |
| Example | *Hope this is not when its viral only. This is a long-term issue, until they have children here, but the authorities are taking actions recently.* |
| Keywords | dulu buat apa, tak buat, tak boleh buat, sebelum ni buat apa, buat ape, baru nak, br nk, baru nk, sembang, penipu, tipu, wayang, tido, tidor, tidur, percaya, lemah, penakut, buktikan, sebelah mata, tutup mata, buta, tak ambil tindakan, tiada tindakan, takde tindakan, tak nampak, pintu belakang |
| Code | NM: Complaint/ Critique |
| Definition | Non-Malaysians complaining, criticizing, or sharing their negative experiences about the authorities |
| Example | *Why only two shops in Westport were closed? There are many others without any license. Barber and handphone shops, Berkah Saudara which sells handphone, has no license. Arrest the Bangladeshi.* |
| Keywords | dulu buat apa, tak buat, tak boleh buat, sebelum ni buat apa, buat ape, baru nak, br nk, baru nk, sembang, penipu, tipu, wayang, tido, tidor, tidur, percaya, lemah, penakut, buktikan, sebelah mata, tutup mata, |

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|---|---|
| | buta, tak ambil tindakan, tiada tindakan, takde Tindakan, tak nampak, pintu belakang |
| Code | M: Requesting Actions |
| Definition | Malaysians requesting for the authorities to take specific actions related to their core businesses or generally on any issues. |
| Example | *Take actions and put continuous effort until these squatters in our country are dismissed. Enforcement actions must be maintained from time to time… They bring more troubles than benefits to the country.* |
| Keywords | ambil tindakan, bila nak serbu, tempat lain bila, tengok-tengok, melawat, jemput datang, sila datang, hantar balik, tangkap, buktikan, gempur, teruskan, buat, operasi, denda, saman, sita, sebat, halau, usir, dakwa, banteras, serbuan, serbu, sapu, pantau, pemantauan, kasi bersih, bersihkan, jangan sembang, buat kerja, jangan cakap, jgn ckp, jgn cakap, harap berterusan, moga beterusan, moga kekal, angkat, kutip, angkut |
| Code | M: Responses to another user |
| Definition | Responses or comments posted to other users' comments |
| Example | *UserBS, that's right bro… there are many local's shops in my area but rented to migrants… what to do? When PBT1 came, the shop owner is there… migrants flee.* |
| Keywords | Mentioned other users' name in the comment or nested comments from the 'Reply' button to a comment |
| Code | M: Praise/ Support |
| Definition | Users commented with praise, supporting actions, or complimenting the authorities or government |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Keywords | *Good job… after that, terminate their electricity and water… they'll be easily reopen if you just confiscated them.* |
| Code | M: Opinion |
| Definition | Comments which are general opinions about any issues related or not to research subjects |
| Keywords | *JIM should ask RELA for help… will be faster to clean up migrants…* |

#### 3.5.1.6 Report Production

The final phase, the 6th phase of thematic analysis, is to tell the stories behind the themes by producing the report for the final analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested that the writings be concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting, as well as to tell the story of the data across and within the themes.

As suggested by Kozinets (2015) in netnography, the analysis should make arguments related to research questions and go beyond merely describing the data. In making the analysis, the interpretations from the observations must be consistent with the three theoretical backgrounds discussed in the literature.

## 3.6 Limitations of Study

The major limitation of this study is that the samples are not the total representation of the public because of the limitations of accessibility to online social media platforms. Since the study was limited to users' comments on a public Facebook page, it was impossible to determine users' gender, age, nationality, and ethnicity to represent the total population of Malaysians or non-Malaysians.

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This study did not thoroughly check the existence of fake Facebook profiles to classify Malaysian or non-Malaysian comments. Each comment is taken as it was posted on the page, regardless of the authenticity of the profiles. These limitations made it clear that the study was conducted based on public opinion of social media users.

Another limitation is that the results may be biased toward Malaysian culture and norms (S. Lee et al., 2018)as the Facebook page under study is the Malaysian Immigration Department, and most users are Malaysians. From comments reading made by users, there is also a possibility of misperceived opinions leading to majority illusions (Lerman et al., 2016), which can be researched further on how it affects perceptions towards migrants and communications between migrants and locals.

### 3.6.1 Ethical Considerations

This study is conducted to collect and understand the content of Facebook comments and ignore other variables. It will not collect other behaviours and activities on this social media platform, such as sharing a post, liking a post or comments, clicking on a post, searching for a post, and determining the frequency of the activities on the platform. While setting the course of action, specifying the research objectives, and conscientiously conducting the research, ethical problems and issues may still arise.

Franzke et al. (2020) agreed that solutions to ethical challenges in internet research may seem unclear, not easy, or ideal, researcher still have the responsibility to protect their research subjects from harm. The context of this study is a sensitive topic. Dealing with

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issues on migrants is a complex field to study when researchers will have to deal with vulnerable groups.

For social media data collection, participants are not recruited even if there is no direct contact. Even though no consent received from participants while maintaining anonymity for collecting data in the current research environment, ethical concerns may still arise from these two conditions:

i) from the characteristic of the chosen method itself; and

ii) from results/ output and the analysis of data related to migrants.

Kozinets (2015) prepared an entire chapter in his book to address possible ethical concerns in conducting netnography. Tunçalp and L. Lê (2014) accused researchers conducting online ethnography of being loose in addressing ethical implications. Avoid making mistakes by taking precautionary actions to address ethical concerns. Ethical concerns in social media research are unavoidable, but proper procedures and choices should be taken to minimize the impact.

Approval from ethics board members should be obtained to maintain ethical research practices. The experience of obtaining approval in conducting this research has not been straightforward because of its complexity, sensitivity, and uncertainty. Therefore, the researcher must take several actions, starting with validating the issues. Generally, the identified issues in using social media platforms are extracted from Zimmer (2010).

Despite having masses of data on social media, he argued that the nature and dynamic of social networks are hard to understand due to limited data because the information is

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extracted from what the subjects chose to make visible. This limitation seems to apply to social networking sites, too.

For this thesis, the identified issues related to information gathering of the research subjects are divided into two phases. The phases are not in any order where ethical risks should be revisited repeatedly throughout the research process. The phases are listed below:

i) Initial Phase. During the pre-test, while establishing the research ground and conducting data collection
   - Users' informed consent to be researched.
   - Properly identify and respect expectations of users' privacy, which may sometimes appear too subjective.
   - Due to publicly available information, sufficient strategies must be developed to maintain data anonymity.

ii) Dissemination Phase. After data collection, research output is constructed during analysis, and post publications are published.
   - Self-reporting biases and errors
   - Minimal representation of the whole population
   - Inability to reflect the meaning or depth of the information users submit.

### 3.6.2 Informed Consent to be Researched

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (2019) prepared 'A Guide to Internet Research Ethics' which require the researcher to obtain consent from research subjects, which may raise other problems, such as subjects' limited understanding of the



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research and the inability to obtain consent if it involves too many individuals interacting in forums, pages, or public groups.

As opposed to this guideline, Kozinets (2015) suggests that informed consent is not required when taking netnography into context. Social media data and analysis are treated as archived messages/ comments/ texts, not human subjects and do not involve human participants (Kozinets, 2015).

Informed consent is required explicitly for human subjects in social research. The metaphor he used was that no informed consent was submitted to a book writer when conducting archival research by citing a book or obtaining permission from a TV show to quote conversations aired on TV. His arguments can be used to evaluate if the same conditions apply to social media.

### 3.6.3 Users Privacy Policy

Kozinets (2015) also justified that data collection and analysis from existing online records and publicly available documents is the same as data collection and analysis in another medium of publication such as books, newspapers, or journals. The author argued that social media should be treated like another publication medium rather than a place or a social space, and there is no human interaction or direct communication when data are gathered from social media postings. Therefore, there is no privacy concern when materials are analysed from publicly available posts that are legally and efficiently accessible by the researcher, believing that users know their posts are public, not private or confidential.

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Facebook is constantly updating its Terms of Service. When users agree to their Terms of Service and use their Products (Facebook), Facebook can use users' information to show them advertisements that they deem relevant to users. Facebook can profit from its users' free use of their social media platform (Facebook Inc., 2020b). Users may review and change their privacy settings as stated in their Data Policy, which clearly states that users can choose the audience with whom they wish to share their information, communication, and activities (Facebook Inc., 2021b).

Facebook defines the public as something that anyone can see. There is also a reminder that Facebook pages or public groups are public spaces; anyone who can see the group or pages can see the posts or comments, it can be published in News Feed and other places on or off Facebook, it can be searched in Facebook or search engines, and it can be associated with the users, even off Facebook (Facebook Inc., 2021b). The terms of service may be legally binding for Facebook to be off the hook for any privacy and safety issues online and offline.

There is still awareness of the risks and possible implications of users' activities on Facebook. Sometimes, the issues in data accessibility are not about private vs public information but because the data contains sensitive information (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019). Therefore, to maintain Facebook as a safe, abuse-free environment for expression and giving voice to people, Facebook developed a set of guidelines in their Community Standards that outlined what is allowed and not allowed on Facebook (Facebook Inc., 2021a).

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### 3.6.4 Data Anonymity

Kozinets (2015) also warned against researchers claiming to maintain the anonymity of the communicators and upholding data anonymity because there was no identity recording from data collection. The internet is recording the identities of communicators even though the information was not disclosed by the researchers (Kozinets, 2015; The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019). The internet, in all its intelligence, can link texts that were reported in findings to the pseudonyms that were used to protect the identity by typing the words in search engines (Franzke et al., 2020; Kozinets, 2015; The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019; Zimmerman & Watts, 2004).

Thus, if the data can be traced, the researcher will have to get informed consent or work in a way to make sure the data cannot be traced back to the identity of the communicators and inform them about the risks (Kozinets, 2015; The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019).

There is a limitation in obtaining consent from thousands of commenters in this research. An alternative approach must be taken to ensure that the comments collected cannot be traced back to their original communicators. This can be done by using Facebook or search engines so that these comments can be included in the thesis and other publications while maintaining the anonymity of the commenters.

As a solution, only Facebook comments in Bahasa Melayu or Bahasa Indonesia will be quoted. However, the researcher will translate the comments into English while maintaining their contexts and meanings. Translations are made by researchers whose



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mother tongue is Bahasa Melayu. Bahasa Indonesia shares some similarities with Bahasa Melayu, but Indonesian friends or online dictionaries will refer to unfamiliar words. Further explanations on applications for ethical considerations will be discussed in subsequent chapters for Methodology.

### 3.6.5 Confirmation Bias, Self-reporting Biases and Errors

Some of its users use social media to share information. Sometimes, it is also used to reconfirm existing beliefs. Almoqbel et al., (2019) find that users tend to see ideas or information that confirms their beliefs or opinions. These situations may create biases. We consider social media as an opinion-rich source. When discussing sell-reporting biases and errors, whether the issue concerns self-reporting from the researcher or the communicators in social media sites whose comments were collected came to the attention.

Self-reporting of opinions and perceptions maintains subjectivity, where it can be seen as right or wrong and cannot be verified (McNabb, 1990). Garz et al. (2020) agreed that self-reporting users will share information from the same groups who share the same inclination towards an opinion, thus creating more engagement between users in the same groups, forums, or their network. Viewing migrants' entrepreneurship issues on the host country's government agencies' Facebook pages will give distinct opinions from the home country's government agencies' Facebook pages. Admitting these biases and errors may result in significant findings for this research. Despite the challenges, analysis and evaluation made while conducting the research may produce unanticipated findings.

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Furthermore, topics typically seen as sensitive and controversial receive more engagement in news articles through comments (Almoqbel et al., 2019). Negativity towards migrants is serving its own biases in many countries. So, it is impossible to avoid self-reporting biases and errors when we conduct research in the field of migrants.

### 3.6.6 Minimal Representation of the Whole Population

Data collected from social media may have minimal representation of the whole population. The internet created a new world without boundaries when information is robust and instantaneous. Social media offers an advantageous environment in which to collect public opinion. However, the research conducted must be feasible, and it will be bound to its scope, thus limiting data collection.

Limiting the chosen websites, subjects, or activities resulted in data limitation. The information gained from social media data mining is still valuable for this research because generalisation is still the key to public opinion gathering by clearly defining the population and sample to avoid possible biases and errors.

### 3.6.7 Inability to Reflect the Real Meaning of True Depth of the Information Submitted by Users

Social media is a platform where interactions are fuelled by users' experiences to express, communicate, and connect compared to traditional websites. Users can post publicly on their pages or interact with other users in groups or on the pages of other users. Unlike

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real life, face-to-face or telephone interactions, social media interactions that operate online may pose misinformation or misperception.

Researchers are also exposed to the limitation to reflect the actual meaning or proper depth of the information posted on social media. Even if the interactions now involve videos, textual or visual communications, there is a possibility that they will be misinterpreted by researchers who collected the data. Researchers will not be able to communicate with other users to ask further questions or clarify things if the study is limited to observation or non-participatory.

### 3.6.8 Other Issues with Collected Data and Possible Harms from Research Outputs

Other possible ethical issues are complexities of representation, information validity, fake profiles/cyber-troopers, Facebook algorithms, message force multipliers, the power of virality, bandwagon effects on the majority of opinion, filter bubbles and selective exposure theory. The researcher must be attentive to these issues during data collection so they will not sway the analysis. As mentioned in this section, ethical risk evaluation is an ongoing process. Ethics considerations must be done at the beginning of the research, tapping into the actions of approaching research subjects, collecting and storing data, representing the work and even after the research has been done to avoid harm and be beneficial to the culture members for netnography.

#### 3.6.8.1 Fake Profiles, Cybertroopers and Repetitive Comments

Individuals and cyber troopers intentionally created fake profiles. FB has also made it clear in its Terms of Service that users should use the same name they use daily to create



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their accounts. Based on a pre-test of comments collected from some FB posts and the data analysis software used. Fake profiles, cyber-troopers, and repetitive comments can be easily detected and searched for using a search button.

Cybertroopers are usually utilized and paid for by political parties (Johns & Cheong, 2019). The selected FB pages have no political inclination but may have comments from cyber-troopers or fake profiles. The researcher is aware of their existence, but it is not the scope of this study to know the impact of cyber-troopers on the comments. However, the researcher is more interested in the contents of the study.

#### 3.6.8.2 News Virality and Message Force Multipliers

As discussed by Johns and Cheong (2019) and Alsaad et al., (2018), cyber-troopers and news virality only act to enhance reports/ news that are already broadcasted elsewhere, for example, on other FB pages, online news portals, and Twitter. Their comments will only be treated as another opinion where opinion can be wrong/ right. There may be issues that the comments collected are not capturing the real situations and depth of information from the effects of message force multipliers and the power of virality in social media.

For this research, UMREC panels were concerned over cyber-troopers and fake profile identifications. However, comments possibly posted by these groups are still considered but with caution. Basic profile checking was done to confirm the authenticity of the profile picture, friend lists, and previous comments. Usually, cyber-troopers will have bogus profile photos and fewer activities and interactions on their page (Johns & Cheong, 2019). However, identification is not possible for profiles with limited privacy.

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#### 3.6.8.3 Fake News or Information Validity

UMREC panels were also concerned with the validity of information posted by cyber-troopers and fake profiles. This research focuses not on sentiment complications and information validity but on the contents. Comments will still be collected from them, treating cyber-troopers (or not) as individuals entitled to their own opinions and not going into depth about them. Studies were conducted on detecting cyber-troopers on Twitter, but the context of the studies is on how tweets diverted/ enhanced social tensions during protests (Johns & Cheong, 2019; Postill, 2014). Furthermore, the research should focus on investigating and identifying specific fake profiles or authentic persons. In that case, it will violate specific users' privacy by unauthorised/ unconsented research of human subjects.

Basic data cleaning will be done where repetitive comments will be excluded, and only a single comment from the same user will be coded. Fake profiles can be detected based on the thematic analysis method, where the researcher will familiarize with the data by reading through all comments and not just skimming. Repeated comments can be easily identified based on researcher experience and data coding.

Atlas.ti, which is used as a coding and analysing software, can quickly search for keywords, including Facebook profile names, throughout the entire documents/ projects to check if there are repetitions from the same users. The researcher will only code a single comment from repetitive comments of the same user. Repetition was said to yield compulsion, which has the power to reinforce. It was manipulated to circulate misinformation or biased information online (Johns & Cheong, 2019). Its repetitiveness

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will somehow increase comments' appearance and change Facebook algorithms to increase user engagement.

#### 3.6.8.4 Facebook Algorithms, Filter Bubbles, Selective Exposure Theory and Bandwagon Effects

Alsaad et al., (2018) wrote an article focusing on the ability of social media to create biases in beliefs and may lead to racist and hateful behaviour. They mentioned that algorithms will work so that the websites shown are what the sites' artificial intelligence thinks the users want to see, but these may not be what the users need to see. Other names for biases are filter bubbles and selective exposure theory.

The algorithms also work in a way where what popped up on users' pages is from their previous activities and is also linked to the interests of their friends in their social network (White & Boatwright, 2020). Adding to this finding, some researchers, Bakshy et al., (2015) and Garz et al., (2020) stated that users may be exposed only to information/ posts from like-minded people in their network. Users can choose what to see or not to see on their social media network. They may also change their settings if they do not like a posting to appear on their newsfeed. However, Almoqbel et al., (2019) explained how social media users may also be influenced by selective exposure, where they will only see what they want to see.

Facebook's algorithms of setting comments with the most likes at the top, and friends' comments appearing higher on the posts will not impact the contents collected because all publicly available comments will be downloaded, collected, coded, and analysed regardless of the number of likes or its comments ranking and positions on the posts.

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Researchers are aware of the ability of Facebook comments to influence users' opinions. Past studies have already discussed the ability of comments in social media as nano-stories to add up and form a grand narrative that will have more significant impacts (Postill, 2014).

What is alarming in his study is that digital narratives may be translated into the physical world from these research findings of social media calls for social movements (Goh & Pang, 2016; Johns & Cheong, 2019; Postill, 2014). Algorithms, the power of virality, messages force multipliers, and the illusions of social media opinions as a voice representation of the majority can result in misunderstandings and misperceptions.

The possibility of bandwagon effects on most opinions in social media resulted from how postings or comments were curated. Facebook's algorithm may influence the order of comments, with more likes being at the top and being read by more users. Comments with more likes or replies from other users may be perceived by users as being supported by many others. "The bandwagon effect refers to a psychological phenomenon in which a crowd tend to blindly concentrate on a particular choice based on perceived trend without making any value judgement concerning the trend" (S. Lee et al., 2018).

### 3.6.9 Risks from the Data and Results of the Research

UMREC's concerns over possible harm resulting from the output of the research to the marginalised groups (migrants) are not to be taken lightly. It is already apparent that research may bring good or harm to respondents, research participants, society, organizations, and people in general. It is not necessarily narrowed down to research that involves vulnerable groups. However, excluding vulnerable groups in research due to the



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higher risks possessed by including them is not the best answer for ethical research. The research should 'do better and bring no harm' because we need to weigh down the benefits of conducting the research or ignore these groups, and sometimes, the risks are the research goals.

Where Kozinets (2015) warned against the error of exclusions and errors of inclusions of data or voices if we tend to avoid minority groups in research. Data, analysis, or publications from this research may be risky to the groups. However, Kozinets (2015) suggested the first step to mitigate the issues requires the researcher to inductively identify not just the human factor but also to include the site and the activity, emphasizing the context if there is any possibility of the research input/ output to be unethical, bringing harm or immoral. These risks may vaguely sound, but a clear definition of risks/ harms should be induced in the context and practicality of the research.

Kozinets (2015) explained that when people post publicly on social media, it does not necessarily mean they consented to academics or other scholarly endeavours to use their data in any way they like. He listed four general procedures for researchers to address ethical issues, which are:

i) Identifying yourself and informing relevant constituents about your research
ii) asking for appropriate permissions
iii) gaining consent where needed
iv) properly citing and crediting culture members

In conclusion, researchers can take several general actions to minimize ethical risks. The researcher is responsible for protecting the integrity of informants or human subjects. The

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researcher should clearly and precisely inform the subjects of the research objectives and the intended use of collected data and results.

Most importantly, the researchers' discretion is to reflect and judge what is appropriate in ethical research (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019). Any topic that is appropriate and worthy of research, including migrants' entrepreneurship, can be considered. From the many branches of migrants' studies, the digital environment of social media opinions on temporary migrants' transformation into entrepreneurs and self-employment will unravel findings that are not always spoken about in real life.

### 3.7 Conclusion

The methodology chapter explains that the research used netnography to collect and analyse public comments from Facebook posts about migrant entrepreneurship in Malaysia. The data was collected from the official Facebook accounts/ pages of eight Malaysian government authorities. The 12-step netnography process and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data. Sampling was done by selecting selective postings on migrants' entrepreneurship topics from law enforcement agencies and city councils.

The research faced challenges in obtaining ethical clearance and had to address concerns about harm and bias. The data analysis involved familiarizing with the data, coding for themes and sub-themes, and reviewing, modifying, and creating themes as needed. The report categorizes businesses operated by migrants into two sub-themes: "Needs" and "Wants," and discusses the reasons migrants become entrepreneurs and their adherence to Malaysian law.

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Malaysians express various opinions, suggestions, complaints, and criticism regarding migrants' entrepreneurship and their compliance with the law, with themes of corruption, social acceptance, and public sentiment emerging from the data. The first findings from this research will analyse the data into who, what, and where migrants' entrepreneurship is, as commented by Facebook users on government agencies' Facebook pages, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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# 1) CHAPTER 4: PROFILING MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM PUBLIC OPINION IN FACEBOOK

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter works as an outline to identify the research subjects of migrants' entrepreneurship. Before we explore the broader picture of migrants' entrepreneurship and the cultural or philosophical values behind the subjects, we must define and establish the subjects we are researching. This identification is based on generalisation and does not target any specific individual but rather the 'groups' of migrants' entrepreneurs and enterprises whom social media users perceived in their comments.

The objective of this chapter is to investigate social media users' opinions on the products sold/ services offered by migrant entrepreneurs according to their origins and location of the business. The following research question is developed:

RQ1: What are social media users' opinions on social media postings on the products sold/services offered by migrants' entrepreneurship in terms of:

- origins
- location of business
- goods and services Offered

From 218 posts on eight Facebook pages, 167 codes were created, and 49,571 quotations were coded. The posts were analysed as documents, and the 218 documents were grouped into eight document groups based on the Facebook pages.

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Document groups were divided into two: i) two enforcement agencies and ii) six city councils. The posts are news or reports located in either i) Selangor (162), ii) Kuala Lumpur (52), iii) Johor (3) or iv) Kelantan (1). Despite the locations of the reported news, user comments have mentioned or reported migrants' entrepreneurship from all 14 states in Malaysia, which will be discussed later.

### 4.2 Migrants' Business Nature: Nationality, Locality, Specialty

Informal reports on the posts consist of rich information on migrants' entrepreneurship where the members of the public mentioned locations, nationalities, and types of businesses based on their encounters and experiences. The information provided can be beneficial to government agencies in improving their enforcement or preventive actions or mitigating problems related to migrants' entrepreneurship.

Generally, public Facebook comments recorded for this study are rich in useful information. It gave numerous repetitions that created a pattern of common themes, which will help study public reactions towards migrants' entrepreneurship and the authorities associated with them.

The results of this study will be divided into two parts: Part A on 'Reports' which contains users' comments that mentioned any nationalities or migrants' entrepreneurs or migrants in general, the states, districts, or places where there are migrants' entrepreneurship or generally migrants and their types of businesses which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Part B, 'Reasons', is users' opinions on why some migrants are entrepreneurial and can conduct business in Malaysia despite the restrictions on business ownership for temporary migrants, which will be discussed in Chapters 5 – 7.



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### 4.2.1 Nationality

Public comments posted by users gave general opinions on the nationalities of migrants they commonly encountered daily. For the analysis, 15 codes were used to code comments for migrants' nationality/ ethnicity from Malaysians and 13 codes for non-Malaysians. The codes used are listed in Figure 3.24: Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Used in Thematic Analysis of Social Media Communications on Migrants' Entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia. The number of quotations for each code is represented in parentheses to quantify the comments.

There are 15 countries listed in KDN's source country that are permitted to apply for PLKS (Kementerian Dalam Negeri, 2021). However, only ten nationalities from the source countries' list were mentioned in the comments: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand. Countries that were not mentioned are Sri Lanka, Laos, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

These nationals were not mentioned because only a tiny number of Laotians (12) were recorded in 2019, and zero was recorded for workers from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Sri Lankan was not mentioned because of the similarities in appearance between Sri Lankans and other South Asians. For this analysis, Acehnese, an ethnic group from Aceh, Indonesia and Rohingya, stateless minority ethnics from Myanmar, were coded based on their ethnicity because there were high occurrences of mentions in the comments.

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Some quotations mention migrants' nationalities, posted by Malaysians and coded accordingly, as listed in Table 4.1 below. The highest number of mentions is Aceh (1,173), followed by Bangladesh (1,123), Indonesia (438), Rohingya (358), Pakistan (297), Myanmar (197), Thailand (150), China (133), India (118), Nepal (94), Arab (44), Africa (34), Cambodia (25), Vietnam (25), and Philippines (16). These countries are then divided into Southeast Asia and Asia sub-continents due to the high number of occurrences for countries in these sub-continents.

**Table 1.1: Nationality and Ethnicity codes from Malaysian Commenters.**

| **Southeast Asia** | **South Asia** | **Others** |
|---|---|---|
| Aceh (1,173) | Bangladesh (1,123) | China (133) |
| Indonesia (438) | Pakistan (297) | Arab (44) |
| Rohingya (358) | India (118) | Africa (34) |
| Myanmar (197) | Nepal (94) | |
| Thailand (150) | | |
| Cambodia (25) | | |
| Philippines (16) | | |

When Aceh and Indonesia coding are combined, the highest number of mentions is for Indonesians. Supported by the literature of qualitative research, the highest number of migrant entrepreneurs is of Indonesian origin (Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012), which happened to be the highest number of registered PLKS in Malaysia since the data of migrant workers were officially collected. As of June 2019, 704,175 Indonesians are registered with PLKS. However, the number of Indonesian migrants may be higher if the number of PATI is known. However, comments mentioned that Indonesia is only coded

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438 times, less than half the mentions of Bangladesh. However, Aceh has the highest number of mentions. These are examples of the comments:

> *In front of Sekolah Kebangsaan BKK, Indonesians operated a car wash for years… they quickly brought in their family members as workers to work there. Hopefully, PBT3 will drop by sometime.*

> *They did not act against the Acehnese, who sold on a lorry at the intersection.*

> *When will you raid the Acehnese shops? I heard that there are protections from PBT5 officers who are paid monthly*.

We cannot simply justify the high occurrences for Aceh due to the high number of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. The number of Indonesian codes is only 27.19% of the 1,611 codes for Indonesia and Aceh combined. Indonesian migrants easily assimilated with the local community due to their language, religion and cultural similarities (Dheer, 2017; Hugo, 1993).

Narayanan & Lai (2005) explained how illegal Indonesian migrants were hired because they were not easy to detect due to certain similarities with the Malays, but their ability to blend in with the locals failed to stop Indonesian immigrant entrepreneurs from being recognised by the locals. Most comments on the posts are posted by Malay users, generally identified from their profile pictures and displayed names. They may have felt threatened when migrant entrepreneurs are perceived as successful and taking over small businesses, which are commonly the types of businesses endeavoured by the Malays.

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Aceh, Bangladesh, and Indonesia are the top three with the highest number of quotations because public encounters with Bangladeshi, Acehnese, and Indonesians are more frequent due to the type of business conducted by many migrants from these origins. Usually, they operate grocery stores, mini markets, and restaurants frequented by local and foreign public to acquire their daily necessities or meals. The businesses are usually located in housing areas; thus, they meet the public daily. Bangladesh has the second highest number of mentions due to its second highest number in Malaysia. As of June 2019, 568,929 Bangladeshi are registered with PLKS.

Rohingya is mentioned frequently (358) due to the increased number of Rohingya refugees entering attempts into Pulau Langkawi, Kedah, during the COVID-19 pandemic. A comment observed:

> *All over Malaysia has been controlled because the government gave them chances until they can get married. We are surprised that refugees can live with locals and work. They are no longer refugees; they are the hosts of Kota Bharu. In front of the terminal in Langkawi, opening a restaurant, until obtained MyKad. So, this is the purpose of destroying our nation. It is not supposed to be like that, so please investigate how the MyKad was obtained by paying a large sum. Please wipe clean the Rohingyas and deport them home. Now, they dominate all locals' jobs. Carpenter, contractors, Alam Flora, restaurants, night markets. What else do locals do to make a living? Why does the government favour the Rohingyas?*

Illegal entry into the country poses serious security and health threats as migrants who are not screened for COVID-19 tests before entering the country may spread the virus to



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the community. A National Task Force was formed on 6 May 2020 through the National Security Council to integrate security enforcement agencies in eliminating border security threats. Operations with codename *Ops Benteng* were conducted in Peninsular Malaysia, on the east coast of the Sabah and Sarawak-Kalimantan border, to prevent illegal entry through rat lanes, whether on land or sea. Daily reports on the operations were posted on social media.

Refugees are closely identified as entrepreneurs from Jewish 2000 years status as refugees in other countries as their means of survival (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Refugees are not distinguished differently from PATI because Malaysia is not a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Ayadurai, 2011). Despite their status as refugees, Rohingyas are not allowed to work legally in Malaysia or not being employed by employers legally to avoid legal action. They are also prone to legal action for criminal acts (Ullah, 2013). To overcome this problem, those who do not want to work illegally will opt to be self-employed or start a business, which explains why Rohingya businesses exist in Malaysia (Ayadurai, 2011; Azizah Kassim, 2015).

Rohingyas are not the only refugees in Malaysia. From the early 1990s, a continuous influx of Acehnese fled from Indonesia into Malaysia. Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, or Free Aceh Movement's 30-year rebellion and request for Aceh's independence from Indonesia, worsened by the declaration of martial law in 2003, resulted in an increased number of political refugees seeking protection in other countries, including Malaysia (Missbach, 2011).

Despite the turmoil in Aceh, Malaysia, as a non-signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, did not approve of their status as refugees.



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Therefore, many fell into illegality when their visas, passes, or passports became invalid. However, in August 2005, Malaysia allowed Aceh refugees registered with UNHCR to be granted IMM13, a yearly renewable special permit for them, commonly known as kad tsunami (tsunami card).

In 2011, Missbach, (2011) quoted from a press statement that it was estimated there were still around 24,000 – 35,000 Acehnese staying in Malaysia using the Kad Tsunami. She assumed that most of the Acehnese in Malaysia did not intend to return to Indonesia for good. The high number of Aceh migrant entrepreneurs may also be explained by these situations as they immigrated and adapted economically. It can be observed that some of the publics are aware of this situation as we observed here:

> *UserM, that is right… history will not be forgotten… but we must remember that it is not allowable even with such history… what is wrong is still wrong… each country has its law… Indonesians can work in Malaysia but not as business owners or by doing business... that is wrong... come to Malaysia and go to Sungai Buloh night market, if I am not mistaken... the Acehnese monopolises the sellers... If there are 100 stalls, 40 are among you... all happened after the Tsunami... because the Malaysian government are soft and weak, Malays who used to monopolise the business there are just being the bystanders, watching migrants making money...*

Refugees are considered PATI or illegals. They are not permitted to work or conduct business. The question in this finding is whether self-employment or operating businesses is a viable option for refugees in Malaysia to ensure their survivability economically, socially, or even psychologically. The economic impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship,



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including refugees in this context, will be discussed further in Chapter 5, and the psycho-social impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship will be discussed further in Chapter 6. There was also a comment which asked about the livelihood of refugees in Malaysia:

> *Assalam. I hope JIM and the government will decide on the actions to be taken towards Rohingyas in Malaysia. They are PATI without a passport but with only a UN card. Can't they work? So, if they cannot work, how will they eat? They will do all sorts of illegal activities to survive, like illegally doing business or stealing. They are roaming freely in Malaysia, unlike the Vietnamese refugees who were placed in one location. They have to help to avoid them doing illegal jobs, group them at a location for easy monitoring so they can grow vegetables or give them jobs until they go to a third country. If they do not want to help, send them back to Bangladesh or Myanmar.*

Coding for non-Malaysians reporting on the nationality of migrants who conducted businesses are tagged separately. There are 13 nationalities coded, which are China (55), Bangladesh (39), India (28), Indonesia (19), Pakistan (16), Rohingya (9), Myanmar (10), Thailand (7), Philippines (3), Arab (1), Vietnam (3), Nepal (3) and Cambodia (2). Comments that mentioned the nationality of migrant entrepreneurs appeared on five out of the eight Facebook pages.

Only 195 quotations were coded with reporting on migrants' entrepreneurs' nationality, where 121 quotations were coded on the ENF1 Facebook page, eight in PBT1, five quotations in PBT5, three in PBT6 and a quotation in PBT4. What can be analysed in the comments is that ENF1 is a pretty popular Facebook page among migrants in Malaysia.

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Analysing the number of comments from non-Malaysians, ENF1 has the highest number of comments compared to other pages. The observed quotations are ENF1 (2,188), PBT1(116), PBT5 (94), PBT6 (27), PBT4 (22), PBT2 (21), PBT3 (8) and ENF2 (2).

From this data, ENF1 can capture more opinions from non-Malaysians. The highest number of posts is from PBT6, and the highest number of total comments is from the PBT2 Facebook page. PBT6 and PBT2 may have more Malaysian followers and interactions with Facebook users. Thus, ENF1 is the most suitable page for studying the conversations and reactions of non-Malaysians towards migrants' entrepreneurship.

Non-Malaysian users are more inclined to report on Chinese migrant entrepreneurs operating in Malaysia. However, some comments are out of context when the users generalise the entrepreneurs as local Malaysian Chinese and Chinese nationals. The comments tend to play the racial cards of either Chinese, Indian, and Malay, the three main ethnicities in Malaysia and how the presence of more Chinese will transform Malaysia into Singapore with more Chinese than Malay. Examples of the comments are:

> *Migrants from China should be monitored; do not become like Singapore.*

> *There are many undocumented Chinese and Indians, too. Do you have the guts to arrest them… kah kah kah… Deport all Indonesian entrepreneurs, even if they are Muslims and 'serumpun'. Let the Chinese deal in business. Malays are not good with business. So, Malays will buy at the Chinese's.*

Assuming the users who made these comments are Indonesians since the comments were mostly translated from Bahasa Indonesia. Historically, Indonesians were indoctrinated



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with the idea of 'saudara serumpun' made by its first president, Sukarno, that Indonesians and Malaysians are brothers of the same stock (serumpun). However, one of the most noticeable patterns in the comments from non-Malaysians was how the comments were always inclined towards religion and disapproval of other ethnicities, such as the Chinese and Indians.

The ideology may have influenced these indoctrinated into Indonesians when President Sukarno's national socialist of nationalism, religion, and communism during the early independence days of Indonesia, rather than Malaysian's Tunku Abdul Rahman, pro-West democratic approach (Rohani Hj. Ab Ghani & Zulhilmi Paidi, 2011). It was also quoted in Rohani Hj. Ab Ghani & Zulhilmi Paidi (2011) that in the earlier days of Indonesian independence, the Chinese in Indonesia were harassed. Hence, they either fled or accepted the racial stigma put against them. These comments confirmed Indonesians' sentiments of de-racialisation, which is very different from Malaysians' idea of racial partnership.

The theme 'Reports' used for the codes in non-Malaysian comments is used in a generalised context. In contrast, the comments did not report or request actions from the authorities for NM: Nationality: Indonesia coding. However, they commented that only Indonesians were arrested. In contrast, others were left unpenalised or let Indonesians run their businesses because of their similarities with the Malays (religions and serumpun).

Most comments collected are in Bahasa Indonesia, so most users are Indonesians. They would instead not report on their compatriots. However, they did comment for the authorities to act against other migrants' nationalities, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. Examples of their comments are:

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*Quickly arrest Bangladeshi who opened a butchery selling mutton, meat, and poultry at @mart in Taman Cempaka, JB. Myanmar is selling fruits, so arrest them and replace them with local sellers*.

### 4.2.2 Locations of Migrants' Businesses

Spatial differences are often used to explain social studies. Locations of migrants' businesses are coded to know more about the trends. This research has 65 codes for locations, consisting of 12 states, 39 districts and 14 places.

#### 4.2.2.1 States Locations in Malaysia

Specifically, 36 codes of the districts and 14 of the places are in Klang Valley. A total of 5,600 quotations were coded for locations in Klang Valley. Observed data for other states are Johor (248), Penang (105), Sabah (70), Kelantan (40), Perak (33), Kedah (31), Negeri Sembilan (26), Melaka (24), Sarawak (19), Pahang (18), Terengganu (10) and Perlis (3). This is an example of a comment that mentioned migrant entrepreneurs in Johor.

*There is a night market in Johor where Indonesian businesses use individual licenses, MyPR, their families' documents, etc. By right, they should not be allowed to sell in Johor Bahru and conquer native's rights… Why did the authorities not check their permit and bank accounts? Moreover, hope JIM is more concerned and works harder for Malaysia... Hope SPRM investigate the employers who were behind this and immediately arrests them. Migrants are good at hiding from the authorities. Don't allow them to do business or hire them even if they are married to locals. Where are Johor authorities? Don't*

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*be too reckless... Because of money, natives' rights are lost... Think about our future... Johor has many migrants from many countries... The big or small factories in Johor have many migrants. The reason is that the permits are too cheap, and there should not be many types of permits and visas for them to choose from and take advantage of to stay in this country for years. It is such a waste to our country. Hope the law will be stricter to prevent migrants' crimes... Hope Dato' Khalid in JIM will read this. Thank you. I love Malaysia.*

There is no comment coded for Labuan and Putrajaya. Putrajaya is the administrative capital of Malaysia, and it houses all the headquarters of ministries and government agencies. Putrajaya was mentioned in the comments because there were locations near Putrajaya that had migrants' business operations left with no actions taken by enforcement agencies.

Klang has the highest number of mentions, 734, followed by its neighbouring districts, Shah Alam (621) and Sungai Buloh (602). Kajang/ Semenyih/ Bangi (466) are districts at the south of Klang Valley, and Selayang (402) is a district at the north of Klang Valley followed by Balakong/ Cheras (362). These six codes are districts in Selangor. It is an obvious conclusion that most migrant enterprises commonly observed by social media commenters are located in Selangor.

The highest quotation in Kuala Lumpur is in Chow Kit (130), followed by Bukit Bintang (120), Sungai Besi (103) and Pudu (100). Although Chow Kit is not a district, the comments may include the whole nearby area and not just a specific building or place, such as the Chow Kit morning market.

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The second highest mention for a place is Kampung Melayu Subang (82), a village or residential area in Sungai Buloh, Selangor, followed by Petaling Street (70), Kotaraya (64) and Kenanga Wholesale City (51). The codes for the Sub-Theme Locality are displayed in Table 4.2, which are grouped into three sub-codes: States, Districts and Places. The places and districts located in the Klang Valley will be highlighted in the table.

**Table 1.2: States, Districts/ Cities and Places Sub-Codes for the Sub-Theme Locality.**

| **Sub-codes** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **States** | **Districts** | **Places** |
| M: Johor (248) | M: Klang (734) | M: Chow Kit (130) |
| M: Penang (105) | M: Shah Alam (621) | M: Kg Melayu Subang (82) |
| M: Sabah (70) | M: Sg Buloh (602) | M: Petaling Street (70) |
| M: Kelantan (40) | M: Kajang/ Semenyih/ Bangi (466) | M: Kotaraya (64) |
| M: Perak (33) | M: Selayang (402) | M: Kenanga (51) |
| M: Kedah (31) | M: Balakong/ Cheras (362) | M: Jalan Silang (50) |
| M: Negeri Sembilan (26) | M: Gombak (129) | M: Masjid Jamek/ Masjid India (45) |
| M: Melaka (24) | M: Bukit Bintang (120) | M: Jalan Ipoh (37) |
| M: Sarawak (19) | M: Subang (119) | M: Jalan TAR (37) |
| M: Pahang (18) | M: Ampang (113) | M: Pasar Borong Selangor (36) |
| M: Terengganu (10) | M: Sg Besi (103) | M: Kg Baru (34) |
| M: Perlis (3) | M: Pudu (100) | M: Times Square (30) |

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| Sub-codes | | |
|---|---|---|
| **States** | **Districts** | **Places** |
| | M: Keramat (89) | M: Central Market (11) |
| | M: Setapak (87) | |
| | M: Pantai Dalam (85) | |
| | M: Sentul (84) | |
| | M: Langat (78) | |
| | M: Rawang (76) | |
| | M: Wangsa Maju (70) | |
| | M: Kepong (62) | |
| | M: Pandan (54) | |
| | M: Puchong (50) | |
| | M: Petaling Jaya (48) | |
| | M: Damansara (44) | |
| | M: Segambut (43) | |
| | M: Nilai (37) | |
| | M: Serdang/ Seri Kembangan (33) | |
| | M: Batu Caves (26) | |
| | M: Brickfields (24) | |
| | M: Setiawangsa (20) | |
| | M: Sepang (16) | |
| | M: Sunway (15) | |
| | M: Klang Lama/ Sri Petaling (14) | |

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| Sub-codes | | |
|---|---|---|
| **States** | **Districts** | **Places** |
| | M: Banting (12) | |
| | M: Cameron Highlands (9) | |
| | M: Hartamas (9) | |
| | M: Bukit Jalil (6) | |
| | M: Sabak Bernam (5) | |
| | M: Cyberjaya (4) | |

To further analyse the states' locations in Malaysia, the data are grouped into two types, which are:

i) North and South Metropolitan Centres

ii) International Bordering States

**a) North and South Metropolitan Centres**

Besides states in Klang Valley, Johor has the highest number of quotations. For locations code of states, 248 quotations out of 627 mentioned Johor in the comment (39.55%), while another 105 quotations for Penang. Johor is in the southernmost of Peninsular Malaysia, neighbouring Singapore. It has high economic and industrial activities.

A port located in Pasir Gudang served as an import-export hub to Malaysia and its neighbouring countries. Its port location is an essential factor in the success of heavy industries in Johor. Many factories offer employment to migrant workers in Johor. Seven ferry terminals in Johor cater to passengers from Indonesia entering the country. Johor is one of the crucial hubs for migrant workers entering Malaysia. Its location is near



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Indonesia and accessible by sea transportation, which has attracted many Indonesian migrants. Another example is Melaka. Even with its proximity to Indonesia, which is within a two-hour ferry ride, Melaka has only 24 quotations of reporting on migrant entrepreneurs.

Further analysis was made to determine the most common nationalities observed by the public in these two states. Based on simultaneous quotations of migrants' nationalities and locations in Johor, the highest number of quotations are from Bangladesh (18), Aceh (14) and Pakistan (13). In Penang, the comments only mentioned Bangladesh (11). There are more quotations on Bangladesh because they are conducting retail businesses and meeting with more of the public. The public may feel uncomfortable with the presence of migrant entrepreneurs at their locations. An increased number of migrants may increase the number of migrants' businesses (Ramli, 2020) and lead to more reporting of migrants' entrepreneurship.

Many migrants are concentrated in big cities. Klang Valley, Johor, and Penang recorded the top three quotations as these main cities are distributed in North, Central and South Peninsular Malaysia. They have high economic and industrial activities that can offer employment opportunities for locals and migrants alike. Penang, just like Johor, is a heavy industrial state with a deep-water port for import and export activities. Job opportunities in factories, ports, and commercial areas attracted many migrant workers. Penang is located near Medan, Indonesia, and a 50-minute flight will take you to Malaysia. Based on a few previous discussions, the proximity and bordering locations may not affect the number of occurrences.

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**b) International Bordering States**

Another 70 quotations were recorded in Sabah, an East Malaysia state located in Borneo. Sabah shares its wide maritime borders with Indonesia and the Philippines, and its land borders are with Indonesia. Half of the workforce in Sabah are migrant workers, and most of them were political refugees in the 1970s (Kanapathy, 2006, 2008). Ullah (2013) claimed that Malaysian authorities' actions are encouraging illegal migrants from Indonesia and the Philippines into Sabah. Migrants from Indonesia and the Philippines tend to bring their families together to Sabah (Kanapathy, 2006; Sayed Mahadi et al., 2019), and children of refugees who were born in Sabah are stateless children. Their long-term emigration to Sabah and their family settling down in the country may have gotten them into business.

Refugees and other illegal migrants who entered by land or sea into Sabah may explain the high number of mentions of migrants' businesses in Sabah. While Sabah has a high influx of migrants because of its geographic location, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Sarawak, which also share their land border with neighbouring countries, have fewer quotations. Kelantan (40), followed by Kedah (31), Sarawak (19) and the least mentioned is Perlis (3). The evident differences between Sabah and these other states may explain why the high number of migrants' entrepreneurship may not be related to proximity to neighbouring countries but more to its' unique migration situation in Sabah.

There are two locations outside of Klang Valley that were coded into specific locations separately, Nilai and Cameron Highlands, due to their frequent repetition. Nilai, a Negeri Sembilan district bordering south Selangor, has 37 quotations, while Negeri Sembilan only has 26. Nilai is a medium-industrial zone and is famous for its textile and home



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furnishing centre. Textiles, carpets, and home furnishing shops are common in Nilai. Out of 37 quotations for Nilai, 11 quotations (29.73%) mentioned Pakistan and three quotations (8.11%) mentioned Bangladesh simultaneously. It gave the rough idea that Pakistani and Bangladeshi commonly ventured into the textile, carpet, and home furnishing business in Nilai.

While Nilai borders the Klang Valley on the south, Perak, bordering the north of Klang Valley, has only 33 quotations, which may be due to fewer economic activities and commuting between the two locations. Perak is the second largest state in Peninsular Malaysia, and it spans through the Titiwangsa Range to Penang, located in the north of Malaysia. Compared to Nilai, which is a smaller district and easily connected to Klang Valley via highways and public transportation such as KTM commuter, many opted to reside in Nilai while working in the Klang Valley. Cameron Highlands, a holiday and agriculture destination in Pahang, has nine quotations. In contrast, Pahang, the largest state in Peninsular Malaysia, has only 18 quotations. Migrant workers are usually employed at vegetable farms and hotels in Cameron Highlands. The presence of migrant workers in remote areas like Cameron Highlands may open opportunities for migrants to run businesses that cater to their countrymen.

#### 4.2.2.2 Locations in Klang Valley

Locations of migrants' entrepreneurship are usually restricted to ethnic enclaves to cater to ethnic customers, like in the United Kingdom, Europe, or the United States (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Waldinger et al., 1990). Economic activities are more concentrated in big cities (Acs & Armington, 2004). A study by Del Carpio et al. (2015) found that besides

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economic activities, more low-skill job opportunities in big cities have attracted more migrant workers to locations like Klang Valley.

Klang Valley spans through the centre of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Even though there is no exact border for Klang Valley, it comprises several territories and districts such as Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Klang, Gombak, Hulu Langat and Sepang (Jabatan Wilayah Persekutuan, 2009). The data are grouped into four types to have a more detailed analysis of locations in the Klang Valley as the centre of economic activities in the country, which are:

i) Industrial Areas

ii) Commercial Areas

iii) Residential Areas

iv) Markets

**a) Industrial Areas**

The highest quotation recorded in this study for reporting migrants' entrepreneurship locations in Klang Valley is Klang (734). Followed by Shah Alam (621) and Sungai Buloh (602). Port Klang is in Klang, a district in Selangor. It is a vital port for the import and export of goods in Malaysia, the second-largest seaport in ASEAN (State Government of Selangor, 2020) and the 12th-largest container port globally (Invest Selangor Berhad, 2020). Port Klang is also a transportation hub for sea entry into Malaysia. These three districts share a common trait, which is that they are centres for small, medium, and heavy industrial activities. Klang, Shah Alam and Sungai Buloh are some of the highly industrialised areas in Selangor (Kawasan Perindustrian Di Selangor, 2016).

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According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (2019), Statistics of Active PLKS holders based on nationalities and sectors showed that manufacturing employed the highest number of migrant workers. The manufacturing industry in Malaysia relies highly on migrant workers, and the highest number of migrant workers are employed in this sector, with 699,430 active workers currently. Therefore, it can explain why most comments from migrant entrepreneurs were observed in Klang, Shah Alam, and Sungai Buloh.

Concentrations of migrant workers in certain areas may increase the number of migrant enterprises and lead to a more significant presence and appearance among the public. Many of these migrants may reside in areas close to their workplaces, and more migrants' businesses may be opened in these areas to cater to fellow migrants. From the research findings of Kitching et al., (2009) and Waldinger et al., (1990), based on the Western environment, the authors agreed that ethnic enterprises focus on ethnic products and services.

Alternatively, it is not observed in the public opinions of migrants' entrepreneurship in this research. From the comments, it is less likely to encounter comments from Malaysians that it is acceptable for migrants to open businesses because they are supplying goods and services to other migrants. But it was observed in one comment that reads, "migrants' businesses are for migrant workers. What's the problem?". Possibly, migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia share the same pattern as migrant entrepreneurs in Korea (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014) and Japan (Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011).

Therefore, migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia are not concentrated in their ethnic enclaves, such as in the West. However, it is more widespread if there are demands from

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the market and opportunities to start a business. Good infrastructures, capital and facilities for businesses through the development of commercial areas created more opportunities for new businesses.

**b) Commercial Areas**

Migrants' entrepreneurship may succeed better in their enclaves with the support of customers from their countrymen (Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011), but migrants' businesses in Malaysia cater to both migrants and locals' market (Bunmak, 2013; Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Muniandy, 2015a). Several locations were spotted as migrants' enclaves in Klang Valley. Reporting of migrants' businesses in the districts and locations are Chow Kit (130), Bukit Bintang (120), Pudu (100), Kampung Melayu Subang (82), Petaling Street (70), Kotaraya (64), Kenanga Wholesale Center (51), Jalan Silang (50), Masjid Jamek/ Masjid India (45). Chow Kit, Bukit Bintang, Pudu, and Petaling Street. These locations are in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, which is at the centre of commercial activities.

Some entrepreneurs started as workers to local business owners before starting their businesses because local owners were not interested in running their businesses in the area due to the market shift (Muniandy, 2015b, 2015a). It is especially true in areas which are commonly known as Little Burma and Little Bangla. These areas are near Pudu, Kotaraya shopping mall and Jalan Silang. Indonesian and Aceh traders can be seen in the Chow Kit area, informally known as Mini Jakarta. They started as petty traders that later evolved and grew (Golam Hassan, 2009). Shops opened by migrants sell products sourced locally and from their country of origin that can attract Malaysians and non-Malaysian

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buyers. Migrants spend their off-day shopping at these locations, and they get the chance to socialise with friends from their own country.

Another commercial location, which is a wholesale hub for clothing and home furnishing, Kenanga Wholesale Centre, located in Jalan Hang Tuah just behind Jalan Imbi in the Pudu area, has 51 quotations. Users posted their comments on the nationalities of migrants operating business in the premise where it may be implied that Bangladeshis dominated the business at the location where there is a noticeable difference between the number of mentions for Bangladeshis and other nationalities, whereby 18 out of 51 (35.29%) quotations for Kenanga mentioned Bangladesh. Only three quotations mentioned Indonesia, two quotations for Nepal and Pakistan, and one for China, India, Arab, and Vietnam. Kenanga Wholesale City is a shopping mall with shops selling clothing and shoes in bulk for consumer retail, resellers, or smaller shops. Bangladesh, as one of the biggest exporters of textiles and clothing, can be the reason why Bangladeshi is the most mentioned nationality at this mall.

**c) Residential Areas**

Besides commercial areas, there was also migrants' entrepreneurship reported in residential areas in Klang Valley, such as Kajang/ Semenyih/ Bangi (466), Gombak (129), Subang (119), Ampang (113), Sungai Besi (103), Keramat (89), Setapak (87), Pantai (85), Sentul (84), Rawang (76), Wangsa Maju (70), Kepong (62), Pandan (54), Puchong (50), Petaling Jaya (48), Damansara (44), Segambut (43) and Serdang/ Seri Kembangan (33). Locations of Migrant entrepreneurs are dispersed all over Klang Valley, from the centre of Kuala Lumpur to the outskirts of Klang Valley.

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Nayeem Sultana (2008), in her PhD thesis, finds that there were no specific locations that can be said to be hotspots for Bangladeshi migrants but selected Bangi/ Kajang, Port Klang, Bandar Sunway, Subang Mewah, Subang Jaya and Kotaraya as her research areas. Migrants may choose to reside in the outskirts because it is cheaper to rent a house in these areas than in the city centre. In the 1970s, higher migration to the city increased housing demand and property prices. Other districts that were mentioned also had a history of squatter settlements. Examples are Kampung Muhibbah in Sungai Besi, Kampung Pandan, Kampung Baru, Keramat, Kampung Melayu Subang and Pantai Dalam.

Migrants settled in government or privately owned lands as squatters to cut down on their living expenses (Samion & Awang, 2017; Sufian & Mohamad, 2009). The areas were mainly on the outskirts of the city centre with limited electricity and clean water facilities. In the 2000s, the government introduced a new policy, *Dasar Setinggan Sifar* (Zero Squatters Policy), to eradicate squatter settlement issues. New Villages were created, and resettlements in *Projek Perumahan Rakyat* (People Housing Programs) were implemented to solve the issues. Samion & Awang (2017), in his research of the suburban housing community in Hulu Langat, he finds that the majority of people living in Hulu Langat Districts were migrants who worked in the nearby areas. During his research, Kajang and Semenyih were divisions in the Hulu Langat District.

Therefore, after more than 30 years, migrants who used to live in Kajang and Semenyih may have settled in the areas that can explain why there are so many high numbers of quotations for Kajang/ Bangi/ Semenyih. Besides that, government initiatives to ensure a house for each family may have backlashed when low-cost apartments were rented out to migrants after they upgraded to better homes. As reported in 2013, Petaling has the



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highest number of low-cost and affordable housing. Low-cost and affordable housing was also built in Klang, Hulu Langat, Gombak and Sepang (State Government of Selangor, 2012), and the programs continue today with more housing projects in other locations too. Since late 1990s, housing developments created more housing options for migrants, the spread of residential areas to the suburban areas can explain the high number of quotations for districts such as Sentul (84), Rawang (76), Wangsa Maju (70), Kepong (62), Pandan (54), Puchong (50), Petaling Jaya (48), Damansara (44), Segambut (43) and Serdang/ Seri Kembangan (33).

Ironically, many migrant workers are provided with inadequate housing and living conditions by their employers even though they were the ones who helped with the construction of the multi-million-ringgit worth of buildings and houses. During the COVID-19 breakout in Malaysia, the dire living conditions of migrants were disclosed to the public in the news. Their communal housings were packed and unhygienic, which may increase COVID-19 infections among migrants. Migrant workers are still at a loss when issues on their housing facilities and welfare are discussed, even though the National Housing Policy is revised every five years. Employees' Minimum Standards of Housing, Accommodations and Amenities Act 1990 were set to ensure employers deserve a liveable housing facility that should not endanger their health and safety. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Rereading and revisiting comments during coding and observations revealed comments repeatedly posted by the same user. For example, in the Damansara code, the highest number of co-occurrence analyses of nationality and locality is observed for Bangladesh, with 12 out of 44 quotations. However, based on the analysis, six out of the 12 quotations were comments repetitively posted by the same user on different posts. The posts read:



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*Please come to Kota Damansara; there is a carwash behind a workshop at Jalan Cecawi 6/33, Kota Damansara, Selangor. Undocumented Indian and Bangladeshi migrants run the business.*

The comments were posted by a user on ENF1 posts on 4 June 2020, 13 June 2020, 14 June 2020, 8 July 2020, 10 July 2020, and 29 July 2020. These showed that ENF1 did not use its FB as a formal medium of reporting on migrants' entrepreneurship to take further actions.

**d) Markets**

The wet market is one of the locations that usually employ migrants. However, local councils prohibit the employment of migrant workers in markets. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a few cluster outbreaks in wet market areas started from *Kluster Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur* in April 2020 (Liza Mokhtar, 2020). As the news hit the public during MCO, migrants' businesses operating in Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur received quite a stir from the public and demanded action from the authorities. Migrants living nearby were screened for COVID-19, and the area was under EMCO. The public responded to the issues through JIM FB posts. The spread has affected nearby areas such as Selayang.

There were several comments by the public reporting on migrants' businesses in Selayang (402). Selayang is commonly known as the location of the Rohingya settlement in Klang Valley, and migrants' traders are typically seen selling goods in the wet market. Another market, Pasar Borong Selangor (36), which is in Seri Kembangan, also received numerous comments.

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Other locations that were mentioned less than ten times are Sri Hartamas (9), Bukit Jalil (6), Cyberjaya (4) and South City Plaza (3). Locations outside of Klang Valley but in Selangor are Banting (12), Ulu Langat (78) and Sabak Bernam (5). Even these districts are located on the city's outskirts with limited job opportunities for migrants. Migrant entrepreneurs were also reported in these districts and other states, showing that migrants may have moved out of the city to villages and small towns to seek business opportunities.

### 4.2.3 Types of Business

Small businesses offer a good opportunity for economic ventures to start a new business. Rettab (2001) explained financial, social, human, and informational capital for migrants' enterprises' entry, which usually requires small start-up capital, low-skill, and small-sized. Push-pull factors may influence low-skilled migrant workers' transformation to self-employment through businesses. Examples of push factors are unemployment, current job dissatisfaction, especially in 3D jobs, difficulty finding employment, insufficient salary, or unfeasible work hours (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Rettab, 2001; Segal et al., 2005).

Pull factors that may attract migrant workers to start a business are economic improvement and work independence (Ganto et al., 2015; Segal et al., 2005). Migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia ventured into the business in the same sector as their previous employment (Bunmak, 2013; Golam Hassan, 2009; Mosbah et al., 2018; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Migrants in Malaysia commonly work in PLKS-approved sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, services, plantation, and agriculture, where the highest number of workers are in manufacturing. The findings will confirm previous



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findings on whether migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia conducted businesses in these same sectors.

For this study, 20 codes for types of businesses were used and further analysed. A total of 2,307 out of the 49,571 quotations were coded for the reporting on types of migrants' businesses that account for only 4.65% of quotations. General types of business were used based on the comments posted by users on FB. Reporting on the types of businesses conducted can be used to find the sectors that appeal to migrants for a start-up.

The highest number of quotations is for grocery stores or mini-market businesses (1,145), followed by restaurants (722) and wholesale/ wet markets (479). These businesses are small businesses commonly frequented for daily necessities or food. These businesses have a broader market, low start-up capital and low risk. It is expected that the goods sold at some shops may have originated from migrants' country of origin to cater to their country people (Muniandy, 2015a) and food originally from foreign countries, such as Tom Yum and Arabic Food being a liking to locals and foreigners (Bunmak, 2013; Mosbah et al., 2018).

Coded quotations for other types of businesses are, textile, tailoring and clothing shops (116), saloon/ barber shops (107), car wash (107), home businesses or mobile sellers, either they were selling from trucks/ cars/ motorcycles (107), workshops (52), massage parlours (52), night markets (34), computer, handphone and electronic shops (28), illegal pubs (21), carpet shops (20), furniture (19), renovations (18), welding (5), hotel (3) and laundry (3). Businesses such as workshops, tailoring, renovation, and computer and handphone repair shops will require some skills. The skills may be acquired from previous employment (Bunmak, 2013; Segal et al., 2005). Migrant entrepreneurs may not



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necessarily venture into business due to job dissatisfaction. Suppose they started the business in the same sector as their previous job but have gained enough knowledge and financial capital for a start-up. In that case, the reasons may not be accurate. Illegal businesses were also quoted, such as illegal pubs, gambling/ prostitution and massage parlours, which are often reported as criminal activities.

Not surprisingly, quotations mentioned for speciality are listed in the 23 businesses that DBKL does not permit for foreigners based on Licensing of Trades, Businesses, and Industries (Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) 2016 (Act 171) and Licensing of Hawkers and Food Placement (Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) 2016 By Law. The list, as reported in a local newspaper, includes hypermarket/ mini market, sundry shop, 24-hour convenience shop, petrol station, wet market, cybercafe, spa, jewellery shop, car workshop, glass/ aluminium/ steel workshop, computer and electronics shop, laundry, hair salon/ barbershop, roadside shop/ kiosk, textile/ clothing/ shoes/ bag shop, restaurant/ bistro/ café, furniture/ teakwood shop, handphone/ prepaid cards shop and herbal/ Chinese medicine shop (Metro News, 2020).

These businesses' survival and start-ups would not be possible without the support of the public as their customers. Business assimilation and a broader market with customers of both locals and migrants may create different perceptions and acceptance levels from the public. Mosbah et al. (2018) argued that Indonesian and Pakistani businesses received acceptance and tolerance from the Malays due to cultural and religious similarities created questionable acceptance from Chinese and Indians, as they are another two larger groups of main ethnicities in Malaysia that are yet to be explored. Public reactions and quotations received from these FB pages are countless, and accounts are from many ethnicities, but mainly Malays. Despite his findings of locals' acceptance, the comments showed

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otherwise. Some reported and responded negatively to migrants' entrepreneurship. In contrast, others gave praise and support or even criticisms and opinions on the government and the country's authorities. Further discussion about the influence of religion on opinion formation will be discussed in Chapter 6 in the comment sections.

### 4.3 Analysis of the theme 'Reasons'

One of the themes selected for coding was public opinion on the reasons why entrepreneurship exists among migrants. The expression of opinions on why migrants' entrepreneurship exists was divided differently between Malaysians and non-Malaysians due to the different repetitive comments received from both user groups. For the theme 'Reasons', there are nine codes for comments by Malaysians and only six codes for comments by non-Malaysians. A total of 4,001 quotations were coded on possible reasons of existence from Malaysian users and 507 from non-Malaysian users, accounting for 9.04% (N= 49,571) of quotations.

The highest number of comments received from Malaysians about possible reasons for migrants' entrepreneurship existence is 1,102 quotations about the law and legal systems about the management of migrants and businesses at 27.54% (N=4,001). The comments criticised weak law enforcement or stated that current laws and regulations are too lenient or biased. Users voiced their opinion of Malaysia's lenient law, which should call for more stringent enforcement and punishment. Some Malaysian users (4.02%) claimed that migrant traders are pass abusers who started their businesses. Examples are:

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*Migrants are stubborn, challenge the law and do not respect the authorities... At the same time, they did not respect other countries. Confiscate and arrest the migrants, deport them home… So troublesome.*

Most of the comments will either demand for the migrants to be deported or want caning as a punishment. Commenters tend to use 'our country' when commenting about the law, showing a sense of belonging to the country and expecting more public participation in the legislative process.

From the comments, local license rental is the second most common reason mentioned by Malaysians, 22.57% (N=4,001), while only 9.13% (N=507) non-Malaysians gave the same reasons. Examples of the comments are:

Malaysian:

*Don't just reprimand PATI; actions should be taken against business owners who gave their businesses to migrants at their premises and licenses.*

Non-Malaysian:

*If there is competition, Indonesians will work hard and not complain. Locals rented their shops, but we paid our rent on time. Too many excuses if it's the locals.*

The most common reason mentioned by non-Malaysian users is comments that claimed Malaysians are incapable of working or trading, 218 (43.00%, N=507). Examples are:



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*UserKM, it is your fault that Malaysians don't want to do business. You are jealous when there are migrants who become bosses... emmmm.*

*Can locals do all the jobs to replace migrant workers? If locals are willing to do it, then it is better to send all migrants back to their home country.*

Non-Malaysians also claimed that the business actions of migrants were not wrong. It is their rightful act, 187 quotations (36.88%, N=507), but only 105 (2.62%, N=4001) Malaysians thought the same way. Examples are:

Non-Malaysian:

*UserAAA, this is not about taking the rights of anyone's land. You have to understand that this is only business. As long as the rent is paid, you must understand they are not taking things from people.*

Malaysians:

*They were just trying to make a living and must work hard. Or else they will starve*.

Despite Malaysians' acceptance towards migrants' entrepreneurship, 13% of Malaysians (520) accused migrant entrepreneurs of various tax issues, including the selling of contraband products, not paying taxes and tax evasions. Some of the users commented on how migrants who earned a lot managed to avoid paying taxes, and migrants are taking

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advantage of the government by using public facilities and amenities intended for its citizens. Webb et al., 2009 explained how the government may lose its tax revenue from informal businesses. The economic impacts of this code will be further discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Examples of comments are:

> *That's it… For years, migrants have been making a fortune in Malaysia… Did they pay taxes to LHDN… not?*

While 519 Malaysians commented about their concerns on PATI (12.97%) about who is running their businesses or hired as workers in the country, surprisingly, only a tiny fraction (4.93%), 25 non-Malaysian users commented about PATI.

Malaysian:

Yes, it needs monitoring… I think there are still migrants... Doing business or working without valid documents…

Non-Malaysian:

> *UserAH, it's wrong. If they entered illegally, the man behind it was locals who led the way for intrusion. Many locals are protecting PATI and employing them. We will not agree if it is our country. However, if there are migrants who illegally enter Indonesia, traitors must have helped them… They are just victims of local and international tekong who are making profits from trafficking. At least Rp.15 million are charged per person. For migrants who were not tricked, they will choose legal entry.*

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Around 3.95% of comments by Malaysians mentioned that migrants who run the business are married to locals. The business licensing is registered under their spouse's name, and non-Malaysians are mentioned in 3.35% of comments for the same reason.

Malaysian:

> *Now, migrants are not allowed to register for businesses. Those married to locals cannot manage businesses registered under their local spouse's name.*

Non-Malaysian:

> *Bangladeshi wanted to marry local women who helped with license registration under their name.*

Other reasons Malaysians were when they claimed that migrants had obtained MyKad or MyPR (4.02%), whether their IC is original or fake, but only 3.16% of non-Malaysians gave the same comments.

### 4.4 Long-Term Impacts of Migrant Businesses

There are 610 quotations of comments that voice concerns about the long-term or future impacts of migrants' businesses.

> *UserR… It's time for Malaysians to speak up to eradicate PATI. When? Their numbers are growing in our country… The future of our next generations and grandchildren may lose their motherland.*

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Besides the concern of long-term impacts on the country's economy and future generations, there are also concerns about the increasing number of refugees. Two of the quotations expressed their opinions on the impact of job limitations on Rohingya refugees.

> *In Klang and Port Klang, migrants are immune. PATI or not, they lived freely in the villages or cities, and Indon, Myanmar, and Nepalese ran many businesses. Taman Rohingya in front of Meru Market doesn't look like Malaysia anymore. The Rohingyas are not recognized. They are PATI. Many children with unknown status were born in Klang. Feel sorry for them. Can't tell if they are a citizen, can't return to their parent's country of origin because they have no documentation of birth, and cannot attend school. Can't get decent jobs, what they end up with, and what's the impact to the country's future.*

### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter profiled migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Various aspects of migrant entrepreneurship have been identified and discussed in detail. Those are the a) locality of migrants' entrepreneurship (where), b) nationality of migrant entrepreneurs (who), and c) speciality of products and services offered by migrants' entrepreneurship (what). In this chapter, 218 posts from eight Facebook pages were analysed, establishing 167 codes.

The comments provided rich information on the types of businesses migrants were involved in and their nationalities. The analysis also looked at the reasons why some

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migrants were entrepreneurial despite restrictions on business ownership. This chapter also examined the locations of migrants' businesses, with a focus on states in Malaysia such as Klang Valley, Johor, and Penang. The analysis found that Klang, Shah Alam, and Sungai Buloh were the districts with the highest mentions of migrants' businesses in Selangor. At the same time, Chow Kit had the highest number of mentions in Kuala Lumpur. Other notable locations with mentions of migrants' businesses were Kampung Melayu Subang, Petaling Street, Kotaraya, and Kenanga Wholesale City.

> *Sorry to ask… Was Kenanga Wholesale Center being built for migrants to do business… We can say that the majority there are migrants who were doing business… If anyone knows about this, please clarify… Is it gazetted that way?*

> *Ok, I agree; if possible, wherever there are migrants' businesses, please demolish them. I am a migrant, but I agree to clear them all. If in KL City in Kota Raya, clear them all, return the business to the locals, let us feel easy to roam.*

The analysis also found that migrant enterprises were commonly observed in Selangor, particularly in the Klang Valley area. Johor had the highest number of mentions for location codes of states, followed by Penang. Sabah also had a high number of mentions of migrants' businesses due to its borders with Indonesia and the Philippines. Even though the PBTs chosen for data collection are located in Klang Valley, social media commenters have posted comments about migrants' entrepreneurship in other states, too.

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The analysis found that the most mentioned nationality of migrant entrepreneurs is Indonesians, followed by Bangladeshis, Burmese (including Rohingyas), Pakistanis and Thais. There are 15 codes used to identify migrant entrepreneurs' nationality, which was mentioned by Malaysian commenters, and another 13 from non-Malaysians.

Besides that, this chapter also analysed the types of products and services offered by migrants' entrepreneurship. There are 21 codes used to identify the products and services mentioned in the comment sections. Most quotations are for grocery stores, mini-market businesses, restaurants, and wholesale/ wet markets. Other types of products and services offered are textile, tailoring and clothing shops, saloon/ barber shops, car wash, home businesses, or mobile sellers either they were selling from trucks/ cars/ motorcycles, workshops, massage parlours, night markets, computer, handphone and electronic shops, illegal pubs, carpet shops, furniture, renovations, or construction works, welding jobs, hotel, and laundry business.

The analysis also explored the opinions of Malaysians and non-Malaysians on the reasons for the existence of migrant entrepreneurs. Malaysians often criticised weak law enforcement and lenient regulations. At the same time, non-Malaysians believed that migrants started businesses for economic improvement and work independence. The highest number of comments from Malaysians were about the law and legal systems regarding migrants and their businesses, with some calling for stricter enforcement and punishments.

Non-Malaysians defended migrants' right to run businesses and accused Malaysians of being jealous. Concerns were expressed about PATI, the long-term impacts of migrants' businesses on the economy, and the lack of job opportunities for Rohingya refugees.

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Overall, the comments reflected a range of opinions and concerns about migrants and their businesses in Malaysia.

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# CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC COMPLEMENTARY AND RIVALRY FROM MIGRANT ENTERPRISES

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss public opinions on economic reasons and impacts behind migrants' entrepreneurship. It is a continuation of research findings from Chapter 4 after identifying and grouping the opinions into forms of reporting or reasoning regarding migrants' entrepreneurship. In this chapter, the thematic analysis will be used to interpret public opinions and ascertain whether the public viewed migrants' entrepreneurship as complementing or a threat in the economic sense. The timeline set for data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic may give interesting findings as economic stability was affected by lockdowns, business closures, job loss, and slower economic growth.

The interpretation and in-depth analysis of data in this chapter to understand the impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship on the economy will be able to answer other research questions on the adherence to Malaysian Law by the authorities, migrants, and the public. It is predicted that non-adherence and malfunctioning laws or systems in managing migrants will influence the economy tremendously. Findings from the research will explore whether migrant enterprises in Malaysia are operating specifically within their products and services niches. Consumers' attitudes and purchasing patterns from marketing and market research literature will be reviewed to answer some of the prominent phenomena or observed data in this research.

This chapter aims to determine whether migrants' entrepreneurship empowers the economy. By unravelling this phenomenon, legal issues related to migrants'



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entrepreneurship emerged, which will be discussed further. Being familiar with the data can facilitate the research process in solving the two research questions in this chapter.

The objective of this chapter is to analyse social media users' views on migrants' entrepreneurship, whether they are seen as economic threats or complementing the market with the following research question:

> RQ2: What are social media users' reactions towards migrants' entrepreneurship within the economic framework?

**5.2 Results and Discussion**

Content analysis can be recommended to provide general insights into whether migrants are operating businesses with specific niches and targeting their fellow citizens as customers. By observing the frequency of comments for each type of business or product, an interpretation of the repeated occurrences can be made. However, to come up with a conclusion that migrants' businesses are here to serve and to meet the demands of the market by simply conducting a content analysis seemed insufficient because of its lack of depth and breadth due to its generalisation and simplification. Therefore, thematic analysis will be conducted by grouping these 21 codes into sub-themes of 'Needs' or 'Wants' by exploring the comments about capital, supply, and demand of migrants' enterprises.

We then outline our research into a qualitative investigation for thematic analysis of Facebook comments in the results and discuss it in three main findings. Firstly, regarding the products and services, comments were analysed for this chapter regarding the



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influence of products and services offered on consumer spending behaviour. The products and services were grouped into needs and wants. It aims to discover if the pandemic has changed the spending behaviour of consumers and whether business owners' nationality also influenced their preferences. Consumers' preferences will be influenced by the choice between migrants' enterprises or local businesses, which will determine whether migrants' entrepreneurship competes with or complements local businesses. The discussion of this chapter is organized into three findings, as in Figure 5.1.

Secondly, the findings in this chapter will uncover the economic impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship and their rivalry or complementariness in the general market. Economic impacts resulting from migrant workers' transformation or participation in the business were analysed from the shortfalls in implementing laws and regulations.

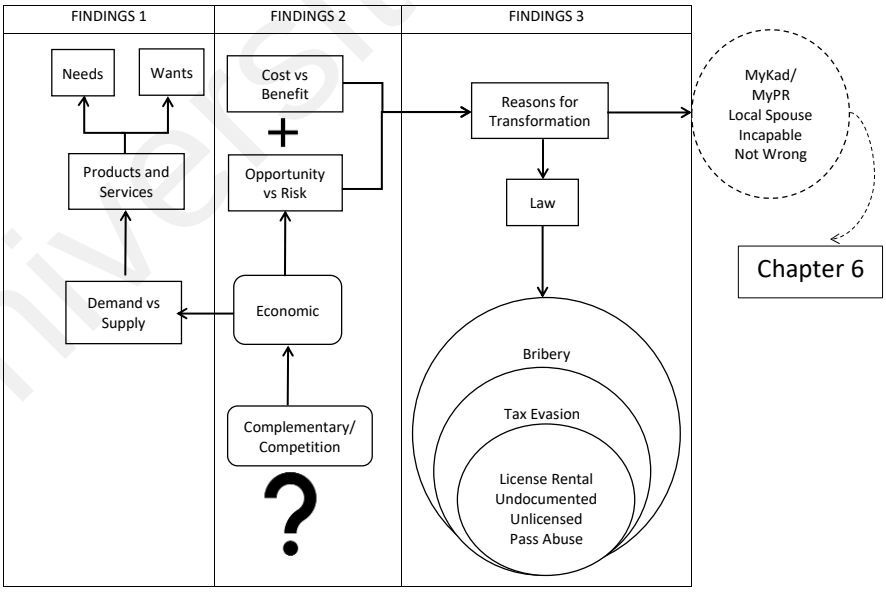


**Figure 0.1: Illustration of Discussions in Chapter 5: Economic Complementary and Rivalry from Migrant Enterprises.**

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Facebook users' comments contained a rich pool of consumer preference data that can be useful in market surveys and business development. They can also be used to evaluate government agencies' performance, collected from comments about the public's reactions and perceptions of the agencies on specific issues related to their core business.

Thirdly, we conclude this chapter by discussing the institutional aspect of migrants' entrepreneurship. Whereby the comments collected were grouped into Reasons and Law themes that have a cause-effect relationship between both themes to investigate the adherence to Malaysian Law by the authorities, migrants, and the public. The COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced public opinions and perceptions as it changed many aspects of people's everyday lives that require adjustments in economic and social activities.

### 5.2.1 Products and Services Niche of Migrants' Enterprises

Standard drivers of entrepreneurship are work independence and economic improvement as pull factors. In contrast, job dissatisfaction is an example of a push factor (Kirkwood, 2009). COVID-19 conditions can worsen economic struggles for some, and vulnerable migrants may face heightened difficulties while in migration. With the assumption of migrant workers as economic migrants and economically driven, the reasons for their transformations into entrepreneurs will be reviewed from a simple economic point of view, from demand vs. supply.

The number of business operators of specific niches will increase with increasing consumer demand. However, extensive studies on migrant entrepreneurs previously found different target markets and product supplies between different ethnicities, and the



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generalisation of migrant entrepreneurs to cater to specific ethnicities and sell specific product niches will not be able to conclude the trend. For example, Arab and Pakistani entrepreneurs tend to focus on product niches but with different target markets, whereby Arab entrepreneurs may target both locals and their ethnic enclaves. In contrast, Pakistani entrepreneurs target the mass mainstream market. The difference between them is that there is more purchasing power from Arab natives compared to Pakistanis in Malaysia (Mosbah et al., 2018).

Another group of migrant entrepreneurs with broader target markets are Indonesian and Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, who commonly offer a variety of products and services, for example, in grocery businesses (Mosbah et al., 2018). Although it sounds promising and highly profitable to target a more extensive general market, several past studies found that there are opportunities for SMEs that chose niche products in small niche market segments to evolve and expand in the future by targeting both locals and migrant consumers (Chreim et al., 2018; Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011).

Additionally, enterprises chose niche markets with less demand because of the lower competition in the existing market. Niche markets with less competition are highly known to create a condition of opportunity for migrant entrepreneurs and demand from fellow citizens for ethnic products (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Fairlie & Meyer, 1994; Mosbah et al., 2018; Nur Suhaili binti Ramli, 2020; Waldinger et al., 1990; Wang, 2013), but ethnic markets were labelled as competitive by Kitching et. al. (2009) due to less barrier and skills needed for entry. Desirable business opportunities for migrants in niche markets may create a saturated market for new businesses to venture into other sectors (Jones et al., 2015). The literature showed that migrant entrepreneurs compete in the market.

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However, initially, they complement the market by supplying products and services that are scarce and more specific to particular niches.

Previous studies on ethnic entrepreneurship are too focused on the ethnicity of the business by identifying the products with the businesspersons, over-representing the market as niche and ethnically focused. It is simpler to associate the business with their ethnicity rather than treating migrants' entrepreneurship with the same treatment as general mainstream entrepreneurship. For example, in the study of transnational entrepreneurs, past studies tend to focus on the transnationalism of migrant entrepreneurs because it is more evident and visible while overlooking the majority of migrant entrepreneurs who are not involved with transnational business (Portes et al., 2002). There is a need for extensive study on the product focus of migrants' entrepreneurship, which is generally in demand in the mainstream market, rather than focusing more on ethnic niches because it may increase competition between locals and migrant entrepreneurs.

Chapter 4 already discussed the products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs. Muniandy (2015b) shared many ethnographic studies of migrants' lives that he encountered at restaurants and shops around Klang Valley in his book. His observations vary from Tom Yum and Indian restaurants to clothing wholesalers in Kenanga Wholesale City and imitation bags, watches, and clothing. He also observed a more extensive trade network of Hindu religious merchandise and products from Tamil Nadu in Masjid India and his findings of a niche market in the area for Indian migrant entrepreneurs. Their similar appearances with local Indians made it more comfortable for them to trade in the area than Bangladeshis or Nepalis. Cultural similarities, especially, will give more advantages to migrant entrepreneurs (Everett et al., 2015).

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The most straightforward observation of various eateries catering to different ethnicities in Malaysia can explain the varying demand from one consumer to another. Returning to the historical timelines of migrants during the colonial era, the assimilation of different ethnicities from different countries of origin created the multi-racial constructs of Malaysia, thus creating diverse demand in the market. There are Indian, Malay, Chinese and Western restaurants all over the country that cater to the palate of both locals and foreigners. Indian restaurants and Mamak restaurants or Chinese restaurants are more challenging to identify as locally owned or migrant enterprises, as is the case with Indian sellers in Masjid, India, due to the similar appearances of the same ethnicities.

For example, the restaurant business in Malaysia did not identify a product niche for migrants except for Arab migrants (Mosbah et al., 2018). Middle Eastern restaurants were also observed in the United States (Fairlie & Meyer, 1994) and the United Kingdom (Jones et al., 2015), offering Middle Eastern ethnic-specific food at the restaurants. The restaurants in the UK and USA are supplying for the market demand for halal. The increasing demand for Middle Eastern restaurants may result from the increased number of Arab tourists in Malaysia and the growing number of Arabic restaurants, which have made them more popular and acceptable to locals (Omar et al., 2016). This showed that product niche offerings are in demand from locals and migrants.

#### 5.2.1.1 Demand and Supply for Products and Services of Migrant Entrepreneurs

The sudden hit of COVID-19 and the pandemic has changed how the government reacts to its legal and political approach to public health delivery when ‘citizens first’ is deemed acceptable and was the right thing to do (IMISCOE, 2022). Border closures have

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highlighted the different statuses of a country's citizens, permanent residents, and foreigners.

The situation was no different in Malaysia, where temporary migrant workers who were considered outsiders were facing various difficulties during the pandemic, including heightened stigmatisation and perceived threats to the locals (in-group). While IMISCOE (2022)discussed the rights of immigrants for public health and welfare system. Riek et al. (2006) discussed in-group threats when scarce resources caused negative attitudes towards outsiders.

Rather than focusing on medical resources during the pandemic, realistic group conflict theory is more prevalent in the competition for economic resources. Despite the complexity of justifying the competition or complementary of migrant workers and migrant entrepreneurs to the locals, COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the values and emotions of locals towards migrant entrepreneurs. Social media exploited the situations by creating perceptions of economic threats from the out-groups (Steinert, 2020).

Mosbah et al. (2018) concluded that migrants' entrepreneurship received less attention from researchers because locals did not feel threatened by the presence of migrant entrepreneurs as it did not concern them locals. However, the observed comments provided different reactions from Facebook users. Previously, the public, who were not businesspeople, may not associate themselves with those doing business. Increased solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased group identifications for locals with the in-group identification of local businesspersons. Therefore, it can be observed that there are more comments from locals who were more responsive to Facebook posts on migrants' entrepreneurship because locals perceived that the locals are important to

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them. They become more sensitive to issues or threats that can harm their in-group (locals and local entrepreneurs) (Riek et al., 2006).

Previous research in the Western context created the perception that migrants are selling products from their country of origin or targeting their fellow citizens. The same observations were reported by Mustafa and Chen (2007). However, most past research in the Malaysian context proved that migrant entrepreneurs operated their businesses targeting customers outside their ethnicity. Their investigations did not explore whether migrants' entrepreneurship poses more competition in the already highly competitive market. The analysis of data for the theme 'Specialty' can be straightforwardly used to answer whether migrant enterprises do not affect local businesses if it is true that they are only focusing on ethnic products and services niche (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Kitching et al., 2009; Waldinger et al., 1990). Products and Services listed in the theme 'Specialty' will be able to check whether they offer general products and services like the local sellers.

In a recent research set in the year 2018 in a local environment, Mosbah et al (2018) also agreed that migrants are usually involved in small and petty trading, especially in general products and services such as saloons, laundry, news-stand, grocery, clothing, and restaurant. The comments observed within Malaysia's context to find out the products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs are also general rather than niche products and services, they fit the description made by Mosbah et al (2018)that migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia prefer to operate general types of businesses. What is more alarming is that these businesses are not the types of businesses permitted by DBKL for non-citizens, as discussed in Chapter 3, but are frequently the favourite among migrant entrepreneurs.

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The list is hypermarkets/ mini markets, sundry shops, 24-hour convenience shops, petrol stations, wet markets, cybercafes, spas, jewellery shops, car workshops, glass/ aluminium/ steel workshops, computer and electronics shops, laundry, hair salon/ barbershop, roadside shop/ kiosk, textile/ clothing/ shoes/ bag shop, restaurant/ bistro/ café, furniture/ teakwood shop, handphone/ prepaid cards shop and herbal/ Chinese medicine shop (Metro News, 2020). Therefore, reports of netnography can be produced by analysing the observed comments in 'Specialty' into sub-coded themes of 'Needs' and 'Wants'. This categorization will be able to investigate the reasons behind their selections of products and services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, by exploring the possibility of users' demand and product supply as contributing factors.

Needs vs Wants were also known as Necessity vs Desire in some studies. For this research, the 'Needs' sub-theme is defined as businesses frequented by everyday people and products or services consumed or bought by almost everyone, significantly lower- and middle-income groups. The products and services are primarily necessities such as food, water, clothing, and shelter.

**a) Itemising "Wants"**

The changing socioeconomic environment due to COVID-19 may have changed consumers' attitudes, purchased power, and lists of 'Needs' and 'Wants'. The unpredictable global economy and businesses slowing down due to lockdowns and the closing of industrial sectors resulted in a limited supply of products. Slower economic recovery also reduced consumer demand for certain products and services. It made

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quicker economic recovery impossible as there is still no solution to stop the infection of the virus even after almost three years since it was first discovered.

From the list of products and services in the Specialty theme, 12 types of businesses mentioned in the comments were grouped into Wants. The businesses listed in the sub-theme 'Wants' are not entirely the types of businesses wanted by Facebook users. They were grouped as there are some businesses that consumers can make do without. For example, gambling/ prostitution is the most mentioned type of business in this research at 2,068 comments. Gambling/ prostitution received the highest mentions not because it was the most wanted service but because they were the least wanted of businesses. The comments were mainly negative when the public either criticised the authorities for their inaction or requested them to take more actions to stop the business as these are illegal and criminal activities.

It can be said that comments were primarily negative as, from the observed data, the type of businesses that received the highest opinions is the gambling/ prostitution business. Some of the comments were not necessarily reporting or directly pointed to gambling/ prostitution. However, there were sometimes opinions about other businesses. The comments were arguing on why businesses selling legal and legitimate goods such as food and clothes were confiscated instead of gambling/ prostitution businesses being shut down.

These comments were tagged with gambling/ prostitution comments to capture these businesses' opinions. There are around 52 comments tagged with the massage parlour code and 21 codes with illegal pubs/ nightclubs. These services are commonly associated with the illegal business of prostitution and the hiring of undocumented female migrant



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workers from Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines and may receive negative remarks from users. Examples of comments on gambling/prostitution and massage parlours which users questioned on their endorsement are listed below:

> *Emm… those who operated illegal gambling were not raided… sex trade… was not raided… they only messed with those who were trying to make an honest living (rezeki halal), working like 'shit'.*

> *It is so hard to make an honest living in our own country. There are too many excuses when for license approval. Rather than picking up those roadside sellers, you had better monitor karaoke centres, nightclubs, massage parlours, or many other places where you can do your job. Arresting those who tried to earn an honest living is not the way, even for those without a valid license.*

The comments were made mainly by Malays based on observing their profile pictures and display names on Facebook. The cultural and religious sensitivities of Malays, who are Muslims, may have influenced their negative comments on business activities, as adultery, alcoholism and gambling are prohibited in their religion. Prostitution is an illegal activity in Malaysia, while gambling, massage parlours, nightclubs and pubs are allowed with strict licensing requirements that can cater to those who are not prohibited from drinking alcohol or betting. Massage parlours that may not be involved in illegal activities may receive specific stigmatisation from the public, and potential customers may view the business negatively and avoid it altogether.

The carwash business is second on the wants list, followed by the workshop. These two businesses are related to the automotive industry, whereby most users see the car wash



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business as a type of business that should be limited to locals due to its lower capital and skills requirement for entry. For workshops, users voiced their opinions about the job and business opportunities that should be kept for the many locals who acquired the necessary skills in vocational education. Renovation works were mentioned 18 times, and welding shops five times in comments. These businesses are frequently associated with workers from the construction sector.

Migrant workers with previous employment experiences in this sector may start their businesses with valuable knowledge and skills gained from employment. Hands-on learning is the best tool for technical jobs, and it can be learned formally in vocational and technical education centres. Vocational and technical education are advocated in Malaysia to help move the country to developed status through industrialization. Development in the technology for manufacturing and service sectors demanded skilled and knowledgeable workers when the country was transforming from a labour-intensive industry towards high capital, skill, and knowledge-intensive in producing higher value-added products and services (Ramlee Bin Mustapha, 1999).

However, after over half a century, Malaysia still relies on migrant workers to ensure growth in various economic sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, mining, and services. Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have limited the movement of migrant workers into the country, and these sectors have been affected tremendously. Supply disruptions in these sectors also affected the unpredictable prices of commodities and the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and trade.

About 21.9% lost their jobs in agriculture and another 15% in services (Lin Lean Lim, 2020), which affects the economy of the sectors and these workers. Migrant workers were



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also affected by factories and business closures but trapped in Malaysia even after they lost their jobs due to travel restrictions in and out of the country. Based on the collected data, for these four types of businesses that are usually associated with men as owners and consumers, the most mentioned nationality is Bangladesh in workshop (30) and car wash (23), followed by Rohingya in carwash (14) and Aceh in workshop (10).

Despite the need to stay connected during lockdowns, handphone and electronic shops are listed in the wants sub-theme because people can still do without their handphones or computers. These gadgets are considered a luxury to some consumers, especially those in the low-income group. Around 28 comments mentioned handphone/ computer/ electronic shops, whereby the most mentioned nationalities in this type of business are Bangladeshis (10) and Pakistanis (5).

Additionally, they were also highly mentioned in the furniture business (19), where Bangladeshis have nine mentions, followed by Pakistanis at six. Pakistanis are very popular in the carpet business (20), where ten comments were coded with Pakistanis and another three with Bangladeshis. Other service businesses listed in Wants are laundry (3) and hotel (3). Few users mentioned these two, possibly because of its smaller market segments and higher capital costs. However, home furnishing businesses are gaining much attention from users. Although products such as carpets, curtains, and furniture are not bought frequently, users still mention them.

The carpets and rugs business is well associated with Pakistanis in Malaysia (Everett et al., 2015; Mosbah et al., 2018). Pakistan's carpet exports for July - March 2020-2021 are valued at around $54.32 million, 11.57% more than the same months in the previous year despite the pandemic (Government of Pakistan, 2020). Pakistanis who were initially



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involved in the niche market of furniture, carpets and rugs are now venturing into other types of businesses, as observed in the data of this research. Pakistanis' method of door-to-door selling has been used since the 1990s, usually offering instalments for payments when they tried to sell carpets to homemakers. The same assistance is still observed nowadays, as in this comment:

> *Malaysians just shut up… What do you know, carpets and clothes sold by Pakistanis can be bought with credit? Bangladeshis and Acehnese opened grocery stores, and barber shops can pay in instalments. Madura opened workshops that can be paid in instalments… What do you know...? Just shut your mouth.*

The lack of mentions in comments for the types of businesses categorized as wants can indicate that these businesses are not favourable to migrant entrepreneurs. Lack of comments from users can also indicate that they see these types of products and services as non-threatening to the local businesses or because these products and services are not frequently bought and can be made do without. However, standard negative views about gambling/ prostitution and massage parlours that appear in Facebook postings about migrants' entrepreneurship suggest that public opinions negatively link them to criminal activities such as gambling and prostitution.

Stigmatisation towards migrants and migrants' entrepreneurship cannot be avoided in the comments. The opinions of generalizing them as undocumented, unlicensed, and worse, criminal may become a hindrance in the business to entrepreneurs who are registered and allowed to do business legally. It can also create a perception of unacceptance towards foreign traders in the country that can prevent potential investors or financial support.

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There are, however, other possible chances of attracting foreign investors from the market surveys, such as the increasing number of migrant entrepreneurs and the growth of businesses. The success of the enterprises will depend on the products and services offered. As we go into sub-theme needs, we can observe that the mixed reactions towards migrant sellers were also influenced by the products and services offered.

**b) Itemising "Needs"**

In the list of 'Needs' sub-theme, the Grocery Store code has the highest number of codes with 1,145 quotations, followed by Roadside (925) and Restaurant (722). These three codes are linked to business premises that offer the most necessities for humans: food, water, shelter, and clothing. The question arises as to whether these three types of businesses are complementary or competing since they are not business niches offered by specific ethnic groups, as both locals and migrants consume the products and services.

In a local setting for a grocery store or mini market in Malaysia, products offered are local and imported, as sold in some migrants owned shops (Mosbah et al., 2018; Nayeem Sultana, 2008). Azizah Kassim (2014) and Muniandy (2015a, 2015b) described the restaurants and shops in migrants' enclaved areas, such as Chow Kit, Little Burma, or Little Bangladesh, primarily catering to migrant workers. However, the observed data showed different findings regarding the businesses targeting locals and migrant consumers.

Grocery stores are the most mentioned in the types of business at 1,145 codes. Grocery stores in Malaysia sell a variety of consumable items, which include fresh food such as eggs, poultry, meat, fish, seafood, vegetables, fruits, drinks, rice, bread, and noodles, as



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well as groceries such as frozen or processed food, canned and bottled food, sugar, flour, cooking oil, cooking gas and snacks. There are also non-food, personal care, and household products such as laundry detergent, shampoo, soap, light bulbs, batteries, cigarettes, pet food, and stationery. Although the selections of brands can be limited depending on the size and location of the premises, consumers still choose grocery stores or mini-markets due to easy accessibility and product availability. During lockdowns, controlled movement order has limited movement to a 10km radius from one's home.

These shops received higher than usual demand from nearby consumers. Although options from online shopping platforms are operating as usual, supply and delivery of items may be limited due to strict requirements for deliveries, shops, and factories to be fully operational during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. People shop near their homes just to buy necessities for food and other things, including required office and school items, as they learn and work from home. These items are listed as needs for consumers as they were necessities then, and only essential services were allowed to operate. The list of 23 essential services was announced in the media statements made by the Prime Minister on 18th March 2020. Products and Services which remained open and mentioned in the lists of speciality themes are listed in Table 5.1:

**Table 0.1: Codes in Specialty Sub-Theme and Essential Products and Services Listed by the Government during Lockdowns.**

| Listed in Specialty Theme | Not Listed in Specialty Theme |
|---|---|
| Food supply/ services, grocery/ retail, telecommunication, hospitality/ hotel/ accommodation | banking/ finance/ Bursa Malaysia, electricity/ energy, firefighting, port/ dock/ airport, post/ courier, prison/ jail/ detention centres/ depot/ rehabilitation centre, fuel/ lubricants, healthcare/ |



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| Listed in Specialty Theme | Not Listed in Specialty Theme |
|---|---|
| | medical, waste/ sewerage, broadcasting, transportation by land/ water/ air /e-hailing, water, essential government services, security/ defence, industry related to security/ defence, online services, e-commerce, wildlife management |

Although the lists of essential products and services mentioned in comments and coded on our speciality theme are fewer, the products and services are too standard and more frequently used by consumers. The lists not mentioned are primarily services and facilities provided by government agencies or offered by government-linked companies or limited business providers.

These businesses require high capital and expertise in water and electricity, ports and airports, or even healthcare/ medical services, which may not be attractive enough to migrant entrepreneurs(but may have involved investments from foreign investors). These listed essential services have further description and restrictions imposed during MCO 1.0 (18 March 2020 – 3 May 2020) to the extent that National Security Councils list the essential items allowed to be sold at physical stores to limit movement out of the house and time spent at the shops.

Businesses who wish to operate during this time must apply for approval from the Ministry of International Trade and Investment (MITI) as they have set the procedures for operation and list of essential businesses, products, and services. The essential items are rice, sugar, vegetable/ animal oil and fats, flour/ grains, bread, water, dairy,



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condiments/ spices, dry goods, coffee/ tea, canned food, meat, poultry, pet food/ animal feed, fruits and vegetable processing, seafood/ fish, fruits, vegetables, cleaning detergents, disinfectants, sanitisers, personal care, tissues/ toilet papers, personal protective equipment/ masks, gloves, medicine/ pharmaceutical, packaging/ printing materials/ inks, medical/ surgical devices, and parts for medical equipment.

The list includes products, electricals, and electronics for the essential items supply chain, such as oil and gas, petrochemicals, chemicals and its products. The lists and standard operating procedures for business were updated several times during the whole period of MCO from 18 March 2020 until 10 June 2020 and continued with more economy opening during recovery movement control order (RMCO) from 10 June 2020 until 31 December 2020.

From the observed data, many of the premises we classified as needed are listed in the essential products and services during lockdown, and they were mentioned more frequently by Facebook users in their comments. The lists are grocery stores/ mini markets (1,145), roadside sellers (925), restaurants (722) and pasar borong/ pasar pagi (wholesale market/ wet market) (479). While these premises sell food and groceries, the mall (43) and night market (34), which also offer the same products and services, were the least mentioned in the comments. It can be due to the more extended operation restrictions imposed on the night market (closed from March 2020 until February 2021) and shops that do not offer essential/ critical products such as clothes and shoes in shopping malls (opened in May 2020 before being closed again during MCO 3.0 in June 2021).

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The longer the businesses were closed during MCO, the fewer comments were mentioned about businesses such as textile/ clothing (116) and barber shop/ saloon (107), which were allowed to operate after February 2021. Business closures and restrictions implemented during MCO, CMCO and RMCO not only limit the number of patronages, but they must also limit the number of employees on the premises simultaneously. The SOPs may have affected employees' working hours and wages in some sectors, and migrant workers may also face the same fate. In the comments, there were around 107 comments which mentioned migrant entrepreneurs who operated from home or mobile by cars or motorcycles. This situation can pave the way for migrants towards self-employment and economic survival. Then, we can assume some migrants were conducting business with limited resources.

However, in some comments coded with home/ motor/ car, Facebook users' opinions and assumptions are different. They claimed migrants were either homeowners or owned their homes, lorries, cars, or motorcycles to conduct their businesses at feasible locations. The advantage of selling from a vehicle is that they can be mobilized to many areas on different days. For example, migrant sellers can move from one construction site to another. Besides that, these sellers can run away or even hide when the authorities try to arrest them. These entrepreneurs used all their resources and were mobile to find their customers. Examples of sellers from their vehicles are:

> (Car) *There is one selling vegetables from a car… A Red Saga… Precisely at the time when migrant workers get off work… in front of Pudu Jail and Furama Hotel, which was being upgraded and the building that is being constructed.*

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(Lorry) *They did not take any action towards the Acehnese who sold on a lorry at the intersection.*

(Motorcycles) *They have fled because they have been informed beforehand. Then they will return. How about those who sell scrap metals on motorcycles? They are now more daring to collect at housing areas.*

However, some migrant entrepreneurs conducted their businesses at a fixed location where their customers would visit them. Most of them will either rent a house as their home or business premises.

(Home) *Do not forget migrants' shops that were springing like mushrooms in Meru… Rapidly growing… Don't forget to raid those who sell at home… Do not just raid local sellers; yeah, it's ENF2.*

A user commented on how local landlords were trying to maximize profit by subletting a house to many tenants. The tenants, however, will utilize the house as a business premise.

*These locals are greedy and rent their houses up to 20 migrant tenants in a house. These migrants are even doing business. Some authorities took coffee money (bribes)—nothing much to say.*

A user commented that migrants' crowded living conditions resulted in more opportunities for them to save more money. Another user also commented on their willingness to pay higher rent and their perseverance in working hard. These are two different perspectives towards migrants, which are always stereotyped against them.

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While economically well migrants may gain more opportunities to pay for higher home and shop rentals, some live in squalid and crowded housing facilities. The generalisation towards migrants may create opinions and perceptions towards migrant entrepreneurs, too.

> *User FHA: This is not a restaurant but another shop. You cannot say that. On a different side, have you ever thought of Malaysians living in Malaysia having a lot of commitments, such as housing, children's education, car loans, and many others? If I can list them, they can be written into a book, but what must migrants and refugees consider??? They can live in a house full of 6-7 people. They do not have to think about bills, loans, licenses, etc., so they can offer a lower price!!! For example, if you go to a Bangladeshi grocery shop, the goods sold are from their country of origin. When will the economy progress if this is the current situation??? And so that you know, not 100% food sellers, there are Malaysians.*

Some migrant workers in Malaysia can afford to buy their vehicles, such as cars, lorries or motorcycles that were used as a mode of transportation or for them to do business. Although most migrants will share their cost of living by renting with others, some migrants own houses in Malaysia. Therefore, it is open to study home ownership within migrant communities in Malaysia as it is interesting to know how migrant workers can afford to keep such assets in their host country.

Some migrants may have run their businesses so well because their income as PLKS will not be enough to buy a house in Malaysia. This is an example of such comments that an Indonesian entrepreneur made it well in business and owned a house to rent. A local was



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renting from a migrant who sells durian, and he faced specific difficulties when he had to endure the smells. It showed that an Indonesian durian seller was doing so well that he owned a house and could rent it to a local tenant.

> *Salam sir. Please take action against our landlord, who sells durian. They freely litter their kitchen wastes, durian seeds and skins. Every day, it was so smelly at home. Our children need to play outside. I wanted to complain about this for so long, but I feared the landlord would be kicked out. The landlord is a very rich Indonesian who lacks feelings and empathy. Please... Use Waze to drive to Jalan Dato Alias.*

A shift in homeownership for migrants from renters to owners may change the perception that all migrants are living a hard life as workers in Malaysia. There is this common stigmatisation that migrants were living in cramped and squalid accommodations. They often rented low-cost flats or lived as squatters (Golam Hassan, 2009; Samion & Awang, 2017; Sufian & Mohamad, 2009), while the most recent observation is that they rented shophouses. Shophouses are premises with shops on the ground floor and houses or offices on the upper ground floor. Some workers who worked in the area lived in the rented units upstairs, or the accommodations were provided by their employers. It can be observed in this comment that migrants also rented shophouses.

> *Look at the upper floor of shophouses. Now, many migrants rent on top of shophouses and inexpensive housing areas.*

The choice between apartments, houses and shophouses must be made based on their available resources. The selection of locations will also significantly impact the success

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of their businesses, which includes setting the businesses in residential or commercial areas, which will bring the businesses more opportunities. It will also depend on the types of businesses suitable for residential areas. These types of businesses will offer products and services that are necessities or needs to people, as that will attract more customers.

The ease of access to residential areas and broader market for general product offerings can help them secure a good business. Two types of businesses were commonly conducted at home by migrant sellers: grocery stores (15) and restaurants/ food stalls (6). These businesses remained open during lockdowns, thus triggering comments from social media users about migrant entrepreneurs' participation in these businesses. Where most sectors and businesses were closed during lockdowns, locals may see them as a threat when they were allowed to operate. Some of the comments on the types of businesses offered at migrants' homes are captured below:

> (Food stall/ restaurant) *Near Sementa, just by the road. Indonesians made a restaurant with houses, and nothing happened for years. Don't you see it?* 🤔 🤔
>
> (Grocery stores) *Please monitor the ground floor of flats that were turned into grocery shops.*

Some scholars suggest that ethnic entrepreneurship should be viewed as a new and essential subset of entrepreneurship due to the complexity of the social, economic, political, and cultural structure of migrants in society (Lintner, 2015). However, there is no identification of products and services specifically targeted to a specific ethnicity in this research to uncover the varieties and generalisations of such.

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Generalisation is essential to ensure the uniqueness of migrants' entrepreneurship compared to the locals can be discussed, as the products offered are not limited to ethnic niches (Rath & Schutjens, 2019). By being general towards migrants' businesses to consider the variety of the products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs, it can uncover the immaterial value of cost vs. benefit and risks vs. opportunities of these businesses to the economy. Cost vs. benefit and opportunity vs risk were reviewed concurrently as some literature prefers to use opportunity cost as a term in business.

#### 5.2.1.2 Consideration of Opportunity Cost or Business Risk for Market Entry

Explanation of possible reasons for entrepreneurial transformation because of migrants' characteristics to grab available opportunities and take unthinkable but manageable risks would not suffice to explain the phenomena. If economic migrants were interested in improving their lives as wage earners, there would be no issue of migrants' transformation into entrepreneurs. Migrant entrepreneurs are likely interested in earning money, which is at least more than what they would earn as salaried workers.

Although they have enough resources to start a business, ensuring the products sell well and are profitable is crucial. The products would not sell without consumers, and demand for products and services will create demand and supply in the market. A basic understanding of demand and supply for products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs can explain the increased price for limited supply and lower price for higher product demand. Different types of demand may have shaped the market for migrant enterprises. However, it may not be different from local entrepreneurs once the characteristics of products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs are identified.



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The opportunity cost of an item is defined as something people give up to get that item (Mankiw, 2018). Costs and risks, including opportunity costs, were weighted prior to migration, and entrepreneurs will have to consider these factors before starting or growing their businesses. Migration has improved household consumption and purchasing power for family members at home (Sharma & Zaman, 2013). However, the psychological and social costs of migration need to be considered along with economic costs, as some viewed their decision to migrate as a result of the loss of wealth, health, and youth (AKM Ahsan Ullah, 2010).

Migration is unlikely to occur if the cost is more than its benefits. However, they are willing to take risks to continue their livelihoods (Sayed Mahadi et al., 2019). The chance to change their status from irregular, temporary migrants who overstayed their visas to entrepreneurs by marrying locals was seen as a way of improving their economic and social status. Some examples are migrants considering several risks and costs to stay in host countries for economic and social benefits (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011). These migrants are left with limited options, whether to return to their home country, continue to be irregular or involuntarily enter self-employment. At the same time, opportunity cost considerations were made by waged migrants to transform into entrepreneurs, especially voluntary entrepreneurs, because of their preferences (Rettab, 2001).

Migration motivation may differ between entrepreneurs and economic migrants. Entrepreneurs may seek the best migration destination that offers the best opportunity to make a profit. At the same time, economic migrants may look for jobs with the right salary (Rahmandoust et al., 2011). In local context research, migrants ventured into



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entrepreneurship by trying their luck and taking advantage of available opportunities and stable economic conditions (Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). Besides the numerous skills, knowledge, resources, and talents needed to succeed in entrepreneurship, luck and chance can help entrepreneurs respond to new opportunities (Veciana, 2007).

Subjective perceptions of luck and opportunities were weighted and exploited by entrepreneurs to start entrepreneurial activities (Dheer, 2017), and migrant entrepreneurs may have considered the opportunity costs carefully even to consider a new business as feasible. Entrepreneurs are not just risk-takers but informed optimists who have assessed opportunities and threats differently than non-entrepreneurs when business launches or growth decisions were made (Norton & Moore, 2002). Therefore, being educated and well-informed on the enterprise venture may facilitate the business.

However, Dheer (2017) also suggested that highly educated people in a more collectivistic society view the opportunity cost of starting new ventures as higher for them. People in high-income countries are less entrepreneurial and prefer salaried employment over creating new ventures, which is possible when many enterprises already promise job opportunities. As a collectivistic country, economic migrants in Malaysia who usually have lower education levels than most locals may see entrepreneurship as having lower opportunity costs, while locals may prefer wage employment.

Opportunities and risks present in an environment may promote entrepreneurial activities for migrants when weighted down. Migrants who are risk-takers fit the characteristics of entrepreneurs who exploit opportunities for new business ventures that are desirable. Several conditions that must be considered for migrants to start a business are summarized in Table 5.2.



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**Table 0.2: Content Analysis of Previous Studies in Migrants' Entrepreneurship from Opportunity VS. Risk Framework.**

| Opportunity | VS. | Risk |
|---|---|---|
| Taking over ownership opportunities from locals who failed or retired that their heirs refuse to take up their parents' enterprises (Waldinger et al., 1990). | | They were choosing a partnership between Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera locals. Non-Bumiputera business owners are known to be more stable and have more job opportunities (Golam Hassan, 2009). |
| They are new groups of Ali Baba traders. Previously, it was between Malay-non-Malay. Now, it is between Malaysian-non-Malaysian (Golam Hassan, 2009). | | Higher business capital requirement from paying bribes to government officials (Muniandy, 2015a, 2015b; Nayeem Sultana, 2008). |
| Strong and weak ties in social networks were utilised by creating business partnerships with locals (Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). | | Breaking some of the laws in Malaysia, for example, in business registration and work pass regulations (Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). |
| Strong ties in social networks were utilised with business partnerships or registration using a local spouse's name (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011; Mosbah et al., 2018; Nayeem Sultana, 2008). | | Have to marry locals to regularize their status if they have overstayed their visas (Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011). |

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| Opportunity | VS. | Risk |
|---|---|---|
| A cheaper workforce is trusted, reliable and flexible by appointing workers from the same country of origin as migrant entrepreneurs based on co-ethnic and kinship (Bloch & McKay, 2015; Bunmak, 2013; Kitching et al., 2009; Nayeem Sultana, 2008; Rahmandoust et al., 2011; Wang, 2013). | | Exploitation, lousy working conditions, long hours, and low-paying jobs trap undocumented migrant workers in the migrant enterprises environment, which can prevent social embeddedness into the wider society (Bloch & McKay, 2015). |
| Niche and unique products sourced from migrants' country of origin (Fairlie & Meyer, 1994; Kitching et al., 2009; Nayeem Sultana, 2008; Portes et al., 2002; Rahmandoust et al., 2011). | | Possibility of being reprimanded for avoiding paying taxes for products imported from the country of origin or selling counterfeit products (Chreim et al., 2018; Webb et al., 2009). |
| Offering lower prices for products and services (Golam Hassan, 2009; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012). | | Must work longer hours and longer time to be profitable and gain smaller returns (Bloch & McKay, 2015; Bunmak, 2013; Ibrahim & Galt, 2011; Jones et al., 2015; Kitching et al., 2009; Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014; Wang, 2013). |
| The business entry requirement is low capital and skills (Kitching et al., 2009). | | Limited options for business funding (Riddle et al., 2010). Some options include savings and loans from friends and family (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014). Earned low wages during employment and need |

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| Opportunity | VS. | Risk |
|---|---|---|
| | | to remit some money to family or pay for migration costs (Muniandy, 2015b). It takes more time to save earnings from employment (Bunmak, 2013). |

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### 5.2.2 Migrants versus Locals Paradox: Business Complementary or Rivalry

A competitive market is defined as a market in which there are many buyers and many sellers, and each has a negligible impact on the market price (Mankiw, 2018). Assumptions on a perfectly competitive market were made to simplify the evaluation of supply and demand when the goods offered for sale are all the same. There are many buyers and sellers, and no single buyer or seller can influence the market price.

Locals' views towards migrants' entrepreneurship, although the opinions are essential for this research, are not the only things that matter in capturing the opinion towards the subject of research. Opinion formation may be triggered by events and influenced by factors such as ideology and political background. Going back to our definition of public opinion as collective opinions of functional groups in a society that is accessible to individuals, where the opinions may require responses and decisions from key individuals (Blumer, 1948), were also emphasized by Lazarsfeld (1957) on the collective opinions of groups in a society rather than collective opinion from individuals.

As this thesis progressed by listing out the comments from individuals to form collective opinions of functional groups, the groups are categorised into Malaysians and non-Malaysians. The opinions were captured from both parties, the in-group and out-group. The structure of this thesis was developed meticulously to avoid any biases. The perspectives of both in-group and out-group will be handled with care.

Most comments received towards migrant entrepreneurs that were collected for this research came from the in-group. However, the views of both are evaluated equally to answer research questions. Previous studies mentioned locals' disapproval of migrant



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entrepreneurs as they are competing with local businesses (Azizah Kassim, 2014). The types of products and services selected by migrant entrepreneurs, which are necessities and not niches from their origins, showed that they compete with the locals. Furthermore, non-citizens cannot select the products and services listed in DBKL's businesses. However, they are still selected by migrant entrepreneurs, creating intense competition with the locals.

They are not complementing the market because the authorities protect these types of businesses to create business opportunities for the locals when the listed products and services mostly require less experience, skills, and low capital for business entry and have a broader target market. Based on the data, the codes grocery store, restaurant, and roadside are so common and general that the public often frequents them and have higher demand from consumers because these products are necessities with higher product sales and turnover. More comments are anticipated, and the results prove the findings.

However, many comments prove that migrant enterprises are complementing the market. There are comments where users supported migrants' entrepreneurship or simply shared their experiences as customers. The businesses complement the market by providing products and services unavailable to local sellers based on their experiences. The market or opportunities were not attracting enough local sellers, or it had limited opportunities for locals compared to migrants. The best example is pasar borong/ pasar pagi (wholesale market/ morning market), where users mentioned 479 quotations.

Even though the wholesale and morning markets offer broader distributions and more product options for food resources, they are not the most mentioned places of business in the comments. It can be because jobs at markets are commonly filled by migrant workers



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because of their longer working hours, filthy work conditions and manual labour that is not popular among locals. Less competition between migrants and locals in this labour sector resulted in fewer comments from Facebook users regarding markets. However, the presence of migrant enterprises in markets has gained enough attention. News reports on rejections towards 'Ali Baba' traders at Pasar Borong Selangor showed that migrant entrepreneurs compete with local entrepreneurs (Razali, 2021; Zain, 2021), which may limit jobs or business opportunities for locals.

Some comments mentioned business and job competition. To search for those comments, nine terms were used in the text search function in Atlas.ti which are *peluang* (opportunity), *utamakan* (prioritize), *dulukan* (put first), *dahulukan* (put first), *bersaing* (competing), *pesaingan* (competition), persaingan (competition), *saing* (compete), competition and compete. These words were chosen as they have the same meaning as competitions in Bahasa Malaysia. Mixed reactions were observed in users' comments about competition. Some mentioned business competition, while others mentioned job competition. The commenters did not agree with the situation of allowing migrant entrepreneurs conduct businesses and compete with local sellers and emergence of competition between locals and migrant workers in the job market.

To better evaluate the differences in opinion formation, whether users agreed about competition and their acceptance or support towards migrants' entrepreneurship when the businesses are viewed as complementing the market. Coincidently, some users provided reasons for supporting migrants' entrepreneurship. Three types of observed comments are listed in Table 5.3.

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It may seem easy to choose between complementary and rivalry and decide on the business characteristics by briefly looking at the types of businesses or products sold by them as a factor for consideration. Selecting only a theme or code can be more convenient. However, that is not the case in this research, as it requires an in-depth understanding of the opinion formations. The results should be able to holistically explain the reasons behind similar patterns in the observed comments by applying thematic analysis techniques. Data familiarization will be convenient to decide on the themes for analysis when we understand the research environment and its subjects in depth and breadth by carefully reading through all the comments.

Comments posted on Business Complementary also commented on the lack of options, bad service quality, and the higher prices of local sellers. The opinions varied between users, locations, and times because the environment set for this research is not specific about a shop or brand. Therefore, only generalisations or public opinions about this topic can be captured. The comments about business competition were mainly about two aspects: 1) the fact that migrant workers were allowed to work in Malaysia in jobs specific to their past and 2) their participation in businesses had limited locals' opportunities. However, these comments contradict other observations, which are 1) comments that claimed migrant workers are competing with locals for job opportunities and 2) there are many new business entries from locals in the market, which were already discussed in the statistics in the literature.

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**Table 0.3: Examples of Comments on Business Complementary or Competition and Job Competition.**

| Complement | Business Competition | Jobs Competition |
|---|---|---|
| *This is the chance for Malay businesses to rise. Open grocery stores, just like migrants', and whatever we homemakers need is available. Sometimes we need to choose migrants' shops because the goods were limited when we looked for 'ulam'. Most are unavailable. So, Malay grocers, please improve after this. It is not that you cannot succeed, but you should learn from other races/ nationals. They have various choices, that is why they become preferences.* | *It should have been done earlier… it will be harder to take action as there are already many migrant entrepreneurs… whatever it is, they must be hunted down. Do not let them do business in our country because it is for locals' opportunities and livelihood.* | *Necessities and food are expensive because of the overwhelming numbers of migrants due to increased demand—and high remittance outflow. Carry diseases and less loss of job opportunities in the manufacturing sector.* |

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| Complement | Business Competition | Jobs Competition |
|---|---|---|
| *User PWSC, yes, thank you for understanding. This is a slander on this uncle. I hope it cleared up for everyone. It is a pity he must close his shop even though he still has many goods, including side costs. This is one of the cheaper options to buy groceries. For residents, this uncle is very generous.* | *Alhamdulillah, we wanted Malaysians to trade without competition, and people could choose between shops.* | *ENF1 hopes you may take action on the vast number of migrant workers in Taman Sri Muda, Seksyen 25 Shah Alam, which is increasing concern. Actions should be taken against local owners who quickly rented their premises to migrants, which affected job opportunities for locals. May ENF1 take immediate action!* |
| *User MS, I think it is illogical to put 100% of the blame on migrant entrepreneurs'... maybe some of the reason for the Malay restaurant that was closed... put higher prices, not comparable with the portion of the food... or inadequate services... or unappealing menu but blaming other people.* | *Please go to Puchong Tasik Prima. Various PATI and those opening shops compete with us licensed locals who comply with the law.* | *Many other Filipino maids ran away to become nurses. Local nurses have no job. Some deceive older people because they are their caregivers. Many hid in Cameron Highlands and Setapak. Many PATI are at Bumbung Biru Flats, next to Stephan Corner. Easy to find around Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants. Some* |

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| Complement | Business Competition | Jobs Competition |
|---|---|---|
| | | *worked as part-time prostitutes. Nobody knew about this. Some worked at restaurants in PV 128. Our students must compete with them to gain some pocket money. Traitors. They should be arrested and heavily punished!* |
| *MCO is the time when every trader increases their prices. They knew people would go to their shops because they would need to queue up in supermarkets. There are MCO SOPs that need to be followed now… If it is possible, don't make it too expensive. We know that supplies are limited… but don't make it too burdensome for customers…* | *User MAA, envy is not the case, but this is a legal issue. Malaysian Government hired migrant workers to fill jobs in specific sectors, not for them to compete with locals' small traders.* | |

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| Complement | Business Competition | Jobs Competition |
|---|---|---|
| *User NAA? Because those Indian shops had limited goods, he put higher prices on them, and it was better to report them. They did not realize that nobody had entered that shop when there was no MCO.* | *User AI, there's a Little Pakistan in Ayer Hitam. It's a pity that local businesses cannot compete with migrant entrepreneurs. It was on TV3. Hopefully, ENF1 will raid the area too.* | |

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Migrants' business strategies for entry and growth may help them to progress or excel in business, which has either become motivation for other migrants or an aversion to others. The observations and comments on competitions concern how locals feel threatened and the opportunities lost by competing with migrant entrepreneurs. Some non-Malaysian users mentioned local entrepreneurs' unwillingness and inability to start a business. These comments contradict each other and were proven false as business registrations increased in 2020.

There would be no issue of competition between locals and migrant entrepreneurs if local entrepreneurs were uninterested, unwilling, and unable to start businesses. Entrepreneurship is not everyone's cup of tea where. Some may be entrepreneurial, and some may not. The success of one's enterprise may depend on various factors, such as the ability to take advantage of available opportunities. Opportunities may present for both locals and migrants alike. However, some claimed that the opportunities were lost due to competition. Some comments on lost opportunities by the locals because migrant entrepreneurs were taking advantage of the opportunities are listed below:

#### 5.2.2.1 Lost Opportunities

Comments were made towards migrant entrepreneurs as competing with locals for business opportunities.

> *User AZAM agreed, sir. This is the law. They seized locals' business opportunities.*

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Such comments like this are clear-cut. Users are not afraid to post their comments accusing migrants of taking the opportunities that were supposedly for locals. Migrant entrepreneurs must face the stigmatisation that they are guilty of taking others' chances.

> *User ZLI, foreigners can enter only as legal and documented workers, not as business owners or employers. Foreigners may do business, but as investors with millions of investments, locals may not have such capital. They may be unable to compete for the same opportunities specially created for the locals.*

This user understands the difference between the types of business registration allowed for foreigners. It requires high capital, and small-sized businesses are specially allocated to locals. Some comments were mixed with reactions towards PATI as business owners.

> *Restore the opportunities to trade for Malaysians and not for PATI…*

Facebook users were also aware that some migrant entrepreneurs are spouses to locals and were involved in business as their jobs. However, there were also some scepticisms about migrants who married locals that they either married someone in their home country or left their local wives and married their countrywomen once they returned. Suggestions to impose a stricter law for those who marry locals were needed to stop them from starting a business in the country.

However, several considerations must be made in implementing the law because it will be discrimination if the migrants have acquired all the passes required for them to stay in

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this country and work in any fields, for example, if they have already received permanent residence status or spouse visa approval whereby, they can work in any legal employment.

> *User SLN, that's right, boss… but there should be stricter laws to prevent migrants who marry locals from starting a business in this country! Then, Malaysians will have the opportunities to do business…*

The overall opinions about migrants' entrepreneurship regarding opportunities are about the lost opportunities for locals. However, some comments criticised the attitudes of locals who always waited for government assistance and aid, including in doing business. Although the comments were made on the official Facebook pages of the authorities, the comments mostly voiced their frustration. They hoped for actions and assistance from the authorities to stop migrants' entrepreneurship.

> *Hope KPN will be more proactive with problems faced by Malaysians than foreigners… who must compete with harsh migrants… it is hard for locals to trade because migrants have monopolized market areas and become thugs… where is the justice, KPN?*

Even though many comments mentioned lost opportunities and government aid, some comments mentioned that no one stopped Malaysians from seizing the opportunities to do business as there was also no obstacle for migrants.

> *Who stopped Malaysians from doing business? I disagree with migrants who become entrepreneurs here. But at the same time, I would like to know, who*

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*stopped us from being entrepreneurs? We only know how to complain but don't know how to seek opportunities. Always expect aid from the government.*

The observation also managed to capture comments from non-Malaysians with the perception that locals are afraid of business competition and expecting help from the government's aid.

*If you don't want migrants to run businesses, locals must run their businesses, not just wait for the government's assistance. Don't be afraid of competition, prove that locals can do it too, it's that simple.*

#### 5.2.2.2 Price War and Service Quality

Despite users' comments that seemed unsupportive of migrant entrepreneurs, some comments supported the presence of migrant enterprises. A user criticised other users' comments and said buyers like it when migrants' goods are priced lower than in malls.

*Most comments were condemning. However, you like it when their shops sell cheaper than malls. Be thankful.*

As we have discussed, migrant entrepreneurs' product preferences for business were targeting a broader market and goods that are necessities. They need to offer the products at an excellent value to be profitable and, at the same time, maintain their market power.

However, as prices of most necessities, especially food products, are controlled, entrepreneurs should always be alert to market changes. Different opinions in terms of

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prices for migrant enterprises can conclude that consumers chose them not solely because of their low prices but also because to other factors such as quality of services, variety of products, location, and convenience (Lo, 2020). There's a comment about the low prices of vegetables sold by migrants' roadside sellers at Selayang Wholesale Market compared to two wholesale supermarkets.

> *Truthfully, their vegetables are way cheaper than NSK or Sri Ternak.*

Some comments tried to justify the low prices due to accusations that vegetables and fruits were sold at a lower price because they were scavenged from the trash.

> *Vegetables and fruits should be discarded using a rubbish compactor immediately because migrants will scavenge and resell them again…*

It was also expected that comments would be made that discussed the impacts of price differences on local sellers.

> *User JJ, it is so hard for Malaysians to survive at Jalan TAR because whatever they sell, migrants will follow and kill the market by being underpriced… One of their dirty tricks. Many traded using Ali Baba licenses, and almost 90% of Masjid India and Jalan TAR traders used Ali Baba.*

Facebook users used terms like *mahal* (expensive), *harga Yahudi* (priced like the Jews), and *pergi haji balik hari* (going for hajj in a day) to comment on exorbitant prices. The same stereotyping of Jewish entrepreneurs commonly known to be involved in the business was also used by commenters. However, in this context, comparisons to the Jews



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were related to them as someone who is exploitative. A comparison of prices and services offered between local sellers and migrant entrepreneurs was also mentioned. However, differing opinions on the prices are summarized in Table 5.4 below.

Prices of goods and charges services in Malaysia are controlled under the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act 2011 [Act 723] to avoid profiteering and anything related to it (Price Control and Anti- Profiteering Act 2011 [Act 723], 2011). Where 'goods' in this Act is defined as a property of every kind, tangible or intangible, movable or immovable, but excludes money and action. 'Price-controlled goods' are goods that have maximum or minimum fixed prices. Prices of most groceries are controlled, especially during festive seasons. However, consumer needs self-awareness of the set prices to avoid paying high prices on their purchases.

Migrant entrepreneurs compete in the market based on the discussion of Facebook users' comments and opinions analysis. The findings show that migrant entrepreneurs offered general goods and services frequently involved in businesses that do not allow them to register. Their strategy to offer these goods at lower or higher prices than others in the market will be able to answer if they compete with or complement local sellers. The issue came back to the law's implementation to overcome price manipulation from sellers and licensing issues. In our subsequent discussion, the leading causes will be determined based on the data analysis of comments related to the law's implementation.

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**Table 0.4: Comment Examples on Price Comparisons of Migrants' Entrepreneurship.**

| Lower price | Higher price |
|---|---|
| *Migrants cannot do business because their permits are for 3D jobs. If they buy goods at their shops, they cut the prices, which can impact the local sellers.* | *Many Bangladeshis, Indonesians, and Nepalese traded at high prices. When are you coming to raid…* |
| *Those roadside sellers are deceiving… The prices are cheap, but they have altered the scale… Locals don't be stupid by buying from them.* | *DBKL must control many foreign sub-contractors who built and renovated houses!!! Sometimes they lied; they said the price was low, but when it was done, it was expensive… They overcharged… Arrest them all.* |
| *Migrants, especially Rohingya, are arrogant when we ask about the prices. The prices are like Jews' (unfairly priced).* | *Not out of jealousy… but the Bangladeshi is a bragger… they did not display the price when we felt that we needed to cancel the purchase because it was overpriced… he gets angry, saying why do you have to bring it to the counter when you don't want to buy it… I felt so angry looking at him…. I felt like reporting on him…* |
| *User APA, if there are no migrants, there are still local home builders. However, because migrants offered lower prices, locals lost the* | |

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| Lower price | Higher price |
| --- | --- |
| *competition. Clients hire migrants to renovate their houses… if there are no more migrants, local builders will have more jobs.* | *That's right… I agreed… During MCO, the prices of many goods increased, especially in suburban and rural areas. They put the prices as they pleased. Their excuses are that the supply is scarce and so on… We are having a hard time… The government, please be aware… consider us users.*<br><br>*It's good that the migrants' businesses are closed… The prices are expensive. It costs you your arm and leg.*<br><br>*Please eliminate Aceh's grocery shops in Selangor. Their prices are like Jews' during MCO.* |

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### 5.2.3 Root Causes of Migrants' Transformation and Economic Impacts Resulted from the Transformation

The comments collected were tagged with the code 'Law' for any comments that contained opinions about the law, legal system, and the penalty related to migrants' entrepreneurship and migrant workers' management in general. As discussed in 3.5.1.4, the theme Law also includes other codes: Legal Actions, License Rental, Undocumented, Pass Abuse, Tax Evasions, Unlicensed, 'Requesting Actions, Nationwide, Complaint/ Critique and Bribery.

The codes on these comments were also separated between Malaysians and non-Malaysians where the comments from Malaysian users were tagged with ten codes which are Legal Actions, Undocumented, License Rental, Pass Abuse, Tax Evasions, Unlicensed, Requesting Actions, Nationwide, Complain/ Critique and Bribery but only four codes from non-Malaysians which are Undocumented, License Rental, Complain/ Critique and Bribery.

The differences between the codes between Malaysians and non-Malaysians were analysed using co-occurrences analysis in Atlas.ti, and the codes in the Law theme are represented using a Venn Diagram in Figure 5.3. For this chapter, only codes classified as causing economic impacts or impacted by the economy will be discussed and represented in black fonts.

Three other codes that are not grouped into the economic impacts that appeared in Malaysian and non-Malaysian groups are MyKad/ MyPR, Local Spouse, and Such



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Actions are Not Wrong. Even though the themes MyKad/ MyPR and Local Spouse seemed to be linked to law and regulation, they were grouped into the Reasons theme instead. They will be explained in the next chapter on psycho-social impacts. Job/ business opportunity loss, although not classified as legal implications, was included in the discussion as it is the result of such legal implications from migrants' entrepreneurship.

A Venn Diagram was used to find the reasons and impacts of migrant entrepreneurs that can relate the law to comments from Malaysians and non-Malaysians. Initially, these codes were coded under the 'Reasons' theme in Chapter 3. However, as the findings progressed, it was added to the 'Law' theme. Economic and psycho-social impacts were coded and discussed separately in two chapters. The two themes, Law and Reasons, were carefully defined and explained previously to help understand the correlation between the themes and the users whom these comments came from, as represented in Figure 5.2.

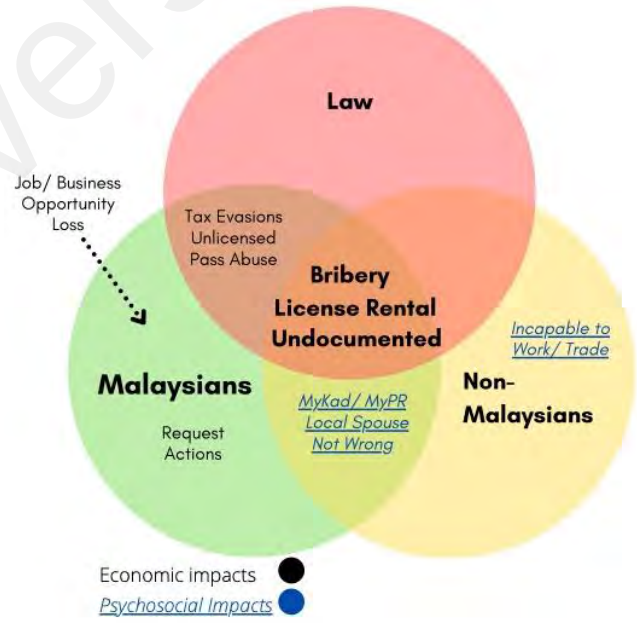


**Figure 0.2: Venn Diagram of Codes in Reasons and Law Theme for Malaysian and non-Malaysian comments.**

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The highest number of codes is Bribery, posted by 4,698 Malaysians, while only 75 non-Malaysians gave their opinion on bribery. A co-occurrences analysis was conducted in Atlas.ti between bribery and the three codes at the intersection of the Venn Diagram to find out the reasons for migrants' entrepreneurship when users are talking about bribery. Table 5.5 recorded co-occurrences of bribery and the codes requesting actions, license rental and undocumented. Although not many were talking about bribery and these three codes, further analysis was needed to find out the reasons behind opinions of bribery by analysing all 13 codes later.

**Table 0.5: Codes co-occurrences in Reasons Theme from the Venn Diagram and Bribery Code for Malaysian and non-Malaysian.**

| Code | M: Bribery, Gr=4698 | NM: Bribery, Gr=75 |
|---|---|---|
| **M: License Rental,** Gr=902 | 38 | 0 |
| **M: Undocumented,** Gr=521 | 39 | 0 |
| **NM: License Rental,** Gr=44 | 0 | 2 |
| **NM: Undocumented,** Gr=25 | 0 | 5 |

It was observed from the overlap circles in the Venn Diagram that only three codes out of the nine have economic impacts from the Law theme quadrant that appeared in comments from both Malaysians and non-Malaysians. The codes are Bribery, License Rental and Undocumented. Three other economic impact codes in the law theme that came only from Malaysians are Tax Loss, Unlicensed and Pass Abuse. It can be concluded that both Malaysians and non-Malaysians agreed that issues of PATI, license rental and bribery are the reasons for migrants' entrepreneurship. Locals helped migrant entrepreneurs to register for their businesses. An example of the comments:

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*KWC Jalan Samping… The migrants monopolize Jalan Gelugor from the shops at the front to the mall… Unlicensed… Then, there is an old Chinese in contact with PBT1 for license registration… and two Malay men registered the license… He used to ride a 'kapcai' but now drives a fancy car Hilux… They collect monthly fees to renew the Bangladeshi shops' licenses… and many in KWC are without a license… Now the fault is not on migrants… our people just wanted to live lavishly…*

Even though it seems locals are making profits from this activity, it is questionable whether helping someone register for a business is a crime. The applications for registration with municipal offices will be approved if the documents needed are complete and legitimate to register for the businesses. Although it was economically beneficial to some individuals, it has affected local entrepreneurs, which will be further discussed in this chapter.

Acehnese business created competitive situations for local Indian and Chinese traders (Ganto et al., 2015). The comments mentioned two ethnicities who helped with the registration: Malays and Chinese. Most comments were posted by users who were briefly observed from their display name and profile photo as Malays. Malays and other natives comprised about 69.4% of the population in 2020. Many Malays were involved in informal or small businesses and trading, including as roadside sellers and small peddlers. More comments from Malays are expected as the majority ethnic in Malaysia. They have more possibility of economic loss when they must compete with migrant entrepreneurs. But the opinions towards migrant entrepreneurs were received from all ethnics and not just the Malays, and this comment came from an Indian user:

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*Yes… User Z… It happened in front of my eyes at Jalan Nagasari… Many shops previously owned by the Chinese were rented to migrants… Many ENF1 visited and dined in… But no actions were taken… I felt you, bro… It's common.*

Besides knowing who helped migrant entrepreneurs obtain business licenses, several exciting findings in the comments are about who these local license owners are. Some comments mentioned Malay and Chinese users as the business owners behind the business rentals. While implying the opinions about the economic impacts to the Malays from migrants' involvement in entrepreneurship, opinions about Malays' involvement in aiding business registrations for migrants showed that some viewed this as an opportunities.

Loopholes in law implementations created opportunities for some and impacted others economically. When PATI was mentioned in the comments, the main concern was the law. When users commented about bribery, only 38 Malaysians commented about bribery and license rental, and another 39 Malaysians commented about PATI, while five non-Malaysians commented about PATI. This user commented that the persons behind such criminal activities to aid illegal entries came from locals and migrants.

*UserAH, it's wrong. If they enter illegally, the men behind it are locals who lead the way for intrusion. Many locals are protecting PATI and employing them. We won't agree if it is our country. However, if there are migrants who illegally enter Indonesia, traitors must have helped them… They are just victims of local and international tekong who are making profits from*

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*trafficking. At least Rp.15 million are charged per person. For migrants who weren't tricked, they will choose legal entry.*

From the observations in the comments, some are making profits from helping migrants enter, and some are helping migrants register their businesses. From an economic point of view, it will not happen if there is no demand. Opportunities for clandestine activities are always available, but constant demand from the market will ensure that the supply is met. There is no number to estimate the economic impacts of bribery, license rental, and PATI. However, future research can be done to find out the financial implications. However, the main reasons behind migrants' entrepreneurship cannot be made solely on the agreeableness of both parties. However, an in-depth analysis of the comments is needed. Therefore, the co-occurrences of bribery will be analysed using all 13 codes from the Law theme.

#### 5.2.3.1 Bribery

Bribery is coded separately rather than adding to the codes of complaints/ critiques. Keywords include 'rasuah', 'makan suap', 'duit kopi', 'duit tepi' and any indirect meanings that relate to corruption as explained in Codes Definitions and Keywords in Chapter 3. The results are displayed in Table 5.6 below. The highest number of codes co-occurrence on bribery with other codes is 2,355 Malaysians with other complaining and criticizing, followed by 956 Malaysians requesting actions from the authorities, 102 Malaysians on tax evasions, 39 Malaysians reporting on PATI and 38 Malaysians on local licenses, 35 Malaysians on law, 23 on unlicensed migrants' businesses, 10 Malaysians on local spouses and pass abuse respectively. Only two non-Malaysians commented about

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bribery co-occurrence with complaining or criticizing the authorities, and another two on license rental.

**Table 0.6: Codes co-occurrences in Reasons Theme and Bribery Code for Malaysian and non-Malaysian.**

| Code | M: Bribery, Gr=4698 | NM: Bribery, Gr=75 |
|---|---|---|
| M: Complaint/ Critique, Gr=18739 | 2355 | 0 |
| M: Local License, Gr=902 | 38 | 0 |
| M: Law, Gr=1103 | 35 | 0 |
| M: Local Spouse, Gr=158 | 10 | 0 |
| M: Nationwide, Gr=340 | 24 | 0 |
| M: Pass Abuse, Gr=161 | 10 | 0 |
| M: Request Actions, Gr=8138 | 956 | 0 |
| M: Tax Evasion, Gr=520 | 102 | 0 |
| M: Undocumented, Gr=519 | 39 | 0 |
| M: Unlicensed, Gr=372 | 23 | 0 |
| NM: Complaint/ Critique, Gr=66 | 0 | 2 |
| NM: License Rental, Gr=44 | 0 | 2 |
| NM: Local Spouse, Gr=17 | 0 | 0 |
| NM: Undocumented, Gr=25 | 0 | 5 |
| NM: Not Wrong, Gr=184 | 0 | 4 |

Complaints and criticisms posted are mostly about corruption or bribery. The highest number of co-occurrences with bribery is on complaint/ critique (2,355 codes), followed



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by Requesting Actions (956). Other co-occurrences are summarized in Table 5.6. Comments from users discussing the abuse of power, corruption/ bribery, and lack of actions showed that the public is aware of the law and the functions of government bodies related to migrant entrepreneurs. The public requested actions and commented on the inaction/ lack thereof in enforcing the law. It can be observed in this comment:

> *Cases with contraband cigarettes are under customs. Police were only supporting custom jobs. The cases for roadside sellers are related to city councils. For migrants who are under immigration, the police helped, too. To put the blame solely on the police department is unfair. There is not necessarily corruption when a police officer goes to the stores selling contraband cigarettes; maybe they want to buy the cigarettes because they are cheaper. But if it involved gambling and prostitution, those are under police's jurisprudence.*

Not many non-Malaysians talked about bribery. Only 75 comments were coded with bribery. For co-occurrences of bribery and other codes in the Law theme, two were coded with complaints/ criticizing and two for license rental. An example of the comments that talked about employers' corrupted practices but were able to get away with is listed below.

> *But there are many locals who utilized PATI. They were OK. Nobody arrested or blamed them. If they met a policeman, employers would pay the police and settle. Safe.*

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Two different users criticised corruption in government agencies, saying it would be a never-ending problem if corruption issues were not solved. An example of the comments is:

> *I see that many Malaysians comment sarcastically… Munafik (hypocrites). They judge migrants as always doing wrong. Whereby those who gave the license. Who rented their shops? Who arrested? Who was bribed…? Malaysians did all… Their comments were as if they were surprised with the mistakes made by migrants... Ignorant... Even though Malaysians knew that they were the cause of it.*

Interestingly, the highest co-occurrences for non-Malaysian comments on bribery are when they report about PATI (5) and any issues or problems encountered during their stay that turned them into illegality. Besides that, non-Malaysians justifying bribery because migrants' businesses are not wrong (4) came second in the list.

Bribery has caused the government a loss of around RM40 billion to RM60 billion annually (Hisyamuddin Ayub, 2022). This estimate may be higher when other costs and economic impacts from bribery are also calculated.

#### 5.2.3.2 Undocumented Migrants and Pass Abusers

There should be no migrant entrepreneurs doing business 'illegally' if there are no PATI. PATI may fall under the category of entering without a valid document, migrants with false documentation, overstaying a visa, failing to renew their visas, pass abuser who works in a different sector than what was initially approved in the visa, workers who ran



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away from their employers, children of PATI who were born in Malaysia and even refugees.

The term kosong (empty/ blank) or *orang kosong* (blank person) is informally used to label PATI, while *pendatang asing tanpa izin* (PATI) (literally translated into migrants with no permission) is formally used for PATI. Issues on the terms used to label migrants were discussed in the literature where previously, the term *pendatang haram* (illegal migrants) was seen as offensive and was then changed to PATI to describe undocumented migrants. However, in the informal conversations of social media users, there is no boundary on the words that users will use, which may also include profanity and offensive words. An example of the comments is:

> *This situation is terrible. There may be thousands of migrants' shops in Klang Valley only. What happened to this country? Migrants are needed in these sectors, construction, agriculture, cleaner, plantations, cleaning drainage, but not to do businesses here like this is their own country, these shits don't want to do contract labour in construction, plantation but they were competing to fight for opportunities and ways to do business and generating income in Malay's land. They, illegal migrants, not knowing their place, enter our country but make it like their father owns this country.*

Offensive words were also used in comments from a local to support authorities' enforcement actions, where the word *tahik* (shit) was used in the previous comment example. Other offensive words which were used are *kuli* (coolie/ servant) and *betina* (female animal), which were used to describe migrants.

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*Don't give a chance to migrants who entered Malaysia for business… send them back… They deserve to be servants living in the jungle… If you let them do business… in the next 10-20 years, Malaysians will be servants. Now, migrants have conquered all grocery stores... Wait for some time if you don't believe it... Malaysians will be immigrants in their own country...*

The source of this issue is when migrant workers who were supposed to be hired as workers or PATI started their businesses. However, the issue is much more complicated than eradicating the source of migrant entrepreneurs by controlling the number of migrants. Some entrepreneurs are spouses to the locals and have migrated to the country, making Malaysia their home. It would be unfair to prohibit migrants who were married to the locals from doing business. However, in some instances, some migrants manipulated their valid visas and licenses to help fellow compatriots start their businesses. Some of the observed comments are:

*User AM, that's right… I saw they come to collect money… looking like a big boss… drinking at a coffee house with Bangladeshis discussing licenses… this is it, blaming foreigners… it won't happen if we don't let them be so hard-headed…*

The fees required for a spousal visa or social visit pass for spouses to locals are much cheaper, around RM6.00 – RM30.00, depending on their country of origin. The pass can be for a single entry for up to three months or multiple entry valid for a year with 30 30-day stay per entry. They will need sponsors who will pay for security bonds ranging from RM200.00 – RM2,000.00. For example, from the comments, we can visualize that there are Bangladeshis or Acehnese migrant entrepreneurs.

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Suppose they are married to locals who have not received permanent residence status. In that case, Bangladeshis must pay RM20.00 per year for a visa and RM750.00 for a security bond. Indonesians must pay around RM15.00 per year for a visa and RM500.00 for a security bond. This amount is far from what they must pay for a valid work visa in Malaysia. Further discussion about local spouses will be discussed in Chapter 6 on social implications.

Besides those who violated their terms of staying with spouse visas, some migrants became undocumented once they overstayed their tourist visas and those who entered in with tourist visas or other social visit passes but are working or doing business in Malaysia. Some of the observed comments are:

> *I hope you did not forget migrants who entered using social visit passes or tourists from China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.… Those extraordinary women were making a living working at reflexology centres, pubs, and bars, as well as karaoke and disco… some are in big cities, and some in rural areas... try to investigate Bentong, Kuala Lipis, Karak, Raub... Pubs and bars are operating on top floors of shop lots. Authorities were said to enjoy themselves there, too.*

> *Declare as a tourist but opening shops. They declare as tourists but are hired for contracts to build houses… they would have been imprisoned if it were in other countries. What to do? Our immigration is weak.*

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Previously, migrant workers would need to pay around RM9,000 to RM14,000 to recruitment agencies or outsourcing companies as the costs for migration (Low, 2021). Nonetheless, the cost for required visas/ passes, levies, medical check-ups, and other documentation to the authorities are fixed and much lower than the costs for their migration. Although the employer should pay the levies, some employees were required to pay for them as part of their migration costs.

The use of online systems for domestic helpers and other migrant workers' visa applications directly with JIM helped to reduce migration costs by migrants with the elimination of mediators and intermediaries. The involvement of private agencies in the hiring, regularizing, and enforcing of migrant workers has resulted in irregular migration to Malaysia (Low, 2021). It is safe to say that the more money involved in migrant workers' management, the higher the risks of their irregularities, but the levies' rates were also increased in the hope of reducing migrant workers' dependency.

The current levies that are imposed today were revised in March 2016. The rates differ based on the sectors, while the visas and deposits are based on migrants' nationality. The rate increase is to maintain economic equilibrium and as an initiative to reduce dependency on migrant workers. The government sees that increasing the levies will help the economy. However, consideration of the amount that was lost due to PATI and pass abusers may have helped in improving the management of migrants. Table A.1 in the Appendix showed an increase between RM50 - RM650.

Additionally, migrants will need to consider the cost of visas. The costs of visas according to migrants' nationality are displayed in Table A.2 in the Appendix.

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Despite the high costs of migration and the fees required to have valid visas and permits, some migrant workers see more opportunities for better economic gain in entrepreneurship rather than as salaried employees. Thus, they transformed from workers to entrepreneurs and abused their valid work visas/ permits. The public well knows that some of the migrant entrepreneurs were migrant workers who abused their work pass/ permit. Some of the observed comment examples are:

> *Entered Malaysia to work, and clearly, their permit was issued for work… if anyone is doing business, arrest and deport them home…*

> *Confiscate, arrest, detain, fine, and blacklist the names and passports of migrants if they go against Malaysia's Law, including migrants who were abusing their work permits but opened retail shops or businesses in Malaysia.*

There was also PATI, who was mentioned in the comments. However, Malaysians commonly labelled migrants as PATI regardless of their legal status. The terms PATI or migrants were used interchangeably in the comments by Facebook users, and it is beyond researchers' control to know who exactly they are mentioning, whether PATI or migrants in general. However, the comments were taken as what it is and coded accordingly, for example:

There must be someone from the authorities and gangsters behind these. They are why PATIs are daring enough to do business in Malaysia, just like 'mushroom'. The government must identify and arrest the faces behind them to eliminate them. Otherwise, this issue will be solved entirely. Some migrants introduced themselves as the 'Abang

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Long' (leader) of the area. How can this happen, and who is behind them all? This issue should be investigated to find out the real mastermind.

Even some of the migrant workers who work in Malaysia do not support the actions of past abusers and PATI. One of the comments from migrant workers is:

> *Confiscated and reopen, then confiscate and reopen, deport them if undocumented… such a sore… do it right until it free of PATI, too many of them.*

#### 5.2.3.3 License Rental and Unlicensed

The potential loss from business/ traders' registration to the government can be calculated along with the loss from visas. Work passes if the business is conducted by migrants who were supposed to be in Malaysia with PLKS. The observed comments include other licensing issues such as unlicensed/ informal businesses conducted by migrants and locals' registration who provide license rental to migrants' business owners locally known as Ali Baba business. Examples of the comments about Ali Baba are:

> *Great! Shut down all these thieves' shops in Malaysia. Spouse license, Ali Baba, is such a waste to Malaysia.*

> *UserWS is true; many are Ali Baba licenses, and the name owner will manage the permits for migrant entrepreneurs so they can open branches one after another. That is why grocery stores and minimarts are spreading everywhere, mushrooming.*

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When discussing licensing issues, there are two main problems with migrant entrepreneurs: licensed rental and unlicensed businesses. There were reports on how the authorities were taking action towards local traders operating without a license. However, migrant traders were left to run their businesses without any legal actions taken towards them. This made a judgement that it is harder for citizens to start small businesses than foreigners or refugees. It could make nascent entrepreneurs perceive that it is harder for citizens to start a business if they want to run their business correctly. Some of the examples of migrant entrepreneurs who were operating with no valid license from the comments are:

> *UserJT, if it's unlicensed, whose license was rented or has no license, is still running the business.*

> *Whaaaattt… running a business without a license, what license are they using all this while... Should stop doing all these illegal jobs. Think about your children, grandchildren, and the nation….*

The costs for business registration are charged differently by city councils. An example of the costs for ENF2's license registration to conceptualize a case scenario of possible loss to the government from migrants' entrepreneurship is listed in Table A.3 - Table A.7 in the Appendix.

### 5.2.4 An Illustration of Economic Loss to Government from Fees

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A simulation example of a Bangladeshi migrant worker who is supposed to work in construction in Selangor but abused the pass to open a business in the city under ENF2 jurisprudence. The costs of possible economic loss to the government are illustrated below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Construction PLKS | : RM1,850 |
| Visa for Indonesian | : RM20, RM500 (Bon) |
| Business license | : RM50, RM5 (sticker), RM7 (patil) |
| Total | : RM2,432 |

These fees may have been paid to allow migrant workers to travel and stay in the country. The licenses may have been paid by registering using a local identity. What may be lost is the money and how bribery has affected others economically through informal activities. In understanding this, the terms *rugi* (loss) and *bazir* (waste) were used to search for opinions. Some non-Malaysians expressed their dissatisfaction when there were migrants who did not have proper documentation, and it resulted in a loss to both host and home countries.

> *Arrest these PATI because we have our passports, but we lose them because we pay the levy yearly. While it is easier for those undocumented, no fees were paid to Malaysia or Indonesia.*

Generalisation was made on the impacts of migrants' entrepreneurship that resulted in losses to the nation, showing that the public is aware of possible economic loss from the activities. Tax evasions and the remittances from migrants' businesses created possible economic losses for the country. The public is also aware that migrant entrepreneurs who

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were not properly registered with the authorities cannot be held accountable if there are any issues with the products sold to them. Such comment is:

> *Need actions towards migrants selling without a license, registration, or regulation. They profited without paying any taxes… They sell food but will not be accountable if there is food poisoning, etc…… but locals will be confiscated when there are any issues... hope the authorities will be more intensive in curbing all migrant violations not abiding by the law.*

Generally, comments were on how bribery is the cause of migrants' entrepreneurship and that it is a loss to local entrepreneurs. Some mentioned that it is a loss that they have paid their taxes, but the authorities were taking bribes or not doing their jobs properly.

> *Phew… when looking at the flooding of migrant entrepreneurs, I think about the impacts on the income of our country… We are at the losing end. They did not pay taxes. I do not know much about taxes or national income. However, I can see that the cash flow is not good for our country. We as citizens should give full support. We should boycott migrant enterprises that have no permit. That is our part to do.*

The required bodies should adequately address the indirect economic impacts of bribery and migrants' entrepreneurship.

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### 5.2.5 Tax Evasions

Although many comments from Facebook users questioned how the government spent their tax money, Royal Customs Department Malaysia (KDM) spent less in 2020 compared to 2019, with the reduced approved budget in 2020 being less than 2019 by RM22,615,354.45. In 2020, the total taxes collected was RM38.666 billion, with RM5,134 million in import excise duty and RM4,719 million in local excise duty.

Cigarettes are subjected to excise duty under the Excise Act 1976 along with liquor, tobacco, tobacco products, motor vehicles, playing cards and mah-jong tiles (Excise Act 1976 [Act 176], 1976). In 2019, there were 63 cigarette importers, and this number increased to 74 in 2020. The public expected the agency to function well even during the pandemic's lockdowns, with budget cuts and less workforce. In 2020, KDM had a workforce of 13,555 personnel, and another 1,317 posts were vacant.

In 2020, the number of illegal business activities and smuggling that the Enforcement Division recorded, KDM, was 5,757 cases, 19.21% of cases less than in 2019, summarized in Table 5.14 in the Appendix. However, the number of cases decreased, with a value of RM1.290 billion in 2020, an increase of 184.14%. The taxable amount in 2020 is 22.70% less than 2019.

From the observed comments, some users mentioned the authorities, who were now increasing their enforcement activities in reprimanding migrant entrepreneurs who were involved with selling smuggled cigarettes and liquor. However, that was not the actual situation with KDM, where the number of cases recorded for cigarettes in 2020 was 39.55% less than in 2019. The reason behind this is that the comments observed were not

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collected from KDM's Facebook pages but from two other enforcement agencies and city councils. The data for KDM did not include data from these authorities if KDM was not involved in their enforcement activities.

Besides user comments requesting actions from authorities as a service of their tax money, some users gave their opinions about migrant entrepreneurs' tax evasions. Migrant entrepreneurs may not pay taxes if the businesses are not registered or unlicensed. There were also cases of contraband cigarettes and other smuggled products imported from migrants' home countries without paying proper taxes. The situations posed direct economic impacts to the country. The shift to online shopping may induce tax evasion and other import-export regulations (Silvia Mila Arlini, 2011). Lockdown situations during COVID-19 have increased online shopping transactions.

Silvia Mila Arlini (2011) research focuses on the impact of textile and clothing smuggling on Indonesia. However, the products discussed are not the most mentioned in the findings of this research. Only three comments mentioned textile and clothing in the same comment coded with tax evasions. From the analysis in Atlas.ti, 520 quotations were coded with tax evasion code where co-occurrences analysis was done to find out which types of business and migrants' nationalities are usually associated with tax evasion.

It was found that 121 comments talked about Acehnese entrepreneurs, 102 commented on bribery as the reason for tax evasion or vice versa, and another 97 commented about grocery stores in the same comments with tax evasions. Examples of the comments are:

*Salam, there are many migrant entrepreneurs from Aceh, Boyan, Cambodia, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh in Paya Jaras until Jalan Merbuk*



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*Sempak Sg. Buloh, whereby they have made hundreds of thousands in profits without paying income tax, and some of them have built big houses and bought lands in cash.*

*Malaysia will be at peace when there is no Acehnese doing business in Malaysia. There will be no problem. Many locals wanted to do business, and the Chinese (local) paid their taxes. What have Acehnese paid? Undocumented are still illegals, Acehnese, Bangladeshi, etc. The authorities have the right to arrest and deport them. PATI entrepreneurs are like parasites.*

Some users commented about how migrant entrepreneurs can avoid paying taxes. Furthermore, price competition resulting from smuggled products significantly impacted small businesses more than medium or large business players (Silvia Mila Arlini, 2011). While locals are burdened with many taxes used to pay the authorities, they question the authorities' unfair treatment of them and the corruption involved in migrant entrepreneurs' tax evasion. Examples are:

*Do it every day without bore to stop migrant entrepreneurs. This is our country. What is essential is that some officers should not be blinded by money.*

*Many Acehnese shops everywhere were not raided… They paid the authorities every month so they were not being disturbed by anyone.*

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Smuggling and 'illegal' business activities succeeded because of corruption, especially in developing countries, due to the low salaries of the authorities (Silvia Mila Arlini, 2011). Previous studies also suggested that smuggling may help to reduce prices in the domestic market. From an economic point of view, the demand for smuggled products will be ongoing if the cost of smuggling is lower than the tariff price (Silvia Mila Arlini, 2011). However, in the same research, the actual smuggling costs should consider the costs of being caught and penalized by the authorities. Back to the question of migrant entrepreneurs as competitors or complementary to available markets, smuggled products create unanticipated market competition (Silvia Mila Arlini, 2011).

Discussion about the smuggling of products to society may be influenced by their importance to the consumer. For example, smuggling rice from Thailand may be viewed differently than smuggling cigarettes from Indonesia. This takes us back to the importance of clarifying the products as necessities or luxuries that can influence social media users' opinions on smuggling issues. The comments are primarily negative regarding the reasons migrant entrepreneurs avoided taxes (income taxes or business taxes). However, positive comments can be viewed from users who prefer contraband cigarettes.

In contrast, the taxes are not paid off for as long as the products offered are cheaper. Consumers can check on the 'legality' of products such as cigarettes and alcohol without stamps if the duties are unpaid. Although consumers know their purchase of smuggled products, many still do so, creating constant demand. Some of the comments are:

> *There go my Canyon cigarettes* 😭 😭 😭.

> *Then it will be hard to find Canyon cigarettes hahahahaha.*



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*UserFR D-Blend cigarettes are now expensive in Klang… disrupting supply.*

The situation during the COVID-19 pandemic should be viewed from many perspectives on the preferences of contraband cigarettes over others. High inflation, reduced income, or loss of employment can be excellent reasons consumers are more mindful of their expenditures. Their choices of contraband cigarettes were made due to the lower prices compared to the taxed ones.

While the government increased the prices of cigarettes and alcohol to reduce consumption due to health reasons, these products will still be purchased by people. Higher taxes on cigarettes will only burden consumers when the tax is to be borne by the buyers. When there is another lower price option, some may prefer cigarettes sold by migrant entrepreneurs due to the cheaper price offered. Again, the market will most likely depend on product prices that can control demand and supply.

## 5.3 Conclusion

This chapter analysed social media comments about the economic framework of migrants' entrepreneurship. It evaluated possible reasons for market entry and entrepreneurship determinants of migrants' entrepreneurship from the local market environment. The evaluations were divided into three main findings, which are:

i) products and services offered by migrants' entrepreneurship were grouped into needs and wants

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ii) migrant entrepreneurs are complementing or competing in the local market environment, and

iii) economic reasons and impacts of migrant workers transformation into migrant entrepreneurs.

Content analysis managed to gain insights into migrants' businesses and their targeted niches while acknowledging the limitations of this approach and proposing a deeper thematic analysis in grouping the list of products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs.

Migrant entrepreneurs must consider many factors before committing to business, such as opportunity and risk, as well as demand and supply in the market. Based on the findings, the opportunity weighed heavier than the risks present, and many bravely chose to transform from a worker into an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs should be able to conduct their market research and observe supply and demand. Some migrant entrepreneurs have worked for their supply from their previous employer.

In this research, migrant entrepreneurs understand the demand in the local market, and they are not only focusing on their ethnic product niche and targeting a broader market from locals and migrant consumers. The analysis showed that more migrant entrepreneurs offered products and services that consumers needed than products and services grouped into wants. The pandemic altered consumer attitudes and preferences for essential and non-essential goods, with global economic challenges persisting.

The study explores the 'Specialty' theme, indicating that migrants' businesses are often not limited to their communities but target external customers. 'Needs' businesses, such



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as grocery stores, roadside sellers, and restaurants, gained prominence during lockdowns, addressing essential needs.

In contrast, 'Wants' businesses like gambling and carwashes garnered mixed opinions. Migrants' resourcefulness and adaptability are highlighted as they engage in home-based and mobile businesses. Homeownership by migrants reflects increased economic stability. However, stigmatisation and generalisations persist, affecting perceptions of their businesses.

Conclusively, social media commenters' perceptions towards migrant entrepreneurs regarding economic framework are primarily negative. They are seen as a threat to local entrepreneurs and compete in a market reserved for locals. As a result, migrants' entrepreneurship competition caused possible economic loss from not paying for licenses, visas, and taxes when the businesses are conducted with no proper documentation.

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# CHAPTER 6: SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE, INTEGRATION AND REJECTION OF MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## 6.1 Introduction

A sociological study claims that entrepreneurs are inclined by a need for power and independence but failed to highlight social pressures on entrepreneurship from psychological components (Waldinger et al., 1990). The impact of migrant workers' transformation into entrepreneurs was analysed thoroughly from the economic context in Chapter 5. It will be analysed from the psycho-social context in this chapter. Social dimensions are essential in the study of entrepreneurship.

However, categorization and constraints, such as the study of entrepreneurship for migrants, will limit the findings due to generalisation (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). From the same scholars, it is found that not everyone will perceive an event and act equally upon the same initiative.

In contrast, voluntary migrants are more inclined to start a business because of their out-of-place situation. These differences can be further explained from psychological contexts because individuals perceive desirability and feasibility differently. Past studies explain why some migrants resorted to entrepreneurships, but some do not.

Four main aspects that will be discussed from the results are issues on MyKad/ MyPR among migrants' entrepreneurs, migrants' entrepreneurs who are married to locals, clarifying/ supporting entrepreneurships for migrants as not wrong and accusations of locals not capable of working or trade. The question that needs to be answered from this



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chapter is whether migrant entrepreneurs were socially accepted or rejected while discussing social issues on migrant-local marriages, MyKad and MyPR issuance, religion, history, culture, values, and ideology that may have affected social media users commenting behaviour about the subject.

The use of languages and how conversations progressed in the comments section will also be observed and discussed in this chapter, including the voice of the original posts from the authors of the official Facebook pages that led to how Facebook users react to the posts or issues. This chapter aimed to answer the research question of how entrepreneurship can help improve social acceptance or if it resulted to more rejection towards migrant workers in Malaysia.

The observations and analysis are done through social media interactions on Facebook to examine the online attitudes of social media users towards migrants' entrepreneurship. The reported output for this chapter answers the following research question:

> RQ3: How did social media users react towards migrants' entrepreneurship within the social framework?

## 6.2 Results and Discussion

Previously, the comments were observed as they were individually. However, in this chapter, the psycho-social aspect will involve observations on the comments and initial Facebook posts by the administrator of the authorities' Facebook pages. The psycho-social aspect discussed in this chapter is analysing data from the theme 'Reasons'. Psycho-social was defined as:



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"Of or relating to social factors and individual thought and behaviour. Also: of or relating to human cultural evolution."

(OED Online, 2022).

The analysis observed how conversations progressed in the online platform to holistically understand the interactions between the post's authors (the administrator of authorities' Facebook pages) and the public (social media users) and between social media users. Psycho-social aspect needs observations from the psychological context and the environment that will be able to explain commenters' behaviour, feelings, social interactions, and preferences. The analysis will be able to answer what triggered hatred, hostility, and dehumanization towards migrant entrepreneurs in social media and how to avoid it, including acceptance, integration and even rejection towards migrant enterprises.

### 6.2.1 MyKad and MyPR

Personal identification of an in-group and out-group is vital in categorizing the comments into each social group where comments were coded into users' citizenship of either Malaysians or non-Malaysians based on their visible username, the language used, profile photos, friend lists and interest list on users' profile. Some comments mentioned or addressed non-citizens and showed how Facebook users identified themselves as citizens or non-citizens. In the comments, they openly talked about their opposite out-group or their own in-group.

Analysis of the opinions from the in-group and out-group perspectives will give exciting insights into the psychosocial constructs in this research. Racial identifications were also



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observed in the comments with the words Melayu (Malay), Cina (Chinese) and India (Indian), the three main ethnicities in Malaysia. Besides, other racial slurs such as Indon (Indonesian), Bangla (Bangladeshi), Pakistan (Pakistani), Myanmar/ Burma (Burmese), Rohingya, Nepal (Nepalese) and Thailand/ Siam (Thai) were also used by Facebook users in their comments. Discussion on citizenship issues can clarify the observations about social acceptance towards migrants on social media.

The comments which mentioned *kad pengenalan* (MyKad) or identity card (IC) were then coded with MyKad. MyKad is the term used for Malaysians' IC. In contrast, MyPR is used for citizens with permanent residence status identity cards. In most comments, the terms IC *biru* (blue IC) and IC *merah* (red IC) were used to differentiate between MyKad and MyPR, as locals use these terms.

There are various issues mentioned in the commenters related to MyKad and MyPR, which are the issuance of MyPR to non-citizens, fake identity cards of both MyKad or MyPR and even other cards such as UNHCR cards for refugees and other opinions regarding MyPR holders, local spouse and citizenship awarded to children of MyPR holders. One of the comments is observed below, where all the issues listed above were mentioned in the comment.

> *There is a night market in Johor where Indonesian businesses use individual licenses, MyPR, their families' documents, etc. By right, they should not be allowed to sell in Johor Bahru and conquer native's rights… Why did the authorities not check their permit and bank accounts? Moreover, hope JIM will be more concerned and work harder for Malaysia. SPRM investigated the employers who were behind this and immediately arrested them. Migrants*

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*are good at hiding from the authorities. Don't allow them to do business or hire them even if they are married to locals. Where are Johor authorities? Don't be too reckless... Because of money, natives' rights are lost... Think about our future... Johor has many migrants from many countries... The big or small factories in Johor have many migrants. The reason is that the permits are too cheap. There should not be many types of permits and visas for them to choose from and take advantage of to stay in this country for years... such a waste to our country... Hope the law will be stricter to prevent migrants' crimes... Hope Dato' Khalid in JIM will read this. Thank you. I love Malaysia.*

The user also came up with a suggestion to check not just their permits but also their bank accounts. There was also a comment about how migrant enterprise owners may use local or spouse details for business registration. However, the enterprise's bank account will be registered under the 'real' owner's name, as observed in this comment:

*#PBT2 #KDN #ENF2 #SSM #KPDNHEP #SPRMCongratulationss and well done… please be strict after MCO because there will be attempts to rebuild the illegal markets. Please take enforcement action against Alibaba. Those presumably are just workers… if they claim to be workers... call the license owner to take their statements... or the company's bank account... Alibaba will not rent their bank account even if the license and premises are rented from locals. If they fail, arrest and charge them both.*

However, the authorities who are involved in managing migrants and migrants' entrepreneurship have limited capabilities to directly check on bank accounts as stipulated in the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 [Act 709], where there will be standard



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operating procedures for such actions to be taken by the authorities (Laws of Malaysia, 2010).

Users' observed comments were mainly about economic concerns discussed in the previous chapter. However, there was an interesting comment about how, historically, rebellion resulted in ethnic cleansing in Riau, Deli and Sumatra and the said user's concern if migrants and PATI may unite with non-Bumiputera for a rebellion. This exciting comment sounds alarming but intrigued further study about the possible reason behind the comment.

> *Remember the history of Riau, Deli, and Sumatera. Used to be Malay majority. There was a high influx of migrant workers. More than the natives. There was a rebellion that killed many Malays, including the kings. It is not impossible to do this in the Peninsula if we let in many migrants and foreign workers. In the Peninsular, Malays and natives makeup only 50% of the population. Imagine if migrant workers, PATI, unite with non-Bumi. The number may be more than the number of natives. They stayed and bred and received red IC (MyPR). They may someday claim their rights, merging into a pact for rebellion. Huge problem.*

Based on contact theory (Allport, 1954), discrimination can lead to violence. When three rejection levels towards the out-group occur, physical violence may erupt. Under certain circumstances, when anti-locution or verbal rejection took place, which progressed into discrimination or segregation, physical attack may follow. Other local commenters feel their safety, security, and future are threatened. As discussed by Higgins et al. (2010),

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people with a pessimistic view of the economy and security are likelier to have an anti-immigrant view. This sentiment was also observed in these comments:

> *Wait a little bit more. Malaysians will become buyers, and we, as workers, don't have to eradicate them. They will attack (lawan balik) because they have controlled the economy.*

> *Hope DBKL, PDRM and ATM can monitor migrant tailors who make uniforms for the army and police in Pekan Sg. Besi. Don't let the enemy of the country wear the uniform of our country's army and police.*

The situation during the pandemic may have influenced intergroup relations when the pandemic was universally perceived as economically threatening. Higher prejudice was observed when a group felt threatened over limited economic resources or their categorical value (Higgins et al., 2010). Both groups will have a defence mechanism to protect their own, including their economic and social importance (Allport, 1954; Leong, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

#### 6.2.1.1 Acceptance towards MyPR

Although non-citizens who received PR status can enjoy the same benefits as citizens except for the rights in elections and political involvement, they still received different reactions from locals, as observed in the comments. It can be positive with comments supporting and approving PR of citizenship status as 'half-citizen' and not seeing them as migrants.

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Positive:

> *User AH, red IC is not migrants. But they are permanent residents. Already half citizen. Which part that they are migrants. Keep your stupidity to yourself.*

> *However, like this shop next to mine, he is an Indonesian. He just said he was born in Malaysia. The license is registered under his name.*

While negative with curse and slur words such as *Boyan, goblok* (dumb ass) and *berambus* (scram) were used to reply to a comment posted by non-Malaysian.

Negative:

> *User RAA doesn't have to talk nonsense, you Boyan… Malaysians studied to tertiary level, but we didn't brag about it… you 'goblok' (dumbass) (having red IC is still a beggar in our country), you are shamelessly breeding here 'berambus' (scram), you idiot.*

*Boyan* is a racial slur word used as an insult towards Indonesian migrants to Malaysia in the 80s and 90s. *Boyan* is the Bawean, an ethnic from the Bawean islands in the Java Sea, who migrated to Malaya before independence or Malaysia (after independence) (Sarifin & Sukimi, 2017). The same scholars concluded that although Bawean migrants shared several similarities with the local Malays, they still identify themselves closer to their roots as Indonesians. Inclination to be identified as a particular ethnicity may influence

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positive or negative reactions and attitudes as individuals or a group. Failure to adapt and assimilate can lead to identity clashes and ethnic tensions (Sarifin & Sukimi, 2017).

Observed comments on social media clearly showed that interventions and actions should be taken to help assimilate and adapt the out-groups to the social structure in Malaysia because the reactions are mixed between positive and negative. Most comments are more hostile towards PR, with critics of the law to grant PR statuses as well as citizenship status to children of MyPR holders, as observed in this comment:

> *Sorry, MPS, the parents of many who commented may have red IC… That's why they were supporting… mostly with red IC. Once their children have blue IC, they will automatically become boisterous. The government needs to review the blue IC given to red IC, including their children born in Malaysia. Malaysians' needs should be prioritized.*

Indirectly, some comments had positive reactions towards PR, such as that they should be allowed to run businesses. Consequently, comments criticising adverse reactions from the public towards the authorities who strictly enforced the law of not allowing PR to run small businesses.

> *I can see that they were pulling things from each other. When they lost their grip, the things fell. It's good that MPS is strict with migrant entrepreneurs (red IC). Isn't it what everyone has been blabbing about when the authorities were not taking action towards them? Now you are angry when the authorities are being strict. What do you want exactly?*

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*User DNH, how can license registration be facilitated when the law clearly states that migrants with red IC cannot do business? Previously, people made a fuss when markets were full of migrant traders. Do you approve of them selling or not?*

#### 6.2.1.2 MyPR Approval

Besides comments from Malaysians who feel threatened with concerns about their safety and future, prejudice and stigma towards migrants were also observed in the comments that they, too, may feel threatened. Some of the comments which were identified and coded as Malaysian users have a specific prejudice and stigma towards migrants who were granted permanent residence status and received their red IC. In-group perspectives towards the out-group were influenced by the personal experiences of the users and the social identity associated with their encounters with the migrants.

For example, in this comment, the user questioned about a Bangladeshi who was awarded a *Dato'ship* (an honorary title) was also granted an IC.

*Dumbfounded, apparently Bangladeshi Dato' Bhuyien, how can he get an IC and the title!!*

As Dato' Bhuyien is Bangladeshi, there are different reactions towards some known Malaysian politicians whose roots were from Indonesian lineage, such as ex-Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi, originally from Java. It was stereotyped that Indonesians can easily granted PR status. In this comment, networking

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with the right people can facilitate PR applications with just two years of residency in Malaysia, and they can immediately do business there.

> *Typical… When it comes to locals. Immediately, they will be captured and compounded. When it comes to migrants, 'big cables', sluggishly actions will be taken… Gombak, Ampang, Langat, Sungai Buloh are nests for PATI… Lived in Malaysia for two years, big cables straight away, getting red IC. Instantly doing business. When we talk about it, they say that we envy them... jealousy... But this is a fact that happens in Malaysia.*

However, some comments mentioned immigrants who had been in Malaysia since the 1970s.

> *User AN, I have many Indonesian and Acehnese friends who live in Keramat. The majority had red IC, and some came in 1979.*

Not many Malaysians understand the laws and regulations on citizenship. Many comments may sound ignorant, and some may sound defensive, depending on the perspectives of the in-group and out-group. The choice of words and the comments already posted by other users may influenced the comments posted afterwards. This is how social media works: users may read, give opinions, and interact directly with a post. This is a chain of conversations between two users who talked about their encounters with Indonesians who are already PRs. They may have arrived in Malaysia 35 years ago.

The voice of the comments posted was neutral and informative. They did not argue or criticize migrants or the authorities in their comments, which showed that some users are



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more mature and open to discussing sensitive issues on social media. It showed that social media can also be viewed as a platform to voice a neutral standing on a partisan issue by not being pro-migrant or pro-authority.

> *User NB: Pantai Dalam has many Indonesian grocery stores.*
>
> *User AN: User NB they are already citizens… Many Acehnese have blue IC because they have lived for more than 35 years in Malaysia… Initially, they were from Aceh, but they are now citizens…*
>
> *User AN: User NB, I see that many have already got blue IC… because they came in the 80s when Tun Hussein Onn was the PM.*
>
> *User NB: User AN, I have many Indonesian and Acehnese friends who live in Keramat. The majority had red IC, and some came in 1979.*
>
> *User AN: User NB, right, many are rich now… because they were doing business.*
>
> *User NB: User AN, foreigners are the most well-off… we can barely make ends meet.*

The in-group opinions and reactions towards the out-group can be different and highly influenced by migrants' nationality. In an economic sense, Indonesians may receive wages different from those of other nationalities. At the same time, socially, they may be treated differently than other nationalities, especially Rohingyas and Bangladeshis. The vulnerabilities of the refugees fleeing war, conflicts, and oppression demanded aid and help from neighbouring countries. Despite these concerns, adverse reactions were posted by the in-group on refugees regarding citizenship or criticism of the government's reactions towards them. Opinions towards refugees and how they can be easily granted citizenship are observed in this comment.

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*Wah! Good that they can communicate in Bahasa Melayu…. They will get blue IC instantly and claim themselves as Malays… Rohingyas stay immune because the authorities are afraid to do anything… Can't even smack… just arrest, feed them… release them… so we'll wait another 20 years. If something happens to Malaysia, our children shouldn't blame the people... The government and all departments involved are at fault...*

The authorities and the law were blamed if a situation seemed unfavourable to the public. Government, law, enforcement, and authorities are always mentioned in comments coded with MyKad and MyPR. It showed that the public knows the law even if they may not fully understand it. The authorities should take more proactive actions in educating the public about the law of citizenship and the responsibilities of the authorities involved, the citizens and non-citizens. Social media can promote awareness about identification cards, temporary residence or citizenship application procedures, and how such statuses can be revoked. Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara (JPN) (National Registration Department) utilized social media to communicate with the public.

Between January and December 2020, JPN posted 320 posts on Facebook, 186 tweets, 310 retweets and 180 posts on Instagram. The posts were mainly about the department's activities and sharing information about its core business.

**6.2.1.3 MyPR Applications for Migrants Who are Married to Locals**.



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Observations about migrants married to locals are coded with Local Spouse in the 'Reasons' theme, which Malaysians or non-Malaysians can post. There are comments about PR applications by migrants who are married to locals who then used their local spouse's information to register for businesses. Conducting a business is a way for migrants to earn a living and provide for their families, as observed in this comment:

> *We are not undocumented (kosong). We are permanent residents. Our children were born here. If we cannot do business, what are we going to eat?*

Some comments mentioned that migrants manipulate locals to make a living in the country like in these comments:

> *User NSS, they don't get it… there are many Acehnese shops in my hometown… When ambushed by immigration, the shop is registered under the wife's name…. The license is complete, and the passport is valid… what else to do...*

> *They have learned from those before them that they must marry locals to live easily and get rich. Once they married a Malay woman, they would move freely and register under their wife's name to do business, get loans, etc. Malay women were manipulated at the maximum so they could live comfortably here. Tactics by bollock migrants came here to breed till they didn't return anymore. The government shall stop this. They are needed in construction, agriculture, cleaners, labour, and drainage. Do not do business here; return to your country if you want to do business.*

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A comment was posted with suggestions for SSM to improve its business registration regulations. Although some of the comments are harder to implement, most comments were about higher compounds, and fines should be imposed on those charged guilty. However, based on previous research, higher fines and compounds will only lead to more corruption.

> *Hope SSM can tighten the law. For example 1) foreigners (married to locals, with PR status) can only register for SSM at the age of 80 (they will die before they can even register) 2) SSM set up a monitoring team for migrants who use Ali Baba system (confiscate the shop) compound RM100K/ RM200k to SSM shop owner (they can open a business, what with paying RM100k/ RM200k, afraid then) - officially corruption vanished, Ali Baba shop owners will be afraid to do Ali Baba system... 3) for any licensing authorities, there should be a seal/ stamp/ signature when monitoring team come for inspection and if there are migrant entrepreneurs in the shop, please arrest the person who previously gave the seal/ stamp/ signature, can check their names and dates. 4) Ensure enterprise registration is not allowed for migrants (even when they use a local's name). If there are migrants in the shop claiming that they are just workers, please compound.*

There is a comment that mentioned how PR migrants would apply for citizenship, and it was their only motive to be married to locals. Some even mentioned that economic improvement would be other results for their PR statuses.

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*User HAB, one more thing, when Malay women marry them, they can use the license under their wife's name, and then they will get their IC. That's their only motive, but these ladies never realized it.*

Assimilation and adaptation of migrants into social groups in the host country have already been widely discussed in sociology research. Migrants' marriage with locals as results and reasons for entrepreneurships were discussed in Asian environments such as in Japan (Md Mizanur Rahman & Lian Kwen Fee, 2011), South Korea (Lian Kwen Fee & Md Mizanur Rahman, 2014) and Malaysia (Mosbah et al., 2018; Nayeem Sultana, 2008) whereby South Asian migrants who are Muslims married with local Muslims or involved in Muslim centric businesses.

As Muslim men are allowed polygamy, some may already have a wife in their home country and will abandon their local wife once they return to their country of origin (Dannecker, 2005). Another issue discussed in migration studies is how arranged marriages between locals and migrants are underground services provided by for-profit organizations and individual entrepreneurs to migrants to legitimize their migration (Massey et al., 1993). In this comment, a user expressed concern over 'marriage-syndicate' that can aid migrant-local marriage that can then be used to apply for a business license:

*They are smart, marrying aunties or grandmothers (older women), and their hearts will melt with loving words. Once they get married, they will use these aunties' or grandmothers' IC to apply for business licenses. Delusional that these migrants wanted them. Once they get the license, they will leave their wife behind. While they already have a wife in Bangladesh or Pakistan.*

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*That's why there are countless shops and they use local women's licenses. Perhaps there is a syndicate for their marriage.*

However, not all migrants used marriage as a form to gain citizenship or permanent resident status, to immigrate or even to be involved in business in host countries. In some circumstances, interracial marriages are as common as same-race marriages. This highly controversial topic involving the minority migrant group is discussed in the context of social media platforms. Information, opinions, and perceptions are uncensored. Anyone is free to give their opinions or share their experiences on social media, including opinions and perceptions on how migrant men manipulated local women.

There is a comment from a Pakistani entrepreneur who makes exciting points about marrying locals while providing for his family in his home country. His current wife has no objection to his wanting to marry another woman from Pakistan.

*If my wife and family are happy, the family in Pakistan is happy. It's a good life. However, some people have negative thoughts towards foreigners who are married to locals.*

*I worked, got paid, and sent all the balance to my family back home. I can't give all the money to my wife. I have a family in Pakistan, too, madam.*
*My wife is a local, and I gave her rights to rent a house, food, clothing, etc. The rest I sent to my family. Do you have a problem with that?*
*User HA, my wife is a Malay. Later, if I married another woman in Pakistan, my wife agreed that I could have another wife. Do you have a problem with that?*

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Consequently, not everyone is against migrants marrying locals, and the registration of businesses is made under their local spouse's name. Observed below are comments by citizens who supported migrants marrying locals:

> User *KR, if the wife is a local and not working, who will support the family if the husband is not allowed to work?*

> *User SJ can register for SSM or business license under their wife's name… but the husband will need to have a permit… they can register the permit under the wife's company… married to Malaysians doesn't mean that they can do as please… still need to abide by the law... if they are not earning money, who will feed their wife and children... immigration does understand... that's why there are ways... regardless the nationalities.*

> *User DMR, I understand it should be ok if the wife is at the premises when asked about the license. There is the wife's name, and the wife is there… but I am not sure. Whatever it is, you can ask others' opinions.*

This comment, although it sounds supportive of migrants' entrepreneurship, has a sound of sarcasm about how marriage can be used for economic gains.

> *Whoever wants to do business, marry Abangla (Bangla) or Abang Aceh (Acehnese). They are handsome, and you will get a grocery shop and live comfortably with money.*

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Based on a study by ILO found that 53% of its respondents agreed that migrant workers should marry local citizens if they want to. It was found that 65% of Japanese and 49% of Singaporeans agreed on migrants marrying locals. In comparison, only 17% agreed that they should be offered a path to citizenship, compared to Japan at 53% and Singapore at 41% (International Labour Organization, 2019).

It can be observed that the high gap in Malaysian public acceptance towards migrants, as compared to Singaporeans and Japanese, has two different issues: i) migrants marrying locals and ii) migrants granted citizenship status. This can be linked to economic factors in these countries as Singapore and Japan are developed countries while Malaysia is a developing country. In a developing country such as Malaysia, citizens are entitled to many benefits not offered to migrants, including education, healthcare, housing, and economic opportunities.

When the in-group feels that the out-group threatens their economic interests, it can lead to negative attitudes or prejudices towards the out-groups (Allport, 1954; Croucher, 2017). There are comments about economic opportunities that are available for citizens should not be enjoyed by migrants as observed in these comments:

> *Married to locals and using wife's name for license. Then their small shop expanded, from 20 x 20 (feet) becomes 80 x 80… cancel their spouse's license…*

> *Even if they have IC, they can't confirm that they are citizens, Bumiputera… They are just squatters (tumpang) for birth… their grandparents, parents, and spouses are still migrants, claiming themselves as citizens. I don't know where*



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*it comes from… they are entitled to whatever benefits, facilities and assistance the government gives... Meanwhile, Malaysians need to appeal for assistance and aid for their schoolchildren.*

However, a comment suggests that migrant business owners register their businesses without marrying locals. On paper, they can be registered as migrant workers for the company, but they are the business owners.

*This issue has been going on for a long time… man or woman, register as usual, apply as usual, can start a restaurant business… The migrant owner is like a worker to the registered 'owner' who was just sitting at home waiting for money to come... Don't even have to be a husband and wife... The law can do nothing about it... This has been going on for decades laa.*

Although this sounds like an easy way out, there is another restriction on registering migrant workers. Another user commented that the migrant worker needs the company name to appear as their registered employer on the permit. However, the most crucial issue is the enforcement of the law and whether there is an effective way to ensure the validity of employer-employee details on every 2 million migrant workers' permits in Malaysia.

*User BK, In Johor… the license cannot be under the husband's name for those who are married to local women… the license must be under the wife's name… if the husband oversees the shop…, the husband's permit must be registered under the shop's name… plus, the restriction is only for premises under PBTs... not including the rental of private properties...*

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#### 6.2.1.4 MyPR and Children of MyPR Parents were Granted MyKad.

A controversial posts when an enforcement officer was disrespectful to an elderly person with PR status who was selling corn by the roadside, received around 355 comments, not including any reply to the comments. In this chain of conversations, a comment from User MF on the post received 12 replies from 10 other. Facebook's algorithm will be able to show comments that have received more likes or replies at the top of the comments list. Some of the comments about MyPR can be read below:

Original Comment

> *User MF : Give the full video, not just some parts of it… even if he is a red IC holder, he should have some consideration. He was just trying to make a living… #mbselangor#ydpmps.*

Replies

> *User MN : User MF, pity the uncle. But in this case, he has been compounded many times. He was rejected for a license application. Because his IC is red. According to federal law, it cannot approve a business license. Before this, the YB had already apologized to him, not just to show support. What's the solution? The representative should table this case with the parliament so it will not happen again. I hope I can settle this nicely.*

> *User OD : User MN… if the authorities gave them chances, then their families will keep growing (beranak pinak), selling in the area… good job, Selangor authorities… Instantly eliminate migrants' business.*

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*User AF : User OD, his children are citizens. Thus, his wife must be a citizen soon.*

*User NSK : User OD, Sis… his father has red IC, sis… he has blue IC… it has been stated in the requirement for citizenship that being born in Malaysia won't automatically make you Malaysian. It is determined by the parent's status. Meaning that his mother is a Malaysian. Looks like we mistreated them with the mindset that his father is a migrant. Red IC is not a stateless person. Red IC differs from PATI. Let's say his father has red IC but is of a different nationality that we may laud, like Japanese or Korean. I wonder if people will react the same as go back to your country... I think many of us don't understand the process of how the children have blue IC while their father has red IC. This man married a Malaysian. Our people, sis. JPN officers should be clear on this issue and help them out. Yes, the father was labelled because he has red IC... plus he is not Bunga Cinta Lestari (BCL)... there is no Indonesian chase off the late Ashraf when he married BCL and stayed there, sis. Sometimes, our understanding is too quick to judge. Hating red IC. Until we can't see the real problem, which is PATI.*

In the conversation above, it can be concluded that not many understand that the award of citizenship to children of a PR parent is already listed in the constitution. Based on an encounter with a cobbler after confirming that he is a Minang originally from Indonesia, he rejected a request for an interview about him and his experience running a business in Malaysia. Suddenly, he turned defensive and insisted that he was a Malaysian by holding

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a red IC (MyPR) and that all his children were Malaysians with blue IC and he ran his business with proper registration.

Previous observation and the comments above shared their experiences of encounters with PR children whose children have blue IC. However, they claimed their parents had not received their blue IC despite their applications. This showed that citizenship is not easily granted to anyone with PR status.

> *UserA even had red IC for 40 years. He has been applying for blue IC for a long time. His five children with blue IC. He is just an elder, and does the red IC deserve to eat sand? It's not like he was monopolizing the market like the Rohingyas…*

> *User FC, Tasik Kesuma, by the roadside? That's my aunt selling lemang, and she looked a bit like Indonesians… But she is not an Indonesian. Her children were born here… her daughter married a Perakian last January… She is 25 years old… True, her parents have red IC with permanent residence status... But their children who were born in Malaysia are citizens... Like myself from Minangkabau roots... But my parents migrated to Malaysia long ago, since they were only 12 years old... Before independence, they got married, and now they are selling fruits in Malaysia... But I don't know... Descendants of migrants will be kicked out.*

These comments showed that MyKad and MyPR can only be granted to anyone who complies with the requirements for citizenship. However, there were cases reported around September 2019 on selling legitimate MyKad to non-citizens by JPN officers and



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an organized syndicate. Although the case was reported before the COVID-19 pandemic, the problems started in 2018, and the impacts may have lasted longer than the virus itself. These individuals were using their MyKad to register for a Malaysian Passport, hoping to exit this country legally. It was reported that there is a syndicate that operates this illegal business that is responsible for producing over 1,000 MyKad for non-citizens (Safini Shamsul Munir, 2019).

### 6.2.2 Buying and Selling of MyKad

The syndicate was exposed when a JIM officer encountered a Chinese woman who was applying for her passport by using a legit MyKad. However, she failed to answer a simple question in Bahasa Melayu that put her citizenship into question (Nurul Hidayah Bahaudin, 2019). As reported in a local newspaper (Skuad Khas Harian Metro, 2019), the cards will be ready within 48 hours. There are two categories of MyKad offered:

i) a MyKad using a local's information who lived in the rural areas or who have died are offered at RM50,000 to RM100,000, and

i) a MyKad with fake or fictitious information that is not linked to anyone's information offered at RM300,000 to RM600,000 each which also includes a birth certificate (Skuad Khas Harian Metro, 2019).

The newspaper article mentioned the punishments of not less than seven years and not more than 15 years and fine not less than RM50,000 but not more than RM500,000 for the selling of birth certificate and MyKad in Section 26E of Act 670: Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007, 2016). There is a comment from a user that the

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punishment is not fair as they can gain up to RM300,000 per MyKad while being fined only up to RM500,000, as quoted in this comment.

> *Do you feel that it is worth it to be imprisoned for seven years and RM40k fined if convicted for the selling of MyKad, like selling citizenship to non-citizens? They can get RM200k - RM300k per MyKad. Our nations need to compete with migrants in our land. We force the government of the day to review the punishment for MyKad selling to non-citizens as punishment for traitors to the country... Death sentence.*

The public is aware of this issue, and some users have commented on social media about their dissatisfaction with the authorities in charge of managing MyKad and enforcing the law. Under Section 466 of the penal code or if found guilty under Regulation 25(1)(i) in National Registration Regulations 1990, the accused can be imprisoned for up to seven years and fined not more than RM20,000 or both. While the law is readily available, observed comments from users showed that they complained that the actions taken are not enough to eradicate the issues of MyKad selling and counterfeiting.

> *Please arrest PATI, who bought IC. Those involved with IC dealings must be heavily penalized or deprived of citizenship.*

> *Do your best. Focusing on our citizens is more critical… we have many issues in our country… support to wipe clean PATI… including those who bought IC… etc.*

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In some of the comments, users tend to relate the selling of MyKad to Indian and Chinese citizens as their physical appearance are like Malaysian Chinese and Indians in Malaysia, so they can get away with it.

> *When is the turn for the Chinese den to buy RM300k IC…? The one who flies an upside-down flag is Chinese, right? Arrested yet? Who's the evillest between these two?*

> *Investigate Indians who managed to get valid IC even if they were not born in Malaysia.*

Several ethnic roots are commonly associated with local Sabahan, such as Pakistanis and Pinoys, who are said in the comments by users to have gained Malaysian citizenship. Besides that, the Acehnese and Indonesians were also mentioned. Social media is commonly used to rant, criticise, or complain about others, including out-groups, especially of different ethnicities, religions, beliefs, or nationality as in these comments:

> *Many Pakistanis in Malaysia have IC. Why's that?*

> *User FA, that's why the Pinoys can quickly get blue IC (MyKad).*

> *User HI, what if Acehnese has become a Malaysian citizen?*

When comments came from Indonesians who mentioned citizenship and PR, some commenters related their comments to the fact that the ancestors of most Malaysians were also migrants who migrated from Nusantara before independence. However, it was a

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known fact that Malaysia and Indonesia were not established before 1945, and migration has been going on even before the formation of countries and territories. Several Indonesian social media users relate the current migration status to the history of people who migrated from Java and Sumatra to Malaya and even further to the era of the Malacca Sultanate.

### 6.2.3 Migration has Been Going on for Years and will Continue On

Comments from Malaysian social media users generalised the lack of enforcement on the problems and issues of migrant workers in Malaysia that have been going on for many years. As discussed in the literature, the three waves of labour migration into the country date back to the 1970s. This can be generally explained by the fact that the Federal Constitution, especially on the citizenship of 'Malaysians', was only made official after Malaysia Day. The date of October 1962 is a significant factor in determining one's citizenship. However, non-Malaysian commenters' opinions about migration, especially Indonesians' involvement in Malaya's independence, were influenced by history up to Sultan Mahmud Shah during the Melaka era in the 1500s.

Meanwhile, Malaysian users tend not to relate their comments to past events, especially historical facts as old as those from the Melaka era. Their opinions mainly were focused on current situations, especially with the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and how there was a lack of changes over the years as migrant workers' issues were not managed effectively. The post by ENF1 shared a news post by a local newspaper on ENF4 enforcement actions, titled "The raids continued on migrants' business premises". Some comments requested more actions from the authorities. This comment that received 100

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replies from Malaysian and non-Malaysian users was a generalised comment with no specific report for actions to be taken on any business that reads:

*User AFMN: Please raid Acehnese shops…*

The comment received mixed replies from users who may or may not support migrants' entrepreneurship. These comments discussed citizenship and their own experiences of marrying local women. Examples of replies coming from non-Malaysian users who rationalized migrations to historical events as below:

*User AS: User MP, all businesses must have paid their taxes. Don't you know the law? Migrants also paid their taxes except undocumented. If undocumented, chase them out. They are guilty. Why do you want to deport those with valid permits? Not all migrants are without permits. I lived in Malaysia for many years, and my wife and children have blue IC. The license is under my wife's name if I want to do business. I have a spouse visa. Do you think that grocery shop owners are undocumented? If they are, they must have been packing long ago...*

*User SP: User AS they don't understand history since long ago, Malay women have married Acehnese, Pahang Royal Princess (Putroe Pahang) with Sultan Iskandar Muda. Until now, her tomb is in Aceh… They don't remember the Acehnese warriors who fought alongside Malays for independence. For once, you should go to Melaka to visit the Acehnese warriors' tomb so you can understand history. Constantly backfiring Acehnese, if one day the Malay will*

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*fight with the Chinese and Indian, nobody will help you, but Acehnese will, do you understand...*

*User TPT: User MS, since the fall of Melaka, we have followed the standard of Malay Law. Who were the traitors towards the Malays? We have to remember that we are standing on Malay land run with the blood of the martyrs in the name of Islam. In 1520M, the Red Bands (Holy War Army of the Red Bands or Tentera Sabil Selendang Merah) fought the Portuguese, attacking and defending. Betrayal and envy started from fortune and power. Just ask yourself who is the fighter and who is the loser; don't be racist on this page.*

*User TM: User AFMN, we are all the same, regardless of whether Malaysian or Acehnese Malay. What differentiates us is just our actions and good deeds. According to the law, it is wrong for migrant workers to work in Malaysia without valid documents. I admit that, but we don't look down on others or other races. All humans are the same in front of Allah, whether rich or poor, black or white. I apologize if my words hurt in any way.*

*UserRY, remember during the era of Sultan Iskandar, Malaysia was assisted by Aceh against the Portuguese colonialists.*

This interesting comment from an Indonesian user claimed that in a speech by their president, he mentioned that in the past, teachers were brought in from Indonesia to Malaysia to teach. His comment received 96 replies from users, who questioned the truth behind his comments.

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*User JAR: It is always the Indonesians who get caught. Are there no other nationalities of migrant entrepreneurs caught by JIM? Too much revenge towards Indonesia??? Don't you realize from history that Indonesian teachers are the ones who teach in Malaysian schools??*

Replies:

*User KA: User JAR, where got Malaysians from Indonesian descendants… They are descendants of Singaporeans and Bangladeshis… That's why they hate us from Indonesia so much.*

*User BH: User LP, some teachers from Indonesia came here to learn the Malaysia education system to be brought back to Indonesia.*

*User BH: User JAR, wrong facts… get the correct information… Indonesians like hoax news. We here prefer facts and more to the intention of Malaysians' wellbeing. Therefore, any migrants or anyone who breaks the law… the authorities will take action… MALAYSIA LAW HAS TO BE RESPECTED, AND WE WILL KEEP UPHOLDING IT SO IT WILL NOT BE EASILY ABUSED BY ANYONE... that's all, thank you.*

*User SS: User JAR, If Joko said that Indonesian teachers are great, why didn't he ask them to teach his citizens and improve their living standards… Then, his citizens would not go everywhere to make a living. It's a pity because many*

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*of my friends are Indonesians who migrated to other countries to change the fate of their families.*

*User NB: User J, as far as I know, teachers from Indonesia never taught Anwar and Mahathir. Try to ask all Malaysian ministers whether they were brilliant because teachers from Indonesia taught them. Suppose it's proven that Mahathir is brilliant because of the teachers from Indonesia who taught him. In that case, I will throw myself into the deep sea.*

*User J: User NB, you have not been born. How did you know the history? Ask Tun M and Datok Anuar Ibrahim. Have Indonesian teachers ever taught the people of Malaya?*

*User J: Indonesians have no ill heart, bro. What more between Muslims? How many Malays from Malaya went to mine gold in Nagan Raya, but we were never offended by them as long as they did not break the region's law? But the Malays' ill heart is beyond humane. Not just towards migrants, they were heartburning among the Malays when their neighbours' economy flourished. This is a fact, not a slander. That's enough, bro, and lose the jealousy.*

*User J: User SB, the attitude of Indonesians towards other Muslims is too different. You can watch it on YouTube. Two students from Kedah studied at Universiti Gadjah Mada, Medan. During the day, they attend lectures. At night, they sell burgers, and the locals support them as buyers. That's the nature of Indonesians, without heart.*

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*User AM: User JAR boss, I am an Indonesian, and I am a lawyer. From my understanding, this is the law that is already in force in our neighbouring country, Malaysia, so we have to respect the law in Malaysia, DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG (different places have different laws to follow). Follow the rules. I wanted to do business in another country, and we followed their rules. We manage the licensing. What if Malaysians go to Indonesia without documents and do business without a license/ permission?*

*User BM: My brain got jammed with his comment… luckily, he did not claim the buildings in Malaysia won't be built if there are no Indonesian workers… Is this a new revolutionary comment after the comments about buildings not being built have become irrelevant in this era?? Just asking... If there is a new theory for commenting.*

*User SS: User SL is talking about tall buildings again as if they worked without getting paid.*

Although these historical events that were mentioned in the two comments were deemed sensational as they received a high number of replies and interactions from users, these events were actual events that were not well informed to Malaysians that they created a spur of adverse reactions from both Malaysians and non-Malaysians, one questioning the other while the other was claiming their recognition to be respected as they perceived actions of their fellow countrymen have helped Malaysia in a way or another.

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The comments of Indonesian teachers who helped to teach in Malaysia are an important event as the foundation of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) through lecturer attachments, academic training and student exchanges since the early 1970s. Datuk Abdul Rahman Yaakob who was the Education Minister during UKM's opening, affirmatively claimed that without Indonesia's help, not just UKM won't be materialized, *Dasar Pelajaran Kebangsaan* (National Education Policy) and *Dasar Bahasa Malaysia* (Melayu) (Bahasa Malaysia Policy) as the only official language in Malaysia will fail too (Rohani Hj. Ab Ghani & Zulhilmi Paidi, 2011).

There are different opinions between Malaysians and non-Malaysians when historical events are mentioned in the comments. The history of teachers imported from Indonesia weighed differently between users. History is often taught differently in two different countries, even if the events involved both countries. It can be seen in these comments:

> *User WG: User NZ, which year you were born? Don't you know history?*
>
> *User NZ: User WG, why should Malaysians know Indonesian history? It's not important.*

Perceptions and opinions are one's rights, and something so important to some people can have a different value to others. What is important is how the information was communicated to both parties. Non-Malaysian users tend to distract the comments from the real issues in the original posts by blaming others' reactions and demanding approvals and respect for their fellow migrants' contributions to the host country. The comment about how Acehnese helped Malaya in the civil war mentioned the Holy War Army of the Red Bands or *Tentera Sabil Selendang Merah*.

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In 1945, the army consisted of local Malays from Java and Banjar ethnicities to fight Chinese violence towards the Malays in Batu Pahat (Mohamed Ali Haniffa & Mohammad Redzuan Othman, 2017). That was the only occurrence, as, in 1586, the Acehnese sultanate helped to free Melaka from the Portuguese (Shah Rul Anuar Nordin & Nik Kamal Wan Mohamed, 2014). While migrations and relations between migrants and locals have dated back to the 1500s, they don't seem to come to an end. Migration is happening now and then; it will continue. In these comments, some users mentioned migrants' generations, the formation of migrants' diaspora and communities, and long-term changes or non-changes that have occurred.

> *User AA, it's good to just grab them all. Certain places have turned into their villages.*
>
> *User NA, yes, they have reproduced to the 7th generation…*
>
> *If all these happened 20 years ago… Migrants would not have conquered… It's too late now…*
>
> *Our real enemy is the snake in the grass. Nobody seemed to care when it was warned ten years ago. What happened now is that it's been too late. Let's see what will happen in ten years if we look the other way now; we will likely be displaced and working under the rules of migrants.*
>
> *I am curious that many Malaysian women marry Bangladeshi men… No Malaysian men married Bangladeshi women… This is a serious matter and*

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*should be discussed… The generation resulting from the marriages will create a new race…*

No matter the changes in politics, economics, and society, migration will remain as time goes by. It is even possible for citizens who are of foreign descendants to be appointed as Malaysia's Prime Minister, as observed in this comment:

*Ladies and gentlemen, you must remember that the requirements to be a prime minister are just Malay Bumiputera. If Pak Bangla (Bangladeshi) marries a Malay woman, the child's race is Malay. Don't be surprised that in the future, Malaysia's PM is a Bangladeshi/ Rohingya. Not many realise or even bother about this now.*

While this opinion is controversial, it is nothing new. Malaysia's former Prime Ministers are said to be a Bugis descendant (YAB Datuk Seri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak) and an Indian descendant (YAB Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad) descendant.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, security threats can be caused by migrants. Precautions should be made to ensure only those who are honest, devoted, and loyal to the country are appointed to keep this country safe. A comment suggested that PDRM only consider citizens of Malaysian parents to be hired as police officers. The award of citizenship is clearly stated in the constitution. Some posted their opinions about questionable loyalty towards the country from children of PR holders, as observed in this comment:

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*PDRM, hope there is a requirement for a parent's birth certificate in the recruitment of police officers… if one of the parents is a migrant, that's why there is less loyalty to the country… Now, many migrants are daring, especially Indonesians, because they have vital backups... Remember the history of Lahad Datu.*

The events of the Lahad Datu conflict in 2013 affected the nations tremendously. Perceptions study of Malaysian audiences on the conflicts showed that they were sympathized (88.1%), angry (82.5%) and hated (78.2%) the incident (Faridah Ibrahim et al., 2014). Information gathered from the media helped shape the public's perceptions. Information will be interpreted according to knowledge, experiences, and judgment. However, perceptions of news and information towards crises can be distorted by emotions, anger, anxiety and sadness (Faridah Ibrahim et al., 2014). This finding relates to current COVID-19 situations where the world crisis heightened negative emotions that can distort one's perceptions.

### 6.2.4 Supporting Migrants' Entrepreneurship

During lockdowns and generally during the pandemic, many channelled their frustration and other negative emotions on social media. Complaints towards the authorities for not doing their jobs and blaming locals for their support towards migrants' entrepreneurship were posted on social media. However, some users showed support towards the authorities and supported the actions taken by all players to ensure success in eliminating migrants' entrepreneurship, as observed in the comment quoted below:

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*User AA, our own citizen-supported migrants' businesses?!... What to do… is just that… migrants will still be here until the end of the day… ask Immigration if they are doing their jobs… Why they are not arrested… Why did JPN give them the red IC… confiscating the items won't solve the problem... they can replace the items... need to send them back to their country... we need to prevent this from its root... JPN and immigration are the most crucial need to play their roles... Don't blame MPKj... consider that they need to serve the whole of Kajang daily.*

*Some showed support for migrants' entrepreneurship as they see business as their source of income, ignoring that migrants who entered using PLKS were to be hired temporarily to work in designated sectors. Some comments supported the idea that business is a way for them to make a living.*

*We don't need to be the obstacle to those who are just making a living, and we don't need to guide the authorities. Indeed, everyone knows one's job. Only one day will we get back what we gave.*

*The question is, where did the migrant entrepreneurs who used to sell at that location go to? Were they being deported? Afraid that if their source of income is affected, they become robbers. Whatever happens, they need to eat… Allahu…*

Although there were also migrants who entered by clandestine routes or became undocumented due to overstaying or those who ran away from their employers, some are legitimately here using spouse visas and making a living through business, all other



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reasons that we have already discussed in this thesis which were coded and grouped in the theme 'Reasons' including migrants with MyPR, local spouse and local's license rental.

Emotions such as empathy and compassion towards another human, regardless of whether they are migrants, were shown when it involved one's independence and livelihood during COVID-19, as some were facing difficulties with hunger and trying to make a living. In some comments, users were concerned about migrants being unable to earn money. However, in the same comments, they encouraged the authorities to act against them.

> *Why it will always be the migrants at fault… the shops are owned by the locals, only that they hired migrant workers.*

### 6.2.5 Locals are not Capable to Work or Trade

It is generally informed to both migrants and locals that migrant workers are hired to do jobs that cannot be filled by the local workforce. Scholars have done various research in the job market on ways to avoid reliance on migrant workers, including through digitalization, automation, and improvement of the job process. Research also includes several other factors commonly associated with employment, such as salary attractiveness, job satisfaction, working hours, conditions, education level and opportunities for advancement.

Although manual jobs or complex labour jobs may offer comparable salaries, they require physical and mental abilities not owned by many. Improvements in technology and



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education levels of Malaysians have also contributed to different talents in different job markets. However, a workforce is still needed in the 3D sectors that attract labour migrants from other countries.

Migrants recognised this pattern, and they voiced their opinions on social media, stating that locals cannot do the jobs they do, such as in construction and plantations. Some of the commenters were sarcastically mentioning Malaysians, who will do the 3D jobs if all migrant workers are to be sent home. Jobs in construction and plantations, although there are plenty, were also filled with locals at professional and management levels. However, most of the low-skill positions are filled by migrant workers. Examples of the comments are observed below:

> *I want to go home, but my boss won't let me. He asked who wanted to do tiling and to pave bricks.*

> *Why are Malaysians too disgusted with PATI? Malaysians are the ones who give them jobs because Malaysians don't want to do heavy and dirty jobs like toilet cleaning, domestic helpers, and plantations. That's why agents hired migrants.*

Most comments mentioned locals who cannot do the jobs that migrant workers would do. Moreover, locals do not want to do the jobs because of several other factors, such as being overqualified, low pay, harsh working conditions, and long working hours. However, the comments also mentioned locals who lack the knowledge and ability to do well, are not willing to fail, are not ready to invest, and primarily, locals failed to compete with migrants in business. An example of the comments can be observed below.



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*It won't be long until the business fails because we don't know how to do business.*

*User RS, it's not hard to get that kind of shop. But citizens don't want to spend their money to pay for the shops. The price is already low, but the demand is lower.*

*See for yourself: if there are no migrant entrepreneurs, you'll be dead… Know that locals are calculative, even for only 50 cents… complained when it's more expensive by 20 cents, that's all you know… So stingy that the last time I had nasi lemak with the egg cut into eight pieces*.

These opinions, whether they are true or not, were posted by users based on their personal experiences and perceptions. As discussed in the literature, the number of business start-ups and new business registrations is increasing yearly, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shifts from physical stores to online shopping, even after the COVID-19 pandemic, have encouraged more entrepreneurs to start their businesses. Government assistance such as KL Prihatin (KL Care) Temporary Permits was introduced on 15 November 2020 and open for registration until 31 March 2021 in Federal Territories for any Malaysian citizens, 18 years old and above, who would like to start their small business at suitable locations may apply for the permits.

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This initiative was introduced to help those affected by lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic earn a living. They are allowed to trade in front of their house or any suitable public area that will not obstruct traffic. The permits are free, and entrepreneurs can sell food and drinks, fruits, dry goods, and wet groceries from 7.00 am until 10.00 pm. This opportunity showed that locals are not afraid to start their businesses and are willing to do so if the circumstances require them to.

In a post by ENF1 about temporary permits, it received 97 comments, 449 shares, 619 likes, 12 love, three care, and one haha. The post has garnered attention and reactions from many that it was shared with other users to spread the information. The post with the title 'KL Prihatin Temporary Permits' was posted on 14 November 2020 that read:

> *Don't forget… to those interested in doing business around WPKL… tomorrow (15 November 2020) … applications are opened. Go to [link to webpage] to grab this opportunity…*
>
> *But if you are non-citizens… FORGET IT and BEWARE! if you hire them…*
>
> *#SayangiKualaLumpur*
>
> *#welovekualalumpur*
>
> *#kualalumpurkitapunya*
>
> *#klwbc2020*
>
> *#wilayahprihatin*
>
> *#klbandarku*

ENF1 posted their stand against migrants' entrepreneurship by using their social media posts to warn migrant entrepreneurs and those who hire migrant workers. Capital letters were used to show assertion. The post was tagged with 105 codes, with 37 users tagging



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other users to gain attention. Another 105 commenters responded to other users in the comment sections; 13 commenters asked for more information, eight mentioned local license rental, and eight praised ENF1. They complimented the authorities and six shared information in the comment section.

The post was informative and received reactions from users who were sharing the news with others. The type of a post and the voice of the post can determine the reactions and comments from users. Although the comments will be independent of one's opinions, they can help influence one's reactions and comments to generally influence their opinions about migrants' entrepreneurship.

### 6.3 Voice of Posts on social media and Progress of Conversations

The opinions and perceptions posted in social media comments are forms of communication and digital social interactions by social media users. The voice of the posts can influence how the conversation progresses and the types of reactions received from users. As this research only focuses on comments, emojis and .gif images and post sharing were not observed. The highest number of comments observed from the data is in a post by PBT2, with 6,900 comments posted on 9 August 2020. The post was a press release statement by PBT2 on the allegations of corruption and misconduct in enforcement actions taken towards migrant entrepreneurs and gambling centres.

In the post, PBT2 explained the actions taken against a street vendor selling burgers were confiscated. The action created a spur when the business owner posted a video on Facebook that there was an Acehnese stall selling cigarettes and an online gambling shop still operating. In contrast, his stall was ordered to close. It shared an image of an official



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press statement made by PBT2 in Bahasa Melayu with its official letterhead and signed by its Department of Corporate and Public Relations with its telephone number as in Figure 6.1, the post reads:

*#weloveshahalam*

*#KitaJagaKita*

*[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]*

*PBT2 VIRAL ISSUE OF CONFISCATED GOODS IN SUNGAI BULOH*

[redacted]

9 Ogos 2020

**KENYATAAN AKHBAR**

**ISU TULAR MBSA SITA BARANGAN PERNIAGAAN DI SUNGAI BULOH**

Pihak [redacted] ingin mengulas video yang ditularkan berkaitan tindakan penyitaan terhadap barangan perniagaan yang telah dilakukan oleh anggota penguatkuasa dari Pejabat Cawangan [redacted]

Untuk makluman tindakan penyitaan tersebut diambil berikutan peniaga berkenaan meninggalkan peralatan perniagaan setelah selesai melakukan aktiviti perniagaan yang menyebabkan masalah lalulintas dan juga keselamatan pengguna jalan raya.

Sebelum ini, pihak [redacted] telah memberikan teguran dan nasihat kepada peniaga berkenaan agar tidak meninggalkan peralatan selepas selesai melakukan perniagaan namun teguran tersebut tidak diendahkan. Dalam tempoh dua bulan, pihak [redacted] juga telah dua kali melakukan tindakan sitaan terhadap peniaga yang sama namun peniaga tersebut masih lagi melakukan kesalahan dengan meninggalkan barangan perniagaan di tepi jalan.

Di samping itu, di dalam tempoh Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Pemulihan (PKPP) ini juga didapati peniaga tersebut juga berniaga di luar waktu operasi perniagaan yang ditetapkan melebihi pukul 12 tengah malam yang telah melanggar Prosedur Operasi Standard (SOP) yang telah ditetapkan oleh Majlis Keselamatan Negara (MKN).

Dalam operasi yang sama, pihak [redacted] juga turut melakukan tindakan penyitaan ke atas satu lagi premis yang meninggalkan barangan perniagaan dan sebuah lagi premis perniagaan yang menjual barangan minuman dan rokok. Tindakan sitaan ini diambil di bawah Undang-Undang Kecil Penjaja [redacted] 2007 Peruntukkan 19 (Meninggalkan Barang Perniagaan Ditempat Awam) & Peruntukkan 3 (Menjaja Tanpa Lesen) serta Peruntukkan 42 (Kuasa Sitaan).

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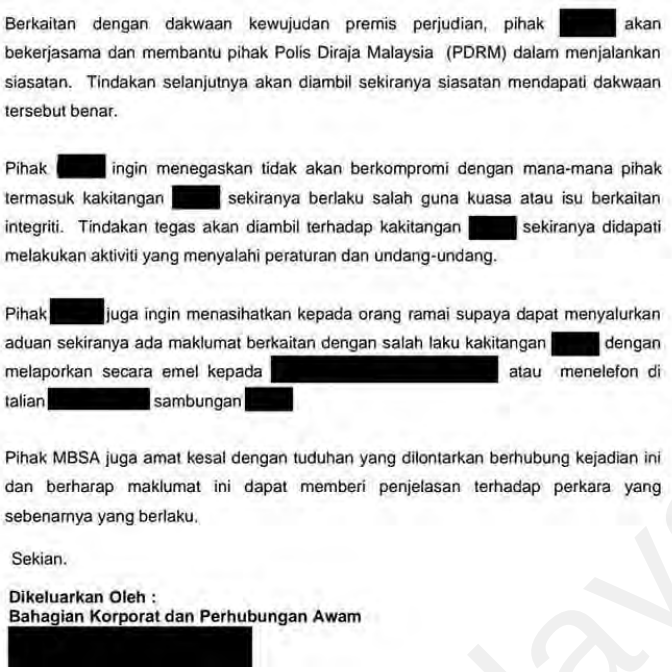

Berkaitan dengan dakwaan kewujudan premis perjudian, pihak [redacted] akan bekerjasama dan membantu pihak Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) dalam menjalankan siasatan. Tindakan selanjutnya akan diambil sekiranya siasatan mendapati dakwaan tersebut benar.

Pihak [redacted] ingin menegaskan tidak akan berkompromi dengan mana-mana pihak termasuk kakitangan [redacted] sekiranya berlaku salah guna kuasa atau isu berkaitan integriti. Tindakan tegas akan diambil terhadap kakitangan [redacted] sekiranya didapati melakukan aktiviti yang menyalahi peraturan dan undang-undang.

Pihak [redacted] juga ingin menasihatkan kepada orang ramai supaya dapat menyalurkan aduan sekiranya ada maklumat berkaitan dengan salah laku kakitangan [redacted] dengan melaporkan secara emel kepada [redacted] atau menelefon di talian [redacted] sambungan [redacted]

Pihak MBSA juga amat kesal dengan tuduhan yang dilontarkan berhubung kejadian ini dan berharap maklumat ini dapat memberi penjelasan terhadap perkara yang sebenarnya yang berlaku.

Sekian.

**Dikeluarkan Oleh :**
**Bahagian Korporat dan Perhubungan Awam**
[redacted]

**Figure 0.1: Press Statement Screenshot from PBT2 Facebook Post.**

The post received adverse reactions from users, where 3,870 comments were coded with complaints and criticisms towards the authorities, 1,5,61 comments were coded with bribery, and another 620 were using the comment section to request actions from the authorities. Although the posts try to communicate PBT2's side of the story in response to the viral video posted by an individual who did not comply with the law, they have failed to receive positive support from users. The press statement was made to justify their actions but failed to address the allegations of not taking action towards migrant entrepreneurs and gambling shops, as well as PBT2's corrupted practices.

The second highest number of comments received in a post is of PBT4, with 3,900 comments. However, this post was a 32-minute video from a live session recorded on 8 April 2020 with a title, Integrated Enforcement Actions around Pasar Borong Selayang where users who were watching the live video will be able to post comments while live streaming enforcement action activities on PBT4's FB page.

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The actions taken in a collaboration between PBT1, PBT4, and ENF2 were said to control the spread of COVID-19 by cleaning the dirty areas of unlicensed roadside sellers who set up their stalls without permission. In the video, authorities confiscated goods and equipment and demolished the stall structures. In the video, the cameraman interviewed an officer named Norhayati about the actions mentioned that the shops were unlicensed or owned by migrants. Closing the shops was said to control the number of migrant entrepreneurs in the area.

The message sent by the post, with interviews and video sharing, has garnered the attention of 768,000 views. The voice of the posts sent a clear message that the authorities are taking serious actions towards migrants' entrepreneurship. It also created a stigma that there are migrant enterprises which operate in dirty and unsanitary conditions that may contribute to the spread of COVID-19, as was visually shown in the video. Users commented based on their observations and unpleasant experiences when they visited the areas. From that post alone, 188 comments were coded with associating migrants with being filthy or spreading diseases, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak. Examples are a comment from UserSY and two other replies that agreed with the user.

> *UserSY: Hopefully, after strict actions taken by the authorities, there will be no more migrants who dare to land in Malaysia… they are very messy and filthy…*

Replies:

> *UserZN: UserAM… and disease spreader*
>
> *UserMMC: UserZN… no wonder migrants are increasing, they keep growing (beranak pinak) … They are doing business as they please… Don't know why*

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*this is not done for so long, ya. The goods are destroyed, but the individuals are not arrested… being dirty is already in their blood.*

Enforcement actions taken by PBT4 on 8 April 2020 was a day after EMCO was implemented in Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion, two residential buildings with shop lots on the ground floor in Jalan Masjid India. The area is popular among the locals and migrants as a shopping area. The houses at the upper levels of the flats are primarily migrants' residential areas. Actions taken by PBT4, which were shared on their FB Live, attracted many social media users who watched the video and commented on the posts.

Jalan Masjid India and Pasar Borong Selayang are locations commonly perceived as having a high migrant population. Following PBT4's enforcement actions and outbreaks of COVID-19 cases from Pasar Pudu, which were said to have originated from Pasar Borong Selayang, EMCO was implemented in the area on 20 April 2020. Figure 6.2 explains the timeline for total lockdowns at the locations in the earlier months of the COVID-19 outbreak, especially in areas commonly perceived as having high migrant populations.

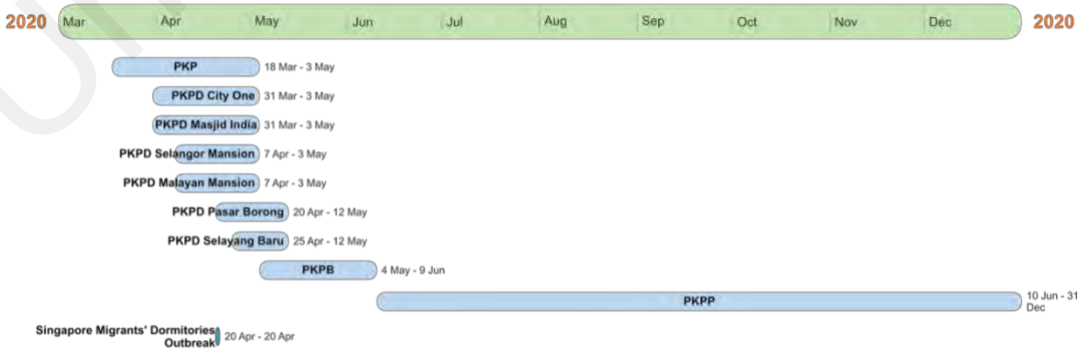


**Figure 0.2: Early Phases of Lockdowns in Klang Valley.**

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From this timeline, the first lockdown in Malaysia began on 18 March 2020. The total lockdown was made on 31 March 2020 at Menara City One Kuala Lumpur, which housed many migrant workers as new clusters of infection were detected in the area, followed by nearby locations such as Masjid India, Selangor Mansion, and Malayan Mansion not long after. As observed from the timeline, Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur, Pasar Borong Selayang, and Selayang Baru were put under total lockdown at about the same time Singapore Dormitories COVID-19 outbreak by the end of April 2020. Therefore, any enforcement activities to combat migrants' entrepreneurship and PATI, in general, can attract more user interactions due to other events happening at that time.

The voice of posts on authorities' FB pages during April – June 2020 mainly reported on enforcement actions to control migrants' entrepreneurship and unlicensed traders. Such actions were also taken to restrict movements of migrants as MCO was implemented from 18 March 2020 until 3 May 2020 before Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) or *Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Bersyarat* (PKPB) in Bahasa Melayu was implemented on 4 May 2020 until 9 June 2020 before a more lenient MCO, the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) or *Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Pemulihan* (PKPP) in Bahasa Melayu was implemented on 10 June 2020 until 31 December 2020.

Besides being associated as being '*pengotor*' (filthy), it was observed from the comments on the post by PBT4 that some FB users were labelling migrants as being '*degil*' (stubborn) for not complying with the movement control order. Based on the pattern of the observed negative comments, such as hate comments, labelling and stigmatisations towards migrants, comments are then coded into three, whether they were inciting i) hatred and violence, ii) hostility, and iii) dehumanization towards migrants' entrepreneurship, or migrants in general.

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### 6.4 Hate and Violence

Posts on migrants' entrepreneurship were not shared on any PBTs' or ENFs' FB pages between January 2020 – March 2020, before MCO, but were only observed on PBT4's FB with three posts in February 2020. Only three posts from PBT4, two from PBT6 and one from PBT2 were posted in March 2020. Therefore, only nine posts on migrants' entrepreneurship were observed before the implementation of MCO. The progress of conversations in comments from the language used can be analysed to uncover if authorities' social media posts incited hate, violence, stigmatisation, and dehumanization towards migrants or the adverse reactions resulted from several other factors that can be triggered by current events happening at the time the posts were shared on social media.

As the posts on enforcement actions towards migrants' entrepreneurship are gaining more attention after the outbreak in migrant workers' hostels in Singapore and EMCO in several locations, so are the increasing number of negative comments towards migrants observed during April 2020 – June 2020 before slowly declining to attract users to comment afterwards. However, it still depends on the posts and current events to determine the kind of reactions that social media users will have, especially adverse reactions. The comments may come from users who express their opinions as citizens; some even share their experiences when discussing the issue with other local traders.

If it is not demolished, they will still trade illegally. This is not recent. Since 1995, I have lived in Selayang. They are free to do business by the roadside, getting very rich by doing business. The Chinese threw away some collected vegetables in the trash bins. I used to sell at the wholesale market and saw how they sell. Even the Chinese at the wholesale market also complained.

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There was an exclusive news interview by Al-Jazeera with a Bangladeshi migrant worker, Md Rayhan Kabir, who was working in Malaysia during the pandemic. In the interview, he claimed to expose what happened in Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion during the total lockdown and how violence was used towards migrant workers, including women and children. The exclusive 25:50 minutes video report from Al-Jazeera titled 'Locked up in Malaysia's Lockdown | 101 East' was posted on 3 July 2020 on its YouTube channel at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/7/25/malaysia-to-expel-bangladeshi-who-featured-in-al-jazeera-report. The screenshot of the video description in YouTube is attached in Figure 6.3 below.

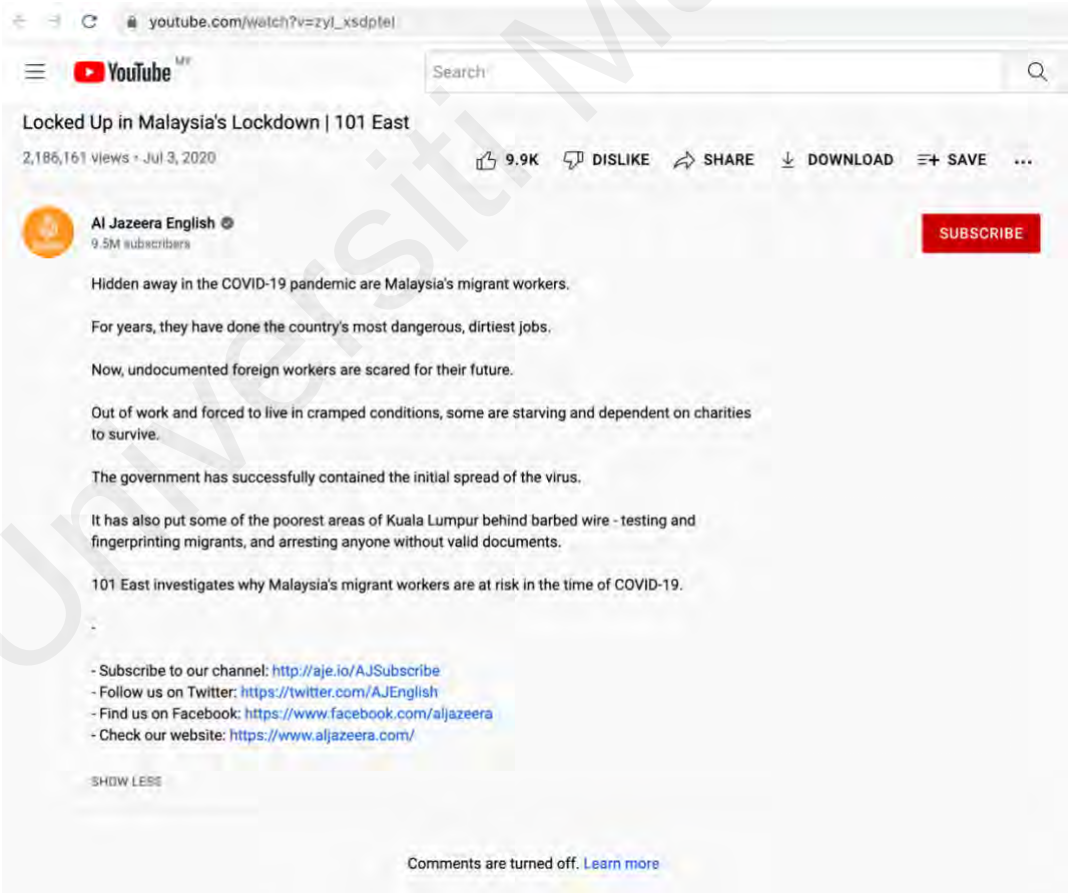


**Figure 0.3: YouTube Screenshot of Locked up in Malaysia's Lockdown**

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By 4th October 2022, the video had reached almost 2.19 million viewers. Al-Jazeera has turned off comments by other users. However, it received adverse reactions towards the Malaysian government of its stigmatisation and injustice towards migrant workers when the video was shared on other social media channels.

The actions taken by the government were also condemned by international human rights bodies and the government of migrants sending countries to Malaysia. This event may influence some of the comments, such as in this example:

> *MBSA is the best. I hope you'll get assistance from RELA and related agencies like immigration and PDRM in the raids surrounding that untouchable (kebal) area. Al-Jazeera accused us of violating human rights, so it is better to abide by the law when doing our job. Good job, MBSA. We must realize and be alert that Bangladeshi millionaires bought properties and clubs in KL to expand their power. May the higher authorities monitor and be wary of their money baits.*

Comments received from other social media users are mixed, between criticising or supporting the actions taken towards migrants during these challenging times. Stigmatisation and hate towards migrants were expressed in the comments on YouTube and other social media platforms. The video was also shared in messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram, and it gained attention from many. Md Rayhan Kabir also faced several threats from social media users, and he was also banned from entering Malaysia due to his actions that have brought shame to Malaysia.

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*Wipe them out and send them back. These foreigners are the kind of pandemic virus which has been laying low in our country and community, having the guts to demand IC and to become legal citizens. Just ask us the big why. We should not be pushed around and give in to their demands. Even though we have accommodated and treated them in the best way possible, this ungrateful kind of people did not appreciate and even got the guts to create a mockery by telling lies to the world that during the down, our government took advantage by arresting them and mistreating them like dogs by not even feeding them and not speaking logically by stating our JIM had put handcuffs on infants too during the operation. What are all these nonsense and senseless accusations? How do they think of us Malaysians as cruel and human? If so, I suggest that our borders, which are always open to people who appreciate our friendship, are always welcome. Nevertheless, those who accuse our beloved nation of abuse should be hunted down and brought to the courts to be charged according to the rule of law and sent back immediately after serving the sentences. The most important thing is that they should impose a lifetime ban on them from returning to our country anymore. That we love our country. We Malaysians only want to have a peaceful and safe environment. We don't have to worry about them because you can see how they bite the hand that feeds them. That shows how ungrateful they are. Just say enough, shut the doors to them, and send them back to where they belong. Malaysia is ours; we are Malaysians, so we must defend our rights and dignity by not giving in. All I can say is you dug the hole, so you should jump and bury yourself. Amen. God Bless Malaysia and keep us safe and peaceful.*

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Hate comments that were collected from the data include hate and disgust. Migrants were viewed as dangerous and troublesome, and some felt uneasy or afraid of just migrants' presence. Hate comments were usually posted because commenters felt that migrants were not respecting Malaysia's law and systems by repeatedly doing the same faults or crimes. The actions taken against migrants failed to give warnings to migrants or for them to feel remorse.

They were said to be ungrateful for being accepted to work in Malaysia and enjoy all the economic and social benefits of living in Malaysia rather than in their own countries. However, they were involved in many unlawful activities, including illegal business. Examples of online comments are when locals clearly expressed their hate and disgust by just seeing migrants' faces. Their chosen words to express their feeling are *sakit hati* (infuriated), *benci* (hate) and *semak* (irritated).

> *While locals cannot run their businesses, the lucky ones are the Acehnese. Their shops are mushrooming, making a living in Malaysia without any disturbance. However, they are talking badly about our kings and authorities. They are infuriated (sakit hati) with this group and are ungrateful. MPS, please come to Kg. Ungrateful Acehnese owns almost all grocery shops in Sri Gombak Indah and nearby areas. MPS, please come to Kg. Sri Gombak Indah and its nearby area.*

> *We don't want to see PATI face ever again… Hate (Benci) them.*

> *Well done, MPS. Hope there's hard work everywhere else. Semak (irritated) to see migrants take over local's income.*

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*Those with documents should be expelled from our country, too!!! Irritating (semak)!!!*

Some words used to express disgust are *sampai nak naik muntah* (made me sick to the stomach), *geli* or *jijik* (disgusted), and even spitting expressions from words like pui or puih.

*UserYO, right, bro. The problem is that there are too many migrants. It made me sick to the  nak naik muntah). Please monitor them.*

*Disgusted (Jijik) seeing these 'red teeth' people. Spitting here and there.*

It was commonly seen in the comments that users expressed their disapproval of not only migrant entrepreneurs but towards migrants in general, including documented migrant workers. In this comment, this user wanted them to return to their own country by using harsh words such as *berambus* (scram) and wanting others to stop feeling sorry for migrants by not donating to them anymore.

*This can expel them. They had to go home (berambus) when they had no life here. Don't feel sorry, and don't help them by donating—enough with giving face. Please get out (berambus) from Malaysia.*

The presence of migrants may make some locals feel uneasy around them. They may have felt afraid or not safe in an area with a high number of migrants, like Kotaraya or Selayang Wholesale Market, and this was discussed previously in Chapter 4. This may be created

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by the stigma against them in the media or from their personal experiences that migrants are dangerous, immoral, troublesome or criminals who deserve to be treated with force and violence.

*Good… reduce the number of migrants here. You can go anywhere, can see only migrants… We are the ones who'll be afraid of migrants.*

*PATI are like the biggest criminals (penyangak) going against the law. Force needs to be used towards them… PATI becomes a threat to the safety of locals… eradicate them…*

*UserJSR, after that, we become the government's eyes and ears to prevent LTTE and communist terrorists in our country, and we want to save our children of the future from their tyranny.*

*Watching this video shoot from afar, it looks like the officer is at fault… watching a zoom-in video, it looks like the Indon is wrong… harsh… violent… he's an Indon thug (samseng).*

*When doing our shopping, they'd be looking at us like we are the migrants… so scary (takut)…*

*Suffocated (Rimas)… we can bring kids on the bus to KL for sightseeing in the past. Now the buses are only full of migrants….*

*I think it's time to use force (kekerasan) on these hardheaded PATI…*

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### 6.4.1 Violence

In these comments, some of the most common violent actions posted on social media may sound like threats. Death threats towards migrants are not uncommon in social media. An example from the data collected is below:

> *You're dead PATI will be searched for in every nook and cranny (lubang cacing).*

In other examples of violence, threats and treatment towards migrants are inhumane. Some gave opinions that migrants should be beaten and kicked, canned until wounded, burned down their shops and goods, beheaded, fed to wild animals and even shot dead.

Beaten and kicked:

> *Bantai (Knocked down) all Rohingyas Bangladeshis, staying in Malaysia feeling big… so arrogant…*

> *Beat them all up (hambat habis-habisan) these insensible people robbers (penyamun masyarakat), go scram.*

> *When you see migrants, kick them there and then.*

Caning:

> *Canning then they will be afraid…*

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*Good to just cane them until their back is wounded (berkecai). Dismiss them. Stop them from entering forever. They are cocky now. It's a mistake to give them a face.*

Burning:

*Burn down the shop.*

*Guess DBKL can take action, burning the goods confiscated before PATI. Then they'll be afraid.*

Beheading:

*UserCB, if they were confiscated today, they'll sell again tomorrow. We need to do our parts, come with a machete, and just behead (pancung) them.*

Fed to wild animals:

*Sending them home is wasting money. Better to throw them into the sea… the sharks will feel complete.*

*Confiscated groups such as vegetables and fruits… or meat, including PATI, should be sent to a tiger cage or crocodile pool… Settled…*

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Shot dead:

> *I suggest DBKL shoot them because they are never afraid to rerun the business.*

> *Why detain trashy (sampah) migrants? It is better to just shoot them like in Myanmar.*

> *PATI is terrible and stubborn, like a male ape (Beruk Jantan). They shoo away but will return. PATI thought that they were big when they had that card. This is Malaysia, not their country. Try to be resistant (degil) in their own country. They can be shot down.*

The discussion in this sub-chapter can be interpreted as controversial and even unethical because it directly aims to analyse hate and stigmatisation towards migrants. The study of harmful communications and interactions in tangible or digital life must be approached cautiously. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, UMREC's concerns are about fake profiles and posts that intentionally incite hate or create tensions. From the observation of comments, a comment posted from UserSD managed to gain reactions from another user.

Original comment:

> *UserSD: if migrants are still stubborn (keras kepala), just shoot them…*

Comment replies:

> *UserA: try to read your country's history, who fought deadly battles against English… Chinese right…*



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*UserA: UserSD, you're a human. I am a human, too. We have our rights. Indonesians gained independence that other countries did not give them. We are free from the blood of our warriors who wanted the country to be safe from colonizers. We have the blood of fighters in our bodies.*

*UserA: UserSD, think with your head: if you shoot an Indonesian, do you think that our country will keep silent? If there is war, how many will be dead? Use your brain to think; don't talk as you wish.*

*UserSD: UserA shut up PATI.*

*UserA: User SD, are you trying to be a provocateur?*

From the language used, it can be interpreted that the comment from UserSD was a form of provocation for hate and violence. Based on the word arrangement and the words used, UserSD can be Indonesians. Initially, UserA's reaction was argumentative and defensive. Towards the end, UserA realized the comment was posted to provoke other users. When the profile ID of UserSD was clicked in July 2022, it no longer existed. It can be assumed that Facebook has detected the profile as fake or that its user may have deleted the account. A simple eight-word comment can incite hate and violent comments from another user.

### 6.4.2 Protection of Money and Gangsterism

It is impossible to ignore interesting comments which relate migrants to gangsterism and violence. As discussed previously, some users expressed their opinions that migrants should be treated with violence due to their unlawful activities. In some of these comments, the authorities were accused of not taking action towards migrants due to the influence of gangsters and protection money was paid to the authorities through these



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gangsters. Users were stereotyping and assuming that migrants would retaliate and use violence towards authorities if they were to be arrested. Opinions from these comments showed what users believed to be the reasons for the demolishment of illegal shops in Selayang Wholesale Market during MCO and why it was not done previously.

> *If it had been done before MCO, there would indeed have been riots. Many enforcement officers will be injured. Well done. When they (migrants) are not around, they can clear all out. Salute to your firmness and consideration of locals' income.*

> *Previously, it could not be conducted because maybe the authorities' safety was jeopardized. Imagine if migrants suddenly take out their parang (cleaver) or whatnot. Now, it is being conducted because they are under MCO. Whatever it is, we should thank MPS.*

The authorities took advantage when everyone was to stay at home during lockdowns to clear illegal shops outside the Selayang Wholesale Market area. Informal economic activities such as in markets and street vending spots were known to have created informal social structures between sellers and buyers and powerful gangsters in Thailand (Boonjubun, 2017). In that study, gangsters were said to extort money from street vendors and rent out vending spots to traders. The situation is similar to this comment that businesses in the Selayang Wholesale Market are controlled by individuals who gained protection from gangsters (Muniandy, 2020).

> *I used to work at the wholesale market in the 80s… there were not many migrants during that time… The wholesale market was on the right to the side*

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*towards Perak… Just there were some Indons… It's upsetting that there was a police post in the market. However, it was destroyed by irresponsible individuals who worked at the market. Many were Chinese who monopolized the business in the Selayang wholesale market, not least the gangsters who were protected by the fish tauke (boss) at the market. Hopefully, there will be more stringent actions from the authorities along with PBT and the army to rebuild their posts to monitor all activities in the market... it can be said that the market usually runs for 24 hours... only at the fish sections operating from 12 am to 9 am... because once the fish market is closed, many drug users will go out to get high and drugs dealing activities... Don't know how the new market operates... only asking for the government to take stricter actions so Malaysia is not the place for migrants to do business as they please... It should always be prevented, and we hope it will be reduced... their existing crimes are widespread (berleluasa).*

Other comments collected with context referred to violence, gangsterism or protection money from words such as *samseng*, *taiko*, *tailong*, and *tauke* that referred to gangsters or thugs, as well as *duit perlindungan* (protection money).

*Small Ajib is claiming to protect all those who do business illegally there… were DBKL blind before? Did not receive report* 🤭

*There is someone collecting protection money here.*

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*Tailong (gangster) will be furious. That's their area. When tailong arrives, it is doomsday for KL, said Dragon (a fictional gangster character in a local movie).*

### 6.4.3 Dehumanizing

Besides associating migrant entrepreneurs with gangsterism and violence, dehumanizing comments are also made against migrant entrepreneurs. Dehumanizing is defined as depriving a person or group of positive human qualities, which includes labelling people as animals or identifying their characteristics. The comments were primarily posted in Bahasa Melayu to express negative emotions.

Some of the common words that appeared in social media comments include *makhluk asing* (aliens), parasite, *anjing* (dog), *sampah* (rubbish), *jantan* (male animal), *sarang* (nest), *najis* (shit), *beranak pinak* (breeding) and *membiak* (rapidly growing). It is not a surprise that such words were used by commenters, as in some of the FB postings made by government agencies, words such as *diburu* (hunted) and *sarang* (nest) were also used to attract more readers. The exact words were observed in some of the comments, for example:

*Should the enforcement operations be in all states, or should there be no authorities? Recently, in Cheras, there were Rohingya nests (sarang). In Taman Muda, Bangla, Nepal, and other countries, this area has too many breeding (beranak pinak). Ampang area is undoubtedly a PATI haven.*

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Listed below are comments which contained dehumanizing words, labelling migrants as animals:

> *These stubborn migrants are like keeping wild animals (haiwan liar) from returning to the jungle. However, they will still look for food because they are not leashed (lehernya tidak dirantai).*

> *Arrest and send them back… More stubborn than Komodo dragons (biawak)… Even the Komodo know if they are chased away.*

> *UserMW, dear MA… must abide by the law when entering other countries… not illegally… remember that, dogs! (anjirr)*

> *Where did these pigs (babi) come from to do business here…*

As the definition of dehumanizing is not just limited to calling human, other terms non-human, it also accounts when the negative comments were using words that were used to describe migrants with animals' characteristics, such as they are only up to no good but just to reproduce (*membiak*).

> *Don't do seasonal raids… migrants are now like moulds (kulat kayu). Rapidly growing (membiak) if not sprayed (racun) with herbicides now.*

> *User SS, they reproduced (membiak) rapidly. Three children within three years. Bragged using UNHCR card.*

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Besides identifying migrants with animals, some of the comments called migrants as rubbish, aliens, ghosts, moulds, and parasites:

> *This location has many aliens (makhluk asing) that look like they are on another planet when you are there… Great… clear all migrant entrepreneurs at that location.*

> *UserMHK, go back to your country, don't be rubbish (sampah) in Malaysia, work for your own country.*

> *It is not impossible if the ghosts (hantu raya) will come back…*

The chosen dehumanizing words in comments may come from one's vocabulary or experiences when they have read about such labelling towards migrants in the mass media or online. The word alien is commonly used in English to describe undocumented migrants, thus directly translated into *makhluk asing* in Bahasa Melayu. The word parasite may be used when migrants are viewed as taking advantage of Malaysia's good economic and political conditions when they venture into business.

The term *sampah*, directly translated into trash, is commonly used as an idiom in Bahasa Malaysia to describe someone useless as *sampah masyarakat.* Although it is easier just to claim commenters used dehumanizing words to describe migrants based on their experiences reading about such labels in the mass media, several other factors, such as cultural differences and rich linguistics terms in Bahasa Melayu and English may have played a role of their chosen words.

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### 6.5 Stigmatisation

The sectors and jobs allowed for PLKS may have shaped the population's social constructs. Perceptions that migrant workers are low-skill workers who are willing and deserving of dangerous, dirty, and demanding jobs while locals are not willing and not able to do the jobs. Some comment that locals are not talented refuse to start businesses and are afraid of business challenges and losses, creating the perceptions of locals as not entrepreneurial enough compared to migrants.

These perceptions can influence social interactions in the digital and real worlds. Opinions on either supporting migrant entrepreneurs or going against them were made without any boundaries on social media. There are five common stigmatisations or labelling towards migrants that were captured from the comments which are repetitively occurring, in which migrants were labelled as being i) stubborn, ii) rude, iii) filthy, iv) spreading diseases, and v) criminals. Comments are grouped as below:

#### 6.5.1 Stubborn

In the comments, migrants were labelled as stubborn because of users' generalisations and opinions on migrants' repeatedly challenging or breaking the law despite warnings and severe punishments towards migrants that were reported in the media, which failed to stop them from committing unlawful activities.

> *UserMNI, many of them are hard-headed… still doing it even after too many warnings.*

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*Stubborn (Degil). Only money, money, money in the head.*

*They are so rich in Malaysia that they fight the police arrogantly.*

Punishments have failed to function as forms of deterrence or prevention for migrants. It can be questioned that different views were observed between the opinions of locals towards migrants' unlawful activities or crimes. Locals may view legal punishments as deterring or educating people to avoid unlawful activities. An opposite party may view punishments as a form of penalization when they have done morally or socially wrong things and have already been reprimanded for them, so that's it. Although these users may not have directly experienced being wronged by migrants, from the theory of criminal law, the 'public' wrongs may have shaped their opinions towards migrants.

Cultural differences between these groups, Malaysians and non-Malaysians, may influence their opinions on different degrees of wrongness, where one party observed unlawful activities as wrong. However, another party viewed such unlawful actions as culturally excusable (Torry, 2001). As discussed earlier, some users romanticised historical events as valid reasons for unlawful activities, and cultural identifications resulted from solid historical connections to past events.

*Thankful if UserNA understands that we are brothers. Bangla Rohingya are our brothers of faith. However, Aceh are not just brothers of faith; we used to fight with you against the Portuguese…!? They are working in Malaysia just to help earn money for their family back home so they'll have better lives. But what do they do if they cannot make a living in a country where Acehnese is considered a family? Then let them know so they will return home.*

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*UserFE In sha Allah, my people will not take Malay's land. However, I don't know about other Chinese or Indians… if you've heard the stories from before, Acehnese have helped Malay's independence. However, they've lost… resulting in an Acehnese village in Yan, Kedah.*

Besides that, there are comments from non-Malaysians who were bargaining on the weightage of crimes that such crimes are worse than the other and their unlawful actions should be excusable. Their comments played out religious sentiments, which will be discussed further in this chapter.

*UserKZ, please explain to them… Any Dalil from the Quran, hadith or fatwa that earns money in other countries is haram… Don't simply say that it is halal or haram. However, you don't even know which one is halal or haram. The only thing you know is that stealing is haram. Right? Sorry.*

*UserM, is it wrong for migrants to work? Can't even do business. People are stealing, robbing, mugging. Are those not wrong?*

### 6.5.2 Rude

Besides comments labelling migrants as being stubborn, some comments label them as rude and arrogant. These comments may be based on their interactions in the comment section, personal experiences or even psychological stereotypes of an out-group. As discussed in the point 'stubborn' above, rude was also used when users were describing migrants who break or disrespect the law. Common words used in comments to describe



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them as rude are *kurang ajar* and *biadap*. Examples of the comments with the sentiments used by Bahasa Melayu are listed below.

> *Well done! Please permanently do raids so PATI will be reduced because there are too many, and they are insulting (kurang ajar sangat).*

> *The shop is a Bangladeshi 's… he's rude (kurang ajar).*

> *UserMW, you look like a crook. Foul (biadap) mouth… Feel sorry for your parents to have raised you.*

> *Disrespecting our law… Rude (Biadap).*

Out-groups prefer to keep their identity so they do not have to speak a foreign language or watch their manners. Therefore, some may have encountered ill-mannered migrants due to their higher sense of maintaining their ethnic and out-group identities (Allport, 1954).

### 6.5.3 Filthy

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, we have already discussed the locations of migrants' entrepreneurship. They operate in residential or commercial areas, cities, or places commonly mentioned in comments about their operating locations. Many comments were labelling migrant entrepreneurs and migrants in general as being filthy or dirty.

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The nature of jobs for migrant workers in 3D sectors, which sometimes needed them to work in a dirty, demeaning, or dangerous job, may have created the stigmatisation of them being filthy. Unsanitary, cramped, and shabby communal living conditions prepared by their employers may make it impossible for them to maintain a high level of cleanliness. The same observation was already discussed in the previous study, when negroes ethnicity received similar stigmatisation, and they were labelled as smelly, lazy, sly, aggressive and stupid (Allport, 1954).

However, in many of the observed comments, cultural differences and different habits between locals and migrants may create a different acceptance level of cleanliness between the two groups. For example, chewing betel nuts, which is no longer a culture in Malaysia, is still typically practised in South Asian countries. While in some countries, smoking in public is deemed unhealthy. Metaphorically, it is still acceptable in Malaysia. As chewing and spitting betel nuts are not the norm in Malaysia, locals may view it as filthy. At the same time, for some migrants, that is ordinarily acceptable and still practised in their culture. Cultural differences between migrants and locals may have created a barrier between the two. One is not accepting the other, while another is unwilling to adapt to the host's culture. Dirty was labelled to both migrants (people) and their business premises (place) in the comments observed. Examples of the comments are listed below.

> *This area is too dirty… migrants bring their culture from home… hope MPS and DBKL… don't give a face to them after this… love our country.*

> *Seri Muda, Klang, Pinggiran USJ, and Seksyen 16 are already like the royal cities of Bangla, Nepal, India and Indon... I am disgusted looking at these dirty places…*

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Chain of conversations, communication in comments about migrants being dirty. In some of the comments, users linked migrants' unsanitary living/ working conditions or their cleaning habits to be reasons for the virus to spread. As discussed earlier, another stigma that COVID-19 created is that unsanitary conditions will help in spreading the virus. Anything or anyone not keeping it clean will always be avoided and feared, as many fear COVID-19 infections and their symptoms.

> *User SY: Hopefully, after strict actions taken by the authorities, there will be no more migrants who dare to land in Malaysia… they are very messy and filthy…*

Replies:

> *UserZN: UserAM… and disease spreader.*

> *UserMMC: UserZN… no wonder migrants are increasing, they keep growing (beranak pinak) … They are doing business as they please… Don't know why this is not done for so long, ya. The goods are destroyed, but the individuals are not arrested… being dirty is already in their blood.*

### 6.5.4 Spreading Diseases

Some of the users' comments were supporting authorities' enforcement actions to arrest migrant entrepreneurs and linking them to COVID-19. They supported the actions and

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commented that migrants should be sent back to their home country because there was a pandemic.

> *One of the reasons for the spread of diseases… Congratulations MPS… Clear out.*

> *How dirty the sellers are. They are attracting diseases to spread quickly*.

Migrants were also accused of not going to the hospitals if they were infected with COVID-19 to avoid the authorities. Ministry of Health was present at all locations with high migrant populations during full lockdowns to conduct and evaluate migrants who may have been infected. Their living conditions and other possible health issues have put them at a higher risk if they are infected with COVID-19. Issues with vaccination programs for migrants were also raised by various parties, such as whether they should receive the vaccination regardless of their documentation and whether the vaccines will be given to them for free.

> *Send migrants home… at times like this, there are contagious diseases, and even when at high risk, they won't go to hospitals or clinics if infected with COVID.*

### 6.5.5 Criminals

Earlier in this sub-chapter, comments expressed concern about being around migrants. Some commented that they felt afraid and uncomfortable. Another labelling commonly used towards migrants is that they were called criminals, thieves, robbers and even



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scammers. Being in a country without a valid pass or overstaying are examples of crimes usually associated with migrants. Because these crimes are too common among migrants in Malaysia and they were heavily reported in the news, on TV and on social media, it is expected that users created the image of criminals among migrants. Some migrants are good, but some may be criminals.

> *Give some money, and they'll be free. Needed money during MCO because they are broke, try to give to them… PATI has associations of burglars, thieves, and robbers (penyamun, penyangak, pecah rumah) nationwide who have the nerves to bother them… even MPK is afraid… just talking big.*

Some users expressed their concern if migrants are not allowed to work or even run a business to make a living, they will resort to crimes to make ends meet. Migrants were accused of being dangerous, and generalisations were made based on one of the user's experiences of his stolen fruits that migrants are generally bad.

> *The people of Selayang should be careful with the migrants. They are not doing business anymore, so they have no money and will try to break into houses to steal.*

> *Cheras, KL, Kajang, Hulu Langat area… Too many… and being arrogant… eating betel leaves, spitting here and there… Stealing... They trespassed my farm, stole my pulasan, and got a bunch. They are a family. I saw them from afar and threw the fruits to their head. So furious.*

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However, it is essential to be reminded that public opinion research is not a compilation of individual opinions but a collective opinion of functional groups. Perceptions of collective threats experienced by in-groups will influence their attitudes towards the out-groups rather than their individual contacts or economic circumstances (Jolly & DiGiusto, 2014).

Thus, negative attitudes towards individuals were backed up by overgeneralisation. It is when prejudice happens (Allport, 1954). Negative attitudes towards migrant entrepreneurs and migrants, in general, may take a verbal or physical form. In fact, it is more prominent in social media, and one may contend that it is not a representation of the real world. Even in the previous study, discrimination seldom occurs in face-to-face encounters (Allport, 1954).

### 6.6 Profanity and Hostility

The use of swear words in the data collected was observed in two situations, whether the profanity and hostility were intended for i) migrants/ migrant entrepreneurs or ii) the authorities/ government. This chapter will only discuss the comments of profanity towards migrant entrepreneurs. The term *pendatang haram* (illegal migrants) was used in Malaysia to describe undocumented migrants.

The term was then changed to *pendatang asing tanpa izin* (PATI). The word '*haram'* itself gives a very negative meaning for locals as the term is widely used in Islamic teachings to prohibit actions. One of the most observed swear words in the comments is *haram jadah,* where its closest translation into English is bastard. Profanity and obscene labelling migrants as *haram* may be because initially, *pendatang haram* (illegal migrants) was used



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to label undocumented migrants, and some locals still use the term towards PATI. Some of the comments are:

> *These bastard (haram jadah) migrants… they did not confiscate them selling at illegal shops… they seized the locals who were trading.*

> *Clear the bastard (haram jadah), migrants, first.*

Besides *haram jadah*, *bangsat* was also used in the comments that can be directly translated into bastard.

> *Bastard (Bangsat) Rohingya… Eradicate (Hapuskan) them.*

> *Look at it… until it became rotten (bernanah) like that… raid them all out… don't be afraid with that bastard (bangsat) UNHCR…*

Although these swear words can be directly translated based on a dictionary search, the limitation in informal languages used in swearing, profanity, and hostility can be hard to translate. It is essential to read and understand the context and content in the comments before translating. The term bastard itself means illegitimate child, a child born out of marriage or wedlock, which can relate to how the illegitimacy of PATI was linked to an illegitimate child.

The words *haram jadah* or *bangsat* were just used to cuss to show anger, disapproval or hate. Besides that, some other words that may share the same context of a bastard, 'the damned', 'damn' or 'damn it' were used in comments. The words *celaka* (wretched),



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*lahanat* (damned it), sial (damn) or even *jilake* (an informal form of *celaka*) were observed in the comments listed below with the swear words translated into the nearest English terms. In contrast, their original swear words in Bahasa Melayu are included in parentheses. So, readers who understand Bahasa Melayu can fully understand the context from their own local or cultural point of view.

> *Damn it (Lahanetttzz) PATI.*

> *Damn (Jilake) migrants.*

In some of the comments, some users directly make generalised cursing and swearing towards a particular migrant nationality like Acehnese, Pakistani or Indonesian.

> *The same in other areas, damn (celaka) Acehnese, coming to our country, even the workers are migrants too, their shops are up to the road but were not bothered by the authorities, but the Malay's will all be demolished.*

> *Many pig (babi) races (warga), there… Indon claimed to be Malaysians… so full of oneself, ugly face (muka berkarat).*

Some of the swear words used are directly addressed to a specific nationality, for example, *indog*, *hendonsial* or *fuckissetan*. These words are created to rhyme with the country's name and a swear word. Examples of the comments are listed below:

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*The damned Indon (Hendongsial) are angry… came here looking all pity… after some time being here, turned into demons (setan)… robbing locals of their jobs… damned (celaka).*

*Stupid (Bodoh) damn Indon (Indonesial), full of yourself (tak sedar diri), spit (tuih).*

*UserMH, fuck you, Indog (Indon dog), pig (babi), damn (sial).*

*UserMHK, cunt (puki), fuckissetan (fuck devil).*

Some other name-calling and swear words are stupid (*bodoh*, *bebal*), dickhead (*palebutoh*) and mother fucker (*pukimak*).

*They return… this people are too stupid (bebal) + invincible (kebal)… please place a specific post for authorities there… monitor everyday…*

*Dickhead (Palebutuh)… you condemn Malays, but you are Malays too… your own race…*

These words are used in comments with no censoring or warning from Facebook. However, some improvements have been made to Facebook based on its artificial intelligence and algorithms that can detect slur words, racial comments, and hate speech. Although social media is a platform of free speech and opinion, Facebook has included a list of several limitations for its users to post on the platform in its Policy of Hate Speech.

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The policies have existed since 2018, and Facebook is constantly updating the policies with its current version published on 28th July 2022 and supported with an explanation of its artificial intelligence mechanics in its blog post on 27 June 2017, that it is crucial to understand the posts or comments in its' whole context before classifying them as hate speech (Facebook Inc., 2017). Facebook mentioned its rationale for having such policies is to avoid an intimidating and exclusive environment on its social media platform that can potentially promote real-world violence (Facebook Inc., 2022).

In Malaysia, a Facebook group page warned its group members to avoid using words such as '*Indon'*, '*Bangla'* and '*Paki'* as those are racial slurs. Group administrators must have received warnings and notifications if there are members who posted comments that Facebook artificial intelligence detected as racial slurs. There was a poster to remind its members about the prohibited words, and they need to address the nationalities in full when referring to Indonesians, Bangladeshis, or Pakistanis, as in Figure 6.4 below:


**Figure 0.4: Facebook Poster from Facebook Group of Tukang Apa Hari Ini.**

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### 6.7 Replies from Migrants.

Facebook users can read, comment, or react on pages that set their privacy settings to 'Public'. However, they can even set certain interaction limitations, such as limited comments to pages' followers or 'friends only'. For this research, the pages have set their posts to public, and anyone can post comments or share their posts with others. However, there were concerns from UMREC that migrants are susceptible to threats, hate and discrimination in real life and the online environment when they cannot defend or speak for themselves. The observed situations are the opposite, whereby migrants (non-Malaysians) also interact openly on Malaysian government agencies' Facebook pages.

In these comments, the commenters tagged as non-Malaysian were probably Indonesians who were sharing their opinions to remind others that they are still human with emotions and defended their pride.

> *Firstly, I apologise for my previous comment. I have no intention to condemn ENF1… I respected whatever actions they took. My comment was addressed to others who commented to attack us Indonesians. We have emotions, too… feelings. We are indeed making a living in Malaysia. We have family, too. If you want to comment, please be mindful. Don't criticize us too much. Thank you.*

> *UserLNA, it is true that… they can insult us freely, but we can't get back at them. We are human, too.*

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Many non-Malaysian users posted comments or replied to comments made by other users to explain or defend their actions. Some posted comments based on their situations and experiences as migrants in Malaysia.

> *After this, when you buy the chicken, you can request from the Chinese for cutting services and ask them to clean the fish, right… If there are any, only 0.0000001% are grocery shops (wet minimart).*

> *You are so mean to Acehnese… They are the ones helping you fight the Portuguese in Melaka… Now, just let them do their business. Because Indon is hard to make a living… Remember the Acehnese service of the past...*

As discussed before, negative comments towards migrants were posted by Malaysian users. However, there are also negative comments posted by migrants that contain hate, profanity, dehumanizing or violence. Such comments are listed below:

> *UserAA, just manage your dying mother… and you will soon die… inviting people to comment… noisy (kepoh)… motherfucker (kimak).*

> *UserNA, how can you be jobless if you are intelligent and hardworking? You stupid (bodohlah kau).*

Generalisation and stereotyping also exist in their comments, as discussed before, about how migrants perceive locals as lazy and demanding. Their comments, which stigmatised Malaysian Chinese and stereotyped Malaysians as lazy, were used to defend the activities of migrants' entrepreneurship in some of the comments.

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*Great, I like it because migrants are not lazy like you… but you are offended with your brothers/ sisters in Islam… Chinese were making problems, but you are hating your brother/ sisters… clever Chinese, they can handle us…*

*UserAs, that's what I've told you. Speak using your brain. It is impossible for Malaysians to work in construction cleaning drainage. They just want to sit in offices, right?*

Surprisingly, several migrants knew about Tun Mahathir bin Mohamed's comment about Malays as being lazy and used it to defend their entrepreneurship activities, as well as the hiring of migrant workers in 3D jobs. Such accusations and generalisations which came from the then Malaysia's Prime Minister have influenced migrants' perception towards locals. It created some sense of superiority when they were perceived as hardworking employees who did the jobs not taken by the lazy locals. These are three comments which mentioned Tun Mahathir bin Mohamed's opinions towards the locals:

*Work and work, that's what Tun M said. Don't just hope for BRIM. The hosts will be done for, losing to their guests. Given licenses by the government but were rented to others. Once they made some profits, they took long holidays to go fishing. I used to study at a university in Malaysia, and the Malays can hardly get any jobs because they are too picky.*

*This is a never-ending story from then until now… only migrants were blamed. Sorry, but they are hardworking and working hard… While locals are lazy, said Tun M.*



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There is a comment on this issue from UserAA, who is a non-Malaysian, which received three replies from locals, UserB, UserEA and UserW, trying to irritate the original commenter, as shown in the conversations below:

Original comment:

> *UserAA : This is a never-ending story from then until now… only migrants were blamed. Sorry, but they are hardworking and working hard… While locals are lazy, said Tun M.*

Replies:

> *UserB : User AA when an Indon is talking… You are an Indon, right?... Hahahahaa.*
>
> *UserEA : User AA, how many years have you lived in Malaysia? Or married to a local? Tell us…*
>
> *UserW : User AA. From Indon? Married to a Malaysian*?

From this conversation, it can be observed that the replies were coming from male users. At the same time, the original commenter was a woman. This kind of reaction is sometimes observed on social media, whereby male users attack female users in the comments. Although it seems physically harmless, the situation may create an uncomfortable online environment. Social media users can decide to react or ignore unpleasant comments posted on their page or replies posted to their comments, as observed in this comment. However, the original commenter did not reply to them.

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The following comment received several replies from other users, and the original commenter reacted to the replies. In a post by PBT4 about a raid at Selayang Wholesale Market, UserT posted a comment that reads, '*It will be temporary. In a month or two, migrants will rebuild their illegal stalls. Should put an immigration post over there.*'

The comment received 166 likes and 60 replies from users. Some exciting conversations that developed in the comment between six locals and two non-Malaysians are listed below:

*UserDPP* : *Why it will always be the migrants at fault… the shops are owned by the locals, only that they hired migrant workers.*

*UserFMK* : *UserDPP, migrants, and PATI are innocent. The ones to blame are Malaysians. Right?*

*UserHYIS* : *Why did migrants want to do business here? They can only work in manufacturing, construction, plantation, and services.*

*UserZJ* : *UserDPP, are you an outsider (orang asing) …? Please return to your country… understood…?*

*UserDPP* : *UserZJ, outsiders (orang asing) … I am from earth… I am not from Pluto… Don't forget to give IC to the Chinese… I went home already… Because I have my own country… hhhhhh… Don't forget to continue the projects… current projects… hhhhh.*

*UserDPP* : *UserJAB, outsider (orang asing), what is that… hhhh... I am an earthman (orang bumi) … created by Allah… outsider (orang asing), what language is that… hhhh.*

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*UserAZ* *: UserDPP, doing an offence… that is wrong… if I ask you to sell drugs, would you do it?*

*UserDZ* *: UserDPP, what kind of Islam that you are talking about… Islam in your country is haywire (kacau balau huru hara) … people are never united and are still talking about Islam… fix Islam in Indonesia first. You can talk about Islam in another country… Many heresies of Islam in Indonesia... Just think about your own country... Don't be busybody about other's country... Malaysia is already developed. When will yours be? Bring home those Indonesians to your country; they are just being trashed in Malaysia.*

*UserDPP* *: UserDZ… migrants are making Malaysia develop… If there are no migrant workers… Don't know what it would look like… your country…*

*UserDPP* *: UserDZ… if the government don't want to hire any more migrant workers… Malaysians do the jobs… construction, cleaners, sewerage, and roadside sweeping. In shaa Allah, there will be no migrant workers here… In Singapore, many of your people are PATI... what the Chinese and the Indians will say... about you... I know... what does Tun M says... hhhh*

UserDPP replied to the comments and defended actions taken by migrants who were involved in entrepreneurship. The most common reason migrants' entrepreneurship is viewed as not wrong, from the perspective of migrants, is because locals rented their shops and licenses for migrants to run their businesses.

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In UserDPP's opinion on the conversation above, four of his reasons why migrants' entrepreneurship is acceptable and migrants are not at fault are: i) locals own the businesses, but migrants were only hired as workers; ii) migrants contributed in the development of Malaysia; iii) locals are lazy, as claimed by Tun Mahathir; and iv) migrants are not outsiders (*orang asing*), but everyone is Allah's creation in this world created by Him.

As discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, migrants find it offensive when they are labelled as *pendatang haram.* In the reply by UserDPP, he finds the term *orang asing* as offensive. The word '*asing*' in Bahasa Melayu can be translated as foreign or alien. Comparing them to an alien may have created dissatisfaction when he replied that he was a human/ earthling (*makhluk bumi*). In some of the comments, their opinions are influenced by religions, especially Islamic teachings, like when he mentioned that he lived in God's created world and he was always abiding by the religious teachings of Islam.

**6.8 Opinions and Comments Influenced by Religions.**

Frequently, several observations from user comments were influenced by religion or religious belief. Using the Text Search function in Atlas.ti with general terms related to religion such as Allah, *tuhan*, *agama*, Quran, God, Islam, and Muslim gave around 1,085 comments. The search words also include usernames that contain the words Islam or Muslim. This number also includes comments which contained words such as *in shaa Allah* or *insyaAllah* in Arabic, which means if God wills or God willing, that is often used by Muslims to express their wish/ hope for an event to occur in the future as well as *Ya Allah* or *Masya Allah*/ *Masha Allah* to express discontent.

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There were comments which prayed for God's punishment towards the authorities who were involved in misconduct, bribery or even those who did not do their jobs rightly and those giving reminders to the authorities and migrants to be righteous and law-abiding.

> *When you only have eyes on bribes, wait for Allah's punishment. SPRM, please come.*

> *We are all the servants of Allah, so let's reflect on ourselves and not blame anyone. And let's do good for all. We must remember that we will return to Allah, and no one will get away with it.*

Some of the comments relate to Malay traders, who are generally Muslims, did not bribe the authorities due to their religious teachings:

> *Our traders are Muslims, so it is challenging to give bribes, so it is understandable.*

However, there were also comments which praised God and showed gratitude for enforcement actions taken by the authorities with comments that contained Alhamdulillah, may you be rewarded by Allah or may Allah protect you. Examples of the comments are:

> *Guess our sellers rented out to migrants. That's why they keep growing (beranak-pinak) as they turn into their country… well done, MPS, may Allah protect everyone who fulfils their duty. Ameen.*

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*Alhamdulillah… But two years… Fuh… A lot can happen within two years… Pity Malaysians… Can only confide to Allah...*

This above user's comment admits defeat towards the authorities and surrenders to God's power if any changes can be achieved in combatting migrants' entrepreneurship. In some comments, some users relate COVID-19 as a punishment from God for the destructions and wrongdoings committed by many.

*COVID's blessing. They have been importing migrants forever. The people see everything now, and we want them cleared. People first.*

*Alhamdulillah… clean all out… blessings behind MCO…, and people have been hoping for this for so long… after MCO, may we benefit from it and improve it for our nation and religion...*

Some comments were bargaining the involvement of Muslim migrants in entrepreneurship. They were defending such actions in the name of the Muslim Brotherhood.

*Congrats… but without them, we Malays wouldn't do the jobs like them… we Malays are working light jobs…, and they are just sweating all out like us, too…. The majority of them are Muslims, too.*

We have discussed above when some migrants were using history, migrant workers' contribution to the development of the country and generalizing Malays as lazy or not



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good in business. Additionally, some migrant commenters were using religious beliefs to validate their business involvement in Malaysia. There are also comments from local users who go against migrant commenters who used religion to ratify migrants' entrepreneurship, as we can observe in this comment:

> *User HT your boneheadedness (kepala hotak kau) … when Malaysians go to Indonesia, they respect the law… when you come here, respect its law… which fatwa (Islamic rulings) mentioned that you could break the law of other countries… permissible to work… but not doing business... with your smuggled cigarettes.*

Migrants' comments were sometimes influenced by their differences in cultural and political ideologies, as we have discussed in 3.4.1 on President Sukarno's political ideologies. Commonly, Indonesian users used racial stigmatisation towards Malaysian Indians and Chinese in their comments and gave their opinion that they should be rightfully allowed to do business in Malaysia because they are Muslims compared to Chinese and Indians, who are generally of different beliefs.

> *Send away all Indonesian traders, even if they are Muslims and from the same root (serumpun)… Just let the Chinese do business… Malays are not good at business… So, Malays will buy from the Chinese.*

> *Switch back to the Chinese business in Malaysia… Good.*

Besides that, there are also migrant commenters who used *Alhamdulillah* and feel grateful that some locals accepted their presence. Another comment was that migrants married



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locals as already determined by God, or they were just doing honest jobs by running businesses on God's land.

> *I'm a migrant worker working in Sime Darby Berhad's palm oil plantation. The number of us migrants is exceptionally high. But 100% complete with documentation. If the government or some of the locals don't like our presence, I've seen from the comments that many don't like us. Some said that we were rowdy (menyemak), filthy, crooks, etc. Alhamdulillah, we patiently accepted even though we felt hurt. Alhamdulillah, for those who commented nice things, we felt happy because we could benefit each other.*

> *Migrants are doing business because locals don't want to do it. Locals are very jealous of migrants who are just earning an honest living on God's land. Who agrees with me, please like?*

This type of conversation between two users is commonly observed from the data whereby locals viewed unregistered businesses as sinful, but non-Malaysians viewed it differently.

> *UserFH: UserNS, but it doesn't mean that it is haram (illegal) in Islam. I would like to ask if paying taxes is a loss to business or the government…? Suppose it is such a waste to the business. In that case, running the business without paying taxes is better than not making enough.*

> *UserFH: UserNS, where did you get the hadith that the profits of Indonesians selling in Malaysia can be haram (unlawful)… those who said that it is illegal*

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*are just jealous… their profits are Halal (righteous) by Allah if it is not stealing or cheating.*

The comments from non-Malaysians, who expressed their discontent with locals who were just jealous of their achievements and success, can be observed in many posts. This will be further discussed in this chapter, as well as how cultural and social differences between countries may influence opinions on social media.

### 6.9 Envy

As discussed in the literature about distinctiveness threat and the construction of identity between Malaysians and Indonesians to explain jealousy and envy. Several non-Malaysians commented that locals envied their success and achievement or, generally, their involvement in the business.

*You're just jealous, failed to succeed, pity you, succeed first.*

*Malay commenters are whiners, envious, jealous, and resentful.*

There was a comment coming from a local user who said that it was not because locals are ill-hearted that they support enforcement actions towards migrant entrepreneurs. Their negative comments towards migrants' entrepreneurship are because they supported actions taken by authorities to overcome the issues before the problems spread and become more challenging to manage if left unattended.

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*We do not have an ill heart (hati busuk) to encourage the authorities. The longer it is, the bigger their groups will become. Even when they are seriously ill like this, they don't care. I support this action for the sake of Malaysians.*

The theme of envy or jealousy is not a repetitive code from Malaysians concerning negativity towards migrants' entrepreneurship. However, it is a more prominent code when coding for comments coming from non-Malaysians towards Malaysians. Non-Malaysians commented on their opinions on why Malaysians have such negativity towards them. It is difficult to justify if Malaysians are jealous towards non-Malaysians involved in business or even non-Malaysians who grabbed job/ business opportunities in the country because jealousy/ envy is a subjective matter that cannot be noticed.

Yet, envy or jealousy was discussed in (Allport, 1954), which can stem from resentment towards innocent people for having more privileges than us and putting the blame on them for whatever we are lacking. Furthermore, envy will happen only when there is only a tiny distance between us and those more fortunate that we can compare ourselves with them (Allport, 1954). Envy makes people think badly of someone, which can explain the negativity between the in-group and the out-group. However, from this research, a more prominent question is, who is envious, the in-group or the out-group?

The theme can only be analysed from textual observations in the comments by searching for words such as *iri* (envious), *iri hati* (envy), jealous, *cemburu* (jealousy), and *dengki* (envy) by using the Text Search function in Atlas.ti, without losing its meaning and context. However, further interviews will be required with the users if sarcasm is detected in their comments, which was not implemented in this research. Cynicism and scepticism

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can never be avoided in conversations related to sensitive issues such as misconduct and marginalization. These two main issues were discussed thoroughly in this thesis.

## 6.10 Conclusion

Chapter 6 examined the online attitudes of social media users towards migrants' entrepreneurship from a social framework. The analysis was represented by categorising social media comments into in-group (Malaysians) and out-group (non-Malaysians) perspectives, focusing on issues related to identity, citizenship, ethnicity, authority limitations, and economic concerns. There are differences between Malaysians and non-Malaysians in terms of social acceptance or rejection towards migrants' entrepreneurship. Malaysians were focusing on MyKad/ MyPR local spouses, and some were supporting migrants' entrepreneurship, while non-Malaysians were supporting migrants' entrepreneurship local spouses and claiming that locals are incapable of working or trading.

The study sheds light on the complexities of intergroup relations, including potential tensions and prejudices. Racial identification and terms for different ethnicities are observed, reflecting the multicultural landscape of Malaysia. Comments expressing concerns about non-citizens' activities, permit violations, and economic threats, some resorting to prejudiced language. Economic insecurities and the pandemic contribute to intergroup tensions, and comments reveal fears and prejudices regarding migrants and non-citizens.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter about the economic framework of migrants' entrepreneurship, we can say that migrant entrepreneurs were supported by local



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consumers when they patronised the businesses. Assimilation of migrants into the local community is still lacking due to observed rejection and disapproval towards migrants who are married to locals, those who received MyPR status and the children of MyPR parents who were granted Malaysian citizenship.

The study examines reactions towards Permanent Residency (MyPR) status, revealing various opinions. Positive and negative attitudes are seen, with some comments using prejudiced language while others acknowledge MyPR holders. Public opinions are influenced by personal experiences, misconceptions, and concerns over granting MyPR to migrants.

Social media interactions reflect diverse opinions on migrants marrying locals. Concerns about economic motivations and possible exploitation are raised. In contrast, others view this as a means for migrants to contribute to the economy. The discussions emphasize the need for fair and transparent processes. Overall, citizenship, permanent residency and even marriage require legal procedures. A controversial incident involving an enforcement officer and a PR status holder triggers a discussion on granting citizenship to PR parents' children.

The conversation highlights confusion about the process and concerns over citizenship fraud, raising questions about the system's integrity. Additionally, the issue of fraudulent MyKad acquisition by non-citizens was also discussed. Social media commenters expressed dissatisfaction with penalties imposed on fake MyKad syndicates, suggested more severe consequences, and debated the fairness of MyKad issuance. Historical references and concerns about certain ethnic groups claiming citizenship also emerged.

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Discussions in this chapter centred around the social framework of migrants' entrepreneurship. However, analyses were also conducted using the chosen words to post comments about the issue. Commenters acknowledge the necessity of migrant workers for specific roles. However, they may use sarcasm, criticizing the locals for not taking opportunities and expressing empathy for migrants' challenges.

These patterns may come from Malaysians but were more noticeable to come from non-Malaysian commenters. Social media posts can influence conversations, shape public opinions, and drive discussions. Visual content, language, and emotions in posts play a significant role in shaping perceptions and reactions, such as with the photos and videos accompanying the posts.

Some comments incited hate and violence towards migrants, with dehumanizing language likening them to animals, pests, or objects. Stereotypes and prejudices contribute to negative attitudes and perceptions. Migrants are stigmatized through negative labels such as "stubborn," "rude," "filthy," "spreaders of diseases," and "criminals." Cultural differences, media portrayals, and personal experiences influence these labels. Opinions posted were also influenced by religion, with users using religious teachings to validate viewpoints.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping perspectives, with some comments expressing gratitude to God for actions against migrants and disagreements between locals and migrants regarding business involvement. Envy is identified as a factor, with migrants and locals attributing negative sentiments to jealousy. Tensions and disagreements arise from misunderstandings and differing perspectives. There is a strong association between migrants and gangsterism, and migrants are dehumanized and labelled with derogatory

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terms. Negative attitudes are often based on prejudice and overgeneralisation. However, people who generally show hatred towards an out-group may react fairly and kindly towards an individual from the same out-group (Allport, 1954).

In conclusion, the analysis provides a comprehensive overview of social media discussions related to migrants' entrepreneurship, identity, citizenship, and intergroup dynamics. It sheds light on various perspectives, concerns, and prejudices, highlighting the complex interactions and influences shaping public discourse on these issues. The study underscores the importance of fostering respectful and empathetic dialogue to address these multifaceted challenges.

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# CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC OPINIONS AND REACTIONS TOWARDS THE GOVERNANCE OF MIGRANTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## 7.1 Introduction

Comments posted by social media users include public criticism towards the authorities. This chapter aims to analyse whether the actions by the authorities contributed to the adverse reactions and perceptions towards migrant entrepreneurs or whether external factors such as economic conditions and the pandemic played a more prominent role.

Additionally, the discussion will be able to investigate the adherence to Malaysian law by the authority, migrants, and public in terms of psychosocial and further answer the following research question:

> RQ4: What are the current implementations and loopholes in legislation/ policy related to licensing, enforcement activities, and social media users (for both the public and the authorities)?

Studying public reactions to migrants' entrepreneurship will outline how the public will react towards authorities associated with migrants and migrants' businesses. Government authorities related to migrants' businesses are JIM, SSM, PDRM or local councils such as DBKL. Studies conducted on Government Authorities' social media accounts were mainly conducted to find ways for service delivery improvement (Gintova, 2019; Reddick et al., 2017). As an information-rich platform, Facebook may create a framework of common thoughts among social media users on any issues, from its' high user-interactions

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activities and communication through public comments posted on social media (Goh & Pang, 2016).

Therefore, based on one's social, economic, and environmental factors, people of the public may form their own opinions and perceptions on migrants' entrepreneurship and be able to share their thoughts about it. Sharing of one's opinions may come off positively or negatively. Government authorities' official Facebook page is sometimes bombarded with positive and negative comments from the public. Traditionally, comments and feedback were given formally in letters, forms, or emails, but rapid technological advancement has improved methods of communication

Comments and feedback can be sent through public social media pages that users can read. Government authorities should step forward in managing their communication and service delivery to cope with these changes. Praise and support will come in abundance, along with critiques and complaints with the ease of use of social media. In times of crisis, response on social media will be positive if the public sympathises with the organisation. However, they will unfavourably react if angry or if it is not done promptly (Huang & DiStaso, 2020).

### 7.2 Positive and Negative Interactions

Based on the analysis of comments in this research, 19,533 complaints and critiques were coded in the comments Malaysians posted. However, only 78 were coded in comments from non-Malaysian commenters. Negative comments may receive more reactions from other users, as negative news shared on social media may attract more audiences. Negative emotions invite more reactions and attention in social media during times of



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crisis (Steinert, 2020); thus, it can explain why the complaints/ critiques code is the highest number of comments coded in this study. These codes in Table 7.1 were not discussed in the previous chapters except for bribery, which was already discussed in Chapter 5 when discussing economic causes and impacts. The modified themes and definitions of their codes and examples will be explained next to facilitate discussions of the findings.

Another observation from this analysis is that the top six of the codes on the comments are users' engagement or interactions with the authorities or other users on the pages. Commenters who posted questions on authorities' FB pages were also observed, as summarised in Table 7.1 below. The types of interactions include positive and negative user comments, mostly negative. Comments are coded with responses to another user, and opinions may be positive, negative, or neutral.

**Table 0.1: Codes from comments posted by Malaysians and non-Malaysians.**

| No. | Codes | # Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | M: Complaint/ Critique – *negative interactions*<br>(Complaining about the authorities or the government) | 19,533 |
| 2 | M: Request Actions - *negative interactions*<br>(Users requesting for actions from the authorities) | 9,266 |
| 3 | M: Responses to another user – *positive or negative interactions*<br>(Responses or reactions to other users' comments) | 8,917 |
| 4 | M: Praise/ Support - *positive interactions*<br>(Users commented with praise, supporting actions, or complimenting the authorities or government) | 7,558 |

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| No. | Codes | # Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | M: Opinion - *positive or negative interactions*<br>(Comments which are general opinions about any issues related or not to research subjects) | 5,867 |
| 6 | M: Bribery - *negative interactions*<br>(Comments which mentioned about bribery, corruption, or misconduct) | 4,816 |
| 7 | M: Ask Question - *positive or negative interactions*<br>(Comments which asked for information or to clarify doubts) | 588 |
| 8 | NM: Ask Question - *positive or negative interactions*<br>(Comments which asked for information or to clarify doubts) | 41 |

Negative comments are either 1) complaints or critiques or 2) requesting actions due to the authorities failing to perform their duties. Positive comments are praise or support that were mostly comments of users agreeing to the authorities' actions, praising or complimenting their actions.

### 7.2.1 Complaints and Critiques

Most of the comments' criticisms voiced commenters' dissatisfaction towards authorities' typical practice of saying words but not deeds. There were also complaints about inaction taken on the public's reports and linking all problems related to migrants' businesses to authorities' inefficiency in curbing the issues related to migrant workers.

As discussed in Chapter 5, bribery was mentioned as one of the reasons for the problems. The public also claimed that a lack of measures was taken to resolve migrant workers'



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issues that have exacerbated other problems, including illegal migrants and unregistered migrants' businesses.

> *Go to the ground, madam. The 2007 amendment, the MySpace era, and now, in 2020, the viral era. PBTs don't have to go to the ground to investigate this and that. Netizens will post the photo/ video in their areas as proof in FB Groups. Easier for YB and ADUN to do their jobs.*

General complaints and criticisms that were coded include sarcasm that thanked the authorities for their actions as well as questioning why the authorities were only taking actions recently and what they were doing before, as included in this example:

> *Whatever it is, thank you for eradicating migrants from doing business at our place… when migrants have conquered businesses in Malaysia, you know how to show your rage…. For example, if this uncle is getting rich just by selling corn, Malaysians changed their perceptions, blaming MPK, MPP, MPO, MPD and all sorts of mmmmmm for not doing their jobs until migrants can live comfortably in Malaysia. However, Malaysians are grasping at straws in their motherland... The MPS officer seemed too ruthless, and that's why netizens got angry.*

As previously discussed in Chapter 6, the third research objective is to analyse whether Facebook posts in the scope of study support migrants' entrepreneurship or incite hate, hostility, and dehumanisation towards migrants, as well as the government agencies who are in charge of migrant workers in Malaysia.

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It is essential to be reminded that this research is not restricted to analysing Facebook commenters' reactions towards migrants but also towards the authorities. The dual-prong analysis of social media reactions to the topic of migrants' entrepreneurship focused on both migrants and the authorities can help to have an in-depth understanding of why social media users reacted in specific ways towards migrants' entrepreneurship. This sub-chapter showed that Facebook commenters on the pages were not only posting negative remarks towards migrants but were also very open with criticising government agencies.

The discussion in this chapter will answer the fourth research question: what are the current implementations and possible loopholes of the law mentioned in the comments? The objectives of the policies and legislation are to investigate how the law, legislation, policies, or guidelines are associated with social media users' reactions to the issue. Some laws are listed here, including migrant entrepreneurs' business registration or licensing, foreign workers' permits and visas, permanent residence application, marriage registration, enforcement activities and even amnesty programs during or after the pandemic.

As the highest number of codes are complaints and critiques, the observed complaints and critiques are diverse. The public can post any comments, and the data used for this research were generally collected from Facebook pages that are publicly available. Two types of complaints/ critiques will be discussed in this chapter: 1) No actions were taken by the authorities/ lack of actions and thus, 2) Requesting for actions to be taken by the authorities towards migrants/ migrant entrepreneurs. Implicitly, these criticisms mean that they did not take action, or the actions taken were ineffective and failed to solve the issues, as requesting for actions is the second highest code in this research.

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#### 7.2.1.1 No Action Taken

Besides many complaints and critiques, the second highest codes tagged with Requesting Actions have 9,266 codes. The comments that were reported about migrants, migrants' entrepreneurship, or PATI, and some of the comments that requested the authorities to take action were coded with the Requesting Action code.

These are some examples of the comments posted based on commenters' experiences when they filed complaints or reports. However, in some of the comments, there were mentions of the authorities who finally took action.

> *Someone is turning a blind eye, and when asked, they replied that complaints should be made first. Actions were taken based on complaints. That is why many migrants are out of control. Many will react when we accuse them of corruption. Enforcement actions should be taken even without complaints.*

From the comments coded with Requesting Actions, we will discuss how some commenters perceived the authorities as not taking action. It showed how the authorities failed to perform their duties to uphold the law. In some comments, they were questioning the authorities as they were only good at talking about their actions on their social media but failed to take actual actions and be consistent, as posted in these comments:

> *Don't just talk… have to do it… arrest them and fine them good… then kick them out of Malaysia…*

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*Don't just talk… Do your job. Hopefully, it's not just when the news is hot and viral. The issue has been going on for a long time until there are many generations here, but only now are the enforcement authorities starting to take action.*

Sometimes, commenters use sarcasm, mockery, and ridicule towards the authorities, showing their frustrations with them in the hope of better service from government agencies. The power of social media or 'viral posts' to gain attention from the authorities was proven effective in some cases when political leaders react to commenters' complaints on social media.

For example, to gain insights into what the commenters were saying about the power of virality, the Text Search function of the word 'viral' was used to collect the comments. A total of 974 paragraphs in the data mentioned the word viral. Examples of the comments are:

*Hahahaha. Being viral, now… The whole country is watching… At first, they were still being cocky… Their press statement is not answering the questions about the real issue… so of course… Now, only they know.*

*One hour after the viral, all the gambling bosses and migrants closed their shops. Conducting raids after that will get nothing.*

Although there was such negativity in the comments, reactions from authorities were not heavily influenced by the negative comments because government agencies still rely on their formal channels for complaints or reports. However, some commenters have filed



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their reports through the required channels but were disappointed. Examples of the comments where commenters used sarcasm are:

> *So… to all roadside traders… if after this, you see migrants' businesses, smuggled cigarettes, or corrupted authorities… just keep quiet… to protect your livelihood… afraid it will turn out like this if they are reported…* 🤐

> *Smuggled cigarettes are everywhere… did you find them? RM100 per stick fine, just like what the Malays have been fined, or more than RM100 because they are foreigners… possibly you don't steal the cigarettes…*

However, the power of news virality on social media has triggered immediate actions from the authorities. The raid made by PBT2 in Sungai Buloh, discussed in the previous chapter, is one of the examples of social media being used to force the authorities to act and demand fair action. Reactions from many social media users forced the authorities to take corrective actions and damage control was needed to repair their tarnished images.

UserAJ posted the viral video of his burger stall being confiscated. However, a contraband cigarette stall and a gambling centre were left to operate even without any permission from the authorities. He even said that his life was threatened for posting the video on his Facebook. However, he wanted the public to see the unjust treatment he received. The public feels it will be safer to go public with dissatisfaction with the authorities rather than using other mediums. Examples are:

> *I heard that many special task forces were established to investigate this and that…. Hahaha... Where are they? Waiting for the people to feed them*

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*information? When we give information, we will be viral… life threatening… what are we becoming, Malaysia? Waiting for other countries to help us do our jobs?*

*UserBSR, all that is useless if it is not viral… now, you need it to be viral before posting the complaint… if you complain first if you are unlucky, you will receive an anonymous letter.*

Some commenters believed that making a post go viral on social media is the best channel to ensure fast actions by the authorities. Examples of the comments are listed below:

*Will it work if we report through email or phone? Don't think so. Make it viral. Then, they'd be doing their jobs quickly.*

*If we send an email, it will be read during office hours only 😀 if viral, it will be faster 😁.*

These comments, which showed social media users' opinions towards the authorities that they did not take action, are signs of loopholes in implementing the legislation/ policy. Although the authorities took action towards migrants' entrepreneurship, the public still sees the authorities who failed to do their jobs right. The actions taken may be ineffective in controlling migrants' entrepreneurship or if the issue has been developing into an impossible stage to prevent or control. Nonetheless, many comments used Facebook as a medium to request actions and report on migrants' activities.

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Based on the interview conducted with ENF1 for data triangulation about social media users who posted comments on FB to report on offences, it was revealed that any comments posted by the public on their FB posts which reported about migrant workers or migrant entrepreneurs were read and evaluated by the page's administrators. Officers in charge will share the information with ENF1's Intelligence Division if the report sounds legitimate and has enough information and merits.

Suppose the comments seem to be too severe. In that case, the page's administrator will contact them to ask for more information via a private message through FB Messenger with a template of required information for further investigation, such as the location. Suppose the comments are posted by whistle-blowers or any member of the public who reported on criminal offences or even misconduct by the authorities that can jeopardise the safety of the commenters. In that case, the page's admin will immediately hide the comment from the public's view.

#### 7.2.1.2 Requesting Actions

Even when non-Malaysians justify migrants' actions of conducting business as not wrong, the activity is considered informal. Lack of institutional control on informal business (Rath & Kloosterman, 2014) and support for migrants' business entry may prevent expansion (Rath & Kloosterman, 2014). Observable migrants' businesses are growing in numbers. However, no official data were collected on the numbers or nationalities of migrants because of the limitations and restrictions imposed on the licensing and regulations.

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*Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja* can be seen as an effective method to finally have an official number of PATI in Malaysia when they register themselves to become documented migrant workers and take part in the amnesty program. Most importantly, it can also solve the problem of labour shortages in the 3D sectors post-COVID-19. One of the possible solutions in managing migrants' businesses is to legally allow them to conduct business.

It will support more migrants' entrepreneurship entries and even expansions. Ideally, the effort may have several migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia. However, the country is not in a condition that needs foreign investors for small businesses and trades. Small businesses and trades are specially reserved for Malaysians due to their low capital and skill for entry. Therefore, many comments from Malaysians were requesting actions to be taken against migrant entrepreneurs and PATI.

There are 9,266 quotations from Malaysians, with 372 of the quotations requesting enforcement actions to be taken in other states outside of Klang Valley or nationwide, even when the six city councils' pages in this research are those in the Klang Valley. Only Malaysians posted comments requesting enforcement actions, and it accounts for 17.86% out of 51,883 total quotations coded in this research. Some public perceive the opinions that there is not enough action taken by the authorities in managing and controlling issues related to migrants' businesses and migrants in general.

Although there were observed public opinions that supported and complimented the authorities for their actions, 14.71% or 7,631 quotations were recorded from comments of both Malaysians and non-Malaysians who supported the authorities/ government. It

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showed that more public users went to social media platforms to ask for actions than those who showed their support for such actions.

Only 1,023 of the comments requesting actions mentioned bribery in their comments, showing that some viewed bribery as the reason for non-action from the authorities. While requesting actions, some users also criticise the authorities for bribery, which includes their superiors who should supervise these enforcement officers. There are comments about monthly protection money being paid to the authorities. Examples are:

> *Migrants with shops at Taman Dato' Bandar were not arrested… Don't be double standard… Don't take bribes, okay?*

> *Is this a fairy tale… I see many migrants roam freely in Ampang… Nothing happened… What if you display the names of corrupted immigration officers…? Or those confiscated migrants' premises that reopen… That's it… Hate to listen to this tale… Not walking the talk.*

The comments' requests pool is further grouped into several codes based on the actions needed. This will give valuable insight into improvements that the authorities should take. To know what actions are needed by analysing the words used in the comments, analysis using Word Cloud was done for the comments coded with Requesting Actions by eliminating stop words and setting the minimum word count to 400 words. The word cloud is presented in Figure 7.1. The words are filtered to verbs that relate to authorities' actions. The most mentioned action words are *siasat* (investigate), *tindakan* (action), *balik* (return), *tangkap* (arrest), *sita* (confiscate) and *serbu* (raid).

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**Figure 0.1: Word Cloud from Comments coded with Requesting Actions.**

These mentioned actions are most likely the actions the public wanted to see as proof that the authorities are doing their job right. The word *tindakan* (action) is the most mentioned 'action' as it was repeatedly used in a sentence such as "… *tolong ambil* tindakan (please take actions) …". The highest mentioned is the word '*tindakan'* (action), which was observed 2,372 times in the data. Followed by *tangkap/ tahan* (arrest) at 1,283 times and *sita* (confiscate) at 1,256 times. Where users commented that the authorities should raid migrants' enterprises, the offenders should be arrested, and goods should be confiscated. Besides that, *siasat* (investigate) with 1,032 quotations showed that users used social media to report an incident or to inform of any illegal activities so investigations could be done to take further actions.

Another four words which many perceived as the most ideal actions that should be taken are *serbu* (raid) at 673 times and *hantar balik*/ *hantar pulang*/ *halau* (deport) at 383 times. The word '*balik'* may have different meanings depending on the context, which includes return, come back, or again. However, in the context of this analysis, it means deportation.



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The word search function includes these terms: *hantar balik/ hantar pulang/ antar balik/ antar pulang/ anta balik/ anta pulang/ hantar blk/ anta blk* (send back/ return/ deport). Examples of the comments are:

> *Don't give a chance to migrants who entered Malaysia for business… send them back… They deserve to be servants living in the jungle… If you let them do business… in the next 10-20 years, Malaysians will be servants. Now, migrants have conquered all grocery stores... Wait for some time if you don't believe it... Malaysians will be immigrants in their own country...*

> *Not just confiscate… arrest them… then penalise… and if they have a permit… cancel it… send them back…*

Some users mentioned how it was such a waste of resources when the authorities were just confiscating and arresting migrant entrepreneurs, or if they are kept at detention centres for a long time, they should be immediately deported, as shown in these comments:

> *Confiscated and reopen, then confiscate and reopen, deport them if undocumented… such a sore… do it right until it's free of PATI, too many of them.*

> *Arrest them, and don't keep them for too long at the detention centres… Deport them… Such a waste to keep them for long…*

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COVID-19 heightened stigmatisation towards migrants. An increased number of raids were conducted following several outbreaks in areas highly populated with migrant workers and entrepreneurs, such as Pasar Borong Selayang and Selangor Mansion. It can be observed that harsh words were used towards migrants, accusing them of being disease carriers. Requests were made to send them out of the country. An example of a comment:

> *JIM, please arrest all PATI and throw them out. They are the real reasons for COVID-19. Only Malaysians can run businesses.*

From the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, 5,110 enforcement actions were taken by JIM, and around 14,847 PATI were detained from 18th March 2020 until 24th August 2021. Until July 2021, KDN spent RM35,833,588.75 on food for the detainees and RM248,237.10 for deportation (Parlimen Malaysia, 2021). Until 26th August 2021, 15,634 PATI were deported.

The authorities were more inclined to deport PATI rather than keep them at deportation centres as the cost for food is RM201,105 per day for 15,552 detainees at 14 detention centres. The government will bear these costs with its' taxpayers' money. However, the information about who will pay deportation costs was not made public. Some public members may be confused or misunderstand government spending when managing PATI. The costs for deportation were a concern to some Malaysian users, as depicted in these comments:

> *The most straightforward action is to ask their ambassadors to pay for it… just blacklist them… deport them immediately… hope this suggestion is better.*

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*Just monitoring until '7th generation'. If they have not been arrested, placed in a lorry, and deported using their embassies money. If everyone is not chased away, this won't be solved...*

However, in the same newspaper report, JIM mentioned that deportation costs were to be covered by migrants, employers, or their embassies. Until August 2021, they collected around RM52,087,000 in fines for deportation (Maszureen Binti Hadzman, 2020). Although the government managed to collect around RM52 million from fines, they have lost around RM100 million to RM130 million from levies if these migrants worked here with proper documentation.

This success can be attributed to *Program Rekalibrasi Tenaga Kerja and Program Rekalibrasi Pulang*, which were introduced on 16th November 2020. Besides the outcome of filling in labour shortages post-COVID, many employers willingly take part in the programs. As a reward for employers who sponsored the deportation costs of their undocumented employees, the authorities will replace the quota of migrant workers with one to one replacement.

The actual income to the government from migrants' deportation must also consider the costs for detention, deportation, investigation and even training of the officers. Considering the case of migrant entrepreneurs, the amount of government's loss may have been higher if there were data from PBTs on their loss from migrant entrepreneurs' license rental or unlicensed business activities because some of the migrants may not have committed any immigration offence if they are staying with a valid pass. Therefore, the income from confiscated goods and collected fines will be able to measure if the resources

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spent on enforcement actions are worth the jobs done or if a new method should be implemented to better manage migrants' entrepreneurship issues.

Enforcement actions never ended while there were still PATIs in Malaysia. The authorities may have spent their resources doing their jobs ineffectively, but these jobs still need to be done. This is a waste of resources for government agencies. For example, JIM must spend resources on enforcement actions to arrest PATI. In contrast, the resources can be used to offer better services to its stakeholders, such as Malaysians, permanent residents, and documented migrants, as well as to strengthen border control.

PBTs will also have to spend their resources on controlling migrant entrepreneurs to offer better services to their customers, such as urban planning, city management, facilities maintenance, social development, and welfare in their municipality. Most importantly, as the main clients and taxpayers, the public expects good services from these authorities. Their satisfaction with services will depend on what they have received or did not receive from the authorities.

Overall, the analysis of this data showed that the authorities should also consider better management of complaints and criticisms posted on social media. Social media users used social media to complain. However, they received little to no feedback from the Facebook page administrators. Bandwagon effects from one commenter to another may create an environment where other users will post their comments to complain just because they read other comments on Facebook that did not get any reaction from the authorities. It will also tarnish the image of these agencies as they do not take the complaints on Facebook seriously and fail to provide the services their clients need. Social media can be a new alternative as a safe channel for complainants by fully utilising social media

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platforms where users can interact in real-time in messages or through comments. They may also post live videos or photos as proof via direct messages and tag the authorities on their posts, videos, or photos to gain authorities' attention.

Although there are social media users who use the platforms to share their frustrations and complaints, there are also some social media users who use social media to pay their support and openly compliment the authorities or the government. It showed that social media users feel that social media platforms are safe environments where they can interact with authorities and other users. The praise and support for the authorities can be shared on their wall and supported with other visuals such as photos and videos. People can also post their comments on the pages of authorities or politicians, post supportive comments on the posts, and even give ratings to the pages. These can help build positive public images that are more transparent and visible online to the authorities.

### 7.2.2 Praise and Support

The third highest number of meaningful codes recorded in this study is praise and support by Malaysians, with 7,558 quotations. Praise and support are commonly posted with simple words such as '*tahniah ENF1'* ('congratulations ENF1'), '*terbaik'* ('excellent!'), good job, congratulations and '*teruskan usaha'* ('keep it up'). These comments can be supported by 'likes', 'love', and 'care' reactions, as discussed previously. Examples of the comments are listed below:

> *Congratulations, MPS and all related bodies… better late than never… Many health issues arise because of these traders… after this…, they upgrade the road facilities in the area.*



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*Great job… too challenging to shut down the market… all the sidewalks were occupied… some almost obstructed the road… don't know who gave them the license… most of them are migrants…*

Praise and support codes were significantly lower than complaints and critiques from Malaysians, which had 19,533 quotations. However, only 73 quotations were coded with praise and support and posted by non-Malaysians, compared to 78 quotations tagged with complaints and critiques. There is not much difference between praise-support and complaints-critiques from non-Malaysians. However, the sounds of comments posted by them were mainly harmful.

Comparing praise and support (positive) with complaints and critiques (negative), Malaysians gave more positive comments (19,533) compared to negative (7,558). A significant difference of 88.41% is noticeable for Malaysians. Non-Malaysians gave more negative (78) comments than positive (73), with only 6.62% differences.

It can be concluded that Malaysians and non-Malaysians use social media platforms to rant about their disappointment, proving there are more posts about negative opinions and emotions during crises (Steinert, 2020). Interestingly, the interview with ENF1 showed that most of their FB followers reacted more to posts about the latest trends, emotions or human interests.

There were 37,991 likes, 807 loves, and 137 cares, grouped into positive reactions to the posts. However, 'haha' and 'wow' reactions on posts were not included in positive or negative because it is open to interpretation by users on how to use the emojis, and they may include amusement or sarcasm. Some comments showed their support for the

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authorities by responding to other users' comments to support the authorities by not criticising them and just letting them do their job. The various opinions and comments from social media users on Facebook showed that this platform can gather different opinions from online social interactions.

> *The public undoubtedly supported the actions by PBT1, just that stupid NGOs (NGO ok) are backing up PATI because they have their interests…*

The comments also include criticism towards NGOs, which Malaysians (in-group) perceived as organisations that would instead protect out-group's rights and not their out-group's rights. However, criticism and support were also shown in the comments towards political parties.

#### 7.2.2.1 Political Support

Public opinions towards migrants' entrepreneurship and authorities may be influenced by their political preferences or benefits and, better yet, by political actions taken towards migrants (Bloch et al., 2015; Dheer, 2017; Khadijah Muda et al., 2022; Lintner, 2015; Wang, 2013). In fact, Whah, (2007)claimed that there are cases of Malaysian Chinese using Malay political influence to get access to Bumiputera's government contracts through Ali Baba partnerships. Ali Baba or license rental situations that we observed between locals and migrant entrepreneurs may result in exploiting one's political influence to win government contracts. This is an example of a comment about a government contract given to Bangladeshis.

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*UserAJ, PR cannot do business. Your head (kepala hotak kau), they are doing business everywhere. Artists with PR are also doing business. Those truly illegal Bangla, damned (celaka) Bangla, can win the state's government tender. What's that?*

These comments mentioned garbage collection tenders given to migrants. Although it sounds like a baseless claim if it is without any proof, this is what this research is all about. Humans are very flexible. Opinions can be manipulated, shaped, or swayed in various ways, including social media.

*They have been established for a long… some have become very rich…, and some with garbage lorries had tenders with PBTs...*

Political instability and various political changes since the pandemic until recently, on 19th November 2022, when Malaysia's 15th General Election was held, were reviewed in Sub-chapter 2.6. A comment said that because the current government was not elected but appointed by YDPA, they are with manifestos and need to work hard to prove their worth. It can explain the situations where all the new ministers posted about the work done by their ministries on their social media pages because the country was going through lockdown phases.

*PN Government has no manifesto for the people. That's why PN has to prove itself and convince people. Do as much as you can. Fire all corrupt officers. They are the country's traitors.*

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*Congratulations, the PN government… recently appointed in the last three months, but we can see you are seriously keeping people's interest… keep up the work in finding the rest of the migrants.*

Although some users may see the newly appointed government as doing their jobs well, some have an opposite opinion towards the previous government. There were comments posted on political influence or showing one's political support to a party and blaming the inaction of previously appointed political parties, UMNO, DAP, PH and PKR.

*UserWA, the Malaysian government, is very political. Impossible to do it. Maybe there are some political influences, and that's the reason why PN are on the fence of PATI. Maybe they have their agenda.*

*Well done… arrest all migrants after this. Halau (kick out) off Malaysia… Along with DAP.*

*They are hiding now… Once when it is quiet… They will go out again. All this thanks to the ruling government PN… Relying on PH… It won't be sure even until Atok (Tun Mahathir) retires.*

*Congratulations, PM8. I love you.*

The comments that support and praise the government showed their support towards certain political parties, ministers, and politicians. What can be observed from the year 2020 is public support shown towards Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin after the country is

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constantly in political turmoil. The decisions taken. Appointing him as the prime minister also helped create a good image for his cabinet members.

Many ministers received support from commenters on social media when they took action to control the pandemic. Their responsibilities in ensuring everyone's social and economic matters were taken care of. During that challenging time, many ministers were showered with praises and support when they were reported to function remarkably through their ministries. However, this comment showed that getting licenses during the BN or PH ruling period was not easy. However, there are still migrant businesses running their businesses.

> *UserAK, PBT6, is still understanding… but is trying to apply for a license or permit from this new minister… it was hard during BN PH. However, you can now try it during PN time.*

Opinions towards the government/ authorities/ political parties may be swayed by one's political preferences/ support. These opinions, however, can be straightened up if the public has a clearer view of the law and regulations, and they may post comments on the lack of legal implementations/ loopholes to be more specific and focused.

Current events influenced public opinions on social media, and comments were recorded on posts about migrants' entrepreneurship that mentioned current political situations. Examples are listed below:

> *Easier to get the job done.*
>
> *1. there are no migrant worker*

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*2. no objection from any parties*

*3. government with no manifesto, politicians cannot interfere*

*PATI issue is an old issue, already cancerous even though PATI obtained their IC… Every five years, the people elected their leaders and appointed them to do their jobs, but this is what we get: these problems… So, when the new PN government committed to eradicating PATI, we supported them... Let's see how far their enforcement actions will continue... The government has tightened border control, currently in Sedili, Johor. This means that the current government is eradicating PATI seriously. PATIs are scattered nationwide, and they are breeding. With the COVID situation, it will take some years to eliminate PATIs... This is not as simple as typing on FB... MPK's tasks are different from JIM's, but they need each other to raid PATI, so we will slowly support those involved in the operations.*

As we can observe in the above comments, commenters posted their opinions about how previous government or political leaders failed to do their job. They posted their opinions about how the newly appointed government performs better. However, some comments mention that there will be no apparent changes even if the government changes because the issue has existed for a long time. Examples are in these comments.

*User FT's previous government turned a blind eye because they profited when migrants entered Malaysia. After all, the levy from each is between RM1000 to RM5000. Try to calculate if there are thousands, moneyed… is it right for migrants to receive honorific (Dato'), what's their contribution to the nation and country... Today, we enjoy the money, but once migrants destroy the*

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*country, then they will regret it, but it will be useless; we, our future generations, will be ruled by migrants.*

*User IS, come any government, it will be the same… the issue has not been settled even though it has been years… not reducing but increasing…*

There were mentions of the political parties and political leaders in the observed comments, especially towards Barisan Nasional (BN), the ruling party in Malaysia for more than 50 years. The comments towards BN were primarily negative as they viewed BN, and many former political heads were behind these problems that stemmed from their past actions. Examples of the comments are:

*Served you right, BN! They (migrants) used to live in Malaysia, now you need to clean after their mess (tahi)… At least, it is still not too late to do the cleaning. Anyway, thank you to all the government officers who are still working. We salute you!*

*UserWA, the Malaysian government, is very political. Impossible to do it. Maybe there are some political influences, and that's the reason why PN are on the fence of PATI. Maybe they have their agenda.*

Opinions from commenters or the public about migrants' entrepreneurship can be influenced by their political views. Regardless of who the elected politicians are, the ruling party or government leaders, they just want the issues to be appropriately managed. Specific changes are needed to prove that the elected and appointed leaders are doing their jobs right.

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#### 7.2.2.2 Law Awareness

Commenters posted many comments knowledgeable about the laws and regulations related to migrants' entrepreneurship issues. For example, in this comment, the commenter understands the separation of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary in the Federal Constitution and between federal and state.

> *For everyone's information… the same government has been in the power of MPS since 2008 because PBTs are not under the central government. This PBT, MPS, is under the state's government. The council's members were appointed by Menteri Besar (First Minister) … PH (Pakatan Harapan Party) has held Selangor since 2008... so think about it.*

It is essential to educate the public about the different functions of government bodies so they may have better knowledge about the law and their rights or responsibilities as citizens. An example in this comment is when a user replied to another user that PBT has no power to arrest migrants.

> *UserZA, it's not PBT1's job to arrest PATI.*

Some commenters also shared their opinions and knowledge about the law system with other users. Users know businesses need registration to operate in any PBT's jurisdiction, even for locals. Some examples of the comments are:

> *UserKN, Selangor, did not allow for roadside selling. That's at your own risk. Check on the PBT's page search kiosk. Look at the list. There are many*

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*vacant. Can sell food/ drinks… Rental is RM270 for 6 months… Not RM270 per month but six months… roughly around RM45 monthly... with water and electricity. License, permit, only rental is charged. Have to renew two weeks before the six-month lease. Twice yearly renewable amounting to RM0. Only paying for stall rental for six months, RM270. Try checking on it.*

*UserKN usually will apply for a temporary permit with some payment… that's for selling seasonal fruits by the roadside… if that's according to the procedure… Don't know if some violate/ go under the table.*

Many comments explained that foreigners can register for a business in Malaysia with a paid-up capital of RM1 million. This shows that the public understands the high requirement for foreigners to start a business in Malaysia and that they are considered significant investors.

*UserSE, Foreigners can only set up business with the minimum paid-up capital of RM 1 million in Malaysia.*

*Malaysia will be more peaceful when there are no migrants. Malaysians can work in building constructions. Migrants don't have to cut grass. Let locals do the job. Shut down migrant entrepreneurs unless there are millions invested. 1- Indian migrants opened Mamak's restaurants. Locals should not buy or patronise. 2- Indians own many grocery stores, so locals should not buy. 3- Tom Yum shops are owned mainly by Thai migrants; locals should not buy and be patrons of the restaurants. 4- I hope locals will open their shops*

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*or rent to do business. Rather than letting migrants trade, let the locals try to be more successful.*

Although the law is there, particular work around the law was done. For example, migrant entrepreneurs pool capital and register several businesses under the same owner. It is not even necessary to register a business under the local's name anymore when they have the required paid-up capital. Example of comment as posted by this user:

*The problem is many Malaysians rented their licenses for migrants to open shops… This is not wrong, dear qualified immigration. Or you just turn a blind eye… Sorry… But if you are going to say it, it's better to walk the talk… In Ampang, more than ten shops are owned by Bangladeshis... They pooled the capital for business using local license... when investigated... They'll cover up by saying they are working under a boss. How can immigration arrest them?? Isn't it hard?*

An example of comments mentioning the law about business licensing for local spouses:

*User DMR, from my understanding, if the wife is present running the business, it should be okay when asked about the license. There is the wife's name, and the wife is there… but I am not sure. Whatever it is, you can ask others' opinions.*

*Now, migrants are not allowed to register for business licenses, and migrants married to locals cannot manage the business license under their local wife's name*.



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The permit required for an extended stay even if you are married to locals:

> *As far as I know, even if migrants are married to locals, they still need to stamp their passport/ visa once every three months… except if they manage to become permanent residents… that is, if they follow the law… if not, see for yourself…*

A comment about actions to be taken towards the employer if PATI were hired:

> *UserHC is not for undocumented. If they get caught unexpectedly, the boss can be fined. Whatever it is, happy working, try to get a permit if possible…*

These comment examples listed above, which I observed as being law-literate, showed that commenters are aware of the legal issues and are not afraid to report any misconduct. Commenters also suggested that other users go to the proper channels to report if they have abused power.

> T*o those commented "ENF1, please monitor this area. It's dirty after the business ended." Please lodge an official report; telling them in FB comments cannot be considered official reports. Legal actions cannot be taken if FB comments are used.*

> *Babu… join a business association… if there is such a police officer, lodge a report or email to Bukit Aman, Selangor Chief Police… better yet, videos or photos can be submitted to SPRM.*

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Having legal awareness is not only limited to Malaysian commenters. This example showed that a non-Malaysian commenter understood that PR can do business in Malaysia.

> *We are not undocumented (kosong). We are permanent residents. Our children were born here. If we can't do business, what are we going to eat?*

Good law awareness is essential not just for citizens to abide by the law but also to protect them from authorities' misconduct and to be responsible citizens by knowing when or whom to report to when they see any suspicious activities.

### 7.2.3 Asking Questions

The public also used government agencies' official Facebook pages to ask questions, especially about issues related to the agencies or the law. There are 588 quotations coded with Asking Questions from Malaysian commenters who posted their questions in the comment sections, whether to ask for more information or to clarify any governance-related issue. Some questions asked were about operation hours, contact numbers, and procedures for filing a report on migrants' businesses. The questions may arise because of irregular office hours during MCO.

> *Where do I make a report on migrants' businesses???*

> *Can we submit our complaints on Facebook comments?*

> *Will ENF1 operate as usual after the 12th?*

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Observed from the comments that commenters may also use sarcasm or criticise the authorities by using passive-aggressive questions in their comments. Examples of these questions include their dissatisfaction with the actions not taken towards undocumented Chinese migrants:

> *JIM, if I may ask just a question…? What's the case with 6 JPN officers who were the people behind IC selling to the Chinese and traitors to the country…? People did not forget the incident… Every citizen would like to know who these traitors are and what the rats behind the syndicate of fake IC are. The public would want SPRM officers to announce on social media. That's all my question.*

> *ENF1 can't hear about any arrest of Chinese nationals who are PATI in Malaysia. What are the initiatives taken by the government to track those who have overstayed in Malaysia for more than the allowable duration? Please clarify or provide a link as a source of information for the public to know more about the current situation regarding this issue.*

Comments which asked for clarification about migrants' businesses, which openly operated in many areas and license application information, including those who are married to locals.

> *I want to ask, what if some are married to migrants and they opened shops? How's that when they opened 4-5 shops? Isn't the permit for migrants to work not to do business or as business helpers? Please clarify.*

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*I find it strange and would really like to know if no action has been taken against Pakistani shops. Seems like there are many Pakistanis' shops free from any action… They are even on motorcycles, cars, vans, and lorries… Are Pakistanis in Malaysia fulfilling all the requirements to have the licence???...*

A neutral question like this, which asked what the punishments or actions were taken towards arrested migrants, showed that the public was curious about what happened after the raid.

*What are the actions taken towards migrants' businesses? Blacklisted or deported to their home country… or they can still stay in Malaysia?*

*May I ask about the Rohingyas? Have you heard that they will be released even if they are arrested for doing business illegally? Arrested again and rereleased? Is it true because I watched it on TV3 sometime ago? Is there any effective action?*

These types of questions appeared more than once in the comments when commenters asked if the premises which were closed down were open for lease or if they could buy the businesses which were closed down. It is interesting to know that commenters who are Malaysians are interested in running a business owned by migrants.

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*These confiscated shops… can locals apply… Because I can see in my area, many Acehnese shops have not been operating… If we can apply, how to do it…*

Comments which questioned authorities' integrity:

*A MANDATORY QUESTION FOR THE ADMIN TO ANSWER: 1- Why can the personal information from the report reach the gambling thugs (tokey)? 2- How much does ENF2 receive the payment to leak the complainants' details? 3- What is the SOP for raids that gambling thugs (tokay) can pack up and close their premises before the raid? 4- Has ENF2 negotiated with these gambling thugs before the raid? The same thing happened nationwide, not just in Sungai Buloh. If the admin has integrity, please answer...*

*Great, salute, but I want to know how some of the Acehnese shops you confiscated but reoperated after a month came about. Can anyone answer? Sorry, I just want to know so there won't be any slender (fitnah)*.

Most answers to the questions are already available on the authority's official website. However, the public will still turn to Facebook to ask questions and expect immediate responses. It suggests that authorities' official communication medium for essential information should be communicated more effectively and promoted actively to reach more audiences.

A reason for this suggestion is that the highest number of co-occurrences analysis for comments coded with 'Asking Questions' is 'Complaints and Critics' with 47 comments.

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Commenters criticised the authorities/ government by asking questions on the authorities' Facebook page. Public relations officers of the organisations should take more proactive actions to improve their service delivery. Their approach of ignoring comments which request answers or feedback may harm the department's reputation (Mergel, 2013).

Non-Malaysians posted around 41 questions, of which three of them asked about the status of the license registered using a local's spouse information, a commenter asked about permission to do business for a MyPR holder, and other commenters asked about possible ways for them to go home to their country during the pandemic, regardless of their status. The questions did not receive any reply from the authorities in answering the questions. However, some of the questions received responses from other users. Examples of non-Malaysian's comments which asked questions are listed below:

Questions about the repatriation program:

> *May I know if the family can buy the tickets for migrants in the detention depot to send them home… family paid for the fares.*

> *How about the visa situation for foreigners who have been in Malaysia since last March and couldn't move due to the MCO?*

Question about business licensing:

> *Can foreigners run car rental or workshop businesses in KL/ Selangor areas? Does anyone have info on this?*

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*Just want to know… can permanent residents do business or apply for a business license?*

Question about business licensing under spouse's name:

*Salam, wanted to ask. I do regular business in my hometown and school, selling drinks. Married to a local. Am I allowed to register for a business license? Or do I need to use my wife's name for the license? Do inform me. Thank you.*

*UserSFA, how about those who have already married Malay women, madam?*

There were also some random questions from migrants about citizenship and whether they can go to buy things during MCO, which showed that non-Malaysian commenters feel comfortable enough to post about anything on authorities' FB pages.

*How do I become a Malaysian citizen?*

*May I go out? Want to buy some vegetables?*

Social media is seen as a medium of interaction where users post their comments on publicly available posts, and they may want their opinions to be heard, someone to read them, or even react to them. When asking questions, these commenters may have used FB to ask for questions or clarify things that they feel comfortable asking online, expecting that there will be someone who can answer them.

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#### 7.2.3.1 Information Sharing

Social media are used to make inquiries and interact with users. Besides asking questions, some users on Facebook interact with each other by answering questions asked by other users about regulations or other governance issues. A total of 880 quotations were coded from Malaysian users who shared information on various issues, such as questions on JIM's contact number, channels to complain and report about migrants, rules and regulations of migrants' issues and advice to illegal migrants asking for solutions about their legality.

A two-way interaction between users may sometimes turn negative when it turns into arguments due to disagreement. As discussed above, non-Malaysian users who commented on the posts are mostly Indonesians. They are actively interacting on Facebook with Malaysian authorities because of the similarities in the languages used between Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia, which can help them read and post comments.

This situation was also observed by other Facebook users as posted in this comment, "*It's strange… if this is the Facebook page for ENF1 of Malaysian or Indonesian? Where are there too many irritated Indonesians posted in the comment section… hahaha*". However, it can thus be suggested that cultural differences between Malaysians and Indonesians may create conflicts in communication and anti-immigration sentiments despite their language's similarities when some online conversations turn into disagreement, cyberbullying, and threats (Ekman, 2019).

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When observed from positive and negative perspectives, commenters positively interacted with other users when they replied to questions or comments with helpful information and facts. Examples of the comments were when they shared about the channels to report on migrants' entrepreneurship or PATI.

> *UserKK, if you have any information about migrants, please share it with the PBT1 One-stop call centre at 180088XXXX or go to the nearest PBT1 branch.*

> *Greetings. Please channel your complaints about migrants' businesses into the AWAS application. http://awas.mpklang.gov.my/*

Information on permits, visas, and licensing:

> *User IE, The government probably won't be issuing new permits anytime soon since they have decided to freeze foreign workers' intake until the end of the year. The focus is now on hiring local workers to fill all economic sectors.*

> *UserSK roadside hawkers' licenses have been frozen since 7/2017 and replaced with limited-time licenses.*

Information sharing in the comments section helped to increase interactions on FB pages. Even if the authorities do not officially reply to comments or answer questions, interactions and reactions from other users can help increase reach and view on these FB pages. As discussed by Di Gangi Wasko (2016), more social media interaction will increase engagement and reach as set in the FB algorithm. Social media engagement can also increase a page's visibility (Nadzir et al., 2019); more interactions can increase the

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reach of FB pages, and the pages can be a better medium to share information with a broader audience.

From the interview with ENF1, it was revealed that their Director General supports using FB as a medium to create a positive image, share information about the department's core business and issues, and highlight activities conducted by the department. It was also proven from the interview with ENF1 that their FB posts are very varied. They shared about their department, migrants, the economy, national matters, and some activities at the department.

However, the type of posts that usually get more hits and reactions from other users are posts with some human factors and emotions, such as news about an accident involving one of ENF1's officers or a post from the public sharing their satisfaction and good experience at ENF1's office. These posts can increase user interactions on authorities' FB pages.

#### 7.2.3.2 Giving Suggestions

As a medium of communication, Facebook can either bring more advantages or damage to its users. It can also affect an organisation positively or negatively. Organisations usually use Facebook to convey information to users through single-directional communication, primarily to provide updates to the public (Gintova, 2019; Mirbabaie et al., 2020; Reddick et al., 2017). Many users turn to social media to rant, complain or compliment an organisation, as these are common customer service issues all service providers face (Gintova, 2019).

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Nevertheless, suggestions have also been received through Facebook pages. Suggestions are unavoidable despite not being actively requested by the page owners (Reddick et al., 2017). Facebook may have a future in replacing traditional Suggestion Box in offices because suggestions can be looked upon in real-time, and further actions can be taken more efficiently.

For this study, 710 quotations were coded as suggestions. 12 users suggested the authorities allow photo and video comments to lodge a report on migrants' businesses as in this comment:

> *It would be better if the ENF1 FB Page allowed photo comments. More accessible for readers to give photos of areas with countless PATI. Why do you need to close it? Shy like a maiden. Even maidens are not shy nowadays.*

Besides that, many comments were asking for Whatsapp number to submit their report:

> *Whatsapp is better… telephone is already ancient… would be calling for an hour with no success.*

An interesting suggestion that the authority has materialised is the placement of CCTV cameras in the Pasar Borong Selayang area by Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) to monitor migrants' business activities; 100 CCTV were installed in November 2020 (BERNAMA, 2020). A comment posted on ENF1 posts which read:

> *Install CCTV, build a post, and MPS bring canes. DBKL, PDRM, SPRM, YB ADUN, and YB Parliament should monitor, act, and not joke around. Just that*



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*the built structures are not small, and they are not hidden unlicensed businesses, can't you see… Malaysia Prihatin, people and leaders who are more dedicatedly transparent under YAB TSMY... take severe actions towards Malaysians who are behind the act and making easy profit out of it, selfish, the database should be improved and updated, do not deal with representatives, insiders, and NGOs, okay.*

Fourteen quotations suggested military involvement, and 50 quotations on ENF2 for collaboration of inter-agency enforcement actions.

*If it is too hard, just put our army there after this.*

*Put our armed forces in Selayang Wholesale Market.*

Besides the police and army, there are also suggestions for service delivery collaboration with other departments or agencies to be centralised.

*... Back to PBT3... instead of continuously demolishing premises since AJ reported about all these... Why don't you group all the manpower and divide it into areas? All authorities should bring forms for the sellers to fill out when applying for registration.*

Suggestion for the embassies of migrants' sending countries to be more involved:

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*The most effortless action to take is to ask all their ambassadors to bear the responsibility… blacklist them… deport them instantly… hope this is a better suggestion.*

There were also suggestions for heavier penalty fines or taxes and stricter laws to be imposed on migrants' businesses.

*... 2) Suruhanjaya form shops monitoring teams if migrants are using the Ali Baba system (confiscate the shops) compound RM100k/ RM200k to (SSM owner of the shops) (they can open up shops but they can't pay RM100k/ RM200k, are they afraid) - officially corruption won't exist, Ali Baba shop owners will be afraid to do the Ali Baba system...*

Conversely, some suggested an amnesty program and more lenient penalties to be collected so more PATI would come forward. As discussed earlier in this chapter, no more security deposit is required for the recalibration program. The government no longer used a third-party company when MyEG (a privately owned company) was not appointed to run the website for the recalibration application.

*After this, ENF1 should allow illegal foreign workers who come forward and surrender to go back to their own country once MCO is over with a fair fine so that all these illegals can afford to pay. This can save our government a lot of money and help Malaysians bring our economy back on the right track. Thanks, ENF1, for doing a great job during this pandemic period. Salute you all, and take care too. God bless you.*

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*Open up to do permits like 6P before. The government can profit from the payment of levy.*

These comments suggested actions to be taken towards Rohingya refugees.

*Rohingya refugees need to be placed on an island or a controlled area with fences and barbed wires so it will be easier for the authorities, police, and immigration to control and monitor Rohingya refugees' path so they are not roaming around all over the country and for safety.*

Suggestions about MyKad, citizenship and permanent resident status, which are under the National Registration Department's jurisprudence:

*Suggestion for Malaysians to replace MyKad every five years. The fact that Malaysian Chinese has the same appearance as Chinese from China… It's hard to arrest… It will be more accessible for Bangladeshis or other nationalities… Check for fingerprints, my nation.*

Suggestion for the public to be more involved in managing the issue when they see that they cannot rely upon the authorities:

*Residential association establish PATI identification unit… Ask for SOP and cooperation with ENF1… let's clean our area from PATI… some were saying that the corrupt are slow to act when they depend on PBT… better to take our initiatives…. It won't be hard if every citizen cooperates*.

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Suggestion to limit migrant workers' contracts in Malaysia:

> *In Gelang Patah, Johor, many migrants are driving recklessly. Please clean up the Gelang Patah area from PATI. Limit the permit to 3 years only to work in Malaysia if possible. Don't let them renew the permit after three years.*

> *Immigration and related ministries, please discuss this so that foreign security guards are not renewed for 2 or 3 years. So, there will be options and opportunities. Many are jobless nowadays, and not just Malaysians.*

Suggestion to include local guarantors for every migrant worker hired in Malaysia.

> *By right, every migrant living in Malaysia should have a local guarantor… if anything happens to them, especially in criminal cases… the guarantor will be liable, not all citizens… and limit the number of migrants for a guarantor. Anything happened, easy to trace... Suddenly, if anyone under one's liability has an IC...*

Suggestion to do more frequent enforcement actions:

> *As an enforcement old timer, I would like to give some tips… To end illegal activities, you'll need at least one or two months to come and confiscate every day. Just like how you stopped COVID's chain. WON'T WORK if it is just for one or two times… It's like cutting off the shrubs...*

Suggestion to privatise PBTs as they are wasting the government's money:



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*Just privatise the PBTs… wasting money to be under the government…*

Suggestion to transform the area, which has always been the spot for unlicensed migrants' businesses, into valuable spaces. PBT4 already implemented this suggestion...

*You're the best PBT2… I suggest… This spot is to be tarred and made into a ticketed parking… okay… if it's not done…. Don't have to do the raid. It'll be the same… just wasting time… hope you'd be alert, sir…*

All the quoted comments gave roughly 16 suggestions that the authorities can implement. Some were already enforced, especially after the pandemic, such as fixing CCTVs around Pasar Borong Selayang. Other suggestions will need more coordination and commitment from institutional level, such as on MyKad/ MyPR, as well as guarantor/sponsor for migrants and privatisations of PBTs.

### 7.3 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter explores public opinions and reactions towards the governance of migrants and entrepreneurship in Malaysia. It examines factors such as government actions, economic conditions, and the pandemic contributing to negative perceptions. The chapter also investigates adherence to Malaysian law by authorities, migrants, and the public. Social media comments are analysed to understand public reactions and highlight the influence of the governance of migrants and political instability in Malaysia during the pandemic.

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Based on the analysis of the types of coded comments, findings include a notable contrast in the number of complaints and critiques from Malaysians (19,533) compared to non-Malaysians (78), with negative comments often attracting more attention due to the phenomenon of negative emotions driving higher engagement during crises. The primary codes observed among comments were related to complaints and critiques, requests for actions, responses to other users, praise/support, opinions, and mentions of bribery, which were grouped into this study's 'Law' theme. While comments reflected a mix of positive and negative interactions, complaints directed at authorities or the government were the most prevalent.

This chapter uncovered robust engagement between users, authorities, and other users on Facebook pages. A common theme was users posing questions to authorities, often with mixed sentiments. Negative comments frequently expressed dissatisfaction with authorities' actions or perceived inaction. Some instances revealed sarcasm and frustration, questioning the effectiveness of implemented measures. The discussions also highlighted the prevalent concerns voiced in comments, focusing on authorities' perceived inaction or inefficiency, leading to public discontent. While acknowledging positive actions, commenters often called for more robust enforcement, arrests, and deportation of PATI. Additionally, a perception of bribery and corruption influencing authorities' lack of action was evident.

The study underscored the impact of virality on social media, as users believed that viral posts could expedite authorities' responses. Sarcasm and ridicule were employed to provoke reactions, indicating frustration with perceived unresponsiveness from authorities. The research objectives extended to analysing sentiments toward migrants' entrepreneurship and government agencies. The public engaged positively and negatively



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with these topics, showcasing diverse opinions encompassing support for migrants' businesses, criticism of agencies, and concerns about PATI.

Besides negative comments, the authorities in Selangor were praised for acting against illegal migrant entrepreneurs, with more positive comments than negative ones. Using agents to handle overseas activities or business is a personal choice. Suggestions received through social media include collaborating between different agencies for enforcement actions, involving embassies of migrants' sending countries, and implementing stricter laws and penalties. The chapter suggests officers should have a nationalistic spirit and be given the power to arrest illegal immigrants, as well as recommends more frequent enforcement actions. Better management of complaints and criticisms on social media platforms by the authorities were also mentioned.

Furthermore, the research delved into current implementations and potential policy loopholes based on comments. Complaints frequently centred around perceived inaction from authorities and calls for more robust measures. Other criticisms discussed in this chapter are the imposition of higher security deposits for PATI for the recalibration program and suggestions from social media users regarding the government's amnesty programs and enforcement.

Analysis of action-oriented words in comments revealed a public desire for investigations, enforcement, arrests, deportation, and raids. The study also recommended authorities closely monitor social media complaints and critiques, responding to address concerns and bolstering transparency. Encouraging positive interactions between authorities and the public was also advised. Social media platforms provide a dynamic

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avenue for constructive and critical engagement, influencing public perception of authorities and government agencies.

In summary, the study unveiled the pivotal role of social media as a platform for public expression, underscoring the need for authorities to address public concerns and leverage social media for effective communication and responsiveness. Findings from this study conflicted with studies by Dheer, (2017), Rath and Kloosterman (2014), that it was found the lack of institutional support and control towards migrants' entrepreneurship contributed to their expansion. This chapter discusses government programs and their changes and public comments related to these programs. It concludes that political instability and government programs can shape public opinions and support towards migrants and entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, migrants' entrepreneurship can still succeed without institutional support.

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# CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

## 8.1 Summary

This study explores the utilization and impact of Facebook as a social media platform for government agencies to share helpful information with the public, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Facebook is widely used for information sharing, communication, and entertainment by users, its potential for government agencies remains underutilized. Chapter 1 highlights the role of Facebook pages for government agencies, mainly for communication and promotion. During the pandemic, social media platforms served as powerful communication tools, offering instant access to a widespread audience, especially for updates on COVID-19. A survey revealed that Facebook, along with other social media platforms, ranked second after television news and online newspapers as a news source.

The study also delves into crisis management procedures during the pandemic, particularly the importance of clear communication through various media channels, including television, radio, the internet, and social media. The chapter examines public opinions and reactions towards migrants' entrepreneurship, especially in COVID-19. Migrant workers faced challenges due to crowded living conditions and raising concerns about virus transmission. Enforcement activities and policy changes were observed to control migrant entrepreneurs' activities.

The research aims to gather and analyse social media comments on migrants' entrepreneurship and the public's opinions towards the authorities. Furthermore, it

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investigates the transformation of migrant workers into business owners, exploring economic and social implications, including competition with local businesses.

The significance of this research lies in understanding public perceptions of migrants' entrepreneurship and their interactions with government authorities, particularly on social media platforms. The chapter emphasizes the importance of studying the integration of migrants into society, shedding light on economic and psychosocial aspects. It acknowledges the potential impact of social media in shaping public opinions and online reactions. Despite encountering challenges in data collection and ethical considerations, the study aims to contribute to the knowledge on migration, entrepreneurship, and public opinion dynamics within the digital landscape.

Chapter 2 highlights various dimensions of migrants' entrepreneurship and introduces the theoretical underpinnings of the research, focusing on public opinion, social media, migration, entrepreneurship, and migrants' entrepreneurship. It explores netnography as a research design and discusses the concept of public opinion in the context of Facebook as a tool for studying opinions and perceptions in Malaysia. The chapter also discusses the Social Media Engagement theory, emphasizing the role of engagement on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the relationship between migration, public opinion, and entrepreneurship, acknowledging the mixed views on migrant workers in Malaysia and their potential transition to entrepreneurship during economic crises.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used, involving netnography to collect and analyse public comments from Facebook posts related to migrants' entrepreneurship. The chapter details the data collection process, challenges faced in obtaining ethical clearance, and

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the 12-step netnography process. It highlights the use of thematic analysis and the categorization of businesses operated by migrants into sub-themes. The chapter concludes by discussing the findings that will be analysed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 profiles migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia, focusing on the locality, nationality, and speciality of products and services offered by migrant entrepreneurs. It presents findings based on the analysis of Facebook posts and comments, showcasing the types of businesses migrants are involved in and their nationalities. It extensively profiles migrant businesses by examining their geographical distribution and predominant nationalities, such as Indonesians, Bangladeshis, and Burmese. Klang Valley is a significant hub for migrant enterprises, particularly in districts like Klang, Shah Alam, and Sungai Buloh. At the same time, other states like Johor, Penang, and Sabah also exhibit notable migrants' entrepreneurship. The diverse range of products and services will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

The chapter introduced the economic and social complexities of migrants' entrepreneurship, shedding light on mixed local perceptions ranging from competition concerns to recognizing migrants' financial contributions. It offers a comprehensive view of the various business types and their impact on regional markets, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges encountered by migrant entrepreneurs. This analysis paves the way for a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play within Malaysia's business landscape. The chapter emphasizes the motivations and factors driving migrant entrepreneurs to enter the market and the locations where their businesses are prevalent.

Chapter 5 analyses the economic framework of migrants' entrepreneurship, categorizing products and services offered into "Needs" and "Wants." It discusses how migrant

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entrepreneurs compete and complement the local market environment, highlighting their adaptability and resourcefulness. The chapter also explores the economic reasons and impacts of migrant workers' transformation into entrepreneurs, addressing factors such as opportunity cost, business risk, and competition dynamics.

It highlights the adaptability and resourcefulness of migrant entrepreneurs who engage in various forms of businesses, including home-based, mobile, and traditional brick-and-mortar establishments. The pandemic-induced shift in consumer preferences towards essential goods is explored, showcasing the resilient nature of migrants' enterprises and how they adapted to situational changes during lockdown.

The chapter navigates through the intricate interplay of competition and complementarity dynamics between migrant and local entrepreneurs. It underscores the nuanced relationship, with some migrants competing directly in the same sectors as local businesses while others complement existing markets by fulfilling unmet needs. The economic impact is examined, revealing bribery, tax evasion, and licensing challenges intersecting market dynamics.

The analysis emphasizes that migrant entrepreneurs often cater to a broader market beyond their ethnic communities, challenging stereotypes and contributing to essential and non-essential markets. The findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of migrants' entrepreneurship's economic implications and underline the need for comprehensive assessments beyond conventional ethnic perspectives.

Chapter 6 offers an in-depth analysis of the complex social dynamics at play in the realm of migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia, primarily observed through the lens of social



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media interactions. The chapter delves into the intricate intergroup relations between Malaysians and non-Malaysians, highlighting diverse attitudes shaped by identity, citizenship, ethnicity, and economic concerns. It illuminates contrasting opinions on migrants' interactions with locals, including intermarriage and permanent residency status, while also exposing the influence of religion in shaping viewpoints. The chapter unearths both positive expressions of support and appreciation for migrants' contributions and negative sentiments rooted in stereotypes and prejudices, underscoring the need for fostering empathetic dialogue and understanding.

In this comprehensive exploration, Chapter 6 underscores how social media is a powerful platform for expressing public opinions and reactions towards migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia. The analysis captures the intricate tapestry of attitudes, revealing the influence of various societal factors. The interplay between economic insecurities, cultural differences, and personal experiences manifests in diverse expressions of support, scepticism, and prejudice. By examining the multifaceted intergroup dynamics and delving into the influence of history and religion, the chapter emphasizes the importance of open dialogue, respectful engagement, and addressing underlying prejudices to navigate the complex landscape of attitudes towards migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Chapter 7 explores public opinions and reactions towards the governance of migrants and entrepreneurship in Malaysia through social media comments. It examines factors influencing negative perceptions, public sentiments, and engagement with government authorities. The chapter highlights the importance of addressing public concerns and leveraging social media for effective communication and responsiveness. It also discusses government programs and changes based on public comments, concluding that political

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instability and government actions shape public opinions towards migrants and entrepreneurship.

### 8.2 New Findings from this Study

Overall, these chapters comprehensively explore various dimensions related to migrants' entrepreneurship, including theoretical frameworks, methodology, business profiles, economic impacts, societal interactions, and public perceptions.

The main observation is on the business profiles of migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia. As clarified before, no official data from any agency is available on the number of migrants' businesses and business owners with foreign spouses/ family as their business partners. Observation data from this research can guide a new hypothesis for future research that Indonesians, Bangladeshi or Burmese own most migrant enterprises.

The public viewed migrant entrepreneurs as their competitors when they ventured into small businesses reserved for the locals. In Malaysia, migrant enterprises prefer to invest in general products and services to reach a broader market. Compared to past studies that focused on the Western context, the market is focused on their business enclave, selling ethnic products and targeting their people. Although visible in our everyday lives, this significant finding has never been documented or recorded officially.

Ineffective actions at the institutional level resulted in several ways of law manipulating migrants' exploitation. Allegedly, the worst case is corruption or power abuse. Hate, anger and frustrations towards migrant entrepreneurs were developed throughout the decades of economic insecurities as well as in-group and out-group dynamics. The findings



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contribute to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia and several actions that can be taken by the authorities to govern the situation better.

A theoretical assumption from this study is that migrants have successfully penetrated small businesses in Malaysia due to the loopholes in the system. They have developed vital networking and support between themselves and the locals through official or unofficial relationships. This networking helped provide sufficient financial, social, technological or workforce capital for business start-ups and expansions. Migrant workers transformed into entrepreneurs because opportunities are available to start a business.

### 8.3 Contribution of the Present Study

From this research, we can have an initial overview of migrants' entrepreneurship in Malaysia, although there is no official data on the number of migrant entrepreneurs. However, the most visible contribution is that we observed reactions towards another social framework (migrants) rather than the usual primary races in this country through social, economic and legislation outlooks. Although this research focuses on migrants' entrepreneurship, the findings will be helpful in the studies of migrant workers and immigration.

The authorities can use the findings from this study to understand the trend and predict types of social media posts that can create a good image. Besides being a valuable tool for sharing information, social media should be used to impress the public and create a positive image for the agencies. Government authorities can learn the type of posts that



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can capture the attention of more users and how to manipulate social media for damage control of the authorities' image when they receive backlash on social media.

### 8.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

Migrants' entrepreneurship research requires understanding several theories, such as migration, economics, entrepreneurship, sociology, policy studies, management studies, urban studies, geography and political sciences. Adding to these varieties, this research, which implemented netnography, needs some level of understanding about communication, linguistics, technology, social media, artificial intelligence, the internet and public opinion. Deciding on the correct theory to conduct this research may look simple, but its versatility gave more opportunities for research contributions.

From existing studies, migrant entrepreneurs focused on ethnic niches in their enclave. However, this research finds that migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia prefer general products and services that will attract more locals than migrants. Social capital was manipulated for economic goals, but from this research, the root cause of migrants' transformation into entrepreneurs is law manipulation. There have been ways for migrants to bypass the law to operate their businesses, whether by registering with local spouses, family or friends, or those who bribed the authorities. Some even conducted their businesses without any valid registration.

### 8.3.2 Methodological Contribution

Netnography is suitable for studying controversial topics, marginalised groups, crimes, or underground behaviours. Initial attempts to conduct this research from face-to-face



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interviews with migrant entrepreneurs failed to gain their trust. People can comment and give their opinions on social media platforms. An observational study can help to gather behaviour and social actions which are not in an experimental setting but occur naturally. This research managed to mine commenters' opinions about a topic. This method can be replicated to examine people's views on any topic. However, the humanistic factor in netnography contributed significantly to the body of knowledge by linking the themes to social, economic and institutional factors.

### 8.3.3 Practical Contribution

There will be an added value when research has any possibility of policy implementation or commercialization value. Netnography and social media data mining have been widely used in consumer research and political opinion gathering. The latest trends is that products and services were promoted and sold on social media, while the latest technology in AI helped pick up future consumer trends. Through this research, I am exploring the possibility of policy implementation and suggestions for improvement in the governance of migrants' entrepreneurship.

There is no official information on the number of migrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia. SSM has several foreign-owned businesses, but migrants' entrepreneurship is still considered a grey area when businesses run with a spouse's or local registration. These companies are not recorded, and no official data are available. It is safe to claim that migrants' entrepreneurship is growing as the number of migrant workers in Malaysia is increasing. Besides the issue of no official record on the number of PATI, the case is similar to migrants' entrepreneurship. Failure to manage this issue will progress unfavourably, just like the authorities' failure to address PATI's issues.

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The first policy suggestion is to have a more effective enforcement action by the authorities. Enforcement actions should also begin with a workable law and legislation. Raids, closing down shops and confiscating goods seem like ineffective actions and short-lived as the shops will reopen, and these actions failed to stop the number of migrant entrepreneurs from growing. The cost of raids, detention, deportation, investigation, workforce and loss from unregistered businesses need to be reassessed in determining the fines and compounds imposed on migrant entrepreneurs who were found guilty.

The compounds imposed by one of the PBTs to claim the confiscated goods is RM300 or dependent on the offences with RM5.00 per day (for less than seven days) and RM0.50 per day (if more than seven days) for storage. Compared to the compounds imposed on PATI, those who overstayed, pass abuse or without any document, they will be fined up to RM3,000 per offence, while their employer can be fined up to RM15,000.

Several considerations will need to be relooked into, as there are possibilities of licensed rental or unlicensed businesses by migrants. Some of them managed to get away without punishment because it would be tough to prove that they owned the businesses. Often, migrant entrepreneurs claim they are mere workers for their bosses, who are not at the premises. There are suggestions from the commenters to check on the name of the account holder of the business' bank account before deciding if they are not the real owners of the shops.

However, enforcement agencies, including PBTs, have limited power to check on one's bank account information based on the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 [Act 709], where there will be standard operating procedures for such actions to be taken by the



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authorities (Laws of Malaysia, 2010). Evaluations have to be made on several of the policies to see what improvements can be made holistically. It will require some focus group discussions from stakeholders such as PBTs, enforcement agencies, banks, SSM and the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC) to check on the legislative improvements such as:

i) the amount of fine or compound;

ii) the licensing for migrants who are married to locals; and

iii) procedures for business document checking

Secondly, government agencies should promote their core businesses and services offered to educate the public. Promotions on policies/laws for business registration, citizenship, labour law, taxation, and migrant workers' passes and visas should be introduced to the public. Social media can be an excellent platform for disseminating news faster and cheaper to a broader audience. By having well-informed citizens, they will understand the responsibilities and duties of government bodies so that they will not post baseless accusations on social media, and more importantly, they will know their rights and responsibilities as citizens, which will be discussed as the third policy suggestion. More involvement from the public can help uphold the law on the governance of migrants' entrepreneurship and migrant workers in Malaysia.

Thirdly, public should be encouraged to share information or report to the authorities on any unlawful and dubious activities. It can strengthen the integrity of the authorities and assist them in governing migrants. Standard operating procedures or a template on the information needed should be shared with the public for ways to report or share information about unlawful or questionable activities so as not to discriminate against migrants in the country.

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The transparency of this information should be looked into so that it will not jeopardise one's privacy. Currently, there are cases when the public makes a viral post on social media regarding corruption or reports on any unlawful activities, and they are threatened and receive adverse reactions from the authorities. The public should be rewarded and encouraged to show exemplary citizen's best practices when they share information with the authorities and ensure their safety is not risked. Besides protecting citizens who helped the authorities uphold the law, accepting migrants into the community should be promoted to encourage a more harmonious country.

Being a multi-racial country has helped citizens to be tolerant towards people of different cultures and races. Racial and ethnic tolerance is something that is not discussed openly to avoid racial conflicts in Malaysia. The situation is similar when it comes to different ethnic of migrant workers in Malaysia, whereby they are invisibly present, but they will still be faced with stigmatisation and discrimination although in real life, they are treated well by the public as mere workers and not as individuals. Lastly, based on this research, the integration and inclusivity of migrants into the community in Malaysia should be encouraged and implemented at the institutional level.

Government agencies should fully utilize social media to integrate migrants into local communities, and some level of respect and appreciation towards migrant workers legally working in Malaysia should be promoted. The celebration of migrant workers' day, for example, can be encouraged to create inclusivity. Acceptance towards those who have already been granted PR status and those who have already been married to the locals can be the next goal in promoting Malaysia's harmonious and multi-racial uniqueness. This suggestion may sound simple, but its application varies due to the fact that Malaysians



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are being protective towards their race and their privileges, as more of their citizenries. It may backfire for some to support the assimilation of non-citizen and accept them as one due to their ego defences.

Comments received from the public on a social media page should not be taken lightly by government agencies. Social media pages are created as a communication medium, but if there is no effective two-way communication between the authorities and the public, social media functions are underutilized. Government agencies must improve their image and service delivery by taking proactive action towards complaints, reports, and accusations of corruption made by the public on their FB page.

It will give the impression that the authorities are unreliable and not being transparent if they let the comments slip. Social media page moderators are the voice of the agencies. They are responsible for fully utilising its functions to improve service delivery because of its ease of use and broader accessibility. To move forward from its current position, a proper guideline should be made for the public to lodge a report or make a complaint on social media for further actions if social media is to be used as a complaint/ report channel.

### 8.4 Future Research Direction

Facebook was used in this research due to its popularity. Nevertheless, social media is progressing as fast as technology itself when new social media platforms are introduced every year. This research can be developed further in future research if it can be replicated on other social media platforms, such as TikTok and YouTube, because of their more visual (video) nature. Besides changing the platform, different selections of authorities'

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FB pages and even the time to conduct this research will be influenced by current events that take place or will take place in the future.

Thirdly, future cross-cultural research can be conducted to have a more in-depth view of migrants' entrepreneurship in a different setting, for example, if the observation is made through the lens of Indonesian authorities' FB pages. Additionally, organizational influence can be examined because there are possibilities that the authorities' FB maturity and presence may influence their ability to manage social media, additional organizational influences were not discussed in this study. This study aimed to identify the factors that influenced a user's experience and, ultimately, social media usage. An organization's social media maturity and presence may influence its ability to manage a social media platform (Geyer & Krumay, 2015), subsequently influencing account usage (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016).

In terms of migration studies research, future research on the economic impacts of undocumented migrant workers has been widely discussed. This research can be a starting point for PBTs and enforcement agencies to consider studying economic loss from unlicensed or licensed rental of migrants' entrepreneurship. Financial implications, as well as possible economic profits that can result from legally registering migrant entrepreneurs who are married to locals, can be looked into.

Although this study focuses on migrants' entrepreneurship, the findings can benefit migration studies, especially on prejudice and stigmatisation towards the out-groups. This research can be a starting point for studies about migrants' entrepreneurship in the Southeast Asian (SEA) market. Even though these situations are not common in every SEA country, there are currently visible changes in the local market in the Philippines.



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For example, with Chinese and Korean traders, Singapore already has many foreign-owned businesses, especially from South Asia, and the emerging trend of digital nomads in Bali opened the way for migrants' entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

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