

Good Governance as a Mediating Effect of Environmental Usage and Belief System in Enhancing the Acceptance of Lebanese Towards Malaysian Peacekeepers

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) has made a significant contribution to maintaining the security of people around the world. Through the role of peacekeeping operations, many countries that have just ended the conflict, such as Somalia, Nigeria, and Iraq, have been visited in order to help the locals rebuild their infrastructure. Nevertheless, in achieving these goals, some of the peacekeeping missions have faced difficulties due to a lack of exposure in understanding the

cultural patterns and problems faced by the host people, and as a result, they are less accepted by the locals. This challenge is also caused by the weakness of the implementation of good governance for a country in managing peacekeeping missions, such as providing information on the culture, religion, and customs of the host people and the political structure and ethnic composition of a population. In this case, it was found that most Malaysian peacekeepers are less faced with difficulties, and they are usually welcomed by locals in every peacekeeping operation, including in Lebanon. Hence, the main objective of this study is to analyse the role of good governance as the mediating effect of the acceptance of the host people. Therefore, this study used two civil-military interaction (CMI) elements: environmental usage and belief systems mediated by good governance, to investigate the Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers. Therefore, a set of questionnaires was conducted in Maarakeh and Tebnine, involving 532 Lebanese. The findings showed that good governance positively influences environmental usage and belief systems, thus the Lebanese's acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers.

Keywords: environmental usage, belief systems, good governance, Malaysian peacekeepers, Lebanon

1. Introduction

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations vary in every nation. Some of the main activities related to UN peacekeeping include fostering cease-fire treaties, mediating tensions to find answers, surveilling emergency rule, and non-military components such as providing relief aid and political restoration, such as assisting the restoration of democratic representation and protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law (UNDPKO, 2008). Despite notable accomplishments (Fortna, 2004; Caplan, 2020; Walter et al., 2021; Sonnback, 2020), it is also noted that across history, especially in the post-cold war setting, UN peacekeeping operations have encountered problems and failures (TRT World, 2018; Jett, 2019; Novosseloff, 2020) caused by a lack of good governance within peacekeeping forces, which led to the rejection of the local population. To implement a good governance concept into action in a conflicting country, the local people must first accept and recognize the importance of a peacekeeping operation. In today's missions, differences in environmental usage and belief systems, which are part of the culture's values, may positively or negatively impact the local population's reaction and acceptance. Knowledge of a society's inherited culture is vital in peacekeeping operations since these operations entail unifying military personnel, police officers, and public officials from various countries of origin, religion, language, education, and other factors. Once peacekeepers from several countries are assembled, cultural factors such as language, customs, religious understanding, communication methods, and behavior have the potential to cause cultural misunderstandings and disagreements between peacekeepers and the local population if not addressed adequately (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006; Howard, 2012; Transparency International, 2019; Lundgren et al., 2021; Canahan & Gilmore, 2006; Blair, 2020).

The research on the local perspective includes a number of single-case studies that examine the impact of governance in the setting of the whole operation instead of focusing on a single peacekeeping force. There has been little research on good governance in the context of culture (Holmes-Eber, 2016; Liljehdal et al., 2013; Simmons, 2013) and none on the acceptance of Lebanese in the Malaysian peacekeeping force. This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature through the assessment of the Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers in the aspects of environmental usage and belief system that were highlighted by the Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) theory, mediated by good governance. In Malaysia, the literature on peacekeeping operations is limited where the majority of the research is mostly linked to the history and experience of Malaysian peacekeeping operations (Ahmad, 2008), the motivation and contributions (Nik, 2016; Abdullah, 2014; Cook, 2016), and their roles in UN peacekeeping operations (Nordin et al., 2022a; Yee & Jumrah, 2017). However, no study has been conducted to investigate how good governance may affect local acceptability, especially in the aspect of environmental usage and belief system, and to the author's knowledge, this will be the first comprehensive study.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section examines the literature on good governance, environmental usage, and belief systems. The second section focuses on the Malaysian Battalion (Malbatt) in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), while the methodology used in this study is discussed in the third section. The fourth and last

section explains the study's findings and discussion, which focuses on how good governance was used to mediate the relationships between environmental usage and belief systems with local acceptance. To demonstrate the hypothesized mechanism, the empirical proof utilizes the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) version 3.3, also known as Partial Least Square (PLS) path modelling.

2. Literature Review

Good governance was defined as ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2009) has proposed eight elements that should be followed by peacekeepers to ensure good governance is implemented in peacekeeping operations, which are participation, consensus-oriented, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, as well as the rule of law. The lack of some principles, especially in the aspects of environmental usage and belief system, contributes to the rejection of local people, which eventually leads to the failure of UN peacekeeping operations (Askin, 2016; Smidt, 2019; Fortna, 2008). The issue of peacekeepers' discipline, or the lack thereof, has been a well-known and recurring blemish on the UN peacekeeping scorecard, which led to the rejection of foreign peacekeepers by the local population. When more than 75 individuals, including civilians, were killed in the north of the Central African Republic (CAR) during an outbreak of violence in September 2016, the UN mission (MINUSCA) was accused of negligence. Amnesty International, a human rights organization, commented on the matter, claiming MINUSCA was under-trained and lacked the resources it needed to appropriately safeguard people (Amnesty International, 2021). This example proves that weak governance has a major impact on the relationship between environmental usage and local acceptance.

The government is, in fact, a governing actor. Other governing actors vary depending on the level of government under discussion. Other participants in remote areas might include powerful landowners, peasant agricultural organizations, unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, religious communities, financial firms, political groupings, international forces, the military, and many others. International forces can be active military forces from other nations, such as those currently stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq, or global community troops, such as UN peacekeepers (Peacebuilding Initiative, 2008). Thus, peacekeeping forces can be regarded as a form of governance, and therefore, this study used Malaysian peacekeepers as the governing actor in mediating the environmental usage and belief system impacts towards enhancing Lebanese acceptance. Few studies have proposed the use of peacekeepers on behalf of the UN or its government in good governance analyses. A study on weak governance in the UN framework, for instance, was done with a focus on peacekeeping. As per the report, the United Nations is a governance body whose incompetence and unfairness stem from exclusion and inequity, which represent the fundamental imbalances of the world order (Cunliffe, 2009). When Fung (2019) looked at the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, he looked at how good governance in China's troops could help

solve the problems that come with having a lot of military forces in China.

With the aim of evaluating the environmental usage and belief systems that affect the local population's acceptance, this study applied the CMI theory, which highlights five cultural elements that should be prioritized by peacekeeping forces. CMI is derived from the theory of Civil-Military Relations (CMR) that explains the relationship between a given society's civil authority and its military authority. The main objective of CMI is to achieve harmony and coordination between the activities of the military and civil society, as well as between local and international parties (Coning, 2016). It also covers the phases of analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the life cycle of a programme to be used in a country in conflict. It consists of five cultural elements that have been highlighted: civil servants' interaction with their environment, economic relationships, social and political structures, and their belief systems (Holmes-Eber, 2016). All of these factors, without a doubt, are equally crucial in peacekeeping missions. However, in this study, the author concentrated on two aspects: environmental usage and belief systems. Peacekeepers don't pay attention to how the locals use the environment and believe in things that are important to them. This has led to a lot of fights between peacekeepers and the local people.

2.1 Environmental Usage and the Acceptance of Local Population Through Good Governance

The most obvious sign of the cultural gap for peacekeeping soldiers deployed in a foreign nation is the way the local population uses their physical environment. These distinctions can include how locals use water (including bathing and hygiene), how they collect and harvest foodstuffs, and what foods the local population considers edible, how they communicate with each other, and how they utilize their technology. Many peacekeeping personnel are distressed by such distinctions (Holmes-Eber, 2016). The knowledge of local environmental usage will help reduce misunderstandings between the two parties by exposing peacekeepers to low-level hygiene assignment areas and how to interact with residents when serving food or drink. Furthermore, by understanding the fundamental interaction between local communities and the vital resources in their surroundings, peacekeepers can not only identify the sources of conflict, but also lessen and mitigate violence in the area (Liljehdal et al., 2013). Many studies have shown that the lack of good environmental governance led to the conflict between the local people and the peacekeepers from other countries.

Language is an important aspect in ensuring the acceptance of the local population (Imam, 2013). This is due to the fact that if the disputing parties understand the language used, the operation assigned to resolving problems between them will go smoothly, as it is difficult to communicate in a foreign language. Other than that, the use of a language assistant or translator was also included under the language category. Inadequate communication is frequently a source of misunderstandings, which can lead to conflict (Nordin et al., 2022b). In August 1992, several members of the Nigerian army were killed by Somali rebels due to a lack of understanding of the language spoken in the area of operations (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007). This shows that the *effectiveness and efficiency* of peacekeeping personnel are necessary to gain the trust and acceptance of the local population.

Responsiveness is one of the principles of good governance that should be prioritized. The case of Rwanda in 1994, for example, is the lowest of many lows for UN peacekeeping. On the first day of the genocide, hundreds of terrified Tutsis took refuge at a school where 90 UN troops were under the leadership of Belgian peacekeepers (Melvern, 2000). The United Nations in New York had rejected warnings that a genocide was being organized, and the Security Council was withdrawing forces in response to the massacre. The peacekeepers were told to leave the school to accompany foreigners to the airport and out of Rwanda. The militias killed 2,000 people at the school within hours, using guns, grenades, and blades (The Guardian, 1999; BBC News, 2011).

Dutch peacekeepers failed to stop the massacre of 8,000 Muslim men in Srebrenica, a supposedly UN “safe area,” the most notorious mass killing by the Serbs in Bosnia (Boffey, 2017; Chappel, 2019). When the Bosnian Serbs seized Srebrenica, the DutchBat III troops, who were based in an old battery factory in nearby Potocari, were powerless to prevent them (ztürk, 2019). When the Serbs attacked Srebrenica, the Dutch peacekeepers were sent to the frontline to stop them, and some of them made the decision to fight alongside the Bosnians who were in the enclave. But the problem was that, as the UN said, peacekeepers can’t take sides, and the Dutch did. So, there were a lot of problems because of that due to the fact that if peacekeepers take a side and fight with the Bosnians, they are going against UN policy (Brown, 2019). This proves that the *rule of law* is crucial in every peacekeeping operation.

The issue of the local population’s *participation*, regardless of gender, has an impact on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Women and girls, for example, have served as combatants, spies, and cooks in some conflicts and wars. The presence of women peacekeepers will be able to assist peacekeepers in obtaining knowledge about conflict situations and opposing parties in order to reach out to groups of women who contribute to conflict areas (Karame, 2001). In Namibia, for example, only men participate in debates or meetings, while women are seated in the back and are not allowed to express their ideas. As a result of the lack of correct information and the lack of involvement of local women, some issues were not adequately addressed, and this seriously hampered the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between environmental usage and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers through good governance as a mediator.

2.2 Belief System and the Acceptance of Local Population Through Good Governance

A belief system is a collection of ideas or a philosophy that guides people’s perceptions of their lives. Faith, political affiliation, philosophy, and spirituality are all examples of belief systems (Asad, 1993; Boulding, 1986). Religious conflict is more forceful, lasts longer, and is more likely to cause lasting issues than other types of conflict (Hennes, 2012; Piazza, 2009; Svensson, 2013). The role of religion in aspects of local acceptance is the subject of this essay, which has received little attention in both research and practice. In recent years, there has been a boom in interest in how belief systems might be utilized to resolve conflict and maintain peace (Abu-Nimer, 2001). The ability of the peacekeepers to understand the belief

system of the local population will make it easier for them to gain the trust of the community and, at the same time, will assist them in finding the best solution for all of the conflicting parties. Peacekeepers should approach religious leaders who represent every party involved in the conflict (Clarke et al., 2017).

Interpretation of religion held by peacekeepers and the local people is equally crucial. When British troops were in Iraq, they deployed dogs to search houses for weapons or indications that locals were assisting militants near the Iranian border. The conduct infuriated the Muslim population because dogs are seen as ritually unclean, so employing the animal to inspect their homes was deemed an insult. Furthermore, British forces behaved disrespectfully while inspecting Iraqi ladies, which prompted outrage because the behavior was deemed unpleasant and demeaning. As a reaction, Muslims assaulted a police station as a reminder of the barbarism of the peacekeepers, killing six British servicemen (Varhola, 2004). This shows that the *rule of law* is important in the relations between belief systems and local acceptance.

Religious peacekeepers are more likely than non-religious peacekeepers to gain from better negotiation credibility. Ceasefire negotiating based on genuine loyalty may strengthen the peacekeeper's ability and credibility in the eyes of the disputants (Harpviken & Rislien, 2008). Disputes frequently require trustworthy negotiators (Khadiagala, 2005), and a religious peacekeeper with a reputation as a politically independent player could be somewhat more trustworthy and better equipped to reorganize fellow citizens (Johnston, 2003). The diplomatic legitimacy of religion can have a significant impact on peace efforts. The Catholic Community of Sant' Egidio, guided by its founder and social activist Andrea Riccardi, managed to negotiate the settlement of Mozambique's civil war in 1992 (Haynes, 2009). This proved that effectiveness and efficiency help in stabilizing the country and promoting local acceptance.

Knowing the symbolic value of a location can assist peacekeepers in taking steps that will help prevent conflict from escalating. Major Batson (2014) outlines how a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) was able to effectively minimize hostilities in the area following combat situations in Najaf, Iraq. Understanding the town's religious and symbolic significance, the unit's leaders realized that using (international and primarily Christian) U.S. forces to defend the shrine might easily be utilized by hostile Muslim groups in a negative information warfare strategy. Therefore, the MEU chose to train and recruit Muslim Iraqi security forces to defend the city, guaranteeing that the truce is respected and that the civilian population is supported. This proved that responsiveness is important in peacekeeping operations.

Major Rose (2014) describes how the Australian peacekeepers struggled with patrols and monitoring in an area of the state that had been recognized as a hotspot for criminal activity. The indigenous Gamberre Aboriginal people considered this region spiritual and linked it to their idea of "dreaming." Because outsider entrance to the area was against tribal law, the troops' monitoring team worked with tribal leaders to establish a plan to train a native patrol made up of Aboriginal males. The approach provided profitable occupation for the young people, preserved the tribe's traditions, and met the operation's objectives of area monitoring.

This showed that participation is important in enhancing local acceptance.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between belief system and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers through good governance as a mediator.

2.3 Malaysian Battalion in United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon

The Malaysian Battalion, Malbatt, in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is an excellent case study for examining how environmental usage and belief systems influence local population acceptance, mediated by good governance. Despite the election of numerous presidents from diverse political parties, Lebanon has seen a string of attacks and conflicts. This emphasized the importance of good governance, whether it be at the local or international levels, in decreasing conflict and preserving a country's peace and stability. Weak governance harms not only the civilian population but also global institutions, particularly peacekeeping missions. The UN peacekeeping forces sustained a considerable number of losses and injuries during their mission in Lebanon. In 2015, a Spanish member of the UNIFIL was assassinated as a result of an Israel Defence Force response to a cross-border attack by Hezbollah on Israeli forces (UN Peacekeeping, 2020). Apart from casualties and wounds, weak governance harmed peacekeepers' effectiveness, destroying their legitimacy in the eyes of the local community and leading to their refusal of foreign soldiers. Hezbollah builds observation and intelligence-gathering sites along the border with the help of a proxy environmentalist tied to Hezbollah. Hezbollah also makes it difficult for UNIFIL to function by assaulting patrols and harassing and blocking local populations. Local citizens fought and halted a Finnish patrol in the village of Blida in 2020. The assaults impeded UNIFIL's access to areas. In addition, in 2020, a crowd in south Lebanon seized equipment from a UNIFIL convoy after it was stopped. The incident occurred when the UNIFIL convoy was returning to the station through the town of Kaouthariyet Al-Saiyad, necessitating the involvement of the Lebanese army. The UNIFIL patrol was raided by a large number of people who stole items and equipment. The convoy was allowed to depart the village after the army intervened, but the equipment was not delivered to the peacekeepers (Lazkani, 2020).

Considering the attacks on foreign peacekeepers, Malbatt receives a warm welcome in Lebanon (UN News, 2019; Reuters, 2007; Mahadzir, 2020). Other than that, the Malbatt 850-8 peacekeeping force has received an Environmental Compliance certificate from UNIFIL during a successful mission in Lebanon (BERNAMA, 2021). Despite the fact that almost 900 Malaysians were posted there at one time, the largest number of Malaysians deployed to an overseas operation, Malaysians were not involved in any clashes with the local populace. This study focuses on two provinces, Maarakeh and Tebnine, to ensure that the respondents involved are locals who are dealing with the Malaysian peacekeeping force on a daily basis. Malbatt was deployed to a mostly Shia population, while the majority of Malbatt personnel are Sunni. Lebanon's official language is Arabic, while Malaysia's official language is Malay, and their second language is English. Some locals, particularly shopkeepers, learn the Malay language in order to make business transactions easier. As a result, the argument arose as to whether Malaysia's recognition was due to the country's good governance. Malaysia, as is well known, is a multi-racial and multi-religious nation. Despite

its cultural variety, Malaysian society has a high level of tolerance and coexistence as a result of prior government initiatives (Nordin et al., 2022b). The Malaysian government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the culture of tolerance that has been instilled in every Malaysian is preserved. Hence, the objective of this study is to explore the effect of good governance on the relationship between environmental usage and belief system with Lebanese acceptance towards Malaysian peacekeepers. The theoretical framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

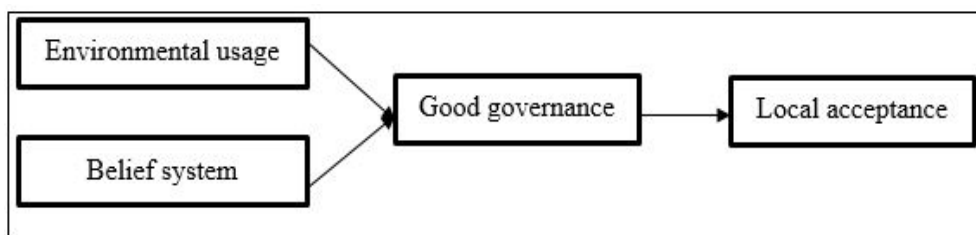


Figure 1. Research's theoretical framework

3. Research Methodology

This study has adopted the approach of a quantitative method by applying experimental research in order to test the effect of good governance on the relationship between environmental usage and belief systems and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers. A public opinion survey was conducted to test the hypothesis through a simple, brief, and easy-to-read questionnaire. Therefore, in this study, the instruments were carefully developed, especially in terms of the words used and the organization of the questions. The questionnaire was constructed after rigorous work on the literature review and used a 5-point Likert scale; (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3), neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree to determine the level of agreement for each question constructed. The questionnaire will consist of three major sections, which are: (1) the demographics section, (2) the relationship between environmental usage and belief systems with local acceptance, and (3) the acceptance of Lebanese. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, a back translation technique was used to translate the questionnaires in English and Arabic. The translation process was conducted by the Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

We chose Lebanese local inhabitants in the Tebnine and Maarakeh municipals as our sampling scope, with a total population of 5,000 and 9,242 in both municipals, respectively. Both localities were chosen because the Malaysian Battalion was stationed in two locations, and so the respondents in this study had direct contact with Malaysian peace-keepers on a regular basis. In this study, stratified random sampling was used to fulfil the sampling goal. With the assistance of Malaysian peacekeepers in Lebanon, at least 700 surveys were disseminated throughout the two municipals. This study drew the participation of 532 Lebanese above the age of 18. The data was analyzed with the Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) version 3.3, also known as Partial Least Square (PLS) path modelling.

4. Results

Table 1 below shows the differences in the demographic profiles of the respondents based on the variables mentioned earlier.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristics	Number of respondents (n=532)	Percentages (100%)
Gender		
Male	392	73.68
Female	140	26.32
Age		
18–24	34	6.39
25–34	89	16.73
35–44	121	22.74
45–54	201	37.78
55 and above	87	16.36
Religion		
Islam	386	72.56
Christian	72	13.53
Druze	40	7.52
Other	34	6.39

Table 1 indicates that the total number of respondents is 532, which consist of 392 (73.68%) male and 140 (26.32%) female. 34 (6.39%) of the respondent age between 18–24, while 89 (16.73%) are between 25–34, 121 (22.74%) age between 35–44, 201 (37.78%) age between 45–54 and the balance 87 (16.36%) are above 55 years old. The majority of the respondent are Muslim, which total up to 386 (72.56%) of total respondent while Christians up to 72 (13.53%), Druze up to 40 (7.52%) and other religions are 34 (6.39%).

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha value

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Lebanese acceptance	0.813
Environmental usage	0.873
Belief systems	0.865

The acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers was measured using a 5-point Likert scale based on the works of Langholtz (2019), Kool (2016), and Paul et al. (2013). The following are some examples of the items: “Malaysian peacekeepers do not being favorable,

preferential, or supportive of any groups, persons, or plans over another”, “Malaysian peacekeepers examine personal biases and behaviors to avoid stereotypical responses”, and “Malaysian peacekeepers work effectively with people from all back-grounds”. For the variable Lebanese acceptance, Cronbach Alpha reliability is 0.813, and reliability for the variable is valid since the value is greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

Environmental usage was measured using a 5-point Likert scale based on the works of Carnahan et al. (2016), Bove and Ruggeri (2018), and Alves de Souza (2020). Some examples of the items are as follows: “Information by Malaysian peacekeepers is enough and easily understandable by the local people,” “Malaysian peacekeepers ensure that the food and clean water are accessible to all local citizens,” “Malaysian peacekeepers use proper transportation that is suitable for the local road,” and “Malaysian peacekeepers have a basic knowledge of the local management of waste products.” The variable environmental usage has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.873, and reliability for these items is accurate since the value is greater than 0.7.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess belief system scales based on the works of Ruffa et al. (2020), Bellou (2014), and Levi (2017). The following are a few examples of the items: “Malaysian peacekeepers have knowledge of local citizens’ belief systems,” “Malaysian peacekeepers respect local religion and belief systems due to being a multi-religious country,” and “the Malaysian government managed to embed diversity and tolerance in every individual.” The variable belief system has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.865, and the item’s reliability is valid since the value is greater than 0.7.

The level at which an indicator is significantly linked to an alternative measure of the same concept is referred to as “convergent validity.” In PLS, the average variance extracted (AVE) and item loadings are used to evaluate a measure’s convergent validity. The AVE value should be greater than that of the other constructs in the same model. An AVE value equal to or greater than 0.50 is considered acceptable. As shown in Table 3, the composite reliability (CR) is measured from the factor of loadings of the accountable observed variable by each of the specified latent constructs. Values greater than 0.50 are considered reliable, and the values in the tables below range from 0.862 to 0.901.

Table 3. Composite reliability value

Construct	AVE	Composite Reliability
Acceptance of Lebanese	0.558	0.862
Environmental Usage	0.555	0.897
Belief systems	0.569	0.901

Discriminant validity can be estimated by measuring the cross-loadings among constructs using the Fornel-Lareker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlation (HTMT). Each construct must have a greater AVE value than the squares of the correlations between

the constructs and most other constructs. Evaluating the correlations between potential overlapping construct measures can thus evaluate discriminant validity.

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Construct	Y1	Y2	Y3
Acceptance of Lebanese (Y1)	0.798		
Environmental usage (Y2)	0.413	0.754	
Belief systems (Y3)	0.338	0.183	0.864

Table 5 below showed the result of hypothesis testing on mediation for both factors. The table reveals that indirect path of environmental usage → good governance → the acceptance of Lebanese has the VAF value of 60.41%. while the VAF value for indirect path of belief systems → good governance → the acceptance of Lebanese is 51.11%. This proves that good governance mediates partially on both of the path stated.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing on mediation

Construct	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision	VAF
Environmental usage → Good governance → Acceptance of Lebanese	0.057	0.058	0.029	1.975	0.048	Accepted	60.42%
Belief systems → Good governance → Acceptance of Lebanese	0.045	0.046	0.023	2.009	0.045	Accepted	51.11%

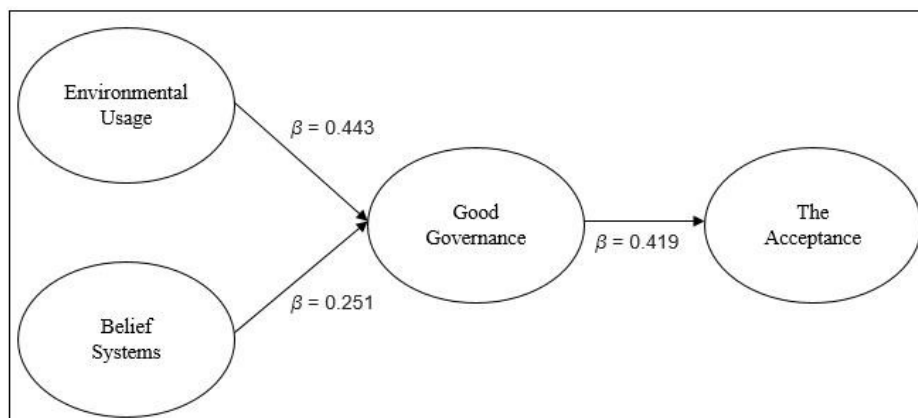


Figure 2. Model of the Lebanese acceptance towards Malaysian peacekeepers

5. Discussion

The findings show that the relationship between good governance and environmental usage and belief systems has positively influenced the acceptance of the Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers. Understanding the local population’s use of the environment and belief systems is not only important between peacekeepers and other international actors, but also implies relations between peacekeepers and the local population. Malaysian peacekeepers have proven that by understanding and tolerating local populations and belief systems, positive acceptance of locals can be gained, thus improving peacekeeping operations’ effectiveness.

5.1 Environmental Usage

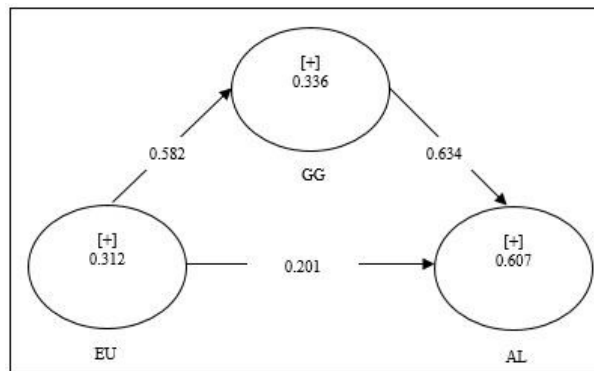


Figure 3. Relationship between environmental usage and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers through good governance as a mediator

Figure 3 above proved that good governance influences the relationship between environmental usage and Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers. This is evidenced by Lebanese collaboration and reaction to Malaysian peacekeeping forces’ activities such as patrolling, commerce and business, and information exchange by local residents. For example, Malbatt was always welcomed to any local event, such as a wedding or a local festival’s celebration. The Lebanese prepared their traditional cuisine and enthusiastically welcomed Malbatt. Malbatt, on the other hand, will serve and promote Malaysian food to the Lebanese if Malaysian peacekeepers conduct an event with the local community, and their feedback is always pleasant. This proved that by adhering to the principle of responsiveness, the peacekeepers would be warmly welcomed by the local population. Every single person is included, including minorities, women, and children, thus showing that by emphasizing participation from all civilians, peacekeepers can build relationships with the locals.

Malaysian peacekeepers also often provide humanitarian assistance to local communities affected by the conflict using funds allocated by the Malaysian government. They are also involved in programmes organized in Lebanon such as education, health screenings, and

medicine. For instance, the Malaysian peacekeeping force helped the Malaysian Islamic Organizations Consultative Council (MAPIM) distribute 150 goats donated by Malaysians and distributed to nearly 3,000 Syrian refugees and local communities around South Lebanon at the MAPIM Global *Qurban & Akikah* event. Apart from that, the Malaysian peacekeeping force also handed over supplies of gasoline, thick blankets, and packed food (Husin & Nordin, 2019). This proves that effectiveness and efficiency will enhance the acceptance of the local population. At the same time, these events and activities were praised by the UNIFIL team Commander-in-Chief, Major General Michael Beary, as they were one of the ways to help the people and at the same time to gain participation from the local community (The Sun Daily, 2016).

As a result, there is a growing perception that this is a failure of governance and that the standard technological approach to food shortages may not be sufficient. Governance, especially the interaction between peacekeepers and local authorities, will have a significant impact in practice, for example, on how resources are managed and allocated, how services are delivered, or on planning and policy (FAO, 2011). War can diminish food availability, interrupt people's access to adequate food, restrict families' access to healthy food preparation facilities and health treatment, and raise concern about fulfilling future food and nutrition requirements. Similarly, food insecurity may contribute to the continuation of violence or to the reversal of post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Long-term strategies must include short-term solutions as well.

For an effective dialogue and interaction to take place, understandable language by all parties is absolutely necessary. However, this can impose a problem on peacekeepers as they might have little or limited knowledge regarding the language used. Therefore, language assistance or interpreters play a vital role in helping peacekeepers build rapport and strengthen relations with the local population. A Lebanese trader, Ali Khanso, stated that Malaysians are very friendly and that he has considered Malbatt as his own relatives. He also learns Malay words from the peacekeeping members so that both he and the Malbatt members can facilitate their dealings in the affairs of daily life and business (Idris, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Furthermore, throughout the deployment or while patrolling, Malaysian peacekeepers were accompanied by a language assistant and an interpreter. This has a big impact on how the Lebanese people feel about Malaysian peacekeepers when the rule of law is upheld.

Language does impose quite a problem on other peacekeeping troops as well, not just on Malaysian peacekeepers. MONUSCO, for example, reportedly performs weekly patrols on the route from Pinga to Kashuga market in North Kivu. Peacekeepers in Darfur carried out firewood patrols, which enabled hundreds of women at risk of being attacked to gather firewood more comfortably, but they were not always effective. There were numerous miscommunications between the women collecting firewood and the peacekeepers accompanying them. Women were sometimes put in danger when peacekeepers did not turn up, went home early, or did not provide instructions on what to do in the event of an attack. Hence, Community Liaison Interpreters (CLIs) were introduced in April 2009 so that peacekeepers could protect the local population in a better and more understandable way. It was recommended that at least one language assistant should accompany patrols at all times,

and interaction with the community should be of the highest concern. Wherever necessary, separate, formal meetings with women must be organized (Oxfam, 2010).

5.2 Belief Systems

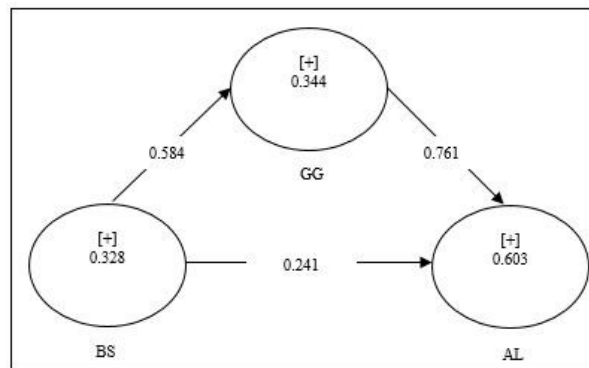


Figure 4. Relationship between belief system and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers through good governance as a mediator

The finding of this study shows that the relationship between belief systems and Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers is influenced by good governance, as shown in Figure 4 above. This is demonstrated by Lebanese cooperation with and response to Malaysian peacekeeping forces. In Lebanon, most communities in rural areas still practice the teachings and practices of traditional beliefs that are difficult to understand. However, for the Malaysian peacekeepers, this did not affect their work because, apart from the high nature of tolerance, they also always practiced a sympathetic attitude towards the local community and tried to respect the religious sensitivities they espoused. This proves that Malaysian peacekeepers uphold the principle of the rule of law when deployed overseas. In addition, while deployed to Lebanon, Malaysian peacekeepers were stationed in areas made up of Shiite communities. Although there are many mosques in the area, the Malaysian peacekeepers will set up their own prayer station in the deployment areas for worship purposes. This is because most mosques in Lebanon are visited by the Shiite community, and they are less comfortable if the Sunnis also perform prayers with them on the basis of differences of opinion. In fact, there have been cases where Lebanese Sunnis have been killed by Shiites inside mosques, and similarly, Shiites have been attacked by Sunnis due to different ways of praying (The Guardian, 2018). This showed that Malaysian peacekeepers follow the principle of responsiveness in order to avoid misunderstandings with the locals.

Malbatt peacekeepers are not permitted to openly discuss religious matters, in addition to respecting the practices and beliefs of minority communities. This is done to avoid the emergence of discomfort among adherents of different religions and the general public. Considering their distinct cultures and histories, the locals of the area have a positive connection with the Malaysian peacekeepers. This is obvious when the Malaysian

peace-keeping force is frequently invited to local community events such as *Aidiladha* festivals, *Aidulfitr* celebrations, and formal religious ceremonies (Berita Harian, 2014). This proves that by following the principle of participation, foreign peacekeepers will be welcomed by the local population. Aside from that, Shia Lebanese celebrate Ashura, a day of spiritual grief commemorating the loss of Imam Hussein (grandson of the prophet Muhammad) during the fight of Kerbala in the 7th century. The black Ashura flags soar over Lebanon, and the people will wear black shirts. Each year, Ashura is a day of sorrow, with the typical parades and traditions of self-flagellation and slapping on the chest by Shia pilgrims to commemorate Imam Hussein's terrible murder (Deeb, 2005). On that day, the citizens will have a march, rendering several roads unusable for the peacekeepers. As a result, instead of ordering the crowd to disperse, the Malaysian peacekeepers would adjust their patrol route. This showed that Malaysians practice the principle of effectiveness and efficiency in order to gain local acceptance.

This is in line with the statement that religion also plays a role in peacekeeping operations (Daniel et al., 2015). The study found that there are several factors that can strengthen or destroy a cooperative relationship, and one of them is the religious factor. For example, teams with the same religious beliefs are easier to work with, such as Malaysia and Brunei. Both come from Islamic countries, and this makes it easier for them to understand each other deeply. They also have requirements and prohibitions in their diets and religious routines. Culture is considered an important element in religion, ethnicity, and national identity in Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2017). Religion is a unifying tool for Afghan culture and identity and the backbone of the country's structure and function. After the events of 9/11, awareness of the role of religious identity has increased, and this event has led to a change in focus on religious ideology.

Other than that, the belief system of the Bawarnah community in Iraq has provided the religion's challenges to US peacekeepers. The US team understood that the local community's negative views on women's screening procedures were related to Islam. In honor of that, she has set up a women's Marine team and a special area to carry out checks on local women in private. Knowledge of the cultural characteristics of local communities, belief systems, and even customs helps not only strengthen communication ties but also contributes towards peace negotiation efforts between all parties involved in the conflict (Bellou, 2014). By using religion as a mediator with the conflicting parties, it can help the peace negotiation process take place more effectively. However, it was also stressed that different religious values and beliefs can also trigger different views and conflicts if they are not managed properly.

6. Conclusion

This study sheds light on a facet of environmental usage and belief systems influencing Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers, mediated by good governance, that had previously received less attention in the academic world. It offers strong statistical evidence and support for the argument that peacekeepers that understand the local population's environmental usage, belief systems, and good governance are more likely to be welcomed

by the locals, at the same time reducing the risk of getting into a conflict with them. The article adds to the theoretical framework that forms the basis of the rest of the research on governance, environmental usage, belief systems, and conflict linkages. The findings indicate that Malaysian peacekeepers are welcome by the Maarakeh and Tebnine local populations even though they have different cultural backgrounds due to the understanding and tolerance of local environmental usage and belief systems throughout their deployment. Even if these understanding and tolerance practices will not end the conflict in a short period of time, they should be included in some wide-ranging conflict resolution strategies that include impartiality and respect. Environmental usage, belief systems, and good governance should be seen as tools that have a positive impact on the acceptance of foreign peacekeepers in conflicting areas rather than an excuse for their rejection.

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