

N432 Cultural Report: Malaysian Culture

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Malaysian culture is a rich tapestry of diverse traditions, customs, and practices shaped by the fusion of various ethnicities, religions, and historical influences. It is a harmonious blend of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous cultures, which have coexisted for centuries. Warm hospitality, friendliness, and respect for others are characteristics of Malaysian culture (Holidify, 2023). Malaysians are proud of their multiethnic identity and frequently refer to themselves as "Malaysians." One of the cornerstones of Malaysian culture is its cuisine (Holidify, 2023). Food is an integral part of daily life, and Malaysia is renowned for its diverse and flavorful dishes. The prevalence of Malaysia is made up of a variety of ethnic groups, the three most significant of which are the Malays, Chinese, and Indians, along with several indigenous people. These communities' distinctive cultural practices and traditions add to the rich diversity that characterizes Malaysian culture.

Malaysian culture embraces a mix of democratic, Islamic, and Chinese traditions, making it a vibrant and multicultural society. The four pillars of Islam, like prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage to Mecca (called Haji), hold great importance in their religious beliefs (Queenland Health, 2019). Traditional Chinese medicine and Islamic healthcare are also valued for maintaining general well-being. Chinese medicine connects the body, soul, and spirit, while Islamic healthcare sees illness, pain, and dying as tests from God, not punishments (Queenland Health, 2019). When it comes to pain, Malaysians view it as a balance between the body and mind, influenced by prayers (Queenland Health, 2019). They see pain as a test of strength from a higher power, rather than a form of punishment. During labor and postpartum, women receive care from midwives and attend antenatal care in hospitals. Pregnant women enjoy gentle

massages from midwives, and ceremonies in the seventh month ensure the safety of both mother and baby. Women are encouraged to pray during labor, and crying or screaming is discouraged.

Postpartum practices are tied to humoral medical theory, with the focus on restoring the body's heat lost during childbirth. To achieve this, they use hot water bottles, stay near heaters, and dress warmly (*Post-Natal Diet: The Malaysian Experience*, 2018). The postpartum diet consists of hot foods, like the special drink jamu made with turmeric, believed to relieve cramps and prevent rheumatism (*Post-Natal Diet: The Malaysian Experience*, 2018). The placenta is treated with respect, sometimes wrapped in white cloth and buried as a symbol of a life once lived. In Malaysian family life, the father often takes on the role of household patriarch, and extended families often live together, emphasizing cooperation and loyalty. Elders are highly respected and often live with their families.

Communication in Malaysia is polite, ambiguous, and attentive. They value maintaining integrity and avoiding shameful behavior in both public and private settings, and they use similes, idioms, and figurative language to express their viewpoints directly (*Malaysian Culture Core Concepts*, 2020). Refusals are hinted at rather than outright stated. Nonverbal communication involves avoiding inappropriate affection in public and using silence as a pause before responding (*Malaysian Culture Core Concepts*, 2020). The significance of food reflects their multi-cultural identity, which has influences from Indonesia, India, the Middle East, China, and Thailand. After childbirth, the postnatal diet includes medicinal herbs like jamu, hot foods like ginger, snakehead fish (ikan haruan), Chinese herbs like wolfberries and angelica, and gourd vegetables like bottle gourd and zucchini (*Post-Natal Diet: The Malaysian Experience*, 2018).

Proper diet requirements impact the time of hospitalization, as the body needs a postnatal diet to heal and recover after labor (*Post-Natal Diet: The Malaysian Experience*, 2018).

Malaysian culture's core values are deeply intertwined with its core values and religious beliefs, shaping their approach to childbearing experiences. The strong emphasis on faith, family, and community involvement reflects their unique blend of traditions, making childbirth and postpartum practices an integral part of their cultural identity.

It's important to be mindful of and respectful of Malaysia's diverse and multicultural background when working with the local culture. Greet people with a warm smile and a firm handshake in this culture. A small nod or the traditional Malay greeting "salam" can also be used when meeting someone older or in a formal environment (Leinbach, 2023). When addressing somebody, especially if they are older or in a higher position, use formal titles. Islam is the most common religion in Malaysia; however, there are other faiths as well. Be aware of religious customs and practices. When visiting religious locations, dress modestly and stay away from scheduling essential meetings or events around prayer times. Malaysians typically communicate in a polite and subtle manner. Refrain from using confrontational or hostile language. Nodding or smiling are two non-verbal indicators that are frequently used to show understanding or approval. The food of Malaysia is diverse, and eating is an important aspect of the culture. It's traditional to take off your shoes before entering a home where you've been invited for dinner. If you're eating with your hands, use your right hand because the left hand is seen as dirty (Leinbach, 2023).

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