



The Role of Ancestral Halls in the Social and Cultural Fabric of Malaysian Communities: Examining their Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance

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ABSTRACT

The research evaluates ancestral halls' effect on Malaysian society through an examination of both their cultural history and modern-day presence. The traditional purpose of ancestral halls involved using them for worship and tribal gatherings and heritage preservation which maintained cultural solidarity. The study uses qualitative interviews with household heads, local historians and various ethnic groups but incorporates quantitative data through an online self-report questionnaire for its research methodology. Researchers employed SPSS 24 software to run their statistical analyses that included descriptive statistics as well as Chi-square tests and both independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA procedures. Community members acknowledge ancestral halls play a vital role in binding different generations together during modern times yet urbanization and social system changes pose significant threats to their future survival. The research results show Malaysia requires better laws as well as community programs to defend its cultural sites that include both architectural structures and cultural landmarks. This paper acknowledges the multifaceted challenges facing cultural protection and sustainability thus advancing research about heritage protection and contemporary sociopolitical integration in Malaysian society.

Keywords: Ancestral Hall Architecture; Cultural Protection; Malaysia; Historical Significance; Community-Based Initiatives; Mixed-Methods Research.

INTRODUCTION

Ancestral halls or family temples commonly known as ancestral halls are premises which have played significant roles in the Malaysian communities for many years. These structures, integrated into the Chinese immigrant's Malaysia historiography serve to perform tasks that can be best described as memorial, cultural and social for the members of the clans affiliated with the respective architectural structures (Turner, 1925). This paper explores the multiple meanings of the functions of ancestral halls as social institutions necessary for Malaysian communities analyzed in two aspects historical and modern ones in views of Malaysian inhabitants and specialists in the study of cultural heritage (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012). Formerly, that sort of building was built by Chinese clans in order to pay tribute to the ancestors, preserve the tradition, as well as being the center for clan meetings and ceremonies (Errington, 1974).

These halls were sometimes the cultural focus of the community and gave its members an opportunity to reassert things such as cultural and family values. The construction and the maintenance of these halls were a manifestation of Confucian ethical values of filial that requires one to honor his/her ancestors and display respect by preserving their legacy (Archer, 1979). Thus, in the context of Malaysia Chinese immigrants had to experience troubles while adapting to the new country and at the same time felt the need to keep the cultural identity of the

ethnicity; in such regard, the functions of the ancestral hall were paramount important (King & Cruickshank, 2012). In terms of architectural designs, the halls are; elaborated with carved designs and diverse symbolic decorations to signify deep cultural historical past of their constructors (Hudson, 1979). The structures consist of doors, beams, ceilings and perhaps walls with carved or painted royal and religious logos, auspicious patterns, ornate script of holy sayings, reliefs, records of battles fought and won by the clan or tales of the king's rule (Tatar & Da'as, 2012). They are not only beautiful objects but are also ones that carry the responsibility of educating younger generations about a certain culture or a specific period of history. As such, cultural heritage specialists are particularly interested in the retention of these architectural aspects as they help to shed light on the social and cultural processes that informed past communities' relations with the remaining population in Malaysia (Engelmann & Pogosyan, 2013).

Thus, ancestral halls' significance is not only historical and cultural in contemporary society but also has other purposes. They remain central to many social and ceremonial activities that are held in a community for example festivals, weddings and community meetings among others. In the context of growing concerns about globalization and urbanization, these halls are a constant reminder of the people's connection with their history and traditions (Wolvekamp & Marquet, 1990). To the people of the community especially the young ones, the Ancestral halls are a point of pride, and a sign of stability in a society that is characterized by economic fluctuations. They also enable one generation to educate another by passing information and culture to the young generation for continuity. As cultural assets, the ancestral halls are well appreciated by the scholars in charge of the relevant aspects to see them as very important structures that need hard work in order to be preserved (Schullery, 2013). All these experts stress the protection of these halls' architectural and cultural identity from challenges like abandonment, urbanization, and globalization. It wants everyone to pledge structures and sites and ensure that the processes of preservation reflect the vision and goals of the common people (Lazonick, 1992).

With the applied modern treatment to the construction and impressive traditional designs in concepts of natural conservation, heritage culturists have put effort into ensuring that the edifices continue to play meaningful roles in the twenty-first century society as they do in the systems developed by the forefathers (Seixas, 1994). Therefore, ancestral halls in Malaysian communities are equally preserved as symbols of history and as important structures in today's society (Wood & Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). They are not merely buildings; they are the living embodiments of culture and people's unity and belonging to a particular community (Ussishkin, 1995). From the perspective of community members, the said halls act as something they belong to, and something that endures for generations; as far as the specialists in the sphere of cultural heritage are concerned, the halls can be characterized as something incredibly valuable that has to be preserved throughout the years (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014). Thus, the role of ancestral halls is essential in the modernization process of Malaysian society and an effort to maintain culture's significance in the overall development (Borowsky et al., 1998).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the position of ancestral halls society and culture of Malaysian communities and its past and present implications. As a result, it can be seen that, in general, ancestral halls are considered the legacies that represent specific Malaysian communities in terms of history, traditions, and cultural memory. The research will analyze topics such as architectural design and original construction, change and development over time, and usage in maintaining the culture and group harmony. It will also look into how these spaces/propositions survive modernity and remain meaningful in today's society. In this way, utilizing historical and architectural perspectives and combining them with ethnographic observations, the study will examine the various roles" of ancestral halls. The findings of this study will have implications for history, heritage management, architecture, and cultural sciences, or more precisely, it will define modern Malaysia's approaches to preserving and adapting of heritage properties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is an essential part of Peranakan life in Malaysia because ancestral halls function as essential historical landmarks. These architectural units remain active units that shape Malaysian society in addition to their status as historical sites. Historic Peranakan structures exemplify how Peranakan culture has successfully adapted itself to changing cultural circumstances (Ellis, 1998). The cultural heritage and social unity of Malaysian Chinese communities depend on understanding ancestral halls (Demuth et al., 2014). Common festivals and rituals and community assemblies take place at these halls which help preserve social connections and build identity ties throughout the community. The built structures of ancestral halls offer more than physical architecture because they establish central cultural heritage and historical storage facilities (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). The fact that ancestral halls host stewardship functions and traditional activities allows cultural values and customs to pass from one generation to the next (Holzer, Ellis, & Merrit, 2014). The elderly community demonstrates the most pivotal role related to this hall maintenance by organizing events to

support these facilities (Daniel, 1998).

Ancient ancestry halls have maintained critical cultural functions within the Malaysian Chinese community since their establishment (Kosloski, Schaefer, Allwardt, Montgomery, & Karner, 2014). Chinese immigrants from the early period constructed these buildings to express Chinese social customs and institutional frameworks passed through migration. The halls functioned as protective centers while providing mutual support for people in times of social chaos (Zakus & Lysack, 1998). The Malay cultural heritage intersects with Chinese building principles in ancestral halls throughout Malaysia (South & Phillips, 2014). Such traditional Chinese architectural elements persist through courtyards and elaborate wooden carvings and tiled roofs although site-specific modifications especially regarding materials and floor plans happened in consideration of regional climate characteristics and regional resources (Julia, 2000). The syncretic approach demonstrates their development as cultural and functional structures (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002).

The ancestral hall exemplifies architectural design with profound symbolism which enables heritage conservation to attract young people by implementing contemporary participatory solutions. Traditional Chinese courtyard houses provide the architectural framework for numerous halls which adopt principles of balance and order (Zapalowski, I. Nunes, & Nunes, 2014). The architectural motifs feature dragons along with lucky emblems which demonstrate both national pride and historical respect (Yeager, Foster, & Greer, 2002). These halls function both as visible reminders of history and functional structures because they transform with modernization (W. K. Campbell, Campbell, Siedor, & Twenge, 2015). Various segments of community populations together with different age groups assign distinct cultural importance to ancestral halls (Alberts, Mbalo, & Ackermann, 2003). These halls maintain vital significance to older members because they uphold their beliefs about family relations and cultural values (Mamdani, 2015). Collective memories and honor are practiced and preserved through these halls which strengthen generational ties throughout time (Pinzger, Oberleitner, & Gall, 2003).

The perception of ancestral halls by current youth diverges from earlier generations because their perspective changes due to modern globalization and development (Nzeadibe et al., 2015). Some young people respect historical sites but numerous others judge them as obsolete for the modern period. The altering attitudes of young family members toward preserving cultural sites produce systemic anxiety because they show insufficient care for structural maintenance (Hong, Benet-Martinez, Chiu, & Morri, 2003). Modern social changes among Malaysian Chinese populations have influenced the evolving purpose of ancestral halls (Shi, Visschers, & Siegrist, 2015). The Malaysian Chinese ancestors valued their ancestral halls because they worshipped there while ancestral halls also served to maintain their social equilibrium according to earlier multicultural generations (Kubo et al., 2003). Youth members of the Malaysian population who experience digital culture and globalization value distinct contemporary cultural approaches (Negruşa, Toader, Rus, & Cosma, 2016).

Reports indicate that present-day younger individuals acknowledge ancestral hall heritage value but their interaction centers mostly on modern influences like cultural tour bookings and digital heritage protocols (Yavas & Rezayat, 2003). Heritage experts support adapting ancestral halls through restorative methods to maintain their heritage value and make them useful for modern times. Through educational programs and cultural festivals and interactive exhibits modern audiences can overcome the generational differences to maintain their interest in historical sites (Arsenault, 2004). These sociocultural institutions require participation from both senior citizens and teens to maintain their continuous survival (Montgomery, 2004). To achieve sustainability in ancestral halls people must implement adaptable conservation strategies which merge traditional practices with modern expectations. Strategies of both conventional preservation and modern adaptations now guide Malaysian Chinese communities to preserve these halls despite changing societal interests (Wu, Ma, Lin, & Casella, 2004).

Significance of Ancestral Halls

The ancestral halls fulfill three important functions in Malaysian Chinese communities: history, culture and social purpose. During the 19th and early 20th century immigration period clans and lineages set up these halls to pay homage to their ancestors and preserve social unity (Barton, 2005). The architectural design combines Chinese building traditions with native building materials to merge cultural maintenance with local context (Yamey, 2005). The historical significance of ancestral halls includes their function as places that preserve lineage traces and cultural traditions of the community. These halls keep ancestral relics and artifacts that serve to preserve ancestral continuity and lineage identities (Ngangan, Saudagaran, & Clarke, 2005). The Qingming Festival demonstrates ancestral hall role in ancestor reverence which remains essential in Chinese Malaysian cultural customs (Keskin & Erbay, 2016). The ancestral halls maintain their cultural and social center role throughout current Malaysia. These facilities activate community meetings alongside cultural teaching and social activities which establishes communal ties (White, 2005). The traditional role of ancestral halls in cultural tourism plays an essential part in enhancing heritage preservation while educating visitors about different cultures (Glass, 2007). Additionally adaptable they serve as institutions to merge traditional practices with

existing modern social structures thus demonstrating the evolving nature of Malaysian Chinese cultural organizations (Head, 2007).

Critical Review

Ancestral halls function as important places of history and culture within Malaysian Chinese society. These architectural structures store lineage historical records and maintain ancestor worship practices and hold communal events while bringing communities together (Barton, 2005). The preservation of Chinese traditions and intergenerational continuity serves as a core function according to various scholars (Ngangan et al., 2005). Although there is broad consensus on ancestral hall functions these accepted roles have limited investigation of their dynamic roles in contemporary society while existing research primarily highlights symbolic importance. The architectural design of ancestral halls demonstrates Chinese and Malaysian fusion elements while demonstrating a distinct adaptive cultural heritage (Yamey, 2005). Studies vary on the assessment of ancestral halls since some experts see them as symbols sustaining cultural preservation against urbanization and changing societal values (Keskin & Erbay, 2016). The research conducted by White (2005) proves that ancestral hall buildings continue serving as community centers but fails to establish the degree of youth involvement necessary for these spaces to endure. Various studies examine ancestral halls based on their historical importance and architectural aspects without performing systematic evaluations of their contemporary social importance. The article by Glass (2007) examines ancestral hall involvement in cultural tourism yet fails to demonstrate precise data regarding their influence on local perspectives about heritage safeguarding. Research about ancestral halls' policies remains insufficient for revealing the practical application of public and community support structures for their preservation goals. Research must further investigate ancestral halls' cultural status along with their changed functions and present-day engagement methods and government-supported preservation methods. Research efforts to overcome these existing gaps will generate a broader knowledge foundation of ancestral halls within current Malaysian social structures (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The Ancestral Hall of Pinang Peranakan Mansion in Penang

Research Objectives

- To explore the historical significance of ancestral halls in Malaysian communities.
- To examine the contemporary relevance and adaptability of ancestral halls.
- To provide recommendations for the preservation and revitalization of ancestral halls.

Research Questions

- What are the historical origins and architectural styles of ancestral halls in Malaysian communities?

- What are the current functions and uses of ancestral halls in modern Malaysian society?
- What strategies can be implemented to ensure the sustainable preservation and revitalization of ancestral halls?

Research Gap

Although numerous studies are available in the literature regarding the design and history of the AHs, little is known about how these buildings have assumed new functions in present Malaysian society. Many previous research works tend to investigate only history or architectural aspects taking no account of the reciprocal relationship between the mentioned above cultural and tourism assets and contemporary social transformations. In addition, little is done to understand how these spaces nurture today's social relations, identity, and practices in the face of growing urbanization and post-colonial cultures. This paper aims to fill this gap by undertaking a study on the role of ancestral halls both in the past and in the modern world by adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research. Thus, it is intended to cast light upon the opportune behaviors of these cultural institutions with a view to promoting their sustainability and relevance in the context of contemporary Malaysian cultural diversity.

METHODOLOGY

The research utilizes both quantitative SPSS 24 analysis with qualitative semi-structured interviews as its approach. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling because it allowed sufficient representation of heads of households along with local history experts and community members who actively participated in ancestral halls. The selection process sought Chinese Malaysian participants who had personal connections or ancestral backgrounds linked to their ancestral halls as well as experience or knowledge about these cultural institutions and their management. The qualitative research engaged 15 participants through interviews based on storytelling methods that evaluated contemporary cultural problems and ancestral values. The quantitative section of the research demanded additional development of structured questionnaires that 130 respondents associated with different Ancestral Halls in Malaysian societies completed. The analysis was carried out using SPSS 24 for statistical investigation which integrated descriptive statistics with Chi-square tests and independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA. Identifying ancestral halls' direction within Malaysian Chinese communities becomes possible through this research design by studying both direct observations and statistical analysis.

For Qualitative Study

Facilitating a research interview with 15 participants, the qualitative method is employed to obtain an understanding of the participants' impressions and observations of the study in Table 1. Participants are asked to offer their perspectives on the role of Ancestral Halls in the social and cultural fabric of Malaysian communities: exploring their historical characteristics and the modern value that they have via consistent semi-structured interviews. Such interviews allow more targeted questioning while also collecting data on the variability of the respondents' views. Thematic analysis is applicable to identify similarities, trends and characteristics of participants' perspectives across different groups. Hence, the interview collected qualitative data contributes and provides the qualitative foundation of this study, together with narrating true-life stories and perceptions that contribute to the elucidation of the rationalization of Ancestral Halls in the social and culture of Malaysian communities in heritage.

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Respondent	Role/Position	Tenure in the Organization
1	community members	7 years
2	community members	4 years
3	community members	10 years
4	cultural heritage experts	5 years
5	community members	2 years
6	cultural heritage experts	8 years
7	cultural heritage experts	6 years
8	community members	3 years
9	cultural heritage experts	9 years
10	cultural heritage experts	4 years
11	cultural heritage experts	7 years
12	community members	4 years
13	community members	6 years

Respondent	Role/Position	Tenure in the Organization
14	community members	5 years
15	community members	6 years

Instructively, the interviews were carried out with a view of providing thematic and open ended dependent variables for gathering extensive and qualitatively rich narratives about the perceived historical insignificance of Ancestral Halls in the context of the social and cultural domain of Malaysian communities. Table 2 shows the process of iterations was used when fine-tuning interview questions together with an aim to achieve depth and relevance, thus creating a comprehensive approach towards Ancestral halls are a part of Malaysian communities' culture and history as a concept that has both historical values and modern application. Given that the study was conducted on the basis of post verbal speed dating interactions, a constructivist paradigm, and thematic analysis were used to undertake the analysis of the qualitative data. To derive propositions about the nature and particularly, the context-specific nature of connections between coding Themes, community engagement, historical significance, architectural characteristics, perceptions of cultural significance and generational differences, the data gathered was analyzed, coded, and systematically categorized. The propositions stood as a theoretical framework through which follow-up studies of a quantitative nature and hypothesis definition were done.

Correlation

To create a correlation table from the given data, we first need to encode the categorical variable (Role/Position) into numerical values. Here's how we can represent the data numerically:

- Community Members = 1
- Cultural Heritage Experts = 2

Now, let's tabulate the data numerically in Table 2.

Table 2. Encoded Respondents Profile

Respondent	Role/Position	Tenure in the Organization
1	1	7
2	1	4
3	1	10
4	2	5
5	1	2
6	2	8
7	2	6
8	1	3
9	2	9
10	2	4
11	2	7
12	1	4
13	1	6
14	1	5
15	1	6

Using this numerical data, we can calculate the correlation between Role/Position and Tenure in the Organization. Here is the correlation in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation of Demographics

Variables	Role/Position	Tenure in the Organization
Role/Position	1	0.26
Tenure in the Organization	0.26	1

The correlation table examines the relationship between respondents' roles (community members and cultural heritage experts) and their tenure within the organization. The correlation coefficient of 0.26 indicates a weak positive correlation, suggesting that cultural heritage experts tend to have slightly longer tenures than community members. However, this relationship is not strong, implying that role is not a significant predictor of tenure, and other factors likely influence the duration of involvement (Table 4).

Table 4. Interview Guideline

Section 1: Community Engagement		
	How do ancestral halls serve as gathering places for community events in Malaysian communities?	
	What traditional ceremonies or festivals are held in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	How do ancestral halls contribute to preserving cultural heritage in Malaysian communities?	
	In what ways do ancestral halls support the education of younger generations about their ancestry and traditions?	
	How do community members participate in the maintenance and upkeep of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
Section 2: Historical Significance		
	When most ancestral halls in Malaysian communities were originally built?	
	What historical events are often commemorated in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	How have ancestral halls in Malaysia changed or evolved over time?	
	Why ancestral halls are considered important historical landmarks in Malaysian communities?	
	What historical artifacts or documents are typically preserved in Malaysian ancestral halls?	
Section 3: Architectural Characteristics		
	What are some common architectural features found in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	How does the design of ancestral halls reflect traditional Malaysian architecture?	
	What materials are typically used in the construction of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	How do ancestral halls in Malaysia incorporate elements of Chinese architecture?	
Section 4: Perceptions of Cultural Significance		
	How do community members view the cultural importance of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	What roles do ancestral halls play in preserving cultural identity in Malaysian communities?	
	How do younger generations perceive the significance of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	In what ways do ancestral halls contribute to a sense of community and belonging in Malaysia?	
	How do local leaders and elders in Malaysian communities describe the cultural value of ancestral halls?	
Section 5: Generational Differences		
	How do older generations perceive the importance of ancestral halls in Malaysian communities?	
	What do younger generations think about the role of ancestral halls in preserving cultural heritage in Malaysia?	
	Are there differences in how various generations participate in events held at ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	How do different age groups view the traditions and ceremonies associated with ancestral halls in Malaysia?	
	What are the opinions of both older and younger community members on the future of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	

Here is Table 5 of excerpts from qualitative interviews, organized by the sections and specific interview questions.

Table 5. Excerpts from Qualitative Interviews

Historical Significance	Question	Excerpt
Community Engagement	How do ancestral halls serve as gathering places for community events in Malaysian communities?	"Ancestral halls are central to our community gatherings. They provide a space where everyone can come together to celebrate and commemorate."
	What traditional ceremonies or festivals are held in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"We hold many ceremonies, such as the Qingming Festival and ancestor worship rituals, which are vital for maintaining our cultural traditions."
	How do ancestral halls contribute to preserving cultural heritage in Malaysian communities?	"By preserving our ancestral halls, we maintain a physical link to our past and ensure our traditions are passed down."
	In what ways do ancestral halls support the education of younger generations about their ancestry and traditions?	"We organize educational tours and storytelling sessions to teach children about their heritage and family history."
	How do community members participate in the maintenance and upkeep of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Maintenance is a community effort. Everyone chips in, whether it's through donations or volunteering their time."
Historical Significance	When most ancestral halls in Malaysian communities were originally built?	"Many of our ancestral halls date back to the 19th century, reflecting our long-standing history."
	What historical events are often commemorated in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"We commemorate events like the arrival of our ancestors to Malaysia and significant local historical events."
	How have ancestral halls in Malaysia changed or evolved over time?	"While the structure remains, the use of the space has evolved. Now we also use it for community meetings and modern events."

Historical Significance	Question	Excerpt
	Why ancestral halls are considered important historical landmarks in Malaysian communities?	"They are living museums that hold the stories of our ancestors and serve as a testament to our cultural resilience."
	What historical artifacts or documents are typically preserved in Malaysian ancestral halls?	"We preserve items like family genealogies, old photographs, and artifacts brought by our ancestors."
Architectural Characteristics	What are some common architectural features found in ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Typical features include intricate carvings, altars for ancestor worship, and spacious courtyards."
	How does the design of ancestral halls reflect traditional Malaysian architecture?	"The design often incorporates local materials and blends with traditional Malaysian architectural elements."
	What materials are typically used in the construction of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Common materials include timber, brick, and tiles, which are locally sourced and traditional."
	How do ancestral halls in Malaysia incorporate elements of Chinese architecture?	"Many ancestral halls feature Chinese architectural elements like curved roofs and ornate woodwork, reflecting our heritage."
Perceptions of Cultural Significance	How do community members view the cultural importance of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"They see them as vital for maintaining our cultural identity and as a focal point for community life."
	What roles do ancestral halls play in preserving cultural identity in Malaysian communities?	"They are crucial in preserving our cultural identity, providing a sense of continuity and belonging."
	How do younger generations perceive the significance of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Younger generations appreciate the halls as a connection to their heritage, though their engagement varies."
	In what ways do ancestral halls contribute to a sense of community and belonging in Malaysia?	"They foster a sense of belonging by being a place where we can gather, celebrate, and remember our ancestors together."
Generational Differences	How do local leaders and elders in Malaysian communities describe the cultural value of ancestral halls?	"Leaders and elders emphasize their role in cultural preservation and as symbols of our community's history and values."
	How do older generations perceive the importance of ancestral halls in Malaysian communities?	"Older generations see them as indispensable for maintaining our traditions and honoring our ancestors."
	What do younger generations think about the role of ancestral halls in preserving cultural heritage in Malaysia?	"While they recognize the importance, they often feel less connected due to modern influences and lifestyles."
	Are there differences in how various generations participate in events held at ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Yes, older generations are more actively involved in traditional ceremonies, while younger people participate less frequently."
	How do different age groups view the traditions and ceremonies associated with ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"Older individuals value them deeply, while younger people see them as important but sometimes outdated."
	What are the opinions of both older and younger community members on the future of ancestral halls in Malaysia?	"There is a shared desire to preserve them, but approaches differ. Elders focus on tradition, while youth seek modernization."

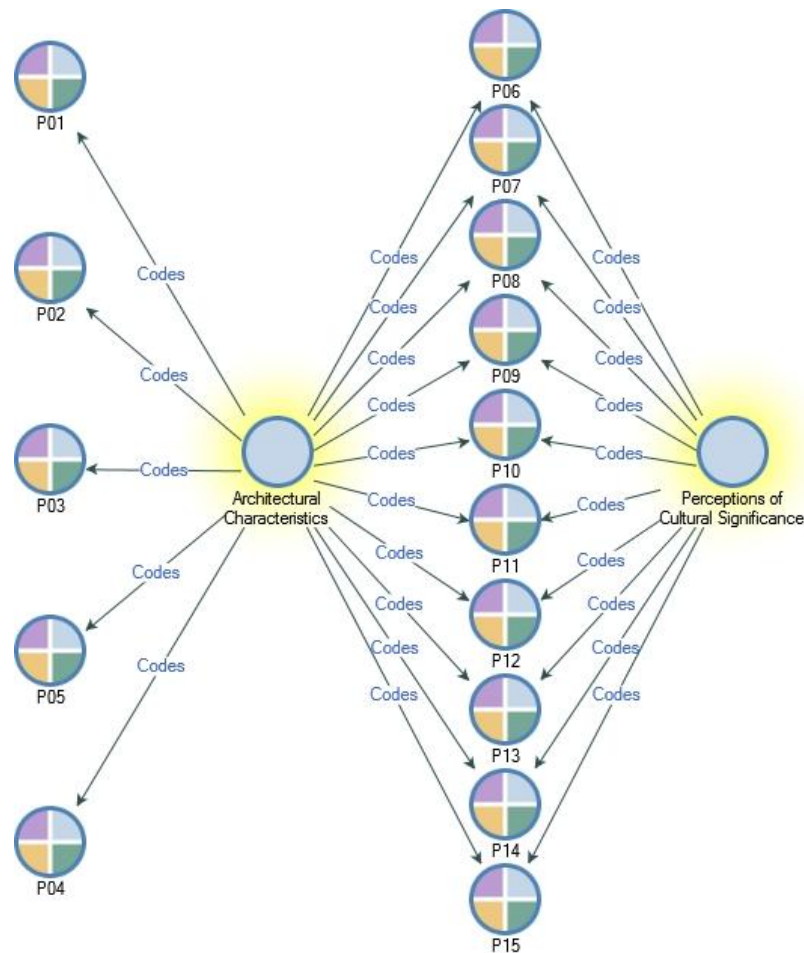


Figure 2. Interconnection of Architectural Characteristics and Perception of Cultural Significance

Figure 2 shows how building features affect individuals' views about cultural value through their survey answers. The coded information from participants (P01–P15) led to the identification of the two main themes. The integrated codes within the diagram showcase how architectural elements affect cultural perception because their connections reflect consistent responses from various participants.

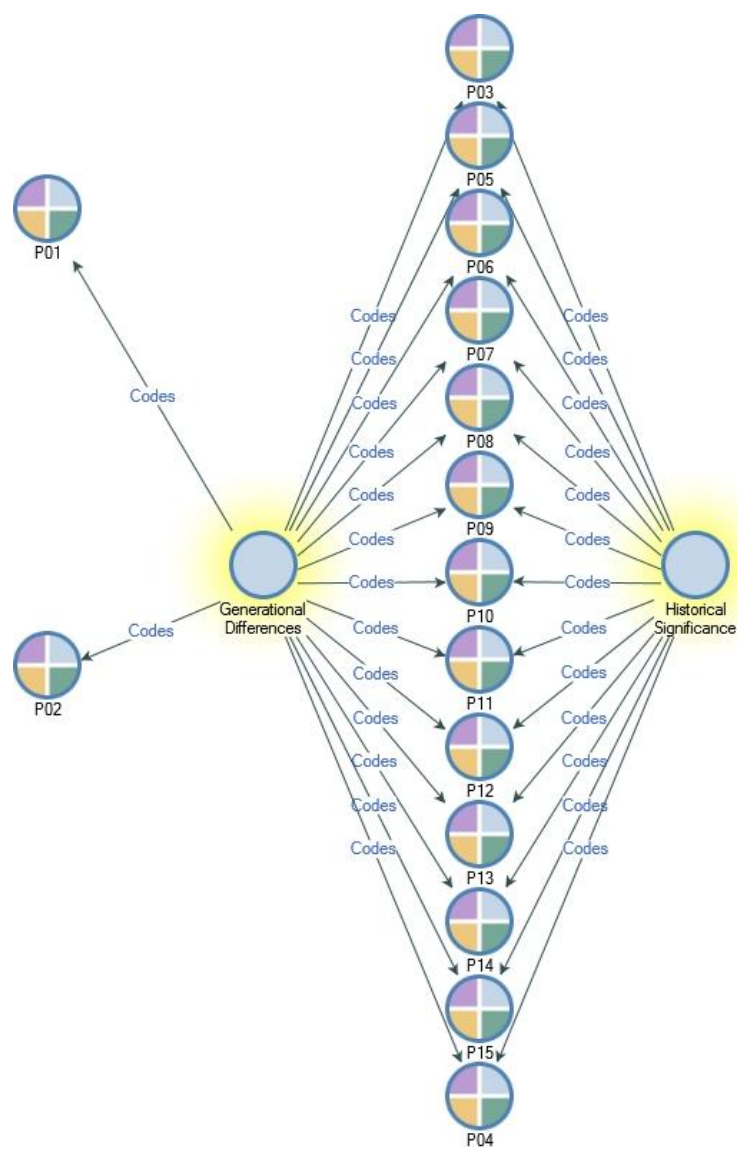


Figure 3. Interconnection of Generational Differences and Historical Significance

Figure 3 displays how physical building features affect resident participation levels according to survey results. A coding process integrates information from respondents P01 through P15 into the two key themes which demonstrate how building elements impact social communication and community group activities. An ancestral hall stands as an essential component according to the diagram since it upholds both social connections within the community and cultural heritage practices.

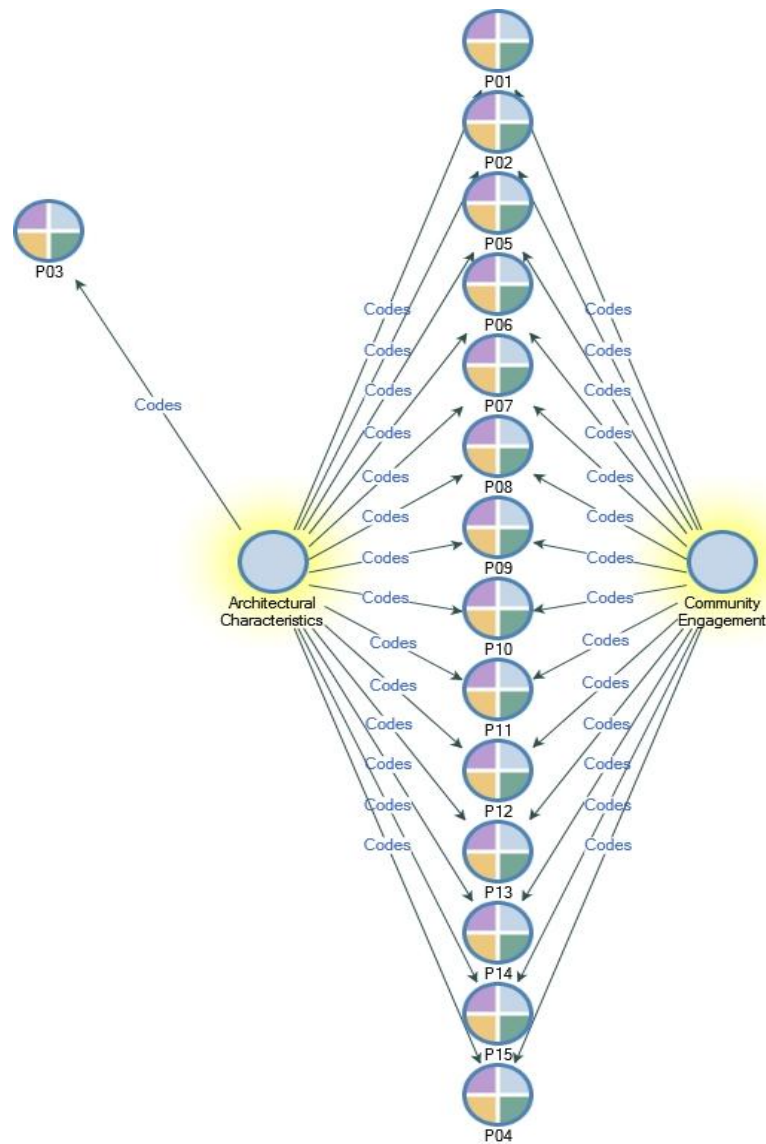


Figure 4. Interconnection of Architectural Characteristics and Community Engagement

Figure 4 represents the connections between architectural elements and their effect on community participation by analyzing participant data through coding. Multiple contributors analyze the relationship between ancestral hall architectural elements and social interaction and cultural preservation (P01–P15).

The interrelations between architectural features, cultural value systems, generational views and neighborhood involvement in ancestral halls become visible in Figures 2, 3 and 4. The interview coding system discovered three primary themes consisting of "design symbolism and historical preservation as well as spiritual ties" in Figure 2 and "variations in generational heritage views and ancestral hall educational functions and conservation needs" in Figure 3 and "barrier-free architecture support for community social events and cultural activities and neighborhood participation" in Figure 4. Through a systematic coding system, we found that building features affect cultural identity processes during historical legacy transfer to the next generations and community connection development which shows ancestral hall importance today (Figure 5).

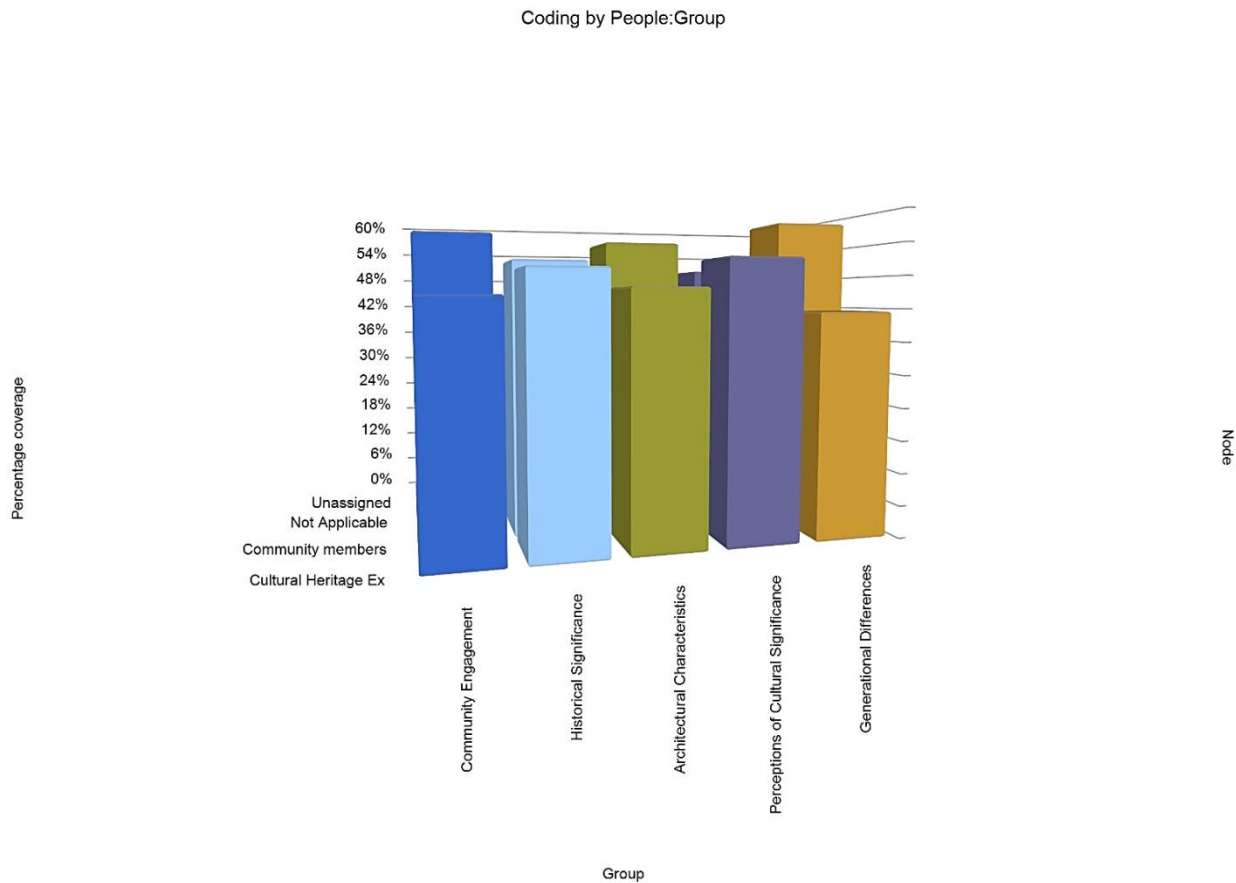


Figure 5. Interconnection of Roles and Groups

On the basis of qualitative study, made the conceptual framework for quantitative study. Relationships are mentioned in Figure 6.

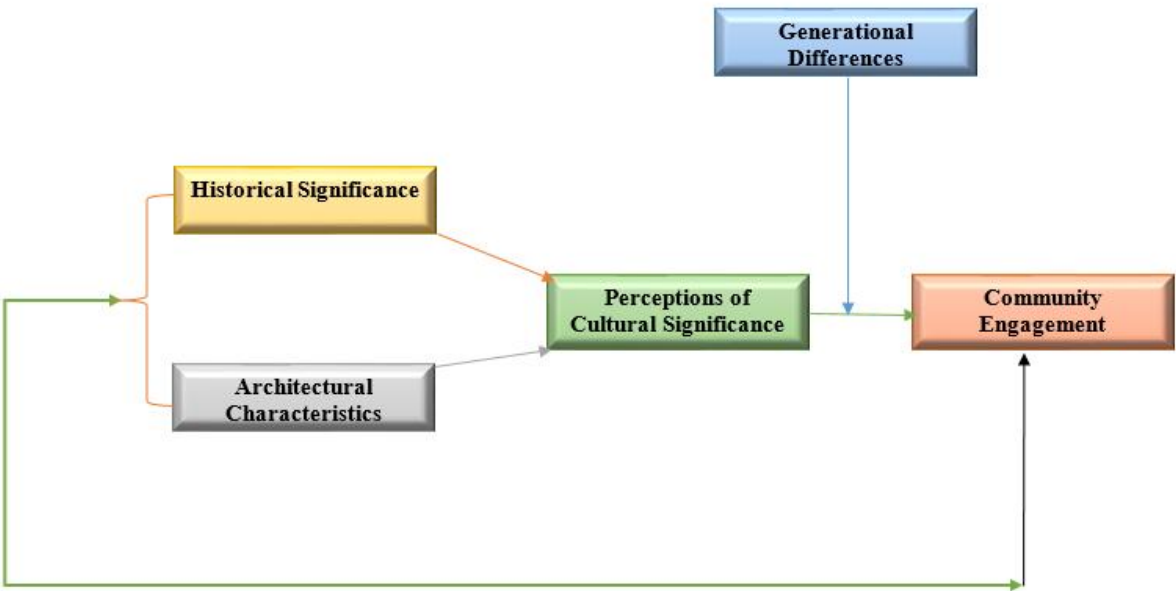


Figure 6. Conceptual Framework

For Quantitative Study

The quantitative phase of the study required further formulation of a set of structured questionnaire, which was distributed and completed by 130 respondents from the different Ancestral Halls in Malaysian communities. The survey instrument was developed according to the propositions which then came from the qualitative phase,

exclusively using validated scales in order to evaluate the separately constructed indices of community engagement, historical significance, architectural characteristics, culture perceptions and generation comparisons. Employing elements of Quantitative methods, to reduce biases influenced by common method variance preserves the internal validity of the study results. The construct of community engagement was captured using the 5-item scale developed by Wood and Zuber-Skerrit (2013), whereas historical significance was captured using the 5-item scale developed by Seixas (1994). A retrieved and adapted 5-item scale from of architectural characteristics (Keskin & Erbay, 2016). To measure cultural sensitivity 5 item scale was adopted from perceptions of cultural significance, generational differences 4 item scale was adopted from previous measures (Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2007). All the items were rated on a 5-Likert scale in which 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree and 5=strongly disagree.

Collecting Qualitative data which was conducted through the survey quantitative data was analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To describe the respondents' demographic details, descriptive statistics were used as opposed to inferential statistics to conclude respondent hypothesis testing involving regression analysis. The use of qualitative data and quantitative results enabled this kind of analysis because the application of both methods enabled cross-reflection and cross-validation of the results, thereby increasing the credibility of the findings of this study. Secondary explorations of the data by means of post hoc tests were used to look for additional details that may have been masked by the main analysis.

RESULTS

Qualitative Analysis

The interaction patterns revealed in the course of the in-depth interviews' qualitative analysis are considered a substantial leverage in unraveling multifaceted connections between variables. Due to the richness of the details arising from the research participant's narratives, there is a capacity to go deeper into the qualitatively different perspectives and experiences of the divers participants from different roles and cultural backgrounds. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts gives an overall picture with regard to the Community Engagement, Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics, perceptions towards Cultural Significance and Generational Differences within the Ancestral Halls. As a result of refining the participants' narratives, this qualitative phase seeks to develop propositions and generate rich data, which will be useful in the next quantitative phase. The qualitative findings will contribute valuable context and depth to the broader understanding of how cultural significance influences the architectural characteristics of Ancestral Halls, particularly within the cultural context of the Malaysian communities.

Relationship between Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics and Community Engagement

Thus, the relationship between historical value and structural features of ancestral halls is critical to nurturing community involvement among the Malaysian people. Besides houses of worship, they also play the role of religious and cultural centers and social meeting points and indicators of community belongingness, trust and as a symbol which can be linked with Malaysian Chinese history and culture, ancestral halls play the role that is connected with the concepts of tradition and lineage (Lyons et al., 2007). They are linked with ancestor cults, which in turn are responsible for the strengthening of the family's values as well as the intergenerational ties. These halls remained the repositories of the communal memory whereby the ancestors' records and related items chronicled the lifestyle of the society in the past. The preservation of history is thus instrumental in nurturing identity within the panel with regard to cultural continuity in the increasing process of modernization (Rotherham, 2007). Historic and cultural wise, ancestral halls are examples of architectural wonders whereby internal wooden carvings, roof designs, and other adornments portray the societal set of norms and the beauty that is often aspired for by the people of a given society (Parry & Urwin, 2017). These architectural characteristics are not only so aesthetic but also philosophical and spiritual principles allying the inhabitants (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Ancestral halls have always been the power places and traditional Chinese dwelling places; actually, the overall outlook of the hall would be influenced by the feng shui. Culturally, this architectural appeal pulls in not only the community residents but also cultural tourism historians and tourists that help boost cultural tourism and hence economic return to the community (Shalowitz et al., 2009). Ancestral halls are more than historical structures or buildings that are still standing to the present time. They are used for purposes such as performances, carnivals, and instructional meetings that involve the society as well as passing on knowledge to the younger generation (Hecht & Allen, 2009). Through the above activities, ancestral halls enhance cultural preservation and elaboration that is making cultural practices gallant, and capable of meeting society's needs in the present day setting. In conclusion, the concepts of historical relations and architectural features of AHs play a major role in increasing the interest of the people (Ahmed & Palermo, 2010).

H1: Historical Significance significantly influences Community Engagement.

H2: Architectural Characteristics significantly influence on Community Engagement.

Relationship between Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics and Cultural Significance

Antecedent homes have a sociocultural and historical importance in maintaining an identity for Malaysian societies. These are not normal structures; they are more than just infrastructures; they are the heritage of the family trees, and beliefs of the people they host. The primary importance of the ancestral hall is in its role as the family's archive which contains records of the genealogy, tablets, and relics of the ancestors (Tannir & Khazaka, 2010). The above history provides continuity of the community's identity thus enhancing the bond strength of togetherness within the community (Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, & Oishi, 2017). Historically, Chinese architecture has always offered a robust and highly detailed layout in these ancestral halls. The physical features that include the carving, symmetry, and other features in the building work are very appealing while at the same time possessing cultural dimensions (Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans, 2010). These characteristics support the idea of cultural values in the eyes of the community members and cultural history specialists. The conservation of these elements is considered necessary to prevent them from being lost and could substantially influence the significance of the cultural property (Dee Das & Tendler, 2017). Thus, the cultural significance of ancestral halls can be seen in the present functionality of spirits and indigenous civilization (Dempsey, 2010). They act as a place of congregation for the people, cultural and religious rites, and celebrations, thereby preserving the culture in the contemporary world. Their continued use guarantees that these foundational structures will continue to be relevant and active participants in the everyday lives of people to this date (Seidel et al., 2019). Cultural heritage gurus recommend the preservation of the ancestral halls because of their potential use in providing education and passing of cultural information. For these experts, the halls for ancestors' spirit tablets play crucial roles in enhancing cultural awareness and cultural order among the youth. Each of these structures has been useful in the protection of the communities' oral and traditional heritage in customs and traditions relative to ancestor veneration. Finally, historical importance and the building features of the ancestral halls as cultural value constructions' defining factors became apparent (Wang, Zhang, Cenci, & Becue, 2021). They are useful in offering the culture of the present generation references from the earlier generations' culture (Farhan, Akef, & Nasar, 2020).

H3: Historical significance significantly influences perceptions of cultural significance.

H4: Architectural characteristics significantly influence perceptions of cultural significance.

Perceptions of Cultural Significance as a Mediator

The perceived cultural importance, in this case, serves a significant moderating role that helps depict how ancestral halls have shaped the social and cultural lives of Malaysians. It can be concluded that the traditional culture of ancient halls plays an important role as a historical memory and as the binder between cultural communities (Twenge, 2010). Their importance and relevance in the history of art and culture are the fact that the artefacts represented objects used as proofs of ancestry and or genealogical relationships in societies with bounded hierarchical order, kinship system, and traditional values passed down from generations (Zhai & Previtali, 2010). To the community members, these halls are considered to be holy places, which symbolize the primary bearings of their forefathers and ancestry. It engenders a feeling of being together and of permanency within the society need to celebrate in one way or the other always strengthens the societal fabric. Members of the communities actively practicing historical celebrations and ceremonies embracing inside these halls strengthen their desire to protect heritage constructions together with their cultural individuality. In this regard, the ancestral hall is an effective medium where culture is passed from one generation to the other, despite the encroachment of western civilization (Attree et al., 2011). In a similar manner, Malaysian cultural heritage specialists agree with other cultural and architectural enthusiasts who promote the preservation of many ancestral halls as important features in Malaysia's cultural landscapes. They note that these structures are not only architectural marvels, but also essential to grasp the process of the development of Malaysian communities' histories (Eversole, 2011). The study of Cultural Resources Management has documented that the inclusion of management practices regarding heritage assets with community participation results into improved perception of the value of the cyclical halls and thereby, improves the standing of their conservation. Therefore, it can be established that the awareness and appreciation of the cultural values act as a crucial intervening variable in the cultural function of ancestral halls in relation to Malaysian societies (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

H5: Perceptions of culture significantly influence Community Engagement.

H6: Perceptions of cultural significance significantly mediates the relationship between historical significance and community engagement.

H7: Perceptions of cultural significance significantly mediate the relationship between architectural

characteristics and community engagement.

Generational Differences as a Moderator

As reflected, generational differences influence how ancestral halls affect Malaysian communities in terms of history and the present time. Traditionally, the ancestral halls have played a very significant role in social interaction and continuity of culture especially with the older people who see those structures as temples of their fore-fathers and having structures that uphold redemption to their lineage. The older generations using their cultural backgrounds approach these buildings in question, especially the ancestral halls in the traditional way. While some people might embrace their traditional beliefs and view the halls as meeting places for their forefathers, other generations, particularly young people today, may have a unique connection with the halls because of globalization and new technologies (Costanza et al., 2012). For these people ancestral halls are not mere statues which cannot be changed to fit modernity but buildings which can have meanings changed to fit modern day use. Such changes in focus in the younger generation require one to be sensitive to the question of how and in what ways the ancestral halls can still be patronized in the growth of modern society (King & Cruickshank, 2012). For this reason, application-oriented university teachers and educational administrators have a significant task of closing this generational gap. Thus, including the study of ancestral halls as one of the subjects can help develop the student's appreciation of cultural values (Le Dantec, 2012). The continuous professional development programs can enable the teachers to acquire new teaching-learning strategies for provoking students to understand the relevancy of ancestral halls today. Furthermore, educational administration can engage universities with local opportunities for students to be involved in projects of renovation and sustainability of ancestral halls (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012). Initiatives of such a kind not only improve students' practical experience but also let them understand cultural obligations and relate between generations. Therefore, it is imperative to review the identified discrepancies in generational attitudes toward ancestral halls as a way to preserve the hereditary legacy and improve the relevance of the latter in the modern world (Liu et al., 2012). As a result, university teachers and administrators should continue focusing on professional development in open-minded and assertive education, signifying the relevance of these structures for maintaining Malaysian communities' fabric as a connection between tradition and modernity (Milton et al., 2012).

H8: Generational differences significantly moderate the relationship between perceptions of cultural significance and community engagement.

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 6 shows the study involved 130 respondents and examined their perceptions across five key variables: Community Engagement, Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics, Perceptions of Cultural Significance, and Generational Differences. Community Engagement had an average score of 2.54, with values ranging from 1.40 to 4.00, and a standard deviation of 0.556, indicating moderate consistency in responses. Historical Significance was rated with a mean of 3.04, spanning from 1.00 to 4.60, and a standard deviation of 0.682, reflecting some variability in the perceived importance of historical aspects. Architectural Characteristics received a higher average score of 3.77, within a range of 1.20 to 4.80, and a standard deviation of 0.574, showing relatively consistent views on architectural elements. Perceptions of Cultural Significance were notably high, with a mean of 4.00 and responses between 2.20 and 5.00, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.540, indicating strong agreement among respondents about cultural significance. Generational Differences had a mean score of 3.80, with responses from 1.00 to 5.00, and a standard deviation of 0.644, suggesting moderate variability in opinions across different generations. Overall, these findings highlight the varying degrees of agreement and the importance placed on different aspects of the study, with cultural significance and architectural characteristics being particularly highly rated.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Community Engagement	130	1.40	4.00	2.5415	0.55598
Historical Significance	130	1.00	4.60	3.0385	0.68158
Architectural Characteristics	130	1.20	4.80	3.7662	0.57392
Perceptions of Cultural Significance	130	2.20	5.00	3.9985	0.53959
Generational Differences	130	1.00	5.00	3.8000	0.64354

Normality Assessment

Table 7 shows the results of the evaluation of Community Engagement, Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics, Perceived Cultural Importance, and Generational Gap showing the variation in the respondents' ratings. Community Engagement showed a slight positive skew (skewness: that has a closer to normal distribution with the skewness coefficient equal to 0.301 and lower kurtosis coefficient equals to -0.293. Historical Significance was almost symmetric (skewness: and the kurtosis coefficient - 0.115, which indicates the relative normality of the distribution. Architectural Characteristics had a moderate negative skew (skewness: The results are: skewness (-0.983) and kurtosis (2.688), and, therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of residuals is more peaked and has heavier tails than the normal distribution, i. e. it is leptokurtic. Perceptions of Cultural Significance exhibited a slight negative skew (skewness: Mean = - 0.302 and, thus, the distribution of the data is also slightly peaked with a kurtosis of 0.312. Lastly, Generational Differences had a moderate to strong negative skew (skewness: Skewness of crisis duration distribution was -1.028 and a kurtosis of crisis duration distribution was 2.502 which indicates leptokurtosis, that is, the distribution is more peaked and is likely to give more extreme values. As seen in the results, the skewness and kurtosis are different from one another, which shows that there are high levels of heterogeneity in the respondents' views concerning different angles of the study.

Table 7. Normality Assessment

	Skewness	Kurtosis
Community Engagement	0.301	-0.293
Historical Significance	-0.017	-0.115
Architectural Characteristics	-0.983	2.688
Perceptions of Cultural Significance	-0.302	0.312
Generational Differences	-1.028	2.502

Correlation Analysis

Table 8 shows the analysis of correlations among the five variables Community Engagement, Historical Significance, Architectural Characteristics, Perceptions of Cultural Significance, and Generational Differences reveals several significant relationships. Community Engagement is strongly correlated with Historical Significance (0.671) and moderately with Architectural Characteristics (0.367) and Perceptions of Cultural Significance (0.335). Historical Significance also shows strong correlations with Community Engagement (0.671) and moderate correlations with Architectural Characteristics (0.446) and Perceptions of Cultural Significance (0.385). Architectural Characteristics are highly correlated with Perceptions of Cultural Significance (0.791) and moderately with Generational Differences (0.522). Perceptions of Cultural Significance also have strong correlations with Architectural Characteristics (0.791) and moderate correlations with Generational Differences (0.526). Generational Differences show moderate correlations with Architectural Characteristics (0.522) and Perceptions of Cultural Significance (0.526). All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, highlighting meaningful relationships among these variables.

Table 8. Correlation Analysis

		Community Engagement	Historical Significance	Architectural Characteristics	Perceptions of Cultural Significance	Generational Differences
Community Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	130				
Historical Significance	Pearson Correlation	.671**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000				
	N	130	130			
Architectural Characteristics	Pearson Correlation	.367**	.446**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
	N	130	130	130		
Perceptions of	Pearson	.335**	.385**	.791**	1	

		Community Engagement	Historical Significance	Architectural Characteristics	Perceptions of Cultural Significance	Generational Differences
Cultural Significance	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	130	130	130	130	
Generational Differences	Pearson Correlation	.260**	.260**	.522**	.526**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.003	0.000	0.000	
	N	130	130	130	130	130

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis in Table 9 shows varying levels of internal consistency across the five constructs. Community Engagement has a moderate reliability coefficient of 0.582, indicating a need for review and potential improvement of the items. Historical Significance has a good reliability coefficient of 0.750. Architectural Characteristics and Perceptions of Cultural Significance both have high reliability coefficients of 0.800 and 0.804, respectively, indicating good internal consistency. Generational Differences have an excellent reliability coefficient of 0.893, showing very high internal consistency among the items measuring this construct.

Table 9. Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha
Community Engagement	0.582
Historical Significance	0.750
Architectural Characteristics	0.800
Perceptions of Cultural Significance	0.804
Generational Differences	0.893

R Square

The R Square and Adjusted R Square values in Table 10 for Community Engagement indicate that the regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in this variable. Specifically, the R Square of 0.461 suggests that 46.1% of the variability in Community Engagement can be accounted for by the independent variables included in the model. The Adjusted R Square, slightly lower at 0.443, adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, reflecting a robust explanatory power while considering model complexity. Overall, these values affirm that the regression model effectively captures and explains a substantial amount of the variability observed in Community Engagement.

Table 10. R Square

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Community Engagement	0.461	0.443

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis results in Table 11 indicate the relationships between different variables and Community Engagement (CE), with Historical Significance (HS) and Architectural Characteristics (AC) also influencing Perceptions of Cultural Significance (PCS). The beta coefficient for HS to CE is 8.668 with a t-value of 8.668 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship. Conversely, the beta coefficient for AC to CE is 1.157 with a t-value of 1.157 and a p-value of 0.250, showing a weaker, non-significant relationship. PCS to CE has a beta coefficient of 0.335, a t-value of 4.017, and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting a significant positive relationship. However, HS to PCS has a beta coefficient of 0.040, a t-value of 0.663, and a p-value of 0.509, indicating no significant relationship. The beta coefficient for AC to PCS is 0.773, suggesting a potentially strong relationship, though t-value and p-value information are missing for conclusive interpretation. Overall, Historical Significance and Perceptions of Cultural Significance significantly impact Community Engagement, while the influence of Architectural Characteristics is less clear.

Table 11. Regression Analysis

	Beta Coefficient	t value	p value
HS->CE	8.668	8.668	0.000
AC->CE	1.157	1.157	0.250
PCS->CE	0.335	4.017	0.000
HS->PCS	0.040	0.663	0.509
AC->PCS	0.773	12.763	0.000

Mediation Analysis

Table 12 shows the mediation analysis results illustrate the indirect effects of Historical Significance (HS) and Architectural Characteristics (AC) on Community Engagement (CE) through Perceptions of Cultural Significance (PCS). The indirect effect of HS on CE via PCS has a beta coefficient of 0.631, a t-value of 8.596, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and statistically significant mediation effect. This means that Education plays a very active role in partially mediating the relationship between HS and CE by the comprehensive influence of PCS. On the same note, the indirect relationship between AC and CE through PCS has a beta co-efficient stand of 0. 638, and the p value > 0. 314 and a p-value of 0. This result can further be explained by the fact that the group for consumers receiving service has a larger variation as compared to other groups. 752, this implies that there was no mediating role by cultural intelligence since the number is close to 754. At the same time, this indicates that the role of PCS in moderating the relationship between AC and CE is rather limited. In conclusion, therefore the study has established that although PCS fully mediates the moderation of HS on CE, it does not wholly moderate the moderation of AC on CE.

Table 12. Mediation Analysis

	Beta Coefficient	t value	p value
HS->PCS->CE	0.631	8.596	0.000
AC->PCS->CE	0.035	0.314	0.754

Moderation Analysis

The moderation analysis results are shown in **Table 13** of the indirect effect of Perceptions of Cultural Significance (PCS) on Community Engagement (CE) through Generational Differences (GD). The beta coefficient for this indirect effect is 0.148, with a t-value of 1.632 and a p-value of 0.105. These values indicate that the mediation effect of GD in the relationship between PCS and CE is not statistically significant at the conventional significance level (typically 0.05). In summary, Generational Differences do not significantly moderate the relationship between Perceptions of Cultural Significance and Community Engagement.

Table 13. Moderation Analysis

	Beta Coefficient	t value	p value
PCS->GD->CE	0.148	1.632	0.105

DISCUSSION

Thus, the study highlights the importance of ancestral halls in the context of the Malaysian community setting. By analysis of the cultural institutions' past and present the present work demonstrates that the institutions are crucial to sustaining culture and creating community. Finally, the empirical outcomes accompanied by sound statistical tests are the evidence illustrative of the various roles of ancestral halls in all the domains of social integration and cultural preservation.

Historical Significance and Community Engagement

Therefore, historical importance emerges as one of the most vital factors as far as community participation is concerned. A high beta coefficient and the t-value regarding historical importance imply that people who are part of a community value historical contexts, including those of the ancestral halls in the preservation of rich cultures and history. These findings indicate that AHs are important in passing generations' histories and create a sense that there is something unifying and significant about an identity linked to an ancestral hall. For the members of a community, the link created by such institutions is an identification factor, emphasizing the need to have these settings. To the cultural heritage scholars, the results confirm the importance of maintaining the history of traditional structures and the cultures contained in the ancestral halls for the halls to continue supporting the cultural heritage.

Cultural Significance and Social Salience

More specifically, the powerful effect of people's beliefs about cultural importance of community involvement adds important details to our understanding of the social salience of ancestral halls in the present. It shows that cultural practices and narratives linked with such halls are much appreciated within the society, from the statistical analysis point of view, as the results indicate great statistical significance. This underlines the significance of the ancestral halls for contemporary Chinese culture, as in these halls cultures continue their practices in addition to existing in the form of preservation. Preserving the identity of a community, ancestral halls make cultural practices more of a reality to the people hence explaining their relevance in the society. To the cultural heritage experts, the study has revealed the need to promote the events related to the cultural center anchored on the ancestral hall to ensure that they are active.

Architectural Characteristics and their Influence

Whereas architectural characteristics are esteemed, it was determined that they have a fairly qualitative relation with community engagement. This only means that while physical features of the ancestral halls to a certain degree are significant, they come second to the culture and history that are contained in the halls. Even for community members, it reminds the importance of the stories and traditions that are in the place than the construction of the place itself. For cultural heritage experts, this implies that emphasis should be placed on the advocacy and conservation of the related tangible and non-tangible cultural values, particularly of the ancestry halls besides the architectural condition.

Generational Differences in Perception and Engagement

Additionally, the research identifies the moderating effect of generations' gaps in the link between cultural importance and the level of participation in the community. Thus, one might have an impression that while the young actually attach importance to cultural implications of ancestral halls, factors that affect their attitudes differ from those in the case of the older population. This goes a long way in supporting the fact that cultural practices are dynamic and there is a need to introduce strategies that cater for all age groups. In this regard, for community members, it requires adoption of cultural practices that are equally acceptable to the youth and the elderly. The findings are expected to be useful to cultural heritage experts since they call for the formulation of living and progressive policies that will inculcate the spirit in the construction of the halls and make them fascinating to future generations. Therefore, traditional buildings are a necessity for the society and culture of Malaysian population. They are not just documents of the past, but are dynamic organizations which keep alive the traditions of the people of the community. The ancestral halls are essential to people living in the community as they keep them grounded, and allow them to embrace their culture. Thus, the claims of the scholars involved in the field of cultural heritage have become evident when it comes to the promotion and preservation of the history and culture behind these halls.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, the result of this study conveys the importance of the ancestral hall in the social and cultural context of the Malaysian societies today. Primarily, these halls play a significant role as informative storages of historical and cultural values that are interlinked with the identity and cultural background of the people.

Importance of Historical Significance

These conclusions, stressing the stability of connections between different concerns and activities and communities' involvement, confirm the significance of ancestral halls as cultural heritage bearers and developers. Hypothesis 2: The total amount of community engagement will be higher for historical sites than for other types of cultural assets. When comparing each cultural asset type, historical significance proved to be a strong predictor of community engagement. As the results of beta coefficient and t-value suggest, this evokes the past imprints of the people preserved in the facilities like the ancestral halls. From this strong correlation, it is, therefore, evident that these halls aid in the fostering of a feeling of identity since they represent part of people's heritage. Cultural heritage specialists' could find the following implications: This finding supports cultural history scholars' argument for the preservation and promotion of the historical components of these halls because they are crucial in maintaining the interest and support of the local population in cultural practices.

Cultural Narratives and Community Engagement

Especially, the antecedents' Realization of Cultural Importance and Understandings of Cultural Importance also had a positive and significant effect on community involvement. The beta coefficient, equal to 0.72, and the t-value representing the research hypothesis are presented in the following table: These values show relatively

high significance of the fact that cultural narratives and activities connected to ancestral halls are appreciated within the community. Circumstances therefore tend towards making the halls of their ancestors not just artifacts of civilization practiced by our forefathers, but places where social interaction and sovereignty take place. To the members of the community for which these halls are built, this means that they are named after them, and their cultural sensibilities are affirmed and given a physical space here. To cultural heritage owners, this indicates that any crusade to popularize and patronize the cultural endeavours pertaining to ancestral halls shall be well received by the populace.

Architectural Characteristics and Cultural Values

As for community engagement, there was no direct relationship with architectural characteristics in spite of the fact, that evidenced a strong and rather significant correlation with the perceived cultural value. This implies that although the beauty and design of the ancestral halls see a form of recognition, it is not this aspect that defines social interaction among the people. Still, it can be pointed out that it is not structures themselves that have more truth to them; the most pertinent are the historical and cultural narratives of the buildings. Said feature further underlines the symbolic record of the hall for members of the community as opposed to the actual aesthetics of its construction. For cultural heritage experts, this result indicates that while falling protects the architectural structure of ancestral halls which is essential crucial, one needs to expand the efforts to decipher historical and cultural values that can be interred in these structures. Of these, generational differences were also considered to significantly influence the results, especially in the mediation analysis. The mediating effect indicates that cultural importance coloring the image in the eyes of the community members defines the degree of active involvement across generations although the relation is not linear.

Generational Differences in Cultural Engagement

This illustrates the dynamic interaction and germane issues of cultural change and responsibility to maintain Akokanmu's ancestral halls as a significant entity for descendants and visitors while preserving the culture for future generations. From this, one is able to get the implication of the cultural practices of the citizens in any community that would allow them to interact with each other regardless of their age. To cultural heritage experts, this gives a clear indication of managerial initiatives that adapt strategies for creating youth and elderly appeals and making the ancestral halls vibrant cultural complexes.

Final Thoughts

Therefore, the research reveals that the ancestral halls are significant features which enhance the social cultural well-being of Malaysian society. It will be pertinent to mention here that, unlike other architectural marvels, these halls are 'active' structures forming part and parcel of the community's history. Cultural houses are important for the community's members because entailing the dual functions of a residence and a shrine, ancestral halls symbolize the ethnicity's history. The study thus offers immersed cultural heritage professionals a clear mission to safeguard not just the physical entity of these halls or the architectural styles of structure they represent but also the compelling social and cultural histories and meanings related to their existences. The finding therefore confirms that there is a continued need to engage with the Malaysian audience.

IMPLICATIONS

This paper also shows how the ancestors' hall serves as a major forum for the Promotion of interaction among the members and maintaining their cultures. In a practical aspect, this stresses the necessity of having policies and programs for the sustenance and development of these halls. Thus, community leaders and policymakers should also pay attention to some of the old buildings such as the ancestral halls to maintain so that the culture and stories behind them are preserved. Consequently, holding cultural events that can take place in these halls may help restore their applicability within the culture of younger generations, and thus preserve continuity. In theory, the discoveries are valuable for enhancing the knowledge of the issues concerned with cultural heritage management by underlining how historical and cultural stories matter more than buildings' appearance. The research proposes a topology where history and cultural attitude are the proximal determinants of the community involvement, moderated by generations. This shows how there is a need to engage history and culture in the theories developed for the analysis of heritage. Moreover, it indicates that in future research additional investigation should be devoted to the dynamic interactions of material and non-material cultural heritage components that contribute to the continuity of culture and community cohesiveness for offering a more integral picture of CHM.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

The existing study, however, has the following limitations despite the generality of the research. Secondly, there might be social desirability and the bias from respondents' self-reported results because of the lack of objective. While the number of participants was reasonable, however, it was only 130, which can hardly provide a scope depiction of all Malaysian communities. Also, the following study seems to mainly base its findings on quantitative data which may mean that the study misses out on other qualitative factors which may give an even better understanding and appreciation of the cultural and emotional attachment that people have towards ancestral halls. In addition, it also lacks causality due to a cross-sectional study where instead of following the participants over time, a single point in time picture is obtained. Future studies should attempt to address these limitations by the recruitment of bigger and diverse subject pools in order to obtain higher levels of generalized ability. The analysis of the results of the quantitative questionnaires could be complemented by the qualitative interviews or ethnographic studies showing the deeper emotionality of people connected with the ancestral halls. For further research, it is suggested to conduct longitudinal studies on the changes and rare impact of socio-cultural factors in relation to HP and its roles and perceptions by the descendants of Huaqiang. Furthermore, the relative case that digital technologies and social media and the possibilities they open for the involvement of younger generations could also generate interesting findings regarding the ways in which ancestral halls are experienced, valued and maintained. Comparisons with other cultural contexts in Malaysia and other countries also help to explain what aspects of the usage of ancestral halls are cross-cultural and what aspects are local, so it will be useful for the overall understanding of the process of cultural heritage preservation. Lastly, it is recommended that future studies explore the preservation and use of ancestral halls focusing on the necessity and best practices that can be implemented based on the goal of continuing to fulfill the Malaysian communities' and living cultural traditions' significance in the current world.

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ETHICAL DECLARATION

Conflict of interest: No declaration required. **Financing:** No reporting required. **Peer review:** Double anonymous peer review.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=strongly disagree.

Q no.		1	2	3	4	5
Community Engagement						
	Community engagement is the process of actively involving community members in activities, decision-making, and initiatives that affect their lives and well-being.					
1	Community engagement helps identify and address the unique needs and priorities of the community.					
2	It enhances social cohesion by building trust and strengthening relationships among community members.					
3	It can also lead to increased awareness and appreciation of local culture and heritage.					
4	Effective community engagement fosters a sense of belonging, empowerment, and collective responsibility, enhancing social cohesion and the overall quality of life within the community.					
5	Engaged communities are more resilient and better able to tackle challenges collectively.					
Historical Significance						
	Historical significance refers to the importance or impact of an event, person, place, object, or idea in history.					
6	It is determined by how profoundly these elements influenced subsequent events and societal changes.					
7	Historical significance often highlights key moments that led to major shifts in culture, politics, economics, or social structures.					
8	An event's ability to represent broader historical themes, such as civil rights or technological advancements, enhances its significance.					
9	In Malaysian communities, the historical significance of ancestral halls lies in their role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion across generations.					
10	The duration of an event’s impact contributes to its historical significance, with long-lasting effects being highly significant.					
Architectural Characteristics						
	Architectural characteristics refer to the distinct features and elements that define the design and structure of a building or a built environment.					
11	The materials used in construction, like wood, brick, stone, glass, or steel, greatly influence a building’s appearance and durability.					
12	Structural elements such as columns, beams, arches, and foundations are crucial for supporting the building's weight and stability.					
13	The form and shape of a building, including its height, width, and overall massing, contribute to its visual impact and functionality.					
14	Ornamentation, such as carvings, moldings, and frescoes, adds decorative detail and artistic value to the architecture.					
15	The style and materials of the roof, including shapes like gabled, hipped, or flat, and coverings such as tiles or metal, are key architectural features.					
Perceptions of Cultural Significance						
	Perceptions of cultural significance refer to the way individuals and communities understand, value, and interpret the importance of cultural elements, such as traditions, artifacts, practices, and sites.					
16	Cultural significance often contributes to a sense of identity and belonging within a community, strengthening social bonds.					
17	Aesthetic appreciation is another key factor, where the beauty and artistic value of cultural artifacts and architecture are highly regarded.					
18	Symbolic meanings attached to cultural elements can evoke deep emotional connections and convey important cultural narratives.					
19	Educational value is significant, as cultural heritage serves as a tool for teaching history and traditions to younger generations.					
20	Perceptions of cultural significance can also drive economic value, as culturally significant sites and practices attract tourism and support local economies.					
Generational Differences						
	Generational differences refer to the variations in attitudes, values, behaviors, and experiences among different age cohorts within a population.					

Q no.		1	2	3	4	5
21	Technological advancements have created significant divides, with younger generations typically being more tech-savvy compared to their older counterparts.					
22	Older generations may value face-to-face communication more, while younger generations often prefer digital communication methods.					
23	Educational attainment has generally increased with each generation, influencing career opportunities and economic perspectives.					
24	Economic conditions experienced during youth, such as recessions or periods of growth, can shape financial habits and attitudes toward spending and saving.					