Intellectual Discourse

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Book Review

Al-Kawakibi, Abdul Rahman. *The Nature of Tyranny
and The Devastating Results of Oppression.* Foreword
by Leon T. Goldsmith. Translated by Amer Chaikhouni.
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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
◌َ	a		◌َا، ◌َى	an
◌ُ	u		◌ُّو	un
◌ِ	i		◌ِّي	in
◌َا، ◌َ، ◌َى،	ā		◌َوْ	aw
◌ُو	ū		◌َيْ	ay
◌ِي	ī		◌ُّو	uww, ū (in final position)
			◌ِّي	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

Note from the Editor

This issue of Intellectual Discourse (Vol. 30, No. 1) presents ten articles on various topics, ranging from the social media to homeless elder persons, and from the politics of authoritarianism to Qur'anic guidance on health crisis. These articles are the outcomes of research carried out by academics not only from Malaysia, but also from Thailand, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates. All but two of the research articles are the results of collaborative efforts among researchers. In addition to the research articles, this issue also includes a book review. The topics covered in this issue reflects the diverse research interests in Islamic revealed knowledge and the human sciences.

The first article (Understanding Malaysian Youth's Social Media Practices and Their Attitude towards Violent Extremism)—written by Nurzali Ismail, Jasmine Mohamed Jawhar, Danial Mohd Yusuf, Anis Izzati Ismail and Raja Muhammad Khairul Akhtar Raja Mohd Naguib—examines Malaysian youth's social media practices and those factors that influence their attitude towards violent extremism in the social media. Using online survey, their study finds that youth prefer video content to written content, infographic and images. It also finds that information or argument quality, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are factors that could influence attitude. This research suggests that counter-violent extremism efforts should further inspect youth's social media usage in order to understand different social media platforms, types of content and message design.

In the second article (Should Heterogeneity Matter? The Case of Malaysia: Evaluating Public Service Motivation in a Non-Homogenous Society), Nadia Hezlin Yashaiya and Abdillah Noh suggest that ethnic heterogeneity matters in assessing an individual's public service motivation and the chances of joining the public service. Their study is based on interviews with officers from Malaysia's Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD – Administrative and Diplomatic Officers) of different ethnicities. They argue that ethnic heterogeneity matters

because personal attributes are important in determining one's public service motivation, while an ethnically heterogenous environment with the potential of producing numerous types of exclusive institutions can influence one's perception of the public service or even determine one's chances of joining the civil service. They further find that ethnic heterogeneity influences an individual's perception, motivation and decision to join the public service.

Zulkhairol Shukri, Nik Norliati Fitri Md. Nor and Nurul Norzehan explore the various reasons that lead the elderly to live a homeless life in Kuala Lumpur in the third article in this edition (The Issue of the Elderly Homeless in Kuala Lumpur: Family Neglect and Its Contributing Factors). They conducted in-depth interviews to determine the reasons these elderly persons live as homeless. Their findings suggest that while almost everyone had family and drug- or health-related issues, there was also a case where an elderly person simply decide to live as a part-time homeless. The findings help raise awareness toward the plight of the elderly homeless, and could help policy-makers to address the needs and grievances of this often-neglected segment of the society.

The fourth article (Muslim Inventors of Reading and Writing Methods for the Blind: Predecessors of Braille) authored by Awad Al-Khalaf, Kassen Saad, Adam Abdullah, Mona Shehade and Najla Aljarwan, highlight the contributions of three Muslim inventors—as early as the 11th century—who created methods for the visually-impaired to read and write. These inventors were Muhammad bin Abdul Warith (d. 1106 CE), Zein-Eddine Al-Amidy (d. 1312 CE) and Wazir al-Sarraj (d. 1736 CE). Like Louis Braille, these Muslim inventors used the sense of touch to help the visually-impaired to read and write. Their methods differed: Abdul Warith used embossed figures from pitch analogous to the Arabic letters, Al-Amidy used fashioned paper-made letters, while al-Sarraj created waxed letters as the reading and writing method. While Braille alphabets are the standard system used by the visually-impaired now, the contributions of Muslim inventors should also be appreciated.

In the fifth article, (In the Name of Covid-19: Democratic Reversal and the Return of Authoritarian Malasia under Muhyiddin's *Perikatan Nasional)*, Muhamad M. N. Nadzri argues that the fall of *Pakatan Harapan's* democratically elected government in February 2020 was self-inflicted when one of its components, *Bersatu*—together with disgruntled members of *Parti Keadilan Rakyat*—withdrew from the

ruling coalition. The succeeding government—*Perikatan Nasional*—did not have the people's mandate and therefore, relied simply on the royal mandate that lent it legitimacy through constitutional provisions, according to Nadzri. While that government resorted to authoritarianism, in the name of Covid-19 no less, it lacked regime sustainability due to its failure to establish any semblance of performance legitimacy.

Still on politics, but this time in Thailand, Norachit Jirasatthumb, Phumsith Mahasuweerachai and Atchara Sorasing study confirmation bias in the sixth article (Confirmation Bias among Adherents of Red and yellow Politics in Thailand). They study red and yellow shirts' confirmation bias through experiments and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). They find that despite ideological orientations, their research participants from the red and yellow shirts are not strictly driven by such ideologies. Their political convictions may change after some experimental treatments, suggesting that exposure to positive and negative information about red and yellow politics can help the participants to make more informed choices despite their confirmation bias.

The seventh article (Secularisation of Muslim Students: A Freirean Perspective on Biological Evolution Teaching in Islamic Schools) written by Ahmad Naharuddin Ramadhan, Marzuki, Heru Nurchayo and Bustami Subhan examine Paulo Freire's critical education paradigm and its significance and relevance for criticising the teaching of evolution in Indonesian Islamic schools. Materials for the teaching of evolution in these schools are centralised from the national curriculum, and include contestable concepts and ideas from the evolutionary theory. Using six key ideas from Paulo Freire—the inseparability of education from political content, the displacement of the values and culture of the oppressed through education, the neutrality of science, three categories of human consciousness, the concept of alienation, and critical literacy programmes—this study argues for decolonisation of education and challenges the neutrality of such scientific ideas.

In the eighth article (The Role of Mass Media as a Channel to Learn about Islam among Muslims in Gombak), the authors—Kamaruzzaman bin Abdul Manan, Mohd. Noh bin Abdul Jalil, Muhammad Ayman al-Akiti, Lihana binti Borhan, Majdan bin Alias, Shukran Abdul Rahman and Khamsiah binti Mohd. Ismail—examine the mass media use for learning about Islam among Muslims in Gombak. Through their survey,

they find that Muslims use various media as a means to learn Islam and there are differences in media platform preferred by Muslims of different gender, age group, educational background, occupational background, and frequency of praying in the mosque. They conclude that the role of the media—conventional and new—should not be underestimated as a vehicle of *da'wah*.

The ninth article (The Best Solution for Pandemic Prevention of Covid-19: Important Notes in Light of the Quranic Perspective), written by Abur Hamdi Usman, Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir and Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah, explores guidance and commands from the Qur'an in the face of a pandemic such as the Covid-19. In addition, the study also includes the prophetic traditions of Prophet Muhammad and lessons from Muslim history as practical guidance in addressing and preventing the spread of any pandemic. The article suggests that there are many lessons from the Qur'an, prophetic traditions and Muslim history that are useful for humanity in facing health crises. Such lessons can be the basis for sustainable health policies in the Muslim World.

Finally, the tenth article (Propagating an Alternative Solution for Indonesia's Problems: A Framing Analysis on Hizb ut-Tahrir's Narratives) by Hasbi Aswar analyses the propagation of Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia's (HTI) political ideology through the use of framing theory. He shows that HTI rejects practically all man-made ideologies and institutions, and calls for the re-institutionalisation of the caliphate. In propagating these ideas, HTI used methods not dissimilar from the framing approach. Due to HTI's radical ideology, the Indonesian government banned HTI in 2017 to protect the nation's unity.

On a personal note, this is the first issue of Intellectual Discourse that I helped manage as an editor. I would like to express my utmost appreciation to Danial Mohd. Yusof, Editor-in-Chief of Intellectual Discourse, for his generous tips and guidance in managing the publication of this journal. I would also like to thank all the contributors for their thought-provoking articles. Finally, I could not thank the anonymous reviewers enough for their immense contributions in improving the quality of the articles in this issue. Thank you very much.

Tunku Mohar Mokhtar
Editor

Understanding Malaysian Youth's Social Media Practices and Their Attitude towards Violent Extremism

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Raja Muhammad Khairul Akhtar Raja Mohd Naguib[*****]

Abstract: The exploitation of social media to spread propaganda and violent extremism has become a serious issue, including in Malaysia. This study attempted to examine youth's social media practices and factors that influence their attitude towards violent extremism on social media. To achieve the study aim, an online survey involving 400 respondents was conducted. The findings revealed that, youth like video content the most, followed by written content, infographic and images. Information seeking continues to be an important purpose for using social media. While youth's attitude towards violent extremism is moderate, this study found that, information or argument quality, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are factors that could influence

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attitude. Considering that social media technology is constantly changing, it is proposed that, future studies in countering violent extremism to continually look into youth's social media usage, particularly in understanding different social media platforms, types of content and message design.

Keywords: Social media, countering violent extremism, Technology Acceptance Model, attitude, youth

Abstrak: Penyalahgunaan media sosial untuk penyebaran propaganda, keganasan dan extremism telah menjadi suatu isu serius termasuk di Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka amalan penggunaan media sosial dalam kalangan belia dan faktor yang mempengaruhi sikap mereka terhadap keganasan dan ekstremisme dalam media sosial. Bagi mencapai objektif kajian, kaji selidik dalam talian yang melibatkan seramai 400 responden telah dilaksanakan. Dapatan kajian mendapati belia paling menyukai kandungan video, diikuti oleh penulisan, infografik dan gambar. Pencarian maklumat dalam talian terus menjadi antara tujuan utama penggunaan media sosial. Walaupun sikap belia terhadap keganasan dan ekstremisme hanya berada pada tahap sederhana, ia boleh dipengaruhi oleh informasi atau hujah berkualiti, tanggapan kebergunaan dan tanggapan mudah diguna. Mengambil kira kemajuan aplikasi media sosial yang sentiasa berubah, adalah dicadangkan supaya kajian membenteras keganasan dan ekstremisme pada masa hadapan terus menumpukan kepada penggunaan media sosial dalam kalangan belia, terutamanya bagi memahami platform yang berbeza, jenis kandungan dan reka bentuk mesej.

Kata kunci: Media sosial, membenteras keganasan dan ekstremisme, Model Penerimaan Teknologi, sikap, belia

Introduction

In recent years, internet penetration rate in Malaysia has significantly increased (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). In 2020, internet penetration rate in the country was over 93%, a continuous increase throughout the last decade (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2020). Malaysia is also considered to be among the countries with the highest social media penetration in the world, as it was ranked first in Southeast Asia in 2020 at 84%, followed by Singapore (79%), and Thailand (75%) (Moore, 2020). In terms of social media usage frequency, Kemp (2021) reported that, Malaysians in general, spent an average of 9 hours online daily, of which, 3 hours were spent on social media.

Although high internet penetration is a welcome development, the liberating nature of social media opens the possibility for violent extremism to breed. Unlike the traditional media outlets such as television, radio or newspapers that are more expensive, difficult to penetrate into and are operating on mainly one-way communication, social media is a cheaper option, easily accessible to everyone and is offering two-way communication (Apuke, 2016). This makes social media an ideal platform for violent extremist organisations to disseminate messages and engage their target audience (Bender, 2019).

Youth are considered the main target online. This is a major concern as youth aged 13 to 34 consist of over 80% of active social media users in Malaysia (Ismail, Ahmad, Noor & Saw, 2019). In a study to identify the usage of social media among youth in Malaysia, communication and socialisation showed to be the most important purposes online (Yusop & Sumar, 2013). The ease of internet allows continuous and limitless access to information and interactions (Omar, Ismail & Kee, 2017), exposing youth to violent extremist content online.

Over the years, many cases were reported involving the usage of social media for violent extremism and terrorism in Malaysia. These include using social media to promote ideology, radicalise, and to recruit new members (Zolkepli, 2018; Baharudin, 2021). Even though the number of reported cases were relatively small compared to the general population of the country, the threat of violent extremism through the exploitation of social media should not be undermined.

Hence, without thorough understanding of the role of social media towards violent extremism, particularly among youth, it would be difficult for policymakers, researchers and experts to formulate effective strategies to counter such threat. This study therefore, attempted to understand Malaysian youth's social media practices, and the factors that could influence their attitude towards violent extremism.

Social media and violent extremism

The study into the use of social media by violent extremist groups have been gaining ground for many years, particularly with the rise of Daesh (Thompson, 2012; Gill et al., 2017; Ganesh & Bright, 2020). In recent times, authorities and researchers alike have warned of an increased usage of social media by terrorist and violent extremist groups (Ismail,

2020; Crump, 2020). This is owed to the current global pandemic that has led many countries to impose movement control orders, which essentially make people spend more time at home and online (Ismail, 2020; King & Mullins, 2021).

COVID-19 pandemic has not only demonstrated fear of increased usage of social media by violent extremist groups, but it has also been used as a platform to justify violence. The pandemic was exploited by extremist groups from various political spectrums, from the far-left, to the far-right ideologies (Kruglanski, Gunaratna, Ellenberg & Speckhard, 2020). According to a report published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a large number of social media postings were made by the far-right movements to exploit the pandemic situation (Crawford, 2020). Most of the social media postings attempted to link the pandemic with immigration, Islam, Judaism, LGBT community, and the elite society (Crawford, 2020; Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2020).

Although our study did not intend to examine the link between COVID-19 and the use of social media by violent extremist groups, it was nonetheless important to note, how the pandemic has elevated concern on the exploitation of social media, particularly the way how violent extremist groups conducted their activities online (Kruglanski et al., 2020). Thus, it made this study even more relevant, to understand youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.

The usage of social media by violent extremist groups is not only limited to mobilise propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment. It is also used to facilitate activities such as to gain funding, communicate, build networks, and to coordinate attacks (Jawhar, 2016). While violent extremists' usage of social media to promote ideologies is eminent (Von Behr, Reding, Edwards & Gribbon, 2013), its direct influence remains inconclusive. In fact, literature has suggested that the role of social media is merely as a facilitator or enabler vis-a-vis violent extremism, rather than being the direct cause of it (Von Behr et al., 2013; Pauwels et al., 2015; Vermeersch, Coleman, Demuynck and Dal Santo, 2020).

It should be noted that knowledge in this area is still limited. Violent extremism within the new media environment is complex, contextual, fast changing and dynamic (Schomerus, El Taraboulsi-McCarthy & Sandhar, 2017; Hardy, 2018; Holmer, Bauman & Aryaeinejad, 2018). As argued by Seraphin, Frau-Meigs and Hassan (2019), the link between

social media and violent radicalisation is at best limited and still inconclusive, particularly in the field of information and communication sciences. Hence, this present study attempted to address the knowledge gap.

The Malaysian situation

Malaysia also has the experience dealing with cases related to the exploitation of social media by violent extremists, particularly those who have been labelled as suspected terrorists. For instance, in 2018, the Malaysian authorities were reported to monitor more than 3,800 social media accounts believed to be actively promoting extremist ideologies and recruiting terrorists ("Almost 4,000 FB accounts being monitored", 2018). It was also reported that, 240 individuals were arrested, while 800 social media accounts were blocked to curb the spread of militant ideologies in the country ("Almost 4,000 FB accounts being monitored", 2018).

Lim (2018) reported that, a series of counter-terrorism operation in the country saw the arrests of suspected terrorists, including a 17-year-old student. The minor planned to conduct attacks on churches, Hindu temples and entertainment outlets using Molotov cocktails (Lim, 2018). While it was not clear how the minor was radicalised, he exploited different social media platforms to upload warning videos of his terror plots to groups with links to Daesh (Lim, 2018). In a separate news report, a housewife was nabbed for her alleged plot to ramp into non-Muslim voters during the 2018 Malaysian General Election (Chew, 2018). Prior to her arrest, she recruited 10 followers using different social media platforms (Chew, 2018).

McLuhan's (1967) proposition of the creation of global village, which characterises social media and the way how it gets people connected, presents both opportunities and threats (Arriagada & Ibanez, 2020; Pennycook, Bear, Collins & Rand, 2020). For instance, there were cases in Malaysia involving individuals who tried to seek spiritual knowledge for transformation on social media, only to get connected with violent extremists and terrorists who then radicalised them (Mohamad, 2020).

While the Malaysian authorities remain vigilant and are committed towards weakening the threats of violent extremism and terrorism in the country, the danger is far from over. The 'post-Daesh' misconception that

leads to the thinking that the threat of violent extremism and terrorism has weakened is naïve and overly simplistic (Sinatra, 2020). According to Jawhar (2020), propaganda, radicalisation process, recruitment and networking are still actively taking place in Malaysia and throughout the region by utilising various communication spheres, making the danger even more difficult to identify.

Understanding attitude towards violent extremism on social media

In this study, we employed the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) to aid understanding on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media. TAM which originated from the Theory of Reason Action (TRA), underlines the fundamental premise that, technological acceptance is influenced by two integral factors; perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) (Davis, 1989). According to Davis (1989), PU refers to one's own belief that using a new technology would help to improve job performance, taking into consideration its advantages and disadvantages, while, PEOU emphasises on how a new technology would help to make job performance easier.

Based on TAM and the earlier studies related to the role of social media in facilitating violent extremism (Von Behr et al., 2013; Zolkepli, 2018; Baharudin, 2021), the following hypotheses were tested:

> *H1 PU has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.*

> *H2 PEOU has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.*

TAM as a standalone model, is very robust in predicting one's acceptance of new technologies (Weerasinghe & Hindagolla, 2017). However, it is limited to the functional factors only based on PU and PEOU (Legris, Ingham & Collerette, 2003). Due to this limitation, many studies have extended TAM by incorporating other external variables to make it more comprehensive (Legris et al., 2003; Van Eeuwen, 2017; Jimenez, Garcia, Violante, Marcolin & Vezzetti, 2021). In regard to this present study, we included two other variables which are, the information/argument quality and perception towards violent extremism.

Information/argument quality was a source factor derived from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). It refers to the quality of a social

media message and how it can influence one's attitude and behavior (Winter, 2019). According to Lee (2017), information/argument quality can help to improve the persuasion of a social media message, and more importantly influence attitude and behaviour. Based on this premise, the following hypothesis was tested:

> *H3 Information/argument quality has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.*

Perception towards violent extremism was another variable included in this study. It generally refers to how youth regard violent extremism. This stems from their own knowledge and experience, which can be influenced by a number of social-psychological related causes such as, education level and standards of living (Zinchenko, Perelygina & Zotova, 2016). According to Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey (2016), community's perception towards violent extremism varied and it can be shaped by insecurity feeling, drivers such as poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic issues, and the types of exposure received from the extremist groups. Hence, the following hypothesis was tested:

> *H4 Youth's perception towards violent extremism has a positive and significant effect on their attitude towards violent extremism on social media.*

According to TAM, attitude is crucial in influencing one's behavioural intention towards actual usage of the technology (Davis, 1989; Yang & Yoo, 2004; Sujeet & Jyoti, 2013; Hussein, 2017). Attitude as a psychological concept is defined as an evaluation of any object including ideologies, values and people, which is based on beliefs, emotions and past behaviours. In relation to violent extremism, attitude can be evaluated through the way one endorses or justifies related risky behaviours (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014; Nivette, Eisner & Ribeaud, 2017).

    In regard to this study, we took the starting position by assuming that attitude towards violent extremism was influenced by PU, PEOU, information/argument quality and perception towards violent extremism. Taking into account the discussion on TAM and the other variables, the following framework was proposed (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The proposed framework of the study
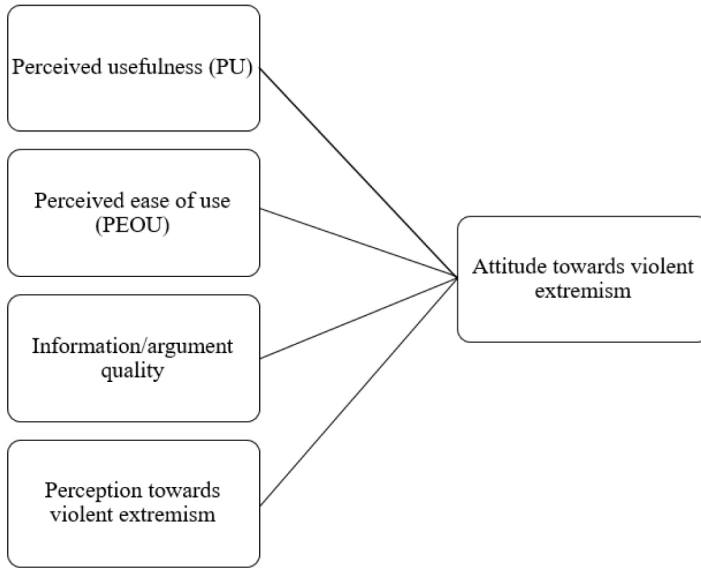
This study addressed the following research objectives:

1. To explore the effect of PU and PEOU on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.
2. To examine the effect of information/argument quality on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.
3. To investigate the effect of youth's perception towards violent extremism on their attitude towards violent extremism on social media.

Research methodology

This study employed the quantitative research method. According to Babbie (1998), a quantitative approach enables a huge population to be reached and described. Specifically, in this study, a cross-sectional online survey was conducted to understand Malaysian youth's social media practices and factors that influence their attitude towards violent extremism on social media.

The main advantage of an online survey is that it allows data collection across geographical location, more manageable and cost effective (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002). In comparison to a longitudinal

study, the findings of a cross-sectional study are not definite. The same study if being conducted at other times and contexts may yield different outcomes (Davies, 1994). The main advantage of such a study is that it allows data to be collected within a short time and different variables to be measured (Davies, 1994).

The instrument development

An online survey was created and distributed using the Survey Monkey application. It was prepared in both Malay and English languages. There were nine categorical variables: age, gender, education, social media experience, duration of usage daily, devices, choice of platforms, types of content and purpose of usage; and five continuous variables: perception towards violent extremism, PU, PEOU, information/argument quality, and attitude towards violent extremism on social media.

Every categorical variable was coded numerically. As for the continuous variables, they were measured using the five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Four measurement items were included in each continuous variable. They were adapted based on past studies related to violent extremism, social media acceptance and usage and TAM (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006; Chen & Lee, 2008; Rauniar, Rawski, Johnson & Yang, 2013; Li & Suh, 2015; Nivette et al., 2017; Dixit & Prakash, 2018). This is demonstrated in Table 1 below.

As proposed by Elangovan and Sundaravel (2021), prior to the actual data collection procedure, the researchers have consulted two panel of experts to assist with the face and content validity of the survey instrument. In addition, a pilot study was carried out to measure the reliability of the survey instrument. An online pilot survey involving 50 respondents was conducted. The data from the survey was analysed using the Cronbach's alpha test. This was to ensure the internal consistency of the survey instrument.

The accepted value for Cronbach's alpha test as proposed by Cooper and Schindler (2008) is 0.700 and above. Greater score of Cronbach's alpha value implies higher internal consistency of the construct (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). In regard to the instrument of this study, each construct was measured above 0.700, hence they were accepted. This is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Variables and Measurement Items

Perception on violent extremism		
No.	Items	Sources
1	It is necessary to react by showing anger against injustice.	Nivette et al., (2017)
2	It is not wrong to have violent radical ideas as long as they remain as thoughts and not actions.	
3	Sometimes people have to resort to violence to defend their values, convictions, or religious beliefs.	
4	It is not wrong to support groups that use violence to fight injustices.	
PEOU		
No.	Items	Sources
1	Social media is flexible to interact with.	Rauniar, et al., (2013)
2	I find it easy to do many things using social media.	
3	It is not difficult to become skilful at using social media.	
4	Communication is made easy using social media.	
PU		
No.	Items	Sources
1	Using social media enables me to get re-connected with people that matters to my life.	Rauniar, et al., (2013)
2	Social media enhances my communication effectiveness.	
3	Social media makes it easier for me to get the latest news and information.	
4	Social media enables me to get information related to my social group(s).	

Argument/information quality		
No.	Items	Sources
1	It is important that information on social media is convincing and influential.	Bhattacherjee & Sanford, (2006); Chen & Lee, (2008); Li & Suh, (2015)
2	I prefer social media information that is emotionally appealing.	
3	I like social media information that is intellectually engaging.	
4	I like social media content that is attractive and visually appealing.	
Attitude towards violent extremism on social media		
No.	Items	Sources
1	Social media is a good platform for me to find friends who share similar views as I do.	Rauniar, et al., (2013); Dixit & Prakash (2018)
2	Social media is useful for me to get information related to injustices around the world.	
3	Social media is a useful platform to communicate with other members of my social group(s).	
4	I find myself to be easily influenced by social media postings, including those that promote violence in the name of faith and religion.	

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Results Based on the Pilot Study Data

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
Perception on violent extremism	0.769
PEOU	0.808
PU	0.743
Argument/information quality	0.747
Attitude towards VE	0.742

The sample

The data collection procedure involved 400 respondents. They were Malaysians, aged 18-34. The rationale for choosing respondents aged

18-34 was supported by past studies that reported, youth made up the vast majority of social media users (Ahmad & Ismail, 2016; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The sample size was decided using sampling calculator, based on the Malaysian population of over 33 million people. It also took into consideration the 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. Convenience sampling was employed in this study, mainly due to its flexibility which allows individuals who fit the criteria of the study to participate (Fricker, 2008).

The procedure

Call for participation in this study was advertised on social media. Specifically, the study was advertised in various social media groups and communities. This included promoting the study on Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Potential respondents who fulfilled the criteria of the study were invited to participate in the online survey. The criteria to participate in the online survey were; the respondents must be Malaysians, 18-34 years old and have at least one year of social media experience.

Consent for participation was sought before the start of the survey. The respondents were made aware that their participation was voluntary and they had the opportunity to quit at any time before the survey was submitted. Once the survey was submitted, it was no longer possible to identify the respondents and their responses due to the anonymity. There was no identifiable information included in the survey. Participation in the online survey took approximately 15-20 minutes.

Findings and discussion

Demographic characteristics

A huge majority of the respondents who participated in this study were Malays (88.2%), followed by Chinese (7.8%), Indian (3%) and others (1%). The large number of Malay ethnic respondents was expected, considering that the survey may possibly be shared on online platforms where participants are predominantly Malays. The lack of participation among respondents from other ethnic groups is addressed in the limitations and suggestions for future studies section.

Table 3: Demographic Findings

Item	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity	Malay	353	88.2
	Chinese	31	7.8
	Indian	12	3
	Others	4	1
Age	18-24	215	53.9
	25-34	184	46.2
Gender	Male	165	41.4
	Female	234	58.6
Education	Postgraduate qualification	53	13.3
	Bachelor's degree	224	56.1
	Diploma	94	23.6
	School certificate	28	7

In term of the respondents' age, 53.9% of them were 18-24 years old, while, the remaining 46.2% aged 25-34. Female made up 58.6% of the respondents, while male respondents consisted the remaining 41.4%. As for the respondents' highest educational qualification, 56.1% had bachelor's degree, 23.6% diploma, 13.3% postgraduate degree and the remaining 7% had school certificate. The demographic findings are presented in Table 3.

Social media practices

Most of the respondents of this study (92.5%) had more than 5 years of experience using social media, 6% had between 3-4 years using social media and the remaining 1.5% had 2 years or less experience. In terms of their duration of social media usage daily, 44.3% used social media more than 4 hours daily, 24% between 3-4 hours, 18.5% between 2-3 hours and the remaining 13.3% used it for less than 2 hours.

Table 4: Social Media Experience, Duration of Usage and Device

Item	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Social media experience	5 years >	370	92.5
	3-4 years	24	6
	< 2 years	6	1.5

Duration of usage daily	4 hours>	177	44.3
	3-4 hours	96	24
	2-3 hours	74	18.5
	<2 hours	53	13.3
Device	Mobile phone	391	97.8
	Other devices	9	2.25

Most of the respondents (97.8%) indicated that they accessed social media mainly using smartphone. The remaining 2.25% used other devices such as laptop, personal computer and tablet. The findings related to the respondents' social media experience, duration of usage daily and their devices are reported in Table 4.

This study found that the respondents most frequently used WhatsApp (49%), followed by Instagram (20.3%), Twitter (11.5%), Facebook (10%), YouTube (6%) and others (3.25%). In term of their preferred types of content on social media, 35.6% preferred video, written content (26.1%), infographic (13.3%), image (12%), video story (7.3%) and others (5.8%). The findings related to the respondents' most frequently social media platforms and their preferred types of content are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Respondents' Preferred Social Media Platforms and Types of Content

Item	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Social media platform	WhatsApp	196	49
	Instagram	81	20.3
	Twitter	46	11.5
	Facebook	40	10
	YouTube	24	6
	Others	13	3.25
Preferred types of content	Video	142	35.6
	Written content	104	26.1
	Infographic	53	13.3
	Image	49	12
	Video story	29	7.3
	Others	23	5.8

Respondents in the 18-24 age group preferred Instagram, while those in the 25-34 age group favoured Facebook and Twitter more. A closer examination using chi-square analysis found that there was a significant relation between respondents' age and their choice of frequently used social media platforms $X^2(1, N = 400) = 9.581, p < .05$. The finding is presented in Table 6. However, a separate examination revealed that there was no significant relation between respondents' gender and highest education qualification with their choice of social media platforms.

Table 6: Chi-square Test – The Most frequently
Used Social Media Platforms According to Age

	Value	**Df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	9.581[a]	7	.024
Likelihood Ratio	10.121	7	.182
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.468	1	.063
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 4 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.

Chi-square test was also conducted to examine the respondents' preferred types of social media content with their age, gender and highest education level. The results revealed that, there was a significant relation between respondents' age and their preferred social media content $X^2 (1, N = 400) = 28.218, p < .05$. This finding is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Chi-square Test – Preferred Types of
Social Media Content According to Age

	Value	**df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	28.218[a]	8	.018
Likelihood Ratio	8.605	8	.377
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.740	1	.053
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 6 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.

Table 8: Chi-square Test – Preferred Types of Content
According to Education Qualifications

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.300a	32	.038
Likelihood Ratio	40.841	32	.136
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.976
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 28 cells (62.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Similarly, there was a significant relation between respondents' preferences of social media content and their level of education X^2 (1, N = 400) = 37.3, p < .05. The respondents with higher education qualifications (postgraduate and bachelor levels) preferred written content more, while those with lower education qualifications (diploma and school certificate) liked video content. The chi-square test finding is presented in Table 8.

A significant relation was also reported between respondents' preferences of social media content and gender X^2 (1, N = 400) = 18.849, p < .05. It was found that, a bigger percentage of male respondents (42.4%) preferred video content compared to female (30.8%). On the contrary, more female respondents (28.6%) preferred written content compared to male (22.4%). The chi-square test finding is reported in Table 9.

Table 9: Chi-square Test – Preferred Types of Social
Media Content According to Gender

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.849a	8	.016
Likelihood Ratio	19.520	8	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.509	1	.061
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 7 cells (38.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .41.

When probed on their main purpose for using social media, it was found that 50% of the respondents used it to get the latest news and information, 21.5% for entertainment, 11.5% to share information with

family and friends, 7.3% to build and maintain relationship, 6.8% for learning and the remaining 3% for other purposes. This is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Purposes for Using Social Media

Purpose	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
To get the latest news/information	200	50
Entertainment	86	21.5
Sharing of information	46	11.5
Building/maintaining relationship	29	7.3
Learning	27	6.8
Other purposes	12	3

Factors influencing youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media

The findings revealed that, youth respondents who participated in this study had a moderate attitude towards violent extremism on social media (M = 3.50, SD = .585). Breakdown of findings for the four independent variables tested showed that PEOU recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.08, SD = .588), followed by information/argument quality (M = 3.43, SD = .632), PU (M = 3.32, SD = .764) and perception towards violent extremism (M = 2.45, SD = .854).

Next, we conducted the multiple linear regression statistical analysis to measure each variable and their relationship with attitude towards violent extremism on social media. All four independent variables were entered and analysed simultaneously to identify the main predictor for attitude towards violent extremism on social media.

The findings presented in Table 11 indicate that, information/argument quality, (p = <.001, b = .600), PU (p = <.001, b = .283) and PEOU (p = <.001, b = .112) were significant predictors for attitude towards violent extremism on social media, R^2 = .426, F (3,395) = 97.51, p < .05. However, perception was not found to be a significant predictor for attitude (p = .461, b = .026).

Table 11: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis of factors influencing attitude towards violent extremism on social media				
Variables	Attitude			
	B^a	β^b	t	Sig. (p-value)
Perception	.018	.026	.739	.461
PEOU	.128	.112	3.386	.001
PU	.221	.283	6.664	.000
Information/ argument quality	.348	.600	8.802	.000
R^2	.426			
Adjusted R^2	.421			
F	97.51			

Based on the findings of the multiple linear regression analysis conducted, this study supported Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3, while Hypothesis 4 was not supported. This is summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Hypothesis Testing Result

Hypothesis	Result
PU has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.	Supported
PEOU has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.	Supported
Information/argument quality has a positive and significant effect on youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media.	Supported
Youth's perception towards violent extremism has a positive and significant effect on their attitude towards violent extremism on social media.	Not supported

Discussion

Social media continues to be important for youth. Increased frequency of social media usage among youth lead to enhanced exposure of violent extremist information. Even though it was argued that exposure to violent extremism on social media does not directly translate to individuals being radicalised (Conway, 2017), it still needs to be treated with caution, considering that social media can help to facilitate the

radicalisation process (START, 2018). Continuous exposure to the
extremists' content leads to increased consumption, dissemination of
information and communication with the extremists (START, 2018).

This study found that WhatsApp and Instagram were favoured more
compared to Facebook and Twitter. A closer examination revealed,
younger respondents who were in the 18-24 age category preferred
Instagram more, while those in the 25-34 age category favoured
Facebook and Twitter. This finding is similar to Alhabash and Ma
(2017) who reported that, Instagram is preferred more by younger social
media users due to the motivations provided such as entertainment,
social interaction and convenience. This study also suggested that
youth preferred video content the most, followed by written content,
infographic and images. This, however, does not imply that visual is
more important than verbal. Instead, both visual and verbal elements
are equally important, as social media preferences can be influenced
by various considerations including personality traits (Mwaba, Saini &
Abratt, 2017).

It is also worth noting that youth's preferences of social media
platforms and types of content are influenced by gender, age and
educational qualifications. For instance, when compared between
genders, it was found that male respondents liked video content more,
while female respondents preferred written content. This is explained
by Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) who indicated that the usage of social
media between genders may differ in terms of liking and practices.

Information seeking continues to be the main purpose for accessing
social media. This particular finding echoed the literature (Wok, Idid &
Misman, 2012; Hamat, Embi & Hassan, 2012; Baboo, Pandian, Prasad,
& Rao, 2013; Yin, Agostinho, Harper, & Chicaro, 2014). Youth's
preferences to consume quick stories and to get insider information on
social media, particularly during crisis situation (Ismail et al., 2019),
open the possibility for extremists' exploitation (Kruglanski, et al.,
2020). This also led to misinformation and disinformation of news on
social media which can create confusion (Close, 2021).

PU, PEOU and information/argument quality were found to be
crucial factors that can influence youth's attitude towards violent
extremism on social media. This was explained by Gerrand (2020)
who indicated that, a conducive environment, including the easy-

to-use social media technology can encourage youth towards violent extremism. In addition, we found that information/argument quality to be the strongest factor that could influence attitude towards violent extremism. According to Machdar (2019), information/argument quality is important as it can influence other relating factors with regard to the usage of social media.

This study reported that perception towards violent extremism is not a crucial factor in influencing youth's attitude towards violent extremism on social media. This is partly explained by Charkawi, Dunn and Bliuc (2021) who indicated that perceived injustice does not necessarily lead to support towards violent extremism. In fact, social identity, sense of belonging and resilience are more crucial indicators that can influence one's support towards violent extremism (Charkawi et al., 2021).

In regard to the use of TAM in this study, PU and PEOU have provided useful lens to understand youth's usage of social media and their attitude towards violent extremism on social media. However, TAM as an information system theory alone is not adequate to explain the behavioural and relational factors that could also influence youth's social media adoption. Hence, a more holistic understanding of new technology acceptance needs to consider not only the functional factors, but also the psychological factors which require the extension of TAM (Park, Kim & Ohm, 2015).

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

While this study has provided useful preliminary understanding on Malaysian youth's social media practices and their attitude towards violent extremism, it also has limitations that should be acknowledged and addressed.

This study mainly involved Malay respondents. Low participation among respondents from other ethnic groups was due to limited advertisement of the study and restricted distribution of the survey. This study which was conducted as part of an international collaboration short term research project had to consider suitable sampling method and recruitment strategy based on the available resources. Even though the quality of this study in general was not impacted as it was not meant to explore ethnicity, it is proposed that future studies consider a more inclusive participation among respondents from different ethnic groups

based on the demographics of the country. This is to provide a more balanced representation based on the country's ethnic composition.

It should also be noted that the findings of this study could not be generalised. Hence, future studies that aim to explore further on youth's social media practices and their attitude towards violent extremism can consider using probability sampling method that provides equal opportunity for the population to be part of sample for the study (Taherdoost, 2016). Probability sampling can help to minimise bias and enable generalisability of research findings (Taherdoost, 2016).

In addition, this study also has a number of important suggestions related to developing a more thorough understanding on youth's social media practices, factors that influence their support towards violent extremism and how to counter the threat online. First, it is proposed that future studies address further on youth's preferences of the types of social media content. In order for future countering violent extremism programs on social media to be successful, knowledge of the various types of content to be used for different audiences is necessary (Lua, 2021).

Second, as shown in this study, information/argument quality is an important factor that can influence attitude towards violent extremism on social media. Hence, future studies on countering violent extremism need to develop a deeper understanding on the social media message design aspect. The message design aspect is crucial to ensure the success of countering violent extremism campaign on social media (Bodine-Barone, Marrone, Helmus & Schlang, 2020).

Third, it is proposed that future studies adopt alternative methods including the projective research techniques. As violent extremism is a sensitive topic, respondents may possibly be more careful when answering direct questions pertaining to the issue during survey or interviews. Projective techniques which aim to unravel true feelings among respondents can help to overcome this problem. In fact, the application of projective techniques is not new, especially in psychology, marketing and crime related research (Garb, Wood & Nezworski, 2000; Piotrowski, 2015).

Last, it should be understood that social media practices are dynamic and constantly changing. Hence, it is important that new studies

continue to be conducted to understand the usage pattern in relation to violent extremism. In Malaysia, the extremists would initially reach out to their target audience using open social media platforms with the aim of maximising reach (Yasin, 2017). This is followed up by a more private communication, mainly targeting selected individuals to radicalise (Yasin, 2017). As pointed out by Jani (2017), despite recent crackdowns, the extremists continue to use social media to spread their ideologies online and this remains a huge threat to the nation (Jawhar, 2020).

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Should Heterogeneity Matter? The Case of Malaysia: Evaluating Public Service Motivation in a Non-Homogenous Society

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Abstract: Drawing works on Public Service Motivation (PSM), heterogeneity and institutions, this article suggests that in assessing an individual's PSM and chances of joining the public service, ethnic heterogeneity matters. It matters because while personal attributes – like education, personal values and identity, political beliefs, socialisation – are important in determining one's public service motivation, an ethnically heterogeneous environment with the potential of producing numerous types of exclusive institutions can influence one's perception of the public service, alter one's motivation to serve in the public service or even determine one's chances of joining the civil service. This study is based on interviews among 28 officers who were attending training at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study found that ethnic heterogeneity influences an individual's perception, motivation and decision to join the public service.

Keywords: Public Service Motivation, Heterogeneity, Institutions, and Malaysia.

Abstrak: Merujuk kepada teori Motivasi Perkidmatan Awam (PSM), faktor kepelbagaian dan institusi, artikel ini mencadangkan bahawa dalam menilai PSM dan peluang individu untuk menyertai perkhidmatan awam, kepelbagaian

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etnik adalah penting. Ia penting kerana walaupun sifat peribadi – seperti pendidikan, nilai peribadi dan identiti, kepercayaan politik, sosialisasi – boleh menentukan motivasi perkhidmatan awam seseorang, persekitaran yang pelbagai seperti latar belakang etnik juga boleh mewujudkan pelbagai jenis institusi eksklusif yang boleh mempengaruhi persepsi seseorang terhadap perkhidmatan awam, mengubah motivasi mereka untuk berkhidmat dalam perkhidmatan awam sekaligus menentukan peluang seseorang untuk menyertai perkhidmatan awam. Kajian ini dijalankan dengan menggunakan kaedah tembubual dengan 28 orang PTD yang sedang menjalankan latihan di Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara (INTAN) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Hasil kajian menunjukkan kepelbagaian etnik mempengaruhi persepsi, motivasi dan keputusan untuk berkhidmat di perkhidmatan awam.

Kata kunci: Motivasi Perkhidmatan Awam, Heterogeniti, Institusi, dan Malaysia.

Introduction

There have been great efforts to identify and examine a special class of motivation – Public Service Motivation (PSM). In layman's term, public service motivation (PSM) can be described as individuals' tendency to serve in public institutions and organisations rather than in the private organisation. Perry and Wise (1990) and later Perry (1996) seminal work that conceptualised and neatly categorised PSM into various dimensions, triggered many works that addressed various concerns. Some of these include identifying antecedents to PSM such as gender, leadership, age or education (Naff and Crum, 1999; Bright, 2005; DeHart-Davis, Marlowe et al., 2006; Steijn and Leisink, 2006; and Moynihan and Pandey, 2007), examining the influence of social institutions – like family, religion, and profession – on PSM (see (Houston, 2000; Brewer, 2003: and Perry, 2007), examining the relationship between whistleblowing and PSM (Brewer and Selden, 1998) or studying causal link between job satisfaction and PSM (Naff and Crum, 1999).

Despite the extensive efforts, investigations on PSM have intuitively assumed a homogeneous setting. Though there are efforts to examine demographics – like gender, age, educational qualification, professions – with PSM, these works have implicitly assumed that respondents

are guided by the oneness of values or national value and not by disparate cultural, ethnic or religious values (Minkov and Hofstede, 2012). This obviously begs an important question: Does an ethnically heterogeneous setting produce PSM responses that are different from that of homogeneous settings?

We need to ask this question because there is a growing literature – that lies outside the PSM literature – that suggests that heterogeneity can affect the quality of public good delivery. (Sachs and Warner, 1995). Ethnic heterogeneity, for instance, produces social and political division that leads to rent-seeking and inferior policy choices (Easterly and Levine, 1997). Ethnically fragmented societies also tend to post lower social activities (Alesina and Spolaore, 1995; Alesina and La Ferrara, 1999; and La Ferrara and Alesina, 2000) and impede the provision of the public good. There is also work that found a negative relationship between heterogeneity and technical efficiency because of a polarised society (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes et al., 1999). These findings suggest the possibility that individuals raised in institutional silos – ethnically, culturally or religiously – may develop different interpretations of PSM dimensions like "commitment to the public interest," "compassion," "self-sacrifice" or even the idea of "attraction to public policy" which ultimately affect their delivery of the public good.

Another reason to undertake such an exercise is that a quick search on "heterogeneity and PSM" in major journals of public administration produced no result. To be fair, there are works that have alluded to the need to factor heterogeneous considerations (Van der Wal, 2015).

Van der Wal and Yang (2015) two-country study of Dutch and Chinese public sector workers found that Dutch and Chinese bureaucrats had different ideas on what they deemed as "realistic values of bureaucracy." Chinese civil servants, for instance, ranked highly "Chinese political ecology," the "rule of man has more weight than rule of law" or "serve the superior or special group" while their Dutch counterparts were more concerned on public sector management and the idea of efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Chinese civil servants also saw the importance of loyalty, obedience, and propriety; unlike Dutch civil servants who saw independent ideas and innovativeness as important considerations (Van der Wal and Yang, 2015). There are also accomplished scholars on PSM who have increasingly emphasised on the

importance of context and institutions when assessing PSM (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; and Perry and Hondeghem, 2008). They describe, "good science is said to be contextual" and argue, "although PSM is measured at the individual level, it should never be seen apart from its institutional environment." (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; Kim and Vandenabeele, 2010; Moynihan, Vandenabeele et al., 2013; Moynihan, Vandenabeele, Perry and Jens Blom-Hansen, 2013, p. 289; Pandey and Moynihan, 2007, p. 41). Kim and Vandenabeele also alluded to the idea of explaining that PSM is a product of both "individual and societal phenomenon." (Kim and Vandenabeele, 2010; and Vandenabeele, 2010, p. 103).

Does heterogeneity matter when we assess an individual's PSM? If ethnic heterogeneity promotes exclusive institutions – ones that maintain ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity – do such institutions affect how individuals view ideas like "public service," "public good" "community" or "civil service"? Or are individuals guided by a dominant generalised value – the same set of rationality and socio-psycho behaviour – and not coloured by heterogeneous values? Will a heterogeneous environment impose different barriers for individuals that will affect their perception and employment chances in the public service?

To address the above concerns, we examined PSM among higher civil servants in a highly plural or ethnically-heterogeneous society, Malaysia. In-depth interviews were conducted on Malaysia's *Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik* (PTD) or higher civil servants. Content analysis was adopted, and as far as possible, the work employed thick description to obtain greater insights into officers' motivation. To improve the validity of data, interviews were conducted in an iterative manner, where similar questions were remodelled or reframed to ensure consistency of responses. It needs mentioning too that this is an exploratory study – a validation for the need to factor heterogeneity – one where the analysis would inform a larger project on motivation involving higher civil service officers in such setting.

The article is set out as follows. The first part will discuss the concepts used; specifically definitions of public service motivation, heterogeneity, and institutions. The second part will provide a brief description of Malaysia's public administration, the purpose of which is to provide the institutional and historical context to Malaysia's civil

service practice. The next part of the article will explain the methodology used and the details of the research where the paper will discuss the findings of the research.

Putting into context

We define public service motivation (PSM) as "individuals' disposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organisation" (Perry and Wise, 1990). Perry and Wise (1990) describe that PSM can be defined into three categories. The three categories include rational (where individual action is based on utility maximisation); normative (where actions are based on the need to conform to societal norms) and affective (where behaviours are based on an individual's emotional response to social context). This definition is adopted because it subscribes to not only utilitarian reasoning but also imbues the importance of context and socio-psycho behaviour. Despite factoring context, the definition intuitively assumes that an individual's PSM is persuaded by a general consideration of the society and not persuaded by his ethnic identity. Going by this definition, an individual might view his motivation to serve in the public service purely from a utilitarian perspective, that is, in his ability to formulate public policy and hence independent of his ethnic identity. Taking into account such consideration we adopt the hypothesis that:

> *H1: Individual's public service motivation (PSM) in an ethnically heterogeneous society- be they utilitarian, normative and affective – is independent of ethnic identity.*

Besides PSM, there are two other concepts that need addressing – heterogeneity and institutions. By heterogeneity, we mean a society that is plural in nature. We are persuaded by Furnivall (1948) definition where he describes a plural society as "a medley of people" where:

> "…they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals, they meet, but only in the marketplace, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the racial sphere, there is a division of labour along racial lines." (Furnivall 1948, p. 304)

To simplify, Malaysia's "medley of people" can be divided into two groups; indigenous and non-indigenous. Indigenous peoples of Malaysia are known as the *Bumiputeras* (sons of the soil). There are two subcategories within the *Bumiputeras* category. The first, are Malays that form the largest group and the second, are native tribes that together make up about 10-12 percent of the population. The non-indigenous group comprises of the Chinese, Indian and Eurasian or people of mixed percentage. According to the Malaysian census of 2010, the population of Malaysia is made up of 54.6% Malay, 24.6% Chinese, 7.3% Indian and Others 12.8% (mainly other indigenous natives).

Very much in keeping with Furnivall's (1948) definition, Malaysia's "medley of people" are not only culturally heterogeneous but have also developed diverse and highly exclusive institutional setups in the realms of education, recreation, economy, and politics(Furnivall, 1948). Despite 62 years of independence, Malaysians mostly attend different types of schools that are ethnically, linguistically and religiously defined. They go to different places of worship, live in different areas and are concentrated in certain employment sectors. Malays, for instance, dominate the civil service; Malays make up 67 percent of total civil servants, with Chinese making up 20 percent and Indians making up 7 percent. The Chinese, however, dominates Malaysia's private sector. Lim (2013) found that Chinese make up 56 percent of private-sector professionals while they made up only 20 percent of public sector professionals.

While it is impossible to detail Malaysia's heterogeneity given the limited space here, suffice it to say that the country's heterogeneous nature is a product of a number of factors: colonisation, migration, creation of spatially and ethnically defined industrial or employment activities, neglect of nation-building during colonial rule and a segregated and diverse educational institution that persisted even after independence. Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), formed in 1971, perhaps captures the challenges that come with having a highly plural society. While the policy aimed to reduce the economic and social imbalance between indigenous and non-indigenous groups and to eliminate the identification of economic functions to certain groups, the NEP, in fact, deepened ethnic polarisation. Edwards (2005) found out that despite the NEP being successful in reducing overall poverty level, it also ended up producing concentration of groups "in particular

sectors of the economy" (Edwards, 2005, p. 9), one where the private
sector became overly concentrated with non-indigenous population
(Chinese and Indians) and the public sector seeing high concentration
of the indigenous group (Malays).

The heterogeneous nature of Malaysian society is propped by
ethnically-defined institutions, which are products of the country's
historical, political, economic, social development. By institutions,
we mean the set of informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs,
traditions, and codes of conduct) and formal rules (constitutions,
laws, property rights) that facilitate or constraint how societal actors
behave (North 1990). Institutions distinguish between appropriate
and inappropriate, "right "and "wrong," "possible" and "impossible"
actions. They determine social behavioural patterns, roles, rules, values,
ceremonies and they are embedded by way of religion, family and
other social structures that provide order, stability, and predictability to
behaviour (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008, p. 71; March and Olsen, 1989).
Such institutions are maintained through socialisation where individuals
identify themselves with significant others and assume a distinct social
identity in order to become members of the institution (Vandenabeele,
2007, p. 548). Given a heterogeneous setting, socialisation is a powerful
force that preserves and promotes the formation, maintenance, and
distribution of particular institutions. For the purpose of establishing a
basic understanding of PSM in a heterogeneous Malaysian context, we
provide below a short background of the Malaysian civil service.

Background of Malaysia's Public Administration

Malaysia's public administration is a product of centuries of historical,
socio-cultural and institutional experiences. Before British colonial rule,
Malaysia (Malaya) had an elaborate administrative structure, called the
adat Temenggong, where the Malay sultans were both the administrative
head as well as the head of government. British colonial rule brought
a modern professional civil service, one where Malay aristocrats were
reassigned new positions in the professional service and entered the
wage economy for the first time (Siddiquee, 2013).

British indirect rule in Malaya meant British retention of Malay
de jure power (by virtue of Malay rulers being heads of state and
highest authority in the state council), which effectively saw continued
incorporation of Malay considerations in the civil service. Throughout

British colonial rule, the administration catered to the demands of Malay royal houses with the unintended consequence of retaining a Malay character in the bureaucracy. There are many examples of this. In 1910, aristocratic elites demanded that Malays be exposed to the rigours of modern administration, which led to the introduction of an elite service called the Malay Administrative Service (MAS). To ensure that there would be a steady supply of Malay officers in the MAS, the colonial administration established the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) in 1912, a boarding school that catered initially to children of aristocrats.

The twentieth century saw Malay aristocrats demanding more places be provided for Malays in the civil service. There was no objection from the administration mainly because there was indeed the need to engage Malays into the modern sector economy. There was the worry that Malays were not heavily involved in the private sector, unlike non-Malays who were highly represented in the private sector - as workers in the tin mines or agricultural plantations or as traders and professionals (Puthucheary, 1978) and such trend could create underemployment and unemployment (Tilman, 1968). Such was the concern that the British administration imposed a preference policy for the appointment of Malay officers. In 1922 – in the midst of a slump in the global economy - the Retrenchment Commission recommended that the ratio of Malays to the local-born-non-Malays appointment in the civil service be kept to seven Malays to three non-Malays (Roff, 1965). This policy was amended in 1952 where the new ratio was four Malays to one Non-Malay (Haque 2003). Despite having such preference policy Malays only dominated junior positions (Tilman, 1968). At the time of independence in 1957, Malays made up only 14.1% of senior officers compared to non-Malays (which also included many retained British officers) who made up about 24.8% of senior officers (Puthucheary, 1978).

The above historical accounts are important because it provides the background to understanding the present character of the Malaysian civil service. Several themes can be drawn from the above description, for instance, that of the persistence of Malay dominance, the skewed nature of public and private sector employment that is coloured by ethnic considerations or even the increasing returns that come from continued investment in mutually exclusive institutions. While scholars are understandably quick to attribute low non-Malay participation to

the preference policy (four "*Bumiputera*" to one *"non-Bumiputera"*)
the above historical readings also give indications that there are reasons
to believe that non-Malays also prefer the private sector. Alatas (1977),
for instance, points out that the improvement in the economy and the
expansion of the private sector provided non-Malays with lucrative
returns that make joining the public sector a lesser option. Woo's (2014)
more recent analysis confirms the find when she found that the paucity
of non-Malays in the public sector was due to non-Malays opting for the
private sector. Kuan Heong's (2018) latest work also found that given
a choice between private and public sector employment, the majority
of respondents (non-Malays final year university students) would opt
for the private sector. The analysis also found support in Lim's (2013)
earlier findings which found that tertiary-educated Chinese preferred
private sector employment; Chinese in fact made up 56% of private-
sector professionals as compared to 20% of public sector professionals.
The above description informs us of the concerns raised in this study.
We proceed now with the details of the research.

The discussions above – the Malaysian civil service, deliberations
on the idea of heterogeneity and a plural society and the impact of
institutions – raise a number of points that this study will be addressing:
the relevance of ethnic heterogeneity in assessing one's motivation for
public service, the importance of institutions, specifically, the prevalence
of mutually exclusive institutions in shaping one's socialisation
process, perception of the civil service and preference for the particular
employment sector. Taking these concerns, we hypothesise that:

> *H2: In an ethnically- heterogeneous society, one's ethnic
> identity does not determine one's capacity to develop
> public service motivation because every ethnic community
> experiences a similar socialisation process.*
>
> *H3: Perception of the civil service in a heterogeneous society
> is independent of one's ethnic identity.*
>
> *H4: Individual's preference to join the public sector (or
> private sector) is similar between indigenous and non-
> indigenous officers.*

Demographics

Qualitative research was employed to elicit a detailed response from higher civil service officers on their motivations to join the public service. Twenty– eight higher civil servants or *Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD)* or Administrative and Diplomatic Officers were involved. These officers are considered *crème de la crème* of Malaysia's civil service officers as they are targeted to take on important policy roles in the administration. The interviews were conducted in the second quarter of 2017 when the PTD officers were attending a 10-month training at the National Institute of Public Administration or *Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara* (INTAN).

The study chose PTD officers at INTAN because having officers in one setting helped ease administrative challenges. This is because, given the strict civil service code of privacy and confidentiality of data, the administrative procedures needed to obtain the interviews were onerous. The process of obtaining permission for the interviews was challenging and the challenge would be even more should the interviews be carried on officers spread in the various ministries and agencies.

Purposive sampling was carried out. We requested that INTAN provide the maximum number of non-indigenous officers available given that there were only 40 (11%) non-indigenous officers (non-Malays) among the 378 officers in the cohort attending training. Thirty officers were initially requested – 10 each from the major ethnic groups. The non-indigenous group was split into two subgroups – Indian and Chinese officers. For indigenous officers, officers were chosen on a random basis due to their large numbers. In all, 28 officers agreed to participate in the interview, giving a response rate of 93 percent. Out of the 28 officers, 18 were non-indigenous officers, nine Chinese and nine Indian officers. Each interview lasted about one hour. The interviews took six months to complete and were all conducted on the INTAN campus.

Out of the 28 respondents, 16 had worked in the private sector, eight had worked in the public sector as non-PTD officers, two had previously worked in not-for-profit organisations and two had no job experience prior to joining the scheme. The eight respondents who had previously worked in the public sector held normal officer positions and were not under the PTD scheme. Only one respondent did not have any work

experience. With regards to qualifications, nine have Masters Degrees, two have PhDs with the rest having bachelor's degrees.   Besides academic qualifications, three of the respondents were holders of the Perdana Fellowship. This is a six -month fellowship scheme where top young graduates would shadow ministers to gain first-hand experience on matters of policymaking. Among the 28 respondents, 10 were also government scholars. These officers were given scholarships to study at the undergraduate level at reputed overseas universities where upon graduation they are required to serve a bond with the Malaysian public service for five years. From the interviews, we found that the five-year bond is not strictly adhered to. Officers spoke of friends who were government scholars but who chose not to return home. The officers said that this was possible because there had been no legal cases brought by the government against bond breakers. We turn now to the specifics of the interviews.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were employed. Six questions were posed to the 28 PTD officers. The questions were designed to provide a comprehensive universe of motivations that guided officers' choice of employment. Additional questions were also asked. In carrying out the follow-up questions, prompts and probes were used, keeping in mind officers' various motivations and their relevance to issues of heterogeneity. To ensure consistency of responses an iterative method was adopted. This is when at the "end" of the interview, the recorder was turned off and at this point, the interviewer would pose the same six questions - with slight variances or reframing - for the purpose of validating respondents' earlier taped responses. We discuss now the details of the findings.

Findings

The six questions were broad questions that asked respondents on what it means to make a positive difference to society, the reasons for people to do good, the dimensions of public service motivation (PSM) that best reflect their choice of joining the service, their motivations to join the higher civil service and the people who have been instrumental in making them consider the scheme. There are also questions on officers' past employment sectors and working experience as well as their assessment of the experience applying for the scheme. The purpose

of doing so was not only to examine different aspects of motivation of these officers but also to find out the relevance of heterogeneity as an important consideration when assessing public service motivation among individuals in a highly plural society.

Content analysis was carried out. We used two broad categories from which to understand the relevance of heterogeneity to an individual's motivation. The first category was on individuals' sense of public duty or service *(H1)*. Here we examined the text responses of the two groups of officers – indigenous and non-indigenous – by noting words associated with public duty or service and examining whether there is a significant difference in responses between the two groups. The second category was to examine the significance of institutions in a heterogeneous setting. To examine the impact of institutions, we test out the three hypotheses *(H2, H3, and H4)*. Socialisation, perception of the civil service, and the perception of the attractiveness of employment sectors served as proxies to measuring institutions. They helped us analysed the text and sort out words that best capture the impact of institutions. To find out the impact of institutions and heterogeneity, we then compared the responses of the two groups – indigenous and non-indigenous officers. We look now at the findings for what it means to do "good for society."

The different meanings of doing "good for society."

We found that there are distinct responses from both indigenous and non-indigenous officers. For example, when assessing responses to what it meant "to do good and to make a positive difference to society," indigenous officers and non-indigenous gave varied responses. All indigenous officers except for one respondent talked of the need to provide for the greater society. One indigenous officer, for example, considered himself "as ambassador to improve public policies…make a positive impact on people's life." Another officer spoke of "social causes" and "to make Malaysia better." Another officer pointed to serve for the larger interest and "moving forward as one people (Malaysians)." Another officer talked about improving "the way people work in the government sector." Another indigenous officer mentioned the "idea that you are serving the society …is a strong motivator" and "I view Malaysians as my customers." The only exception was the response from one officer who highlights he served because "part of it is because of religion and ...another part is because of patriotism."

The responses from non-indigenous officers were slight nuanced. While all spoke about wanting to serve society, they also emphasised the need for them to serve their specific community. One non-indigenous officer remarked that "I once told a panel of interviewers that the number of Chinese in this sector is so small" and he told the interviewers that he wanted "to make some changes to improve my community." Another of the non-indigenous PTD officers remarked one of her reasons to join the PTD was "… helping the community. Indian population size is very small (less than 7%). I feel if I am there, I would be able to help my community." She also mentioned the perks of being in such a service because "…the power is so immense. This is not being racist. I tend to see it from an angle, if you are a Malay, you give back to your community and uplift. If the Chinese get to do for their society and uplift and Indians (also) get to do."

Besides asking the officers about making a positive difference, the officers were asked to identify a particular dimension of public service motivation that best fit them after being briefed on each dimension of PSM. Charlie, a non-indigenous respondent pointed to "attraction to policymaking." He chose the dimension because as an activist and has worked for a not-for-profit organisation he felt that his community (Indian) needed the most help. He elaborated that:

> "I was very active in a movement to help my race in applying to public universities… my community did not get a place in public universities because many of them sent incomplete documents that fail to secure them a place in public universities… After years of effort in the movement, I can see an increase in numbers of my race in the public universities."

Another non-indigenous officer chose the "ability to influence public policies" reasoning that:

> "It is my dream to work in the public sector because there is so little percentage of Chinese in the bureaucracy. I am not racist but if I am in the system, I can lead my community."

Another non-indigenous respondent also shared the need to help his community pointing out that:

> "Indian population size is very small…I would be able to help my community and at the same time help in whichever department I am posted to."

The responses from indigenous officers contrasted with that of non-indigenous officers. Unlike non-indigenous officers, indigenous officers used general terms like "serve the nation," "responsibility to society" or "the need to think of others." Three indigenous respondents cited compassion as a prime motivator. One officer pointed out that "as a decision-maker in public policy, I will make sure that I will identify other people's need and it is my responsibility to serve our nation." Another officer pointed to the need "to help people because coming from a non-privilege background" he did not know "the right channel to communicate the need." Another officer chose "commitment to public value" as he felt that "as a public servant, I feel that I need to think for others and everyone around me in terms of public values." One indigenous officer, however, took exception to the remarks posted by other indigenous officers. The officer chose "attracting to public policy" because he felt that the dimension best reflected the need to change the life of his "people." The respondent came from an indigenous tribe in Sabah and felt that "once I am in a position to influence public policy, I will look into some loopholes…especially the lack of public transport in rural areas in Sabah. We need to revamp this policy."

The responses generally affirm that when it comes to delivering the public good, officers in a heterogeneous environment had a varied idea of who the beneficiaries are. While indigenous officers – in general targeted the larger community, the choices made by non-indigenous officers were more qualified and directed toward serving specific communities, not just the larger society. The responses indicate that in a heterogeneous setting, evaluating PSM needs qualification. There is every likelihood that "serving the public" could mean serving the public in general as it is about serving a specific community. We turn now to another important aspect of the study – the role of institutions in influencing or determining an individual's public service motivation.

Institutional quality and heterogeneity.

If institutions determine social behavioural patterns, roles, rules, values, ceremonies and are embedded by way of religion, family and other social structures that provide order, stability, and predictability to behaviour (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008, p. 71), then the responses given by the PTD officers demonstrate the huge influence that institutions exact on individual's PSM. As mentioned above, we used three subcategories

or proxies to measure the impact of institutions on an individual's motivation for public services. The proxies are – socialisation, views of the civil service and choice of employment sector (H2, H3, and H4 respectively).

The responses demonstrate the significance of exclusive institutions when examining one's motivation to serve in public service. We found that indigenous and non-indigenous officers underwent different socialisation process that ultimately influenced their decision to serve in the civil service. Seven out of eight indigenous officers mentioned that they joined the PTD scheme because of primary socialisation. The officers mentioned having parents, siblings, spouse or friends who were public servants. Some officers remarked that they knew of jobs in public service from an early age because they had either parent, husband, cousins who are PTD officers.

The responses from non-indigenous officers were different. Unlike indigenous officers where primary socialisation was instrumental, non-indigenous officers noted that they joined the service because of secondary socialisation. The officers said that if they were to rely on primary socialisation, they would not have considered the public service. The officers said that this is because they did not find encouragement to join the civil service from people close to them. They only knew about the civil service and decided to join the PTD scheme from secondary socialisation – from university lecturers, supervisors and university friends. In fact, fourteen out of eighteen non-indigenous respondents mentioned that their family members did not support their application to be PTD officers. They said that their loved ones did not see a career in public service as something worth pursuing and urged them instead to join the private sector for better pay and career opportunities or even seek overseas employment. One respondent, for instance, remarked that "my parents did not agree with my decisions to be part of this scheme…my father thinks that I deserve a better job than working for the government and my mother was telling me that I could go further by staying away from Malaysia."

One officer only got to know about the PTD scheme after clinching a government scholarship. Another officer said that "I only know about this scheme when I was appointed as Perdana fellow." She went to say that being a Perdana fellow and having to work alongside a minister was

an eye-opener that gave her a better appreciation of the inner workings of the civil service. Another non-indigenous officer remarked on the importance of secondary socialisation saying that "being a Perdana fellow informed me of the PTD and other civil service schemes... Before this, I did not know." Only one non-indigenous officer took an exception. The officer mentioned that her early exposure to the life of a civil servant prompted her to opt for the scheme. She said "Back then when my mum who was working in the Agricultural office, we used to spend time in her office after school. That was the time when I saw the ADO (Administrative Officer) now called PTD... the ADOs were very friendly and warm to us…At that point, I knew that I would love to be working in the public sector."

The powerful impact of institutions in a heterogeneous setting is also reflected when we probed the officers for their views of the PTD scheme and their experience applying for the scheme. The question was aimed to test H3, which is to gauge officers' perception of the civil service and their assessment of the fairness of the selection process in the civil service given the common views of discriminatory hiring practices. Nearly all non-indigenous officers - eighteen out of twenty non-indigenous respondents - said that they secured a place in the scheme on their first attempt.

The officers, however, acknowledged that they had initial reservations when they applied for the scheme. All of them thought that securing a job in the public sector was going to be difficult. After successfully completing the selection process, one non-indigenous officer remarked that the low number was because of perception, saying that "Initially, I was sceptical, but I tried. I was the only one in my family who applied for this scheme and surprised that I was selected." She elaborated that "People of my race perceived the government jobs very negatively. They always assume that they will not be given a chance to join the scheme, but no one applied. This proved that the system is fair and we (Chinese) never tried applying for government jobs but claimed that the system is unfair." Another non-indigenous officer, also gave a similar assessment, mentioning that there was a common perception that non-indigenous applicants would not get a place in the scheme. She reiterated that "I think those (non-indigenous applicants) who apply stand a better chance of getting it because the numbers are so small. I know. I am Indian, but it is true. They don't apply." Another respondent,

a graduate from an American university gave a similar remark saying that "Our people do not know a lot about government jobs because the pay is low. My parents think I should work in the private sector and earn more money because I am a US graduate."

The ease in gaining a place in the PTD scheme for non-indigenous officers contrasted with that experienced by the indigenous group. Indigenous officers felt that the recruitment process was far more stringent. Only two indigenous respondents secured a place in the scheme on their first attempt, five indigenous respondents secured the place after attempting twice and one respondent who got into the scheme on his third attempt.

The different responses from both non-indigenous and indigenous demonstrate the significance of exclusive institutions in shaping an individual's perception of hiring practices in the civil service. Malaysia's social, historical and political experiences have created exclusive institutions, one where the perception of the civil service – discriminatory or otherwise – is determined along the ethnic dimension. Left unchallenged the propagation of these institutions could well deter individuals with latent PSM from joining the public service.

We also asked respondents on their choice of the public sector and their experience of past employment sectors. This question test H4, which is to measure the impact institutions have on an individual's employment chances in a different sector. We ask this because there is a lot of work in the literature, described above, that suggests that Malaysia's employment sector is highly segregated along the ethnic dimension.

On broad terms, there is no distinct difference between non-indigenous and indigenous officers when it comes to reasons to join the service; all officers displayed an almost similar mix of PSM. Indigenous officers, for example, cited highly on items like "job security," "challenging job content," "high salary," "helping others" and "accomplishing something worthwhile." Among the non-indigenous group, Chinese officers rated highly items like, "job security," "and a job that is useful to society," "career development," "prestige and status." Among the non-indigenous, Indian officers rated highly on items like, "helping others," "job that is useful to society," "prestige and status."

Despite the broad similarities, indigenous officers however listed "high salary" as the most important consideration when choosing the public sector. This is in contrast with that of non-indigenous officers. When probed, most indigenous officers said that the public sector pay was more attractive than the private sector. While they displayed the need to serve "society or Malaysians in general," they also commented that one reason for them joining the public service was because of the difficulty of getting employment in the private sector. Indigenous officers who had the experience of working in the private sector cited "low pay" and "discrimination' in the private sector. Some added that it was the frustration of not getting a well-paying and rewarding career in the private sector that drove them to consider the public sector. One officer, who holds a Ph.D., told of her difficult experience working in the private sector that eventually forced her to seek public sector employment. She remarked that "There is bias in the private sector." She said that "I was treated and paid differently. In my experience, one private sector that prefers non-Malays paid a consultant with lower academic qualification (with a degree). He was paid more RM2000 a month when I was paid lower than RM2000 with a Master's degree." Another respondent who was a tax auditor in the private sector for four years mentioned that it was, "racial discrimination in terms of pay and job position," which forced her to leave for a public sector job. Another indigenous officer mentioned that joining the PTD scheme was a better option because he faced discrimination in the private sector when it came to job scope and pay and that he was not able to get a job that matched his qualifications in law and governance. One officer mentioned that despite being a degree holder, she held the position of administrative clerk for four years in the private sector, mentioning that "racial discrimination in terms of pay and job position" made her choose the public sector. Another respondent, who used to work as a chemist in a private firm for two years cited "challenging job scope" and "low pay" as her reason to quit the private sector.

The responses contrasted with those of non-indigenous officers who rated private sector perks as more attractive than the public sector. Discrimination in the private sector was not mentioned by non-indigenous officers. In fact, all non-indigenous officers felt that the private sector gave an attractive salary. They cited that the reason that they left their private job for the public sector was because of non-monetary benefits.

For the non-indigenous officers, many felt that the private sector was attractive but chose the public sector because it gave them the opportunity to serve the larger society and not narrow private interest. One non-indigenous officer gave the reason that although the salary and "job position" (private sector) were good, "I am only contributing to one organisation. Another officer mentioned that she worked for a private investment bank upon graduation but left after two weeks, saying that it was not her calling, even though the pay was competitive. She mentioned that her experience working with policymakers as a Perdana fellow gave her a new perspective of the public service pointing out that "I admire higher civil service officer's role in the public service... They put in so much effort in their duties to improve public service delivery…The monthly allowance (Perdana fellowship) is high for a fresh graduate." There were other non-indigenous officers who wanted to join the scheme to "try-out." One officer who spent two years as an engineer with an oil and gas company said he chose the PTD scheme to explore different job scope. Another respondent (non-indigenous) who used to work for a not-for-profit (NGO) organisation, mentioned that even though the work culture and remuneration in the NGO were good, he chose the public sector because working in an NGO gave him limited power to improve the quality of life and deliver quality public good.

The responses above demonstrate the powerful impact of institutions in influencing one's employment option. Clearly, the responses show that the Malaysian employment sector is highly segregated along ethnic dimensions. The responses confirm earlier works that identify a particular ethnic group with a particular employment sector. For indigenous officers, joining the civil service was a better option. For them, public service offers better pay since they felt discriminated in the private sector. The case is different for non-indigenous officers. They saw the private sector as a better option – if one considers the remuneration – but chose to be in the civil service for non-monetary reasons. An important lesson that can be drawn from this, that is useful for personnel administration, is that the mutually exclusive nature of Malaysia's institutions – along ethnic dimensions – has denied both employment sectors (public and private sector) from optimum human resources. Unmistakably, the generation of exclusive institutions has ended up denying both the public and the private sector of suitably motivated individuals.

Conclusion

The findings disconfirm the four hypotheses. This study found that individual's public service motivation (PSM) in an ethnically heterogeneous society is dependent on ethnic identity. This study also confirms that an ethnically-heterogeneous society, one's ethnic identity determines one's capacity to develop public service motivation because every ethnic community experiences a different socialisation process. It is also revealed that the perception of the civil service in a heterogeneous society is dependent on one's ethnic identity. This study also proved that an individual's preference to join the public sector (or private sector) is different between indigenous and non-indigenous officers.

The responses show that heterogeneity matters when assessing an individual's PSM. A point to note is that heterogeneity matters because it churns out exclusive institutions that produce a number of effects relating to PSM. The findings reveal that a heterogeneous setting can generate different versions of what it means to serve society. While the officers highlighted the need to be of service to the general society, the term "society" can take a more nuanced meaning. In a heterogeneous setting – even while highlighting the need to serve others - officers mentioned the need to be of service to their own community. The responses also show that exclusive institutions produce different hurdles or incentives to individuals. They demonstrate that socialisation is capable of generating multiple perceptions of certain institutions (civil service) that affect an individual's choice of employment. The responses show that primary and secondary socialisation can create different impressions of the civil service and with it, affect an individual's decision to be in the civil service. Given the case, there is the likelihood that an individual's PSM might be suppressed because of socialisation. Heterogeneity and the creation of institutions also create different views of social institutions that either encourage or inhibit one from contributing to public service. Unlike Rainey (1982) who suggested that individuals with high PSM would naturally gravitate toward public sector employment, the Malaysian experience suggests that in a heterogeneous setting, there are other caveats to consider. This is because heterogeneity breeds institutions that impose different hurdles and incentives for individuals to join the service.

This study makes no pretence that it is an exploratory one; it is part of a larger project that diagnoses the different motivational sets of higher civil servants in Malaysia. Exploratory as it may be, the empirical findings reiterate the need for more comparative and cross-national research to improve the conceptualization and operational measurement of PSM (Perry 2010). Perry et al., (2010) suggest that future works on PSM demand that we be "attentive to linguistic, contextual and cultural considerations." (p. 687). Perhaps future work can attempt to probe the relevance of PSM with issues from the fields of psychology, sociology, leadership, management, politics and public policy.

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The Issue of the Elderly Homeless in Kuala Lumpur: Family Neglect and Its Contributing Factors

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Abstract: Issues concerning elderly neglect and depression among the elderly have been frequently discussed. These issues include leaving the elderly alone after their children migrate to the city, sending elderly parents to welfare centres, leaving elderly parents in hospitals and disposing of parents without mercy. Nevertheless, it is rare to read about senior citizens who choose to live as homeless due to being dumped by their family members, including their spouses, children or siblings, difficulty in getting a job and conflict with family members. This qualitative study involved ten elderly homeless in Kuala Lumpur (KL) city. They were subjected to in-depth interviews to determine the reasons they live as homeless in KL city. Although they had become homeless, deep in their hearts, they still expect their family members, especially their children, to take care of their welfare and wish to stay with the family until the end of their lives. This article is an initiative from the researchers to raise awareness about the healthcare of the elderly especially among their children to be more responsible and provide support to parents until the end of their lives.

Keywords: Elderly, Homeless, Kuala Lumpur, Children, Family support

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Abstrak: Isu pengabaian dan kemurungan dalam kalangan warga emas kerap dibincangkan. Isu ini termasuk meninggalkan warga emas tinggal seorang diri setelah anak-anak berhijrah ke bandar, menghantar ibu bapa tua ke rumah kebajikan, meninggalkan mereka di hospital dan membuang mereka tanpa belas kasihan. Namun, jarang terbaca mengenai warga emas yang memilih untuk menjadi gelandangan akibat dibuang oleh ahli keluarga. Kajian kualitatif yang dijalankan ini melibatkan sepuluh warga emas gelandangan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur. Temubual mendalam telah dilakukan bagi mengkaji punca mereka memilih untuk menjadi gelandangan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur. Walaupun hidup sebagai gelandangan, namun jauh di sudut hati mereka tetap mengharapkan ahli keluarga terutama anak-anak untuk menjaga dan ingin tinggal bersama keluarga hingga ke akhir hayat. Artikel ini adalah satu inisiatif daripada pengkaji untuk meningkatkan kesedaran tentang penjagaan kesihatan warga tua terutamanya dikalangan anak-anak supaya menjadi lebih bertanggungjawab dan memberikan sokongan terhadap ibu bapa sehingga ke akhir hayat mereka.

Kata kunci: warga emas, gelandangan, Kuala Lumpur, anak-anak, sokongan keluarga

Introduction

The issue of neglecting the elderly has recently gained attention from various sections of the society. In general, neglecting the elderly can be defined as the act of intentionally leaving the elderly, such as leaving the elderlies in hospitals, nursing homes, or public places. Such incidents are often linked to happenings whereby an individual feels overburdened or inadequately experienced to care for the elderly. The perpetrators, who neglect these elderlies, tend to justify their actions for numerous reasons. Nevertheless, the elderly are inevitably in a state of confusion and despair. Gauging the number of elderly neglected is very difficult because most neglect cases are not reported to the authorities. Besides, many of them are not only physically neglected but also mentally and emotionally. Although this issue has received the attention of many parties, demographic data for the homeless elderly community still does not exist officially in any government department or agency. Thus this study attempts to collect demographic data on a small scale and focusses on neglected seniors and explicitly discusses elderly who choose homeless life as a living arrangement.

Literature Review

Elderly neglect by the family, especially children, causes the elderly to distance themselves from their families. They choose homelessness as a path of peace or self-comfort to get out of the cocoon of grief. Nowadays, the homeless group, comprising senior citizens, increases annually. The increase indicates a severe problem in the community development context. Living as homeless against the backdrop of dirty places in alleys, under bridges, on sidewalks, and places suitable for shelter is very worrying. This group of senior citizens, on average, have a poor and minimal level of personal health. At the age of over 60, they have various health problems. Their health risks worsen in an unclean and unsafe environment.

Neglect also includes and leads to abuse. The issue of elderly neglect is not given serious attention compared to child abuse and child neglect cases. Most of the concerned cases emphasise the neglect and abuse of children and women. Such cases and trends must be given attention because of the concern and impact on society. Therefore, this study was undertaken to scientifically examine the problem of neglect experienced by elderly homeless people in KL city centre. This study emphasises two aspects by exploring in detail the factors contributing to the phenomenon of neglect among the homeless and providing awareness to all parties about the concern for the elderly. The awareness will help improve the life quality of the elderly and achieve harmony and well-being of society holistically.

Numerous previous studies examined the neglected elderly by focussing on the elderly living in elderly care institutions. Scopus is regarded as a reliable search engine that simplifies the literature review process by classifying categories and items for easy search, download, and selection of research articles. Scopus' exceptional coverage of emerging economies provides access to vital, high-quality research undertaken (particularly in health and social care) and published in developing nations which might be missing in other databases. The search was conducted by searching for specific terms, such as 'elder abuse', 'factor', cause', and 'welfare home'. Seniors over the age of 80 were reportedly more likely to be abused in welfare homes than those under 80. Pillemer et al. (2016) observed that older women have a higher tendency to be abused in welfare homes. In several other studies,

caregiver abuse, while providing treatment to the elderly with physical disabilities and cognitive impairments, tend to be a determinant factor of abuse and neglect of the elderly, particularly in Japan. This systematic review emphasised that the characteristics of the elderly and perpetrators lead to the abuse and neglect of the elderly in welfare homes.

Mohd Yunus (2021) found that most studies only focussed on the development of the elderly in the community. Nevertheless, studies on abuse in institutional settings, such as Nursery Homes (NH), are lacking. The lack of evidence is particularly evident in low and middle-income countries. Estimates from the National Centre on Elder Abuse revealed that 44% of long-term caregivers of the elderly form only 7% of perpetrators abusing the elderly. Compared to seniors living in communities, those living in institutions for seniors were found to be at a higher risk of being abused because they are more physically dependent on their caregivers, lack social support, and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Other factors linked to persecution occurring in NH are inadequate staff training, lack of research in the field of the elderly, unconducive working conditions or environments, funding problems, and the absence of appropriate guidelines and screening tools. Moreover, weaknesses in law enforcement have become a common phenomenon in low and middle-income countries. Hence, a lack of monitoring and regulation exist concerning the abuse of the elderly.

Bidin and Mohd Yusoff (2015) discovered that some countries had created specific laws as a mechanism to address and prevent the neglect of the elderly. In Malaysia, elderly abuse is recognised as a form of domestic violence. The legislation dealing with matters related to domestic violence is the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (Act 521), which should be read in conjunction with the Penal Code. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) is the primary legislation that provides protection and civil rehabilitation to abuse victims. In contrast, the Penal Code deals with the punishment of the respective perpetrators. Although numerous previous studies explored the issue of elder abuse in Malaysia, only a small number have studied the legal protection offered by the DVA to elderly victims. This study aimed to discuss the affordability and adequacy of civil rehabilitation provided to abused seniors under the DVA and further analyses the adequacy and appropriateness of the Act for protecting elderly abuse victims.

Kethineni and Rajendran (2018), in their study in America, argued that 'filial responsibility law' is a law (duty of care) that requires adult children to take care of their parents, especially frail parents. Some states have extended this obligation to close relatives. This responsibility can be enforced through law or morally motivated as a part of religious and cultural teachings. Custodial duties are difficult to define, enforce, and interpret due to the cultural diversity in America. When such cases come to the attention of Twenty-Nine courts, no general laws are related to varying filial responsibilities in defining concepts and determining means of law enforcement. Since most elder abuse involves neglect rather than outright abuse, this situation poses a complex challenge for law enforcement in different states. This study reviewed state legislation and scholarly resources to evaluate the respective laws, court decisions, and current state enforcement issues related to elder neglect in America.

Rzeszut (2017) discussed elder abuse by focussing specifically on neglecting the elderly. Most states in the United States (US) do not recognise elderly neglect as a form of elder abuse in their laws. This study also proposed a legal model that can be used as an example in any country to ensure that elderly neglect is more frequently reported. Neglecting the elderly is an undesirable phenomenon, and those contributing to this problem should be held accountable for the crimes committed. This study emphasised the need for the caregivers of the elderly to adhere to guidelines and be responsible when performing duties and know-how to seek help to prevent elder abuse in the US. Family Courts in the US should gazette the neglect of the elderly as a serious crime and do not take this issue lightly as this ignorance will lead to severe repercussions. Neglect of the elderly should be included in elder abuse laws in every state and given serious thought when meting punishment for such offences.

Masut@Masod and Abdul Mutalib (2019) believed that senior citizens should have similar citizenship rights as others. They are entitled to have the same potential to live a healthy and satisfactory quality of life. Although Malaysia is evolving towards an ageing society, the protection of the elderly in private care centres must be improved. Existing laws (Care Centre Act 1993 and Penal Code) preserve and protect the rights and benefits of the elderly. However, no clear guidance is available on the protection of the elderly in Malaysia, especially those abused in private care centres that cater for the elderly. No specific

provision in Malaysian law addresses the problem of abuse and crime against the elderly in private care centres. This study examined whether Malaysian laws that protect the elderly from elder abuse in private care centres effectively address the issue. The methodology used in this study was the library study method that analysed texts and documents related to elder protection law and elder abuse. This study recommended that the government create a comprehensive sentencing framework to protect the elderly in private care centres and strengthen the preventive measures contained in the Care Centres Act 1993 and the existing laws.

The economic stability of an elderly individual determines the maximum well-being and lifestyle in old age. Hashim et al (2019) reported that older people with a high quality of stable life experience a low level of neglect. In contrast, culture, tradition, and religion play a crucial role in caring for the elderly and their emotional well-being. The study's implications strongly advocated the importance of the elderly's well-being in shaping a society's life quality. The study recommended that the government gazette a new policy on the elderly's welfare. Despite the neglect of the elderly, the care shown by family members or close relatives towards the elderly in a family setting is still practised by families in Asia. Although the traditional family has evolved into a nuclear family, some still practice tradition, culture, and religious education regarding the caring of the elderly. In addition, stakeholders and policymakers should ensure that greater attention is given to the elderly. In the case of money misappropriation, all forms of financial assistance must adhere to transparency policies and precise financial reporting guidelines. Concurrently, the elderly should contribute to the community if they are capable of doing so.

The community's skewed views about the elderly should be eliminated, and they should educate themselves about this issue. Clark (2019) conducted a study in India involving older women and found that neglected older women living in Bangalore felt that society's negative views about them influenced their daily lives. The bitter experiences of these older women were influenced and constrained by differences in social class (caste), gender, underdeveloped health systems, poor safety nets and other factors. Older women who do not live with their families get minimal support from outsiders. Therefore, the study emphasised the need for society to provide support and assistance to the elderly living without a family to ensure their dignity and life quality.

In addition to society's view of the elderly, young people's perspective on the neglect of the elderly is critical because the inculcation of good values in students is crucial in forming a caring society. Hasbullah et al. (2018) aimed to determine the attitude towards elder abuse among undergraduate law students in Malaysian public universities. Data were collected using a self-administered survey form consisting of background profiles and 12 scaled items on attitudes towards elder abuse. The descriptive analysis indicated that out of 513 respondents, 383 were female (74.7%), and 130 (25.3%) were male students. The minimum age of the respondents was 22 (SD = 1,834). A total of 323 respondents had participated in activities related to the elderly (63.0%), while 190 (37.0%) reported never participating in activities related to the elderly. Two-thirds of the respondents (63.9%) reported having a more positive attitude towards elder abuse, while one-third (36.1%) had a lesser positive attitude towards elder abuse. The findings indicated the need to raise awareness among the younger generation, especially among law students, on the issue of elder abuse as they are expected to be part of the planning structure that can protect the elderly from abuse.

Most of these neglected elderlies have a history of poor health or are chronic disease patients. Yunus et al. (2018) studied the cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships between elder abuse and neglect (EAN) and chronic disease pain among the elderly population in rural Malaysia. The Cohort study was conducted for two years in Kuala Pilah, a district in Negeri Sembilan situated about 100 km from the capital, KL. The study involved the community-dwelling elderly aged 60 and over. A total of 1,927 respondents were evaluated at the early stage. Two years later, a re-evaluation involving 1,189 respondents was undertaken. The EAN was determined using a modified Conflict Tactics Scale, while chronic illness pain was assessed through self-reports using validation questions. The study found that the prevalence of chronic disease pain was at 20.4%.

The cross-sectional results showed eight variables significantly related to chronic disease pain, namely age, education, income, comorbidities, personal health, depression, walking speed, and EAN. The abused elderly experienced 1.52 times more chronic disease pain (odds ratio = 1.52 times, 95% confidence interval (CI) = 1.03–2.27), although the longitudinal analysis showed no relationship between EAN and risk of chronic disease pain (ratio risk = 1.14, 95 % CI = 0.81–1.60). A lack

of consistent correlation was observed when comparing the analyses with complete cases that have implied data. The findings suggested that although EAN does not cause chronic disease pain, individuals with physical limitations have a higher tendency to be abused and neglected.

Therefore, the self-empowerment of the elderly is crucial when addressing the issue of neglecting the elderly in Malaysia. Achmad (2017) had intended to examine the empowerment of the elderly as the government and society's preparation when facing a population's changing demographic structure caused by an increase in life expectancy. The qualitative study had investigated the empowerment of the elderly, which is the ultimate goal of the national health agenda. An increase in the elderly population inevitably poses various challenges, prompting the government to address them constantly.

The number of seniors with poor physical health and productivity is greater than infants and children. Physical limitations and the possibility of suffering from 'degenerative' diseases cause the elderly to have special needs that must be catered to by the younger generation. Therefore, the initial empowerment of the elderly should occur within the family unit. Neglect of the elderly is one of the factors that require urgent attention to ensure that the well-being of the elderly is always a priority. Instead of portraying inappropriate behaviour towards these elderly, perhaps the families of the elderly should leave the elderly in care centres to ensure their health conditions are not neglected.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study conducted interviews with respondents who were homeless elderly to obtain relevant and detailed information regarding factors that could explain the phenomena and trends concerning the neglect of the elderly. The interview method was utilised to obtain more detailed information. This study involved ten homeless elderly living in KL. The study delved into their feelings and the factors that drove them into becoming homeless. The researchers chose locations frequented by the homeless, such as sidewalks, building alleys, under bridges, and Kuala Lumpur Homeless Transit Centre in Jalan Pahang, KL. The selection of samples involved ten respondents, comprising homeless senior citizens representing the existing elderly homeless population.

The items in the questionnaire were related to the respondent's demographic information, such as name, age, marital status, origin,

education level, and level of health, which could give a picture of the respondent's background. Information regarding the respondent's children, such as the number of children, married children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, was examined to determine the elderly's relationship with the family members (still in contact or outright ignored).

Next, the questions on homelessness were narrative in nature. When this interview was conducted, the respondents mostly spoke about their past and why they migrated to KL city, which eventually made them homeless. The interview also discussed employment opportunities and assistance from government bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which helped assess the community's sensitivity to the homeless elderly. All the questions posed to the respondents were specific to their personal lives. The study's findings describe the answers to the study's objectives and questions concerning the neglect of the family of the homeless elderly in KL.

In order to answer the research questions, the researchers used thematic methods to achieve the objectives and address the research questions. The thematic analysis produces a theme for the interviews conducted and obtains the research findings. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is the specific theme in a phenomenon implemented either deductively or inductively. Data is identified and coded from raw data such as transcripts, biographies, photographs, and videos in thematics. The use of methods and themes depends on the research conducted.

Result and Discussions

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Respondent (R)	Sex	Age (years)	Ethnicity	Marital status	Education level	State of origin
R1	M	62	Malay	Divorced	UPSR	Kelantan (Tumpat)
R2	M	66	Indian	Married	No education	Johor (Muar)

R3	M	65	Malay	Divorced	PMR/SRP	Kuala Lumpur (Gombak)
R4	M	60	Indian	Married	PMR/SRP	Perak (Chemor)
R5	M	61	Malay	Divorced	PMR/SRP	Perak (Taiping)
R6	F	60	Malay	Widowed	UPSR	Kedah (Sg. Petani)
R7	M	66	Chinese	Divorced	Standard 5 5	Penang (Butterworth)
R8	M	63	Chinese	Divorced	No education	Perak (Ipoh)
R9	M	63	Malay	Divorced	Standard 3	Kedah (Baling)
R10	M	62	Indian	Divorced	UPSR	Selangor (Dengkil)

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

As shown in Table 1, most respondents were men, with only one woman. All the respondents were aged 60 years and above. The oldest respondent was 66 years old, while the youngest was 60. Eight respondents were widowed, and only two respondents were still married. Three respondents had a Penilaian Menengah Rendah/Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (PMR/SRP) level education, three others had Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) education, one had Grade Five, one had Grade Three education, and two respondents had not received any education. Most respondents came from the northern states, such as Kedah, Perak, and Penang, while three came from the south, namely Johor, KL, and Selangor, and only one came from the east coast namely Kelantan.

Respondents' occupation

Table 2. Respondents' occupation

Respondent (R)	Type of occupation
R1	Selling used items, boxes and beverage cans (RM300-RM400)
R2	Worked as a temple cleaner (RM300)

R3	Selling tissues and snacks (RM1000)
R4	Beggar (RM600-RM650)
R5	Parking attendant (RM500-RM850)
R6	Beggar (RM200-RM450)
R7	Parking attendant (RM600-RM900)
R8	Unemployed
R9	Selling newspapers (RM700)
R10	Beggar and selling tissues (RM400)

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

According to the research findings in Table 2, most of these respondents worked part-time to support their lives as homeless. Their income did not exceed RM1000, and the average income was RM628, excluding one respondent who had no source of income. The unemployed respondent lived on assistance provided by the community and the welfare centre (NGO). One respondent, R3, stated that he is only homeless part-time and owns a residence in Jalan Ayer Panas, KL. Based on the interview, R3 stated that:

> "Somehow, in five years, I became a homeless person, not because I don't have a house. I have a house in Jalan Ayer Panas. Only that I prefer to live like this, enough time to go home [sic]. During the day with my homeless friends, and if there are any extra sustenance, I share it with them."

He chose a homeless life just to fill his free time, and the income he receives is shared with his homeless friends. Besides, he also receives financial assistance from his son. All the respondents received assistance from various NGOs that provided food, clothing, mattresses, regular medical treatments, and other forms of assistance. According to R2, who is working as a temple cleaner:

> "I work near the temple as a 'cleaner.' I clean the temple area, and I get paid only RM300. It is not enough to support the family in this KL city, so I also asked for BSH's help. I worked but had to be homeless from 9 am to around 9 pm as well. After that, I just got a room to rent, so me[sic], my wife, and son[sic], we stayed there. Not much help just depends on my salary and BSH alone to live."

Among all the respondents, only two stated that they received subsistence assistance (BSH) from the government, while the rest received assistance from NGOs.

Information about the family and children

Table 3. Family information/ number of children

Respondent (R)	Family information
R1	Divorced, childless, but still has siblings
R2	Has a wife, children and still has a biological family
R3	Has children and grandchildren
R4	Has a wife, children, and grandchildren
R5	Divorced and has children
R6	Husband deceased and has children
R7	Divorced and has children
R8	Divorced and childless
R9	Divorced and has children
R10	Divorced and has children

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

Table 3 discusses information about the respondent's family members. All of them lived as 'foreigners' (homeless) in KL and away from their families, except for two respondents living as homeless families. The first respondent, R1, is divorced and has no children but still has a family in his village. His siblings do not know his life as a homeless, and he has never returned to the village after coming to KL. In contrast, R2 lives as a homeless part-time in a rented room with his wife and son. He becomes 'temporary' homeless from 9 am to 9 pm and has never returned to his village after coming to KL.

On the other hand, R3 is a widower whose wife died, and he has three children who visit him weekly, indicating that he has a good relationship with his children and family members. The fourth respondent, R4, is still married and has two children and two grandchildren living in Perak. Nevertheless, his children and wife refused to care for him because he is HIV positive. The fifth respondent, R5, is divorced and has experienced being neglected by his family, although he has three children and grandchildren.

Subsequently, R6 is a widow with two children, but she became homeless because her children do not care about her condition. The seventh respondent, R7, is divorced with one child. He once returned to his family in Penang, but his ex-wife and child did not welcome him. Thus, he returned to KL and has lived as a homeless ever since. Next, R8 is divorced with no children and fled to KL. He feels more comfortable with his living condition as a homeless, and his whereabouts are unknown to his ex-wife and family.

The ninth respondent, R9, is divorced and has four children but is homeless due to his personality problems (hot temperament) and violent behaviour (physical abuse of his wife and children). Nevertheless, his present lifestyle as a homeless is unknown to his family, and he feels like returning to the comfort of his family. The last respondent, R10, is divorced and has two children who estranged him because the authorities had arrested him. Although his ex-wife and children do not know about his current homeless lifestyle, his relatives know about it but choose to ignore him without caring about his condition.

Factors that Influence the Respondents to become Homeless

Theme 1: Difficulty in getting a job

Based on interviews with all the respondents, two respondents were homeless because they lacked the proper qualification to hold a good job in KL. The first respondent, R1, migrated to KL after divorcing his wife 14 years ago and became homeless after failing to secure a job due to a lack of education. He felt that:

> "I have been a homeless man since I divorced my wife. At that time, I was 48. After the divorce, I came to KL. At first, I came to KL to look for a job, but it was difficult to get a job because I didn't go to high school, only up to sixth grade. Now it feels like 14 years have passed since, and it has become more and more difficult for a homeless man like me to get a job. Since coming to KL, I have never returned to my village, so the relatives there do not know my current condition."

Family members are unaware that R1 is homeless as he never returned to his hometown after leaving it. Naturally, the respondents want a better life than their current living conditions. On the other hand, R8 fled to KL due to the extreme stress of life caused by a failed business venture

and debts owed to a loan shark. During the interview, Respondent 8 stated that:

> "I did run away to KL, and I have lived like this for 12 years. I feel comfortable living like this. I used to owe money to several ah long for 'business' ventures, but I can't afford to pay them because my 'business' is not profitable. Almost every day, I quarrel [sic] with my wife because of the money until we finally divorced [sic]. I live as a homeless person, but I feel happy now that there is no ah long to chase me."

The respondent's family members do not know about his life as a homeless, and he feels happier with his life now because there is no burden to shoulder, and it is too late to change his life to a better one. Several respondents faced difficulties securing a job because of their life history, namely former prisoners and having a history of diseases, such as AIDS. This situation makes it difficult for them to obtain a job and forces them to become homeless.

> 'I am HIV-positive, difficult for me to look for a job suitable for me. So are my children because of my disease, my children do not want near me, my children say if I follow them home, I will give disease to all of them.' (Respondent 7)

> ''My children are scared of me, they say my HIV disease can get to them, so they throw me, want to meet grandchildren also they do not allow.' (Respondent 4)

Half of the elderly homeless are at an advanced age but heartbreakingly have to work to support themselves. Unfortunately, the majority of them do not have equal employment opportunities, and the salary is minimal, which is below RM1000. Hence, the government is urged to provide workforce opportunities for the elderly that provides optimal payment by adopting a 'Universal Design Framework', which offers financial stability to the elderly homeless (The Star, 2020). Che Amani et al (2021) argued that financial neglect is the abuse of finances owned by senior citizens or exploiting the senior citizens' property or savings, such as cheating in the ownership of property or financial assets. Financial and material neglect is the abuse or fraud of property committed against the elderly. These guardians or heirs fail to provide primary care or needs such as security, emotional and physical treatment, including financial and material neglect (World Health Organization, 2018).

In the study's findings obtained during the interviews conducted, most respondents experienced neglect in terms of financial and material. Financial and material neglect experienced by the average respondents stated that neither their child nor family gave money for subsistence or buying necessities. In addition, they also never supplied nutritious food to the respondents. The respondents stated that their monthly expenses solely depended on assistance from the Social Welfare Department and NGOs. Almost all the interviewed respondents experienced financial and material neglect where the children did not carry out their responsibilities in matters of the welfare of their parents. Most of the children did not give money for the respondents' expenses, while the respondent only expected financial assistance from Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) to cover their daily lives.

Reay and Browne (2002) explained that interventions to address the problem of neglect in the family are very few. Approximately 63% of women and 53% of men aged 75 and over have a disability and need help from immediate family members to meet their needs. Financial neglect also occurs at a rate of 4% to 10% involving seniors from 65 years to above.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Conflict with family members

Most respondents became homeless due to intentional or unintentional family conflicts. Malaysia is witnessing a state of fragile family institutions because each family member is busy with their own lives and affairs, and many possess some degree of irresponsible behaviour. The living conditions of the homeless in this study strongly suggest that the respondent's family institution is unstable and fragile. According to R2, he migrated to KL because he felt slighted by relatives in his village who had cheated him in distributing the family estate. The respondent lived homeless for 12 years and lives with his family but thinks that the current situation is comfortable enough for him.

> "I have a family in the village, but I would never believe them. I was cheated by my own biological family because of the family's inherited property. They were willing to cheat me just because of property, so my family and I came to KL. Even though the events are long past, I still feel with their nature. I don't want to go back to Muar because I feel have [sic] had enough with life now."

In contrast, R3 has a family, and they know about his homeless life and even visit him during the weekends. Homeless life is voluntary because the respondents are free to have friends and are able to help other homeless people. The respondent sells tissues and snacks while being homeless to fill his free time and feels comfortable with his life as a part-time homeless person. He did not mention experiencing any conflict with his family but hoped that the community would always help the homeless. He emphasised by saying:

> "I hope very much that our society helps the homeless; especially, for them to support socially, and the elderly homeless with disabilities. Many of my peers need help."

This study found that the respondents' families were another reason the homeless elderly neglected their responsibilities to their families at a young age. The respondents' families may find it difficult to forget past events, especially being ignored or neglected by these respondents (MyHEALTH, 2017). Respondents' past actions of failing to fulfil their responsibilities as parents to spouses and family, such as engaging in criminal activities, marriage and divorce, and drug addiction, has forced children, spouses, and other family members to harbour feelings of frustration, hatred, and resentment.

For example, R4 has a family, but they do not care about him being homeless. He was evicted from his home after contracting HIV through drug use and has been homeless for the last nine years. He is still addicted to drugs and is unable to deal with his addiction while relying on good Samaritans for assistance. He feels that a homeless life is harrowing but has to accept it.

> "I have family in Chemor, but they don't know about me at all. I was kicked out of the house. Being able to be a homeless person limits my physical movement, and I can't move like before. When a child with a wife doesn't care about me because I am HIV positive, I feel very miserable and live miserably. I think this has become my destiny. Even now, I beg and ask for the kindness of passing pedestrians, sometimes even get help from NGOs. They provided food, clothing, and syringes. When asked to R4 whether the youths are still addicted to drugs, he replied, 'yes, I am still using it. I always go far in the alleys in KL to take drugs. The family doesn't care about me, but I hope the community always helps our group."

On the other hand, Respondent 5 migrated to KL after being expelled by his family because he was arrested and had served a sentence for drug abuse. He worked as a security guard for two years but was laid off due to poor health and eventually became homeless as he could not support himself. He is still addicted to drugs and sometimes works as a part-time parking attendant and hopes his family will accept him back into the family. He mentioned that:

> "I came to KL because my family did not accept me after I was released from prison. Remember coming to KL can get a job, but my condition does not allow me to work for a long time. Two [sic] years also, I worked as a security guard. I can't afford to find a job, especially with my current health condition. I can't even afford to take care of myself. My wife with my children really doesn't care about my condition. I work part-time to take care of the parking lot now. Sometimes I work sometimes not if the work can be paid in RM500-RM800. I want to return to the bosom of my family and live with them. What I hope is that the public should be caring and give good placement opportunities to those of us who are homeless.

The only women respondent, Respondent 6, migrated to KL with her husband (who has since been sentenced to hang for offences committed under the Penal Code) and was arrested by authorities for engaging in drug trafficking and offering sex services around the Chow Kit and Puduraya areas. After serving a four-year prison sentence, she finally became homeless and is still a drug addict. Her children do not care about her condition. Hence, she wants to spend the rest of her life homeless and does not want to disturb her children.

> "I chose to be a homeless person. In the beginning, I came to KL with my husband involved in drug crime activities. Then we were arrested, my husband was hanged. I went to prison for being a prostitute while distributing drugs in the KL area. Auntie doesn't want to disturb the children's lives, even if they don't care about auntie. I hope that help for the homeless will always be provided."

In addition, another respondent, Respondent 7, was involved in drug pushing and selling activities from a young age. After being arrested by the authorities and serving a 15-year prison sentence, he now works as a parking attendant in Jalan Pudu. His wife and children do not want

to accept him into their family again, so he chose to be a homeless person living in his work hut and bathing in public toilets. One study in Malaysia found that neglect of the elderly causes severe depression in them, eventually leading to suicide, mental illness, and low life quality (Ahmed et al., 2016). According to the interview, Respondent 7 once contemplated suicide because he felt life as a homeless person did not have a bright future.

> "I've been living like this for 17 years. The family did not want to accept me because I was once arrested by the authorities for drug crimes. After getting out of prison, I worked as a parking attendant. I once returned to my hometown, but my wife had remarried, the children no longer wanted to see me. They don't want me in their lives anymore. Now that I'm old, I don't feel like living happily in the future. I once tried to commit suicide because of the stress in this life. I have a place to sleep at my workplace, and when I want to take a shower, I use public toilets, but living like this is really hard."

The ninth respondent, Respondent 9, migrated to KL because he failed as a husband and father due to his hot temperament and violent behaviour towards his children and wife. Although he worked as a newspaper vendor, he lived as a homeless person because he could not afford a place to live. His family did not know about his current life, and he feels sorry for his previous attitude. He sincerely hopes that his family can accept him in their lives.

> "I am a hot-tempered person, often beating my wife and children until my wife divorced me. After divorcing, I came to KL and worked as a newspaper vendor in Chow Kit, but my income was only RM700, it was not enough to cover the cost of living in a city like KL, so I had to live off the streets to become a homeless person. My family in the village did not know about my living conditions here. I am upset with my own hot-tempered nature and violent behaviour. I want to return to my family and have a better life with my children and grandchildren."

On the other hand, Respondent 10 had lived as a homeless for 16 years. He was dumped by his family after being arrested for drug trafficking offences and had served ten years in prison for the offence. His family members do not know his life as a homeless person, but his siblings are aware of his condition and do not care. He did not get any suitable job

because of his prisoner status. Hence, he begs while selling tissues to make a living. According to him:

> "I've been a homeless person for 16 years. I was once arrested by the police for being involved in drug crimes and have served a prison sentence of 10 years. After serving my sentence, I came to KL to work, but with the status of a former prisoner, many did not want to give me a job, so I had to beg while selling tissues on the street. Indeed, the children of the family and my ex-wife did not know my condition, but my siblings knew I was in trouble and homeless and living as a homeless person, but they did not come to help me. I also want to live like a normal person with a family, and I really hope to be able to meet my children again and meet my grandchildren and spend my old age with them."

Both respondents felt very upset and regretted their past actions and would love to spend the rest of their lives with their children and grandchildren. Neglecting these homeless elderly should be addressed as prudently as possible because if they do not receive family support, a rift will occur in the family institution. Therefore, the government should encourage volunteer campaigns from various parties to help these neglected and homeless elderly. Besides, the government should create a 'filial responsibility law', making it mandatory for adult children to care for their parents (Kethineni & Rajendran, 2018).

Theme 3: Health Status

The next factor that drives the occurrence of neglect among the elderly homeless is the level of health experienced by the elderly homeless. The precarious and critical health status of the homeless elderly makes it difficult for their children to care for them. Nowadays, the children of most homeless run away from their duties and responsibilities of managing the elderly homeless. In addition, the disease suffered by most of the respondents is severe, such as HIV. Hence, the children choose to leave the homeless elderly alone without supervision as a simple solution to avoid caring for them.

This situation causes neglect among the homeless elderly because their disease must be controlled with medication and observation, especially the homeless elderly who suffer from memory problems and mental disorders. The following are the statements given by the respondents:

> "I am HIV positive, so my children do not want to stay close to me. They said I will spread the disease to them if I go home with them." (Respondent 7)

> "My children are afraid of me. They said my HIV can be transmitted to them. That's why they dumped me. They also won't allow me to see my grandchildren." (Respondent 4)

Theme 4: The past story of the elderly that caused them to become homeless

The last factor is the past of the elderly that the children and families cannot forget. These homeless, older people made mistakes in the past, such as hitting and damaging the self-esteem of children and families. The family's emotions are disturbed by things happening in their lives and carried away until now. At this stage, family members should undergo counselling sessions to restore their emotions. The following are the statements given by the respondents:

> "I realised that when they were little, I ignored them a lot. I embarrassed my family with my drug addiction and drug trafficking problems. That's why they threw me away. Until today, I hope my children can forgive me for all my mistakes." (Respondent 5)

> "I do not have children, but I still have a family. However, they are afraid if I go home because the Ah Longs might come to harass them again. It's okay. Let me live by myself without burdening my family." (Respondent 8)

Conclusion

Based on the interviews with respondents, factors that contributed to their homeless living were being disowned by their families due to their involvement in drugs, personality problems (temper fits leading to violence), general failure in life, indebtedness to loan sharks, and not being able secure job opportunities. Nevertheless, some choose life as homeless due to comparatively being comfortable and feeling satisfied with a homeless life. All respondents admitted to receiving assistance from the government (BSH) and NGOs and regular treatment from the health department, although they could not afford the cost of medical treatment.

Some worked part-time and received less than RM1000 a month, while others turned to begging and selling tissues on the streets. Feelings of remorse were displayed on their faces during the interviews. Unfortunately, some were into drugs, while others desperately wanted to spend the rest of their lives with their children, grandchildren, or families. Nevertheless, some next-of-kin did not want to accept their return, while most of the homeless felt that their return would disrupt the family life of their next-of-kin. Hence, they continued living as homeless.

Neglect of the homeless elderly by their immediate family is very worrying. The lack of support or outright failure of the family to provide support or help to their spouse or parents will result in these homeless people being denied the opportunity to live a quality-filled and prosperous life. Family structure is crucial because the children will follow the mould formed by the parents. Hence, exposing the children to responsibilities, including extending sincere love and appreciation, builds the spirit of belonging to the family, which can be instilled in children and other family members. Most respondents did not play the role of the family head because the children and family members are not interested and do not want to involve themselves emotionally with the homeless elderly. Undeniably, these elderlies have made errors in judgement in their past.

Nevertheless, children's are responsible for showing empathy and sacrificing their time and effort in caring for their parents. In addition, the community should be sensitive, be aware of the surrounding situation and increase their knowledge about this issue. Undoubtedly, in Malaysia, various parties, such as the government or NGOs, constantly strive to assist this group. Various parties, especially families, are collaboratively responsible for curbing the neglect of the elderly and trying their best to provide proper care for the elderly, especially the homeless.

Acknowledgement

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Muslim Inventors of Reading and Writing Methods for the Blind: Predecessors of Braille

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Abstract: Over the past few centuries, there have been numerous attempts to find suitable methods that would help blind people read and write, thus improving their quality of life. At present, Louis Braille (1809-1852 CE) is probably the best-known inventor creating a writing system known as "The Braille Language" that aids the blind to read and write. Consequently, one question arises: Was Louis Braille the first one to invent the language for the blind, or did others precede him to that? Using descriptive analytical approach, this research aims to present three inventions by three Muslim scholars who created methods for the blind to read and write. The first of which dates to the 5th century A.H. (1009-1106 CE), i.e., seven centuries before Louis Braille's attempt. After reviewing and studying the relevant literature, the study concluded that like Braille, all three Muslim scholars used the sense of touch to achieve this goal. The first, Muhammad bin Abdul Warith (d. 5th century A.H.)

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created embossed figures from pitch analogous to the Arabic alphabetical letters to teach his blind son read and write. Second, Zein-Eddine Al-Amidy, (d. 712 A.H. / 1312 CE) a blind Muslim scholar, fashioned paper-made letters to read, write, and remember the prices of his books. Third, Wazir Al-Sarraj (d. 1149 A.H. / 1736 CE), another Muslim scholar, created waxed letters for his blind teacher to help him read and write.

Keywords: Braille language; Blind; Muslim Scholars; Inventions, Read and Write.

Abstrak: Sejak beberapa abad yang lalu, terdapat banyak percubaan untuk mencari kaedah yang sesuai yang boleh membantu orang buta membaca dan menulis, sekali gus meningkatkan kualiti hidup mereka. Louis Braille (1809-1852 CE) mungkin merupakan pencipta yang paling terkenal mencipta sistem tulisan yang dikenali sebagai "Bahasa Braille" yang membantu orang buta membaca dan menulis. Kini satu persoalan timbul: Adakah Louis Braille yang pertama mencipta Bahasa untuk orang buta, atau adakah orang lain mendahuluinya untuk itu? Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif analitikal, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengemukakan tiga ciptaan oleh tiga orang sarjana Islam yang mencipta kaedah untuk orang buta membaca dan menulis. Yang pertama bermula pada abad ke-5 A.H. (1009-1106 CE), iaitu, tujuh abad sebelum percubaan Louis Braille. Selepas meneliti dan mengkaji literatur yang berkaitan, kajian tersebut mendapati bahawa seperti Braille, ketiga-tiga sarjana Muslim juga menggunakan deria sentuhan untuk mencapai matlamat ini. Yang pertama, Muhammad bin Abdul-Warith (m. abad ke-5 A.H.) mencipta angka timbul daripada nada yang serupa dengan huruf abjad Arab untuk mengajar anaknya yang buta membaca dan menulis. Kedua, Zein-Eddine Al-Amidy, (w. 712 A.H. / 1312 M) seorang ulama Muslim yang buta, membentuk abjad melalui kertas untuk dibaca, ditulis, dan mengingat harga buku-bukunya. Ketiga, Wazir Al-Sarraj (w. 1149 A.H. / 1736 CE), seorang lagi ulama Islam, mencipta huruf lilin untuk gurunya yang buta bagi membantunya membaca dan menulis.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Braille; buta; Ulama Islam; Ciptaan, Baca dan Tulis

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, one billion people suffer from some type of vision impairment that could have been prevented or has yet to be addressed (WHO, 2020). Globally, among 7.79 billion people living in 2020, an estimated 49.1 million were blind; 221.4

million people had moderate Visual Impairment (VI), and 33.6 million people had severe Visual Impairment (VI). The estimated number of blind persons increased (by 42.8%) from 34.4 million in 1990 to 49.1 million in 2020 (Bourne et. al., 2020).

The American Council of the Blind and the European Blind Union (ACB, & EBU) demand that information be made accessible to anyone, including blind and partially sighted people, at the same time, and at no additional cost. They state that the right to read is part of basic human rights, and the right to information is internationally recognised in article 21 of the United Nations "*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*" (EBU, 2021). Access to the written word is extremely essential for people to participate fully in their societies. It's important for educational purposes, political involvement, success in the workplace, scientific progress and, not least, creative play and leisure (Sutton, 2002).

Literature have cited several attempts done by inventors creating new methods for the blind to read and write. Some of these methods were helpful in teaching the blind, while others were not, until the birth of the internationally approved Braille Language in 1837 CE (Jime´nez et al., 2009, pp. 144-146). Muslim inventors have, long before Braille, made several attempts to teach the blind by touch, using tar, paper, or wax, which is the subject of this article. But before this, let us take a brief look at the history of the blind, and get to know some famous figures who excelled in their societies despite their blindness.

History of the Blind

The history of the blind is difficult to chart. It has long been assumed that in the ancient world the blind enjoyed few opportunities and lived out their days in penury as beggars, or as wards of their families in the absence of any systematic state or government assistance (Miller, 2006).

From ancient times, and in various regions of the world, people with disabilities have suffered from abuse, negligence, and ridicule. (Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.30). Old nations treated handicapped people with contempt and disrespect, and sometimes with cruelty and estrangement. They viewed the disabled as useless people who could not do what is entrusted to them to the fullest, thus they cannot serve the society as expected. Some of these old nations considered the blind to

be harmful to the state, and that they must be disposed of by all possible means for the society to remain strong, and able to carry out the burdens, and costs of life. (Miller, 2013, p.40; Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.30). The following paragraph will shed some light on how old nations treated the handicapped in general, and the blind namely during ancient Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, old Arab times pre-Islam, and during Islam.

The Blind during the Greek Ages

Old Greek literature states that the life of an impaired person in ancient Greece was miserable. Greek laws stipulated that the disabled child should be disposed of and eliminated in childhood; by throwing him/her into the river to die by drowning or leaving them in the freezing cold until they perish with a boomerang. Another law known as *"Preventing the Rearing of Deformed Children"* was recommended by Aristotle to be passed, believing that it was not worth it to bring up a child who could not lead an independent life (Garland, 2020).

Similarly, Plato indicated that the person with disability is considered harmful to his ideal state (Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.30). Consequently, the number of those who survived to adulthood was very low if compared to nowadays, and if they managed to survive somehow, the Greek society did not treat the mature disabled with any special sympathy. There is also proof to suggest that any physically disabled Greek would become a scapegoat – called the *pharmakos* – in times of crisis. They were exiled from the city and cursed ritually, thinking that they were harmful to the society (Garland, 2020). As for people with any visually recognisable disability, the Greek rules did not allow them to learn, develop autonomy or marry, because this would inevitably weaken the state. (Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.30).

The Blind during the Roman and Egyptian Old Times

As for the Romans, there was a Roman law code from around the middle of the 5th century BCE called the: "Law of the Twelve Tables," it has the remark: *"kill the deformed child quickly."* It was known as well that Spartan children were inspected by the elders on birth and if found impaired, they would be abandoned in the jungle to be eaten by animals and birds. Hesiod, the epic poet who lived around the beginning of the 7th century BCE, records the belief that if a child was born with a deformity, it indicated anger or ill will of the divine. There is every

likelihood that if a child was born deformed and managed to survive
somehow, it would be treated as a second-grade citizen. He or she
would not be permitted to enter the temple, let alone serve as a priest
or priestess, since only physically perfect people could serve the gods.
The same is true for ancient Egyptians; blindness in turn, congenital
or disease-related, was considered a divine punishment. A man thus
handicapped, would sink in a state of uncertainty and darkness (Garland,
2020).

The Blind in Arab Society

As mentioned before, societies in different ancient cultures have
implemented various ways to interpret the disability phenomena.
Unfortunately, they developed their attitudes to people with disabilities,
and to the blind, by oppressing and humiliating them (Borowska-
Beszta, 2012). Thinking of the Arab world, Ibrahim, and Ismail (2018)
mentioned after Guvercin (2008), the wrong perceptions of disabled
people as a factor influencing societal attitudes, leading to exclusion,
mistreatment, and deprivation of their rights to equal opportunities
in education, employment, and social inclusion. Murad and Walid
(2008) wrote that regardless of the positive characteristics of those
with disabilities, abled-bodied individuals tend to believe that disabled
people are not mature ones, and that they lack essential things. Under
this assumption, able-bodied people practiced different forms of
discrimination, intolerance, and used stigmatising labels in their daily
communication styles towards the handicapped (Saad & Borowska-
Beszta, 2019, p.30). Stigmatisation and oppression were marked by
inferiority, contempt, abuse, and negligence on the forehead of those
with disabilities, as if this society is punishing them for a sin they did
not commit. They besieged them in successive circles of educational,
psychological, and social hostage, without providing them with the
simple demands of liberation from this human oppression and contempt
(Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.31).

Murad and Walid (2007) continued saying that since the dawn of
history, Arab societal view of people with disabilities like the blind, was
built on fraught with confusion, misunderstanding, doubt, and despair.
Arab societies like other old nations, found it difficult to deal with the
disabled psychological, social, behavioral, and emotional disorders.
They felt despair especially when those disabilities required special

uninterrupted care, and the provision of certain appropriate conditions for each case, was impossible to be offered at that time. (Saad & Borowska-Beszta, 2019, p.31).

In conclusion, one can say that blindness was assumed to be a ticket to misery, a curse, or a sentence to be a second-class status citizen. (Miller, 2006). Fortunately, things did not remain as is, as after the dawn of Islam, there was a radical change regarding the blind and the disabled ones.

The Blind in Islam

When reviewing the philosophy of Islam regarding the disabled, one finds that unlike the preceding philosophies, Islam has a totally positive attitude towards the disabled, needy individuals, and those suffering from any kind of disadvantageous situation. The Holy Qur'an and al-Sunnah al-Sharifa not only accepted the existence of disabilities as a natural part of human nature, but also set certain values, applied practical proposals for caring for disabled people, and highlighted the significance of such caring. (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012, p. 206). The following paragraph will present a solid proof for what we have formerly mentioned.

In Islam, all Muslims are equal, and the Holy Quran confirms this:

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ) [الحجرات:31].

"O [mankind!] Behold, Indeed We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is most righteous of you. Behold, Allah is all-knowing, all-aware". (49:13)

According to the verse, Allah's measure of a human being's worth relies not on physical attributes or material achievements, but on spiritual maturity and ethical development. (Banza, & Hatab, 2005, p.12). The Prophet (PBUH) most explicitly communicates this message when saying: "Verily, Allah does not look at your bodies or your appearances, but looks into your hearts" (Muslim, n.d., 2564).

This connects with the exhortation in the preceding verse (49:11), saying:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ

عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ) [الحجرات:11].

"O, you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; for they
may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; for they may
be better than them. And do not insult each other by [offensive] nicknames".
(49:11)

The verse obviously forbids all people from mocking each other and
orders them not to call each other with bad names, aiming to conserve
everyone's respect and safeguard each other's dignity. (Banza, & Hatab,
2005, p.12).

Moreover, the Qur'an and al-Sunnah al-Sharifa take an extra step to
stress the necessity of applying the above-stated attitude towards people
with disabilities. This is reflected in one of the Qur'an's chapters,
i.e. (سورة عبس) "Surat 'Abasa," telling the story of Abdullah Ibn Umm
Maktoum, a blind companion, who came to the Prophet (PBUH) asking
him about certain religious enquiries. Unfortunately, at that moment,
the Prophet (PBUH) was busy convincing some leaders from Quraish
to embrace Islam. Unintentionally, the Prophet (PBUH) looked away
from Ibn Umm Maktoum's face and frowned at him. (Al-Tabari, 2000,
vol. 24, p. 217). Right then, "Surat 'Abasa" was revealed started saying:

(عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى (1) أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى (2)) [عبس:1-2].

"He frowned and turned away because the blind man approached him!" (80:1-
2).

This incident highlights the fact that Muslims with disabilities are to
be treated with full regard and respect, and that they should have the
same subject- to-subject relations that are granted to the non-disabled.
(Banza, & Hatab, 2005, p.13). Allah courteously blamed his Prophet
(PBUH) even for frowning at a blind man – who in reality – did not see
that he has been frowned at, which set a supreme norm for all Muslims
to respect the blind and all disabled people.

Indeed, such norms were set into practice when the Prophet (PBUH)
held Ibn Umm Maktoum in charge for Al-Madina Al-Munawara twice
when He (the Prophet PBUH) went out for jihad. (Abou Daoud, n.d.,
2931). Also, it was narrated that: "Ibn Umm Maktoum was appointed

by the Prophet (PBUH) to call for the prayers (make Azan). (Muslim, n.d., 381).

Not only this, but we find that the Holy Qur'an exempts the blind, the lame, and the sick from going to the battlefield, saying:

(لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ) [الفتح:71].

"There is not upon the blind any guilt, or upon the lame any guilt, or upon the sick any guilt [for staying away from a war in Allah's cause", (48:17)

In summary, one can assert with no doubt, that the Holy Qur'an was the earliest initiator and defender for disability rights.

Likewise, 1,400 years ago, way before the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was enacted, following the commands of the Holy Qur'an, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), worked hard to ensure that people with disabilities were catered for and were given their rights and privileges, including the right to a normal life just like anyone else. (Islam, 2020). He (PBUH) was so keen to comfort all people especially those with disabilities and raise their self-esteem. This is mirrored in the following narrations:

1. Anas bin Malak R.A., narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Allah said: If I afflict any human being by losing his/her eyes and they showed patience for this loss, Paradise will compensate them for this." (Al-Bukhari, 2001, 5653).

2. Also, Abou Huraira R.A. narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said that: "Whoever Allah wants good for, He will afflict him." (Al-Bukhari, 2001, 5645). (Meaning He afflicts him with calamities hoping to purify him from his sins, so that he will meet the Al-Mighty sin free".

3. Similarly, Al-Sayida Aisha R.A. narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said that: "Any Muslim is not afflicted by hardship, disease, anxiety, sadness, injury, or distress, not even a thorn pricked by a thorn, except that Allah expiates some of his sins". (Al-Bukhari, 2001, 5640; & Muslim, n.d., 2572).

So, this was a brief snapshot showing how the Holy Qur'an and al-Sunnah al-Sharifa viewed the blind and the disabled. Of course, what was documented in the Islamic literature in this regard is so huge and

goes beyond the scope of this article. But one might ask: what about Muslim Leaders who came later, did they follow the teachings of their Prophet (PBUH) regarding the disabled? This will be answered in the following points:

a. As for Muslims' Caliph, an outstanding role model was Omar Ibn Al-Khattab (40 bA.H.-23A.H.), the second Rashidun Caliph, who used to take care personally for an old blind lady, cleaning her house and meeting her daily regular needs. (Ibn-Khathir, 1988, vol. 7, pp.152-153). Also, Omar R.A. granted a man with a disabled child a house near the mosque, when the father complained that his son was unable to reach the mosque because of his disability. (Aljazoli, 2004).

b. Next, in the second Islamic state in Damascus, al Walid ibn-Abdul Malik (50-96 A.H.) the Umayyad Caliph, who assigned for each blind a guide to lead him and for each disabled and needy individual a caregiver. (Al-Tabari, 1967, vol. 6, p. 496). Interestingly, Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi said that al-Walid was the first person to build the *bimirstan* (hospital) in Islam during the year 88 A.H. /706 CE, to accommodate the intellectually disabled as part of its services. He also locked up people with lepers in special hospitals and granted them a fixed allowance during their sickness. (Issa, 1981, vol.1, p. 10).

c. A further example was Omar bin-Abdul Aziz (61-101A.H.), the eighth Umayyad Caliph, who took special care of the disabled as well, when he ordered for every blind a guide to lead him/her through the way. Similarly, he gave orders that each two incapacitated people or those with chronic disease should have a servant to take care of their needs. (lbn-El-Hakam, 1984, vol. 1, p. 54). In addition, This Caliph gave orders to all the leaders in Iraq, Damascus, and other cities that all poor, needy sick people, and those with any kind of physical disability must be allocated a regular monthly income. (Al-Tabari, 1967, vol. 6, pp. 569-570).

The above mentioned examples provide solid evidence for the massive support being given to the blind, needy, and disabled people in the early Islamic societies. Indeed, Islam gives all groups within the society full attention; each has their own rights, dignity, and respect

including those with disability (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012, p.207). This was the general perception of Islam towards the blind and other disabled individuals. As for the West, equally, the world began steadily to change its view towards the blind too, and this happened during the Enlightenment period which will discussed in the following paragraph.

The Blind during the Enlightenment Period

During the *Enlightenment* of the 17th and 18th centuries, philosophers in Europe introduced new questions about blindness and the nature of the blind. The Anglican philosopher, George Berkeley in an essay *Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), set rhetorical scenarios which allowed speculation as to the nature of learning and understanding by the blind. If understanding was generated from within, as Berkeley argued, then there was no reason a blind person could not learn as well as the sighted (Miller, 2006). This led to the new phase of educating the blind.

Educating the Blind

French philosopher Denis Diderot – originator of the philosophical foundation for educating the blind – penned one of the first treatises to include significant discussion about the education of the blind in his paper "*Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who Can See*" (1749). The essay suggested that the sense of touch could be honed for reading in blind persons, pre-figuring the 19th-century invention of Braille's writing system. He emphasised the role of sensory experience in human accomplishment, espousing the idea that the ability to see was not central to the ability to understand and reason. Diderot argued that the blind could be educated so long as the educator focused on what skills the blind person possessed and not on the lack of sight. Next, in 1784, Professor Valentin Haüy – a French calligrapher – opened the first school for the blind in Paris, where Louis Braille get some of his primary education, before introducing what is known now as the Braille Language (Miller, 2006).

After this summary about the history of the disabled and the blind during the old times, let us mention some of the inspiring outstanding blind figures who left us a huge and valuable literary legacy that contributed to the enrichment of the world's cultural heritage.

Among Some of the Well-known Blind Figures

Historical knowledge of the lives of blind people in the pre-modern Western world is extremely limited. What is left to the historian is a

collection of biographies of "extraordinary" individuals, starting with Homer (around 701 BCE): one of the greatest and most influential Greek writers, known as the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to John Milton (d.1674 CE), an English poet and prose polemicist, known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, to Louis Braille (d. 1852 CE), a French educator, and the inventor of the *Braille Language*, which is the subject of this article, then to Helen Keller, an American author (d. 1968 CE), known as the disability rights' advocate, and finally to Jorge Luis Borges (d. 1986 CE), an Argentine short-story writer, essayist and poet, who contributed to philosophical literature and the fantasy genre. These figures and many others not mentioned in this article, proves that blind people can pull together to create an honourable tapestry of blind people's history (Miller, 2006).

As for blind people in the pre-Islamic period, i.e. that preceding the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, also known as Al-Jahiliyya (Al-Tahanawi, 1996, vol. 1, p. 547), or during Islam, literature cited many well-known names, whose blindness did not stop them from leading a successful and productive life, leaving valuable literary work that enriched the Arabic and the Islamic literature, amongst whom we mention Al- Aa'sha (d. 629 CE), one of the most prominent pre-Islamic poets, known for his ten *Mu'allaqat,* which is one of the most famous Arabs' poetry. Some said it has been called so because, like precious jewels, it sticks to the mind. Others said that these poems were written in gold water and hung on the Kaaba's curtains before the advent of Islam (Ibn Khaldun, 1988, vol. 1, p. 804; Al-Rafi, n.d. vol. 3, p. 121). Abdallah bin Umm Maktoum (d. 15A.H.) one of the Prophet's blind companions (mentioned earlier), whose blindness did not stop him neither from memorising and teaching the Holy Quran, nor from being one of the bravest Muslim martyrs when he insisted to share in al-Qādesiya battle despite his blindness. Al-Qādesiya was a decisive battle that took place during 14/15 A.H., when Muslims' army overcame a larger Sasanian army. This victory paved the way for Islamic subsequent conquest of Iraq (Ibn Kathir, 1988, vol. 7, p. 51). Qatada bin Da'ama Al-Sadusi (d.118 A.H.) was one of the top Muslim scholars who specialised in Hadith, Tafsir, and the Arabic Language. He classified many important books and was known for his extra-ordinary memorisation power. Bashar bin Burd (d.168 A.H.) was known as the leader of the reformed poets of his time. There was also Abu al-Ala'a'

Al-Maa'rri (d.449 A.H.), considered as one of the greatest classical Arabic poets, a thinker, and a writer from the Abbasid era. In the modern era, there was also Taha Hussein (d.1973 CE), an Egyptian writer and an intellect, who was nominated for the *Nobel Prize in literature* fourteen times.

Innovative Methods for the Blind to Read and Write

The two preceding paragraphs cited names of some notable scholars whose blindness did not prevent them from becoming famous writers, poets, or thinkers. On the other hand, there are some other people – Muslims and non- Muslims – who excelled in a different manner, i.e., by creating new means, or inventing new systems to educate the blind helping them read and write. Their attempts will be discussed fully in the following section, starting with Louis Braille.

Who is Louis Braille?

Louis Braille was born on 4 January 1809 CE in Coupvray, a small town about 20 miles from Paris. At the age of three, Louis Braille stabbed his right eye with a sharp tool. By the age of five, Louis Braille was completely blind. On 6 January 1852, at the age of 43, Louis Braille died from tuberculosis that he endured for many years. (Miller C. M., 2006, pp. 2,13,16).

Origins of the Braille System

Note that the first reading system by touch for blind people was created by Francesco Lana Terzi (1631-1687 CE), an Italian professor of physics. In 1670 CE, he wrote "How a blind person from birth can not only learn to write, but also hide his secrets in code and understand the answer using the same code." The importance of the system designed by Lana is that it was the invention of a reading system not based on the system of sighted people. Other trials and attempts followed; however, many of these trials were unpractical, thus had limited usage. Later, Valentine Haüy (1745-1822 CE), devised a different system which was based on reading Roman letters in relief (Jime´nez et al., 2009, p. 144).

During his childhood, Braille used the education system developed by Valentine Haüy based on reading Roman alphabet letters using the sense of touch. This writing system was based on typographical composition. Blind people could read by recognising ordinary letters

in relief by touch, and the same system was used to teach arithmetic.
(Jime´nez et al., 2009, p. 144).

Barbier's Sonography

The immediate precursor of the raised dot-based reading system
employing touch, known as the Braille system, was the creation of a
French artillery captain, named Charles Barbier de la Serre (1767-1841
CE), who developed a unique system known as "night writing" for
soldiers to communicate safely at night. Although Barbier's method is
acknowledged as highly important, his sonography was not useful for
spelling, dictation, or calculation tasks. However, it might be fair to say
that without the creation of the Barbier system, it is very possible that
the Braille's alphabet might not have existed (Jime´nez et al., 2009, p.
145).

Birth of the Braille Language

Although it was not designed for the blind, Louis Braille used Barbier's
slate with minor modifications to write his alphabet. In 1825, at just
16 years of age, Louis Braille had already completed the essence of
writing by touch. In 1829, the procedure was published in his work
titled: *"Procedure for writing words, music, and Gregorian chant using
dots, for use by the blind and made by them (Proce´de´ pour e´crire les
paroles, la musique et la plain-chant au moyen de points, a l'usage des
aveugles et dispose´s por eux)."* In 1837, this edition was improved and
even simplified, and the first book was printed using the Braille system.
The 1837 text defined the alphabet, numbers, spelling signs, and musical
notation, and it is essentially very similar to the current Braille system
(Jime´nez et al., 2009, p. 146). So, let us look at the real configuration
of the Braille Language.

Braille Raised Dotted Language

Braille raised dotted Language is a writing system that uses embossed
paper. It consists of characters – small rectangular blocks – called cells
that contain tiny palpable bumps called raised dots (Sultana et al., 2017,
p. 195). To read in Braille, a visually impaired individual would use
the two index fingers, one being the "focus" and the other being the
"context".

Braille dots are numbered from 1 to 6 and arranged in 2 columns and 3 rows. Different combinations of dots indicate various characters of the language. There are sixty-four possible combinations that use one or more of these six dots. A single cell can be used to represent a letter, number, punctuation mark, or even a whole word. A person can use one or both hands to read the Braille characters. Braille is not a language, but a code by which many natural languages such as English, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and dozens of others are written and read (Dasgupta et al., 2017).

Figure 1: (a) Braille raised dotted language; (b) Braille Cell

(a)   (b)
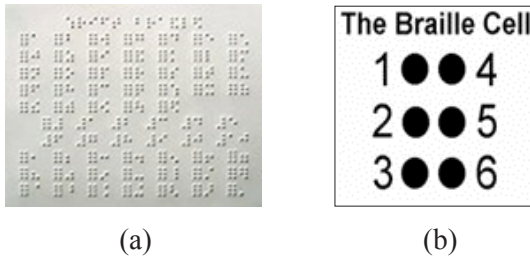
Later, an 8-dot Braille Unicode was introduced to facilitate the Computer Braille that could represent all 95-computer characters with one Braille cell itself. The 8-dot Braille can represent a maximum of 256 unique symbols. It has a huge potential to provide the ultimate solution to Braille users while writing texts (in English or in other languages) as well as mathematical and technical texts (Garg, 2016).

The Acceptance of the Braille System in France

During his lifetime, Braille received recognition for inventing his alphabets only from a small circle of people, and never received formal public recognition. It was not until 1854 that the Braille system was officially adopted in France (Miller C. M., 2006, p. 8).

Recognising Braille's System as a Universal Language by UNESCO

In March 1950, UNESCO adopted the recommendations at the Paris International Meeting on Braille Uniformity. On 21st February 2005, and in cooperation with the World Blind Union, UNESCO chose to highlight the Braille system as a ''vital language of communication, as legitimate as all other languages in the world'' (Jime´nez et al., 2009, p. 148).

However, it must be noted that despite its international recognition and widespread usage, Braille's system represents only one of several preceding unknown attempts to develop useful systems for the blind to read and write. Biographies of well-known Muslim scholars mentioned that three Muslim pioneers have various attempts at creating letters for the blind, preceding Braille. Although not much is known about how many people benefited from those trials still, these inventions should not be overlooked, but need to be acknowledged and presented to the world. The following paragraphs will describe the three discoveries and highlight some of its peculiarities.

Muslim Inventors Pre-Braille

Literature quotes various accomplishments of Muslim scholars making great achievements contributing to the Islamic civilisation. Some of these scholars were not blind, while others were born blind, or maybe lost their sight after some time, still they were able to overcome their disability, presenting extraordinary work for the benefit of others; (Abdul Aziz et al., 2018), among whom we mention Mohammad bin Abdul-Warith (5th century A.H.), Zein Eddine al-Amidy (d.712 A.H. /1312A CE), and Wazir Al-Sarraj (d. 1149A.H./1736-1737 CE). These three Muslim Pioneers succeeded to discover three different reading methods for the blind before Braille, and we will start with the first one: Mohammad bin Abdul Warith. (Ibn-Hazm, 1900; al-Safadi, 2007; Mahfouz, 1994).

Mohammad bin Abdul-Warith (5th century A.H. /1009-1106 CE).

Mohammad bin Abdul Warith is an astounding Muslim inventor who lived in Andalusia in the fifth century A.H. (1009-1106 CE). Unfortunately, little is known about Abdul Warith's personal life or about his career. But one can conclude that Abdul Warith was a highly knowledgeable individual – if not a very well-known Muslim scholar – and an exceptionally talented and skilled person to invent letters for the blind at that date. This conclusion is confirmed firstly by being determined to teach his blind born child by himself despite the hard circumstances existing at that time, secondly by the fact that his second son Ahmad, was the private tutor of Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi (384-456 A.H.), a Muslim polymath whose writings gained much fame. In fact, the credit goes to Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi who fortunately recorded Abdul Warith's invention in one of his books titled *Al-Taqrib li Hadd al-*

Mantiq (Approximation of Logic). Ibn Hazm says: "My teacher Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Abdul Warith told me that his father, Mohammad bin Abdul Warith, created a method for the blind to read and write. Originally, he invented it for his young son who was born blind" (Ibn-Hazm, 1900, p.192).

Abdul Warith's Embossed Letters

As mentioned earlier, Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi was the sole Muslim scholar recording Abdul Warith's invention in his book, *Al-Taqrib li Hadd al-Mantiq*, when he said "At first, Abdul Warith made few embossed palpable figures representing the letters of the alphabet from pitch (or tar)." Using his sense of touch, Abdul-Warith instructed his blind son to touch these embossed figures until the boy was able to configure the form of these figures in his mind. Next, he asked him to touch several sequences of various combinations of these embossed letters, thus giving more familiarity to them. With training, the child started to combine multiple different alphabetic letters with its corresponding palpable tar figures to form a word. Shortly afterwards, the blind child was able to form a series of different words, followed by another set of words, then forming a line, and so on so forth until he completed one whole book. With persistence and continuous hard work, Abdul Warith's blind son was able to read and write by himself (Ibn Hazm, 1900, p.192).

Only this much is known about Mohammad bin Abdul-Warith's invention. Had he taught others the embossed letters, he would have no doubt changed those peoples' way of life. Learning to read and write from a blind's person perspective is by far more than just learning the alphabet, it represents a way of connection to the world, to be more involved, dynamic, independent, and productive; one can say it is a *Way to Life*. Interestingly, in some of his verses, Abu al-Ala'a' Al-Maa'rri (d.449A.H.), a blind poet (mentioned earlier in the first section of this article) affirms that reading by touch was well-known among Arabs living during the fifth century A.H., when he said:

<div dir="rtl">

كَأَنَّ مُنَجِّمَ الأَقوامِ أَعمى لَدَيهِ الصُحُفُ يَقرَؤُها بِلَمسٍ

لَقَد طالَ العَناءُ فَكَم يُعاني سُطوراً عادَ كاتِبُها بِطَمسٍ

</div>

"It is as if a blind astrologer has scrolls that he reads by touching.

The suffering has taken so long, how many lines the writer has to write in obliteration".

Based on this, Abdul Warith's attempt to help his blind son to read and write should be recognised. His name should be honoured for the remarkable effort that he made. After Mohammad bin Abdul Warith's amazing story with his blind son, let us discuss another attempt done by Zein Eddine Al-Amidy, a distinguished Muslim scholar, who should be credited for being the first to invent an innovative model for the blind to read and write before Braille.

Zein Eddine Al-Amidy (d.712 A.H. /1312 CE)

He is Al-Imam Abou El-Hassan Ali bin Ahmed bin Yusuf bin Al-Khader Al-Amidy commonly known as Zein Eddine Al-Amidy. Nothing is mentioned about his birth date, but it is known that he was originally from Amid, the most important province of Diyarbakir in the northeast of the Levant, in what is present-day Turkey. However, he was born in Baghdad, and spent all his life in it until he died there in 712 A.H. / 1312 CE.

Zein Eddine Al Amidy's childhood and educational background

Literature quotes that Al-Amidy became blind during his childhood, but nothing is mentioned whether it was congenital or disease-related. For learning, Al-Amidy attended different Shaykhs' Councils in Baghdad, such as the one headed by Majd al-Din Abd al-Samad Ibn Abi al-Jaish, Shaykh of Reading *(Qira'at)* in Baghdad (d.67 A.H.) and other councils specialising in Fiqh, Arabic language, and other sciences.

Remarkably, Al-Amidy became one of the most senior scholars in Hanbalis Jurisprudence. He was a prolific scholar who mastered not only the sciences of the Arabic Language, but other languages too, including Persian, Turkish, Mongolian, and Latin. He also penned such tomes as *Jawahir al-Tafsir fi 'Ilm Al-Ta'bir* (Gems of the Science of Composition) (Zerkli, 2002, vol. 4, p. 257), *Muntaha al-Usul Fi 'Ilm al- Usul* (The Ultimate Basics of the Principles of Jurisprudence), and *Ta'alik fi al-Fiqh al-Hanbali* (Comments on Hanbali Jurisprudence) (Ibn-Hajar, 1972. vol. 4, p. 25).

Zein Eddine Al Amidy's Invention: Reading by Touch

Despite his blindness, Al-Amidy was an exceptional man, possessing an insight that surpassed those of the sighted. He was an inspiring figure. His disability did not prevent him from becoming a famed Professor

in Al-Mustansiriya School in Baghdad, the largest University in the world at that time. He was so creative, inventive, and proficient that the presidency of the University allocated him a single room on the University's campus in recognition for his outstanding innovative work.

Being blind since his childhood, Al-Amidy got motivated to find a way to read and write. His job as a Librarian – if we can name it so – left him with no other choice but to invent a method to read and write. Interestingly, Al-Amidy used to gather all kinds of books, assemble them on shelves to sell them later. It was reported that during his daily trading, whenever Al-Amidy bought a book, he took a piece of paper, twist it to take the shape of one of the alphabetic letters. Then, he used "these small, twisted papers" to know the price of the books he was selling (Al-Safadi, 2000, vol. 20, p. 127). Al-Amidy affixed these paper-made letters at the edge of each book's cover. If he forgot the price of any book, he would touch those papers-made letters he fixed to the edge of every book to know its exact price (Zerkli, 2002, vol. 4, p. 257).

From Al- Safadi's past description to Al-Amidy's method, one can infer that Al-Amidy made his paper letters relatively prominent so that he could read through touch, a similar principle applied by Braille five centuries later (Al-Safadi, 2000, vol. 20, p. 127). Being an outstanding scholar with exceptional insight, Al Amidy was able to tell the contents of any book just by touching its cover. Not only that, but he was able to tell the number of lines in any page only by moving his fingers over that page (Al-Safadi, 2007, vol. 1, p. 191).

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, a famous Muslim scholar (d.852 A.H), recorded Al-Amidy's extraordinary abilities in mastering his innovative method, asserting that he was famous for this invention (Ibn-Hajar, 1972, vol. 4, p. 25). Similarly, according to a study published in 1911, Ahmad Zaki Pasha (an Egyptian philologist, d.1934 CE) said that: "Zayn Eddine Al-Amidy's method preceded Braille's by about six hundred years" (Zaki-Pasha, 1911, vol. 61, p. 77). Also, in his book *The Civilization of Baghdad in the Abbasid Era,* Mikhail Awad (an Iraqi historian, d.1996 CE.) said: "Al-Amidy is the first one to master this art before Braille, and if we want be fair enough, the whole credit should go to Al-Amidy creating a language for the blind by touch before Braille". Mastering how to read, write, and do arithmetic calculations using this

unique genuine method, Al-Amidy's succeeded to live a fruitful life like
the sighted; working, learning, teaching, *and classifying books.*

Wazir Al-Sarraj (d. 1149A.H./1736-1737CE)

Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmed bin Mustafa
Abu Abdullah al-Andalusi, also known as Wazir Al-Sarraj, was a
Tunisian polymath. He was also a famed scientist, historian, writer, poet,
and a remarkable inventor. He was born in Tunisia in1070 A.H./1659 CE
and he lived there until he died in 1149A.H. /1736-1737 CE (Mahfouz,
1994, vol. 5, p. 138; Makhlouf, 2003, vol. 1, p. 471).

He was proficient in Islamic Jurisprudence, Hadith, Literature,
Poetry, and History. He received his education from several Shaykhs at
the Zaytuna Mosque including Ibrahim Al-Jamal, Muhammad Fatata,
Muhammad al-Hajij al-Andalusi, Ali and Muhammad al-Ghamad,
Saeed al-Sharif, Al-Sfakisi Muhammad, al-Sagir Daoud, Muhammad
Ashour, Ahmad Birnar, and many others (Mahfouz, 1994, vol. 5, pp.
138-139; Makhlouf, 2003, vol. 1, p. 471).

Wazir Al-Sarraj's Career

Al-Sarraj taught in several schools, eventually becoming well known
in the fields of science and literature. Later, he was employed by Prince
Hussein bin Ali (the founder of the Bayat State) as a teacher at Zaytouna
Mosque. The prince was happy with Al-Sarraj's performance, and
appointed him in different key positions. Interestingly, Prince Hussein
permitted Al-Sarraj to hold special regular meetings with other Muslim
scholars to share general knowledge, and to update them about his great
book in progress entitled *Al-Hullal al-Sundusiya*. Also, Prince Hussein
asked Al-Sarraj to prepare the text that he inscribed on his official seal
to stamp his letters and looked forward for Al-Sarraj's companionship
in some of his travels (Mahfouz, 1994, vol. 5, p. 138).

Wazir Al-Sarraj's Reading Method

Although not blind, Al-Sarraj invented a reading method for the blind
upon the request of his blind teacher Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Jamal Al-
Safaqisi. This was mentioned in the book titled: *Trajim Al-Mouelifin
al-Tunisien* in the biography of Shaykh Ibrahim al-Jamal, a blind reciter
of the Holy Quran (Mahfouz, 1994, vol. 2, p. 54). Upon the request of
his teacher, Al-Sarraj created waxed figures to fashion models of the

Arabic alphabets for his old blind shaykh to read and write (Mahfouz, 1994, vol. 2, p. 54). Unluckily, this much was only recorded about Wazir Al-Sarraj's waxed letters, but one can imagine that he asked his blind teacher to touch these waxed letters, get acquainted to their forms, then relate each form to one of the alphabetic letters, until Sheik Ibrahim al-Jamal was able to read and write. This simple reading method by touch for the blind preceded Braille's system by nearly a century.

To sum up, one can notice that the three previously mentioned inventions, whether made from embossed palpable figures of tar as Abdul Warith did, or from paper as Al-Amidy did, or from waxed as Wazir Al-Sarraj did, all used the sense of touch to read and write as Braille did later.

Conclusion

The invention of writing by raised objects or dots was an event of enormous historic importance for blind people. It was a milestone in the history of education for the blind, and it put the universe of reading within their reach. Three Muslim pioneers invented three creative methods for the blind before Braille. Going as far back as the 5th century A.H. (1009-1106 CE), Muhammad bin Abdul Warith invented embossed figures from pitch for his blind son. This was then followed by Zein Eddine Al-Amidy (d.712 A.H. /1312 CE), who invented paper-made letters for himself to read, write and sell books. Finally, Wazir Al-Sarraj (d. 1149A.H. /1736-1737 CE) created waxed letters for his blind teacher to read and write.

Presently, Braille's raised-dots system has been adapted to many other native languages other than French, thus serving a wide range of blind people all over the world. Ultimately, blind, and visually impaired people around the globe are benefiting from the outstanding innovative trials of a long line of past inventors, whose contributions should be cherished.

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In the Name of Covid-19: Democratic Reversal and the Return of Authoritarian Malaysia under Muhyiddin's Perikatan Nasional

Muhamad M.N. Nadzri[*]

Abstract: In late February 2020, the democratically-elected *Pakatan Harapan's* coalition government was toppled, arguably through a self-inflicted coup by its component party *Bersatu,* which brokered a deal with its allies from within and outside of the coalition. Based on a synthesis from Bridget Welsh' ideas on political mandate and Andreas Schedler's new institutionalism, this article explores how the royal mandate was taken advantage of by the newly formed coalition government, the *Perikatan Nasional* (PN), in confronting challenges for its survival by resorting to authoritarianism, blanketed by its policies to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is argued that the pandemic brought an adverse effect to PN's regime integrity in a way that it had both became the source of regime sustainability and regime subversion. While the democratic reversal is clearly apparent, the failure of Muhyiddin's administration to effectively deal with the challenges of good governance during the pandemic had eventually led to its own demise.

Keywords: Barisan Nasional; Covid-19 pandemic; Malaysia; Pakatan Harapan; Perikatan Nasional.

Abstrak: Pada lewat Februari 2020, kerajaan Pakatan Harapan (PH) yang telah dipilih secara demokratik melalui Pilihan Raya Umum 2018, dijatuhkan melalui apa yang boleh dianggap sebagai rampasan kuasa kendiri (*autocoup*) oleh Bersatu, iaitu salah satu parti komponennya, bersama sekutu-sekutu parti itu di dalam dan luar PH. Berdasarkan sintesis idea Bridget Welsh tentang mandat politik dan perspektif Andreas Schedler mengenai institusionalisme

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baharu, artikel ini meneroka bagaimana mandat di-Raja telah digunapakai oleh kerajaan baharu yang terbentuk ketika itu – Perikatan Nasional (PN) dalam berhadapan dengan cabaran-cabaran survival pemerintahannya melalui kaedah autoritarianisme atas nama pandemik Covid-19. Walau bagaimanapun, artikel ini menghujahkan pandemik itu membawa kesan yang bertentangan kepada integriti rejim—ia telah menjadi punca kepada ketahanan dan kejatuhannya. Meskipun kebalikan demokrasi di bawah pentadbiran Muhyiddin boleh dilihat dengan jelas, namun kesukarannya untuk menangani cabaran-cabaran yang dibawa oleh pandemik melalui governans yang berkesan akhirnya membawa kepada kejatuhan kerajaannya.

Introduction

In May 2018, Pakatan Harapan (PH) dramatically defeated the longstanding UMNO/Barisan Nasional (BN) government in the 14th General Election. The breakthrough was made possible by a double jeopardy suffered by the ruling regime, contributed by a fundamental elite rupture within the BN coalition when the defectors later made a pact with PH and coordinated their campaign to challenge the former in the 2018 election (Nadzri, 2018). The pact was not so much of an ideological congruence found among parties in PH, but rather a marriage of convenience *vis-à-vis* an "intra-elite struggle for power" (Gomez & Nawab, 2019). Its main objective, which is somewhat short-sighted, was to topple the BN government and oust the then prime minister, Najib Abdul Razak, from power. Hence, it was more of a semi-"replacement" or a quasi-"transplacement" of political administration (Huntington, 1991), or a governmental change rather than a regime change (Tapsell 2020).

However, it is empirically unreflective to say that the PH regime was just as similar to the previous BN regime. Although cronyism (Gomez, 2019) and patronage (Case, 2019, pp. 21-24) persisted, the PH government did make some noticeable progress during its term from May 2018 to February 2020 (Azmil, 2020, p. 105; *New Straits Times*, 2020). The rights to freedom of expression and assembly, for instance, saw significant improvement (Bedi, 2019); so much so that it actually turned the PH government as the main target of politics of dis/mis-information and ethno-populism (Shah, 2019; Jomo K.S., quoted in Kow, 2019). The independence of judiciary also saw significant

improvement since the late 1980s (*Freedom House*, 2020), while the
role of the Parliament was being revived from a mere rubber-stamp
institution (Mauzy, 2013) through several changes towards reforms and
democratic practices (Reuters, 2019). Nevertheless, as indicative to its
nature as a semi-replacement regime, PH displayed a combination of
old order elite (who dominantly control the government) and reformists,
making changes and continuity of policies and practices of the previous
regime. Instead, they dynamically evolved from a substantially hybrid
regime (Case 2019) to a weak democracy.

As a result of the short-sighted and loose coalition, PH's integrity
as the ruling government went unresolved since the early phase of
its administration. UMNO's splinter party, the Malaysian United
Indigenous Party or Bersatu, led by Mahathir Mohamad and Muhyiddin
Yassin dominated key positions in the government—Mahathir held
the prime minister's office while Muhyiddin held the home minister's
office. Mahathir made full use of his prerogative as the prime minister
to appoint a majority of Bersatu MPs in his cabinet although his party
won only 13 seats out of the 113 seats PH won in the 2018 election. His
skilful manoeuvre had placed important checks against the influence
of the larger reformer groups particularly from the People's Justice
Party (PKR) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) both in the ruling
coalition and the government. Nevertheless, the reformers constituted
a large majority in the coalition and were pushing for a more equitable
form of coalition. When Anwar Ibrahim was pardoned and released
from the prison soon after PH's triumph in the general election, allies
within PH, particularly Bersatu, became increasingly uncomfortable
(Abdullah, 2019). After 22 months in power, Bersatu initiated a self-
coup with the support from the opposition parties through the palace,
with Muhyiddin's faction came out as the victor.

The coup happened in late February 2020, when the first wave of the
Covid-19 pandemic hit Malaysia and the world. Muhyiddin's coalition
government, later known as the Perikatan National (National Alliance,
PN), faced several challenges from Anwar's PH and the Mahathir's
faction since the inception of the new government as they both believed
that Muhyiddin did not have the majority support from the MPs. Instead
of proving the legitimacy of his government, Muhyiddin strategically
manipulated democratic institutions and procedures, seeking popular

legitimacy by systematically constraining freedoms and rights by blanketing them under policies to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the above premises, this paper seeks to highlight the sudden return of authoritarianism in Malaysia, through various manoeuvres by Muhyiddin's PN government in consolidating his powers and constraining the challenges to the regime's survival under the pretext of combating the pandemic. As it was a government with less legal-rational mandate, but more of a traditional one (Welsh, 2021), its policies in responding to the Covid-19 were crucial for the regime to obtain popular public approval. As indicated in the last three general elections in Malaysia (2008, 2013 and 2018) and the change of governments, the voters are now more informed and critical towards those in power, while party-identification is on a downward trend to an incremental size of rational voter in the country (Ostwald, 2019). In addition to that, the PN government had to confront the legacy from PH, particularly its tolerance with political criticisms and the restoration of an independent judiciary. Despite the return of authoritarianism in Malaysia under Muhyiddin's PN, particularly through executive aggrandizement (Thompson, 2021), political developments in Malaysia since 2008 had arguably set up some check and balance mechanisms on the political system to prevent it from turning into a full authoritarian regime (Nadzri, 2018), despite still hovering in the grey area of a "hybrid regime" category albeit skewed to an autocracy (Lemiere, 2021).

The Trappings of a Hybrid Regime in Malaysia

Malaysia is often cited as one of the prime references of a hybrid regime in most scholarly discussions on political system (Levitsky & Way, 2002). A hybrid regime is neither fully democratic nor fully authoritarian (Gervasoni, 2018). The two forces of regime i.e. transformation— democratisation and autocracy dynamically co-exist on every level of the political system and compete with each other to construct a new reality, a category, or a system. In contrast to absolute monarchy, dictatorship, or totalitarianism, hybrid regimes are not fundamentally sustained by forces of traditional institutions such as the military junta or a police state, instead it is maintained through skilful manipulation of new democratic institutions and processes such as elections or legislative, judiciary, and executive power (Case, 2020). Additionally,

as noted by Ekman (2009, p. 8), "hybrid regimes… are not poorly functioning *democracies* but new forms of *authoritarian regimes*".

The British's Anglo-Malay Working Committee in 1946 - involving the British officials in Malaya, UMNO leaders, and representatives of the Malay Rulers (Wah, 1973) – ushered a new political system for an independent Malaya which had led to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy with constitutional monarchy and federal state in 1957 (Milner, 1991). The 1957 Federal Constitution of Malaya, later Malaysia in 1963, integrated and combined various interests within its society and territory which were not only significantly different but were opposing one another (Fong, 2016). The power of the traditional authority is limited with its parliamentary democracy but the Malays are still holding substantive residual powers. The Malays are conferred special rights *vis-à-vis* the recognised legitimate interests over other communities (Stockwell, 1976; Andaya & Andaya, 1982). Citizenry rights and freedoms are also enshrined in the constitution along with the operatives of the branches of government (the separation of powers between the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary), and demarcated jurisdiction between the federal and state governments. Constitutionally, national elections must be held once every five years and all Malaysian citizens above twenty-one years old are eligible to vote (Ufen, 2009).

Rather than allowing Malaya to freely self-determine on their own, there was an agenda to preserve the British interests in Malaya, particularly its economic control over various industries; thus, alliance with conformist elites was sought. As a result, Malay aristocrats and administrative officers who largely worked for the colonial government enjoyed a widening political space at the expense of radical and left-leaning leaders who were banned from politics since 1948. Chandra Muzaffar (2020) referred to the groups as the "Malay administocrats." The political control over the left-leaning group, the pragmatic pact between UMNO-MCA-MIC (which later formed the Alliance coalition), and identity politics championed by the UMNO/Alliance substantially contributed to its landslide victory in the first general election held in 1955. This victory for UMNO/Alliance became the first independent Malayan government in 1957. While the Alliance adopted a multiparty model to power, the political ends of the UMNO/Malay administocrats did not fully accept democracy, but rather to hold onto state power in

achieving sectoral and party interests in the name of religion (Islam), the nation (Malay), and the state (*Tanah Melayu*).

Political oppressions and later manipulations were used to cripple dissidents, while weakened institutional democratic checks, and election gerrymandering largely contributed to UMNO's hegemony for more than six decades until the 2018 General Election. Nevertheless, the character of the political system was not entirely static or plainly moving towards authoritarianism *per se*. It was still very much dynamic in nature with a lot of new challenges of democratisation to UMNO's autocratisation projects at various political levels, largely brought by the forces of modernisation and globalisation. In 1984, Mahathir's BN administration attempted to tighten its grip over the mass media by enacting the Printing Presses and Publications Act as his regime's response against media literacy and burgeoning size of working and middle class. The move was substantially effective and most of the media in Malaysia were considered as propaganda tools in regime perpetuation until late 1990s. The arrival of internet technology, however, came about at the same time as the major split in UMNO/BN (Anwar was side-lined from UMNO which gave birth to PKR), which opened up some new sites of resistance, political contestation and 'new media' although Mahathir had responded by enacting another draconian law – the Communication and Multimedia Act in 1998. Throughout the history of post-colonial Malaysia, political competition remains vibrant albeit with the said moves of "authoritarian innovations" (Dettman, 2020) to the extent that the system is considered as "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky & Way, 2002). The opposition bloc managed to win a few regional states repeatedly since the 1959 general election, and won popular votes in the 2013 general election before ultimately ousting UMNO/BN in the 2018 general election.

The above illustrations were a direct application from Schedler (2009: 329) idea on how the autocrats are confronted with the challenge of survival, vertically and horizontally. Autocrats in the hybrid regime of Malaysia also faced "challenge of governance" when they had to "secure their ability to power" (Schedler 2009: 326) based on the recognised policy demands domestically and internationally particularly by introducing new, or reforming or repealing the existing rules and organisations without significantly alter the regime character or allow those rules and organisations to place real democratic checks

on the autocrats. Although such moves might probably help autocrats in maintaining their regime relevancy, the establishment of new organisations and rules might possibly pose a source of threat to the regime continuation (Schedler 2009: 339). In contrast to Schedler's account, this paper contends that the challenge of governance for Muhyiddin's PN was not essentially institutional, but rather performance-based. The state's institutions under Muhyiddin's administration, as explored later in this paper, helped to sustain the new regime rather than subverting it.

Welsh (2021) argues that there are three types of political legitimacy in the hybrid regimes of Malaysia, namely; the traditional, legal-rational, and performance-based. This could be seen as a synthesis of concept of authority by Max Weber (Spencer, 1970), and Pepinsky's (2009) account on the relations between performance (economic) and authoritarian regimes stability. Arguably, those are not "types" but rather constitute important elements or components for authoritarian governance or mandate in Malaysia. This is because having only one, or even two, of the components is not always sustainable. The traditional legitimacy exists when the regime is dominated by the Malay-Muslim, championing the agenda of Malay supremacy and protecting its interests in relevant government institutions. The legal-rational aspect comes into discussion when the regime is capable of securing a win at a national election. The performance-based mandate, as its name suggests, is achieved through effective policy and decision making in bringing about progress in the state, particularly economic growth. The durability of the BN regime for six decades was due to the fact that they scored well in all components of those mandates before declining in its performance since Abdullah Badawi's leadership. On the other hand, PH is seen lacking in the traditional and its performance was also circumscribed.

The PN did not come to power on a legal-rational basis. It has neither win a national election nor established through a legislative procedure, but its mandate to govern essentially came from a traditional legitimacy through a royal endorsement and it was strengthened with the fact that PN is mostly comprised of conservative Malay-Muslim leaders. Nevertheless, as argued above, having only one of the components in the political mandate was not sustainable in the long run, even for a hybrid regime in Malaysia. Although the Covid-19 pandemic allowed PN to subvert checks and balances horizontally (particularly from

the parliament) and vertically (especially the civic groups) through politicisation and skilful manoeuvres, thus helping the PN's regime survival, it also posed a challenge of governance to the regime. The political survival of PN depends on how well the government can effectively manage the pandemic and its repercussions in the short run, which will impact its legal-rational basis (through confidence vote or elections) or traditional mandate in the long run.

Bersatu Clinging onto Power in Putrajaya: From Pakatan Harapan to Perikatan Nasional

The 2020 'auto coup' was considered by Bersatu and its allies since the early phase of PH administration as one of the means to cling on to power (Hilman 2020: interview). If the media regarded the self-coup as the "Sheraton Move", Bersatu and its allies perceived it as "the right move" (*langkah kanan*) (Hilman 2020: interview). UMNO and opposition leaders were invited to defect to Bersatu when PH captured Putrajaya in May 2018. Due to the pressure from criminal investigations, continuation of unequal allocations to the opposition in contrast to the government MPs, and political economic rewards, Bersatu has managed to double its number of MPs to 26 in just a year through the practice of party hopping (Umavati 2021).

As the promised of the transfer of power after two years from Mahathir to Anwar was approaching, Bersatu and its allies brokered new alliances with the opposition parties, which had not only frustrated Anwar's rise to power, but more importantly, it was engineered to keep its governing position, even at the cost of breaching the 2018 GE's mandate. The power brokerage was successful, albeit more dramatic in reality where Bersatu managed to hold its grip on the pinnacle of power in Putrajaya. On the other hand, Mahathir's faction was side-lined and eventually expelled from the party by the groups led by the Bersatu's president Muhyiddin Yassin during the process of the eventful power transition in late February 2020, which was permitted by the Malaysian structure and the practice of a hybrid regime (Levitsky & Way, 2002).

The new administration, now known as the Perikatan Nasional (National Alliance, PN), headed by Muhyiddin was a coalitional government consisted of five main parties –Muhyiddin's Bersatu, PAS, UMNO/BN, *Gabungan Parti Sarawak* (the Sarawak Parties Alliance, GPS), and a faction of 10 MPs from PKR led by Azmin Ali.

The government was dubbed by many, and in fact identified itself, as a Malay-Muslim government, due to the identities of most of its MPs and the political ideologies of the aforementioned parties. Shamsul (2020) considered their collaboration in PN as political alignments amongst leaders who share relatively similar idea of nations-of-intent, a vision of Malaysia as a nation at the core of Malay-Muslim centrality. The power transition was carried out in the palace, widely seen as a new political innovation allowed by the Malaysian courts since 2010. However, the model of a 'Malay-Muslim' government itself is not in parallel with ethnically and regionally diverse social composition in Malaysia. Such a model had been disregarded by the previous governments, from the Alliance to PH because it would disrupt the political stability of the ruling party culturally, and also politically where a comfortable majority will be difficult to achieve.

The coup against PH marked the return of the old authoritarian order. Nevertheless, as with other authoritarian governments, the PN was confronted with two key political challenges of its existence: challenges of survival and governance (Schedler, 2009). Apart from the support of the palace, the PN government was 'blessed' with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia. These two advantages, however, were not utilised by PN in improving its political support particularly on legal rational mandate or the regime's performance, on the contrary, these were exploited as an easy way to stay in power.

The Perikatan National's Challenge of Survival

The ultimate challenge of PN's survival is largely beholden in the parliament. The government was neither democratically elected by the electorate, nor voted in by the parliamentarians. It was formed based on fickle statutory declarations (SDs) among Members of the Parliament, presented by their respective party leaders to the palace with uncertainty and clarity. The SD-style governmental change brokered directly within the palace is a rather new authoritarian innovation (Dettman, 2020), introduced during the Najib era in manoeuvring the 2009 coup in Perak in, whereby the conventional legislative procedure for vote of confidence was side-lined (Muhamad Nadzri, 2020).

The issue of uncertainty multiplied as the support or opposition to the PN government were increasingly based on individual MPs, rather than their respective parties. Consequently, the opposition continued to

pressure the government to prove its majority in the parliament. Despite having a razor-thin majority, PN preferred to avoid taking any risks of being toppled from the vote of confidence (The Economist, 2020). Hence, a number of political manoeuvres were made to circumscribe the power of the institution, mostly in the name of Covid-19, particularly in checking over the government's legitimacy (and powers) and accountability, while at the same time mobilise several moves to increase the number of support from defections and thus strengthening the ruling coalition (Azmil, 2020). From these observations, Muhyiddin apparently adopted these four main strategies:

i.   Burgeoning Payroll Vote and Co-Option
ii. Crippling the Legislature
iii. Centralisation of power
iv. Political persecution and abuse of state machineries

Burgeoning Payroll Vote and Co-Option

Bersatu may be a small party compared to the likes of UMNO/BN or PKR, but their 2018's victory with PH had enabled them to have a direct and dominant control over access to state powers, especially being part of the old establishment that enjoys support from the Malays and their institutions in contrast to PKR and DAP. Bersatu was in a dominant position during the coup, and they were in a better bargaining position in influencing others to support the party to be the leading ruling party. In order to get UMNO/BN and others to support them, a gigantic cabinet-size was established during PN's administration, with more than 70 ministers and deputies (Azmil, 2021; Case, 2021). Some ministries, like the Health Ministry and the Education Ministry, have two deputies. Several political appointments in the Executive with less certain responsibilities were made, such as the position of Prime Minister's Special Ambassador that comes with ministerial privileges. PAS president and Marang MP, Abdul Hadi Awang, was appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Ambassador to the Middle East, a position which is highly believed as "ceremonial" in nature (Fauzan, 2021).

Other MPs were appointed as chairpersons at various Government-Linked Companies and Federal Agencies. Nevertheless, few UMNO leaders were left out, like former deputy prime minister and UMNO president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and former prime minister Najib

Abdul Razak, partly due to their ongoing court cases. They were also not incorporated as a form of a check against their dominance to their hegemonic position as top figures in UMNO. During Muhyiddin's administration, for example, former Sabah chief minister Musa Aman's corruption charges were dropped. In contrast to Zahid and Najib, Musa Aman is not only harmless to the ruling regime, but his influence in Sabah is highly beneficial to the PN. Musa played a big role in allowing PN to wrest control over Sabah from the Warisan-PH rule in July 2021.

This payroll vote strategy is essentially beneficial to the strengthening of Bersatu with certain costs to UMNO (Wong, 2020). The political coalition between UMNO and PAS which was formalised in 2019 was weakened when PAS prioritised its relations with Bersatu in PN over the former. The shifting position made by PAS is understandable, not only due to the fact that Bersatu was the main centre of power, but being a smaller party of 18 MPs and previous experiences with UMNO dominating its allies, PAS felt that Bersatu was a safer partner for them although their relationship with UMNO is still desired if they were to maintain their governing position. UMNO was split between those supporting the party's president, and those supporting the PN, making Bersatu on the right track of achieving its original objective of establishment: to be the dominant 'Malay party' by replacing UMNO.

Crippling the Legislature

The first parliamentary sitting was initially scheduled for 9 March 2020 by the previous government, before the coup. It could be a good opportunity for the new administration to obtain popular legitimacy. However, the sitting was postponed to 18 May 2020 due to the nationwide lockdown because of Covid-19. The 18 May 2020 parliamentary sitting was confined to just a day sitting which only allowed for the Royal Address. Consequently, the opposition proposal for a vote of no confidence against Muhyiddin, which had been accepted by the then Speaker of the House Mohamad Ariff Md Yusoff, was effectively frustrated.

Mohamad Ariff's professionalism posed a threat to Muhyiddin's PN survival and in the July 2020 sitting. His impartiality was observable when he disallowed a special parliamentary sitting for a motion of confidence by Mahathir (the then interim Prime Minister) in late February 2020 based on procedural grounds, and later accepted his motion of vote of no confidence against Muhyiddin's administration in

May 2020, which Muhyiddin skilfully responded with the one-day sitting scheme (Mohsin, 2020). Mohamad Ariff also allowed the motion for his removal as the Speaker of the Lower House by Muhyiddin without any prejudice, and recuse himself during the passing of the motion in the July 2020 sitting which led to his withdrawal (Ahmad Naqib, 2020). Azhar Azizan Idrus, the former Election Commission chairman was a newfound Muhyiddin's ally. He was appointed as the new Speaker and the motions for a vote of no confidence against Muhyiddin was effectively buried despite several attempts by the opposition MPs to table a private member's bill (Shad Saleem, 2021; Veena Babulal & Muhammad Yusri, 2020). In late 2020, Muhyiddin's government was once again inevitably placed in a precarious situation in the parliament, when his administration needed to secure an approval for the 2021 National Budget. Later in September 2020, Anwar went public and announced that he had the majority support of the MPs and was granted audience with the Agong in mid-October 2020. Although the Palace seemed unconvinced with Anwar's claim of majority, Muhyiddin's administration immediately sought a royal approval for a declaration of Emergency in the name of combating the Covid-19 pandemic about two weeks later (Saleena, 2020). The proposal for "health emergency" was ultimately rejected by the Agong because in his view, the current laws were sufficient in responding to the pandemic. Muhyiddin's government survived the budget approval in the Parliament in November 2020, due to a temporary change of mind among UMNO's top leadership towards Muhyiddin, after the Agong's advice (*New Straits Times*, 2020).

In early January 2021, however, rumours were rife that UMNO would retract its support for the PN. Two UMNO MPs from Machang and Padang Rengas had openly withdrawn their support for Muhyiddin. PN's majority in the Dewan Rakyat was once again under threat and Muhyiddin wasted no time in proposing an Emergency for the second time to the Agong. In contrast to the Agong's decision in October 2020, a special meeting was called for the Conference of Rulers, before the Agong granted Muhyiddin's proposal to declare Emergency, citing his duties as a constitutional monarchy (Case, 2021, p. 17).

The government's avoidance of proper parliamentary sittings has not only helped Muhyiddin's administration to cling on power by evading a vote of no confidence, but more importantly, it has effectively crippled the legislative functions in Malaysian legal-political system (Shad Saleem, 2021). Consequently, parliamentary checks and balances

which had progressed during the Pakatan years were halted or rather regressed when the government avoided its parliamentary accountability and responsibility, and the issue of the government's mandate to rule persisted. Although the executive's avoidance for the parliamentary sittings had brought about political stability, it was only temporary and the crippling of the legislative functions arguably contributed to the mess in the government handling of Covid-19. Muhyiddin's government was seen to have failed in managing the pandemic. When the Conference of Rulers meeting was called in June 2021, the Agong and the Malay Rulers decreed that the Emergency declaration did not address the Covid-19 pandemic and rejected the proposal by Muhyiddin's cabinet to extend the Emergency beyond August 1, 2021, calling on the Federal and State governments to reinstate the functions of the legislative bodies immediately.

Centralisation of Power

Closely related to the above issue, the problem of power centralisation has re-emerged under the PN whereby the legislative functions of the parliament have been snatched and denied by the Executive particularly through the introduction of Emergency Ordinance (Essential Powers) 2021. The EO was gazetted on 14 January 2021 under the conditions allowed by the Proclamation of Emergency on 11 January 2021. Despite the absence of any expressions for political constraints in the proclamation, about half of the provisions in the EO were targeted against the convening of the legislative bodies at the national and state levels, and against the possibilities for holding elections (Case, 2021, p. 19).

Therefore, once again, not only the lifeline of government was saved by Covid-19 politics, but the parliamentary powers were snatched by the Executive, thus avoiding the government from any legislative checks and accountability and enabled the apparently minority government to rule essentially at will, as long as the EO is still in order (Ostwald, 2022). More emergency Ordinances were introduced in the following weeks, including a political law ostensibly against fake news, resembling the Anti-Fake News Law introduced by the Najib administration in 2015, and a financial ordinance which allowed the government to use public funds without the approval of the Parliament.

The Law Minister, Takiyuddin Hassan, once explicated the example of the new fake news ordinance, ostensibly to control the spread of fake news from anti-vaxxers, but also including "interpreting the emergency to save the PN government" (Kini TV, 2021). The financial ordinance, on the other hand, has allowed the government to extract hundred billion of ringgits from the national coffers without any scrutiny from the national legislature and transparency to the public, as an apparently extraordinary budget in dealing with the diverse implications brought by Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia (Lim, 2021b).

The above practice of centralisation of power amid the pandemic, particularly the declaration of the Emergency and the introduction of new ordinances, had suspended Muhyiddin administration from its legal rational mandate—by blocking parliamentary scrutiny (horizontal checks) and popular accountability (vertical checks)—but solely resorted to the King's authorisation (traditional mandate) and its governing performance. Nonetheless, by doing so, the character of the political system has significantly moved to a fuller authoritarianism with essentially unfettered governmental powers (executive supremacy) and tighter control over the nation's political freedoms.

Political persecution and abuse of state machineries

Political persecution strategy, one of the BN-styled authoritarian governance (Rodan, 2009), was brought back by the PN government. Political persecution was employed to target certain leaders in the ruling coalition as well (Case, 2021). Generally, there were three tactical moves utilised by Muhyiddin's PN:

a. Using the state's enforcement agencies in charging or intimidating the government's opposition.

b. Practising differential treatments against the opposition representatives.

c. Banning the registration of new political parties which are in direct competition with Bersatu.

The police force, anti-corruption agency, Malaysian Commission of Multimedia and Communications (MCMC) and the Attorney-General Chambers were among the key agencies used by the Muhyiddin's administration in weakening and intimidating its opponents (Noore

& Habib, 2022). The criminal charges against Zahid were somewhat inconsistent with the government's decision to drop the corruption charges against the influential former Chief Minister of Sabah Musa Aman in June 2020. A number of opposition representatives were also intimidated, including in petty issues such as pressing accountability for the government in certain misdeeds. Former youth and sports minister and Muar MP, Syed Saddiq was seen repetitively and continuously harassed by various state agencies in forcing him to change his support to Muhyiddin's administration (Free Malaysia Today 2021). In March 2021, he was investigated for misusing Bersatu's party fund, allegedly in early 2020. He was later charged by the MACC in July 2021. Prior to that, Saddiq was investigated by the police and the MCMC over his remarks on social media condemning custodial death of A. Ganapathy in a police lock-up (Camoens, 2021). Although these harassments failed to force Saddiq to change his allegiance, it has effectively created fear among the opposition members. A few MPs defected to PN when they were investigated by the authorities including a former PH Minister and PKR Vice President Xavier Jeyakumar (Firdaus 2021). Quoting former Inspector-General of Police Abdul Hamid Bador, "(Leaders) are power crazy and ready to buy others and threaten them (if they refuse to be bought). That is corruption" (Straits Times, 2021).

Differential treatments were made against the opposition-controlled states, constituencies and their representatives (Malaysia Kini, 2020b; In combating the pandemic, the opposition-controlled states like Selangor and Penang were, at first, not included in the national coordination agency. It was after continuous pressure by the lawmakers that the states were later included albeit with significant limitations. No allocations were given to the opposition members until the mid of 2021 when the political stability of the ruling coalition worsened (Malaysia Post, 2021). Most of the assistance given to the opposition-controlled constituencies were channelled through various federal ministries and respective parties. Facilities under the government ministries were used by PN ministers in boosting political support in their constituencies. The Minister of Higher Education for example, organised for a university hospital in the Klang Valley to send their doctors and nurses to her constituency hundreds of kilometres away for several days, to provide vaccinations to her constituents (Astro Awani, 2021).

The split in the Bersatu in late February 2020 has eventually divided the party into three groups. The biggest faction stayed with Muhyiddin – the victor of the 2020 political coup. The main contender, Mahathir's faction with five MPs regrouped and established a new political organisation, the *Pejuang Tanah Air* (Pejuang). The axed youth chief, Syed Saddiq set up a new political party known as the Malaysian United Democratic Union (MUDA). Both of these parties faced difficulty to get their parties officially registered by the Registrar of Society (ROS) which is under direct ministerial control of the Home Minister who is also the secretary-general of Bersatu (Berita Harian, 2021; Lim, 2021). It was only after a year that Mahathir's Pejuang was registered in June 2021 through a court order.

Muhyiddin's Challenge of Governance: Impacts of Covid-19 to the New Regime

Unlike institutional challenges faced by other authoritarian states impacted by modernisation, globalisation and democratisation, the Muhyiddin administration's challenge of governance was originally more of its performance rather than institutional. The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated many governments, including democracies, to adopt more autocratic measures in dealing with its impacts. This bodes well with the Muhyiddin administration, having weak control over the confidence of the MPs in the parliament, in strengthening his government and his party.

Despite the skilful manoeuvres, Muhyiddin's performance in dealing with the challenge of governance in combating the pandemic has significantly deteriorated after six months in power (Case, 2020). Mandated by the palace and traditional sentiments among the Malay conservatives, Muhyiddin however, faced difficulties in strengthening the support for his administration against the implications brought by the pandemic in politics, the national economy, the health system and education (Kurlantzick, 2021).

During the first six-months of PN rule, the executive power was held by the professional state bureaucrats. The nature of relatively conformist Malaysian society with less intervention by the political executives to the bureaucracy enabled the state to effectively control the first wave of pandemic by July 2020 (Case 2020). The national coffers, arguably, were still sound, allowing the government to provide various

kinds of assistance to the people. As a result of that, Muhyiddin secured
high approval ratings from June to September 2020 when his policies
began to take effect.

Nevertheless, in ensuring the dominance of his group and party in
Malaysian politics, politics gradually took over practical and cautious
decisions in managing the political affairs during the pandemic. Soon
after successfully gaining control over Putrajaya, PN captured Johor,
Melaka and Kedah from defections, the coalition also collaborated with
Musa Aman in toppling the Warisan-PH government of Sabah. The
project was successful but it came with huge political costs. In contrast
to the other states captured by the PN, the victory in Sabah was more
dramatic as it was secured painstakingly through a fresh election in
September 2020 in the midst of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The threat was deemed non-existent by the ambitious PN in
capturing Sabah to the extent that movements of people between Sabah
to the Peninsular were loose, apparently to allow easy access for the
PN ministers, leaders and its machineries to commute between the two
regions. As a result of the easing of movement restrictions, there was a
significant increase of Covid-19 cases reported in Sabah and as it went
sporadic, hundreds of cases started emerging throughout the country.
Prior to that, daily Covid-19 cases saw only two digits per day and it
increased by three digits right after the election and it went to more
than four digits by the end of 2020. Since then, more than one million
people have been infected by Covid-19 in July 2021 with more than
12,000 deaths. The Covid-19 management in Malaysia was considered
one of the world's best in mid-2020, but later became among the worst
in mid-2021.

Consequently, the PN government gradually lost support from the
people, and also from the palace. As indicated from the royal decrees,
PN's political lifeline was prolonged during the first 12-months in
Putrajaya. The royal decree that approved the Emergency declaration
reminded all politicians not to play with politics during the pandemic,
effectively targeting opposition critics. However, Muhyiddin's
administration totally misread the conditional support from the palace.

The 'royal vaccine' which appears to protect the PN government
from the 'opposition virus' made the government believe that it would
be immune to the critics at no costs. As a result of that, the royals were

partly criticised for its role in the coup and the gradual weakening of the parliament. The Agong was perceived to be in favour of the PN government constitutionally or personally (The Guardian, 2020). Nevertheless, the poor performance of the PN government in managing the pandemic and the economy—despite political manoeuvres designed to enable the government to deal with threats of Covid-19 more effectively—led to the Agong and the Malay Rulers showing displeasure and disappointment towards the PN government in mid-2021. Due to the worsening situation of Covid-19, economic downturn and unemployment, the King seemed to be no longer wanted to be associated with the government, or seen to be responsible for the mess created by the PN government.

Although the royal vaccine initially saved the government from being toppled in the parliament, it has inadvertently weakened its accountability and also the possibility for cooperating with the opposition. Coupled with an overzealous project to increase the dominance of Bersatu, it heightened the political competition between the PN against the opposition parties, and also within the ruling alliance. These instances have distracted PN from the fundamental issues of governance. It was not long before a major crack occurred within the PN when parties within the coalition competed against each other in the Sabah State Election in September 2020, only after six months in power. Later in December 2020, UMNO staged an internal coup against the Bersatu/PN leadership in the state of Perak, through a vote of confidence procedure in the state assembly. Bersatu's deputy president Ahmad Faizal Azumu who was the *Menteri Besar* of Perak became the casualty from the internal coup by UMNO.

Without parliamentary scrutiny and almost absolute power in governance, the PN government gradually became less accountable but also less efficient. Missed opportunities of bipartisan cooperation and collaboration through parliamentary sittings were forsaken. Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin gave very few media interviews during his first-year tenure and they were usually in the form of a top-down national address, directly avoiding any questions and concerns from the public. Muhyiddin's government slowly became dissociated with the ground which eventually contributed in making unpopular and unrealistic policy decisions. Apart from a number of reversals in policies, there were also ill-conceived policies such as lockdowns and the reopening

of schools and universities in the early 2021 in the midst of the rising
Covid-19 cases.

The Push Against Autocratisation

Despite the pandemic and growing autocratisation during the
Muhyiddin's years, the push against authoritarianism continues, albeit
with greater constraint. There are, at least, four sources of resistance
against Muhyiddin's autocratisation; namely the social media, the
opposition, the civil society organisations and surprisingly, the
constitutional monarchs.

Social media has been a platform of effective oppositional politics
in Malaysia since 2010. It has significantly contributed to the fall of
BN as well as the PH, in 2018 and 2020 respectively. Under the PN
rule, although the more popular style of oppositional politics of street
demonstrations were constrained by the pandemic, the politics in the
social media is very much sustained. In fact, despite the PN government
being considerably popular during the first six-month in power, most of
its policies were passive. While the government needed popular support
and lacked a clear majority in the Parliament, it was responsive and
reactive to the trends on social media. As a result, the government became
increasingly reactive to the popular demands and started modifying or
changing its policies to appease the public (The Star, 2020).

Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous section, the
Muhyiddin administration apparently gave more focus on the regime's
survival rather than the challenges of governance, perhaps due to the
poor judgments and miscalculations of his support from the people
and the monarchs. Gradually, the policies were self-serving interests
of the ruling elites rather than policy-based, including wresting power
from the opposition-controlled states (Kurlantzick, 2021). Unpopular
policies and poor management of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis led
to the calls for Muhyiddin's resignation as the prime minister and the
administration was called '*kerajaan gagal*' or failed government as
the people were increasingly dissatisfied with the performance of the
government in handling the socio-economic issues (Victor, 2021).

PH too, was badly affected by the withdrawal of Bersatu from the
pact and defections of Azmin Ali's faction in PKR. PH was further
weakened with disunity and being disorganised after the defections

although opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim enjoyed the biggest support among them. The support, nevertheless, was not enough without Mahathir's faction, making both of them desperately finding a shortcut to return to power, rather than focusing on re-building the opposition pact. While Anwar made a secret pact with the UMNO's president to topple Muhyiddin (Maisarah, 2021), Mahathir used his reputation trying to influence the palace to re-appoint him as an interim prime minister in a war-like cabinet government (Hana, 2021). These challenges were significant towards the PN government, pushing the latter to use extra-legal measures as highlighted in the third section of this paper.

The civil society groups, like BERSIH 2.0, were under significant constraints during the first year of PN in power. This was not only due to the threats of the pandemic and the lockdowns, but also due to their more diplomatic characters and tolerance to the previous PH government. The group can be also seen trying to be more 'civil' with PN, by promoting better policies for the political and electoral system through webinars, in contrast to their aggressiveness against the BN government in the past with large scale demonstrations. The expressive and aggressive civic movements were assumed by new groups, mostly among youths. There were at least two street protests in the past year, the first was held on 29 February 2020 in protest of the appointment of Muhyiddin Yassin as the new prime minister and the second protest held on 31 July 2021, saw 1,000 people turning up in black shirts in Kuala Lumpur demanding for Muhyiddin's resignation (Hazlin, 2021).

The last source of resistance or opposition against authoritarianism of the PN unexpectedly came from the monarchy. In reality, the support of the monarchy to Muhyiddin's administration was not as strong as it may seem. The conditional support from the monarchy was dependent on Muhyiddin's performance and it is usually based on the majority support from the Malay Rulers. Perhaps, by being the newest Sultan in the Conference of Rulers, the Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Al-Mustafa Billah Shah of Pahang is more diplomatic and consultative with his fellow Malay Rulers. Many key decisions made by the King were discussed with the Malay Rulers in the Conference of Rulers to seek consensus. These include the decisions to select a new prime minister in late February 2020 and the consideration for Muhyiddin's first request for a proclamation of Emergency later that year.

As Muhyiddin's administration performed poorly despite the Emergency in January 2021, the Agong gradually distanced himself from the PN's government and at the same time the Conference of Rulers were also seen as more expressive against the PN government. In June, the Agong and the Malay Rulers decreed that the Emergency should not be extended after August 1, 2021 with the exception for the state of Sarawak in which the state election is postponed until 2022. The Agong and the Malay Rulers have also decreed that the legislatures both at the state and federal levels must reconvene immediately to debate on the Emergency Ordinances and policies related to Covid-19 management by the government. Muhyiddin was reluctant to reconvene the Parliament as decreed by the King, risking his position should a vote be allowed during the special sitting. The government convened a week-long Special Sitting in the Parliament, only to appease the King but eventually avoiding a debate and vote over the Emergency Ordinances. The Agong was dismayed when the government announced in the sitting that all Emergency Ordinances were revoked a few days before the sitting in the Cabinet Meeting (Sarawak Report, 2021). The relationship between the monarchy and Muhyiddin's government turned sour since mid-2021 due to the misstep of the government to revoke the Emergency Ordinances without due diligence and proper procedure.

Conclusion

The Muhyiddin's administration responses against the challenges of survival has not only reversed the newly-found democratisation opportunities (Huntington, 1993) in Malaysia, but recorded a new autocratisation episode (Pelke & Croissant, 2021). The episode was reflected by Malaysian political observers as "hybrid exceptionalism" (Case, 2020), "democratic regression" (Azmil, 2020), and "democratic backsliding" (Saleena, 2020) which is in line with the stance taken by this paper and with international comparison such as the work by Lurhmann and Rooney (2021).

Nevertheless, the political system during the Muhyiddin's era was still hovering in the hybrid topology although it was inclined towards the authoritarian spectrum particularly through the significant reduction of legislative powers through Emergency proclamation in early 2021. His government still collapsed (in August 2021), however, indicating

that even a strong government with immense executive and legislative powers is not totally immune from political pressures and accountability.

On the one hand, as per Pepinsky (2009) studies on Suharto's Indonesia (1968 to 1998) and Mahathir's Malaysia (1981 to 2003), the governments' performance is crucial for maintaining the legitimacy of an authoritarian regime, in contrast to legal-rational mandate such as electoral support. On the other hand, some features of democracy are arguably (and surprisingly) proven to be necessary for the maintenance of a hybrid regime, particularly the mechanisms for imposing governing accountability to the executive. In the case of Malaysia under Muhyiddin, almost all of the mechanisms for political accountability, horizontally from the Parliament and vertically from the people (the media and civic groups) were fended-off, suspending the potential for co-governance (with the Parliament and the oppositions) and essentially alienating the government from its people, while at the same time over-relying on (the conditional) royal and cultural support (traditional mandate). The consequence is proven to be disastrous for Muhyiddin's administration, which continued to be over-focusing on the challenges for survival and undermining the challenges of governance and the need to perform competently.

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Acknowledgement

Confirmation Bias among Adherents of Red and Yellow Politics in Thailand

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Abstract: Disagreements between Thai partisans have manifested in the competition between red and yellow shirts. This study aims to explore bias of each partisan by employing the concept of confirmation bias. Experimental treatments were divided according to how participants were exposed to an information: (1) exposure to positive information about red politics, (2) exposure to negative information about red politics, (4) exposure to positive information about yellow politics, and (4) exposure to negative information about yellow politics. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed to identify the participants' original political ideology and verify whether their original beliefs changed or preserved after exposure to the experimental information. The results revealed that there existed persistence of political traits but not for all participants. There was also a decrease of political convictions after some treatments.

Keywords*: confirmation bias, red shirts, Thai politics, yellow shirts*

Abstrak: Perselisihan faham bersifat partisan dalam politik Thailand dapat dilihat dalam persaingan antara kumpulan baju merah dan kuning. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka kecenderungan setiap partisan dengan menggunakan konsep pengesahan kecenderungan (confirmation bias). Pelaksanaan kajian

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ini dibahagikan mengikut bagaimana peserta didedahkan kepada sesuatu maklumat: (1) pendedahan kepada maklumat positif tentang politik merah, (2) pendedahan kepada maklumat negatif tentang politik merah, (3) pendedahan kepada maklumat positif tentang politik kuning, dan (4) pendedahan kepada maklumat negatif tentang politik kuning. Analisis Komponen Utama (Principal Component Analysis: PCA) digunakan untuk mengenal pasti ideologi politik asal peserta dan mengesahkan sama ada kepercayaan asal mereka berubah atau kekal selepas pendedahan kepada maklumat kajian. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat ciri-ciri politik yang berkekalan tetapi bukan untuk semua peserta. Terdapat juga penurunan keyakinan politik selepas beberapa pendedahan kepada maklumat kajian .

Kata Kunci: pengesahan kecenderungan, baju merah, politik Thai, baju kuning

Introduction

Political bias is deeply rooted in Thai society. This bias has manifested in prolonged political unrest emanating from competition between two political opposition groups – red shirts and yellow shirts. Each group demands completely different political outcomes. Red shirts call for a real democratic system in which their votes give them an effective voice. In contrast, yellow shirts prefer military rule, mobilising in frequent *coup d'état* to stabilise the political order. In the face of these irreconcilable beliefs, this study focuses on exploring confirmation bias among these opposing parties in their political attitudes.

The conflict between red and yellow politics evolved around Thaksin Shinawatara, a wealthy businessman who was the 23rd prime minister of Thailand. His administration resonated two very opposite reactions. On the one hand, he was so much admired by rural masses from his policies targeting redistributive measures. On the other hand, there were people considering that Thaksin's government was corrupt. Thaksin's policies were nothing but a populist agenda using government budget to serve his personal aim and cronyist network in consolidating their political power and accumulating a greater wealth (McCargo & Patthamanand, 2005). These people who shared hatred towards Thaksin formed a movement called People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or known as yellow shirts. They wore yellow shirts to show their reverence to the King and constantly accused Thaksin of disrespect to the throne. A breaking point

came at the sale of Thaksin's own company (Shin Corp) to Temasek (the Singaporean government's investment) with tax exemption in January 2006. This event sparked public outcry. The PAD rallied a huge street demonstration demanding the removal of Thaksin government and the King to appoint his own prime minister. The protest was followed by a military coup in September 2006. Thaksin was ousted from premiership and still in exile. The overthrow of elected government aroused the movement of United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) or known as red shirts. The UDD contended that all unelected governments subsequent to the coup were illegitimate and demanded a political reform to diminish the power outside the realm of democratic constitution. The antagonism between red and yellow shirts set out a momentum of political upheaval whereby the country witnessed a series of bloody street politics and government's siege of protestors.[1]

Red and yellow shirts espouse different political worldviews. Red shirts comprise rural people who benefitted from Thaksin's populist policies (e.g., the Village Fund Program and 30-baht medical treatments) (Charoenmuang, 2016) and expand urban-based people from different professions (students, government officials, workers, etc.) (Satitniramai, 2010). Generally, red shirts opposed the coup, and defined themselves against conservative forces (high-level government officials, military, and royalist elites). They considered that these conservative elites underpinned a hierarchical system of social classes and undemocratic means that justified an injustice and oppression (Winichakul, 2008). On the other hand, yellow shirts were composed of conservative-royalist elites (Connors & Hewison, 2008). They perceived the Thaksin Government representing a capitalist state power with an attempt to establish a democratic authoritarianism (Tejapira, 2006). Therefore, they were discontented with Thaksin regime and those who rooted for Thaksin and his successions. These elites dismissed Thaksin because his grassroots populist policies and CEO-type administrative style undermined their political legitimation (Pye & Schaffar, 2008). It should come as no surprise that yellow shirts' political stance was to restore a

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1   The country experienced several major protests, for example, the PAD invading and shutting down main airports (November and December 2008), the bloody protest of Red Shirts to force a new election (March-May 2010), and protests against a proposed amnesty bill that could return Thaksin to Thailand of Yingluck government (Thaksin's sister) (October 2013 – May 2014).

political order rather than transforming the social structure in favour of unprivileged classes.

Studies have verified that this political polarisation between the two groups stems from factors including their disagreement over the return of Thaksin to a political role (Manachotphong, 2014; Sukamongkol, 2014; Siha, 2017), different democratic perceptions (Keawklieng, 2017), and divergence on the legitimate method for selecting a national leader (Chaisukosol, 2012). These studies are useful in grounding the characteristics that define red and yellow politics but have not yet evaluated the level of adherence of both partisans, which could increase, or decrease under a particular situation. This specific inquiry needs to test confirmation bias within the political attitudes of each party.

Therefore, this study extends the frontier of research on Thai politics by introducing a behavioural economic approach for the experimental evaluation of political bias among both red and yellow shirts. The main objective is to verify political bias among red and yellow shirts by using an intervention. In this intervention, participants were presented with political information and subsequently evaluated on whether they react to such information by confirming more or disconfirming their pre-existing beliefs.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of confirmation bias serves as the main framework here. This behavioural economic concept contrasts with the mainstream economic representation of rational human agency, whereby economic agents are expected to always make decisions on how to act or what to believe by thoroughly considering all available and necessary information. In contrast, confirmation bias refers to a cognitive bias whereby people tend to be selective in gathering, interpreting, and recalling information. When people would like some concept to be true, they tend to deliberately seek data that are likely to confirm the beliefs they currently hold (Kahneman, 2011). In this sense, people form their beliefs based on the influence of bias and do not change these beliefs easily. They embrace only information consistent with their view and reject or neglect information that casts doubt on or undermine their view. Confirmation bias suggests that people's thinking processes are not objective.

Confirmation bias can explain well how people hold their political preferences. Political beliefs and ideologies are inherently subjective and reflect selective exposure (Klapper, 1960). That is, people who have a strong preference for a certain political party are likely to refrain from communicating with those who oppose their beliefs. In other words, people may feel more comfortable exchanging information with political allies, not foes. Moreover, people only pay attention to what seems to be consistent with their political attitudes. Most importantly, confirmation bias leads people to selectively interpret information in relation to what they like and to have a tendency to forget undesirable information. Thus, confirmation bias suggests that people are not passive recipients of political information; rather, they evaluate information with reference to their convictions on certain political issues.

Social and political convictions appear in the classical literature testing confirmation bias. Lord et al. (1979) performed an experiment showing that both proponents and opponents of capital punishment became more polarised when asked to evaluate information challenging their existing attitudes. An experiment by Anderson et al. (1980) found that research participants tended to cling to their beliefs about either a negative or a positive relationship between risk-taking and success among firefighters despite the absence of direct evidence to confirm their view. Research on gun control by Taber & Lodge (2006) affirmed that participants' processing of relevant information is affected by confirmation bias. When given arguments in support of and against gun control, they actively chose only non-threatening sources to support their prior beliefs. This behaviour of seeking out confirmatory evidence was traced to the neuro level in Westen et al. (2006). Neuro-imaging evidence showed that subjects had more neural activity related to motivated reasoning when evaluating speeches by committed co-partisans than when evaluating those of opposing candidates. This finding is quite consistent with that of Westerwick et al. (2017), who found that research subjects' information processing reflected selective exposure: they assessed only information corresponding with their existing beliefs, regardless of the quality of the information.

It can be seen that political bias is observable in many circumstances. However, there are no studies applying the confirmation bias framework to a social context in which an intense political conflict exists. Therefore, we apply this framework to the Thai context to see whether research

participants' attitudes towards their preferred ideology (either yellow or red) change when they are exposed to information that confirms or contrasts with their original belief.

Methodology

Key Working Hypotheses

This study aims to test confirmation bias among research participants who are either red or yellow shirts. The study hypothesises that adherents to both ideologies display political bias in two senses. First, they tend to confirm their attitudes after exposure to political information that is consistent with their original beliefs. Second, exposure to information that opposes their politics does not undermine their leanings. That is, participants are likely to continue to hold the same political beliefs.

Experimental Design

This study set up an experiment to test the above hypotheses. This experiment used political information as an intervention to explore how red-shirt and yellow-shirt participants respond to such information. We divided the research participants into four treatment groups. The type of information the participants received classified each group. The rationale for this classification was to allow comparative discussion of the results on confirmation bias among the groups. Figure 1 presents the four treatment groups in this study. The first group consists of participants who received positive information about red politics (*RED+*). The second group comprises participants who received negative information about red politics (*RED-*). The third group includes participants who received positive information about yellow politics (*YELLOW+*). The fourth group is made up of the participants who received negative information about yellow politics (*YELLOW-*). The numbers of participants in each group were 91, 103, 115, and 83, respectively.

Figure 1 Treatment groups in the study
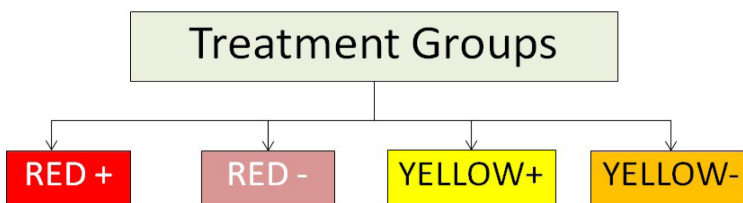
Each treatment group was subjected to an identical experimental procedure. Figure 2 shows the design of this experiment. Firstly, the political ideology of each participant was identified. This identification revealed how many participants in each group held red and yellow ideologies. The experiment next presented the participants with political information. They were assigned to read information that varied according to their treatment group. This intervention is critical for testing the persistence of political bias. Finally, political ideology was assessed again to explore the change or perseverance of participants' political adherence in each treatment group.

Figure 2 Experimental design

A	B	C
Identifying political ideology	Presenting political information	Re-identifying political ideology
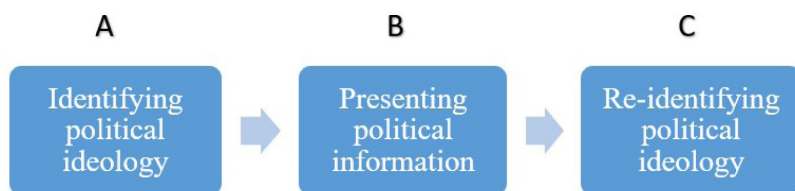
Data Analysis

A three-part questionnaire was designed in relation to the experiment and classification of the treatment groups. The first part asks about demographic data. The second part lists 13 questions on their opinions on political issues, including the Thai electoral system, *coup d'état*, the legitimacy of political movements, the character of political leaders, etc. Participants responded to each question with ratings on a Likert scale with 5 levels (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). The third part of the questionnaire presents information about Thai politics. It is a short article covering major ideological points, including political regime, characteristics of political leaders, and political and social change. There are four types of information referring to four political orientations*:* (a) a positive attitude towards red shirts, (b) a negative attitude towards red shirts, (c) a positive attitude towards yellow shirts, and (d) a negative attitude towards yellow shirts. The drafting of these articles required assistance from a political specialist to validate the accuracy of the information. The participants were asked to read this information and complete the second part of the questionnaire again.

PCA was then conducted on the data from the questionnaires. We used the PCA technique to extract information on participants' primary political orientation. This method drew on Manachotphong (2014), but we made a modification by adding an experimental procedure to explore the different outcomes among the treatment groups. The results from a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (0.625) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (significance level of 0.000) indicated that the questionnaire variables were suitable for use with PCA to detect structures. In this study, PCA was performed on the data from the questionnaires to extract the classification of the principal components in terms of political ideologies. A main measurement here was the factor loadings. When a particular question had a high factor loading (above 0.5) with respect to a specific component, this question was included as a sub-element, while those questions with values lower than 0.5 were not taken into account. In other words, PCA detected which questions were related to each other and able to be organised under a particular political ideology. The researchers interpreted and named each group according to the details of its sub-elements.

It should be noted that there were two layers of analysis. The first layer was a component analysis with respect to the total number of participants to inform the general categorisation of political ideologies. The second layer was an analysis within each treatment group to compare the weight of factor loadings before and after the participants were manipulated with the information intervention.

Data Collection

This study recruited a total of 392 research participants. They all resided in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Data collection was not completed all at once. The researchers gradually collected approximately 30-50 participants at a time until reaching the desired number. Every experiment was conducted in a quiet room without any distraction. There was space between the participants' desks so that they were able to perform the assigned tasks individually. The participants were informed about the details of the experiment and instructed to respond to the first and second parts of the questionnaire. This step took approximately 40 minutes. Then, the participants were given a sheet of political information (the third part of the questionnaire) and asked to read it within 20 minutes. After reading the information, the participants were instructed to redo

the questionnaire items on political attitudes (the second part of the questionnaire). This process took 30 minutes. It should be noted that some participants withdrew from the experiment after recruitment. This resulted in an uneven number of participants among treatment groups.

Results and Discussion

General Characteristics of Participants

The experimental setting requires that participants in each treatment group have similar characteristics to clearly evaluate the intervention outcomes. Tables 1-6 show the similarity among the treatment groups in terms of gender, age, civil status, occupation, education, and income. Most participants in each group were female, single, and between 20 and 29 years of age. More than 40% of the participants in each treatment group had incomes in the range of 5,000–15,000 baht (1 US dollar is approximately 30 baht). The proportions of participants with and without an undergraduate degree are similar. The participants in each group are mostly college students and work in the public sector

Table 1 *Gender in each treatment group*

	Male		Female		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
RED+	21	23%	70	77%	91
RED-	34	33%	69	67%	103
YELLOW+	37	32%	78	68%	115
YELLOW-	33	40%	50	60%	83
Total	125	32%	267	68%	392

Table 2 *Civil status in each treatment group*

	RED+		RED-		YELLOW+		YELLOW-	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Single	57	63%	69	67%	81	70%	47	57%
Married	27	30%	29	28%	26	23%	35	42%
Widowed/Divorced	6	7%	4	4%	8	7%	0	0%
Separated	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Total	91	100%	103	100%	115	100%	83	100%

Table 3 *Age in each treatment group*

	RED+		RED-		YELLOW+		YELLOW-	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 19 years	6	7%	11	11%	24	21%	9	11%
20-29 years	48	53%	54	52%	53	46%	31	37%
30-39 years	5	5%	7	7%	4	3%	6	7%
40-49 years	12	13%	13	13%	19	17%	18	22%
50-59 years	13	14%	12	12%	11	10%	16	19%
More than 60 years	7	8%	6	6%	4	3%	3	4%
Total	91	100%	103	100%	115	100%	83	100%

Table 4 Monthly income in each treatment group

	RED+		RED-		YELLOW+		YELLOW-	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5,000 baht	6	7%	9	9%	11	10%	6	7%
5,001 - 15,000 baht	46	51%	51	50%	50	43%	34	41%
15,001 - 25,000 baht	17	19%	13	13%	15	13%	13	16%
25,001 – 35,000 baht	8	9%	12	12%	17	15%	11	13%
35,001 – 45,000 baht	4	4%	6	6%	10	9%	6	7%
45,001 – 55,000 baht	6	7%	6	6%	2	2%	8	10%
More than 55,001 baht	4	4%	4	4%	10	9%	5	6%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	91	100%	103	100%	115	100%	83	100%

Table 5 *Education in each treatment group*

	RED+		RED-		YELLOW+		YELLOW-	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Lower than undergraduate level	39	43%	44	43%	63	55%	37	45%
Undergraduate level	52	57%	49	48%	49	43%	40	48%
Higher than undergraduate level	0	0%	10	10%	3	3%	6	7%
Total	91	100%	103	100%	115	100%	83	100%

Table 6 *Occupation in each treatment group*

	RED+		RED-		YELLOW+		YELLOW-	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Student/College student	45	49%	54	52%	68	59%	33	40%
Public-sector employee	30	33%	36	35%	38	33%	37	45%
Private-sector Employee/Business owner	13	14%	10	10%	7	6%	12	14%
Unemployed	3	3%	3	3%	2	2%	1	1%
Total	91	100%	103	100%	115	100%	83	100%

General Political Ideologies of Participants

This section reports the general results on participants' political ideologies before the details of the experiment are elaborated in the following sections. The results of PCA in Table 7 indicate that there are 4 principal components (comp.1-comp.4). Each component represents a particular political ideology defined by the details of the sub-elements (questions). Only the questions with factor loading values greater than 0.5 are counted as sub-elements of a component. Component 1 represents the "red-democracy" ideology, which includes questions 1, 7, 10, and 11. There were 97 participants in this group. They believe in electoral democracy and prefer a Thaksin premiership. Component 2 represents the "red-corruption" ideology, which includes questions 5 and 6. There were 102 participants in this group. Adherents of this ideology tolerate corruption as long as politicians are able to run the country. Component 3 represents the "yellow-conservative" ideology, which includes questions 2, 3, and 4. There were 109 participants in this group. They represent a conservative force that upholds the monarchy and supports the political power established by the *coup d'état*. Component 4 represents the "red-radical" ideology, which includes questions 8, 9, and 12. There were 84 participants in this group. They resent the illegitimate power of political elites and wish to eliminate the patronage system. Note that it was not possible to include sub-element no. 13 into any principal component.

Table 7 *Principal components of political ideologies*

Questions (Sub-elements)	Factor Loading			
	Comp. 1	Comp. 2	Comp. 3	Comp. 4
1. The country should be run as a democratic system where the power comes from the people	0.588			
2. *Coups d'état* solve political and social unrest			0.665	
3. Maintaining the existing structure of the country's administration creates stability			0.695	
4. It is legitimate for a political movement to seek to protect the monarchy			0.694	
5. Vote-buying is acceptable as long as politicians have the ability to manage the country		0.774		

6. Corruption among politicians is not related to the country's development and people's quality of life		0.781		
7. Elections are the most suitable approach for selecting a national leader	0.663			
8. A political movement against the power of political elites is justified				0.531
9. Authoritarian democracy is unacceptable because of its dictatorial character and interventions in independent commissions				0.821
10. The prime minister should be courageous, assertive, and skilful in business, like Thaksin Shinawatra	0.656			
11. Promoting free trade encourages new businesses and economic mobility	0.633			
12. Nepotism and the patronage system should be dismantled urgently				0.664
13. The government should compensate the victims of the political protests of 2013-2014				

Overall, there are 3 red ideologies to which 283 participants adhere and 1 Yellow ideology to which 109 participants adhere. This result suggests that in general, the participants are mostly on the red spectrum. This result reflects the political reality of the Khon Kaen area, where a 619,139-vote majority (from a total of 908,054 votes) in the 2011 general election went to the Pheu Thai Party (Election Commission of Thailand, 2011). This party represented Thaksin's nominee and red politics.

Exploring Confirmation Bias within Each Treatment Group

This section gives an extensive discussion of political bias among the treatment groups. The analysis approach used is again PCA. However, instead of extracting the principal component from the total group of

participants, PCA extraction was performed with respect to the number of participants in each treatment group. This method allows for comparison of the experimental results between treatment groups. It is important to note that when the principal component is extracted separately in this way, the total numbers of participants in the red and yellow groups do not necessarily have to match those in the previous results for general political ideologies. However, the results in Table 8 still suggest that the participants are mostly on the red spectrum. Additionally, PCA extraction within each treatment group revealed a green group, who are neither red nor yellow in their political leanings. The table shows the change in the number of participants in the respective ideological groups. After reading the information, the numbers of participants in the red and yellow groups decrease, while the number in the green group increases. The analysis of each treatment group is as follows.

Table 8 *Cumulative number of participants in red, yellow, and green groups*

	Red	Yellow	Green	Total
Before reading information	275	87	30	392
After reading information	261	61	70	392

Treatment Group: Red Positive (RED+)

This group consists of 91 participants who received positive information about red politics. PCA extraction revealed that there were 5 principal components in this group: red politics defined by sub-elements 1, 7, 10, and 11; red politics defined by sub-elements 5 and 6; red politics defined by sub-elements 9 and 13; yellow politics defined by sub-elements 2 and 3; and yellow politics defined by sub-element 4. Table 9 indicates the numbers and factor loading values of participants who adhere to these ideologies. There are 58 participants on the red-shirt spectrum and 33 participants on the yellow-shirt spectrum. The factor loading values here are an average of those for all sub-elements in the respective spectrum. The factor loading values for the red and yellow ideologies are 1.066 and 1.072, respectively.

Table 9 *Results for treatment group RED+*

	Red		Yellow		Green	
	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading
Before reading information	58	1.066	33	1.072	0	-
After reading information	56	1.147	15	1.092	20	0.976

After reading the information, PCA extraction revealed that the same sub-elements were still dominant among the participants who adhered to a red ideology. The results on Table 9 show that their number slightly decreases from 58 to 56, and the factor loading value increases from 1.066 to 1.147. This result could be interpreted as the participants on the red spectrum having more conviction in their original beliefs after reading information that favours their pre-existing beliefs. On the other hand, the number of participants on the yellow spectrum shows a remarkable drop from 33 to 15 after exposure to this information. It is possible that exposure to RED+ information decreased their adherence to yellow politics. However, the green group in the table explains this situation. The participants in the green group mostly fell on the yellow spectrum in the pre-treatment phase. After reading the information, they became less opposed to red ideology. They still supported the *coup d'état* (sub-element 2), but agreed that red shirts who were victimised during the 2013-2014 protests should be compensated (sub-element 13). However, it should be noted that the remaining 15 participants on the yellow spectrum intensified their original beliefs, as shown by the increased factor loading.

Treatment Group: Red Negative (RED-)

This group consists of 103 participants who received negative information about red politics. PCA extraction revealed that there are 5 principal components in this group: red politics defined by sub-elements 1, 7, 10, and 11; red politics defined by sub-elements 5 and 8; red politics defined by sub-elements 8, 9 and 12; red politics defined by sub-elements 6 and 13; and yellow politics defined by sub-elements 3 and 4. Table 10 indicates the numbers and factor loading values among adherents to the

two ideologies. There are 81 participants on the red-shirt spectrum and
22 participants on the yellow-shirt spectrum (as shown in Table 4). The
factor loading values here are an average of those of all sub-elements
within the respective spectrum. The factor loading values for the red
and yellow ideologies are 1.033 and 1.091, respectively.

Table 10 *Results for treatment group RED-*

	Red		Yellow	
	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading
Before reading information	81	1.033	22	1.044
After reading information	83	1.091	20	1.121

After exposure to the treatment information, PCA again captured
almost all the sub-elements on the red spectrum, except sub-element no.
8. Table 10 shows that the number of adherents to red politics increased
slightly from 81 to 83, and the factor loading value increased from 1.033
to 1.091. This result is consistent with a classic case of confirmation bias
in which people tend to be less receptive when facing counter-indicative
information (Nickerson, 1997). Thus, reading negative information
about red-shirts did not lessen participants' adherence to their original
beliefs. On the yellow-spectrum side, participants reported having even
more conviction in their original beliefs, as seen from the increase in
their factor loading value from 1.044 to 1.121. This was not a surprising
result because the participants on the yellow spectrum read negative
information about their political opposition.

Treatment Group: Yellow Positive (YELLOW+)

This group consists of 115 participants who received positive information
about yellow politics. PCA revealed 5 principal components in this
group: red politics defined by sub-element 1; red politics defined by sub-
elements 5 and 6; red politics defined by sub-elements 8, 9 and 12; red
politics defined by with sub-elements 10, 11 and 13; and yellow politics
defined by sub-elements 2, 3 and 4. Table 11 indicates the numbers and
factor loading values of adherents to the two ideologies. There are 83
participants on the red-shirt spectrum and 32 participants on the yellow-

shirt spectrum. The factor loadings here are an average of those of all sub-elements on the respective spectrum. The factor loading values for the red and yellow ideologies are 1.152 and 0.908, respectively.

Table 11 Results for treatment group *YELLOW+*

	Red		Yellow	
	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading
Before reading information	83	1.152	32	0.908
After reading information	89	1.121	26	1.109

After participants' exposure to the information treatment, PCA again captured almost all the sub-elements on the red spectrum, with the addition of sub-element no.7. Table 11 shows that the number of participants espousing red politics increases from 83 to 89, and the factor loading value decreases from 1.152 to 1.121. The decrease in the factor loading value suggests that reading positive information about yellow politics lessened this group's bias in favour of red politics. However, the number of participants on the red spectrum increases.

These increased numbers indicate that 6 participants who originally fell on the yellow spectrum became redder despite reading optimistic information about yellow politics. This result may not align with theoretical predictions but is very interesting. Normally, behavioural economics tends to posit a systematic and persistent bias among people. However, in some cases, people have been found not to maintain their original standpoint and to be able to process interventions rationally if they feel that they are being manipulated, especially by monetary incentives (Frey & Oberholzer-Gee, 1997). For this treatment group, the information intervention may have created the impression that the research participants were being subjected to excessive attempts at persuasion. Therefore, they may have resisted the information, and their political ideology correspondingly inclined towards the red spectrum. Note also that the remaining 26 participants on the yellow spectrum intensified their political beliefs, as seen from the increased factor loading value (1.109).

Treatment Group: Yellow Negative (YELLOW-)

This group consists of 83 participants who received negative information about yellow politics. PCA revealed no purely yellow components. The results were a combination of red and green components. There were 5 principal components in this group: red politics defined by sub-elements 5 and 6; red politics defined by sub-elements 7, 10 and 11; red politics defined by sub-elements 9, 12 and 13; green politics defined by sub-elements 3, 4 and 8; and green politics defined by sub-elements 1 and 2. Table 12 indicates the numbers and factor loading values of adherents to the two ideologies. There are 53 participants on the red spectrum and 30 participants on the green spectrum. The factor loadings here are an average of those for all sub-elements on the respective spectrum. The factor loading values for the red and green ideologies are 1.073 and 1.095, respectively.

Table 12 Results for treatment group *YELLOW-*

	Red		Yellow		Green	
	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading	frequency	factor loading
Before reading information	53	1.073	0	-	30	1.095
After reading information	33	1.255	0	-	50	1.022

PCA indicates that the participants were less inclined towards the red spectrum after being subjected to the information treatment. Table 12 shows that the number of participants on the red spectrum considerably decreases by 20. This result could be interpreted in the same way as that for the previous treatment group. Reading a critique of yellow politics clearly supported a preference for red politics, but some participants still may have felt that this information was overwhelming. Therefore, they may have toned down their original beliefs, resulting in many more participants falling on the green-spectrum. Moreover, the increase in the factor loading value to 1.255 in the table indicates that the remaining participants on the red spectrum intensified their adherence to their original ideology.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to explore the confirmation bias of two political oppositions – red and yellow shirts. We divided the participants into four treatment groups according to the information they were exposed to. PCA approach was employed to classify their ideologies (coding as red, yellow, and green spectrums) before and after exposure to the information.

PCA revealed that the participants mostly fell on the red spectrum. Significant conclusions can be drawn from the results for the different treatment groups. The first conclusion is that confirmation bias was indeed present. The participants in the *RED-* treatment definitely verified this, as they tended to intensify their original belief regardless of the kind of information they received. However, a second set of results did not support the hypothesis. The notion of confirmation bias implies persistence of belief. However, the results demonstrated that political attitudes are changeable. The results of treatment *YELLOW+* showed that the political conviction of participants on the red spectrum decreased when they received information opposing their original beliefs. Likewise, in treatment *RED+*, some participants switched from the yellow to the green spectrum. Relatedly, the third finding was that the participants' reasoning was not always biased. There were participants, especially yellow shirts in treatment *YELLOW+* and red shirts in *YELLOW-*, who probably perceived the experiment to be a manipulation and became more reluctant to confirm their beliefs.

These findings suggest that there is still hope for reconciliation in Thai politics. The change in political attitudes and inclinations toward opposing ideologies may reflect sympathy for the political opposition. This study recommends that the pursuit of democratic order is desirable to ensure people's equal access to transparent information, thus allowing them to justify their political decisions and have space for negotiation of ideological differences.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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Secularisation of Muslim Students: A Freirean Perspective on Biological Evolution Teaching in Islamic Schools

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Abstract: The teaching of evolution has long been debated in the fields of science, education, and theology. This controversy raises many problems, especially when the national curriculum includes it as the material to be taught in religious (Islamic) schools. This study aims to examine Paulo Freire's critical education paradigm and its significance and relevance for criticising the teaching of evolution. This study used a qualitative-descriptive approach, with a library research. The data were obtained from Freire's books as primary sources and other related books and articles as secondary sources. The study found 6 key ideas of Freire that are relevant to critique on the teaching of evolution, namely: (1) the inseparability of education from political content, (2) the displacement of the values and culture of the oppressed through education,

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(3) the neutrality of science, (4) three categories of human consciousness, (5) the concept of alienation, and (6) critical literacy programs.

Keywords: evolution, critical paradigm, Paulo Freire, Islamic education, religious school

Abstrak: Pengajaran evolusi merupakan topik yang menjadi perdebatan panjang baik dalam bidang sains, pendidikan, maupun teologi. Hal ini menimbulkan banyak problem khususnya apabila kurikulum nasional juga mewajibkan pengajarannya di sekolah-sekolah berbasis agama (Islam). Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji paradigma pendidikan kritis Paulo Freire serta signifikansi dan relevansinya untuk mengkritisi pengajaran evolusi tersebut. Dalam studi ini digunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif, dengan jenis *library research*. Data diperoleh dari sumber primer yang terdiri dari buku-buku karya Freire dan sumber sekunder dari artikel-artikel ilmiah dan buku-buku lain yang terkait. Hasil penelitian menemukan 6 ide pokok Freire yang relevan dengan kritik atas pengajaran evolusi, yakni: (1) tidak terpisahnya pendidikan dengan muatan politik, (2) tergusurnya nilai-nilai dan budaya pihak yang tertindas melalui pendidikan, (3) ketidaknetralan sains, (4) tiga penggolongan kesadaran manusia, (5) konsep tentang alienasi, dan (6) program literasi kritis.

Kata Kunci: evolusi, paradigma kritis, Paulo Freire, pendidikan Islam, sekolah agama

Introduction

Indonesia contains the largest Muslim population of all countries in the world, amounted to 207,176,162 based on the 2010 Population Census of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). The large population of the Muslim community has an impact on various aspects of social, national and state life, which includes ideology; politics; socio-culture; law; and education.

The history of education in Indonesia is inseparable from the movement of Islamic education in educating the nation's life. Thus far, Muslims have played a remarkable role in advancing the field of education and increasing public knowledge. This role ranges from building the global network of science in the archipelago, the establishment of Islamic boarding schools, to the establishment of formal schools, which constantly flourish in this modern times. These Islamic educational

institutions, in its essence, serve as manifestation of the Muslim ideals to preserve, internalise, and transform Islamic values to the nation's future generations, especially in the current era of disruption, which has brought various negative impacts, especially moral and spiritual degradation (Mierrina, 2019; Nudin, 2020; Tafonao, 2018). Amid the current moral crisis, and at a time when general education is embattled with the need to improve students' character and morals, religious educational institutions should constantly be at the forefront in creating a generation that is intelligent, faithful, devoted to God, and have noble characters (Alawiyah, 2014).

Although the religious education institutions have been projected to serve as an educational institution for Muslim students with non-secular nature, several studies have reported the insignificant difference between the learning in madrasas and religious schools—especially in terms of general sciences, including natural science—and the learning in general schools. This fact is evidenced by Hartono (2012), who revealed that the learning in madrasas still adheres to Western secular sciences that are not in line with the worldview of Islam. Western science conveys civilisation materials on positivism, materialism, and the belief about the death of God, which is still mainly taught in many madrasas in Indonesia. Some other studies stated that there has been a considerable dichotomy between the materials on science and those on religious sciences in madrasas, especially in public schools. Science teachers usually prevent their students from associating theories or explanations of science with those of religion on the grounds that both have different explanatory domains (Kholifah, 2018; Sabda, 2009; Supa'at, 2007).

This condition may lead to the adverse impact on students' faith, especially on matters related to scientific explanations that are in direct conflict with religious teachings. According to constructivism learning theory, in this case, student construction of knowledge regarding religious teachings and beliefs is shaken due to inconsistent information, which cannot be integrated with the cognitive structures or prior knowledge schemes (Ayuningrumi et al., 2016; Mulyani et al., 2012). Some experts even argued that secularisation through education is due to the exposure of students at schools to scientific explanations that are incompatible with religious beliefs coupled with the labelling as "the scientific explanation and is based on empirical evidence." Consequently, this condition leads to inferiority in explanation of religion, and thus many

"educated" group started to lose faith in religion (Becker et al., 2017; McCleary & Barro, 2018; see also Harrison, 2017).

The teaching of evolution has long been part of this debate. Evolution is a problematic and dilemmatic material to be taught to the religious Indonesian community. The evolutionist view of the origin of life as well as the origins of humans has clearly taken a position against religious belief in general. Thus far, there has been a constant debate over the discussion of evolution and regarding its teaching at schools (Fraser et al., 2011; Staver, 2015; Winslow et al., 2011).

One of the useful paradigms to explore the above problems is the critical education paradigm, brought about mainly by one of its important thinkers Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Freire's views have inspired many critical studies about oppression and hegemony in the education system. However, as far as is explored, the use of the Freirean perspective to highlight the oppressions behind the study of the natural sciences is rare, including the teaching of evolution discussed in this study. As Sardar & Von Loon (2012) stated, science has been the pillar of the sacred totem that is the guardian of secular Western culture, and therefore, there should be no claim against science. Because science is the primary support for Western secularity, criticism of problematic things in modern science, such as the theory of evolution, is very important as an opening key to releasing the influence of the Western worldview on other sciences based on it. This study aims to present a critique based on Freirean perspective on the teaching of evolution.

Literature Review

Since this study aims to criticise the teaching of evolution in religious schools from a Freirean perspective, it is necessary to provide a literature review here to provide important insights related to the potential of relevant key theories as the basis for our critique.

Secularism and Secularisation through Education

Historically, the term secularism refers to the separation between the state and religious authorities, although this definition is considered too reductive. In its essence, secularism is more than just separating the civil state from religious authorities (Stambach et al., 2011). The term secularism refers to a system of understanding that puts forward materialism, rejects the existence of other life outside the world, and

seeks to escape all forms of belief and religious rules (Jamaluddin, 2013; Majid, 2008). In this connection, secularisation can historically be defined as a shift in individuals, objects, and meanings from religious nuances to more general and ordinary nuances. In a broad sense, the term secularisation refers to the decline of religious institutions, the decrease of belief, and the weakening religious practices in society (Casanova, 2001). Secularisation can also be interpreted as a process of becoming a secular person and embracing secularism, which is mundane and frees oneself from religious rules or beliefs (Hadi, 2016).

Secularism first emerged in the West, as history notes, in particular during the Renaissance period. The establishment of Western civilisation and science as the centre has triggered the introduction of the Western worldview in education and its propagation to other countries, as was confirmed by Kuntowijoyo (2008). He said that principally, the goal of the Renaissance was to liberate mankind from the myths of West-Greece, which then gave birth to a scientific revolution. However, the scientific revolution also caused new problems. The spirit to break free from ancient mythology turned out to have an impact on religion agnosticism, and in turn gave rise to secularism. Meanwhile, the scientific revolution in a non-religious and even anti-religious spirit has resulted in the notion that science is inherently value free. This reflection of Western culture and ideals eventually spread throughout the world, including Indonesia. Many thinkers articulated that the progress of culture and science could only take place were we able to free ourselves from the confines of religion (Kuntowijoyo, 2008).

There have been many studies to prove the thesis regarding secularisation though education. Some evidences pinpoint that the higher the level of education taken by an individual, the lesser his religiosity level (Becker et al., 2017; Cesur & Mocan, 2018; Dilmaghani, 2019; Hungerman, 2014; Masuda & Yudhistira, 2020; McCleary & Barro, 2018; Mocan & Pogorelova, 2017). The negative impact of education on religiosity, among others, is caused by the existence of a hidden curriculum (See various definitions of the hidden curriculum in Margolis, 2001). In this context, the hidden curriculum refers to the Western ideologies based on rationality that is in direct conflict with religious beliefs; such as Darwinism, Freudism, existentialism, atheism, and materialism which have undeniably infiltrated the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities adopted from the West. The Western

scientific hegemony in the field of education is one of the ways that helps to propagate and disseminate the hidden curriculum globally. These ideas are particularly transmitted through schools and colleges that inconsiderately adopt Western-style secular education without proper sorting and filtering. The other way is through power exerted by the Western colonial countries who brought these ideas to their colonies. The third method is through student exchange programmes, by way of sending students and providing scholarships abroad. The fourth method is through political movements or intelligence operations (Efendy, 2015; Hadi, 2016; Jamaluddin, 2013).

The Teaching of the Evolution and the Non-Neutrality of Western Science

Biologists agree that evolution is a core theme in biology and has even become a central unifying theme in science (Kim, 2016; NSTA, 2013; Campbell et al., 2011). Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900-1975), one of the founders of the modern theory of evolution, even said that there is no meaningful discussion in biology without being illuminated by the light of evolution (Dhobzansky, 1973). The idea of evolution is considered capable of connecting so many observations about the living world, especially regarding the extraordinary diversity of organisms. Along with this diversity, many characteristics are found in common. From this unity amid diversity, the idea of evolution emerged, namely that the organisms living on earth today are modified descendants of a common ancestor. The similarity of characteristics between existing organisms then gave birth to the idea that these organisms are descended from a common ancestor. On the other hand, the differences that make each organism under its environment are the basis for thinking about evolutionary adaptations that make individuals within a species have variations in the details of characters that are shared.

Furthermore, the environment will choose individuals with character shapes that are more suited to the environment. These individuals will be more competitive in obtaining resources, have a longer chance of living, and produce offspring by passing on their adaptive characteristics. This process is known as natural selection (Campbell et al., 2011; Starr et al., 2016).

The idea of a common ancestor of living things raises the curiosity for academics to reconstruct the story of the origin of species, including

the story of human evolution. The emergence of interest in the story of human evolution cannot be separated from human curiosity about himself, which is as old as human existence itself. For example, it has been a philosophical question for a long time, namely: What and who is a human being, where do humans come from, and where in the end is human life? (Priyoyuwono, 2008). Included in this philosophical question is how the origin of life was formed? On this basis, Darwin himself called it the "mystery of mysteries" (Darwin, 1871). To answer this question, Darwin published his work *On the Origin of Species* which describes his view of the emergence of the many species that exist today, descended from ancestral species that differed in character from the species we see today. The idea of common descent, according to Darwin, is caused by critical biological changes (modifications) little by little over a very long time.

Darwin viewed the history of life as a tree with one common trunk, which then branched off into the youngest branches. In other words, existing organisms are related through descent from a common ancestor. The closer the kinship in the evolutionary tree, the more similar the characteristics (Campbell et al., 2011). When it is traced back, the form of the assessor organism will be more straightforward. Miller-Urey then connected this organic evolution with his idea of neo-abiogenesis. From the results of his experiments (1953), he concluded that life on the primordial earth could have occurred by chance from inorganic substances (hydrogen, methane, ammonia, and water). Due to heat stimulation, cosmic ray radiation, and energy originating from lightning that existed on the earth's surface in the past, these inorganic substances then form simple organic compounds that accumulate in the waters in the form of primordial soup. These simple organic compounds will continue to evolve (chemical evolution) to create more complex compounds, followed by organic molecules that make up living materials (Suhardi, 2007).

The above explanation proves that the origin of species, including humans and all life on earth, is a central theme in the discussion of evolution. Therefore, NSTA states that the theory of evolution raises awareness that nature has its history and that changes over time have and will continue to occur. This change even happens in life and more broadly on planet earth, stars, and galaxies, where what we see today is

different from conditions in the past (cosmic evolution) (NSTA, 2013; see also Alassiri, 2020).

Sometimes misconceptions occur when concepts in other branches of biology are used to explain how evolutionary mechanisms arise, such as mutations. Mutations are a discussion in genetics and are not part of the theory of evolution (Suryo, 2011). However, mutations explain how the evolutionary mechanism occurs because they are considered the initial source of new alleles that allow the emergence of unique beneficial traits (Martincová et al., 2022). Because of the misconception about mutations, the theory of evolution is often blurred with the scientific facts about viral mutations and antibiotic resistance in bacteria (Mantelas & Mavrikaki, 2020). So, disagreement with the theory of evolution is considered equivalent to a rejection of scientific facts. In this regard, Bakar (2020) has also made scientific criticisms of Pervez Hoodbhoy, linking Darwin's theory of evolution with the coronavirus. Hoodboy claims that the idea of evolution was the key to solving the mystery of the Covid-19 outbreak and successfully discovering a coronavirus vaccine.

In addition, the explanation above also proves that the current structure of modern biological science—with evolution as its paradigm or framework—does not provide room for a hypothesis about God. Starr et al. (2016) stated, "science only cares about what can be observed". The narratives presented in most biology textbooks contradict science and religion, asserting that scientific discoveries about the evolution of living things are scientific explanations. On the other side, creation is merely a traditional belief system whose descriptions are no longer relevant to what scientists have discovered (BSCS, 2006; Kardong, 2008; Starr et al., 2016; Campbell et al., 2011). This problem was confirmed by many people from among the scientists themselves. Fred Hoyle states that biologists have forced themselves to conclude that life could have occurred randomly. However, this position is refuted by recent discoveries that the enormous complexity of life is too complex to have happened by chance. However, the structure of biological science is not open to questions to prevent the return of religion as in the medieval era (Hoyle, 1984). Elisabet Sahtouris stated that modern science likens nature to a "machine." The universe becomes a closed mechanical system that works according to fixed mechanical laws, without divine intervention or other supernatural things that exist "outside nature" and

is blind or undirected. In modern science, this universe was not created by God. Still, it was merely an accidental arrangement into a universe consisting of matter, which is not alive, has no meaning, and has no purpose (Sahtouris, 2013).

Indeed, it cannot be denied that there are some figures and scientists among Muslims themselves who accept evolution and try to reconcile it with the information in the Qur'ān through a middle way, namely theistic evolution. These "half-hearted" groups seem to have fulfilled what was stated in the Qur'ān: "They are neither of you nor of them" (Qur'ān, 58:14). Many of their opinions are not following the principles in the theory of evolution itself. They also do not receive support from the Qur'ān, nor are they following the consensus of the previous scholars (the *Salaf*). One of the clear examples is that although the theistic evolutionists accept that the evolutionary process is God's way of making the various living things that exist today, they still believe that human evolution has now reached its peak. This position is to reconcile with the description of the scriptures that humans are given the mandate as guardians of this earth and carry out the task of worshipping God. However, the principle of chance in evolution itself does not support their beliefs. The process of change is unpredictable, and randomness is vital in determining how things evolved. Therefore, Carl Sagan (1934-1996) once said that we are the product of a 4.5-billion year-long process of biological evolution that happened by chance and slowly. There is no reason to think that the evolutionary process has now stopped. Man is a transitional animal; he is not the climax of creation (Sagan, 2000). In addition, the statements in the Qur'ān, with their overall unified context, do not provide support for what they believe.

For this reason, many Muslim theologians take a firm position against accepting the theory of evolution. Sheikh Muhammad Mutawalli Ash-Sya'rawi stated that the theory of evolution is heretical and misleading and must be refuted (Asy-Sya'rawi, 1992, p. 105). He also said that Darwin's theory was a form of lying about God regarding the creation of man and could cause doubts in the belief in the existence of God (Asy-Sya'rawi, 1978, p. 24).

Some other Muslims try to use the framework popularised by Stephen Jay Gould and others called the Non-Overlapping Magisterium (NOMA). Religion and science are allowed to operate in their

scientific domains (Gould, 1999; Barbour, 1990). The reason is that the goals of religion and science are different. Religion is a source of theological, moral and spiritual values, while science is a source of innovation, discovery and improvement of the quality of human life. Nobel laureate Richard Feynman agrees with this view by stating that religion is a culture of faith while scientific culture is a culture of doubt (Alassiri, 2020). When examined in more depth, this view can be said to be a tricky approach. Acts as if condescending but intends to elevate science's position above religion. Religious culture is often identified with "faith", "for we live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), but for the pejorative meaning that religious explanations are rigid, dogmatic, irrational, and have no relevance at all once with the existing reality. Meanwhile, scientific culture is identified with "doubt" in an ameliorative sense, which is open, dynamic, rational, following facts and supported by scientific evidence. Allowing religion and science to run in their domains is precisely the cause of the shock of belief which further weakens a person's confidence in his religion (Abbas, 1983).

The theory of evolution clearly does not provide any room for the existence of Adam and Eve as the first humans as believed and mentioned in the holy books of Islam, Judaism and Christianity (Dawkins, 2012). This fact denotes that the teaching of evolution has offered another truth, which contradicts the teachings of scripture. Students who receive this teaching will undoubtedly choose one of the two, be it religion or science, because it is impossible for having the values of both truths, which contradicts one another. This is where the shock of belief can occur. Dennett's (1995) statement reinforces the possibility of a shock of thought, which likens the theory of evolution to a universal acid, a corrosive liquid that destroys anything it hits. Darwin's theory of evolution is analogous to the universal acid, which can undermine other concepts that he thinks to belong to the bygone pre-scientific era. Such outdated ideas, according to Dennett, include belief in God, value, meaning, purpose, culture, morality and so on from basic things that have been highly valued by humanity for a long time (Dennett, 1995).

Paulo Freire's Critical Education Paradigm

Paulo Freire was a philosopher who questioned the occurring dehumanisation through the current education. Dehumanisation is the removal of human dignity, where the nature of the individual as a

human being is disrespected, devalued due to injustice, exploitation, hegemony, coercion and oppression exercised by the oppressor through an unjust system. Schools have become a means of reproducing oppression, perpetuating injustice, and a "factory" to produce "robots" that only obey the controllers. The occurring practice of education is more inclined to a dissemination of doctrine or a hegemonic tool for the ruling group or the elite. Students are always drilled and trained to consent submission (Abdillah, 2017; Yaqin, 2015).

Freire sharply criticises what he calls banking education, where the teacher serves as the customer and the student is treated as a money safe. In this case, knowledge is positioned as money that is placed in the safe. The materials being taught shut down students' critical thinking, and they become a burden for the students instead. They turn students into mechanical machines since they do not provide students with opportunities to develop and give opinions according to their point of view. Educational practice is only understood as a means of indoctrination of knowledge, stopping critical thinking processes, freezing creative power, and shaping students to become people who are easy to believe (magical awareness). The school reflects the interests of the colonisers, and as such, the aspirations and needs of those colonised (students) are usually ignored. Colonial groups usually indoctrinate values and shift the culture of the colonised in order to assert their superiority. This is similar to what we encountered in the colonial education system, where colonial people were alienated from their original culture (Ayudha, 2016; Bahri, 2019; Robikhah, 2018).

To Freire, education is inseparable from politics in a broad sense. Education can be a means of hegemonic awareness that is either positive or negative (Fakih, 2002). In terms of a negative position, education becomes a significant hallucinating tool. In other words, education in this position is able to trick the individuals involved in it, to be lulled by the offers and values carried in it. This then will further drown the awareness of students to remain in the lies and incitement contained in the values and ideological campaigns that are exhaled through education. At this stage, education manifests itself as a means of oppression, working by becoming a means of conquering consciousness. In this position, conquest is carried out by means of a mechanism of mythicising the world, which aims to present a false world to the minds of individuals who are undergoing the learning process (Freire,

2011). This process then runs by providing subtle persuasion so that individuals who enter education are lulled into accepting the myth of propaganda (Fuad, 2003). At that time, there were changes in the views and knowledge of students, which were basically different from those before learning. Their views were bent so that they were no longer the same as what they previously understood and knew. Furthermore, the process of bending knowledge, as well as mythicising and evaluating, is a mechanism that is taken to perpetuate the situation of oppression and maintain the status quo. These processes are presented in order to carry out a cultural invasion (Freire, 2011). Cultural invasion is a continuation of the process of oppression and the process of alienation. Through cultural invasion, the awareness of each student is lost or negated by the awareness formed by the views of educators who are the arms of the powerful oppressors. This condition is increasingly drowning students in a slumped position. They lose their critical awareness so they can no longer see that something is wrong. Furthermore, they also experience an alienated condition, as they become alienated from themselves, or alienated from the world and environmental conditions that they really want (Datunsolang, 2018; Freire, 1984).

From 1964 to 1970, Freire worked in Chile to carry out literacy programs. His work was considered a successful literacy activity since he not only succeeded in eliminating illiteracy, but also raised critical awareness in the participants. From this, the critical literacy tradition was born. Critical literacy is defined as a person's ability to develop literacy skills, be it reading or writing, in order to raise awareness of the reality of social inequality as a manifestation of abuse of power, oppression, or marginalisation. Thus, Freire's critical literacy is not only cognitive (namely being able to read and write), but also involves awareness and experience and the most important thing is to give birth to emancipatory desires (Freire, 2011; Lee, 2011). Thus, in line with his pedagogical concept, Freire's critical literacy is intended to help those who are marginalised to reveal the hegemony of power and change the situation, or in Giroux terms, "is more than just understanding; it is also about the possibility of self-determination, individual freedom and social agents" (Giroux, 2004).

His success in this critical literacy program gave birth to Freire's idea of liberating education. He thought about how learning can shape the awareness of oppressed individuals and communities to gain freedom

and equality. Freire classified human consciousness into three. The first
is magical consciousness, which is the level of consciousness that is
unable to know the relationship between one factor and another. For
example, poor people are unable to see the link between their poverty
and the political and cultural system. People who are still in the magical
level of consciousness are trapped in the myth of natural inferiority.
Hence, instead of fighting or changing the reality in which they live,
they basically adjust to the existing reality. The educational process
that uses this logic does not provide the analytical ability to identify
the links between systems and structures to community problems.
Students dogmatically receive the "truth" from the teacher, without
any mechanism to further understand the "meaning" of the ideology
that is behind every conception of public life. The second is naival
consciousness. This awareness is experienced by those who have seen
and understood the causes of chaos in their lives, but do not have the
awareness to rise up and challenge or at least try to fight for their rights.
People who are in this naive awareness are apathetic, always looking
for something safe, either out of fear or because they are unable to
organise themselves to become a force for change. The third is critical
consciousness. At this level, people are able to reflect and see the causal
relationship, refuse to become perpetrators of the oppressive status quo,
and try consciously to replace the oppressive system (Boyd, 2012; Din
& Ahmed, 2017; Mahur et al., 2019; Nuryatno, 2015).

Research Methodology

This is descriptive qualitative research with library research. The library
research enables the researchers to try to reveal new concepts by reading
and recording information relevant to the research objectives or needs.
Reading materials include books, journals, and scientific works related
to the title of this research. In this study, the researchers analysed texts
and available data. The data used in this research cover: 1) Primary data
sources: the main data sources in the form of works written by Paulo
Freire; 2) Secondary data sources: data sources that support primary
data in the form of books and scientific articles that discuss Freire's
ideas and critiques of the education system and administration.

Findings

The literature review to explore Paulo Freire's thoughts results in the
following findings, which are presented in the form of critiques on the

teaching of evolution in Islamic schools based on Freire's perspective (see the summary in Table 1):

First, in Freire's critical paradigm, education cannot be separated from politics in a broad sense and that education is not something neutral but must be understood in terms of the relationship between knowledge, power, and ideology. This view encourages us to look critically at our education which is widely adopted and influenced by Western education. In fact, Western education itself is not free from certain agendas and ideologies. The West has experienced a dark history as a result of the arbitrariness of the Roman Church's authority in curbing and blocking the doors of thought and discovery and imposing punishment or inquisition on many innocent people, simply because they are considered to have committed heretics and against the teachings of the church. As witnessed by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in the 16th century, the authorities of the Catholic Church have done many actions that are contrary to Christian teaching itself. In Rome, the holy city of Christians at that time, piety was neglected until witch doctors and prostitutes filled the streets. Church authorities have also abused their authority by selling religion for worldly interests, such as selling indulgences as well as commercialising relics and places of pilgrimage for money.

This bitter experience later turned into a very radical response, in the form of the ideas of secularisation with the spirit to separate religion from all aspects of human life, even resulting in an anti-religious spirit. This condition further led to the emergence of materialism, Darwinism, atheism, and so on, all of which contributed to the development of science and education in the Western world. If these aspects of the Western education system are adopted or borrowed without any critical sorting or filtering, the Western ideology and worldview that are inclined to atheism and secularism can infiltrate our education. Arif Rohman (2013) explained that this borrowing method, namely borrowing education from other nations or countries that are deemed more advanced, regardless of the country's own context has the potential to cause problems. Each country has a different background and socio-cultural context. Thus, what may be considered something appropriate in other countries may not necessarily be appropriate in our own place.

Indonesian curriculum for Biology Majors mostly refers to the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS) (Mutia, 2016;

Suryadarma, 1993; Suyanto, 2011), a biology curriculum development
organisation in the United States, which was one of the pioneers of the
teaching of evolution in the United States in 1950's, a time when the
teaching of evolution was still widely prohibited on the basis of the
Scopes Court ruling and the Tennessee Supreme Court ruling because
religious values (especially Protestant Christianity) were still deeply
rooted in society. By 1950, there was competition and increasingly
conflicts between the US and the Soviet Union, otherwise known as the
Cold War. The US fear of a new world dominated by the Soviets forced
the former to make a breakthrough in the field of education, by way of
preparing US students to study and take part in science, mathematics,
and engineering (Staver, 2015). In this regard, Arias-Vazquez has
conducted a study on the impact of education in the US on religiosity
(data recorded from 1972). He found that education has had a negative
impact on individual religiosity, as marked by a decrease in Church
attendance from year to year and a decrease in people's belief about the
importance of religion in their lives (Arias-Vazquez, 2012).

   Using Freire's critical paradigm, the socio-historical background of
education in the US, as well as the results of Arias-Vasquez's research,
may give us an idea that the teaching of creation (that God created
life) in the US was gradually facing increasing challenges, while the
teaching of evolution began to spread. Initially, the religious group tried
to champion their rights by demanding the teaching of alternative views
in terms of creation (known as Teach the Controversy), apart from the
teaching of the theory of evolution. In 1982, in the case of McLean v.
Arkansas Board of Education, the federal court stated that the Arkansas
law which requires the provision of a balanced portion of teaching
between evolution and creation has violated the US Constitution's
Establishment Clause. The court stated that creationism is not a science.
This court verdict led the religious group to demand the teaching of
intelligent design in addition to the teaching of evolution. Ultimately,
in 2005, Judge John E. Jones at the US District Court issued a ruling
that intelligent design is not science, but only a form of endorsement
of religion, which highlight that its teaching is unnecessary. This court
ruling is in contrast to the fact that intelligent design has avoided all
forms of reference to religion and merely shows scientific evidence of
evolutionary errors (Matsumura & Mead, 2016; Staver, 2015).

This contextual background should be carefully considered by all parties involved in education in Islamic schools, both curriculum developers, teachers, and authorities (school principals). The Islamic schools shall no longer use the same biology curriculum as the regular curriculum used for public schools which have adopted many of the BSCS curriculum structures. At the very least, there should be a fair and equal portion in the provision of the syllabus and lesson plans developed in Islamic schools, so as to allow sufficient space for the teaching of Islamic creationism to counter scientific evolutionist arguments. Teachers in Islamic schools must have a good understanding of scientific arguments that can invalidate arguments about evolution and vice versa, by way of proving the truth of the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic schools also require separate student books or modules that are structured in a way that meets this need. This need is also in accordance with Freire's critique of cultural invasion through education by colonial or oppressive groups by indoctrinating values and shifting the culture of colonised communities in order to assert their superiority. According to Freire, education should be dynamic, contextual, classless and without discrimination (Mansyur, 2014).

The second point is on Freire's view of the non-neutrality of science. Science is not value free but is a reconstruction in a society. As Foucault (1926-1984) articulated, the power system in society produces a reconstruction of knowledge related to the interests of the ruling group (Gianto, 2012). As seen from the fact that science talks are concerned with objects or phenomena that are objective in nature, neutrality can evidently be maximally pursued. Nonetheless, scientific products are no longer mere raw data as they are. The product of science involves the intellectual and psychological activities of scientists in viewing, analysing and interpreting existing data, which opens the door for the entry of scientist subjectivity in some scientific discussions. The subjectivity of researchers has taken a role even since the very beginning, when they have started the process of searching and researching facts or choosing what theme to study (Fata & Noorhayati, 2016). Fata & Noorhayati's explanation is scientific and logical if it is not interpreted negatively as a rejection of science but is interpreted as a critique that modern science being taught today is motivated by a secular Western epistemology (Setiawan, 2017; Tanjung, 2019). Biology as part of science is also covered in this. Staver (2015) explains that Darwin's

work has contributed three important elements in the advancement of biological science. First, the theory of evolution to explain the origin of species and as a unifying theme for the branches of biology. The same idea was stated by Campbell et al. (2011). Second, to become a new framework for future scientific studies. Third, to change the philosophy of knowledge regarding the origin of life, in that, there is no mention of God's plans or actions, which put aside faith in biology. Moreover, the American philosopher and cognitive scientist, Daniel C. Dennett, calls Darwin's work a "universal acid" that can destroy religious views of the existence of God, the soul, and life after death. There is nothing special in humans, because it is no different from other animals (Evans & Selina, 2010; Sternberg, 1999). Dennett is known as one of "The Four Horseman of New Atheism" along with Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens (Finley, 2019).

The third point is on Freire's classification of human consciousness into three: magical consciousness, naïve consciousness, and critical awareness. We can use this classification to understand the state of the people involved in education (including the students themselves and their parents) in relation to the teaching of evolution. The first group refers to people who are still in the level of magical consciousness. This group is still shackled by the inferiority myth, that everything that exists and originates from the Western world is progress. In their view, Western science is entirely true, neutral and flawless; and therefore, the way to achieve progress (including in education and scientific advancement) is to entirely comply with them. As seen from the theory of the hidden curriculum, if we position the hidden secularisation behind the teaching of evolution as a hidden curriculum, it will be deliberately covered up and stamped by scientific elites or colonisers as "legitimate science" and otherwise considered unscientific; pseudoscience; and not science, which makes people unaware of the problems in it, thinking that all is well (Margolis, 2001). This was reinforced by Efendy who explained that education observers had considered that the curriculum was actually a political product, namely that the curriculum product was part of the political process of a nation. As a political product, this curriculum is vulnerable to politicisation of the elites of a nation. Epistemologically, the curriculum is the result of a battle between the philosophical discourses adopted by each ideological carrier, and likewise with the Western curriculum. This Western influence, consciously or not, has had

an impact on the education system in Indonesia, which some experts have included in the Third World construction. As a consequence, the colonisation of markets and ideas in Indonesia has taken place very smoothly. Often without even realising it, our society has participated in the efforts to market the global ideas. This Western paradigm then penetrates and influences the global epistemology system, which requires that scientific studies and findings must refer to it. Otherwise, they will be labelled as unscientific (Efendy, 2015).

Table 1. Some Freirean Views of Education and Their Relevance in the Critique on the Teaching of Evolution

No	Freire's View	Relevance in the Critique of the Teaching of Evolution
1	Education is inseparable from politics (in a broad sense) and that it is not something neutral but must be understood in terms of the relation between knowledge, power and ideology.	This serves as a criticism on Indonesian education, which widely adopts and is influenced by Western education. In fact, Western education is never free from certain agendas and ideologies. If these aspects of the Western education system are adopted or borrowed without being critically sorted or filtered, the Western ideology and worldview that are inclined to atheism and secularism can infiltrate our education. This criticism also covers a biology curriculum that includes the teaching of evolution.
2	Schools reflect the interests of the colonisers or oppressive elites in power, so that the aspirations and needs of the colonised group are usually ignored. The colonial group indoctrinated values through education and shifted the culture of the colonised society in order to assert their superiority. Education should be dynamic, contextual, classless and without discrimination.	The biology curriculum in Islamic schools should be structured based on the context, and it is not to be equated with the curriculum for general schools, by way of providing a fair and equal portion for the teaching of Islamic creationism to counter evolutionist scientific arguments.

No	Freire's View	Relevance in the Critique of the Teaching of Evolution
3	The non-neutrality of science: science is not free of value but is a reconstruction in a society related to the interests of the ruling group.	Biology as part of science is also not a neutral subject. Especially through the theory of evolution, atheism has infiltrated biological science. Teaching evolution and evidence of evolution can destroy students' religious beliefs about the existence of God, the spirit, and the existence of an afterlife. In this view, humans are not special creatures, because they are no different from other animals.
4	Freire's classification of human consciousness into three: magical consciousness, naive consciousness, and critical awareness.	In connection with the teaching of evolution, the state of the people involved in education can be divided into three as well. The first group is people who are still shackled by the myth that everything that exists and originates from the Western world is progress; Western science is entirely true, neutral and flawless; and therefore, the way to progress is to follow them. They do not realise that there is a problem in the education system and consider that all is well. The second group is those who have gained an understanding on the problem but do not dare to leave the safe zone. The third group is those who are aware of and trying to change the situation according to their own profession.
5	Freire's concept of alienation	This concept can explain the situation when students receive educational materials that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs. This condition will lead students to experience alienation - alienation from society and even from themselves, experience split personality, and make them tossed and torn.

No	Freire's View	Relevance in the Critique of the Teaching of Evolution
6	Critical literacy program to raise awareness on the reality of social inequality as a manifestation of abuse of power, oppression, or marginalisation.	It is necessary to implement critical literacy programs in Islamic schools and colleges to raise awareness of problems in evolutionary theory and its teaching.

The second group refers to people who are in the level of a naïve consciousness. These people are actually aware of the real situation, namely the problem in the teaching of evolution to children. They already know the agenda or interests behind it. However, they do not want to act or speak up to challenge and voice their rights. This condition may be attributed to fear of being sanctioned because they are in an oppressive system ruled by the elites who also believe in and justify evolution. An example of this case is a lecturer at Biology Faculty at a university who is afraid to speak out for creationism because he is worried about the accusation of complying with the radical-fundamentalist group and thus will be reported to his superiors so that he will be fired. Otherwise, it could be because of a feeling of being unable to make changes. The third group are those who have reached critical awareness. They have been able to reflect and see the relationship between one factor and another. In this case, for example, these group of people will be looking at the relationship between the increasingly rapid secularisation and materials in the curriculum that do lead to secular understanding. These people refuse to perpetuate the oppression of these elites, and are trying in whatever way they can to improve the situation.

The fourth point refers to Freire's concept of alienation: human consciousness that has been controlled or shackled by an ideological superstructure that exists outside of themselves, which makes them alienated and separated from their world, from their group or society. This concept can explain the situation when students receive educational material that is irrelevant to them, which contains the values of secularism or atheism, which make them excluded from their social community (which in this case is the context of a religious Indonesian society), and even alienated from themselves, because they have to accept what is contrary to their beliefs. The teaching of secular sciences that is contrary to religious beliefs, in addition to the absence of answers that can counter these views satisfactorily, will create a situation that

is described as someone who lives with a split personality. On the one hand, he must speak as an educated person by referring to scientific explanations of the origin of life, human origins, and the speciation process; but on the other hand, he is a Muslim who believes in the truth of divine revelation which contains values contradicting what is described by science. Under these circumstances, he will be tossed and torn between the two views (Kartanegara, 2005; Kuntowijoyo, 2001; Sopater, 1987).

The fifth point refers to Freire's literacy program, which aims to raise awareness of the reality of social inequality as a manifestation of abuse of power, oppression, or marginalisation. This program can be applied to Islamic *madrasas*, schools or universities. This program is not intended to teach students how to read letters, because problems related to illiteracy have been resolved in Indonesia. The literacy of this program refers to critical literacy, as a way to raise awareness of problems in evolutionary theory and teaching. Libraries in Islamic schools and colleges need to budget funds to provide books written by scientists with proven credibility to challenge the theory of evolution. In biology classes, teachers or lecturers can increase the critical literacy of their students by programming them to read creationist books. Textbook developers also need to include useful materials for cultivating this awareness in student or teacher handbooks. Some examples may include: the roots of Western philosophy behind the emergence of the theory of evolution, scientists who reject the theory of evolution, gaps that confuses Darwin in *On the Origin of the Species,* empirical evidence against the theory of evolution, the relationship between Darwinism and racism, and so on.

Discussion

The research implies that Freire's critical paradigm can be a new way of looking at teaching and learning critically by focusing on the attempt to uncover key issues or concepts that include ideology, hegemony, resistance, power, knowledge construction, class, cultural politics, and emancipation. Freire's ideas provide a perspective to help see the true reality, which most people do not realise because their consciousness lies in the level of magical consciousness, as they are trapped in myths crammed by the elite. Thus, instead of struggling or changing the reality in which they live, they justify it, reinforce it, and adjust themselves to

the oppression. Freire's ideas are born out of original conception that can hardly be found in, for instance, other philosophical schools. The critical education paradigm is the only school of educational philosophy that reveals the political content (in a broad sense) of all educational activities. Education is not situated in a sterile space and mass, but is a political activity in facing hegemonic systems and structures. Education is understood in terms of the relations between knowledge, power and ideology. This notion is very useful and becomes a gate to understanding many educational social phenomena.

Based on philosophical studies and educational theories, this research findings prove that criticism on the teaching of evolution is possible and is part of a scientific academic discussion. Affiliation to a particular faith and rejection of Darwinian views are not to be equated with rejection of science. Even after Darwin published his work *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the foremost French biologist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) tried to test the correctness of the theory of abiogenesis or spontaneous generation which formed the basis for the Darwinian view of origin of life. Pasteur made a simple experiment using a flask that had a long neck that curved downward like a goose and has proven the theory of biogenesis and is recognised by the world. His revolutionary ideas laid the foundation for modern medicine and science, such as: sterilisation techniques, aseptic procedures in surgery, and epidemiology (Gillen & Sherwin, 2008).

The results of the current research still lie at theoretical level, and thus still need further developments. Some possible ideas for further researches on this topic include: a phenomenological attempt to see how teachers respond to curriculum policies in the teaching of evolution, or the attempt to see whether there has been a change in students after learning the theory of evolution. This research can also serve as the basis for developing instructional designs in Islamic schools.

Conclusion

From this study, we can draw some conclusions based on the Freirean perspective that leads to several criticisms on the teaching of evolution in Islamic schools: (1) science, including biology is not completely neutral. The teaching of evolution to Muslim students in a religious society in Indonesia may potentially contribute to the process of secularisation and bring about the formation of a split personality, (2) the applicable

biology curriculum - especially in Islamic schools - should be sorted
and filtered, (3) the biology curriculum in Islamic schools should not
be equated with that in public schools. Hence, it is necessary to prepare
the biology curriculum by considering the context, and there must be a
fair and equal portion of the teaching of Islamic creationism in addition
to the teaching of evolution as a way to counter evolutionist arguments,
(4) many parties involved in education (teachers, students, curriculum
developers, and so on) comply with the theory of evolution and fail to
see the problems because they are still trapped in magical consciousness,
and (5) it is necessary to promote critical literacy in Islamic schools and
colleges to raise the awareness of the problems in evolutionary theory
and in its teaching.

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The Role of Mass Media as a Channel to Learn About Islam Among Muslims in Gombak

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Abstract: Mass media's evolution today requires the dāʿiy to equip themselves with communication skills as part of da'wah. This is because the mass media offers borderless and limitless Islamic contents platform that can reach many Muslim in 24/7. However, mass media also has disadvantages where fake preacher and extremist can freely promote their ideologies. Moreover, past literature on the mass media focusses more on the development of Islamic

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content yet very few studied on the importance of its channel of distribution for da'wah. This study focusses on mass media's role in educating and analyse its favourability as a tool for Islamic learning. The respondents were 596 Muslims in Gombak. The results highlight the practicality, importance, and opportunities of mass media to propagate a better understanding of Islam that can be utilised by the government and religious authorities in formulating policies and strategies for teaching Islam more effectively.

Keywords: Mass Media, Traditional Media, New Media, Islamic Learning, Globalisation, Gombak.

Abstrak: Evolusi media massa pada masa kini memerlukan para da'i melengkapkan diri dengan kemahiran komunikasi sebagai sebahagian daripada dakwah. Ini adalah kerana media massa menawarkan platform kandungan Islamik yang meluas dan tanpa sempadan, serta boleh dicapai oleh pengguna Muslim dalam tempoh 24 jam seminggu. Walau bagaimanapun, media massa juga mempunyai kelemahan di mana penceramah palsu dan pelampau bebas mempromosi ideologi atau fahaman mereka. Tambahan pula, kajian lepas berkaitan media massa lebih tertumpu kepada pembangunan kandungan Islamik namun, hanya sebilangan kecil kajian yang membincangkan mengenai kepentingan saluran penyampaian untuk dakwah. Kajian ini menumpukan kepada peranan media massa dalam mendidik dan mengkaji kelebihannya sebagai alat untuk pembelajaran Islamik. Responden yang terlibat adalah seramai 596 orang Muslim di Gombak. Hasil kajian telah mengetengahkan kegunaan, kepentingan dan peluang media massa dalam mempropagandakan kefahaman yang lebih baik mengenai Islam, di mana ianya boleh digunapakai oleh kerajaan dan pihak berwajib agama dalam merangka polisi dan strategi untuk mengajar tentang Islam dengan lebih berkesan.

Kata kunci: Media Massa, Media Tradisional, Media Baharu, Pembelajaran Islamik, Globalisasi, Gombak

Introduction

The utilisation of mass media in the field of *da'wah* is nothing new as the newspaper, radio, and television have already long taken this role in conveying Islamic teaching to the community. The media also functions as a channel for Muslims to acquire new knowledge, discuss current issues, and share information on the Islamic lifestyle. Traditional mass media such as the radio and magazines continue to be well received in the Muslim community. Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAM) reported that Malaysian radio listeners has now increase 217,000 in

numbers to 21.3 million weekly listeners, equalling 96% of individuals in Peninsular Malaysia (Kessler, 2022). Despite a decline in readers for printed media, Statista statistics showed a rise of 5% of respondents who acquire their news through traditional media such as television. (Hirschmann, 2022).

With the invention of the internet, the *da'wah* field Malaysia has gone a tremendous change due to new mass media is quickly overtaking the traditional mass media's functions as the mainstream channel of *da'wah*. Since then, the internet has also become an important channel for Muslims to learn Islamic teaching and to disseminate Islamic belief in the global village (Ghani, 2010). The evolution of the internet accompanied by advancements in communication technology has exponentially increased the dependency of people on the media. Research done by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2018) found out that Malaysia has the highest numbers of social media users in Asia - and Malaysian, on average, stays about 8 hours per day on the internet. Nonetheless, most of their reason for surfing is to seek information/knowledge. This study aims to discover which media is frequently used by the Muslims in Malaysia in their quest for information and Islamic education.   The   main objective of this research is to describe the pattern of media usage among Muslims in Gombak based on gender, age, education level, occupation, and frequency of going to the mosque.

Mass Media and Islamic Learning

Traditional *da'wah* approaches are becoming more and more insufficient to address Muslim issues as many modern problems require a more modern approach in solving them. Nowadays, social issues within the Muslim community—such as adultery and alcohol consumption in public—have gone rampant without control. According to the National Anti-Drugs Agency research in 2019, 80% of cases of a drug addict are Malay Muslims (Statistics of drug addicts by ethnicity, 2014 – 2019, 2021). To address these issues – Hamka, according to what H. M. Iskandar mentioned in his book "Pemikiran Hamka Tentang Dakwah," proposed five elements of *Da'wah*, which are: (1) the subject, (2) the materials, (3) the methods, (4) media and means, (5) the object. Mass media would be one of the means of *da'wah*, and its utilisation is a part of *da'wah* methods. Utilising it well will contribute to the higher

success of *da'wah* to a more significant number of audiences (Iskandar, 2001, p. 251; Syobah, 2013, p. 29).

The introduction of mass media has changed the *da'wah* style and Islamic education in the modern era. Mass media can be considered as a channel, media/medium, means or a tool used in mass communication, which is a communication directed to the mass people (channel of mass communication) (A. Manaf, 2018, p. 196). The advancement of mass media today has opened up many opportunities for Muslims to increase their understanding of Islam through many sources and means. Research by Piela (2010) discovers that many Muslim women in the United States utilise the media as a platform for them to communicate, educate themselves, and discuss related issues on Islam. Thus, media has become an important platform for them and many other Muslims, especially for the young Muslims, to discuss with their peers and consult the religious authority/scholars regarding their understanding of Islam.

Traditional mass media such as radio, television, newspaper, and magazine greatly impact Muslim society. Moreover, he possibility for community radio to be a *da'wah* agent due to its cheap production combined with its direct, flexible, and portable potential. Alfiatul Rochmah (2020, p.5), on the other hand, analyses the probability of some cases of its misuses by radical and populism movement, with a specific case study on Dakwah Syariah Radio (RDS FM). Writings as a means of *da'wah* are also utilised in newspapers and magazines such as *al*-Manar, Solusi, and *Al*-Islam. Iwan Kuswandi (2017, p.17) in his study showcased the impact of Kiyai (Indonesian religious teacher) writings on the Muslim students, such as giving them motivations, exposing them to a new finding of knowledge, and improving their understanding of the religion.

Thus, a contemporary *dāʿiy* is in dire need of communication skills, particularly skills related to media. The increasing cases of media manipulation used to promote deviant groups and inauthentic teaching of Islam need to be countered. Even more concerning is the fact that the media—particularly new media—is where most young Muslims spend their time. They usually refer to the new media on things related to religion rather than consulting their nearest mosque or religious authority. Without sufficient communication skills, the *dāʿiy / duʿāt* will be losing their grip and influence on young Muslims that now have been

swayed by "shining" presentation and the "cosmetic" knowledge of deviant/immoral figures, even though the *dāʿiy / duʿāt* possessed better understanding of Islam. It is one of the main reasons why *dāʿiy / duʿāt* need to make use of social media.

Many Muslim scholars have also begun to participate in the new media to ensure the positive utilisation of those platforms. Several names such as Quraish Shihab, Nouman Ali Khan, Mufti Menk, Yasmen Mogahed, *Ustādh* Azhar Idrus, *Ustādh* Abdul Somad and others try to counterbalance its negative influences by becoming somehow an influencer themselves, flooding the new media with Islamic lectures and information. Concerned Muslims also started to create pages and groups disseminating their public lessons and classes, collecting millions of followers worldwide. Localised Muslim scholars can now further expand their presence to the global arena, while classes and courses are no longer becoming exclusive and expensive.

Despite the transformation of many traditional media into new media forms, new media will not be able to completely replace traditional media in Malaysia. For instance, the number of people reading newspapers in Malaysia has not yet decreased to a significant level, and people continue to consider it to be relevant until now. It is possible that the Internet has emerged as a more favourable option in political discussion medium for the people, but the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of Malaysians still acquire their news from more traditional sources like newspapers and television (Yap, 2009). Moreover, research done by Ali Salman et al. (2011b) showcased the complimenting effect of traditional media and new media.

From *da'wah* and Islamic education point of view, as long as there are *mad'u* (recipient of da'wah) available, the means to reach them is always relevant and important. There is a large body of literature that has been produced on the topic of the benefits of mass media for da'wah; however, there is none that focuses on the various types of mass media and narrows its influence according to each medium such as television, radio, newspapers, websites, and other media. This research will fill in the gap by broadening the scope of understanding on the utilisation of traditional and new mass media and quantitatively analyse its usage patterns among Muslims with different backgrounds in Gombak. It is the first research of its kind that covered all 12 districts in Gombak, the

first one to look into various types of media and also the first one that zooms into various backgrounds of the respondents.

The Impact of Mass Media on Muslim Society

Media predominantly influence the development of social behaviour in this age of information. The mass media have power in creating the awareness, construct thinking and belief as well as influence the behaviour of the public. With the new technologies, the media now are no longer act as a channel but it has become the part of human life (Manan, Mohamad & Yakim, 2020). According to The Communications and Multimedia Ministry (2021), in Malaysia, 122.8% of population have a smartphone (The Star, 2021). Moreover, 85% of Malaysians are internet user and 86.4% are active on social media. In general, Malaysians spend 38% of their daily life surfing internet. As for the traditional mass media consumption, Malaysians spend nearly 3 hours watching television and 1 hour listening to radio (Statista, 2021). Based on the above argument, it is not an exaggeration to say that the mass media exist in every aspect of Malaysian's life including learning. It is in line with the transformation of media, which has found its significance since entering into a more open form towards freedom of expression as the basis for shaping the structure of people's lives. Meanwhile, the transformation of information to a more open direction has resulted in drastic changes in people's behaviour. Significant changes are more visible from the aspect of religious behaviour in addition to other elements. Changes in religious behaviour resulting from the transformation of information are indicated by society's morality, which sometimes ignores religious values. On the other hand, the media has also made a positive impact on religious publicity. It can be seen from the variety of religious events presented in the media, both printed and electronic, presenting information on regional and national issues. It also helps to build critical attitudes in society due to information disclosure (Shobah, 2014, p. 26). In many regards, the impact of mass media on the Muslim community can be understood as follows:

Positive Impact of Mass Media on Islam

The advent of mass media marked the beginning of a new era in modern society. People today rely heavily on mass media to stay updated on daily news, global issues, and recent events that take place in their immediate environments. Almost all people in the world have access

to the mass media of various forms with 4.2 billion people are users of social media (Tankovska, 2021). Among the positive impacts of mass media in the Muslim's society can be derived as follows:

Encourage Socialisation and Human Interaction

Among positive aspects of mass media, particularly the new media is it makes us easier to know new people worldwide. Social media can help people keep in touch with their old friends and keep updated with their relatives. People can easily make new friends through chat room or discuss interesting topics with strangers of different background on many issues. The Qur'ān says:

> "O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous. Allah is All-Knowledgeable, All-Aware." (*al-Qur'ān*, 49:13)

With the utilisation of new media, people can get to know each other's beliefs and backgrounds and promote good inter-cultural and inter-religious relationships.

Channel of Da'wah and Islamic Learning

New media also help to improve the quality of the da'wah presentation. People can interactively react with the contents and ask any question directly on the channel. It has become easier to ask any questions or share any opinion on the discussion. They can also utilise new media to reconfirm latest fatāwā and clearing up any ambiguities on current issues. Religious authority such as MAIWP has effectively utilized their website to address questions and issues from the masses (Persekutuan, 2015). They regularly published Islamic articles on their social media and website to address current issues of the masses. When used together, traditional and new forms of media, such as articles and bulletins, as well as social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram, can be very effective in spreading Islamic information to large groups of people. To ease the people in the way of da'wah coincides with The Prophet SAAS says, "Make things easy and do not make them difficult, cheer the people up by conveying glad tidings to them and do not repulse (them)" (Al-Bukhārī, 78:152).

Increase Awareness and Solidarity on Muslim Issues

The mass media could also help Muslims to quickly get any update on their brother's condition from all over the world. Issues such as aggression that happens in Palestine, or ethnic cleansing on Rakhine and Uyghur - with the utilisation of mass media - will bring the world attention to that place. Global awareness campaigns and petition were initiated and moved by Muslims and non-Muslims on their respective countries to force their authorities to criticize and pressure the oppressor; economically and also politically. This awareness is easily spread through the channel of mass media through writings, posters, and videos. This spirit of brotherhood is in accordance with the Prophet PBUH saying: "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself" (Al-Bukhārī, 2:6).

The Problem of Mass Media on Islam

The mass media is a double-edged sword; as much as it can be used to benefit Muslims, it can also harm them. As an open platform, all types of people can take advantage of the mass media, including the wrong person. Some people might use the mass media for evil agenda, such as promoting hate speech, conducting shady businesses, and spreading illegal sexual content. There are several other disadvantages of mass media, such as:

Distortion of Facts, Infamy and Hate Speech on Islam (Islamophobia)

There has been an increase in hate speech in Islam in the mass media in recent years (Civila et al., 2020). Many cases of Islamophobia recently happen in several Muslim-minority countries in the West as a result. The utilisation of mass media in promoting self-acted revenge or Muslim killing also happens in several places. The Christchurch incidents in New Zealand were examples of how new media were used to broadcast Muslims' killings "live" to the viewers (Christchurch Shootings: "Bad Actors" Helped Attack Videos Spread Online, 2019). The hatred and infamy for Muslims are among the major reasons for the harsh treatment and discrimination against Muslims in several Muslim-minority communities (Barzegar & Arain, 2019).

Ideological Clash and Globalisation of Value

Many social media challenges bring harm to us and the surrounding. Social media challenges such as "The Outlet Challenge" asked the users

to stick a metal fork to the wall socket (Lee, 2020). "Momo Challenge" allegedly used social media channels and WhatsApp to encourage children to perform self-harm, and two teenagers from Colombia have died due to this challenge (Newsroom, 2018). A viral Choking Challenge in 2007 joined by 79,000 Ontario students resulting in some of the students need to be taken to the hospital (The Canadian Press, 2008). Another challenge, the "Tide Pod Challenge," encouraged children to post videos of themselves eating Tide Pods, resulting in about 12,000 cases of ingesting laundry detergent pods in 2017 (Janeway, 2017).

Psychological Issues and Losing Touch on Reality

Many studies show the negative psychological impact of the mass media on people, mainly social media users. A study done in 2019 showed that social media could cause addiction that may impact the sleep cycle, daily routine, and hinder work progress (Hou et al., 2019). It can also lead to psychological illnesses such as narcissism, stress, anxiety, and depression (Eraslan-Capan, 2015; Malik & Khan, 2015). Most of the contents published on social media do not reflect the reality. Celebrities and influencers will often show off their lavish lifestyle and fortunes. Simultaneously, their fans will imitate that kind of lifestyle to the degree of faking and denying reality. It will incur conflict within their mind and impact their psychological health. Study shows that frequent exposure to hate-speech online could plausibly influence the online stress expression of individuals (Saha et al., 2019).

Media Landscape in Malaysia

The mass media industry in Malaysia is made up of traditional mass media publisher such as the television, radio, newspapers, and the new media developer or web-based media developer such as blogger and independent content maker. Most of traditional media in Malaysia are wholly owned by the government such as the Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) or maintained by business conglomerate such as the Media Prima Group and Astro All Asia networks Ltd. Established in 1946, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) or also known as the Department of Broadcasting Malaysia – the earliest and the oldest broadcaster in the country - currently manages 6 television channels and 34 radio stations (Ahmad, 2009). Media Prima, on the other hand, owns four television channels and four radio stations (*Media Prima: Corporate Structure*,

2020). Astro All Asia Networks Plc, Malaysia's current sole satellite television provider, is privately owned.

Printed newspaper in Malaysia is still widely read by the masses despite competition by the alternative media. Well-known newspapers such as The Star, New Straits Times, The Sun, Berita Harian, Utusan Malaysia, Sin Chew Jit Poh and Nanyang Siang Pau are still thriving alongside 20 to 30 other newspapers and tabloids published in Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil. Readership has yet to decrease to a threatening degree, and advertisers continue to view it as the preferred medium. Although the Internet has become a challenge to the traditional mass media, the reality is that most Malaysians still get their news from traditional media such as newspapers and television. This does not, however, imply that Malaysian newspapers can sit back and expect their readership to remain stable or grow. Most newspapers have also started their own online versions to keep up with their modern readers. Despite these changes in mass media trend, Malaysia's traditional mass media continue to attract advertising dollars. The presence of online newspapers did not result in the extinction of the printed newspaper. On the other hand, they actually enforcing each other. The new media provide another form for traditional media to grow; as the form of newspaper may change, but not the "newspaper" per se (Salman et al., 2011a, p. 7).

Islamic radios and television have also started to gain more listeners and viewers with several more channels have been made. Launched in the early 2000s and funded by the government, IKIM-FM main features are brief lectures, short prayers, and short passages from the Qur'ān with several Islamic songs. In 2017, Zayan FM, a more modern and contemporary Islamic radio was launched by Astro. On Islamic television channel, Astro also launched Astro Oasis for full Islamic content while Media Prime focused one of their channels, TV9, mainly for *da'wah* purpose. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia has also started their own free-to-air Islamic television channel, TV AlHijrah, in order to expand the reach of *da'wah* in Malaysia. The new media helped the traditional media publisher to thrive with a new form as the television channels, radios and newspapers now can be accessed online (A. M. A. Manaf, 2018, p. 122). A statistic by the Nielsen Company showcased an increasing trend of Digital media consumption, with a total reach of 73% and a growth of 4% in 2017. Embracing the changes

is the current trends of the mass media industry in Malaysia in order for them to be relevant and adapt with the changes of their users (*State of the Media – The Malaysian Media Landscape in 2017*, 2018).

Methodology

The respondents of this research are the Muslim community that lives in Gombak. This research is part of Gombak Mosque educational module construction project that aims to develop a more structured and effective curriculum module for the mosque. Thus, only Muslims were eligible to participate in this study. The research employed stratified random sampling techniques, where the population is divided into subcategories based on the geographical location that they belonged to, and participants of the research were randomly selected to participate based on those criteria.

Enumerators were chosen to assist in data collection. They were given several briefings before the questionnaires were delivered, and they needed to be aware of the research's general background. The items in the questionnaire were clarified so that respondents could get better understanding on the items. They need to also familiarize themselves with the sampling method as well as the data collection's overall plan and strategies. To achieve a positive outcome of the research, several ethical and safety standards must be followed.

The questionnaire was organised into three sections: section A's items are related to mosque curriculum, section B contains questions about the respondent demography, and section C contains items on respondent attitude and behaviour. Enumerators were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire first in order to identify any potential confusion or misunderstanding of the items in the field. Any questions or concerns about the questionnaire's conduct were addressed directly by our main researcher.

The respondent's sampling procedure must meet specific criteria, including: (1) the respondent must live in Gombak district, (2) must be a Malaysian Muslim, (3) they can be mosque goers or non-mosque goers, and (4) the respondent must complete the questionnaire within the data collection period (5th July to 16th July 2019). The following is the breakdown target for every ten respondents: 5 adult males (40 years old and above), 3 adult females (40 years old and above), and 2 youth (between 15 to 39 years old).

Among the plans and strategies that could make it easier for the enumerators to reach the required number of respondents are: (1) scout the survey area ahead of time, (2) identify the key population area, (3) set a daily target, (4) start collecting as soon as possible, (5) be friendly but not overly friendly, (6) submit all completed questionnaires on time, and (6) always consult the researcher if there are any problems with the questionnaire.

To ensure a smooth data collection process, enumerators were encouraged to follow several ethics and safety protocols while conducting the study, including: (1) Be polite when approaching the respondent, (2) Be clear and objective when dealing with respondents, (3) Try to keep interactions short but sweet, (4) Allow the respondent to answer the questionnaire with their own thoughts, (5) Assist the respondent if they do not understand the questionnaire, (6) Do not cheat by filling out the form yourself, (7) Always bring the data collecting approval letter, (8) Do not dispute with respondents, (9) If respondents refuse to take the survey, find a new one, and (10) Always return/contact the researcher if you have a problem.

The surveys were distributed to 596 respondents from 12 Gombak sub-districts namely Rawang, Selayang, Kuang, Subang, Taman Templer, Batu Caves, Gombak Setia, Gombak, Hulu Kelang, Bukit Antarabangsa, Ampang and Lembah Jaya. Data collection was carried from 5th July to 16th July 2019. Collected data were analysed using the SPSS software.

Results

This part presents the research output based on the trends of media use in Islamic education. Figure 1 showcased the overall percentage of how Muslim society in Gombak used media in learning Islam. The majority of the respondents had chosen television (14.1%) as their primary platform, followed by YouTube (12.8%) and book/magazine (10.8%). It proves that television is the most used media platform in Malaysia. Moreover, the advancement of technology has also affected media consumption. Modern technology allows lessons conducted at the mosque to be recorded or broadcasted live via YouTube channels, and the respondents can view it at any time and place they wanted. The research also found that many respondents still return to the printed materials such as books and magazines to obtain Islamic knowledge.

Table 1 Media used in Learning Islam

Media Channel	%
Television	14.1
YouTube	12.8
Book/ Magazine	10.8
Family	9.8
Website	9.6
Radio	9.5
Friends	9.1
Facebook	8.8
Usrah	8.1
Instagram	4.1
Ustādh went to their house (home-teaching)	3.4

Similarly, some respondents learn Islam from their families (9.8%), websites (9.6%), radio (9.5%), and friends (9.1%), followed by Facebook (8.8%) and 'Usrah (8.1%). This survey found out that not many respondents learn Islam through Instagram (4.1%) and from ustādh that went to their house (3.4%).

Hence, in general, the mainstream media is still the leading platform for Muslims to learn more about Islam. The family institution also plays quite a significant role in educating their members about Islam. Interestingly, social media has become more popular as a source of *da'wah* and Islamic education. Social media (25.7%) can allegedly be considered a primary media source to learn about Islam if YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are combined.

Other Sources of Learning Islam

There are also unpopular sources that respondents have subscribed to learn more about Islam. Figure 1 illustrates eleven other primary sources/platforms for Islamic education (other than going to the

mosque), with 51.5% respondents stated that they took outside classes, 21.1% others invited *ustādh* to their house, and 12.1% others learned through WhatsApp app.

Figure 1 Other sources of learning Islam
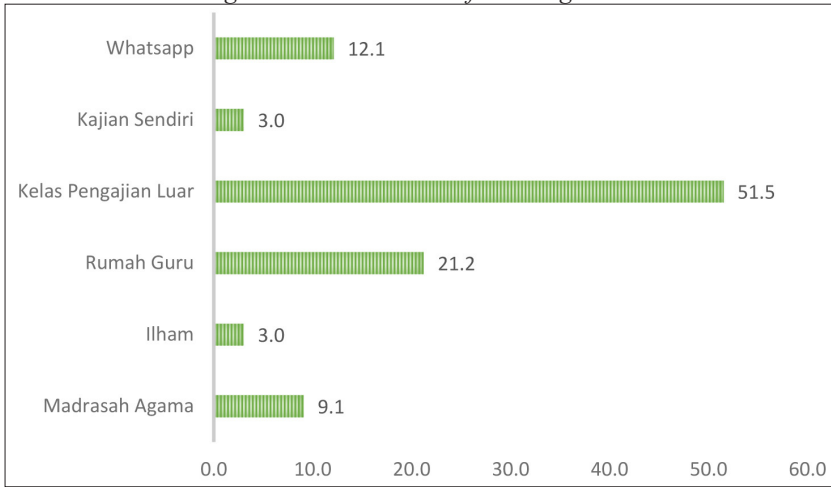
Some of the respondents are regular attendees of Islamic madrasah (9.1%), some others learn based on personal research (3%), and some of them opt to self-inspiration to learn Islam (3%). All of these channels are problematic because their sources could not be determined and monitored. All Islamic sources, including the teachers and books, need to be certified by religious authorities such as JAIS for approval. Similarly, learning Islam through WhatsApp, self-study, and inspiration prone to misguidance and wrong interpretation. It might lead to extremism and deviant teaching of Islam.

Learning Islam Based on Gender

Table 2 divides the output based on the gender of the respondents. Overall, we can see a similar trend between men and women. Both genders have chosen television (13.6% men; 14.6% women) as the main platform followed by YouTube (12.2% men; 13.4% women) and book/magazine (10.5% men; 10.9% women). A similar trend was also found in social media (24.2% men; 27.3% women) such as YouTube, due to the similarity of YouTube to television. Moreover, YouTube is easy to use and accessible at any time and place. The users only need to

type down the name of the lecturers—and in a short time—they will be presented with all lessons of that lecturers.

Table 2 Learning Islam Based on Gender

Gender	Men	Women
Television	13.6	14.6
YouTube	12.2	13.4
Books/Magazine	10.5	10.9
Family	10.0	9.2
Website	9.7	9.0
Radio	9.6	8.9
Facebook	8.6	8.9
'Usrah	7.8	8.5
Friends	9.8	7.8
Instagram	3.4	5.0
Ustādh that came to their houses (home-learning)	3.5	3.2

Learning Islam Based on Age

Table 3 categorises the output of this research based on the age of the respondent. Most teenagers (14.2%), young adults (13.5%), and elderly (18%) have chosen YouTube as their primary channel for Islamic learning and discussion. Some adults (14.7%) seem to prefer television as their main source of learning Islam.

The second option/medium chose by the respondents showcased a bit of diversity. The teenager prefers to learn Islam from their family members while the young adult has chosen television as their second option. Some adults watch YouTube (12.8%) while elderly participants have selected television (16.8%) as their second channel to learn about Islam.

Table 3 Learning Islam Based on Age

Age	15-25	26-40	41-60	61 and above
Television	11.3	12.6	14.7	16.8
Radio	6.4	8.2	9.6	11.0
Books/Magazines	7.6	9.8	12.0	13.2
Friends	8.6	8.2	9.2	11.0
YouTube	14.2	13.5	12.8	18.1
Family	11.5	9.3	9.2	12.5
'Usrah	7.8	7.7	8.0	10.4
Facebook	7.8	11.6	8.7	15.6
Websites	10.9	11.0	9.7	14.7
Home Teaching	4.5	2.9	2.7	3.9
Instagram	9.5	4.7	2.8	6.3
External/Outside classes	0.0	0.5	0.6	0.6

Teenagers have chosen television (11.3%) as their third choice of media platform. On the other hand, the young adult (11.6%) and the elderly (15.6%) have chosen Facebook as their third-best media to learn more about Islam. As for the adult, they are comfortable with books and magazines. It is not surprising that teenagers and young adults prefer YouTube, as their generations are the ICT generation, yet it is intriguing that the elderly also opt for social media as their main channel for Islamic learning and discussion. Similarly, the adult participants' preference for television is also quite fascinating.

Learning Islam Based on Educational Background

Based on the data shown in Table 4, the respondents can be divided into several educational backgrounds; primary education (21.8%), secondary education (15.7%), and certificate/ diploma (13.1%). Most of them used television as their primary source for Islamic knowledge. Meanwhile, respondents with bachelor's (13.9%) or master's degrees (14.1%) have chosen YouTube as their primary source. Ph.D. holders preferred to read books and magazines as these media are usually more in-depth and detail.

As for their second choice, respondents with primary education (16.1%) preferred to learn from the radio, while respondents with secondary education (12.3%) and certificate/diploma (13%) preferred YouTube as their secondary media. Meanwhile, respondents with bachelor's degrees mostly learned about Islam through television (12.2%), and the master holders would refer to books/magazines (13.6%), and Ph.D. holders used to spend their time on YouTube (13%).

Table 4 Learning Islam Based on Educational Background

Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Cert/ Diploma	Bachelor degree	Master	PhD
Book and Magazine	11.5	10.2	10.0	11.2	13.6	14.5
YouTube	5.7	12.3	13.0	13.9	14.1	13.0
Television	21.8	15.7	13.1	12.2	13.1	11.6
Radio	16.1	10.1	8.3	8.3	10.5	11.6
Website	3.4	8.2	9.7	11.8	11.5	10.1
Friends	9.2	10.0	9.5	7.5	7.3	10.1
Family	11.5	10.5	10.4	8.3	8.4	8.7
'Usrah	6.9	7.8	8.2	9.2	6.3	8.7
Facebook	4.6	8.2	9.4	10.2	7.9	4.3
Instagram	3.4	3.4	5.1	4.0	4.7	4.3
Ustādh come to house (home-learning)	5.7	3.6	3.3	3.3	2.6	2.9

Learning Islam Based on Occupational Background

Based on the employment type, Table 5 highlighted that most of the respondents who are retired (17.8%), housewives (16.7%), government officers (14.3%), and self-employed (13.3%) chose television as their main channel to learn about Islam. Meanwhile, respondents who work in the private sector had chosen YouTube as their main means to acquire knowledge. The majority of students preferred to learn about Islam through their family members.

Table 5 Learning Islam Based on Employment

Occupation	Government Sector	Private Sector	Retires	Self-employed	Housewives	Students
Family	9.2	9.7	8.6	9.8	9.3	14.4
YouTube	13.7	13.5	10.4	12.6	13.9	12.7
Website	11.5	10.7	7.9	8.9	6.8	10.9
Television	14.3	13.0	17.8	13.3	16.7	10.5
Instagram	3.6	3.9	1.8	4.3	3.9	9.6
Books/ Magazines	9.5	11.3	13.7	9.6	11.0	8.3
'Usrah	7.6	7.7	7.5	8.5	10.3	8.3
Friends	8.1	9.3	10.4	9.4	7.8	7.9
Facebook	10.4	9.3	6.4	9.5	8.5	7.0
Radio	10.6	8.5	12.6	9.8	8.5	5.7
Ustādh coming to their house (home-teaching)	1.4	3.2	3.1	4.3	3.2	4.8

Learning Islam Based on Frequency of Going to The Mosque

The following data explain the relationship between the channels used in learning Islam and the respondents' frequency of going to the mosque. Based on Table 6, respondents who go to the mosque five times (13.8%), thrice (14.7%), and once (14.4%) a day used television as their primary channel to learn about Islam. Respondents who go to the mosque three to five times a week use YouTube (12.8%) as their main channel to learn Islam. On the other hand, respondents who go to the mosque once or twice a week also chose television (15.3%) as their primary source of knowledge on Islam. Finally, respondents who go one to four times a month used television and YouTube (14.2%) to enhance their understanding of Islam.

Table 6 Learning Islam Based on Frequency Going to The Mosque

Frequency going to the Mosque	1 – 4 times in a month	1 - 2 times in a week	3 - 5 times in a week	1 time in a day	3 times in a day	5 times in a day
Television	14.2	15.3	12.5	14.4	14.7	13.8
Book/Magazines	9.5	10.1	12.1	10.8	11.5	11.4
YouTube	14.2	13.4	12.8	13.8	11.9	11.2
Radio	8.0	8.2	9.5	10.2	11.0	10.7
Friends	7.6	9.4	8.1	9.6	10.6	10.0
'Usrah	7.0	7.4	7.7	9.0	8.4	10.0
Family	9.9	9.4	10.0	10.2	9.5	9.7
Websites	10.7	10.1	9.7	6.6	9.1	8.7
Facebook	10.6	9.6	8.6	9.0	7.4	7.6
Ustādh coming to their house (Home-teaching)	3.0	3.6	3.9	3.0	2.2	4.3
Instagram	5.4	3.6	5.1	3.6	3.5	2.5

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the data above, we may find a similar tendency between men and women when it comes to learning Islam based on gender. Television is the most popular platform for both men and women, followed by YouTube and books/magazines. Due to YouTube's resemblance to television, a similar trend was observed in social media such as YouTube. YouTube is also simple to use and accessible at anytime and anywhere. Users merely need to key in the lecturer's name, and they will be presented with all of that lecturer's classes in a short time. For the approval of any Islamic source, whether it be a teacher or a book, it is necessary to obtain certification from a religious authority such as the JAIS. Similarly, understanding Islam through social media platforms like WhatsApp, through independent research, or by inspiration might lead to erroneous interpretations. It is possible that this will lead to fanaticism as well as a misguided teaching of Islam.

When the respondents were broken down according to their ages, we discovered that the vast majority of teenagers, young adults, and

senior citizens use YouTube as their primary medium for Islamic study and conversation. It would appear that watching television is the primary method of Islamic education for certain folks. It is not surprising that teenagers and young adults prefer YouTube because their generations are the generation of ICT; nonetheless, it is remarkable that senior people also use social media as their primary medium for learning about Islam and having discussions about Islamic topics. In a similar vein, the predilection for television held by the adult participants is an aspect that is quite remarkable.

There are a few different educational backgrounds that can be used to categorise the respondents, which are primary education, secondary education, and certificate or diploma. The majority of them relied mostly on television as their primary medium for Islamic education. In the meantime, respondents who hold either a bachelor's or master's degree have said that YouTube is their preferred source. Ph.D. holders favour reading books and periodicals since the content of these mediums is typically more in-depth and detail oriented.

The research came to the conclusion that the majority of people who were retired, housewives, government officers, and self-employed chose television as their primary channel to learn about Islam. In the meantime, respondents who are employed in the private sector have indicated that they mostly acquire knowledge through the use of YouTube. The vast majority of students indicate that they would rather learn about Islam from members of their own families.

Television is the primary source of information about Islam for respondents who attend prayers between once to five times per day at a mosque. YouTube is the primary source of Islamic education for respondents who attend religious services between three and five times per week. On the other hand, respondents who attend to the mosque once or twice a week selected television as their primary source of information on Islam. Finally, respondents who go between once a month and four times a month say they learn more about Islam through watching television or watching videos on YouTube.

Based on the presented data, we could see that television is the most popular channel for Islamic learning and education. The data showcased that most respondents used television to learn about Islam regardless of their demographic and psychographic background. These

findings are essential in discovering the role of television and its relevance as a broadcasting channel in our modern ages. With the new media's popularity, many experts believe that television's position as a broadcasting agent will be outdated and soon becoming a deserted industry. However, this study challenged that and suggested that Malaysia's television broadcasting industry is still relevant, particularly in conveying Islamic material and teaching. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to argue that television is still efficient and effective in conveying Islamic information to viewers.

In conclusion, the role of new media in educating the public cannot be undermined, as the data also showed that YouTube and Facebook are among the top three media chosen as well. The new media offered plenty of interfaces that allow users to select relevant information, ask questions, share information, and create Islamic content. With this, respondents could enhance and expand their knowledge that they obtained from the mosque and on television. For example, suppose a pair of newlyweds is curious about their marriage responsibility- he or she can search as many religious talks they like on marriages given by any scholars worldwide. It will provide them with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of their marriage responsibility.

The data also showcased the importance of media as a channel in distributing Islamic knowledge to the community. Hence, the mosque should use the advantage of new media to broadcast their organised lesson and classes. Facebook Live and IG Live are among the tools that the mosque committee could use in their mosque in expanding their reach to the people who cannot attend face-to-face classes at the mosque. People who are working, disabled, or too occupied with their daily activities can also join the courses online at their place.

Moreover, the classes can be recorded and uploaded to YouTube for people who missed them. Similarly, these recorded classes and lectures can also help random viewers who are perhaps in a difficult stage of their life and now seeking true answers in Islam. They could type out any keyword, and hopefully, some of the recorded videos could guide them back to the right way. It will further enhance the efficiency of mosque's programmes from only benefiting the people who go to the mosque to expand its benefit to the whole *ummah* in general.

Furthermore, the shared and viewed videos can also generate income for the mosque. For example, when the mosque's YouTube account reaches a certain number of subscriptions, the mosque will be paid handsomely for every viewer and advertisement embedded in the video. The mosque account information can also be added to the video to attract more donors. The mosque can use the generated income to help the surrounding community especially the needy Muslims. For this to happen, the mosque should have its media equipment, media team, and social media accounts. Moreover, the mosque committee should be equipped with the necessary media knowledge and production training. It will promote a good new image and perspective of the mosque in the eyes of the public. It will also further enhance and improve the mosque's role as the "*Markaz al-Ummah*" in producing excellent Muslims.

Finally, it is crucial to improve Muslim scholars' perception of media roles in da'wah so its strength could be used to improve Islamic institutions such as the mosque. The mosque is not just a symbol of Islam, yet it is the heart and centre of Muslims' activity and it is important to strategically utilise the media's strength as part of a plan to diversify and expand the mosque presence in the community. The objective of this research in examining the pattern of media usage among Muslims in Gombak based on gender, age, education level, occupation, and frequency of going to the mosque is fruitful with the output discussed above. Further study needs to be done by using a larger sample and focussing on different districts in Selangor. This study also suggests that this kind of surveys should be expanded to the national level to reaffirm and discover the importance of media in da'wah and Islamic education. It is essential to understand the degree of transformation needed to be done on the mosque's institution regarding improving its roles as an institution that pillared the ummah's excellence.

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The Best Solution for Pandemic Prevention of Covid-19: Important Notes in Light of the Quranic Perspectives

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Abstract: This article analytically discusses how the Quran commands Muslims to be prudent in the face of a pandemic crisis. The Quran is the holy book of Islam and is considered by Muslims to be the word of God and is a valid source of guidance alongside science advisories from government authorities. Using a qualitative method, this study investigates the Quranic assertion that in the face of a pandemic crisis, Muslims are required to do charitable deeds and keep striving with the hope that the solution to problems people face can be actively found, rather than just fatalistically surrendering to fate and Allah's power alone. In this regard, the Quran commands Muslims to be prudent and to take precautions against the spread of disease, practice charity, endure, not be fooled by false gossip and to place trust in the religious and health authorities during times of crisis.

Keywords: Pandemic, Covid-19, solution, health, light of the Quran

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Abstrak: Artikel ini secara analitikal membincangkan bagaimana al-Quran memerintahkan umat Islam untuk berhemah dalam menghadapi krisis pandemik. Al-Quran adalah kitab suci agama Islam dan dianggap oleh Muslim sebagai firman Tuhan dan merupakan sumber panduan yang sah di samping nasihat sains daripada pihak berkuasa kerajaan. Dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, kajian ini menyiasat penegasan al-Quran bahawa dalam menghadapi krisis pandemik, umat Islam dituntut untuk beramal dan terus berusaha dengan harapan penyelesaian kepada masalah yang dihadapi manusia dapat dicari secara aktif, bukan hanya menyerah diri secara fatal kepada takdir dan kekuasaan Allah SWT semata-mata. Dalam hal ini, al-Quran memerintahkan umat Islam untuk berhemah dan mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga terhadap penularan penyakit, beramal, bersabar, tidak terpedaya dengan gosip palsu dan meletakkan kepercayaan kepada pihak berkuasa agama dan kesihatan semasa krisis.

Kata kunci: Pandemik, Covid-19, penyelesaian, kesihatan, cahaya al-Quran

Introduction

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic is a worldwide phenomenon. As of now, millions of people have been infected by this pandemic, and too many lives have been lost. The spread was so fast that the entire world was stumped and left in a state of restlessness and anger. All countries of the world had to deal with this global phenomenon by taking drastic preventive measures so that its transmission could be controlled and subsequently stopped altogether (Komarova, Schang, & Wodarz, 2020).

In the Malaysian context, the Covid-19 pandemic was confirmed to have spread on 25 January 2020. In Kuala Lumpur, a 14,000 strong delegation of Islamic *Tablighi-Jamaat* was widely considered the cause of the second wave of the pandemic in Malaysia, with attendees from the event travelling to Brunei, Cambodia and Indonesia and later testing positive with the virus (Barmania & Reiss, 2021). As shown in Figure 1, on 19 April 2021, there were 377,132 confirmed positive cases with 355,224 cases of recovery, 2,078 new cases, 1,386 deaths, 228 cases treated in ICUs and respiratory assistance required in ninety-three cases ("Current Situation of Covid-19", 2021).

Figure 1: *Covid-19 Data in Malaysia, as of 19th April 2021*

377,132 confirmed positive cases

1

1,386 deaths

4

355,224 cases of recovery

2

3

228 cases treated in ICU and respirator assistance in 93 cases
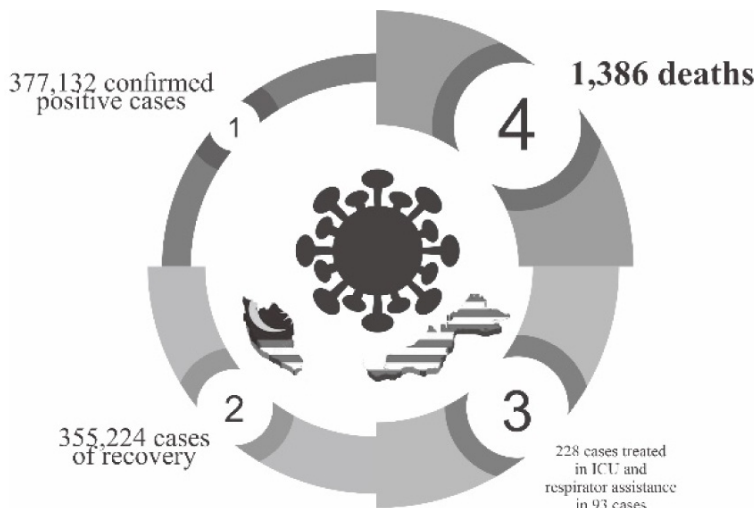
Source: Current Situation of Covid-19 (2021)

To date, the Malaysian government has implemented several phases of restriction when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. Among them were the movement control order (MCO), the enhanced movement control order (EMCO), the conditional movement control order (CMCO), and the recovery movement control order (RMCO) (Ng et al., 2020). According to Yıldırım, Arslan, and Alkahtani (2021), fear of Covid-19 and negative religious coping may be detrimental to mental health, while positive religious coping may reduce depression and stress. Hence, the spread of pandemics such as Covid-19 needs to be endured wisely (includes individual coping strategies or regulatory prevention strategies) to avoid other problems such as depression and mental disorders. The lockdowns and social restrictions led to a decrease in wellbeing (Morres et al., 2021). According to Weber and Pargament (2014), religion and spirituality can enhance mental health by encouraging constructive religious coping mechanisms, community and support, and affirming beliefs. Additionally, studies examining religious coping in medically ill patients have found that between 34% and 86% have reported using their religious/spiritual thoughts and activities in coping with their illness (Thune-Boyle, Stygall, Keshtgar, & Newman, 2006). From all this, we must manage the Covid-19 crisis with efficiency and wisdom to reduce the negative effects on the individual and society. From the

Islamic perspective, Allah does not send down a calamity without a positive aspect of wisdom behind it, as spoken in the words of the Prophet, which means:

> From 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the Prophet said: "I have asked the Prophet about the plague. Then the Prophet told me that it is a punishment sent by Allah to whomever He wills, and Allah made it a blessing for the believers. No one was affected by the plague of this Year while they were staying in their own country with patience and thoughtfulness, and they understood that nothing happened to them unless everything was determined by Allah, even then they will be rewarded with martyrdom." (Narrated by al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā', Bāb Ḥadīth al-Ghār,* hadith number 3287).

Conrad (1982) argued about how plague terminology is used in Arabic sources, which in many instances offer testimony of the highest value. Conrad (1982) said, in classical Arabic, the term *ṭā'ūn* is usually assumed to mean "plague", while *wabā'* is considered a more general term for "epidemic" or "pestilence". Hence, in the Arabic writings about the plague of the fourteenth century and after, one repeatedly encounters the maxim, "Every *ṭā'ūn* is a *wabā'*, but not every *wabā'* is a *ṭā'ūn*." According to this hadith, the test of the spread of disease was a punishment for unbelievers (kuffār). However, as Muslims, it can be considered mercy from God (al-'Asqalānī, 2005). Therefore, the plague or *ṭā'ūn* is sent by God to whomever He wills as a token of divine mercy for Muslims since it guarantees them entry into Paradise as martyrs. This portrayal of the epidemic as a manifestation of divine kindness and the tremendous recompense that will be bestowed upon those who perish as a result of it must be contextualised within a broader view of disease, and challenges or trials in general, as a type of test (*ibtilā'*). Test as a means of establishing one's faith and sincerity is a central concept in religious traditions, which is undoubtedly true of Islam as well (Shabana, 2021).

A Muslim should therefore take no action to flee from the plague or enter an area known to be infected since both actions are attempts to foil the will of God (Conrad, 1981). It is nevertheless cannot be understood as 'fatalistically surrendering' as the effort shown by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in the famous incident of the plague that hit Syria. According to reports, when 'Umar was on his approach to Syria, the

army's leaders went out to meet him to inform him of the outbreak of
the plague. When he conferred with his companions, a disagreement
arose. While some believed they should continue to Syria according to
their original plan when they left Medina, others believed they should
return and avoid spreading the disease to other Muslims. After more
contemplation, 'Umar chose to return to Medina and avoid exposing
the people with him to the sickness. At that point, the army's leader,
Abū ʿUbayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ, posed an exclamatory question on whether
'Umar was escaping from God's destiny by doing so. 'Umar reacted by
emphasising that he would be escaping from one God's destiny to the
next. The report finishes with a Prophetic warning not to enter or exit
an impacted location. According to the report, 'Umar was unaware of
the Prophet's words before deciding to return to Medina. When another
companion, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf brought it to his attention, 'Umar
was satisfied that his conclusion matched this counsel. This report has
inspired discussions on the extent to which one can exercise one's
agency in response to an action or event perceived to be part of divine
destiny (Shabana, 2021).

Regarding the pandemic, throughout history, Muslims have
experienced similar disasters. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 H) in his
book *Badhl al-Māʿūn fī Faḍl al-Ṭāʿūn* records that in 749H there was a
great plague epidemic in the city of Damascus, Syria. To eliminate the
epidemic, the villagers prayed together in the open. al-ʿAsqalānī (nd.:
328-329) said:

> And the men came out towards the open fields with influential
> people and dignitaries of the country, and they prayed to
> Allah. Thus, the plague epidemic became much worse and
> more widespread, while before they gathered together for
> prayer, the epidemic was contained.

A similar incident, according to al-ʿAsqalānī (nd.), occurred closer to
the present day, namely in Cairo, Egypt dated 27 Rabiulakhir year 833
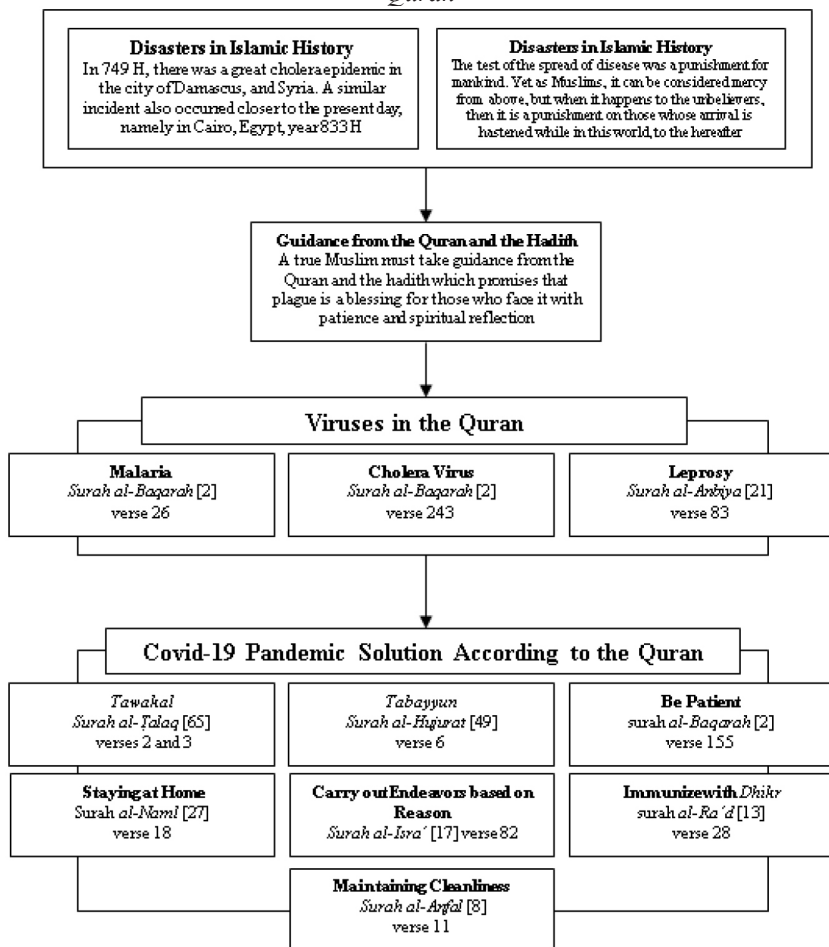H. Al-ʿAsqalānī (nd.: 328-329) said:

> The number of people who died due to the epidemic
> numbered below 40. They then went out towards the open
> field on 4th Jamadilawal after being asked to fast for three
> days in advance. As with the *Istisqāʾ* (prayer for rain),
> they prayed and completed the prayer immediately before
> returning home. In less than a month, the number of people

> dead every day in Cairo reached a thousand and continued
> to increase.

The historical record on the spread of the epidemic, as narrated by al-ʿAsqalānī above, proves that the phenomenon of epidemics has been going on for a long time (Ayalon, 2021). Therefore, the current generation must be prepared to face this pandemic by placing religious guidance in primary position. Religion has always played the role of a balm for the soul, and regular religious participation is associated with better emotional health outcomes (Kowalczyk et al., 2020). For those who believe in God, seeing oneself as having a close bond with God could yield emotional benefits. People may find comfort by believing that an all-powerful deity will provide support, guidance, and protection (Exline, Grubbs, & Homolka, 2015). Accordingly, as a religion that covers the entire lifestyle of its adherents, Islam has its set rules, procedures, and standards for daily life. As a universal or holistic religion that guides people to the right path, including when faced with dangerous pandemics such as Covid-19, reflecting on arguments from Islamic sources as a guide (including in terms of preventive measures and effects) (Ameen et al., 2020) can reveal the hidden wisdom behind this global pandemic.

In this article, the author parses the methods for managing challenges people face from Covid-19 using the Quran as the primary source of legislation in Islam. The breakdown is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *The best Covid-19 pandemic prevention solution in the light of the Quran*

Disasters in Islamic History	Disasters in Islamic History
In 749 H, there was a great cholera epidemic in the city of Damascus, and Syria. A similar incident also occurred closer to the present day, namely in Cairo, Egypt, year 833 H	The test of the spread of disease was a punishment for mankind. Yet as Muslims, it can be considered mercy from above, but when it happens to the unbelievers, then it is a punishment on those whose arrival is hastened while in this world, to the hereafter

Guidance from the Quran and the Hadith
A true Muslim must take guidance from the Quran and the hadith which promises that plague is a blessing for those who face it with patience and spiritual reflection

Viruses in the Quran

Malaria	**Cholera Virus**	**Leprosy**
Surah al-Baqarah [2] verse 26	*Surah al-Baqarah* [2] verse 243	*Surah al-Anbiya* [21] verse 83

Covid-19 Pandemic Solution According to the Quran

Tawakal	*Tabayyun*	**Be Patient**
Surah al-Ṭalaq [65] verses 2 and 3	*Surah al-Ḥujurat* [49] verse 6	surah *al-Baqarah* [2] verse 155
Staying at Home	**Carry out Endeavors based on Reason**	**Immunize with** *Dhikr*
Surah *al-Naml* [27] verse 18	*Surah al-Isra'* [17] verse 82	surah *al-Ra'd* [13] verse 28

Maintaining Cleanliness
Surah al-Anfal [8] verse 11

On Viruses in the Light of the Quran

According to Islam, all organisms such as cells, viruses, bacteria and even the biosphere are Allah's creation, consisting of various forms involving unique structures (Mehmood et al., 2021). An interesting study conducted by scholars from Algeria argued that *al-Muddaththir* [74], a sura in the Quran, discusses viruses, which can be explicitly applied to Covid-19 (Khenenou, Laabed, & Laabed, 2020). Other Quranic verses that discuss viruses are 2:26 & 243, and 21:83.

i. al-Baqarah [2] verse 26 on Mosquitoes

An epidemic is a natural phenomenon that should not be taken lightly. Throughout history, among the epidemics that have shocked the world are mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue, both major global health problems faced by the human population. The single-cell protozoan responsible for malaria and the virus that causes dengue, both carried by mosquitoes, are leading causes of death and disease throughout tropical and subtropical countries (Cowman et al., 2016). Although mosquitoes are small insects, they can significantly impact human life. John Robert McNeill, a history professor and author of *Mosquito Empires*, mentions that mosquitoes can even influence world change in some situations. In the history of wars of the 20th century, the number of casualties from disease transmitted by mosquitoes was proven greater than that of weapons (McNeill, 2010). In the Quran, 2:26 can be referred to regarding the plague that comes from this tiny insect.

The parable found in Quran, 2:26 reflects the power of Allah, who can create small creatures like the mosquito and so can create even smaller life forms such as the Covid-19 virus. Suppose the existence of a tiny pest like the mosquito can cause humans to suffer from deadly diseases such as dengue fever. In that case, it is only natural that a micro-sized virus can kill millions of people around the world today (Laishram et al., 2012). Therefore, it is understood that the smaller something is, the more difficult it can be to unravel its secrets (al-Rāzī, 1995). Although the polytheists are cynical about the small animals as mentioned by Allah in the Quran, scientific studies of today find that the creation of small animals such as mosquitoes reflects the greatness of Allah in creation (Othman & Yusoff, 2012).

Although mosquitoes are tiny in shape and form, they have a significant relationship with human health. From ancient times to the present, mosquitoes have been the leading cause of significant health problems for humans and livestock worldwide. Mosquitoes cause various diseases. The Anopheles mosquito is a malaria vector; the Aedes mosquito is a dengue, yellow fever (in America and Africa) and encephalitis (in America and Europe) vector. Meanwhile, the Mansonia and Culex mosquitoes are filariasis vectors (Salleh, 1997). Humans get various diseases through mosquitoes, such as dengue fever, malaria and others. However, the effects of mosquito bites are negligible to humans,

with only allergic reactions such as itching, red swelling on the body and so on. The danger of mosquitoes is that they are vectors or carriers of microorganisms or parasites that cause fatal or debilitating diseases (Salleh, 1997).

ii. al-Baqarah [2] verse 243 on the Plague Virus

The Quran insists on the prohibition of leaving one's hometown or area affected by the plague. The plague epidemic that broke out among the Israelites a long time ago can be used as a lesson for the current generation, as stated by Allah in Quran, 2:243.

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari (d. 310 H.), shared this interpretation of verse 243 from sura *al-Baqarah* through the account of a majority of companions and followers that the Israelites fled from their villages in groups, and they either fled to avoid fighting their enemies or to escape from the plague (al-Ṭabari, nd.; Conrad, 1981). Ibn Kathīr (2000) added this interpretation by quoting Ibn 'Abbās's view that the Israelites numbered four thousand, all leaving their homelands to avoid the plague affecting their state.

In response to the interpretation of the account above, Muslims can cite the wisdom of teachings and evidence that show that there is no benefit of vigilance in the face of destiny, and there is no refuge from Allah save by Him. Ibn Kathīr (2000) opined that the Israelites ran away to escape the epidemic that struck them to continue their lives. However, in the end, the fate that befell them was the opposite of what was expected. Death came swiftly and destroyed them all. Despite the strictness of the law in entering and fleeing from an area plagued by disease outbreaks, there is debate among scholars about *rukhṣah* (a special dispensation that can be invoked in the case of an emergency situation with only one plausible solution, the non-performance of which will threaten human life or well-being) for those in the area to get out of it or vice versa. It can be pointed out that there is flexibility for certain groups to do so with certain conditions, as explained by al-Qurṭubī (2006) in his Quranic exegesis. For example, obtaining or providing treatment, performing employment, running a business, pursuing studies, providing essential services, delivering assistance, controlling security, or others related to general and special benefits are included in the *rukhsah* that can be considered necessary. However, it is still subject to the conditions from authoritative reference experts such

as obtaining confirmation of not suffering from or carrying the virus of the disease for those who wish to do so, and other related.

iii. al-Anbiyā' [21] verse 83 on leprosy

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is caused by a *Mycobacterium leprae* infection (Worobec, 2009). Leprosy is one of the major skin diseases that causes body deformities. The consequence of this disease is paralysis of the limbs with symptoms of pain, fever, loss of limb function, and eventually leading to mental disorders or death (Arikrishnan, 2020). In the Quran, this disease has been mentioned in sura Quran, 21:83.

In his interpretation, Ibn Kathīr (2000) stated that Allah spoke about Prophet Ayub (Job) and the calamity that befell him as a test. The tragedy befell his property, children, as well as his body. Prophet Ayub was a wealthy person who owned much livestock and agricultural land. He also had many children and a large comfortable home. So, Allah tested Prophet Ayub's faith by first taking away his property; all of them disappeared without a trace. Then the test was imposed on the body of the Prophet Ayub himself. The ailment that attacked him was leprosy on his whole body. Not a single part of his body was safe from this illness, except the heart and tongue that always remembered praising Allah. This specific test of the Prophet Ayub made the people around him not want to be near him. So, Prophet Ayub secluded himself in the city's outskirts where he lived. No human being wanted to come near him save his wife, who oversaw caring for and managing his daily needs.

Based on the interpretation, it can be understood that leprosy suffered by Prophet Ayub was so severe that the people around did not want to approach him. The action of the whole community distancing themselves from Prophet Ayub was in line with the words of the Prophet. The Prophet specifically stressed that the public must stay away from leprosy patients for fear of being infected. As narrated by Abū Hurairah, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated, "[t]here are no contagious diseases, ill omens, owls nor ṣafar (which are considered to bring misfortune). Stay away from leprosy just as you flee from a lion." (Narrated by al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ṭib, Bāb al-Judhām*, hadith number 5707).

In this noble hadith, an elaborate medical plan was developed by the illiterate prophet at a time when there was no known "quarantine"

or others, obliging the Muslim who is present in a country where the plague was rampant not to come out of it even if he is healthy because he may have carried the disease, and whoever is outside the country should not enter it. Also, isolation and blocking epidemics are required from a religious point of view. Islam forbade the exit of a person from an endemic environment into a safe environment, and he does not enter into an endemic environment while in a healthy environment (Al Eid & Arnout, 2020).

Hence, the argument of avoiding infectious diseases such as leprosy has been compared to avoiding the Covid-19 viral disease because it resembles a cause and effect in terms of infectious concern. Logically, staying away from people suspected of having the Covid-19 virus is more important because it is difficult to ascertain whether a person is indeed positive compared to leprosy, which can be detected and clearly seen (Ramos-e-Silva & Rebello, 2001).

Covid-19 Pandemic Solution According to the Understanding of Quranic Guidance

Based on the thematic study conducted on the Quran's verses related to plague, specifically, there were no control and treatment methods for the plague in the Quran. Even so, some interpreters associate plague with the kind of punishment that was once inflicted on the Israelites (Fancy & Green, 2021). Other accounts remain silent and do not interpret the type of punishment the Israelites faced. Nevertheless, it is possible to work out some of the concepts listed below as methods that can be derived to control or treat Covid-19 according to the light of the Quran.

i. Tawakkul (Trust in God)

Islam emphasises faith's strength, which acts as an emergency medical treatment (Alyanak, 2020). Individuals who experience avoidance or anxious attachment to God reported higher levels of anxiety and depression, lower levels of life satisfaction, and poorer physical health compared to individuals with a secure attachment to God (Parenteau, Hurd, Wu, & Feck, 2019). Theoretically, the element of reliance or *tawakkul* is evaluated as a principal factor in determining one's spiritual intelligence (Nemati, Rassouli, & Baghestani, 2017). It functions to produce a strong soul, leading an individual towards high resilience in the face of life's challenges (Huda, Yusuf, Azmi Jasmi, & Zakaria,

2016). *Tawakkul* refers to the state of the heart that depends entirely on Allah and feels calm with Him and without fear (Ibn Qayyim, 1993). *Tawakkul* also means trusting Allah's purpose in carrying out a plan, leaning on Him and surrendering oneself under His protection (al-Ghazālī, 1998; Watt, 1986).

In this way, an individual who applies *tawakkul* will give birth to a strong soul because he is confident that Allah will always help and guide him in all aspects of behaviour. This then shapes the individual into a person with high resilience in the face of life's challenges (Usman, Stapa, & Abdullah, 2020), as decreed by Allah in Quran, 65:2-3. This strategy may be a reactive process in response to a stressor (resulting in prayers for help), a lifelong trained habit (in terms of a "trait"), or the conviction that faith is a stronghold and God is at one's side whatever life brings. This can be regarded as a robust basic trust in God, who is expected to carry one through such phases of insecurity or illness. As a result, people who rely on theistic beliefs may pray for distinct reasons: to connect with the Sacred (communication), to become healthy again (invocation), or to articulate fears and worries without any further expectation of healing (which nevertheless may result in feelings of relief). Interestingly, research on this topic has shown that most patients with chronic diseases pray to find relief from their suffering; they do not necessarily pray to receive healing, but to "positively transform the experience of their illness" (Büssing, Recchia, & Baumann, 2015).

ii. Tabayyun (research/verification)

The spread of the Covid-19 virus has impacted various sectors of life, including economic growth and mental health. As the entire world struggles in the face of this pandemic, various inappropriate statements or writings (fake news) are uploaded or shared on various social media sites, adding to the existing tensions worldwide. Additionally, many chain messages of false information have been spread to the public regarding the Covid-19 virus. There is fear that the spread of false statements or materials related to this issue will cause concern and panic among the community. Thus, in the seriousness of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, the Quran urges the community not to underestimate the matter of *tabayyun*.

With that, Allah commands all to conduct research and get the truth of the news conveyed by a person to avoid unwanted events (Usman,

Sailin, & Mutalib, 2019). Allah shows this matter in the Quran, 49:6. When interpreting this verse, al-Ṭabarī (nd.) states that *tabayyun* is the intention of delaying for a while the information or news that arrives until one knows with confidence it is undeniably the truth. This means that one should not be in a hurry to receive news. Allah's command to first carefully examine the news, according to Ibn Kathīr (2000), as an advised precautionary measure (*iḥtiyāṭ*). This ensures that a person does not pre-judge with reckless words, which could lead to lies or factual errors.

iii. Patience

The scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic needs to be faced patiently and wisely by Muslims. Acts of extreme annoyance or despair in the face of such a situation should be avoided; it is better to try to reflect upon and understand the wisdom behind it (Mandal & Pal, 2020). This pandemic should be understood as a form of test from Allah on His servants. With the success of being patient in facing this test, a person can get unfathomable joy from Allah. The Quran records the words of Allah in 2:155 as to the importance of patience (Afsaruddin, 2007; Al Eid & Arnout, 2020).

Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Bakr al-Anṣarī al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 H.), author of the book *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān wa al-Mubayyin li mā Taḍammanahu min al-Sunnah wa* Āiy *al-Furqān*, when interpreting Quran, 2:155 states that a reward is provided and promised by Allah for those who are patient. The origin of patience is restraint, and its reward is innumerable. However, it will not be obtained unless patience occurs at the beginning of the test (al-Qurṭubī, 2006). Outwardly, the views of this insightful account may come across to Muslims who evaluate the tests of Allah as sometimes brutal and cruel. However, when viewed in a new light, it is found that the fruit of patience contains grace.

It is not farfetched to claim that testing is a way Allah signifies his love for his servants. Through a life test such as Covid-19, a person can be made aware of his smallness and the greatness of Allah. Thus, a person will become increasingly humble towards his God, continuously asking for forgiveness and repenting of all sins and wrongdoings. Therefore, patience in facing this test of life is evaluated as a virtue in the eyes of religion (Al Eid & Arnout, 2020). In line with that, an

account of the hadith narrated by Suhaib stated that the Prophet (pbuh) explicated as such:

> The condition of a believer is amazing. The whole affair is good; this matter is not found except in a believer. If he gets pleasure, he is grateful. Then it is good for him. If he gets into trouble, he is patient, then that also is good for him. (Narrated by Muslim, *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa al-Raqā'iq, Bāb al-Mu'min amruh kulluhu khair*, hadith number 2999).

iv. Staying at Home

Staying at home is surely a good option in some cases but not in all (i.e., fire, tsunamis). However, during the Covid-19 outbreak, this solution is highly recommended and can help reduce activities associated with the spread of plague (Moreland et al., 2020). Hence, the Quran emphasised the importance of staying in one's home when in a situation of danger, as decreed by Allah in 27:18. This sura presents the account of the Prophet Solomon's army in the Valley of the Ants. While some scholars accept the literal meaning and suggest a miracle in communicating with ants, others believe "The Ants" was the name of a human tribe that Solomon encountered (El-Mallak, & El-Mallakh, 1994).

In this sura, Allah describes how an ant was so concerned about the safety of other ants, advising them to enter their nests so as not to be trampled by the Prophet Solomon and his armies. Ibn Kathīr (2000) interprets that when the Prophet Solomon and his army reached the valley of the ants, one of the ants was worried about his people who would perish because they were trampled by the horses of the army of the Prophet Solomon. So, he called on his fellow-creatures to immediately enter their nests.

According to the former Sheikh of al-Azhar, Muḥammad Musṭafā al-Marāghī (d. 1945), the story of the ants in the Quran is meant to be a lesson to the rational so that they can understand the state of these creatures. The situation of the ants that had successfully gathered their friends to escape from any danger by organising themselves to find resources (al-Marāghī, 1946). As a result, it can be understood that the orderliness and discipline found in the ant kingdom, as stated by Allah in the above verse, the ants sought immediate protection (after receiving a warning from their scout) so as not to be trampled by Prophet Solomon and his army. Indirectly, Allah also reminds human beings

that in striving to meet their daily needs, they should also prioritise the common good to take refuge in one's house from the evils that come and other calamities.

The ant was one of the soldier ants whose role was to defend the colony and protect it from danger. Logically, these worker ants were the first to detect any danger approaching the colony, such as the arrival of the Prophet Solomon and his army as the ants kept watch outside the nest (Güneş, 2004). Upon reflection, the ants can assume that the Prophet Solomon and his army are larger creatures that would trample and destroy the ant population. Thus, the ant tries to escape from a danger collectively, as this instinct had been placed into the ants by Allah to preserve the colony's life. One lesson that can be learned from this event is that even a tiny insect has feelings of affinity for its kind; to be spared from destruction, together they seek refuge in their nest during challenging times (Ross, 1994). Although the ant's nest is not as strong, efforts to save the colony must be implemented without any reason for delay.

In this vein, the strategy of 'social distancing' is currently recommended to hinder the spread of the Covid-19 virus which includes the closure of workplaces and educational institutions, the avoidance of large gatherings, the quarantine of persons in contact with confirmed cases, the isolation of suspected or confirmed cases, the recommendation of staying at home, and even the mandatory quarantine or lock-down of certain residential areas and cities (Islam, Islam, & Adam, 2020).

v. Conduct Endeavours Based on Reason

Muslims need to realise and understand that nothing happens in heaven or on earth except by the will of Allah. When this fact is appreciated, it can create peace in a believer's heart. Of course, a Muslim should strive to avoid being infected by whatever effective means, including quarantining, maintaining personal hygiene, maintaining a balanced diet, social distancing as directed by the authorities, and medicinal treatment (Ahmad & Ahad, 2021). Allah recommends endeavours of spiritual healing through the verses of the Quran through His words in 17:82.

The interpretation of this verse explains that Allah sent down the Quran as a cure for ignorance, misguidance, eliminating severe diseases,

hypocrisy, deviation and polytheism. The Quran is a blessing to the believers who practice all the required obligations. Believers partake in what is lawful and reject what is forbidden. Then they enter Paradise and are delivered from Allah's divine punishment (al-Marāghī, 1946). Therefore, Islam has made it obligatory to treat patients by practising endeavours or *ikhtiyār* in close collaboration with *tawakkul* towards Allah. This proves the absolute conviction to the practice that no one can prevent, benefit or cause harm other than by His will. According to Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1393), one of the famous Sunni scholars of the Hanbali School of thought, *tawakkul* shows a heart that genuinely depends on Allah in obtaining benefits and rejecting harm in matters of this world and the hereafter, up to the smallest detail and the greatest extent of things (Ibn Rajab, 2001). Subsequently, to face the Covid-19 epidemic, efforts can be conducted as advised by the Prophet through a hadith narrated by Usāmah ibn Zaid (Nuryana & Fauzi, 2020). The Prophet (pbuh) once said, "[w]hen you hear the news of Plague in a place, then do not enter it, and if you are in the place where the Plague occurs, then do not go out of it." (Narrated by al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ṭib, Bāb mā yudhkar fī al-ṭā'ūn*, no. 5396).

Another effort that can be made is to recite the *al-Fātiḥah* with the sick or affected person. The advantages of the sura *al-Fātiḥah* can be derived from the incident of how a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) named Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī had saved a village chief who was stung by a poisonous animal. Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī recited the *al-Fātiḥah* to treat the village chief, and with the permission of Allah, the patient was cured (al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ṭib, Bāb al-Ruqyā bi fātiḥat al-kitāb*, no. 5404).

vi. Mental Soothingness with Dhikr (remembrance of Allah)

In the Quran, there is a method of healing therapy for the heart, and through those, other diseases can be weathered. The words of Allah in 13:28 prescribes treatment of a weak heart with *dhikr*. Evidence of this discourse can be seen in relation to a weak heart disposition of a person (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014; Hussein, 2018; Saniotis, 2018).

Dhikr, in terms of language, means to say and remember. While in terms of terminology, it means remembrance that is done to remember Allah to escape from negligence and forgetfulness of the heart by constantly feeling the presence of Allah in one's heart (Hooker, (2021;

al-Sakandarī, 1961). Thus, *dhikr* is the memory and presence of a strong and continuous heart praising and gravitating towards the divine meanings of Allah so that negligence is removed from the heart in ways that are allowed by Islamic law, such as through speech, deeds or with the heart (Abuali, 2020).

There are many verses of the Quran related to the call to always perform *dhikr* by remembering Allah (Geels, 1996). Among them are the words of Allah in 33:41 (Guemuesay, 2012). Al-Qurṭubī (2006) interprets this verse by stating that Allah commands His servants to remember and be grateful to Him. Let them continue to practice and expand the practice because rewards will be bestowed upon them. Allah makes the matter (of remembrance and gratitude) as one without limits since it is easy to do by a servant and contains an even greater reward.

vii. Maintaining Cleanliness

Covid-19 has presented unprecedented health challenges across all strata in society worldwide. The Covid-19 experience has caused us to reflect on the quality of life, health and well-being and, just as important, the end of life (Roman, Mthembu, & Hoosen, 2020). During this time, cleanliness is a vital component to be practised and is encouraged by all respected authorities (Piwko, 2021). In Arabic, cleanliness refers to the word *al-naẓāfah,* which is purification (Ibn Manẓūr, 2010). This cleanliness starts from the physicality of an individual to the cleanliness of the environment. From a health point of view, hygiene is one of the things that is highly emphasised. This includes self-care and care for the surrounding occupied area. Children and the elderly are more susceptible to diseases, especially with pandemics and viruses (She, Liu, & Liu, 2020).

Therefore, good hygiene needs to be given exposure, emphasis and practised by those of all walks of life. The scenario that occurred due to Covid-19 has shown significant changes to the community in Malaysia. Everyone begins to practice good hygiene by washing their hands regularly, keeping themselves from moving outside unnecessarily, and being in dirty places like markets until they can clean purchased items before being stored or cooked. This new norm is sure to significantly impact the community's health, with everyone ensuring that the area around them is clean and free of dirt (Awan, Shamim, & Ahn, 2020). Allah explicated in Quran, 8:11 about the falling of rain as a method of

purifying human beings. This verse proves that Allah sends rain from the sky to His servants to purify them from all impurities and sin. The same is true of removing oneself from Satan's temptations and his vices (al-Saʿdī, 2002). Therefore, if Muslims take the underlying wisdom of this Covid-19 pandemic, there is no problem in putting cleanliness as the primary act that needs to be implemented and maintained in daily life.

Conclusion

Pandemic outbreaks are not an odd or new phenomenon. The accounts of Islamic scholars prove that such events took place as early as the time of the Israelites. The Quran also reveals some debates about viruses, epidemics, and so on, although not in intricate detail. The verses of the Quran on these matters are found in Quran, 2:26, 243 & 249, 21:83 and others.

If Allah has destined that the entire world will be infected with the Covid-19 virus even after various efforts and endeavours, then humans could never stop it because humans are insignificant creatures. Although Covid-19 has caused various harms and even death, efforts can be made by choosing a vaccine as one of the cures to control the covid-19 disease so far, and in accordance with the demands of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (the objective and purpose of the Islamic law) which is to preserve life. As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic must be appreciated as a shower of mercy and love from Allah to His believers. In other words, if the disease persists, we believers remain confident of the great gift of forgiveness and rewards to come. Thus, the commitment of patience is also at stake in undergoing a period of quarantine and isolation quietly in our respective homes. Muslims are expressly advised to use the Quran as a guide in overcoming this pandemic. The Quran offers several essential notes to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, such as applying *tawakkul*, *tabayyun* on every news or information received, having patience, making home your haven, increasing remembrance towards Allah and maintaining one's cleanliness.

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Propagating an Alternative Solution for Indonesia`s Problems: A Framing Analysis on Hizb ut-Tahrir`s Narratives

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Abstract: As part of a global movement, Hizb ut-Tahrir has a single mission that is to call Muslim people to implement Islam and *sharī'ah* as the state ideology and law. On the other hand, Muslims should leave the secular ideology adopted in the Muslim world today. This article will discuss HT`s perspective on Islam and secular thought like democracy, nationalism, and liberalism in the Indonesian context. This issue will be explained through framing theory in social movement study that will help understand how a movement perceives the root of the social problem, offers the solution, and invites people to join the movement. This article argues that Hizb ut-Tahrir has used the framing approach to disseminate its ideological and political mission in Indonesia.

Keywords: Framing Theory, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, Ideology, Secularism, Social Movement.

Abstrak: Sebagai sebahagian daripada gerakan global, Hizbut Tahrir mempunyai satu misi iaitu menyeru umat Islam untuk melaksanakan Islam dan *syari'ah* sebagai ideologi dan undang-undang negara. Sebaliknya, umat Islam seharusnya meninggalkan fahaman sekular yang diterima pakai dalam dunia Islam hari ini. Artikel ini akan membincangkan perspektif HT tentang Islam dan pemikiran sekular seperti demokrasi, nasionalisme, dan liberalisme dalam konteks Indonesia. Isu ini akan dijelaskan melalui teori pembingkaian dalam

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kajian gerakan sosial yang akan membantu memahami bagaimana pergerakan melihat punca masalah sosial, menawarkan penyelesaian, dan menjemput orang ramai untuk menyertai pergerakan itu. Artikel ini berhujah bahawa Hizbut Tahrir telah menggunakan pendekatan pembingkaian untuk menyebarkan misi ideologi dan politiknya di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Teori Pembingkaian, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Ideologi, Sekularisme, Gerakan Sosial.

Introduction

Hizb ut-Tahrir in Indonesia (HTI) could be considered as one of the most successful branches of Hizb ut-Tahrir globally. More specifically, in the Muslim world, HT in Indonesia enjoys political freedom as a legal and registered Islamic group compared to other Muslim states that treat this group as dangerous. From 2004 to 2017, HTI has had legal status in Indonesia, making this group free to contact many levels of society in Indonesia, including politicians, academics or intellectuals, businesspersons, students, and others. It also makes it easier to mobilise people to attend its national and international events.

In 2017, however, the Indonesian government revoked the legal status of HTI by issuing a special law. This paper will specifically discuss the HTI`s way of constructing Indonesian political problems from its point of view. This case will be analysed through the framing theory, which will help explain how a social movement creates its narratives on problem solutions and invites people to participate in a movement`s activities.

This descriptive article analyses HTI`s dynamic in Indonesia, focusing on its narrative on Indonesian problems. The primary sources used for this article are collected from HTI`s books, websites, magazines, and seminar papers. On the one hand, secondary sources are gathered from books and articles related to Hizb ut-Tahrir. All the sources are analysed qualitatively to find the main narratives of HTI in Indonesia using the framing theory`s elements, including diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational elements.

Framing Theory

Before mobilising people to participate in collective action, one important aspect of social movement is to socialise a problem to become

a collective identity. Because collective action can only be achieved once a collective identity has been established, collective identity can only be achieved through the socialisation of meaning through the framing process.

Frames have been defined as "schemata of interpretation," a group of ideas, or a collective representation that allows individuals to discover, perceive, identify, and label events in their living space and the world at large. The frame will guide everyone in understanding the world and dealing with whatever events occur in this world. By frame analysis, one can understand the construction of ideas or meanings behind the emergence of certain social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The frame also guides people's interpretation of what needs to change; why, and how to do it.

Benford (2000) argues that the individuals construct the frame through the process of negotiating a shared understanding of some problematic conditions or situations they define as requiring change, making attributions as to who or what is to blame, articulating an alternative set of arrangements, and urging others to act together to effect change. Furthermore, frames are developed to achieve specific goals: recruiting new members, mobilising members, acquiring resources, and so on (Benford & Snow, 2000).

The framing process is divided into three stages: addressing a particular event as a social problem (diagnostic), a strategy that will probably solve this (prognostic), and motivation to act on this knowledge (motivational) (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

The diagnostic dimension of framing analysis refers to the efforts of a particular group or individual to interpret a phenomenon to become a social problem. Interpretations of the problem may differ depending on who interprets it, which creates a contestation of interpretations among actors, including social movements, media, and governments. Using the "frame of injustice" for a social movement is considered the most common to create collective action. The "framework of injustice" means that actors produce interpretations that acts of political authority are deemed unfair. Therefore, in the diagnostic element, while social movements look for social problems, they also identify the source of causality, blame, and agent guilt or so-called adversarial framing or boundary framing (Benford & Snow, 2000). This process, for example,

can be found in the arguments of the anti-globalisation movement, which blames the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank for the greatest responsibility of all victims of neoliberalism.

Prognostic means to build "new solutions, new social patterns, new ways of regulating relationships between groups, a new articulation of consensus and exercise of power." Using prognostics for social movements is quite difficult because it occurs in the multi-organisational field. Framing social movements will face counter-frames from opponents, especially if the opponent has a more rational argument than a social movement. On the other hand, opposing framing activities can affect the framing of a movement by turning movement activists on the defensive (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 616) 617. For example, it was shown in the 1990s when hundreds of Islamic scholars in Saudi Arabia demanded political reforms but were later branded extremists by the government. Framing by the government then became legitimacy to suppress the opposition movement.

The motivational dimension means that social constructs and interpretations are necessary to convince and legitimise an action to motivate people to engage in collective action. According to Snow and Benford (2000), this dimension provides a "call to arm" or a reason to engage in collective action, including constructing appropriate vocabularies of motive. Therefore, the most important thing in this framing task is how to convince other people or movements to come together in collective action. In this framing task, the so-called agency component is necessary to ensure engagement and maintain participation in collective action. The agency component requires some vocabulary commonly used by social movements: the vocabulary of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety (Benford & Snow, 2000).

It is necessary to emphasise that ideology and framing are not the same, although, at the same time, ideology can also be a source of framing. Framing is considered more flexible than ideology. Framing is a product of a culture in which individuals construct their interpretation of social objects and give them meaning. On the one hand, ideology is a unified set of principles and assumptions that provide the key to understanding the world (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). For example, the impact of neoliberalism or globalisation can be felt differently by many

people and movements. Some respond from an ideological lens, such as socialist or Marxist ideology, while others use a different lens.

In this study, HT`s Islamic ideology produces HT's frame against the idea of democracy, liberalism, and nationalism. In Muslim communities, these three ideas are responded to differently depending on how Muslims interpret Islamic texts, as there are conflicting interpretations of this—as a result, determining Muslim behaviour towards these for either welcoming or rejecting it. The framing theory will be used to understand Hizb ut-Tahrir's interpretation of these ideas and how HT makes them a social problem, which is then socialised to others or movements for HT's ultimate purpose.

Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia

From the beginning, Hizb ut-Tahrir (liberation party) has declared itself a political party, and politics has become its job and identity. Elsewhere around the world, the group has consistently shown itself to be a political party working solely on politics. As a political party, Hizb ut-Tahrir has adopted Islam as its ideology and is working to spread Islamic *sharīʿah* ideas among Muslims so that all Islamic societies can understand Islam and, together with Hizb ut-Tahrir, implement Islam as the country's constitution. The group believes that the only accepted state in Islam is the *khilāfah* system. So, for HT, the only job or political activity to pursue today is to rebuild the *khilāfah* state. This message is spread by Hizb ut-Tahrir in more than 40 states worldwide.

The group was first introduced in Jerusalem by Shaykh Taqiuddin an-Nabahani, an Islamic jurist and scholar, in 1948. In 1953, Hizb ut-Tahrir was declared a legitimate political party but was later banned by the government in the same year. From the 1950s to the 1970s, under An-Nabhani's leadership, the group's work still existed around the Middle East. Under the second leader, Sheikh Abdel Qadeem Zalloom, from 1977-2003, the group has spread to many other countries outside the Middle East, such as Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Australia, Canada, and the United States (Osman, 2018).

From 2003 until now, Hizb ut-Tahrir is led by Sheikh Ata bin Khalil Abu Rashta. Under his leadership, the group expanded globally and

actively worked on the internet as the group's political propaganda medium. The group has its official website in its global centre and national branches. It also has its own YouTube channel, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. HT`s members are also often invited to discuss contemporary issues in media such as Aljazeera, CNN, and the Australia Times.

As an active work to spread this ideology, Zeyno Baran noted that HT has succeeded in raising global awareness of Islam as the only link between Muslims and the need for a caliphate:

> "HT'S greatest achievement to date is that it has shifted the terms of debate within the Muslim world. Until a few years ago, most Islamist groups considered the notion of establishing a new caliphate utopian goal. Now, an increasing number of people consider it a serious objective. And after decades of stressing the existence and unity of a global Islamic community (umma), HT can take pride in the growing feeling among Muslims that their primary identity stems from, and their primary loyalty is owed to, their religion rather than their race, ethnicity, or nationality" (Baran, 2005).

As a political party, the group seeks to turn the current political conditions dominated by secular ideologies into Islamic ideologies or systems. A secular system based on the separation between religion and politics is now applied in most countries of the world. Characteristics of secular systems are laws made by humans, and the purpose of the political system is primarily for material needs. In comparison, the Islamic system is based on the sovereignty of *sharīʿah*, where only the Quran and Hadith (prophetic tradition) are the primary sources of law in a country. Also, the state's goal is to implement *sharīʿah*, protect and unite the *Ummah*, and carry out *daʿwah* and *Jihād* abroad. As a result, Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects all ideas derived from secular ideologies, including democracy, human rights, liberalism, and nationalism, because they are incompatible with Islamic ideas (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1953).

To fight for the establishment of an Islamic system or *khilāfah* state, Hizb ut-Tahrir claimed to follow the steps of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which are based on intellectual and political activities. HT believes that the Prophet not only taught how to establish the state but also how to fight for it, which HT says is through three

steps: First, the process of cultivars and organising in which Islamic groups or parties begin to gather and educate people with Islamic ideas and create groups or parties. Second, engage with people to develop a shared awareness of the need for an Islamic system and reduce people's confidence in the current political system and regime. In this step also, HT tries to persuade the military force to support its revolutionary ideas once it was ready to do so. Third, establish a caliphate that implements all *sharīʿah* laws (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1999).

Framing Hizb ut-Tahrir on Indonesia's Problems

In Indonesia, the group was first introduced in the 1980s after Abdullah bin Nuh invited Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi to come to Indonesia. Abdullah bin Nuh was a prominent Islamic scholar living in Bogor, West Java, who founded an Islamic Boarding School *(pesantren)* called al-Ghazali. Bin Nuh met members of HT, mainly from the Middle East, when he visited his son studying in Australia. Later, Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi came, stayed, and carried out his *da'wah* activities facilitated by Abdullah bin Nuh in Indonesia (Fealy, 2007). From the 1980s to the 1990s, HT's work under Al-Baghdadi's leadership was underground, where HT was not used as a symbol of the movement until political reforms in 1998.

HT declared its existence officially after two years of the reformation. The declaration was proclaimed at the First International Conference in August 2000, attended by about 2000-3000 people at *Senayan* Tennis Stadium, Jakarta, and attended by international speakers such as Ismail al-Wahwah (HT Australia) and Dr. Sharifuddin Md Zain (HT Malaysia). Many HT members from other countries, Australia, Malaysia, Jordan, and the United Kingdom, attended the event. The conference declared that HT would step from the first stage (culturing and organising) to the second stage (interacting with *the ummah)* of the three phases to achieve its political goals.

From 2000 to 2017, Hizb ut-Tahrir has hosted hundreds of events, demonstrations, talk shows, seminars, conferences, and published media and books. This is part of HT's strategy in the second stage of *da'wah* activities to win the hearts and minds of Muslims in Indonesia to support the idea of *sharīʿah* and *khilāfah*. But in 2017, the Indonesian government decided to revoke the group's status as a legal Islamic group in Indonesia because the HT issue is contrary to Indonesian ideology,

causes polarity in society, and threatens Indonesian unity (Aswar et al., 2020).

Working for the *khilāfah*, HT claims, is to follow the methods adopted from the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to destroy the existing non-Islamic political system, which is not taking part in elections, coups, including military action. The idea of change and the way to think of problems and solutions are adopted and followed by HT members everywhere in every branch. The only difference is the content or issues they respond to depends on each region in which HT exists (Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir In Britain, 2000).

Diagnostic Dimensions

Sharīʿah and *khilāfah*, as opposed to secularism, are utilised by HTI to persuade Indonesian Muslims through contextualising these narratives in the Indonesian context. First, HTI argues that all problems in Indonesia are due to a secular system that ignores *sharīʿah* law. This secular system then potentially invites foreign countries to infiltrate Indonesian politics (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 2011).

Secularism manifests itself in various forms, such as democracy, capitalism, and nationalism, and these brought disasters to Indonesia. In democracy, for example, the authority of the people (representatives) to pass laws can then be used as a tool of the colonial state to infiltrate such representatives in the legislature to produce regulations that serve colonial interests. HTI stated that in Indonesia, there are about 76 products formulated by, and served, foreign countries; such as mineral and gas, electricity, foreign investment, natural resources, bank and finance, agriculture, and water (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 2009a).

On the other hand, according to HT, political corruption is also inevitable in democracies as the system was created with high cost, for example, in choosing political leaders in the executive or legislature. In 2014, the Indonesian government spent about 14.4 trillion rupiahs (more than one billion USD) for the general election. Legislative candidates spent an average of 1.18 billion rupiahs (approximately 82,600 USD). As for presidential candidates, in 2014, each spent about 61 billion rupiahs. According to HTI, this costly democratic process inevitably invites capitalists to engage in this process that they will demand a return once their candidate wins. In the end, elected leaders will serve only the

interests of their capitalist counterparts manifesting in regulation and other state projects in economic activity. It also resulted in the growth of corruption and nepotism in Indonesian politics (Zaid, 2016).

HTI argued that the problems that arise in democracies stem from the democratic system itself. HTI calls it a structural and systemic problem. Therefore, anyone running for office and winning elections in a democracy will not bring significant change to Indonesia. Elected leaders simply continue the existing systems, laws, and regulations without having the authority to change them fundamentally. Even their authority is limited by other state systems such as the legislature and the judiciary. The participation of Islamic parties in democracy is also uneventful because even though democracy accommodates each party with different ideologies to compete, it does not allow any change to the system and ideology of the secular state. Hence, Muslims' role in politics are limited only to the ritual aspects such as marriage, banking, and *ḥajj* or pilgrimage (Affandi, 2014).

Another issue of democracy, HTI stated, is the dependence of Indonesia to liberal international organisations: WTO, IMF, World Bank, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). These institutions can be a restraint on Indonesia in formulating economic policies for the benefit of the people, rather they even weaken Indonesia's political capacity to develop its politics, economy, and military (Ishaq, 2014).

This argument becomes the reason of HTI's abstinence in Indonesian general elections. According to HTI, basically voting in elections is allowed in Islam *(mubāḥ)*, in Islamic jurisprudence, referred to as *Wakālah* (representation). However, it can turn out to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *ḥalāl* (legitimate) depending on the purpose of the representation. If a person represents another person in a legitimate activity, it becomes legitimate; on the contrary, if that representation is for unlawful activity, it becomes unlawful or *ḥarām*. In terms of engaging in elections aimed at electing representatives or leaders to make laws and implement secular laws and systems, according to HTI, it is unlawful and sinful in Islam. It is against the principle of *Sharī'ah*: *"Wasīlah (medium) that can definitely bring to ḥarām (forbidden) activities are also ḥarām (forbidden)* (Al-Islam, 2009).*"*

However, HTI allows someone who wants to get involved as a member of the legislature but on certain conditions: should be from

Islamic parties and running without collision with secular parties, no bribery, fraud, and fake; campaign with ideas and programmes inspired by Islam; parliament as the place to do *daʿwah* in implementing *sharīʿah*, resisting colonial domination, and controlling the government; and must be consistent (Al-Islam, 2009).

On the other hand, HTI believes that although there will be benefits from participating in election, no significant changes have been achieved through it. The regime is changing, but the system is still the same. The secular democratic system itself is what makes Indonesia worse. So, according to HTI, participating in elections is not just a way to bring about change for Indonesia. Hence, the best way to change is to follow the method of change exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which is the method of the social change a la Islam (Interview with Ismail Yusanto, 2014).

Another problem that goes hand in hand with democracy is neoliberalism or capitalism. This idea minimises the state's role in organising the economic aspects of a country. For HTI, this idea is a tool to weaken the country and turn it into a corporate state where the leading players who get more benefits are businesses and the wealthy people. Neoliberalism deprived Indonesia of control over most of its vast natural resources and state public ownership to private companies/individuals: in the oil and gas industries, coal, gold and copper, agriculture, telecommunications, consumer goods, banks, insurance, capital markets, and media. As a result, Indonesia lost its primary resources to provide accessible services to its people. It ended with economic, social, cultural, political, and military crises ("Indonesia Dicengkeram Neoliberalisme dan Neoimperialism," 2015).

Nationalism, for HTI, is another issue that contributes to the problems of Indonesia and the Muslim World. Nationalism damaged Muslims from one country to more than fifty nation-states. Indeed, this idea weakens the *Ummah* and is vulnerable to infiltration by foreign powers. Nationalism contrasts with Islam because of its basic idea that people are bound by nations, while in Islam, people are bound by Islamic creeds. In addition, in Islam, the concept of a state must be one state for all Muslims, not separated. With the Islamic State, and the Caliphate, Muslims will have a strong state that can take on the current capitalist countries led by the United States and its allies (Al-Jawi, 2014).

According to Ismail Yusanto (2014), in Indonesia's history, the heroes who fought for Indonesian independence against Dutch colonialism were motivated only by the spirit of Islam, not by nationalism. Nationalism is an emotional construct that makes it very temporary and weak. Many ruling regimes claim to be nationalist in Indonesian politics as President Megawati (2002-2004) and Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014); in reality, they only served neoliberal economies that prioritise foreign over national interests. Ismail Yusanto, (2014), HTI spokesperson, argued that the way Islam loves Indonesia should be on an Islamic basis that can save Indonesia from capitalism, liberalism, and secularism (Interview with M. Ismail Yusanto, 2014).

Prognostic Dimension

The next step in the framing process undertaken by a movement is an effort to build "new solutions, new social patterns, or new ways of regulating relationships between groups, consensus and the exercise of power in a society or state" (Benford & Snow, 2000). This is to respond to the root of the problem that has been spelled out through the diagnostic dimensions.

Through diagnostic elements, HT explains that Muslims have two problems, namely the internal and external aspects. From the external side, the attack from the enemies of Islam distances Muslims from the teachings of Islam itself by dividing the unity of Muslims politically and imposing ideas that are contrary to the teachings of Islam. This effort is made either with direct or indirect activity, like through Muslim figures. This is what HT says keeps Muslims occupied in thought even though it is physically and militarily independent. The second factor is the internal factor, where Muslims are far from their religion by only practicing Islam in pieces. On the other hand, they claim to be Muslim, but their life practice is no different from non-Muslims.

The root of the problems that exist according to HT is the absence of Islamic life in which the state applies Islamic *sharīʿah* to all aspects of life. The absence of a caliphate that has collapsed since 1924, according to HT, is the source of the catastrophe of the destruction of Muslims. Therefore, the main solution is to uphold the caliphate as a method to enforce the laws of Allah SWT both in terms of economic, political, social, cultural, and others.

In terms of solutions to all existing problems (prognostic), HT explained that upholding the caliphate, beside as a solution to the problem of Muslims, it is also an obligation for Muslims to uphold it. This obligation, according to HT, has been stated in the Qur'*ā*n, *Sunnah*, *Ijma'* (the consensus of prophet companions) as the only system recognised by Islam and different from other systems of government including empire, monarchy, federal state, and republic or democracy (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2005b). The function of this system is to apply the laws of Allah and his messenger and carry out *da'wah* to the whole world.

HT explained four important pillars of the *khilāfah* state system. The first principle is that sovereignty is in the hands of *sharīʿah*, not belonging to humans or people. It means that the primary source of law is only Allah's law, *sharīʿah* law. Man-made laws are considered transgressions and sins if they violate these provisions (Hizb ut-Tahrir, n.d.,). This principle clearly reinforces HT's attitude towards democracy and the modern state that makes sovereignty in the hands of the people. The second principle is that power is in the hands of the people, which means that it is the people who have the right to choose the leader to manage their affairs. Furthermore, *bayʿah* is a formal process to appoint a leader that is a statement of public loyalty to the elected leader.

The third principle is the obligation for all Muslims to appoint a caliph to unite Muslims in a single polity. HT considers the existence of a nation-state that divides Muslims as a violation of *sharīʿah* law, and it weakens the unity of the *Ummah*. The fourth principle is that a caliph has the authority to carry out legislation to be applied in a society (Hizb ut-Tahrir, n.d.).

Historically, Hizb ut-Tahrir explained that the concept of an Islamic state had been applied by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and then continued by the caliphs of the four dynasties from the 7th century CE to the 20th century CE. During that time, no law was applied except Islamic law in all aspects of life: political affairs, law, economy, social, education, the system of government, and foreign policy (Regulation of life in Islam) (An-Nabahani, 2002, p. 58).

The impact of the application of this system, according to HT, is tremendous on human civilisation. Islam transformed the Arab nation from a low-thinking, ignorant, fanatical level to a nation capable of thinking brilliantly and spreading Islam to various regions such as

Persia, Iraq, Shām, Egypt, and North Africa. Islam can merge these different Muslim nations by eliminating the barriers of their national identity with Islam (An-Nabahani, 2002, p. 63).

In the regulatory aspect of society, HT explained that Islam does not distinguish between Muslims and Non-Muslims, all are protected to the same degree, including the obligation of the state to ensure justice and security. In science, the world has been indebted to various scientific discoveries in Islamic civilisation, such as in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, and others. In terms of international politics, the Islamic State, or caliphate, has also proven to be the world›s number one state for centuries, capable of leading society with full justice, security, and prosperity. While the secular system, according to HT, will not produce the good and progress in society because of its damaged character and contrary to the teachings of Islam (Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, 2009).

The mechanism for electing leaders in Islam is also inexpensive, according to HTI, because only the caliph is directly elected through elections or by representatives of the people in the assembly of the *Ummah* (house of representatives). On the one hand, officials under the caliph are appointed directly by the caliph because of their status as an aide. The house of representatives can also be directly elected by the people, but its function is only supervision and providing input to the ruler, not making laws. This mechanism covers the huge costs for the electoral process as in the democratic system (Hizb ut Tahrir Indonesia, 2009; Zaid, 2016).

On the other hand, in terms of economic issues, HT argues that *sharīʿah* guarantees the basic needs of every community, education, health, security, food, and board. The state utilises all its natural resources for the welfare of the people, while privatisation, liberalisation, and revocation of subsidies should not be carried out in an Islamic state. For Indonesia, which has a wealth of abundant natural resources, the correct management of the country will make the country's finances abundant to serve its people.

To do that, Islam suggests that a state be independent in its political thoughts and policies from foreign thoughts and intervention. States should not cooperate with international institutions that can deprive a state of its political sovereignty. It should also not cooperate with the

IMF and the World Bank, which are symbols of neoliberalism and global neo-imperialism (Al-Jawi, 2015).

Regarding nationalism, Shiddiq Al-Jawi (2014) revealed the concept of the caliphate is clearly superior to the idea of nationalism. The concept of nationalism is weak because it stands on emotional and artificial foundations such as song, flag, language, and history. The idea of a nation is imaginary because many countries are made up of several nations but simply described as a nation, such as Indonesia and the United States of America. Some regions have one national identity but different countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which are Malay in nature. In addition, in the application aspect in a state, nationalism can be filled by the ideology of secularism, Marxism, or socialism, and other ideologies.

While in the concept of an Islamic state, Al-Jawi (2014) contended that the binder of society is not a nation or tribal identity but an Islamic creed, and the highest state's interest in all its activities is not in the national interest but the interest of Muslims, through the application of *sharīʿah* domestically and the spread of Islamic *daʿwah* abroad. In terms of territorial boundaries, the *khilāfah* state will continue to develop, not be fixed like a nation-state. It will develop along with the activities of *daʿwah* and *Jihād* carried out by the state. Furthermore, the only source of law is. The flag used is only one flag of *tawḥīd*, a black flag that is written with white *tawḥīd* word called *Rāyah,* and a white flag that is written with black *tawḥīd* word called *Liwa'*. The official language used is only Arabic as a unifying language of Muslims, even though it is also not forbidden to use the local language as a colloquial language (Al-Jawi, 2014). Fighting for the caliphate will be considered as obedience to Allah SWT while fighting for the nation-state will be worth the maximum (Al-Jawi, 2014).

Motivational Dimension

The most important thing in this framing task is how to convince people or other movements to unite in collective action. This dimension of motivation requires a vocabulary to ensure the involvement of individuals or other movements in an attempt to change. Commonly used words are emergencies/severity, urgency, effectiveness, and feasibility (Benford & Snow, 2000).

HTI uses the motivational dimension to invite Muslims in Indonesia to participate in the *da'wah,* calling for the caliphate. HTI emphasises that by referring to *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah,* establishing a caliphate is an obligation for Muslims, and if it is neglected, it is then considered a sinful action, and will get punishment from Allah SWT. HTI quoted the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad narrated by *Im**ā**m* Muslim, that "whoever dies, while on his shoulders there is no *bay'ah* (declaration of allegiance) to the *im**ā**m* or caliph then he dies like the death of ignorance (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2005)."

The importance of the caliphate, according to HT, is exemplified by the companions of the Prophet, who were willing to postpone the Prophet's funeral after death to focus on choosing the leader after the Prophet. Similarly, Umar ibn Khattab as the second caliph, limited the election period of the caliph to three days. According to HTI, the attitude of prophet companions towards the election of leaders is proof of the urgency of the caliphate for Muslims because it is strongly related to the life and death of Islam and Muslims (Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, 2011).

Not only that, HTI explained that the caliphate is a historical inevitability because it has been promised by Allah and his messengers contained in the verses of the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. As the popular *ḥadīth* is often conveyed by HTI, narrated by Im**ā**m Aḥmad that Muslims will be in the five phases of history, the prophetic phase, the rightly guided caliphates phase, the phase of biting power *(mulkan 'āḍḍan),* the phase of coercive power *(mulkan jabriyyatan),* and the last phase of the return of the caliphate that follows the prophetic method (Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, 2011).

From factual conditions, the caliphate, according to HT, is an urgent need for a world damaged by the implementation of the secular capitalist system. Capitalism creates a gap between rich and poor countries. A vulnerable financial system collapses and free-market myths benefit only the rich. Democracy, too, promised freedoms to result in moral damage, destruction of creeds, destruction of families, and free sex. In the legal aspect, the law is used as a means for capitalists to colonise and exploit the people's wealth (Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, 2011, p. 44).

Khilāfah, according to HTI, will lead the world so that people can live together to support each other, share, and help each other without the arrogance of nationality and territoriality.

> Fighting for a caliphate for HTI is an obligation that is worth
> a great reward but must be with the Prophet's demands,
> namely non-violence, politics, and intellectual. "If one
> reward is so great, then how great is our intercession:
> hundreds, thousands, even millions of people who get the
> blessings of Allah SWT. Remember that it is this Islamic
> caliphate that we are fighting for that will carry out Islamic
> treatises to the whole world and be a way for people to
> convert to Islam in droves, *Subhānallah*!" (Hizb ut-Tahrir
> Indonesia, 2011, p. 49).

Conclusion

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a global movement that has been in dozens of Muslim
countries covering various continents such as Asia, Australia, Europe,
America, and Africa. In Indonesia, this movement has been present
since the 1980s but with a movement that is still hiding. After political
reform in Indonesia, HTI began to actively move openly through
various methods such as demonstrations, seminars, lectures, media
publications, and so on. Major agendas have been held by the group
since the 2000s until it was finally dissolved by the government in 2017
on charges of radicalism, against state ideology, and endangering the
country's stability.

During the struggle of HTI in Indonesia, this group invites
people to fight together by using three basic elements used by social
movements in general when moving, namely diagnostic elements by
making secularism ideology the root of the problem in Indonesia. This
secularism ideology gave birth to derivative systems such as democracy,
human rights, capitalism, and nationalism that made Indonesia damaged
and colonised.

The second element used by HTI is prognostic, which provides
solutions to problems that occur in Indonesia due to secularism
through the enforcement of *sharīʿah* and *khilāfah*. The *khilāfah* is a
political system that will apply *sharīʿah* law in all aspects of life by
indiscriminately ensuring justice, welfare, and security for both Muslims
and non-Muslims.

Then the motivational element becomes the ultimate element of this
group by emphasising the obligation to uphold *sharīʿah* and *khilāfah*
for Muslims and the retribution of great sin for those who neglect it.

The caliphate is also part of the promise of Allah and his Messenger, which will indeed happen. Those who fight for it will get a reward that will continue to flow when the caliphate is upright. The *khilāfah* is also considered an urgent necessity because secularism is considered to be ruining human life.

During its activities in Indonesia for approximately 20 years, until it was dissolved, it is obvious that the sequence of framing used by HTI can be seen from its speeches, lectures, discussions, and media they produced, such as leaflets, magazines, tabloids, and online media. The message conveyed by HTI through such framing, however, proved to be not only simplistic but also controversial. Its ban in 2017 halted the propagation of such message to the general Indonesian public.

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Book Review

Al-Kawakibi, Abdul Rahman. *The Nature of Tyranny and The Devastating Results of Oppression***. Foreword by Leon T. Goldsmith. Translated by Amer Chaikhouni. London: Hurst, 2021, 152 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 9781787385481. £45.**

Reviewer: Carimo Mohomed, Collaborator Researcher, Catholic University of Portugal, Lisbon.

Considered as one of the architects of Arab political philosophy in the 19th century, the Syrian educationalist ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (born in mid-19th century and died in 1902) was influenced by reform ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838/9-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and he advocated a return to the original purity of Islam, claiming that alien concepts and distortions such as mysticism, fatalism, sectarian divisions, and imitation had led to ignorance and submission to stagnant theologians and despotic rulers who suppressed freedoms, promoted false religion, and corrupted the moral, social, educational, and financial systems of the Muslim nation. According to him, the best, or in this case the worst, example was the Ottoman Empire, while advocated Arab independence and an elected Arab caliph with limited powers as the basis for the revival of Islam.

His book is no less than revolutionary in its call for the overthrow of despotic regimes and the restoration of governance by the people and for the people. Appearing in English for the first time, the text has a foreword from Leon T. Goldsmith, offering an overview of Al-Kawakibi's intellectual contributions. The first chapter of the text provides a definition of tyranny, presenting it as akin to a sickness or malaise that seeps into all classes of society, leaving behind decay. The following seven chapters apply this conception of tyranny to what Al-Kawakibi sees as society's crucial elements: religion, knowledge, honour, economy, ethics, and progress. Having laid a theoretical framework

for understanding the centrality of tyranny, its characteristics, and its devastating effects, Al-Kawakibi concludes by setting forth a brief programme for remedying the 'disease' of tyranny. The final chapter outlines another book in which he had planned to elaborate upon his ideas, but his death, under mysterious circumstances, came first.

Al-Kawakibi was born in Aleppo to an influential Syrian family. He received a thorough education in the Islamic sciences and the languages of the region including Arabic, Turkish and Persian. As a young man, he was very interested in literature and politics, having edited *Furat*, the official paper of Aleppo from 1875 to 1880. He also edited the highly influential reformist journal, *al-Manar*, which was started by Rashid Rida (1865-1935). After working at *Furat* and *al-Manar*, Al-Kawakibi started his own literary journal called the *al-Sahba*, a journal which vehemently criticised the despots and dictators of his time and alluded to the tyranny of the Ottoman Empire. He especially focused his criticism on the new *wali* of Aleppo, Jamil Pasha. Due to Al-Kawakibi's political outspokenness, the journal was shut down by the local Ottoman Government after only fifteen issues. After his work as editor, Al-Kawakibi entered politics more directly, and worked for various positions in the Ottoman civil service in Aleppo. Despite his opposition to the Ottoman Empire, Al-Kawakibi wanted to serve the Arabs. During this point in his career, he became an honourary member of the board of lawyer examinations. Al-Kawakibi, along with other Aleppans, complained about the *wali* to the central government in Istanbul, criticisms which fell on deaf ears until Istanbul sent a representative to Aleppo to investigate, and immediately threw Kawakibi and his followers into prison in 1886 after an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Jamil Pasha. Once released from prison, Al-Kawakibi's popularity rose, and he became the mayor of Aleppo in 1892. Later, he went to Istanbul to study the Ottoman Empire's despotism and problematic leadership more extensively. With his newfound knowledge, he returned to Aleppo and began working for the Ottoman government again. Because of his opinions, he was subject to harassment and intimidated on a regular basis. He decided to publish his book *Umm al-Qura* (*The Mother of Cities: Mecca*) in Egypt, rather than in Syria, and finally left his home country in 1899, moving to Egypt, where he was welcomed by other Islamic intellectuals residing there.

Written between 1898 and 1902, *Tabāi' al-Istibdād wa-Maṣāri' al-Isti'bād* (*The Nature of Despotism and the Harm of Enslavement* / *The*

Characteristics of Despotism and the Destructions of Enslavement / *The Nature of Tyranny and the Devastating Results of Oppression*) is a text which can be placed within the realm of political philosophy. Apart from being a criticism of the despotic regime of the Ottoman Sultan 'Abd-ul Hamid II (1842-1918, r. 1876-1909), the book is also an *exposé* of the causes of despotism and its effects upon the society and the individuals. At the same time, it looks at the relation between the status of knowledge and despotism and at the mechanisms which prevent knowledge and promote ignorance within the despotic society, mechanisms which are closely related to how despotism spreads in it. Despotism is portrayed by the author like a virus that penetrates all layers of society, pervades all social classes and, in the end, destroys the social body. To be sustained, despotism needs people's ignorance or a general absence of knowledge. According to Kawakibi, knowledge is important because through it, human beings will come to know their rights and only if they know their rights can they demand it and thus force the evil despot to act in the interest of the people. Hence, knowledge is the remedy that cures the illness of despotism. A combination of conscious and unconscious processes prevents knowledge from spreading; psychological factors in the individuals, the relation between the various groups within society and the physical outlook of the despotic society which is defined by chaos and unrest leaves no room for organised education. These factors contribute to the fact that knowledge under despotism has a confined and limited status.

The text is characterised by a rich vocabulary and a wide use of metaphors, something which makes it vital and refreshing. Kawakibi employs rhetorical tools and the book at times bears resemblance with that of a political speech. Following the events of the so-called "Arab Spring", this translation by Amer Chaikhouni makes a seminal historical text available to English audiences [a French translation was published in 2016 under the title *Du despotisme et autres texts* (*On Despotism and Other Texts*)] and demonstrates that Al-Kawakibi's pioneering thought remains relevant not only to intellectuals and young generations but to people all over the world who are searching for ideological doctrines to bolster their aspirations for political and social change.

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Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article
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Chapra (2002)

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The Qur'ān
In-text:
(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36
(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:
The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)
(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
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