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Intellectual Discourse
Vol. 31, No. 1, 2023

Contents

<i>Note from the Editor</i>	1
 Research Articles	
Validation of a <i>Sejahtera</i> Living Index Using the Rasch Model <i>Muhammad Faris Abdullah</i> <i>Mohamad Sahari bin Nordin</i> <i>Suhailah binti Hussien</i> <i>Norhayati Mohd. Alwi</i> <i>Noor Suzilawati binti Rabe</i>	7
Investigating Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī’s Methodology in the Study of Christianity through Selected Textual Analysis from His <i>Christian Ethics</i> <i>Fatmir Shehu</i>	31
Paradoxical and Insufficient? Gender Quotas and Placement Mandates in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s 2020 Local Elections <i>Mirsad Karić</i> <i>Šejma Aydin</i> <i>Huseyin Korkut</i> <i>Muhidin Mulalić</i>	57
Gestalt and Semiotic Analyses of Brand Communication on Disability Inclusion: The Case of Malaysia and the US <i>Aida Mokhtar</i> <i>Faiswal Kasirye</i>	83
Understanding the Decline of Pakistan-US Alliance and the Growing Influence of China in Pakistan <i>Roy Anthony Rogers</i> <i>Noraiz Arshad</i> <i>Iftikhar Ali</i>	113

Let's Think They are Safe Online! A Malaysian Perspective on The Classification of Children's Cyber Risks <i>Sarina Yusuf</i> <i>Misha Teimouri</i> <i>Muhamad Shamsul Ibrahim</i> <i>Nan Zakiah Megat Ibrahim</i> <i>Syahida Mohd Nazri</i> <i>Stephanie Ann Victor</i>	139
Social Media Use for English Learning in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Review <i>Farah Fazlinda Mohamad</i> <i>Khazaila bt Zaini</i> <i>Nur Syahidatul Idany</i>	161
<i>Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah</i> as Goal Framing for Sustainable Behaviours: A Conceptual Framework <i>Ali Mehellou</i> <i>Mohamad Saifudin Mohamad Saleh</i> <i>Bahiyah Omar</i>	183
Faith in The Time of Coronavirus: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis <i>Siti Aeisha Joharry</i>	211
COVID-19: Analysing the Principle and Application of <i>I'tibār Ma'ālāt</i> in the Selected <i>Fatwas</i> Issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI) <i>Abdul Manan Ismail</i> <i>Ahmad Syukran Baharuddin</i> <i>Muhammad Hazim Ahmad</i>	233
The Challenges of Civil Society Organisations: NGO-isation of Resistance in Malaysia? <i>Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar</i> <i>Muhamad Takiyudin Ismail</i>	257

The Authenticity of Theology in Scientific and
Technological Thinking
Anhar Anshory
Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli
Ramli Awang 283

Research Notes

The Seminar on *Da'wah* in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 and
the Emergence of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia
Alwi Alatas
Agus Setiawan
Achmad Sunjayadi
Yunadi Ramlan 303

Book Review

Osman Bakar, *Environmental Wisdom for Planet Earth:
The Islamic Heritage* [Revised New Edition] (Kuala Lumpur:
Islamic Book Trust, 2022). 114 pp. ISBN 978-967-2795-00-1.
Reviewer: *Senad Mrahorović* 315

Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
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	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اُو	aw
اُو	ū		اِيَّ	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اِيَّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

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

Note from the Editor

In this issue, *Intellectual Discourse* (Vol. 31, No. 1) presents 12 articles, a research note, and a book review. The articles range from validation of a *Sejahtera* living index using the Rasch model to social media use for English learning in Southeast Asia, and from understanding the decline of Pakistan-US alliance to the challenges of civil society organisations in Malaysia. For this edition, nine of the 12 articles are collaborative efforts among authors; some from the same institution, while some others from different ones. Scholars from various academic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia Pakistan, and Turkiye contributed their articles that resulted from their research works. The topics and contents of the articles reflect the diverse disciplines in Islamic revealed knowledge and the human sciences.

The first article (Validation of a *Sejahtera* Living Index Using the Rasch Model)—written by Muhammad Faris Abdullah, Mohamad Sahari bin Nordin, Suhailah binti Hussien, Norhayati Mohd. Alwi and Noor Suzilawati binti Rabe—develops a scale to measure *sejahtera* living. *Sejahtera* is a concept in the Malay language that encompasses happiness, social-emotional wellbeing, life satisfaction, quality of life, meaning in life, and spiritual intelligence. This article examines the validity of the scale, and estimates the index scores of *sejahtera* living among students and employees of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It reports the findings of this validation exercise, based on data from 1,057 respondents. Using Rasch measurement analysis, the authors find evidence for the validity of the *sejahtera* living construct in terms of the good fit of the items, reliability and separation indexes, response category functioning, dimensionality, and construct validity. The findings also support the need for instructional interventions and training to sustain and improve the quality of *sejahtera* living among Muslims.

In the second article, (Investigating Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī's Methodology in the Study of Christianity through Selected Textual

Analysis from His Christian Ethics), Fatmir Shehu investigates the methodology pioneered by Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī in the field of comparative religion, based on the latter’s “Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of its Dominant Ideas.” Using historical, descriptive, and interpretative analytical methods, the article analyses al-Fārūqī’s new approach toward understanding Christianity. This article discusses al-Fārūqī’s short biography, al-his work on Christianity, and the interpretive analysis of al-Fārūqī’s methodology in the light of selected texts from his work on “Christian Ethics.” Shehu finds that Al-Fārūqī’s objective-analytical-comparative methodology is relevant to the contemporary scholarship of comparative religion.

Mirsad Karić, Šejma Aydin, Huseyn Korkut and Muhidin Mulalić collaborate in a study for the third article (Paradoxical and Insufficient? Gender Quota and Placemnet Mandates in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s 2020 Local Elections). This article examines the impact of preferential voting on the representation of women in the local councils following the last Local Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They analyse the effect of gender quotas and placement mandates across several determinants: electoral unit magnitude, local community urbanisation rate, ethnic composition of municipalities, and ideological foundation of political parties. The 2020 Local Elections resulted in 19.86% women candidates elected to the local councils, still short of the universal 30% target. Their study also reports that female candidates in the urban centres have higher chances of being elected; among ethnic-majority seats, Serb-majority areas elected more female candidates; and female candidates from centrist parties have higher chances of being elected than other political orientations.

The fourth article (Gestalt and Semiotic Analyses of Brand Communications on Disability Inclusion: The Case of Malaysia and the US), written by Aida Mokhtar and Faiswal Kasirye, discusses the role product brands play in promoting disability inclusion through their brand messages. Their multiple case study compares brand communication from ten product brands each originating from Malaysia and the United States using Ferdinand de Saussure’s model of semiotics. They find that *Common Fate* is the fundamental gestalt principle in most brands’ communication on disability inclusion of both countries and that positive nomenclature was used as the signifier that underlined the organisations’ positive perception of disability inclusion.

In the fifth article (Understanding the Decline of Pakistan-US Alliance and the Growing Influence of China in Pakistan), Roy Anthony Rogers, Noraiz Ahmad and Iftikhar Ali explain Pakistan's hedging strategy in its foreign policy amid the uncertain future of China-US relations in South Asia. This article argues that Pakistan's fear of becoming excessively dependent on the US and of getting enmeshed in China's growing influence in Pakistan necessitates the formulation of foreign policy that avoids being overdependent on any of the two, but still presents Pakistan as an important ally to both. Pakistan's conduct of foreign policy towards the US and China, the authors contend, is one that positions itself as a crucial strategic partner of the US in the fight against terrorism, and as a strategic economic ally of rising China.

The sixth article (Let's Think They are Safe Online: A Malaysian Perspective on the Classification of Children's Cyber Risks) by Sarina Yusof, Misha Teimouri, Muhamad Shamsul Ibrahim, Syahida Mohd Nazri and Stephanie Ann Victor investigate digital threats and inappropriate contents encountered by children when surfing the Internet. This article analyses the risk factors associated with children's Internet use, from a data of 420 school-going children aged nine to 16 years old around Selangor, Malaysia. It finds that children were highly exposed to, among others, unwanted exposure to pornography, potentially dangerous user-generated content, sexting, personal data misuse, cyber grooming, and cyberbullying in the past 12 months of using the Internet.

Farah Fazlinda Mohamad, in the seventh article (Social Media Use for English Language Learning in Southeast Asia: A Systematic review), assesses the use social media for English learning in the Southeast Asian context through a systematic review. This study searched the SCOPUS database to find peer-reviewed journal articles on social media use for English learning in Southeast Asia, and identified 46 such articles, of which 21 met the inclusion criteria. This article suggests that the use of social media for English learning is associated with improving communication skills, enhancing collaborative learning, encouraging self-directed learning, enhancing writing skill and learning experience.

In the eighth article (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as Goal Framing for Sustainable Behaviours: A Conceptual Framework), Ali Mehellou, Mohamad Saifudin Mohamad Saleh and Bahiyah Omar introduce a

new conceptual framework based on five pivotal values of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*—preserving religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth—which served as predictors in the framing of sustainable behaviours. This article discusses an overview of goal-action research, followed by identification of research gaps, and an extensive review of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah's* five goals. The authors propose a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-based framework for sustainable behaviours that offers new avenues to establish greater understanding of the universal values of Islam.

Siti Aeisha Joharry compares between language used in online writings on the Coronavirus from an Islamic institution and those written for a more general audience in the ninth article of this edition (Faith in the Time of Coronavirus: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis). Analysing keywords from a collection of articles on Covid-19 using the corpus linguistic approach through the Sketch Engine, this study finds salient words that are more faith-based, such as God, acts of devotion and martyrdom. This article also finds that there are more words referring to God, the Prophet, faith, and religion in online writings from the Islamic institution. The online writings analysed also prominently feature issues relating to *Tawakkul*, or reliance on Allah, weighing whether the virus is a punishment or a mercy, as well as how to deal with grief.

In the tenth article (COVID-19: Analysing the Principle and Application of *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* in the Selected Fatwas Issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI)), Abdul Manan Ismail, Ahmad Syukran Baharuddin and Muhammad Hazim Ahmad explore the application of al-Shāṭibī's *i'tibār ma'ālāt* in selected fatwas issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI). *I'tibār ma'ālāt* refers to the need to consider the benefit/s of the outcome of a particular ruling for the society. This study finds that in addition to the application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the fatwas had also—explicitly and implicitly—applied the principle *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. This signifies the universal relevance of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* in solving emerging religious concerns, as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The eleventh article (The Challenges of Civil Society Organisations: NGO-isation of Resistance in Malaysia?), written by Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar and Muhamad Takiyudin Ismail, discusses the positive contribution of Malaysian civil society organisations in

policymaking and democratisation. It investigates challenges to civil society organisations, which include the politics of democratic aid to NGOs, sexual harassment, and job exploitation in several NGOs. The authors explore the concept of “uncivil society” in Malaysia and its relevance to the NGO-isation of resistance. Based on interviews with informants from four NGOs, this study identifies three main concerns regarding “uncivil society” and NGO-isation of resistance, namely: undemocratic work culture, the NGO establishment motive, and ineffective resistance.

In the twelfth article (The Authenticity of Theology in Scientific and Technological Thinking), Anhar Anshory, Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli and Ramli Awang discuss the flaws in Western scientific and technological thinking, which they argue are caused by the separation of theology from science and technology. This article claims that the deprivation of knowledge from the bond of true belief will ruin human life and nature, and provides examples from weapons and food technologies to support such claim. The authors acknowledge efforts among Western scientists who have awareness to take steps to restore the agenda of science and technology within the framework of religious beliefs. Furthermore, drawing from the works of leading scholars who pioneered Islamisation of knowledge, this study elucidates the nature and appearance of Science and Technology that are firmly embroidered with natural theology leading to universal well-being.

This edition also features research notes (The Seminar on *Da'wah* in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 and the Emergence of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia) written by Alwi Alatas, Agus Setiawan, Achmad Sunjayadi and Yunadi Ramlan. They discuss the impact of a seminar on *da'wah* in Kuala Lumpur in 1977, which was attended by some Indonesian Muslim activists, on the emergence of a new awareness of *hijab* wear in Indonesia. While acknowledging multiple other factors that contributed to *hijab* awareness, the authors find that such awareness was initiated by the attendees of the 1977 *da'wah* seminar who organised various programmes to encourage Indonesian Muslim women to wear *hijab* despite obstacles imposed by the New Order government.

Overall, the articles in this edition reflect the multidisciplinary nature of *Intellectual Discourse*, covering—among others—the disciplines of education, comparative religion, international relations, *fiqh*, history

and communication. They are in line with the main objective of the journal to be a forum for scholarly dialogue and communication on issues related to Islam and the Muslim World. On a personal note, and on behalf of Danial Mohd. Yusof, the Editor-in-Chief, I would like to express our utmost appreciation to everyone who is involved in this publication. The publication of this edition would not be possible without the contribution of the authors, the anonymous reviewers, and the editorial team.

Tunku Mohar Mokhtar
Editor

Validation of a *Sejahtera* Living Index Using the Rasch Model

Muhammad Faris Abdullah*

Mohamad Sahari bin Nordin**

Suhailah binti Hussien***

Norhayati Mohd. Alwi****

Noor Suzilawati binti Rabe*****

Abstract: The *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is a framework of divine values and beliefs that govern the life of a Muslim. It contains clear guidelines on how to live the good life the way the religion sees it and on what constitutes quality of life, happiness, and wellbeing for the Muslim. In more precise terms, the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* guides Muslim in regard to how they can achieve a *sejahtera* life. Although *sejahtera* living is a fundamental and a highly important concept, it is not widely researched or addressed in the current body of empirical literature. One can see that there is a paucity of empirical data on *sejahtera* living. To address this research gap, this study first developed a scale to measure *sejahtera* living and subsequently examined its validity. It also estimated the index scores of *sejahtera* living among students and employees of a public university in Malaysia. This article reports on the findings of this validation exercise which involved a sample 1,057 lecturers, non-academic staff, and postgraduate and

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undergraduate students. Data were collected using a content validated 34-item questionnaire created based on the dimensions of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. The results of the Rasch measurement analysis provided evidence for the validity of the *sejahtera* living construct in terms of the good fit of the items, reliability and separation indexes, response category functioning, dimensionality, and construct validity. The extracted logit interval scores were used to construct linear measures of the baseline *sejahtera* living index. The findings support the need for instructional interventions and training to sustain and improve the quality of *sejahtera* living among Muslims.

Keywords: *Sejahtera* living, Muslim well-being, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, Rasch analysis, validation study

Abstrak: Inti pati *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* mencakupi pegangan, kepercayaan dan nilai-nilai suci Islam. Ia ditanggapi sebagai kerangka yang membimbing penganut Islam ke arah menjalani dan mengecapi makna dan amalan hidup yang berkualiti, bahagia dan selamat. Lebih tepat lagi, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* menjadi panduan menuju kesejahteraan hidup. Namun begitu, sehingga kini, pemahaman dan amalan hidup *sejahtera* dalam konteks *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* kurang diperkatakan. Jelas wujudnya lompong ilmu yang berteraskan maklumat empiris. Kajian ini dilaksanakan, pertamanya, dengan tujuan membina instrumen yang tentu sah bagi mengukur makna dan amalan kesejahteraan hidup. Kedua, kajian ini menganggarkan tahap, atau indeks, kesejahteraan hidup dalam kalangan warga sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia. Instrumen yang digunakan mengandungi 34 item mengikut dimensi-dimensi *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* dan telah diuji daripada segi tentu sah kandungan. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 1,057 pensyarah, kakitangan bukan akademik dan para pelajar di universiti tersebut. Keputusan analisis yang menggunakan model pengukuran Rasch menghasilkan pelbagai bukti tentu sah instrumen tersebut. Analisis ini seterusnya menerbitkan skor logit yang diguna pakai untuk menentukan indeks garis dasar kesejahteraan hidup dalam kalangan sampel. Penemuan-penemuan kajian ini turut mencadangkan tindakan-tindakan susulan, termasuk program pendidikan dan latihan bagi memungkinkan kesejahteraan hidup pelajar dan pekerja institusi pengajian tinggi tersebut ditambah baik.

Kata kunci: kesejahteraan hidup, aman tenteram, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, analisis Rasch, kajian pengesahan.

INTRODUCTION

The literature is replete with conceptual and empirical studies related to *sejahtera* living and with varied terms associated with the concept of *sejahtera-ness*, such as “happiness,” “social-emotional wellbeing,” “life satisfaction,” “quality of life,” “meaning in life,” and “spiritual intelligence” (e.g., Genç, 2021; Hassan, 2020; Sarifuddin et al., 2021; Schuur et al., 2020; Skrzypińska, 2021; Stammer & Toivanen, 2022). Mohd Kamal Hassan (2020, p. 2) explained that *sejahtera* living is “a state of holistic and integrated wellbeing consisting of success, happiness, security and balance in this world and in the hereafter,” and it demands “an alternative paradigm of holistic and sustainable development from the worldview of Islamic monotheism.”

Despite its importance in the life of Muslims, there is a paucity of empirical data on *sejahtera* living. Since a robust scale for measuring *sejahtera* living can hardly be found in the current research literature, we are thus lacking an understanding of what a *sejahtera* life is to Muslims, as well as how and whether they are living one. It is only recently that an effort to validate a five-factor measurement model on the “*Maqāsid al-Sharī’ah* Quality of Life” (MSPQoL) was documented (Mohamad et al., 2016). The researchers tested the quality of the instrument using data from 248 drug abuse inmates. The results of testing a third order MSPQoL questionnaire supported the reliability of the data and the validity of the construct in terms of its convergent and discriminant validity. In addition, Nordin et al. (2022) examined the psychometric properties of a locally developed *sejahtera* living questionnaire. Using the conventional classical test theory, these validation studies effectively established the adequacy of the *maqāsid al-sharī’ah* instrument. However, they did not use the instrument to assess and compare the extent of *sejahtera* living among their samples.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with a two-fold objective, the first was to address the prevailing gap in current research by examining a locally developed questionnaire that aimed to measure *sejahtera* living among Muslims. It tested the validity of the questionnaire, which was completed by the students and staff of a public university in Malaysia. Rasch models are currently the only available tools for constructing additive scales and diagnosing the extent to which our data fit the fundamental conception

of measurement. In this study, the validity of the items is acceptable if there is a sufficient number of people at an ability level comparable to the items' difficulty so that the item's difficulty, commonly referred to as the measurement attribute, can be more accurately estimated. Thus, Rasch analyses provide a useful methodological structure for assessing many of the evidential aspects of the validity of the *sejahtera* living measure.

The study's second objective was to estimate the index scores of *sejahtera* living reported by the students and employees of the public university who participated in the survey. The index score was used as an indicator of *sejahtera* living among the respondents. Additionally, the use of index scores would facilitate the comparisons of *sejahtera* living reports across groups and across time.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Many people—at least 25% of the world's population—have some sort of belief that man's existence in the temporal world (*al-dunya*) is neither accidental nor a natural adaptation of organisms. Many around the globe—not just those of the Muslim faith—reject Darwinian thinking that human beings evolved or descended from a small number of original or progenitor species that included apes. Instead, Muslims are encouraged to accept the Creator's *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and worship Him by advancing good and fending against evil and harm in all facets of life and faith.

It is not befitting of God to leave mankind aimless and directionless after creating him. In fact, mankind is explicitly taught how to worship God through the Qur'an and the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings and practises. On top of that, they are given feedback about how they should perform the acts of worship in a manner that is pleasing to God. They are told about the importance of purity and sincerity in worship. They are informed about the hereafter (*ākhirah*) and where their intentions (*nīyyah*) and good deeds (*'amal*) will take them in the hereafter. The Qur'an gives mankind feedforward (i.e., advanced tips) about how to set their intentions and deeds straight so that they end up in the right place (i.e., God's paradise). In this context, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* serves as a structure of divine values and beliefs pertaining to Islamic law, business and financial practises, political and governance thoughts and

systems, social and emotional interactions, and the way of life among Muslims.

The term “*maqāṣid al-sharī’ah*” refers to the framework of understanding the purposes of the *sharī’ah*, as prescribed by Islam. Ibn Ashur pointed out that the idea spreads the maintenance of order, the achievement of benefit and inhibition of harm, the establishment of equality among people, and the capacity for the law’s respect, obedience, and effectiveness (2006). By doing this, it gives the believer the ability to grow in strength, respect, and self-assurance. According to Saladin, Azmil, and Mariam (2020), the goal of *maqāṣid al-sharī’ah* is to uphold and advance the quality and wellbeing of human existence both here on Earth and in the Hereafter. It encompasses five facets of existence: riches and resources, life, mind, dignity and lineage, and preservation of religion.

Preservation of Religion: The definition of religious preservation in this study is “one’s awareness and commitment in the Islamic Worldview.” The ultimate monotheism (*tawhīd*) paradigm, which is supported by the Islamic creed (*‘aqīdah*), is included in one’s beliefs, knowledge, and practises. In addition to performing numerous forms of *‘ibādah*, defending the Islamic religion can be accomplished in a number of ways, including writing, speaking, and other practical ways (Afridi, 2016). For instance, a happy Muslim should agree that “God has a significant impact upon [him/her]” and “realise that [his/her] daily activities are parts of *‘ibādah*.”

Preservation of Life: Respondents who have lived in *sejahtera* are aware of and actively involved in safeguarding their bodily and emotional well-being, safety, and lives. They protect their environment and keep dangers at bay. An individual who answers in this way is more likely to “[be] responsible to protect life,” “avoid harmful food or drink,” and “make sure that [his/her] surroundings are safe.” He or she would be protected from unexpected life-threatening situations by taking precautions. “It is important to note that generally speaking, saving one’s life is required,” writes Afridi (2016). It should not be done, though, at the expense of other people’s lives (p. 281).

Preservation of Intellect: Those who unwaveringly select, carry out, and develop in their progress and defence of the intellect (*qalb*) abound in high degrees of *sejahtera* existence. The term “intellect” in this study

encompasses the Islamically infused cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. The responses one has to statements like “made myself prepared in all my courses/work,” “happy with my personal relationships,” and “satisfied with the Islamic environment” reveal how intelligent they are in day-to-day living. In this respect, Afridi (2016) argues that,

Allah s.w.t. has ordered that everyone should protect this precious gift by utilising the mental faculty for the benefit of all and not for any kind of evil or anything that might lead to destruction. To achieve this goal, Islam has given the freedom to its followers to express their views and tolerated the differences in views and opinions. However, the expression of views and differences of opinion must conform to the moral and ethical values provided by Qur’an and Sunnah. (p. 282)

Preservation of Dignity and Lineage: Protecting one’s dignity entails respecting one’s right to privacy, refraining from revealing others’ flaws, acting responsibly in men’s and women’s relationships, and reaching fair conclusions when it comes to issues involving one’s family, marriage, and divorce (Afridi, 2016; Mohamed Sidik, Ishak, Saper, & Mohd Daud, 2019). All of these are in line with the Islamic tenet that emphasises the right of every individual to be treated with dignity, nobility, and respect (Husna, Ab Manan, Rafeah, Amiratul, & Mohd Hafiz, 2021). *Sejahtera* living is logically proven by one’s affirmation that he or she is always “comfortable talking to/working with people of opposite gender,” “good/prepared to be a good parent to my children,” and “have the positive attributes to lead my family.” These are examples of *sejahtera* lifestyle that relate to dignity that were evaluated in this study.

Preservation of Wealth and Resources: This aspect of maqāsid al-sharī’ah deals with how one goes about gathering, using, safeguarding, dispersing, and purifying his or her natural self-resources, such as potentials, riches, and time, in a fair and beneficial way (Zailani, Mohd Satar, & Zakaria, 2022). A Muslim who conserves wealth and resources is very likely to prevent waste in any way, give *sadaqah*, pay *zakat*, and respect their time. This wealth dimension is consistent with the idea that, according to Islam, wealth and resources are intended to help each individual meet their basic needs, which should then improve *sejahtera*

life by encouraging civic engagement (Abdullah, Has-Yun Hashim, & Yusri, 2020).

Conceptually, the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* reveals a crystal-clear structure, meaning, purpose, principle, objective, intent, and goal of living (Afridi, 2016; Abdullah et al., 2020; Saladin et al., 2020). It recognises *sejahtera* living as a way of life among Muslims. Abdullah et al. (2020) emphasised that the,

...discussion of worldly purposes is then divided into five types of purposes or objectives, which are the preservation of faith (*al-Dīn*), preservation of life (*al-Nafs*), preservation of intellect (*al-'Aql*), preservation of property (*al-Māl*) and preservation of progeny (*al-Nasl*). All five purposes are classified into *darūriyyāt* (necessity), *hājīyyāt* (need) and *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishment). *Darūriyyāt* means it is a must and basis for the establishment of welfare in this world and the hereafter in the sense that if it is ignored, then coherence and order cannot be established. This is followed by the *hājīyyāt* (need), which is to facilitate life and removing hardship. The last category is *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishment), which refers to the purpose to beautify life, and to establish ease and facility. (p. 121)

The structure proposes a taxonomy of *sejahtera* life indicators. Based on the widely recognised application of the Rasch measurement model, the items or indicators are to be hierarchically hypothesised into “difficulty” levels, which according to the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* experts are *darūriyyāt* (necessity), *hājīyyāt* (need), and *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishment). This hierarchical structure represents the expected ordering of item difficulty (Afridi, 2016; Baghaei, 2008; Messick, 1996). For example, the following *darūriyyāt* item—“I make sure my surroundings are safe”—should be an easy statement to endorse, while the *taḥsīniyyāt* item, “I strive to perform supererogatory rituals even when I am busy,” may be harder for many Muslims to endorse.

Islam is unlike other religions. The Islamic creed differs from other monotheistic religions in its most fundamental concept of *tawhīd*, i.e., belief in the Oneness of God. It is a distinct characteristic of Islam that everything that a Muslim says, thinks, intends, and does must be made for the sake and pleasure of Allah (SWT), the One and Only Creator. A true Muslim understands and accepts that all that he/she does is for

Allah (SWT), even his/her life and death. This is what he/she pledges in the five daily prayers:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

“Say, surely my prayer, my worship, my life, and my death are all for Allah—Lord of all worlds” (6:162).

In essence, to worship Allah (SWT) with the purest and sincerest of intentions is the ultimate purpose of human existence and sustainability (Oladapo & Rahman, 2016; Yaakob & Abdullah, 2020). And for those who do so, they have been promised a great reward by Allah (SWT) in the hereafter—and in this life, they will attain souls that are completely at ease and in peace (*nafs al-muṭma’innah*):

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّفْسُ الْمَطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَةً ﴿٢٨﴾
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي ﴿٢٩﴾ وَأَدْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي ﴿٣٠﴾

“Allah will say to the righteous, “O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord, well pleased with Him and well pleasing to Him. So join My servants and enter My Paradise.” (89:27-30).

The verses cited above highlight the idea of well-being and *sejahtera* living that Islam propounds. It should be emphasised that the degree to which a Muslim accomplishes *sejahtera* living is contingent upon how much he/she is able and willing to submit to the will of God and commit to ‘*amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa nahī ‘ani-’l-munkar*’ (i.e., enjoining good and righteousness and forbidding evil and destruction). Thus, to the Muslim, his/her sustainable existence and holistic development (spiritually, physically, emotionally, and psychologically) is a function of his/her compliance to the *maqāṣid al-sharī’ah* framework and guidelines.

METHOD

A total of 1,057 students and employees at a public university in Malaysia participated in the study. The sample size was deemed sufficient for the application of an objective measurement procedure like the Rasch analysis. The sample comprised undergraduate students

(45.9%), postgraduate students (10.5%), administrative and support staff (14.8%), and faculty members (28.9%). Most of the students were aged between 20 and 25 years (86.2%), while the employees between 31 and 50 (roughly 65%).

To account for the variability in the respondents' learning and living experiences, the research team conducted a series of focus group discussions. The analysis of the qualitative data yielded results which were then calibrated against the university's mission to humanise education, which it based on the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as the founding component (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2021). The study then solicited expert judgment to establish the relevance and importance of the questionnaire items.

A panel of nine experts was formed to examine and evaluate the operationalised variables, namely *sejahtera* living. The content panel experts comprised locally and internationally recognised experts in *sejahtera* living. The panel members included institutional leaders in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* who were the Directors of the Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS), Strategy and Institutional Change (OSIC), and Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability and Humanity. Each expert worked independently to review and rate three specific aspects, i.e., (1) the adequacy of how each *sejahtera* living dimension was defined based on the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework, (2) item-definition alignment, and (3) the sampling of items. Using a simplified content validity procedure, the study set the threshold of critical level of agreement (CVA) for a panel of nine experts at .778 (Ayre & Scally, 2014) and retained only those items with CVA values larger than the threshold. A self-reported *Sejahtera Living* questionnaire was then created and administered online. It contained a total of 50 content-validated *sejahtera* living items covering the five facets of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Each facet was represented by ten positively worded statements, which the respondents had to rate on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from "Never" to "Always," with "Sometimes" being used as the mid-point.

Data Analysis Procedure

To address the first research objective, the study applied the Rasch Rating Scale analysis. The Rasch model applies both the respondents' ability to reply to the questions and the item's level of difficulty. The investigation of item appropriateness (item fit) determines whether the

instrument's items can accurately measure the validity of *sejahtera* living outcome. The strength of the Rasch analysis lies in its ability to produce the evidence needed to establish the validity and reliability of an instrument and a set of data.

In the present work, the Rasch model was deemed the most robust technique for determining the psychometric properties of the instrument that aimed to scale the levels of *sejahtera* living and learning among the respondents. The analytics generated linear interval scores (logit scores), which allowed for arithmetic operations like addition and subtraction. Thus, the model enabled the use of parametric summary statistics to estimate the index score (Boone et al., 2014; Pallant & Tennant, 2007; Wright, 1992).

To address the objectives of the study—(i) the validity, and (ii) estimate the index scores of *Sejahtera* living reported by respondents, the Rasch model analysis was used to determine the psychometric properties of the *Sejahtera* living data, reliability of the collected data, response category functioning, dimensionality of the 34-item questionnaire, and construct validity of the measurement were also examined.

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Results of the Preliminary Data Analysis

An initial Rasch analysis was conducted on the whole data set of fifty items. Of the initial 50 items, the results revealed that 34 of the items satisfied the levels of fit deemed critical in the Rasch theory. This study used the widely used rule-of-thumb to determine the acceptable values of the mean-square; $0.5 > \text{MnSq} > 1.5$ (Linacre, 2002). A misfitted item is diagnosed when the Infit and Outfit statistics are smaller than 0.5 or larger than 1.5. Based on this criterion, the remaining 16 items did not reach the standards.

Misfitting items manifest “construct-irrelevant variance and gaps along the unidimensional continuum” (Baghaei, 2008, p. 1146). These are problematic items that should not be used in the measurement and should, therefore, be removed from the scale. A number of them contained elements of social desirability, for example, the following items: “I think of myself as a Muslim in my decision making and actions” and “I avoid gossiping about others.”

Furthermore, the results showed that a substantial proportion of the sample did not fit the measurement model. The respondents had unexpectedly responded to the questionnaire items inconsistently. This means to say that low ability respondents in the sample had positively endorsed the difficult-to-endorse items. Nonetheless, misfit occurred when high ability respondents failed to endorse the easy items.

Results of Goodness of Fit of the Measured Items and Persons

Considering the results of the preliminary analysis, a second Rasch analysis was performed on the data with 34 good-fit items, involving a sample of 1,057 respondents. The final 34-item *sejahtera* living with the 4-point agreement scale format met the requirements of Rasch measurement.

The Rasch analysis works by producing fit statistics that can be used to assess the psychometric properties of a given questionnaire. It functions by offering two statistics to evaluate the efficacy of the data derived from the questionnaire, namely (1) infit statistics, and (2) outfit statistics. The infit statistic, which is inlier-pattern-sensitive, is receptive to unexpected patterns of responses by persons on items. The outfit statistic, on the other hand, is an outlier-sensitive fit, and is responsive to unexpected observations by persons on items which are very easy or hard to be endorsed (Wright, 1992).

Table 1: Item Fit

ENTRY NUMBER	TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL COUNT	TOTAL MEASURE	MODEL S.E.	INFIT MNSQ	ZSTD	OUTFIT MNSQ	ZSTD	PTMEASUR-CORR.	AL-EXP.	EXACT OBS%	MATCH EXP%	ITEM
5	3673	1251	1.43	.05	1.30	6.68	1.42	8.53	.63	.71	51.0	56.4	RCR2
14	3852	1251	1.05	.05	1.06	1.48	1.16	3.20	.65	.69	58.2	57.9	SAR3
24	3927	1251	.89	.05	1.13	2.92	1.18	3.45	.63	.68	57.0	58.7	DYR4
18	3931	1251	.88	.05	1.06	1.47	1.05	1.11	.67	.68	61.0	58.9	SAR8
33	3976	1251	.78	.05	.94	-1.47	.88	-2.42	.68	.67	62.4	59.3	PSR9
27	3993	1251	.74	.05	1.08	1.85	1.17	3.25	.65	.67	61.3	59.8	HER4
13	4004	1251	.71	.05	.99	-.32	1.08	1.54	.65	.67	61.7	59.9	SAR2
19	4032	1251	.65	.05	.80	-4.93	.76	-5.08	.71	.66	66.2	60.1	SRA9
34	4052	1251	.60	.05	.98	-.37	.95	-1.05	.66	.66	63.1	60.6	PSR10
28	4067	1251	.56	.05	1.02	.54	1.04	.83	.65	.65	61.9	60.8	PSR1
20	4075	1251	.54	.05	.77	-5.86	.77	-4.59	.70	.65	68.8	60.8	SAR10
22	4076	1251	.54	.05	1.11	2.40	1.18	3.24	.61	.65	59.6	60.8	DYR2
16	4134	1251	.40	.05	.91	-2.21	.85	-2.78	.68	.64	66.2	62.0	SAR5
17	4197	1251	.24	.05	1.17	3.63	1.09	1.56	.62	.63	64.2	63.1	SAR6
30	4199	1251	.23	.05	.98	-.53	.98	-.31	.62	.63	65.3	63.1	PSR6
31	4200	1251	.23	.05	1.15	3.29	1.11	1.85	.61	.63	64.4	63.1	PSR7
32	4222	1251	.17	.05	.91	-2.12	.79	-3.68	.65	.62	69.1	63.7	PSR8
15	4282	1251	.01	.05	.88	-2.79	.81	-3.14	.64	.61	69.5	65.0	SAR4
23	4290	1251	-.01	.05	.82	-4.31	.82	-2.93	.65	.61	70.2	65.1	DYR3
25	4293	1251	-.02	.05	1.00	.06	.95	-.77	.62	.61	67.8	65.1	DYR5
29	4337	1251	-.15	.05	.85	-3.55	.81	-2.91	.63	.60	72.2	66.1	PSR2
26	4340	1251	-.16	.05	1.18	3.82	1.26	3.51	.56	.59	64.7	66.2	HER2
11	4377	1251	-.27	.06	.83	-3.81	.73	-4.04	.63	.59	72.3	67.3	PLR9
21	4408	1251	-.36	.06	.96	-.84	.86	-1.94	.60	.58	70.8	68.1	DYR1
10	4434	1251	-.45	.06	.87	-2.93	.82	-2.40	.61	.57	72.9	68.8	PLR8
1	4456	1251	-.52	.06	1.15	3.03	1.18	2.10	.55	.56	71.3	69.5	IWR2
4	4487	1251	-.62	.06	1.10	2.03	1.16	1.77	.54	.55	71.2	70.3	RCR1
12	4594	1251	-1.02	.06	.85	-2.99	.63	-4.08	.58	.51	79.9	73.9	PLR10
7	4599	1251	-1.04	.06	1.22	4.00	1.18	1.68	.47	.51	73.4	74.3	PLR2
2	4600	1251	-1.04	.06	1.06	1.08	1.07	.71	.51	.51	77.5	74.3	IWR3
3	4626	1251	-1.15	.07	1.11	1.97	1.05	.46	.50	.50	79.2	75.3	IWR4
8	4628	1251	-1.16	.07	1.01	.27	.84	-1.54	.51	.50	75.9	75.5	PLR3
6	4646	1251	-1.24	.07	1.17	3.08	1.22	1.83	.48	.49	79.7	76.4	RCR3
9	4688	1251	-1.43	.07	1.06	1.01	.87	-1.03	.47	.47	77.6	78.4	PLR4
MEAN	4255.7	1251.0	.00	.05	1.01	.2	.99	-.1			67.9	65.6	
P.S.D	259.6	.0	.75	.01	.13	2.9	.18	3.0			6.9	6.1	

Table 1 displays the distributions of infit MnSq and outfit MnSq which are the indicators of fitting/misfitting items. All items were free from misfitting infit MnSq and outfit MnSq values. The values of infit MnSq ranged from 0.77 (item SAR10) to 1.30 (item RCR2); the estimated outfit MnSq values were between 0.63 (item PLR10) and 1.42 (item RCR2). The results suggested that the 34 items were reasonably productive. This means to say that there were no serious threats of mismatch between respondent ability and item difficulty (i.e., a threat to validity) and unjustifiable responses by low ability respondents. Additionally, all items showed positive correlations as measured by the point measure correlation (PTMEA CORR). The PTMEA CORR ranged between .47 (item PLR2; PLR4) and .71 (item SRA9). The

retained items were aligned in the same direction on the *sejahtera* living construct.

Reliability and Separation of the Data

To further diagnose the model-data fit, the study evaluated the reliability and separation of person and items. In terms of reliability, the Rasch model produces two types of indexes, i.e., person reliability and item reliability. Person reliability is comparable to the traditional internal consistency reliability, i.e., the Cronbach’s alpha. It is based on the locations of the respondents along the measurement scale. Item reliability, on the other hand, refers to the adequacy of the number of items included in the analysis. In the present study, the reliability threshold was set at .75 (McCreary et al., 2013).

Person separation is the chance to replicate the person-ability classification using responses from the same sample of people to a different set of items measuring a similar construct. Low item separation (< 3) normally means that the sample is not large enough to confirm the difficulty hierarchy of the items. Meanwhile, low person separation (< 2) implies that the instrument may not be sensitive enough to differentiate between respondents of high and low abilities; hence, additional items are required to address the issue.

Table 2: Results of Person and Item Reliability and Separation Index

PERSON	1251	INPUT	1251	MEASURED		INFIT		OUTFIT	
	TOTAL	COUNT	MEASURE	REALSE	IMNSQ	ZSTD	OMNSQ	ZSTD	
MEAN	115.7	34.0	2.57	.50	1.02	-.1	.99	-.2	
P.SD	16.7	.0	1.95	.42	.49	1.8	.57	1.8	
REAL RMSE	.65	TRUE SD	1.84	SEPARATION	2.82	PERSON RELIABILITY	.89		

ITEM	34	INPUT	34	MEASURED		INFIT		OUTFIT	
	TOTAL	COUNT	MEASURE	REALSE	IMNSQ	ZSTD	OMNSQ	ZSTD	
MEAN	4255.7	1251.0	.00	.06	1.01	.2	.99	-.1	
P.SD	259.6	.0	.75	.01	.13	2.9	.18	3.0	
REAL RMSE	.06	TRUE SD	.74	SEPARATION	13.23	ITEM RELIABILITY	.99		

The results of the Rasch analysis showed that the person reliability index, which represents the reproducibility of person order, was at .89. It means that similar ordering of the respondent ability is reproducible if they were to answer another questionnaire which measures a similar construct. The person separation index was 2.8, which exceeded the cutscore of 2.0. The questionnaire could effectively discriminate respondents with different levels of ability to endorse.

The item reliability index, which represents the replicability of the hierarchy of item location, was .99. This statistic suggests an almost perfect reproduction of item difficulty hierarchy could be observed if the *sejahtera* living questionnaire is answered by another group of people. At 13.2, the item separation index was relatively large. The questionnaire was clearly able to discriminate the difficulty levels among items.

Category Functioning

All items in the *sejahtera* living questionnaire used ordinal categories of responses. Thus, it is necessary to examine how well the response options were used by the sample, the results of which would indicate whether the four-point Likert-scale was suitable. To evaluate the functioning of the 4-point response category, we assessed the following: (1) the frequency of observation in each category (i.e., ≥ 10 shows regularity of the response distributions), (2) the progression of average logit score in a linear manner, (3) the mean square residual of outfit statistics (< 2.0), and (4) the thresholds between every response category and its subsequent category, which should be ordered in increasing value.

The *sejahtera* living questionnaire adopted four response options, ranging from category “1” (Never/Rarely) to category “4” (Always) to be checked by the respondents. To examine the reasonableness of using the 4-point Likert-scale data, the study examined the functioning of the response category. Table 3 summarises the results of the response category functioning.

Table 3: Summary Statistics of Category Functioning

CATEGORY LABEL	SCORE	OBSERVED COUNT	OBSVD %	SAMPLE AVRGE	INFIT EXPECT	OUTFIT MNSQ	ANDRICH MNSQ	CATEGORY THRESHOLD	CATEGORY MEASURE
1	1	987	2	-.62	-.85	1.20	1.33	NONE	(-2.94)
2	2	4273	10	.37	.35	1.06	1.24	-1.69	-1.02
3	3	13934	33	1.47	1.54	.90	.80	-.26	.92
4	4	23340	55	3.26	3.23	.99	.99	1.95	(3.13)

The results showed that the number of observations for category “1” was 987, and it increased to more than 23,340 observations in category “4.” The average measures increased with the category scale, suggesting that the rating scale behaved appropriately. The outfit

MnSq of the five categories ranged from 0.99 to 1.33, meaning that the thresholds between the categories were ordered properly. The Rasch-Andrich thresholds matched the ordering of the response categories as they increased monotonically from -2.94 (category 1) to 3.13 (Category 4).

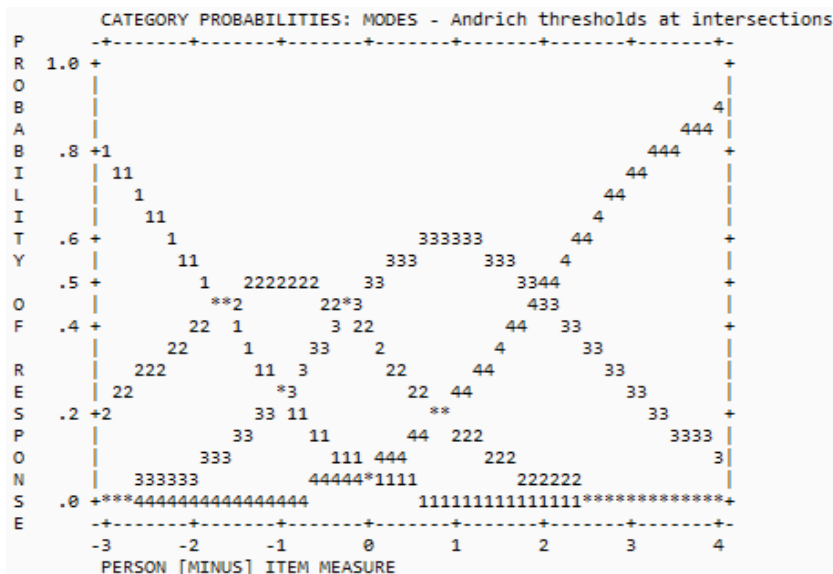


Figure 1: Rasch Model Category Probability Curves of *Sejahtera* Living Data

Figure 1 displays the Rasch Category Probability Curves extracted from the data analysis which supported the usefulness of the 4-point rating scale. There was no significant issue of overlapping categories or categories which are too far apart from each other. The 4-point *Sejahtera* Living rating scale allowed enough information for the respondents to discriminate among response categories. The response categories also captured a sufficient range of the *sejahtera* living concept.

Dimensionality

Rasch analysis rests on the assumption that there is only one underlying construct measured by the set of items in the questionnaire. In short, it assumes that the questionnaire measures only one factor—which, in this context, was the idea of *sejahtera* living—accounting for the variability of responses across items. To evaluate the tenability of the unidimensional assumption, the study examined Principal Component

Analysis (PCA) of the residuals. The PCA of the standardised residuals determined if subdimensions existed among the items. To support the tenability of a unidimensional measure, the variance explained by the PCA should be at least 40% (Linacre, 2017). On the other hand, the variance explained by the first principal component of the residuals should not be more than 15%.

The PCA residuals showed that the Rasch dimension explained 47.9% of the variance in the data, which exceeded the 40% benchmark (Linacre, 2017). The largest secondary dimension, “the first contrast in the residuals” with an eigenvalue of 3.1 explained merely 4.8% of the variance. The PCA of the residuals was checked against the widely used benchmarks and supported the unidimensional assumption of the instrument.

The variance explained by the items (i.e., 19.8%) was about four times the variance explained by the first contrast. The eigenvalue of the first contrast was 3.1, with a strength of about 3 items. Figure 2 displays the results of the un-rotated principal component analysis of the standardised residuals. The letters “A, B, C, ...” and “a, b, c,” refer to items with the most opposed loadings.

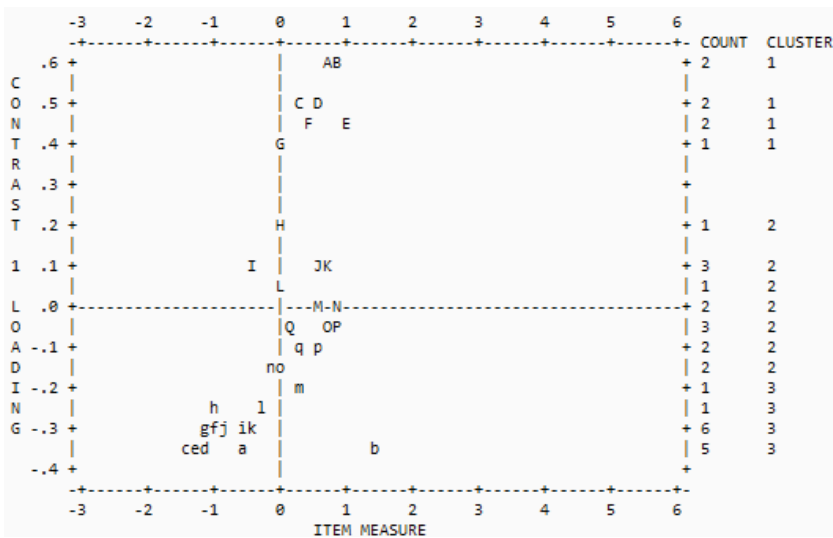


Figure 2: Plot of the Standardised Residual Contrast 1

The results (Figure 2) indicated the likelihood of a secondary component with three *sejahtera* living items. However, these items (i.e., A, B, and C) represent preservation of intellect, one of the five strands of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. The three opposing items (a, b, and c), on the other hand, were related to the preservation of religion and life, which happened to be another essential aspect of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. These items were also part of the “*sejahtera* living” construct. Also, the values of the infit MnSq and outfit MnSq statistics of these items were within the range of fitting unidimensional items. Therefore, the study decided not to consider the presence of another dimension.

The assessment of item dependency found no serious violations of the LID (local item dependency) assumption. The highest positive residual correlation was .57, indicating the absence of local item dependency (LID) between pairs of items. The 34 items shared less than one half of their “random” variance, suggesting that all the items were important for the unidimensional measure.

Construct Validity of the *Sejahtera* Living Inventory

Thus far, the evidence for the construct validity of the *sejahtera* living concept was amply demonstrated. Specifically, all point measure correlations were positive with the minimum value of .49. The estimated item reliability was .99, while the item separation index was 13.2. With this, the results supported the reasonableness of the unidimensional assumption and the assumption that the items were independent.



Figure 3: Person-Item Map of Sejahtera Living Data

In addition, the Rasch analysis generated a map (i.e., the Wright map) to facilitate an efficient assessment of construct validity. The Wright map (Figure 3) displays the estimates of item difficulties and respondent ability to endorse the items along a common continuum. The continuum scales a gradual change in the items' degree of difficulty and the ability of the respondents to endorse them. It expedites visual comparisons of the Rasch's predicted ordering of item difficulty against the actual order of item difficulty in a data set. It also discloses the alignment between the Rasch model and the observed data alignment, hence providing evidence of construct validity (Boone et al., 2014).

Figure 3 depicts the hypothetical unidimensional *sejahtera* living measure that the scale aimed to measure with its 34 items. The item at the top of the line (i.e., item RCR2 which was phrased as “I strive to

perform supererogatory rituals even when I am busy”) was expected to be the least endorsable to the sample. As expected, it was a difficult-to-endorse item. Down the line, the items became easier for the respondents to endorse, with the easiest item being “I make sure my surroundings are safe” (PLR4). The inspection of the Wright map suggested that the hierarchy of the estimated item difficulty matched its theoretical ordering, the summary of the difficulty of the items are similarly summarised in Table 1. Moreover, the map showed the absence of huge gaps between the items, indicating that the construct was not underrepresented. The results, thereby, offer additional evidence supporting the construct validity of *sejahtera* living.

It is of our interest to note that eight items were located at and beyond +2 SD from the mean. These are the items which were difficult to endorse. Of these, 50% of the items were associated with the meaning of preservation of intellect, namely “I examine newly learned ideas from the perspective of Islam” (SAR2); “I am satisfied with my achievement in my studies/work” (SAR3); “I do the right things in my life” (SAR9); and “I am able to satisfy my spiritual needs” (SAR10). The results suggested the sample performed poorly in those matters related to the preservation of intellect. On the other hand, seven items were located beyond -2 SD. These are the easy-to-endorse items, which included four statements on the preservation of *sejahtera* life. The items were, “I avoid harmful food or drink” (PLR2); “I adhere to safety procedures” (PLR3); “I make sure that my surroundings are safe” (PLR4); and “I dedicate my life to worldly success and the hereafter” (PLR10).

Estimates of Index Scores

The Rasch analysis estimated the respondents’ logits score, which exhibited additive properties. Chien et al. (2008) argue that Rasch modeling “transforms ordinal scores into the logit scale ...” (p.418) that justifies the construction of linear measures. The results of data from the sample of 1,057 respondents in this study yielded logit interval scores ranging from -2.80 to 6.97, with a mean logit score of 2.7 and a standard deviation of 1.95. The scores were then extrapolated to be positively distributed to ease their interpretations. Our eyeball inspection found that the person scores were normally distributed, and skewness and kurtosis statistics were estimated at |1.0| (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

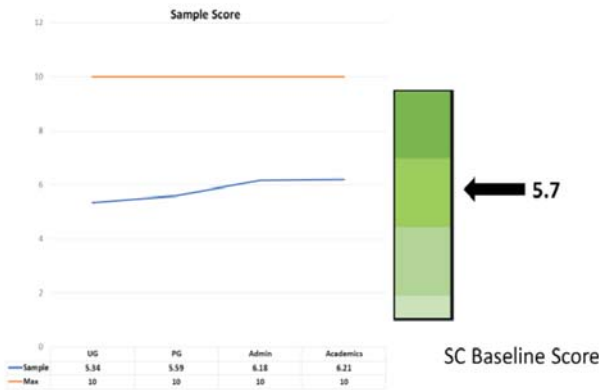


Figure 4: Sejahtera Living Index Scores

Figure 4 illustrates the *sejahtera* living index score of the sample. The *sejahtera* living index may yield a score that ranges from a low of 0 to a high of 10. The distributional analysis showed that the mean score of IIUM students and staff was 5.7, with a standard deviation of 1.95. This may be taken to mean that the level of *sejahtera* living among the sample was slightly above average. The analysis also revealed that *sejahtera* living was systematically associated with sample type, where lecturers were found to be more inclined toward positively endorsing items suggesting higher levels of *sejahtera* living (Index Score = 6.21, SD = 1.89), while the administrative personnel, postgraduate students, and undergraduate students reported lower *sejahtera* living scores, at 6.18 (SD = 1.94), 5.59 (SD = 1.84), and 5.34 (1.93), respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study’s major purpose was to examine the validity of the developed questionnaire, that is whether IIUM students and staff’s responses to a locally developed questionnaire on *sejahtera* living constituted a meaningful and interpretable measure of the construct. The results of the Rasch analysis supported the validity of the *sejahtera* living construct. The findings of the study showed that the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, reliability of the collected data, response category functioning, dimensionality of the data, and construct validity of the measurement supported the validity of the measurement. Thus, the 34-item *Sejahtera* Living Questionnaire (SLQ) is defensible and reasonably adequate to measure the “holistic and integrated wellbeing of Muslims”

(Hassan, 2020, p. 2). As expected, the validated unidimensional *sejahtera* living data manifested the five dimensions of the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, which are purported to comprise the preservations of faith, life, intellect, property, and progeny (Abdullah et al., 2020). This finding is consistent with the meaning of *sejahtera* living among Muslims (Mohamad et al., 2016).

The second purpose of the study was to measure and document the baseline index score of *sejahtera* living among the study's participants. Since the Rasch model requirement of unidimensional assumption was supported, the extracted logit interval scores were used to construct linear measures from the counts of ordinal data (Chien et al., 2008) to compute the index score of *sejahtera* living. The baseline index score of the construct was found to be 5.7. In lieu of the commonly used summated scores, the *sejahtera* living index is based on the unique properties of Rasch measurement, namely specific objectivity, invariance, and sample independence (Chien et al., 2008).

Additionally, the scores were useful to compare differences in the levels of *sejahtera* living across groups of people and to track changes of *sejahtera* living across groups of Muslims that occur over time. The results of group comparisons suggested that the academic staff outperformed the non-academic staff and students in *sejahtera* living. On the other hand, the undergraduate students had the lowest index on the *sejahtera* living continuum/measure. It should be noted that the study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, at which time most students, unlike the staff, were lock-downed on campus. This could be one reason underlying the differential effect of sample type on the *sejahtera* living reports discovered in the study.

The Rasch analysis also revealed a performance disparity across the *sejahtera* living items. Such a finding can be used to galvanise intervention programs to sustain and improve the well-being and "*sejahteranes*" of university staff and students. For example, of the 34 indicators of *sejahtera* living, four conceptually related items were difficult for the sample to endorse. The relatively more difficult items were the cognitive-attitudinal items that belong to the preservation and promotion of intellect strand of the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*. It was discovered that the respondents were not doing well in the preservation of intellect. Therefore, this aspect of the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* should be

improved through training, curriculum implementation, co-curricular activities, and faculty's instructional practices.

Despite its contributions, the study was not without limitations. The results of the Rasch model, in particular the Wright map, have triggered some red flags. Evidently, the targeting between the items and sample (i.e., the degree to which the item difficulty range matched the sample ability range) was far from perfect. A large number of the respondents were able to endorse most of the items, which were located within the *darūriyyāt* category, that is, the lowest level in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* hierarchy. Hence, future studies should address this concern by including more items on preservation of life which are expected to perform at the *hājiyyāt* dan *taḥsīniyyāt* level.

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Investigating Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī’s Methodology in the Study of Christianity through Selected Textual Analysis from His *Christian Ethics*

Fatmir Shehu*

Abstract: This article seeks to investigate the methodology of Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, a contemporary Muslim scholar recognised as an authority on Islam and comparative religion, in the study of Christianity based on his masterpiece “Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of its Dominant Ideas.” The goal of this article is to study al-Fārūqī’s genuine and comprehensive work through which he presents a new approach toward the understanding of Christianity, highlighting its ethical aspect. Its significance lies in defining the value of the methodology he used in the study of Christian dogma and ethics. This article uses historical, descriptive, and interpretative analytical methods throughout the entire work. This study discusses: (1) al-Fārūqī’s short biography; (2) al-Fārūqī’s work on Christianity; and (3) the interpretive analysis of al-Fārūqī’s methodology in the light of selected texts from his work on “Christian Ethics.” The outcomes of this research provide new insights into the existing body of knowledge concerning Muslims’ experience in the study of other religions, which is very advantageous for contemporary scholars of comparative religion.

Key Terms: Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, Christian Ethics, the objective-analytical-comparative methodology, Comparative Religion, inter-religious dialogue.

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Mengkaji Metodologi *Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī* dalam Kajian Agama Kristian Melalui Analisis Teks Terpilih Daripada Etika Kristiannya

Abstrak: Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji metodologi *Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī*, seorang sarjana Islam kontemporer yang pakar dalam perbahasan Islam dan perbandingan agama, dalam kajian Agama Kristian, berdasarkan karya agung beliau “Etika Kristian: Analisis Sejarah dan Sistematis Tentang Idea Dominannya.” Tujuan makalah ini adalah untuk mengkaji karya tulen dan komprehensif *al-Fārūqī* yang mana beliau membentangkan pendekatan baharu ke arah pemahaman agama Kristian yang menekankan aspek etikanya. Kepentingannya terletak pada pentakrifan nilai metodologi yang beliau gunakan dalam kajian dogma dan etika Kristian. Makalah ini menggunakan kaedah analisis sejarah, deskriptif dan interpretatif, untuk keseluruhan kajian. Kajian ini membincangkan: (1) biografi ringkas *al-Fārūqī*; (2) karya *al-Fārūqī* mengenai agama Kristian; dan (3) analisis tafsiran metodologi *al-Fārūqī* berdasarkan teks terpilih daripada karya beliau “Etika Kristian”. Hasil kajian ini memberikan pandangan baharu dalam pengetahuan sedia ada mengenai pengalaman Muslim dalam kajian agama lain, yang mana sangat bermanfaat bagi sarjana perbandingan agama kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī*, Etika Kristian, Metodologi Objektif-analitik-perbandingan, Perbandingan Agama, Dialog Antara Agama.

Introduction

The history of inter-religious relationships between adherents of different religious communities exhibits an experience of both hostile and friendly natures. The former has occurred because of ignorance, misinterpretation, and vilification of each one's religious teachings. The latter has been initiated by the learned representatives from different religious communities, who engaged themselves in the study of the teachings of religions with the intention of providing writings as proper references for the adherents of world religions. Thus, a proper understanding of one's own religion and the sincere intention to study the religions of others have allowed people to co-exist peacefully in a society characterised by the diversity of religions. Learning about each other's religion and its main tenets enables its followers to construct an amicable environment in their community. When the adherents of each religion obtain accurate knowledge about the teachings of their own religion and the religions of others, friendship can be fostered. Religion

is seen as a comprehensive way of life and a divine dictum, on which their entire activities are dictated and accounted for. An appropriate exploration of each one's religion keeps its followers away from conflicts and brings them to a friendly engagement, dialogue, and better understanding. In the past, many intellectuals from different religions have shown great interest in the study of other religions and produced significant literature.

Muslim scholars were among the forerunners who made great contributions to the scholarship of comparative religion. They demonstrated their scholarly efforts toward this subject through various works produced during different historical periods. The Islamic sources, *al-Qur'ān* and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, have motivated and inspired these scholars to be mature in the selection and adoption of different methods in their writings about other religions in general, and Judaism and Christianity, in particular. It has been observed from the content of their works that the historical, descriptive, analytical, comparative, objective, critical, disputative, polemical, and refutative methods have been the most useful ones, with the purpose of easing the relationship between Muslims and the adherents of other religions. Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (?-861C.E.), Ibn Nadīm (935C.E.-990C.E.), al-Bīrūnī (973C.E.-1048C.E.), Ibn Ḥazm (994C.E.-1064C.E.), al-Shahristānī (1086C.E.-1153C.E.), Ibn Taymiyyah (1263C.E.-1328C.E.), Ibn Baṭūṭa (1304C.E.-1368C.E.), al-Fārūqī (1921C.E.-1986C.E.), Fattāḥ (1933C.E.-2007C.E.), and others, have made use of all these methods in their writings on other religions.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the methodology used by a great contemporary Muslim scholar and thinker of comparative religion, Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī (1921C.E.-1986 C.E.), in the study of Christianity emphasizing its fundamental ethical teachings. The subject of this research is significant as it attempts to perceive and analyse the methodology used by al-Fārūqī in the study of ethical principles of Christianity based on his writing "Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of its Dominant Ideas". The qualitative library-based methodology that includes the historical, descriptive, and interpretive analytical methods is used by the researcher in this study. The historical method deals with the exposition of historical data that are collected from various literature related to al-Fārūqī's life, his early

intellectual development concerning the field of comparative religion, and his administrative experience. The descriptive method is used to present historical facts and other related matters about the scholar. The interpretative analytical method is used to identify and analyse al-Fārūqī's methodology in the study of Christianity in the light of selected text extracted from his original work entitled "Christian Ethics."

Numerous works have been published, many of which highlight al-Fārūqī contributions to the study of Islam and other religions. Imtiyaz Yusuf presents a comprehensive study of the views and thoughts of al-Fārūqī. He collected al-Fārūqī's most significant scholarly comments and remarks about "Islam and its impact on different aspects of human life, thought and interreligious relations" (Yusuf, 2021, 2). Malik Badri introduces some of the psychological factors that greatly helped al-Fārūqī to shape his life, as well as transform him into a prominent Muslim thinker of contemporary times. Badri (2014) also discusses Al-Fārūqī's psychological situation, which helped him shift from Arabism to Islamism. Abdulkader Tayob asserts that al-Fārūqī contributed greatly to the study of other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. He engaged in living dialogue with the adherents of these religions. Also, he introduced new methodologies in the study of religion, which posed a great challenge to the existing approaches (Tayob, 2013, 230-250). Ilyas Ba-Yunus discusses al-Fārūqī's powerful views on the future directions of Islamisation of Knowledge. Al-Fārūqī's early intellectual growth and his activities in the USA and Canada are discussed in this paper (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 13). The information provided by the authors of all these works has contributed greatly to this research. However, al-Fārūqī's works on "Christian Ethics," has not been discussed.

Thus, the study of the content of al-Fārūqī's writing on "Christian Ethics," with a special focus on his methodology in the study of Christianity through interpretive analysis of selected texts, is necessary and timely. The focus of this study is on: (1) al-Fārūqī's brief chronology; (2) al-Fārūqī's work on Christianity; and (3) the interpretive analysis of al-Fārūqī's methodology in light of selected texts from his work on "Christian Ethics".

Al-Fārūqī's Short Biography

Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī,^{1**} who is known as al-Fārūqī was one of the great Muslim scholars of the 20th century with an Ummatic vision concerning the conditions of Muslims, as well as humanity. He was a renowned Palestinian-born contemporary Muslim thinker, philosopher, visionary, and authority in comparative religion. His scholarship covered the study of religion, Islamic thought, approaches to knowledge, history, culture, education, interreligious dialogue, aesthetics, ethics, politics, economics, and science. In addition, he was one of the founders of the concept of "Islamisation of Knowledge," through which he applied Islamic teachings showing their relevance to the contemporary age. This concept became the agent of change for Muslim intellectuals of the 20th century.

Al-Fārūqī's main concern was to establish educational centres and institutions, leading the way to the Islamisation of Knowledge project. His visionary approach towards the application of Islamisation was meant to: (1) reconstruct the existing human knowledge introduced by the human-cultural-based Western worldview; and (2) produce an intellectual generation for the Muslim world and humanity that could

1 ** He was born in Jaffa, Palestine on January 1, 1921. His father made two special supplications for him: (1) to become a great scholar, and (2) to die as a *shahīd* (martyr). Al-Fārūqī wandered by saying, "Now I am a scholar, but how can I die as a *shahīd* in the US?" Indeed, Allah (s.w.t.) accepted both of his father's supplications (Badri, 2014, 152). Finally, he met death as a martyr on Wednesday, 29 May 1986. Three different narratives are related to his death. *Firstly*, he and his wife were murdered in their home in Philadelphia on May 26, 1986, in circumstances that have never been resolved (IIIT, 2010, para. 1). *Secondly*, he died on May 27, 1986, and his death was an unexpected one. Both he and his wife Lamyā (Lois) al-Fārūqī were inhumanly murdered in their home on 18 Ramadan 1406/27 May 1986 (Yusuf, 2012, 22). *Finally*, he and his wife Lamyā (Lois) al-Fārūqī were brutally assassinated on May 28, 1986 (Naeem, 1986, 369-370). This shows that the date of his death is interpreted differently, and it requires appropriate data to verify its authenticity. According to the researcher's own inquiry, AP News has reported that "Isma'il Raji al Faruqi, 65, a professor of religion at Temple University, and his American-born pianist wife, Lois, 59, were found dead of multiple stab wounds in their home early Tuesday" (Linder, 1986, para. 2) This shows that the news about the death of al-Fārūqī and his wife have been announced on Wednesday, 29 May 1986, which is one day after his death.

respond to and overcome the challenges posed by empirical-scientific intellectualism, which separated between revelation and reason – religion and science. According to him, there is no separation between revelation and reason or theory and practice. Rather, there is a Unity of Truth presented by the Tawhīdic Worldview. Therefore, people should reflect this unity in all aspects of their life.

Al-Fārūqī's Intellectual Development

Al-Fārūqī received his early education from his father, ‘Abd al-Hūdā al-Fārūqī, who “was a judge (Qāḍī), well-versed in Islam as both a religion and a way of life” (Badri, 2014, 147). He learned al-Qur’ān and as-Sunnah at home from his father, as well as from the local Masjid near his home (Shafiq, 1994, 5-7). In 1926, he entered the French Dominican College des Frères (St. Joseph) and received his high school diploma in 1936 (Ali, 2014, 105). At the age of fifteen years old, he was fluent in both Arabic and French. Besides, in this college, he received his first exposure to Christianity. In 1937, he joined the College of Arts and Sciences at the American University in Beirut, where he studied English and continued thereafter completing a B.A. with a major in Philosophy (Fletcher, 2008, 16-20). In 1948, when Israel became an independent Jewish state, he and his family were forced to migrate and take refuge in Beirut (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 13).

Al-Fārūqī studied at the American University of Beirut for a short time and then joined Indiana University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences obtaining his M.A. in Philosophy in 1949. In March 1951, he was awarded a second M.A. in Philosophy from Harvard University’s Department of Philosophy. In September 1952, he obtained his doctorate from Indiana University’s Department of Philosophy with the thesis: “Justifying the Good: Metaphysics and Epistemology of Value” (IIT, 2018, xi-x). In 1954, he decided to leave the United States and go to Egypt, in order to immerse himself in the spirituality of Islam and study at al-Azhar, which was among the Islamic world’s earliest and most respected university. He stayed in Egypt until he completed his studies in 1958 (Badri, 2014, 150).

Between 1958 and 1961, he joined the Institute of Islamic Studies as a visiting professor of Islamic studies at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. During this time, he studied Christianity and Judaism at McGill’s Faculty of Divinity. From 1961 to 1963, he was invited to

work as a visiting professor at the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan. In 1964, he went back to the United States of America, where he was appointed as Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. In 1968, he moved to Philadelphia as a Professor of Islamic Studies to join the newly established Department of Religion at Temple University, where he continued until his death in 1986 (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 14; Yusuf, 2021, 3-5).

Al-Fārūqī's Leadership Experience

Al-Fārūqī started his leadership experience in 1942, when he was appointed as Assistant to the Registrar of Arab Cooperative Societies, under the British Mandate government in Jerusalem. Later in 1945, at twenty-four years of age, he was promoted to the post of district magistrate (hākīm) for the Galilee district (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 13). He was an activist who inspired many with his brilliant ideas and actions. His leadership attitude was shared with others in many places where he served as Professor at various universities in America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia. He successfully applied his visionary ideas in the establishment of Islamic studies programmes, recruiting and training Muslim students, organising Muslim professionals, as well as engaging in international ecumenical dialogue. He was the Founder and President of the Islamic Institute of Advanced Studies in Reston, Virginia, where a special programme in Islamic Studies was developed, to award Masters and Ph.D. Degrees. Al-Fārūqī was the Chairman of the Islamic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religions and the Vice-President of the Interfaith Colloquium (Naeem, 1986, 369).

In 1962, the Muslim Students Association was established, having strong chapters at Temple and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Al-Fārūqī became its advocate, who with his experience as a professor of philosophy and with his newly acquired commitment to Islam, contributed greatly to the Association's reform and change "from that of being rigidly conservative to an organisation with very knowledgeable and rational practitioners and advocates of Islam" (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 14). In 1976, he became the first president of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and contributed greatly to the shaping of its programme (Ba-Yunus, 1988, 15). He was the co-

founder of the International Institute for Islamic Thought in the United States in 1981. He regarded the political, economic, and religio-cultural malaise of the Muslim community as a product of the bifurcated state of education installed in the Muslim world resulting in a loss of identity and world vision (Esposito, 2003, 83). According to al-Fārūqī, the Islamisation process of modern human knowledge was the sole solution for changing the condition of Muslims all over the world.

Al-Fārūqī's Main Writings

Al-Fārūqī, an authority on Islam and comparative religion, has authored and edited about twenty-six (26) books and written more than one hundred (100) articles, published in different journals worldwide (Naeem, 1986, 369; Bibliography, n.d., para. all). Among his best-known writings are: *From Here We Start* (1953); *Our Beginning in Wisdom* (1953); *The Policy of Tomorrow* (1953); *ʿUrubah and Religion: An Analysis of the Dominant Ideas of Arabism and of Islam as Its Heights Moment of Consciousness*, (1962); *Uṣūl al-Sahyuniyah fī al-Dīn al-Yahūdī (The Zionist Foundations in the Religion of Judaism)* (1964); *History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim–Christian Dialogue* (1965); *Christian Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* (1967); *Al-Milal al-Muʿasirah fī al-Din al-Yahudi (Contemporary Sects in Judaism)* (1968); *The Great Asian Religions* (1969); *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (1975); *The Life of Muhammad* (1976); *Sources of Islamic Thought: Kitab al Tawhid* (1980); *Islam and Culture* (1980); *Islam and the Problem of Israel* (1980); *Social and Natural Sciences* (1981); *The Hijrah: The Necessity of Its Iqamat or Vergegenwartigung* (1981); *Essays in Islamic and Comparative Studies* (1982); *Islamic Thought and Culture* (1982); *Triologue of the Abrahamic Faiths* (1982); *Islamization of Knowledge* (1982); *Tawhid: Its Implications For Thought And Life* (1982); *Islam* (1985); *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (1986); and *Meta-Religion: Towards a Critical World Theology* (1986).

Al-Fārūqī presented his brilliant ideas and thoughts concerning the Muslim Ummah, the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), and humanity through the contents of the above-mentioned writings. His scholarship in comparative religion is presented in most of his writings. Above all, he was an active dialogist who engaged in intra-religious

dialogue with Muslims and inter-religious dialogue with the followers of other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. He introduced an ideal and relevant model for contemporary scholarship of comparative religion in two masterpieces.

Firstly, in his book “Christian Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas” (1967), al-Fārūqī presents his criticism of the Christian Doctrine of Man by examining Christian dogma and ethics. Al-Fārūqī sees the study of Christianity and its main teachings through the lens of Islamic methodology as necessary. Through this book, the close relationship between Muslims and Christians was initiated in the light of inter-religious dialogue. Therefore, he discusses the steps for the establishment of a proper methodology needed for the scholarship of comparative religion at the beginning of this book.

Secondly, his book “Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World (1975)” is an excellent historical narration of the most known religions, where facts on every religion are illustrated with colourful maps. This work presents a historical introduction about each religion in a very comprehensive manner including the historical development of each religion and its Prophet, founder, community, main teachings, rites, and rituals, as well as denominations. Indeed, it is a well-written masterpiece through which various religions are presented to contemporary students, scholars, intellectuals, and devotees of comparative religion scholarship. The main methodology used in this book is rigorous historical analysis as the historical data of religions are presented, and world religion maps are inserted to show the geographical location and the populations of the studied religions.

Al-Fārūqī's Methodology in the Study of Christian Dogma and Ethics:

Al-Fārūqī's “Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of its Dominant Ideas” is a genuine and comprehensive work, through which he presents a new approach to the understanding of Christian dogma and ethics. It presents the historical chronology of Christianity from its early historical development until contemporary times. In addition, it responds to the claims of contemporary great Christian theologians, who, according to al-Fārūqī, contributed to the corruption of the ethics of Jesus' Message. The work of “Christian Ethics” reveals al-Fārūqī's (1) proficiency in dealing with the Christian scripture and

other related authentic sources, and (2) attempt to establish a close relationship between Muslims and Christians. Hence, to understand al-Fārūqī's scholarship, it is crucial to discuss in this section, *firstly*, the content of his "Christian Ethics" and, *secondly*, the understanding of his methodology in the study of Christian dogma and ethics, which is divided into two parts: *the first part* describes the required steps for the development of a proper methodology in the study of religion, and *the second part* investigates his comprehensive objective-analytical-comparative methodology through an interpretative analysis method of selected texts from his work.

The Content of al-Fārūqī's Christian Ethics

Al-Fārūqī's masterpiece "Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas," was first published in 1967 by Montreal, McGill University Press. Nevertheless, the researcher uses the updated version of this book, which is published by A.S. Noordeen, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1420H./1999C.E. Its content is written within the length of two-hundred and fifty-six (256) pages including an introduction and two main parts, as well as appendices. Its subject of discussion is a high level of discourse due to the author's use of the analytical-critical methodology in explaining Christian Ethics as the main theme of his book.

Firstly, Introduction. al-Fārūqī starts his "Christian Ethics" with a long, detailed introduction that contains 22 pages. The content of his introduction deals with the subject of comparative religion (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 1-22), which is presented in the light of the following topics: (1) The need for disengagement, (2) The search for higher principles, (3) Five theoretical principles – internal coherence, external coherence, the principle of unity, coherence with reality, the principle of right purpose, (4) The need for principles of value, is illustrated with reference to Stephen Neill, Hendrik Kraemer, Albert Schweitzer, (5) Six principles of value, the first principle – only two orders of being, the actual and the ideal, the second principle – the two orders of being, the actual and the ideal, are mutually relevant, the third principle – the ideal is relevant to the actual as a command, the fourth principle – the actual being is in itself a value, the fifth principle – the actual is malleable, susceptible to influence and intervention, and, the sixth principle – the perfection of the world is specifically a human burden. He ends his introduction with

the aim of his study, where he discusses the Islamic ethos and the basis for dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Secondly, Part One: The Ethic of Jesus, is written in 87 pages and is divided into four main themes (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 23-109). First theme: the Jewish Background deals with two important issues concerning Jewish ethics and law. It is presented in light of the following topics, which are: (1) the Jewish Ethics, which contains the concept of a "race apart," Hebrew Scripture and the "race apart," and Apologies for "racial apartness;" (2) the Cult of Law, which discusses the return from Exile, rebuilding the Temple, rebuilding the Law, "Legalism" of the Pharisees, and the Pharisee-Sadducee conflict; and (3) ends with notes and references. Second theme: Jesus' Breakthrough covers issues related to (1) self-transformation, which is discussed based on the context of revelation, Jesus' indictment of legalism, the universality of the new "law," the priority of intentions, and the self before God; (2) the first Commandment, which includes its ethical aspect, its religious aspect, and the meaning of "firstness;" and (3) ends with notes and references. Third Theme: the New Ethics focuses on (1) Rejection of "Apartness," which discusses the Messiah of the Jews, and rejection of family ties; (2) the New Values, which are related to the political and the social aspects, "Love thy neighbour," the family, the law on divorce, Jesus on divorce, the family: parents and children, the personal, the love of God, the love of the Law, Jesus' teaching of the ethic, the Kingdom of God, the Jewish concept of the Kingdom, Jesus' concept of the Kingdom; (3) Christian legalism; and (4) ends with notes and references. Fourth Theme: Jesus and Islamic Mysticism discusses (1) The Sufi Parallel, which is understood in light of the disciplines of Sufism, love only God, the Sufi "path," Sufi "love" and the "first commandment," seeking "union" and "unity," explanations for the parallel, non-historical explanations for the parallel, a historical explanation; and (2) ends with notes and references.

Thirdly, Part Two: The Ethic of Christianity, is an important subject, which is discussed in 108 pages, emphasising three main themes that continue from part one (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 110-217). Fifth Theme: What is Man? covers one main issue related to (1) the image of God, which focuses on humanism: Hellenic Christianity, humanism rejected: Augustine, humanism rejected: the Reformation, modern

times: irrationalist confusion; and (2) ends with notes and references. Sixth Theme: *What Ought Man to Be?* is discussed in light of the first important subject in Christianity (1) Sin and Salvation, which emphasises the necessity of sin, the concept of the Fall, the Jewish background, the transvaluation of the Jewish idea of the fall, the concept of sin in the Gospel (in the teachings of Paul, in the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers, prior to the teaching of Augustine, in the teachings of Augustine, in the Reformation, in modern Christian thought), the concept of redemption, Christianity as the religion of redemption, the nature of Christian salvation; and (2) ends with notes and references. Seventh Theme: *What Ought Man to Be?* is analysed in relation to the second important subject in Christianity (1) Church and Society, which focuses on societism and personalism, the personalist ethic, the societist ethic, the quest for a societist ethic, the Kingdom of God is the Church, not society, the Church as the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God is both Church and society, the relativism of William Temple, Karl Barth: the denial of societism, the Kingdom of God is of this world, the call to worldliness, the a-societism of Reinhold Niebuhr; (2) conclusion; and (3) ends with notes and references.

Fourthly, Epilogue and Indexes: in the last part of his book, al-Fārūqī presents in a unique way an epilogue in four pages, which portrays the outcome of his study, as well as significant suggestions directed especially to Christians (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 218-221). According to al-Fārūqī, Christianity needs to be reformed for the second time, leading the Christians beyond the traditional doctrines to Jesus himself as the voice of the Holy and exemplar of the moral law. Also, he calls the Christians to engage in dialogue with Muslims. Then, Al-Fārūqī presents three types of indexes in 22 pages, which are: (1) Index of Biblical Quotations, i.e., the Old Testament and the New Testament; (2) Index of Subjects; and (3) Index of Authors and Titles (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 222-243).

Finally, Brief Summary: al-Fārūqī's "Christian Ethics" presents systematically and historically the dominant ideas of Christian ethics and especially ethical teachings of Jesus as Jewish belief. Al-Fārūqī argues that the existing Christianity does not follow what Jesus believed and taught and therefore, a reformation is required. In addition, he affirms that the ethics of Jesus and Islamic teachings are considered

as a parallel response to the commandment to love only One God. Indeed, al-Fārūqī's "Christian Ethics" distinguishes clearly between the different ethical systems proposed by Christians, compared to the original teachings of Jesus (p.b.u.h.) and provides the basis for inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

Exploring al-Fārūqī's Methodology

The knowledge of the Western intellectual tradition and the Islamic Heritage that al-Fārūqī was equipped with made him a living encyclopaedia (Al 'Alwani, 1994, ix). Al-Fārūqī applied a methodology ruled by objectivity, fairness, justice, as well as critical analysis in all his works. His idea was to convey the Truth according to Dīn al-Fiṭrah, that is al-Islām. Therefore, his whole life was dedicated to presenting al-Islām to both the Muslim World and the Western World by using the Islamic methodology extracted from al-Qur'ān and as-Sunnah, through which he responded to contemporary scientific methodology.

Al-Fārūqī clarifies his methodology in the study of religion by arguing that the researcher should understand the purpose of "higher principles," through which he/she is able to "compare and evaluate the meanings – the cultural patterns, the moral values, the ethical doctrines – of the religion" (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 3) he/she is studying. In the explanation of these principles, he mentions that:

the "facts" of religion are not cold but, by their nature, affecting – they touch us, get hold of us, move us to do this or that. When we strive to present them systematically and critically, we do not "capture" them for cold storage in a professorial mind or a university library or museum; rather, we strive to present their full force and appeal, their authority and power to move. That cannot be done without evaluation of the meanings which, through "disengagement," we come to understand (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 3).

It can be observed from the above-mentioned statement that the researcher's disengagement enables him/her to understand the meanings provided by the studied religion(s), which then require an evaluation through which the judgment towards these meanings is governed. Therefore, the researcher should use in the study of religion two kinds of principles, the theoretical principles and the principles of value. The former, known as the theoretical principles, became al-Fārūqī's

methodology of comparative religious understanding, which he divided into five principles. The latter, known as the principles of value, became al-Fārūqī's methodology of comparative religious evaluation, which he divided into six principles.

Al-Fārūqī's "Christian Ethics" uses the objective-analytical-comparative methodology in the study of Christianity. His methodology is understood from the lengthy discussion provided in the introduction of his book, where he puts forward various arguments concerning his views about the use of appropriate methodology in the study of religion, as it is viewed and practiced by its adherents. The notions of "Disengagement," "Theoretical Principles," "Evaluative Principles," and "Inter-religious Dialogue" are the fundamental elements that shaped his methodology in the study of religion or culture. To understand al-Fārūqī's methodology used in the study of Christianity's ethical doctrines and dogma, this section is divided into two parts: the first part describes the required steps for the development of a proper methodology used in the study of religion, and the second part investigates his comprehensive objective-analytical-comparative methodology through an interpretative analysis method of selected text from his work.

The Required Steps to Develop a Proper Methodology for the Study of Religion:

Al-Fārūqī asserts in the introduction of his "Christian Ethics" that to achieve objectivity in the study of a particular religion, the researcher should understand and work on his subject of research according to the following steps:

First Step: the researcher should be aware of the "Disengagement" method before he undertakes a study on any subject and especially religion, which signifies the need to abstain himself/herself "from every kind of value-judgment, to be "present" to the phenomenon in question purely as an impartial observer, unconcerned with questions of truth and falsehood" (Sharpe, 1986, 224). For al-Fārūqī, religion is not made up of "scientific facts" that can be examined objectively in the way geological or biological samples are examined. Rather, religion encompasses all the internal and external principles of people's lives and is not limited to the eternal aspects, such as rites, rituals, institutions, and doctrines, which are not the real substance of religion that is made up of life experiences (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 1). In addition, people's disengagement

from their own way of judgment as viewed by their religion allows them to be sympathetic, to learn, to understand (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 2) religion(s) as is understood and experienced by its adherents. This method is applied based on being aware of the subject of study and dealing with it objectively. It is required from the researcher “to remain free to move back from (well as into) the beliefs, values and meanings of the religion and culture” (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 3) he/she is studying. The “Disengagement” approach provides the platform for the researcher to step out of his own presuppositions and values enabling him/her to step into the religion he/she wishes to study. The imagination allows the researcher’s understanding to be touched and informed by “life-facts” that present the true essence of the religion studied. The longer the researcher’s effort of imagination is, the deeper his/her experience of the other religion is, as well as the deeper and more reliable his/her insights into it are (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 1). In this sense, the “Disengagement” approach neither promotes the unity of religion nor does it allow the rejection of one’s own religion. Rather, it provides the best platform to study the religion of others with objectivity and professionalism. The appropriate implementation of this methodology expects the researcher to know the “higher principles,” which are of two types: the “principles of theory” and the “principles of value.” Al-Fārūqī has applied these principles in his book on Christian Ethics.

Second Step: the researcher should understand the purpose of “the theoretical principles,” known as al-Fārūqī’s methodology of comparative religious understanding, which he divided into five principles. Firstly, the principle of internal coherence or noncontradiction enables the researcher to understand the fact that “the elements of the system may not contradict each other” (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 4). If in a particular religion, contradictory elements are found, then the researcher has to understand the contradiction and make it clear whether it confirms to the historical facts or not, i.e., God commands people to do something and at the same time commands them to do the opposite. This statement is incoherent to this principle, as it is contradictory even if it is a religious paradox or mystery. Secondly, the principle of external coherence is a “technical way of saying that a statement (of belief or doctrine in the case of religion) must make sense in light of what we already know” (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 6). This means that if the researcher discovers new facts in relation to the religion he/she is studying, it is necessary for

him/her to refer to the existing known source of knowledge concerning that religion, i.e., Torah (Judaism), Bible (Christianity), and al-Qur'ān (Islam). Besides, Revelation is the revealed Word of God, which is coherent with human knowledge in general and the situation of the people it was revealed to during a historical time, event, or situation. So, Revelation is not relative to the human situation as claimed by the evolutionists. Rather, it is relational to the human situation. Thirdly, the principle of unity denotes that God is the Only Source (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 6) of all Revelations through which the Truth is revealed by Him to many nations at different times. Therefore, the Revealed Truth, which is shared by different religious communities especially Muslims, Jews, and Christians should be one in its purpose. The commandments people get from the same God cannot contradict each other, i.e., One and the same God does not command one group of people to worship Him and another one to associate partners with Him or ignore Him at all. This will be incoherent with His Being as One Single God. Fourthly, the principle of coherence with reality signifies that the Truth(s) claimed by any religion, or a group of people should not conflict with the reality experienced or known by people outside of those truths (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 7). Indeed, the reality reveals the true nature of the Truth if it is hidden, i.e., if someone claims that he obeys God to please others and in his private life he does the opposite, then sooner or later the reality will reveal his hypocrisy. In other words, the inner aspect of the Truth should be similar to its outer aspect. Fifthly, the principle of right purpose seems to be derived from the principle of non-contradiction (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 7). It denotes that the Revealed Truth, which is from God, should be always related to what is right, good, just, and beneficial for the people. When a person claims to believe in al-Qur'ān as the Revealed Word of Allah, then he/she should serve the purpose of al-Qur'ān. Otherwise, his claim contradicts its very purpose, which is believing in al-Qur'ān as the Word of Allah. When the researcher understands the first group of the higher principles, then he/she should not violate the second group of these principles, through which the evaluation does take place.

Third Step: the researcher should understand the purpose of “the principles of value” that became al-Fārūqī’s methodology of comparative religious evaluation, which he divided into six principles. Firstly, the principle of two realms of being, the actual and the ideal (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 14), which are very different beings. In addition, the

actual of something ought to be “fact,” and the ideal of something ought to be “value” put upon it. Secondly, the principle of the two orders of being, the actual and the ideal, are mutually relevant, which denotes the close relationship between the two. The actual without the ideal does not make any sense as the ideal stands as the ground of the actual. Equally, the ideal realm could not be as such if it does not bring any change to the actual, i.e., no point in having the value “mercy” if it can never be implemented in the actual world. Thirdly, the principle of the ideal is relevant to the actual as a command, which means that God’s commands are ideals needed by man to regulate his actual life regardless of whether he realises them as such or not. Fourthly, the principle of actual being is itself a value, which denotes that the realm of actual being does receive and embody values because of its nature as being created as good. The actual is created by God for a purpose, and therefore, Man is not free to condemn the creation of God by looking for an easy way out of it, especially during times of trials. Fifthly, the principle of the actual is malleable and susceptible to influence and intervention, which means that the malleability of the actual is an affirmation that God’s commands can easily be fulfilled by people, as being morally good does not require any extraordinary efforts. Sixthly, the principle of the perfection of the actual is a specifically human burden, which denotes that Allah has created man as His Khalīfah (vicegerent) with great responsibility that is considered as a heavy burden on him. Man, a sound moral being, should obey Allah’s commands. Nevertheless, man as a responsible being is allowed by Allah to be free in his choice by accepting or rejecting what Allah commands. Besides, man, who is the only moral agent created by Allah, is subjected to being involved in the cosmos and changing it to a better position. If man follows Allah’s commands, his burden will become light.

Last Step: the researcher should engage in inter-religious dialogue with the members of the religion he/she is studying. A researcher in the study of religion(s), after he/she has understood the wisdom behind “Disengagement,” “the Theoretical Principles,” and “the principles of Value,” he/she needs to engage in “Inter-religious Dialogue”, which is “the only attitude that is genuinely compatible with human brotherhood in practice” (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 21). Al-Fārūqī addresses the Christians

by questioning them, “Are they willing to join Muslims in an effort to found human brotherhood under the moral law?” (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 21) This means al-Fārūqī invites Christians to engage with Muslims in inter-religious dialogue, which is “the only kind of inter-human relationship” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 9) that helps them to remove all barriers and discipline their consciousness. Therefore, the researcher who intends to engage in inter-religious dialogue with others, and especially Christians, must have “sincerity of intention” and “respect for other religions.” Such an attitude enables him to have a better understanding of the religions he/she is studying. Al-Fārūqī’s approach to interreligious dialogue as presented in the study of Christianity signifies his sincere intention, which is to understand this religion better through objectivity where misunderstandings and prejudices are avoided and better relations with others, especially with Jews and Christians, are promoted and established. It can be argued that the current condition of Muslims can be changed only if they reform and revive their understanding of Islamic tenets in both theory and practice, as well as understand and accept others as they are in their true sense, and not as they want them to be (Shehu, 2018, 79-80). Inter-religious dialogue plays a great role in establishing peaceful co-existence and interrelationships between Muslims and other religious communities that live in a society characterized by diversity.

Comprehending al-Fārūqī’s Methodology through Interpretative Analysis of Selected Texts

Al-Fārūqī’s objective-analytical-comparative methodology in the study of Christian dogma and ethics, as addressed in his book, is discussed in this section through the interpretative analysis of a particular selected text. Firstly, selected cited texts from his “Christian Ethics” are provided, and then they are studied with an interpretative analytical methodology. Al-Fārūqī says in his “Christian Ethics”:

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, has two aspects: one as redeemer, saviour; the other as the “Word,” co-eternal with God, the Creator. Through the Word, creation comes to be. This is surely valid. God is, and an aspect of His nature is the all-creative Word—the one aspect of God, His creation, which is an object of direct human knowledge (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 139).

For God to be Christ in eternity means that a plan has existed in eternity in which God, as Jesus, shall be baptised, anointed, crucified, and resurrected. This is why the Christian feels that what came to pass in the Christ-event was the revelation of divine nature. It was not God merely commanding something to be done; nor, as in Islam, communicating His Will to man, but revealing the divine nature itself as it is relevant for man. Islam too, one may argue, regards the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad as the most important event in history, and claims that it is eternal. Nonetheless, it should be noted at once that Islam entertains no illusions about an eternity of the Prophet's person (Al-Faruqi, 1999, 160).

The above-mentioned cited texts show how al-Fārūqī uses an objective-analytical-comparative methodology, which is a combination of three methods, namely, the objective method, the analytical method, and the comparative method. The interpretative analysis of these methods is as follows:

The Objective Method

The objective method denotes a fair and just approach used in the study of religion. It helps researchers to investigate the teachings of other religions or belief systems and present the subject of their study as it is without changing any information even if they disagree with it. If a Muslim scholar would like to undertake a study on Judaism, he must be fair with the subject of his research. He must look at Judaism the way it is described and lived by its adherents and avoid any attempt of looking at Judaism from his own perspective as a Muslim. Hence, being objective in the study of a particular religion and its teachings means accepting the facts as they are and not changing them based on the researcher's religious worldview.

Al-Fārūqī uses the objective method in the above-mentioned statement with the purpose of providing accurate information about what is said and believed by the Christians without any alteration. In the first part of the cited text, it is observed that al-Fārūqī deals with a very significant issue in Christianity. Firstly, he describes Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity as believed and understood by Christians, who "has two aspects: one as redeemer, saviour; the other as the "Word," co-eternal with God, the Creator" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 139). This shows the true facts about the person of Jesus, where his position

is described by al-Fārūqī as it is mentioned in the Christian sources without any changes. Secondly, he avoids using his own perspective, i.e., the Islamic perspective, while presenting the facts about the person of Jesus Christ. He tries to look at them as they are presented by the Christians by being neutral and just. Thirdly, he presents a fair judgment, in his saying “Through the Word, creation comes to be. This is surely valid” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 139). His objectivity towards Christians’ belief that the creation came to be through the Word is shown without any prejudice.

Al-Fārūqī plays the role of the narrator, where he presents the information about the subject that he studies by referring to authentic sources, i.e., the Bible, books, and articles. Besides, he supports his judgment by other means, such as observation, readings, communication, interaction, teachings, dialoguing, etc., which he uses to interpret the way how Christians translate this belief into practices. In addition, his long experience in dealing with Christians and Christianity enables him to be very objective in his methodology.

The Analytical Method

The analytical method is used to break a problem down into the elements necessary to solve it or determine the probability of solving a problem. An analytical method is the most appropriate approach used to deal with social-oriented problems as they do not yield to any other method. Thus, the analytical method is used by the classical and modern scholars in their analysis of some problems, situations, or facts. Religious scholars have used this method to analyse the data in the form of writing based on historical facts where the problem is identified and then, is solved properly by using a sound approach and providing proper evidence.

Al-Fārūqī uses this method to explain the teachings of Christianity in a detailed form in order to present them to the reader in a simplified manner. He analyses in the second part of the first statement, the data related to the concept of God in Christianity, where he states that “God is, and an aspect of His nature is the all-creative Word—the one aspect of God, His creation, which is an object of direct human knowledge” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 139). In this statement, he deals with the fact about “God is” and supports it through a sound analysis by emphasising the nature of God. According to him, the all-creative Word is a very important aspect

of God's nature through which the creation process did take place. He does not bring forward this kind of analysis in vain. Rather, he responds to the Christian teaching that Jesus Christ has one aspect, the Word, which is co-eternal with God. So, the Word is the shared aspect between God and Jesus Christ, which makes Jesus Christ share with God in the process of creation through the Word. Besides, Jesus Christ in being co-eternal with God becomes Divine, i.e., God. In addition, God's nature as the Creator, who causes the whole creation to be, is a very fundamental subject for human knowledge as it enables them to answer worldview questions, like – who is the Creator? or who created me? or who created the universe? or who created the entire existence?

Furthermore, al-Fārūqī presents his analysis in the following statement, where he asserts, “For God to be Christ in eternity, means that a plan has existed in eternity in which God, as Jesus, shall be baptised, anointed, crucified, and resurrected” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 160). In this sense, the shared nature between Jesus Christ and God, which is co-eternal, has been an eternity plan before Jesus Christ came into existence in his human nature, as he has two natures: divine and human. The eternal plan is that God, who is presenting Himself in the form of Jesus Christ has to go through the situational event related to the human history of Jesus Christ. It means that God, who resembles Christ in human nature is baptised, anointed, crucified, and then resurrected. These terms form the foundations of Christianity concerning the person of Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man. In addition, he mentions another supportive statement, through which he presents what the Christians believe in the person of Jesus Christ, “[t]his is why the Christian feels that what came to pass in the Christ-event was the revelation of divine nature” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 160). So, according to al-Fārūqī, it is the feeling expressed by Christians that what was revealed to Jesus Christ was not a revelation like what has been revealed to others; rather, it was the revelation of his divine nature, which makes him co-eternal with God, as well as God. This kind of revelation achieved by Christ has caused him to be deified, i.e., God.

The Comparative Method

The comparative method is applied in the study of two or more religions, like Islam, Judaism, Christianity, etc., with the intention to: (1) identify the topic of the study, i.e., the concept of God, Eschatology—life after

death, scriptures, etc.); (2) collect data about the subject of study; and (3) analyse the selected subject of study, i.e., the concept of God, from a comparative perspective in light of two or more religions, i.e., Islam, Judaism, Christianity, etc., highlighting the similarities and differences. The comparative method is used in the study of religions and their teachings on a thematic basis dealing with religious similarities and differences.

Al-Fārūqī uses the comparative method to show the differences between revelation, as well as the person of Christ as believed by the Christians, and the person of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) as believed by the Muslims. His comparative approach is presented in his saying, “[i]t was not God merely commanding something to be done; nor, as in Islam, communicating His Will to man, but revealing the divine nature itself as it is relevant for man” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 160). This statement shows two different perspectives concerning the nature of revelation from God to man. This statement describes three different pieces of information at the same time. The first part shows the fact that the revelation sent to Christ was not just something for God to command to be done. The second part portrays the way revelation is in Islam, where God communicates to man His Will through revelation. The third part reveals Christians’ understanding of revelation, where God revealed to Jesus Christ the divine nature, which makes Christ both divine and human. In this way, al-Fārūqī compares the Christian perspective and the Islamic perspective regarding the concept of “revelation.” In Islam, the concept of “revelation” is believed and understood as the Will of Allah revealed to man. Such a perspective differs from the Christian perspective, where the concept of “revelation” is believed and thought to be the revelation of divine nature itself to the person of Jesus Christ and not the Will of God to man.

Furthermore, al-Fārūqī provides information about the similarities and differences between the two perspectives in a comparative way, showing the common aspects and different positions. Firstly, he presents similarities concerning the nature of revelation, which is presented as eternal by both religions. This is expressed in his saying, “Islam too, one may argue, regards the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad as the most important event in history, and claims that it is eternal” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 160). Thus, revelation in Islam is the most important event as it is in Christianity. Secondly, al-Fārūqī asserts that there are differences, as

far as the position of the two religions is, in the person who receives this revelation. He says, “[n]onetheless, it should be noted at once that Islam entertains no illusions about an eternity of the Prophet’s person” (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 160). This shows that Islam forbids the eternity of human beings, as it belongs to God alone. Thus, the eternal aspect of revelation does not make its receiver, i.e., Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), eternal. Rather, his nature as a human being is preserved and not changed. It is the nature of revelation and its purposes that distinguish the prophet(s) from other human beings. Besides, it displays the Will of Allah by sending this revelation. This differs from the way Christianity teaches the nature of revelation and the person of Jesus Christ, which has been discussed above.

From the above discussion on al-Fārūqī’s methodology in the study of selected teachings of Christianity, as presented in the cited texts from his “Christian Ethics,” that al-Fārūqī has:

1. a clear picture of his subject of study, i.e., the position of Jesus Christ and what the Christians say about him, the concept of God and revelation, as well as the person of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.),
2. maintained an impartial view of the information pertaining to the central tenet of Christianity, namely, that Jesus is one of the persons of the Trinity and that he has a personal relationship with God,
3. a just and fair judgment about what is claimed by Christians,
4. a sincere intention, which is to develop a close relationship between Muslims and Christians,
5. a willingness to remind and motivate Christians to rethink the relationship between Jesus and God,
6. a readiness to compare what Christians assert about revelation and how it relates to the person of Jesus with what Muslims assert about revelation and how it relates to the person of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), and
7. a concluding remark about the position of Christians towards the relationship between the nature of Jesus Christ in relation to God that is being co-eternal, which is very much different from the perspectives of Islam and Judaism.

Conclusion

This research concludes that al-Fārūqī has greatly contributed with his masterpiece to the scholarship of comparative religion from a Muslim's perspective. The chronological study of his background, which deals with the development of his intellectual personality, has shown in al-Fārūqī's dedication and sincerity in the quest for knowledge about Islam and other religions. The methodology he uses in his original writings "Christian Ethics," uncovers the power of his argument and creativity while discussing Christian dogma and ethics. He pioneered the objective-analytical-comparative methodology in the study of religion. His brilliance in the selection of such methodology, as well as its application in his writing as shown in the above discussion, reveal his strong background and knowledge of the subject of his study. His objective-analytical-comparative methodology is investigated through the interpretative analysis of selected texts from his work. This study shows that al-Fārūqī's methodology is relevant to the contemporary scholarship of comparative religion. Contemporary scholars and especially young ones can use al-Fārūqī's methodology in the study of religion by being objective and fair. In addition, it helps them to distinguish between the teachings of their own religion and the teachings of other religions as well as to engage in inter-religious dialogue with adherents of other religions with the aim of promoting peaceful coexistence.

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Paradoxical and Insufficient? Gender Quotas and Placement Mandates in Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2020 Local Elections

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Abstract: Bosnia and Herzegovina is ranked 73rd in the *Global Gender Gap Index 2022*. A questionable democratisation process, ethnonationalism, and changes in the political culture strongly affected gender equality, participation, and representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This article tackles the impact of preferential voting on the representation of women in the local councils following the last Local Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The effect of gender quotas and placement mandates are examined across the following determinants: electoral unit magnitude, local community urbanisation rate, ethnic composition of municipalities, and ideological foundation of political parties. To test the main objectives and research questions, this paper examines the impact of preferential voting on gender political representation. A complete dataset for all candidates and municipalities of the 2020 Local

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Elections, officially released by the State Election Commission, was used. The descriptive analysis indicates that 19.86% of women candidates have been elected to the local councils. With regards to the residence, female candidates from rural areas have a lower tendency of being elected than candidates from highly urban municipalities. Regarding ethnicity, the number of seats won by female candidates was the largest for candidates with a Serb majority, followed by the Bosniak and the Croat ones. When considering political orientation, female candidates from parties with centrist political orientation have a higher tendency of being elected, closely followed by female candidates from parties with a leftist orientation.

Keywords: Gender Quotas, Placement Mandates, Preferential Voting, Electoral Systems, 2020 Local Election, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstrak: Proses pendemokrasian yang rencat, ethno-nasionalisme dan perubahan-perubahan yang terangkum dalam wahana budaya politik telah memberi kesan yang signifikan kepada isu kesaksamaan gender, partisipasi dan representasi di Bosnia Herzegovina. Ini, antara lain, telah menyebabkan Bosnia-Herzegovina berada di tangga ke-73 dalam Indeks Jurang Gender Global 2022. Kajian ini menganalisa sejauh mana kaedah pengundian keutamaan memberikan impak kepada representasi wanita sebagai ahli majlis daerah berikutan pilihanraya tempatan Bosnia-Herzegovina yang terkini. Dampak kepada kuota gender dan mandat perlantikan telah dianalisa bersandarkan kepada agen penentu berikut: magnitud unit elektoral, kadar urbanisasi komuniti lokal, komposisi etnik daerah dan asas ideologi parti politik. Kajian ini seterusnya meninjau impak sistem pengundian keutamaan ke atas representasi politik berasaskan gender dalam usaha untuk menguji objektif-objektif utama dan persoalan-persoalan kajian. Bagi tujuan ini, satu dataset lengkap calon dan majlis daerah dalam Pilihanraya Kerajaan Tempatan 2020 yang dikeluarkan oleh Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Bosnia-Herzegovina telah digunakan. Analisa deskriptif menunjukkan 19.86% calon-calon wanita yang memenangi pilihanraya kerajaan tempatan telah dilantik sebagai ahli majlis daerah. Tersinggung aspek residen atau lokaliti, calon-calon wanita daripada luar bandar memiliki peluang yang lebih rendah untuk memenangi pilihanraya kerajaan tempatan berbanding calon daripada kawasan bandar. Merujuk kepada etnisiti pula, jumlah kerusi yang terbesar telah dimenangi oleh calon-calon wanita di kawasan majoriti Serb, diikuti oleh calon-calon wanita di kawasan majoriti Bosniak dan Croat. Ketimbang orientasi politik, calon-calon wanita daripada parti-parti politik berhaluan tengah berpotensi lebih tinggi untuk menang pilihanraya, diikuti dengan rapat oleh calon-calon daripada parti-parti politik berhaluan kiri.

Kata Kunci: Kuota Berasaskan Gender, Mandat Perlantikan, Pengundian Keutamaan, Sistem Elektoral, Pilihanraya Kerajaan tempatan 2020, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Introduction

The concept of equal political participation and descriptive representation of both genders in political life is the cornerstone of modern democracy as they imply the extent to which the law-making bodies reflect in their membership the distribution of gender in society. Holding free, fair, regular, and competitive elections is one of the primary tools to achieve this goal. Apart from a gradual narrowing of the gender voting gap, almost a century-long female suffrage has not resulted in an equal election and representation of women in the main bodies of governance. Thus, the type of political system—being democratic or non-democratic—might be relevant, but not a determining factor for the representation of gender in the state bodies. Even full democracies do not necessarily have a more satisfactory number of women in the legislative and executive branches of government than the less democratic states (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003).

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is not an exception to this global phenomenon. Although equal representation and gender equality are constitutional and legal requirements in B&H, women are still underrepresented in representative bodies at the state and local levels. This has not changed after the 2020 local elections as only 19.86% of female candidates were elected to the local councils even though the Law on Gender Equality in B&H and the Election Law ensure and promote gender equality in management, decision-making process, and political representation. Equal gender representation implies the presence of at least 40% of the less represented gender in the administrative bodies, executive authorities, and legislative bodies. The state election commission is authorised to ban political parties' participation in the electoral process if they do not comply with this legal requirement. Despite political parties' compliance with this requirement, the election results still returned local councils dominated by men.

As political underrepresentation of women in democratic states has not been reduced exclusively with the equal right to cast votes (Pitkin, 1967), its success is further conditioned by the type of the political

system, the electoral system, and the recruitment process (Phillips, 2007). In this process, the political institutions and electoral bodies have a role in creating the link between the voters and democratic processes, and are “factors that help shape and give meaning to political attitudes” (Anderson et al., 2005). The electoral system in B&H uses the proportional representation (PR) method, which considers equal participation of both genders (Lijphart, 1999), whereby the electoral model enables more female candidates to get elected compared to a single-member district (SMD) plurality/majority system (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Although the model itself is a necessary condition for more representation of women in the state bodies, its success is largely conditioned by some other factors such as gender quotas, placement mandates, and the level of in-party thresholds.

As of September 2022, 134 countries have introduced various ways to increase gender balance in representative bodies. Political parties in 61 countries have adopted voluntary quotas, while quotas at the sub-national levels and for the single-lower house have been legislated in 114 and 97 countries respectively (Gender Quotas Database). The number of women in the legislative assemblies more than doubled over the last twenty-five years. Today, women make up at least one-third of legislators in 54 countries worldwide: eleven countries in Africa, four countries in Asia, two states in Australia, twenty-five countries in Europe, two countries in North America, and ten countries in South America (<http://www.ipu.org>).

This article contributes to the current discussion on the influence of gender quotas and placement mandates on women’s political representation in open-list PR electoral systems by examining the results of the last local elections held in B&H in 2020. The study is based on the complete dataset for all 143 municipalities in B&H and 30,445 candidates who were on the lists of various political subjects for the 2020 local elections. The reason why local councils are selected as a unit of analysis is because B&H consists of quite a large number of municipalities and local elections involve substantial number of candidates. This enables us to examine the difference between male and female candidates elected to the local assemblies and the possible impact of placement mandates in this process. This would not be possible by studying and analysing general elections as the total number of elected

officials to the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H is only 42, and they are elected from only five electoral units.

Literature review

The democratisation process and changes in political culture resulted in a gradual decline in the gender voting gap and gender representation, especially in full democracies. Today, the gender voting gap stands at around 8% on average, and is slightly higher for left-oriented voters than for more conservative ones. According to some studies, the main reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the legislative and executive bodies are due to men's greater masculine political sophistication (Campbell, 1960), men's greater aggressiveness and aptitude for conflict (Verba et al., 1997), women are generally less knowledgeable than men about politics (Fraile, 2014), less likely to feel politically efficacious (Rinehart, 1992), and have less interest in politics than men (Verba et al., 1995). Another reason could be due to prejudice by voters or party leaders (Randall, 1987) as women are less selected and nominated than men by the gatekeepers (Phillips, 2021). Even though the gender gap in descriptive representation is reduced by certain institutional designs, a significant gender gap prevails in the legislature (Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2015).

Researchers in the UK and the US have found only slight differences between multi-member and SMD in gender representation, although the latter is nowhere in favour of women (Schmidt & Saunders, 2004). Some studies have found a direct positive relationship between district magnitudes and the election of women even if they are placed further down on the party list (Norris, 1996). However, the PR system might become very competitive too as it tends to favour fluid party systems with an oversized number of parties, and with newly established parties contesting an election and striving for power. In such political circumstances, a "policy of diffusion" of the issues related to the promotion and support of gender equality has been one among several strategies and tools used in electoral campaigns (Kittilson, 2006).

One of the most stable findings concerning the electoral process is that the election of female candidates is favoured by factors such as PR electoral systems, which are less competitive than the SMD systems, particularly in those electoral systems which apply closed lists and placement mandates preferential voting with a low in-party threshold,

competitive party lists, and large constituency magnitudes (Laserud & Taphorn, 2007). A closed-list electoral system with placement mandates fosters the election of women to the representative bodies. This is so-called a mechanical impact because it is solely a result of the electoral rule. On the other hand, if placement mandates were implemented in an open-list electoral system, then the impact is psychological and twofold. Firstly, it might be a natural tendency of voters to select a few top candidates on the lists (Koppell & Steen, 2004), and secondly, it impacts voters' propensity to get some useful information about the candidates and to make choices that correspond to their interests (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012).

Studies have shown that even full democracies do not elect more women in the representative bodies than the less democratic states (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). The type of electoral system has been one of the often-discussed factors as a prospective cause of gender discrimination in political representation (Fortin-Rittberger & Rittberger, 2014; Roberts, Seawright & Cyr, 2013).

Scholars found that electoral arrangements such as an open-list PR which enables voters to give preferential votes to one or more candidates on the list affect the political representation of women (Allik, 2015; Golder et al., 2017; Gorecki & Kuklowicz, 2014). Still, various findings about the effects of the open-list PR electoral system on the election of women to the representative bodies have remained unclear. Findings vary from those concluding that women are disadvantaged by this type of electoral system (Gorecki & Kuklowicz, 2014; Millard, 2014) to those who found that the open-list PR system did not impede the electoral success of female candidates (Gail & Marsh, 2010). Others such as Golder et al., (2017) and Kunovich (2012) even concluded that in specific scenarios, the open-list PR system has a positive effect on female candidates at the ballot boxes.

Quotas may take three different types: political party voluntary quotas, party list legislative quotas, and legislative or constitutionally reserved seats. Each of these three types of quotas may exist on its own or simultaneously with other types of quotas. Legislated party list quotas and reserved seat quotas may exist for the single/lower house, upper house, and at the sub-national levels such as states, entities, cantons, departments, or municipalities. All three types of quotas simultaneously

exist in 27 countries, while 80 countries practice the combination of quotas at the sub-national levels and for the single/lower house (Gender Quotas Database). Htun (2004) makes it clear that gender quotas are regular tools to boost gender equality, while reserved seats ensure and secure the political representation of religious, linguistic, ethnic, and national minorities.

Initial studies which advocated the adoption of gender quotas argued that they are a vital tool to increase the number of female legislators and executive officers and the most practical way to bring quantitative gender equality to politics (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Krook, 2009). However, empirical studies which evaluated the effects of gender quotas on political representation at various state institutions and especially in legislative bodies have shown different results, and more often, electoral gender quotas come closer to providing real equality of opportunity than equality of result, which is contrary to what was commonly believed (Dahlerup, 2007). According to Stockemer & Sundström (2021), PR electoral system normally suits female candidates better than majority SMD or plurality systems but, nonetheless, legislative quotas and voluntary party quotas do not significantly increase the share of female representatives. Sacchet (2018) found that despite implementing a gender quotas policy for almost 20 years in Brazil, the inappropriate electoral fund management and considerable differences in campaign revenues allocated for male and female candidates did not reduce the gap between them. Empirical findings show that gender quotas have a larger impact on women's representation in candidate-oriented systems than in programmatically oriented ones (Forman-Rabinovici & Nir, 2021; Migheli, 2022). Finally, it is doubtful that even if the electoral lists of political parties apply a full gender equality quota or even positive discrimination in favour of female candidates, the ratio of elected representatives would be equivalent to that found in open-list PR electoral systems.

Studies covering the issue of gender and legislative representation claim that the voters are not biased against the candidates based on their gender. They argue that candidates of both genders are equally successful in state and local legislative elections (Dancy, et. al., 1994; Seltzer et al., 1997). The second group of scholars argue that the voters make a preference based on gender stereotypes about men and women. More recent research results are inconsistent, some findings indicate a

shift in conventional gender stereotyping (Duehr & Bono, 2006), others indicate the expansion of female representation in the legislature but at a slow pace (Swers & Rouse, 2011), while other longitudinal studies indicate that the traditional stereotyping about commonality is equally prevalent for men and women (Haines, et. al., 2016).

Earlier studies show that voters exercise ethnically-biased voting (Johnston, et. al., 1992; Popkin, 1994) and that political elites often manipulate ethnic cleavages to get support and win elections (Norris & Mattes, 2003). However, more recent literature shows that there are mixed findings on the voters' preference when supporting candidates of the same ethnic background and the same gender. While Heath, et. al. (2015) and Van Erkel (2019) found that voters prefer candidates who share the same socio-demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, race, and gender, Bird, et. al. (2016) assert that it is implicit whether a candidate's partisanship, ethnicity, or gender is a reason for voters to vote for him/her. Mixed results also were found concerning the fact that ethnic affinity and gender-biased effects are overruled by partisanship, as a vote for a candidate is a vote for a party (Badas & Stauffer, 2019), and that personal reputation is important to gain votes (Barreto, 2007; Teney, et. al., 2010). Research in the US shows a link between the race/ethnicity of voters and their inclination to support female candidates. Thus, black female voters are the strongest supporters of black female candidates, and black female candidates with significant experience in politics can attract both black and white voters, regardless of gender (Tasha & Hanes, 2007).

Scholars, experts, and policy-makers frequently express concerns about growing polarisation between urban and rural areas (Rodden 2019), as there is a strong and significant divide between the political behaviour and attitudes of citizens from urban and rural places (Kenny & Luca, 2020). However, relatively few studies have explored whether the increasing political divide between rural and urban recorded in some countries is evident universally.

Recent political events such as the US Presidential Election in 2016, the UK's 2016 Brexit vote, Austria's national elections in December 2018, the 2018 protests in France, the 2021 local elections in Italy, the support for France's far-right leader Marine Le Pen in the Presidential Election last year, all proved the emergence of a spatially-divided

electoral landscape and support for political differences between rural and urban areas, which became stronger in recent decades (Becker, et, al., 2017; Vassallo, 2022).

The B&H's electoral context

The multiparty system in B&H was (re)introduced before the dissolution of the Former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. This enabled the Bosnian people to establish political parties and elect their representatives in free and fair elections for the first time after decades of the abolition of representative democracy. According to the Constitution, B&H is a highly decentralised state which consists of two entities, namely the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and Republika Srpska (RS) and the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With a population of 2.2 million people, FB&H consists of ten cantons which are further divided into 79 cities or municipalities containing Bosniaks (70%), Croats (22%), and a small number of Serbs (4%). On the other hand, RS with 1.2 million people is largely populated by Serbs (81%), Bosniaks (14%), and Croats (2%). A total of 62 cities/municipalities are located in RS. (Mulalic & Karić, 2020).

The Constitution of B&H does not contain any explicit provision on the local government and holding the local elections per se. In this context, the Constitution demands that those serving in the state authority offices observe the basic democratic principles that B&H “shall be a democratic state, which shall operate under the rule of law and free and democratic elections” (Constitution of B&H, article 1.2). This implies organisation of the legislative and presidential elections at the state and entity levels and, if feasible, for cantonal legislatures and municipal governing authorities to be held on a regular basis. Since 1996, seven municipal elections have been held in B&H. Initially, the first and second local elections in 1997 and 2002 respectively, were held under the full auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the rules and regulations adopted by the provisional Election Commission. Local elections held in 2004 were the first elections after the war held in accordance with the Election Law adopted by the State Parliament in 2001, fully locally-financed elections and observed by the international community.

According to the Election Law, political subjects such as independent candidates, political parties, a coalition of political parties, and the list

of independent candidates have the right to participate in the elections. For the municipal election in B&H, every candidate list must include male and female candidates. As illustrated in Table 1, each party list consists of at least 40% of a less-represented gender

Table 1. Placement of a less represented gender in a party list

Total number of candidates in a party list	Total number of candidates of a less represented gender
1	0
2	1
3	1
4	2
5	2
6	3
7	3
8	3
9*	4
11*	5
13*	6
16*	7
18*	8
21*	9
23*	10
26*	11
28*	12
31*	13
33*	14
36*	15

Source: Central Election Commission B&H.

*Position on the list where the candidate of a less-represented gender must be placed

The number of seats in the local councils is distributed according to the total number of eligible voters in a municipality. Hence, small municipalities are the ones with less than 8,000 eligible voters and their councils are composed of 11-17 representatives. Medium municipalities are composed of 18-25 representatives and the total number of eligible voters in these municipalities ranges between 8,000 and 20,000. Finally, large municipality councils consist of 26-31 representatives and the total number of eligible voters in these local communities exceeds 20,000 (See the diagram below). This description is the base for the classification of municipalities into small, medium, and large ones in Table 4.

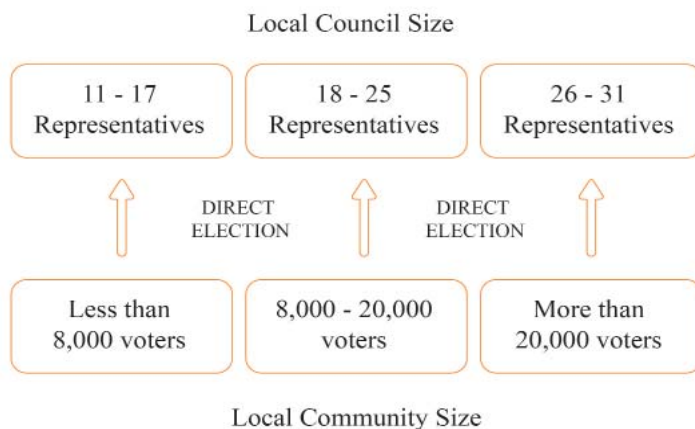


Diagram 1. Relationship between the community size and council size in the local election in B&H.

Each political subject list might have up to 5 candidates more than the allocated number of mandates in the city/municipality council. Election Law stipulates that the mandate of the elected municipal and city council members and mayors lasts for four years. The proportional system is used to allocate the mandates for municipal and city councils with the condition for all political subjects that contest the election pass the electoral threshold of 3% of the total valid votes cast in the local community.

Mandates won by a political subject are distributed according to the Saint-League formula. The candidates who individually got at least 10% of the preferential votes of the total number of valid votes

received by his/her political subject are assigned the mandate in the municipal council in the order from the highest to the lowest number of preferential votes. Then, if the remaining candidates received less than 10% of the valid votes obtained by his/her political subject and if there are still mandates to be distributed to a list, then the allocation of the remaining candidates from the political subject is done according to their placement on the list, i.e., the preference will be given to the candidate with the higher placement. It is important to stress that a mandate won in the elections belongs to the elected candidate and not to a political party, coalition, or a list of independent candidates.

Findings from electoral ballot data

The impact of preferential voting system may depend on the quota, the placement mandates, the size of the electoral unit, and the type of residential area. Therefore, we conducted a register-based study from the electoral ballot data. In doing so, a complete dataset for all candidates and municipalities of the 2020 local elections was used for the analysis of the local elections held in November 2020. Local elections in B&H are held every four years and the results are systematically collected and stored by the Central Election Commission. The data included information on the total number of votes and (non)elected individuals per municipality concerning gender, municipality size, two entities (FB&H and RS) and the BD, municipality urbanisation level, primary voter ethnicity in the municipality, and the political orientation of the candidates. A total of 30,236 candidates (57.7% male and 42.3% female) from 143 municipalities are included in the database. The data analysis is mainly focused on the gender of the candidates and it does not include the tests of statistical significance given that the data encompasses the entire population of candidates and not a sample.

A total of 3,330,213 voters were registered for the 2020 local elections. Out of this number, 3,266,488 or 98.1% were voters who could cast votes within the country and the remaining 63,765 or 1.9% voters were Bosnian voters from abroad. A total of 3,177 mandates were contested in 141 municipalities, of which 1,845 mandates were in the FB&H, 1,301 in RS, and 31 in the Brcko District (See Table 2). Voting was conducted on November 15, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., at 5,221 polling stations within the country and five polling stations in diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

Table 2: Contested mandates, eligible voters, and turnout

	Regular Mandates	Eligible Voters	Valid Votes	Turnout
FBH	1,845	1,970,831	1,030,920	52.3%
RS	1,301	1,269,884	778,219	61.3%
Brcko District	31	89,498	45,966	51.4%
Total	3,177	3,330,213	1,855,105	55.7%

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

In the 2020 local elections, a total of 30,455 candidates were registered on the lists of 574 political subjects, including 151 political parties, 76 coalitions, 266 independent candidates, 17 lists of independent candidates, and 64 independent candidates.

Table 3: 2020 Local Election Candidates by Gender

	Candidates	Elected
Male	17,903 (58.8%)	2,546 (80.1%)
Female	12,542 (41.2%)	631 (19.9%)
Total	30,445 (100.0%)	3,177 (100.0%)

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

Table 3 shows that political subjects met the legal requirement of having at least 40% of less represented gender candidates on the lists. However, of the total 3,177 elected officials, 2,546 (80.14%) were male candidates and only 631 (19.86%) were female candidates. To evaluate the effect the preferential voting system has on gender, the so-called *inversions* were estimated (Gendźwiłł & Żółtak, 2020; Seggaard & Saglie, 2021). Namely, the projected composition of the municipal councils using the closed-list ballot structure was estimated. Further, this projected seat allocation was compared to the actual results. Given that the closed-list ballot structure does not allow voters to alter the candidate ranking assigned by the political parties, the comparison of the projected and real election results will demonstrate the power the voters have over the election of local representatives.

The main assessment is aimed at gender and how a projected closed-list system would impact gender distribution among elected individuals. Here, the study merely projects and identifies the actual candidates who could have been elected if there was a closed-list election system, i.e., without preferential voting. In a closed-list system, candidates would have been elected only based on their ranking in a party list according to the total number of seats of a particular party. Since the place of each candidate in every party list is already known, it is quite straightforward to figure out who would have been elected in such a scenario. The results of the projected closed-list scenario are also compared with the actual results in the tables below. Positive differences indicate that the group in question benefits from the preferential voting system. The results indicate that male candidates benefit from the preferential voting system.

Table 4: Comparison of voting systems by municipality size

		Preferential Vote System				Closed List System					
		MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		Net Gain for Female Candidates	
		Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Seat	%
Municipality Size	Small	516	78.2	144	21.8	426	64.5	234	35.5	+90	62.5
	Medium	1,042	80.4	254	19.6	815	62.9	481	37.1	+227	89.4
	Large	988	80.9	233	19.1	744	60.9	477	39.1	+244	104.7
Total		2,546	80.1	631	19.9	1,985	62.5	1,192	37.5	+561	88.9

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

As Table 4 shows, the preferential voting system benefits male candidates irrespective of the municipality size. The gap is most pronounced in municipalities that are large in size where the net gain in the number of seats allocated to female candidates would have been 104.7%. The net gain is also significant in medium- (89.4%) and small- (62.5%) sized municipalities. However, it is important to consider the

base effect here. For example, the net gain would have been the highest in the case of the candidates from municipalities which are large in size, but those are also the municipalities that had the lowest share of seats for female candidates under the preferential vote system.

Table 5: Comparison of voting systems by urbanisation rate

		Preferential Vote System				Closed List System				Net Gain for Female Candidates	
		MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE			
		Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Seat	%
Urbanisation Rate	Less than 20%	598	78.5	164	21.5	481	63.1	281	36.9	+117	71.3
	20% to 39.9%	905	80.2	224	19.8	699	61.9	430	38.1	+206	92.0
	40% to 59.9%	599	83.4	119	16.6	442	61.6	276	38.4	+157	131.9
	60% to 79.9%	252	81.0	59	19.0	209	67.2	102	32.8	+43	72.9
	80% and over	192	74.7	65	25.3	154	59.9	103	40.1	+38	58.5
	Total	2,546	80.1	631	19.9	1,985	62.5	1,192	37.5	+561	88.9

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

Table 5 provides details on the question of whether the gender effect of preferential voting varies with the urbanisation level in the municipality. The level of urbanisation rate is used from the data collected in the last census in 2013. As can be seen in the table, female candidates from rural areas suffer somewhat more from the preferential voting systems than candidates from highly urban municipalities. More precisely, the net gain from a closed-list system increases with urbanisation until it reaches 131.9% (at an urbanisation rate of 40% to 59.9%), which is when the net gain starts shrinking down to 72.9% (at an urbanisation rate of 60% to 79.9%) and 58.5% (at urbanisation rate of 80% and more).

Table 6: Comparison of voting behaviour across municipalities

		Preferential Vote System				Closed List System					
		MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		Net Gain for Female Candidates	
		Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Seat	%
Ethnicity	Bosniak Majority	983	79.9	247	20.1	760	61.8	470	38.2	+223	90.3
	Serb Majority	1083	82.4	231	17.6	829	63.1	485	36.9	+254	110.0
	Croat Majority	345	74.0	121	26.0	288	61.8	178	38.2	+57	47.1
	No Ethnic Majority	135	80.8	32	19.2	108	64.7	59	35.3	+27	84.4
Total		2,546	80.1	631	19.9	1,985	62.5	1,192	37.5	+561	88.9

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

According to results provided in Table 6, the net gain in seats for female candidates, had the closed-list system been implemented in terms of ethnicity, would have been the largest for candidates with the Serb majority population (110%) followed by Bosniak majority municipalities (90.3%) and municipalities with no single major ethnic group (84.4%), while the net gain would have been the smallest for candidates from Croat majority municipalities (47%). Considering the base effect, these results are not surprising.

Table 7: Comparison of voting systems by political orientation

		Preferential Vote System				Closed List System					
		MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		Net Gain for Female Candidates	
		Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Number of Seats	%	Seat	%
Political Orientation	Right	1284	79.3	335	20.7	1005	62.1	613	37.9	+278	83.0
	Left	664	79.8	168	20.2	499	60.0	333	40.0	+165	98.2
	Centre	179	81.7	40	18.3	137	63.1	80	36.9	+40	100.0
	Others	419	82.6	88	17.4	344	67.5	166	32.5	+78	88.6
Total		2,546	80.1	631	19.9	1,985	62.5	1,192	37.5	+561	88.9

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

Table 7 shows the distribution of seats among political parties coming from different political spectrums, i.e., from the left-inclined political parties to the right-oriented political parties. Parties' political programmes and available party documents were used to classify political parties on the right and left political spectrum. When considering the political orientation of the candidates, it is once again evident that the preferential voting system benefits male candidates irrespective of the party's political ideology background. Table 7 shows that if the closed-list system was implemented in the 2020 local elections in B&H, the net gain for female candidates from parties with centrist political orientation would have been the highest (100%), closely followed by candidates from parties with leftist orientation (98.2%). The benefits would also be obvious in parties with other political ideologies (88.6%) as well as those right-oriented (83%). These results show that the base effect is once again evident.

Table 8: Comparison of gender preference and list placement

List Placement	MALE			FEMALE		
	Frequency	Male %	Overall %	Frequency	Female %	Overall %
1 to 5	227	21.6	18.6	37	21.5	3.0
6 to 10	279	26.6	22.8	42	24.4	3.4
11 to 15	204	19.4	16.7	32	18.6	2.6
16 to 20	136	13.0	11.1	23	13.4	1.9
21 to 25	93	8.9	7.6	20	11.6	1.6
26 to 30	74	7.0	6.1	11	6.4	1.0
31 to 36	37	3.5	3.0	7	4.1	0.6
TOTAL	1,050	100.0	85.9	172	100.0	14.1

Source: www.izbori.ba (Authors' Compilation)

The projected analysis revealed that 1,222 candidates would not have been elected if the closed-list voting system had been used in the 2020 B&H local election. Table 8 presents the list placement of the candidates in intervals of five and shows how many and what percentage of the candidates were elected due to the preferential voting system even though their original list placement could not have allowed them to be elected since their party had won fewer mandates. In other words, Table 8 presents the comparison of the gender of the candidates who

won the mandates with the help of the preferential voting system and their placement in their party list. Male candidates enjoyed the benefits of the preferential voting system vastly as 1,050 men would not have been elected in a traditional closed-list election system compared to only 172 female candidates. The distribution of this benefit does not differ significantly between males and females in terms of their original list placement.

Conclusion and recommendations

This paper offers a detailed analysis of the effects of a gender quota and placement mandates in the open-list PR electoral system for the B&H local elections in 2020. Law on Gender Equality in B&H, in accordance with international standards, stipulates the obligation of all public bodies to ensure and promote equal gender representation. This implies a minimum threshold for equal participation of a minimum of 40% of less represented gender and obligations to adopt special measures in a situation when either gender is represented with less than 40%. In addition to this, Election Law in B&H introduced the gender quota and placement mandates. Analysing data from almost 600 political subjects and more than 30,000 candidates in the last 2020 local elections in B&H, this paper finds that all political subjects fully complied with the legal requirement concerning the gender quota and placement mandates.

Having in mind the fact of full compliance with the law and the open-list electoral system, we might have expected the possibility of a slight increase in women's success on electoral ballots. However, post-election results indicate considerable underrepresentation of women in all but seven municipality councils, which met the legal requirement of having at least 40% representatives of a less represented gender. Some municipalities have got no female representatives at all and almost half (62 municipalities) of all 143 municipalities are represented by less than 20% of women. The study shows that in the case of the B&H electoral context, the size of the electoral district does not have a positive impact on the possibility to elect more women to the representative local councils. Irrespective of the size of the municipality, the rate of elected women to the local councils is around 20%.

The scenario is only slightly different with the type of residential area and its impact on the rate of elected women. Namely, only those municipalities with an urbanisation rate of over 80% have been able

to elect slightly over 25% of women to their local councils. This is an indicator that the voters in the most urban places such as the capital city and a few big cities in B&H tend to give more preferential votes to female candidates compared to the voters in less urban areas or predominantly rural municipalities. However, elected representatives in these municipalities make up only 8% of all elected local councillors in B&H.

The study shows that an ethnic composition of local communities provides a more significant difference in the election result of female candidates among the three main ethnic groups in B&H. Thus, the Croat majority communities have a stronger support for female candidates than the other two ethnic groups. This indicates a more liberal approach in the politics of Croat political leaders who give much more chances to women to lead the processes and occupy even the most important positions in the legislative and executive bodies in the state institutions such as the current Chair of the Council of Ministers of B&H, and the president of the entity of the FB&H. Both these positions are occupied by women coming from the leading Croat political party. On the other hand, the results of this study show that the Serb and Bosniak majority communities are lagging in terms of supporting female candidates through the preferential votes on election day. For these two ethnic groups, politics is still exclusively a “man’s business.”

Finally, this study illustrates that there is no difference in the success of political parties that subscribe to different ideologies as their voters almost identically vote for the female candidates on the list regardless of their ideological background. This tells us that the participant political culture of the B&H peoples is still immature. Therefore, taking into consideration the essential principles and programmes of at least leading political parties in B&H, it is not possible to make a clear distinction among the political parties and classify them into left, centre, or right-positioned political subjects.

Considering the fact that the current political situation in B&H would not allow the introduction of a closed-list system which will enable added presence of the less represented gender in the representative bodies, the following recommendations may improve women’s political representation in B&H’s political institutions:

- Harmonisation of the Law on Gender Equality in B&H and the Election Law with regards to the obligatory minimum representation of less represented gender in the state bodies.
- Support for political parties that place female candidates on the top of candidate lists and demonstrate balanced gender representation in elected representative bodies.
- Enacting a clear procedure in favour of less represented gender for those who are elected but decide to join the executive bodies with the candidate of the less represented gender from the list of same political subject.
- Increasing the in-party threshold from the current 10 percent to 30 percent so that ranking order would enable more women to be elected in the representative bodies using the formula of placement mandates.
- Introducing a vertical parity or zebra system which requires that parties nominate equal number of both genders on the party list.
- Changing and transforming patriarchal political culture so that voters develop greater sensitivity towards casting more preferential votes for the female candidates on the list.

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Gestalt and Semiotic Analyses of Brand Communication on Disability Inclusion: The Case of Malaysia and the US

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Abstract: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the United Nations' effort in advocating disability inclusion in education and the infrastructure of member countries. Brands can also play their role by promoting disability inclusion through their brand messages. Brand messages are powerful as they advocate causes and ideals that include disability inclusion through repetitive and omnipresent messages whose ultimate goal is to influence the target audience's behaviour. This multiple case study compared brand communication from ten brands each originating from Malaysia and the United States using Saussure's model of semiotics. It was found that *Common Fate* is the fundamental gestalt principle in most brands' communication on disability inclusion of both countries and that positive nomenclature was used as the signifier that underlined the organisations' positive perception of disability inclusion.

Keywords: Disability inclusion, Malaysia, USA, brands, semiotics.

Abstrak: Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan (SDGs) Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu menggariskan usaha badan tersebut dalam menyokong penglibatan orang kurang upaya (OKU) dalam pendidikan dan infrastruktur

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negara anggotanya. Jenama juga mampu memainkan peranan mempromosikan penglibatan OKU melalui mesej jenama mereka. Mesej jenama berupaya menyokong usaha dan ideal penglibatan OKU melalui penggunaan mesej berulang dan tersedia ada di mana matlamat utamanya adalah untuk mempengaruhi tingkah laku dan sikap golongan sasaran. Kajian kes pelbagai ini membandingkan komunikasi jenama daripada sepuluh jenama dari Malaysia dan Amerika Syarikat dengan menggunakan model semiotik Saussure. Kajian mendapati bahawa *Common Fate* (“Takdir Sepunya”) merupakan prinsip asas *gestalt* dalam kebanyakan komunikasi jenama mengenai penglibatan OKU di kedua-dua negara dan tatanama positif telah digunakan sebagai penanda yang menggariskan persepsi positif sesuatu organisasi terhadap penglibatan OKU.

Kata kunci: penglibatan orang kurang upaya, Malaysia, USA, jenama, semiotic.

Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that persons with disabilities (PwDs) represent over 15% (approximately over one billion people) of the global population. This number is increasing due to the aging community and the presence of noncommunicable diseases (“Disability”, 2021). In Malaysia, approximately 453,258 PwDs were registered with the country’s Social Welfare Department (“Social Statistics Bulletin Malaysia 2018”, 2020). While in the United States (US), 61 million adults have a disability, making up 26 percent of the adult population (“Disability Impacts all of Us”, 2020). Regarding global employment rates for PwDs in developing countries, 80% to 90% of working-age PwDs are unemployed, whereas, in industrialised countries, the figure is between 50% and 70% (“Disability and Employment”, 2021).

“The Malaysian public sector employees encompass 1.2 million in total as of August 2018, excluding the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) and Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM), and 3,782 PwDs were employed in the public sector in 2017 while in the private sector, 14,252 PwDs were employed from 1990 to 2018 out of the 13.74 million people in the workforce (Ministry of Human Resources, 2019). In the US, it was reported that in 2020, 17.9 percent of PwDs were employed, a decrease from 19.3 percent in 2019 (Bureau of Labour Statistics: US Department of Labor, 2021). The statistics show that more needs to be done to employ PwDs in Malaysia and in the US, and employment practices

should be communicated supporting disability inclusion. Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (PwD Act 2008) mentions in Section 29 (1) that persons with disabilities shall have the right to access to employment on equal basis with persons without disabilities. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against PwDs in employment and other areas.

When it comes to the private sector and disability inclusion in the US, there have been several efforts, such as the Disability Equality Index (DEI), that measures workplace practices of disability inclusion and Valuable 500. The DEI is a "comprehensive benchmarking tool that helps companies build a roadmap of measurable, tangible actions to achieve disability inclusion and equality," with companies that score 80 and above acknowledged as the best places for PwDs to work in (Disability:IN nd). The Disability:IN website also mentions DEI as a joint initiative of the nonprofit organisations, Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). Six criteria are considered in the assessment to attain a score in the DEI: Culture & Leadership, Enterprise-Wide Access, Employment Practices, Community Engagement, Supplier Diversity, and Non-US Operations. Valuable 500 is a global business collective of 500 Chief Executive Officers and their companies that make efforts to practice disability inclusion by developing a Transformation Programme that will spur system change and encourage businesses to be inclusive of PwDs (Valuable 500, 2021).

In the US, there appears to be a sense of belonging felt by organisations that disclose their disability inclusion practices through their DEI scores and also by being part of the Valuable 500 group, that also creates a positive brand reputation. Employing PwDs would help develop goodwill, the good image of an organisation, and its brand reputation. This is akin to the notion of cause marketing that links marketing efforts to a good cause and corporate social responsibility (CSR) that puts the organisation in a positive light as it serves society through activities (Moriarty et al., 2019).

It is important to note that there are some issues in the employment of PwDs in Malaysia and in the US. PwDs in Malaysia encounter two significant challenges; the problem of the lack of equal employment opportunities and the uncondusive workplace environment, which

include mobility and accessibility problems, inaccessible technological facilities, unsupportive employers and colleagues, and security risks (Tyng et al., 2020). The lack of disability inclusion practices in organisations may endanger the relationship between customers and the organisation. A study proved that the image of a company that hires PwDs affects customer satisfaction positively (Akbar et al., 2020). It would also be good to include PwDs in a company's vision and scope, that helps build and boost its reputation in the long run.

Other than disability inclusion in employment, some brands have been generating products for PwDs and promoting them through advertisements (Mokhtar & Hussain, 2019). The latest devices include novel features in software for cognitive, speech, and vision accessibility (Apple, 16 May 2023). In the US, however, Nielsen reported that PwDs only appear in one percent of the advertisements despite having 26 percent of the population with disabilities (Neff, 2021). Including PwDs in brand communication may also help shape people's perceptions of a brand and the continuous attraction of customers to it (Houston, 2016). It is apparent that positive depictions of PwDs in a company's advertising campaign and branding could improve a brand's image and promote its disability inclusion as a subset of diversity inclusion (Moriarty et al., 2019).

The study's research questions are:

1. Which gestalt principles are found on the websites of brands in Malaysia and in US when communicating on disability inclusion in employment?
2. What are the signifiers for disability inclusion on websites of brands in Malaysia and in the US?
3. What are the signified elements for disability inclusion on websites of brands in Malaysia and in the US?
4. How are disability inclusion depictions comparable on websites by brands in Malaysia and in the US?
5. How are disability inclusion depictions different on websites by brands in Malaysia and in the US?

Literature Review

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), disability “results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, down syndrome, and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support” (World Health Organisation, 2021). Disability inclusion, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), refers to:

Including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability is disability inclusion. This involves more than simply encouraging people; it requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in effect in a community or organisation.

Benefits of Communication on Disability Inclusion Practices to Organisations

There are several benefits of practicing disability inclusion in the workplace and communicating these practices. The benefits of being inclusive of PwDs in any organisation are that the brand gets a positive perception from its consumers and PwDs who become brand ambassadors create a positive image of the organisation (Akbar et al., 2020). The inclusion of PwDs in the workplace can attract publicity and increase customer traffic with social enterprises (like hospitality businesses) to actively promote themselves on social media (Kalargyrou et al., 2018). González & Luis Fernández (2016) proved that customers are loyal to brands that convey clear corporate information about disability inclusion practices. The feeling of goodwill toward the organisation due to its disability inclusion efforts motivates customers to purchase products churned by these organisations.

Disability Inclusion and Websites as a Medium for Marketing Communication

The website is the platform where advertising, public relations, and direct marketing are blurred and integrated (Moriarty et al., 2019). Websites predominantly advertise organisations and their products, build rapport with stakeholders underscoring the public relations function and sometimes allows for purchases and interaction with

emails, chatbots, phone numbers, and other contact details, marking its direct marketing function. The present study focused on websites as a platform for advertising the organisation with regards to its disability inclusion practices.

A study examined the inclusivity and accessibility of recreation programmes in colleges for students with disabilities on programme websites of 24 US universities regarding inclusive terminology, inclusive images, and inclusivity statements (Bruning et al., 2020). The findings were that two universities used 39.48% of the total inclusivity terms, the majority used only one disability-related term on their website, half used eight or fewer terms, and one used outdated terminology. In addition, more than half of the universities examined (58.33%) did not have pictures of PwDs or adaptive equipment on their websites, and only a quarter (25%) had a collegiate campus recreation programme statement. Finally, a qualitative study examined how a small business owner in an urban US city prioritised digital inclusion in his daily operations, and it generated six themes: perceptions of disability influence digital inclusion, powerful branding suggests digital access, unawareness of accessibility guidelines, UX (user experience) testing overlooks input from PwDs, inclusion is tough to enforce on digital platforms, and workarounds hinder digital improvements (Cipriani, 2019).

The websites of 75 major companies in five different countries (France, Germany, Spain, the UK, and the US) were also examined, and it was found that the discourse of inclusion is being steadily depicted on websites and that branding inclusion can be beneficial in the mission to be an employer of choice. In another study, using a critical discourse theoretical framework and adopting strategies from Astroff (2001) and Pauwels (2012), disability information on the California State University (CSU) website appeared to have surface visibility, meaning that 66% of the sites had minimal information on their home pages, the lack of information of disability inclusion as part of diversity, the lack of reasonable navigation structures, obscured content and the mentioning of disability as the deficits of students (Gabel et al., 2016). Another study investigated obvious evidence of inclusive practices in library instruction programmes through a content analysis of library instruction websites and instruction request forms, and examined instruction-related pages for accessibility language, and the findings showed little evidence of programmatic disability inclusion on library websites

(Graves & German, 2018). Another study examined five prominent US art museums in terms of the marketing methods they used to promote access to audiences with disabilities, and the findings indicate that word of mouth and the use of technology, such as websites and social media, were the most common forms of marketing methods used to reach PwDs (McMillen, 2017). More studies need to be conducted to examine how brands communicate on disability inclusion at the workplace on their websites judging from the studies that have been carried out.

Semiotics, Disability Inclusion, and Websites

No studies have combined the concepts of semiotics, disability inclusion, and the websites of Malaysian and US brands, marking the research gap. There are, however, some studies that have investigated the evolutionary discourse of toy campaigns through their visual and verbal attributes using Kress & van Leeuwen's social semiotic approach in the examination of images to provide a broader view on the issues of diversity, representation, and inclusion (Almeida, 2017). The findings depict a transition to contemporary notions of different family structures, embracing physical imperfections and naturalising our perceptions of disabilities. Another study examined five museums regarding how visually impaired people are represented by art museums that provide accessible activities for them (Fernandez, 2020). The analysed discourse found on the webpages of these museums found an ambiguous representation of people with visual impairments.

Websites need to balance the expectations of mainstream society and PwDs. The representations of visually impaired people found on these online sources are the result of balancing traditional discourses around people with visual impairments and demystifying representations that focus on negative stereotypes that label them as unproductive people. Another study examined the websites of disability support offices (DSOs) belonging to twelve US higher education institutions (HEIs) using multimodal discourse analysis and genre analysis (Kim, 2021). It was found that DSO websites were within four clicks of HEI homepages but had inconsistent navigation paths, making it challenging to reach DSO websites. In addition, DSO websites were promoting and branding the institutions more than presenting information about the services offered.

A case study investigated the best practices in accessibility among selected hotel restaurants in New Zealand (Shetty, 2020). The categorical analysis findings depict best practices in terms of the accessible display of content and visual design elements on their websites. This included the use of high colour contrast for displaying information on websites, the use of the two-step click process to access information, and a standard central tab present at the top of the page consisting of links to subsequent webpages. The strategies that were used to convey accessibility identified through content analysis included (i) accreditations with social change organisations, (ii) inclusion of PwDs in the workforce, (iii) use of persuasive language, and (iv) effective use of imagery. Examples of common tactics found across websites include Braille menus and the availability of trained staff to support PwDs in the restaurant. The rhetorical analysis findings depicted how the three cases used quotes and statements indicating themes around: (i) Accessibility is for all, (ii) Persuasion for the Inclusion of PWDs, (iii) Validity, and (iv) Persuasion for social change.

Another study uncovered Thai fourth-year English-major students' adoption of lexical choices with connotations that conveyed the identities of the Home for Children with Disabilities for their website project and further explored how and why discursive strategies were used to interpret identities of the home and disabilities through the participants' lexical selection (Sudajit-apa, 2017). The findings revealed the participants' use of different lexical choices with connotations to presuppose the home's identity as a warm, practical, and charitable organisation by providing various special care services to their children, and the children with disabilities were identified as socially independent and capable of being self-supporting. Nevertheless, social exclusion and the lack of social collaboration were entrenched in the discourse's discursive reproduction.

Another content analysis study on the websites of top 20 organisations in Romania searched for statements and definitions related to diversity, equality, or inclusion (Hopson, 2021). The findings uncovered notable differences between top Romanian organisations, how they address different diversity dimensions and how best to elaborate the diversity discourse. From the study, 19 diversity dimensions were identified. Most analysed organisations have at least one diversity statement on their official website and address at least three diversity dimensions.

However, in the case of seven organisations, no statements conveyed diversity, equality, or inclusion. From this review, there were no previous studies, to our knowledge, on the amalgamation of Gestalt principles, semiotics, websites, and disability inclusion of Malaysian and US brands.

Theoretical Framework

This study presents design principles from Gestalt theory as part of its framework. The principles of Gestalt help us to understand how people make sense of advertising, marketing, and visual campaigns. Gestalt comes from the German noun meaning form or shape, and Wertheimer's initial work was refined by Gestalt psychologists who said that visual perception is the consequence of organising sensory elements into different groups (Lester, 2020) and a holistic perception of individual parts (Zufelt, 2019). The principles refer to how humans perceive objects in a holistic manner.

Wertheimer's (1938) Gestalt factors are Proximity, Similarity, Closure, Good Curve, Past Experience or Habit, Objective Set, Director, and Common Fate. He categorises the Factors of Similarity as parts that are alike coming together in a person's perception; the Factor of Proximity as the association of objects close together that form a pattern; and the Factor of Closure that symbolises two enclosed units evident in a pattern in the form of two shapes that may be perceived as evident.

Furthermore, other Gestalt factors relate to the Good Curve and encompasses the shape of three-enclosed distinct shapes that are dominated by a curved line; Past Experience or Habit, which focuses on the use of the experience that is habitually felt due to constant drilling to form a pattern; Common Fate relating to the natural grouping of elements that create a pattern based on standard spacing such as 2 mm between pairs of dots that would move pro-structurally in groups they were placed in when shifted together; and, Objective Set that concerns dominant groupings perceived by a person despite the disturbance in a pattern. Finally, the last gestalt factor assesses Direction, which means that if an adjacent line B to the main line of AC, B would be perceived as an appendage. All the Gestalt Factors are used to examine the websites of 10 brands each in Malaysia and the US in the study.

Semiotic Analysis

The study of signs or semiology embraces meaning-making through signs or text that can be anything from literature, art, and media (Chandler, 2017). This study used Gestalt principles that represent patterns formed through different signs intertwined with semiotic analysis to interpret the signs' meaning.

Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of modern linguistics, states that language is a system of signs within a system, a sign has two aspects: *le signifiant* (a “signifier”) and *le signifié* (a “signified”) with the relationship between both parts as that which is conceptual, arbitrary, and defined by social convention (Danesi, 2018). The linguistics feature has been made to include the physical elements of signs that could be seen, touched, smelled, or tasted (signifiers) and the visual mental image (signified) described as a post-Saussurean phenomenon (Chandler, 2017). When applied to the study, the website represents a sign divided into two: the signifier element comprises the visual and verbal elements, and the signified as the mental image the audience interprets. The study applied Saussure's semiological perspective and examined the sign, signifier, and signified website content concerning disability inclusion messages conveyed by selected brands in Malaysia and the US.

Method

This study is a multiple case research design that compared selected brands in Malaysia and the US regarding brand communication on disability inclusion by using Gestalt principles and semiotic analysis. A case study goes in-depth as it attempts to answer the research questions of “how” and “why” (Yin, 2018). The principles of Gestalt and semiotics are put together in a framework for the study and included in the codebook. The units of analysis are websites selected from ten US brands that are familiar to the researchers: L'Oréal USA, Microsoft, Boeing, Corning, Nestle, Johnson, and Johnson, Dell, Ford, P&G, and Walmart that scored 100 percent in the DEI of 2021 (American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability: IN, 2021). Furthermore, the ten most valuable Malaysian brands in 2021 selected for the study are YTL, PETRONAS, Maybank, Celcom, CIMB, Telekom Malaysia, Air Asia, Maxis, Sime Darby, and Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), selected from a list of top ten brands ranked according to brand value by Brand Finance (“Malaysia 100 2021 Ranking,” 2021). After the brands were

selected, the keywords: “DEI” and the brand name were used to search for US brands’ reports on the brands’ practices of disability inclusion at the workplace. In the case of Malaysia, the term: “disability inclusion” and the names of top brands were used to search for reports of disability inclusion by the brands. The research process involved the following stages (see Figure 1):

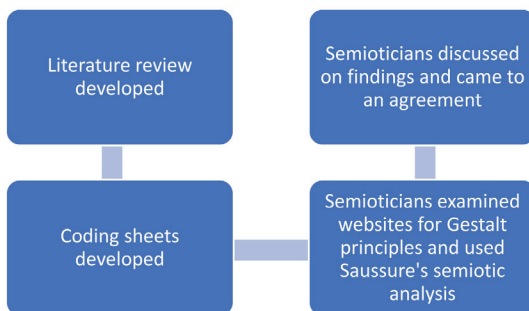


Figure 1: Flowchart of research methods process

A coding sheet was divided into Gestalt principles, semiotic signifiers, and signified elements that integrated Gestalt principles and Saussure’s semiotic analysis approaches in the research study. Both images and copy (or text) in the brand communication through websites were examined.

The semiotician as the interpreter of the websites must also know the culture in which a representation or the text (on websites) was formed in order to interpret them better (Danesi, 2018). The influence of a persons’ background on the interpretation of advertisements is apparent. In a study, analysts who held different positions such as the advertising creative director, minister and consumer consultant, were used to understand the meaning of advertisements which according to semiotic or sign analysis, is dependent upon the person’s interpretation after seeing or hearing the advertisement, and hence, the findings represented the variations of interpretations influenced by various backgrounds (Langrehr & Caywood, 1995).

However, the polysemic nature of semiotics puts forth a sense of arbitrariness where the signs could have multiple meanings interpreted by different individuals (Bryman, 2018). This is supported by the development of later post-structuralist semiotics that differed from early

semiotics, which took a structuralist approach, perceiving the meaning of signs as remarkably fixed and interpreted according to a system. In contrast, later post-structuralist semiotics theory saw signs as interpreted by audiences that would differ from the creator of the message and between audiences themselves marking the difficulty in determining the notion of sameness in meanings akin to the intercoder reliability of content analysis (Macnamara, 2005). Nevertheless, in keeping with the importance of establishing the credibility of qualitative data, the semioticians confided in one another to agree on common findings. This confirms with the practice of investigator triangulation that requires multiple observers as opposed to single observers in the observation to eliminate biases (Denzin, 1978).

Findings

The brands whose websites were examined in terms of their practices of disability inclusion were selected (See Table 1). There were ten brands in Malaysia that were selected as they ranked highly in the Brand Directory (“Malaysia 100 2021 Ranking,” 2021), and in the US the researchers were interested in examining the websites of brands that earned 100 percent for their DEI (American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability: IN, 2021). Not all US brands selected originated from the US, such as L’Oréal USA (originally from France) and Nestlé (originally from Switzerland). However, they were chosen due to the researchers’ familiarity with them.

Table 1: Brands Selected for the Study

Brands in Malaysia	Brands in the US
Maybank	L’Oréal USA
Maxis	Microsoft
Celcom	Boeing
Telekom Malaysia	Corning
Sime Darby	Nestle
YTL	Johnson and Johnson
PETRONAS	Walmart
TNB	Dell
CIMB	Ford
Air Asia	P&G

Brands in Malaysia, Gestalt and Semiotics

Table 2: Gestalt Principles on Webpages and Reports of Top Brands in Malaysia

Brands in Malaysia	Gesltalt Principles
Maybank	Common Fate
Maxis	Common Fate
Celcom	Common Fate
Telekom Malaysia	Common Fate and Similarity
Sime Darby	Common Fate
YTL	Common Fate
PETRONAS	Common Fate and Similarity
Tenaga Nasional Berhad	Common Fate
CIMB	Common Fate
Air Asia	Common Fate and Similarity

All of the Malaysian brands selected for the study originate from Malaysia and these encompassed banks such as Commerce International Merchant Bankers Berhad (CIMB) and Malayan Banking Berhad (Maybank); telecommunication companies such as Telekom Malaysia, Maxis, and Celcom; Sime Darby (a global trading and logistics player with core businesses in industrial, motors and logistics sectors, healthcare, insurance, and retail segments); YTL Corporation Berhad (an integrated infrastructure developer with extensive operations in several countries including Malaysia); PETRONAS (Petroliam Nasional Berhad or government-owned oil and gas corporation); TNB (an electric utility company); and, Air Asia (an international low-cost airline) (see Table 1).

The websites of the Malaysian brands were examined in terms of their depiction of disability inclusion by focusing on crucial Gestalt principles and interpreted through the semiotics analysis of image and text. There were different combinations of Gestalt principles found on the websites. The brands using Common Fate and Similarity principles

when conveying disability inclusion are PETRONAS, Air Asia, and Telekom Malaysia. Maybank focuses on providing entrepreneurial training to PwDs, PETRONAS ensures their suppliers are inclusive, and Air Asia practices equal opportunities at the workplace. Sime Darby, YTL, CIMB, Maxis, Celcom, Tenaga Nasional Berhad, and Maybank websites mainly use Common Fate as they provide the Direction of the organisation through the idea of everyone moving forward in the same way in terms of disability inclusion.

The Maybank website identifies with the Gestalt principle of Common Fate in its copy and image, marking the idea of moving PwDs forward when training them to be financially independent and self-sustaining through its entrepreneurship programme. The signifier is the image of a group of happy children waving to the camera together, marking Common Fate's one-direction principle. The children reflect the marginalised community but are not PwDs. The text focuses on Maybank Foundation's collaboration with the social enterprise People Systems Consultancy in their Reach Independence & Sustainable Entrepreneurship (RISE) programme that trains PwDs to become successful entrepreneurs. This is mentioned as part of Maybank's efforts to contribute to communities sustainably, bringing about tangible results. The signified is Maybank's practice of disability inclusion within the community by empowering PwDs to be self-sustaining and financially independent through entrepreneurship.

For PETRONAS, disability inclusion is mentioned in its *Human Rights Report 2020*. The Report appears to be guided by the Gestalt principles of Common Fate and Similarity. The visual signifier is the image of a smiling worker in an orange suit and a hard hat (possibly an engineer) who appears to be a person without disabilities or typical. The text focuses on PETRONAS's practice of disability inclusion as part of its non-discrimination practice in hiring and employment practices, which is also one of its nine human rights principles that its Suppliers and Contractors must adhere to. This way of reporting upholds the common Direction taken by PETRONAS by putting disability inclusion under the umbrella of human rights, thus, adhering to the Common Fate principle. As a signifier, the text mentions that unlawful discrimination should not happen for people of different ages, gender, religion, skin colour, and disability, underscoring the Similarity principle because they belong

to the standard category of a diverse community. The signified entails PETRONAS' support for disability inclusion through its Suppliers and Contractors in terms of their hiring and employment practices that are quantifiably evaluated and framed using global expectations of human rights and the law.

Air Asia also uses the Gestalt principles of Common Fate and Similarity in its Sustainability Report as it mentions that it is against discriminatory and unequal practices and harassment and provides equal opportunities to all staff despite their marital status, family, religious belief, disability, age, racial grounds, sexual orientation, or memberships. Disability inclusion practices have been placed under human rights by the airline. Air Asia deems these efforts as the brand's role in being ethical and responsible through its intolerance of discriminatory and unequal practices. The text's tone reflects the brand's firm stance on this as it mentions its Code of Conduct and Sexual Harassment Policy, whistleblowing mechanism, the People & Culture Department that will investigate the matter, and any form of misconduct by employees that would get them to face disciplinary action, including dismissal. The signified is Air Asia's support for disability inclusion in employment as part of human rights.

Telekom Malaysia also uses Similarity and Common Fate gestalt principles in its *Sustainability Report* that focuses on creating value by including a diverse collective workforce (that includes PwDs). The diverse workforce is mentioned positively as they contribute to innovative and well-balanced ideas for the organisation. This common Direction to the diverse workforce represents the Common Fate principle embraced. The collective label given to the diverse workforce upholds Similarity. In addition, Telekom illustrates disability inclusion practices through designated parking spaces and ramps for PwDs. The signified projects that disability inclusion is practiced and perceived through a positive lens by associating it with the formation of value and by providing access to PwDs in order to include them at the workplace.

Sime Darby, YTL, CIMB, TNB, Celcom, and Maxis are brands that focus on the principle of Common Fate through their website signifiers. It could be seen that with the Common Fate principle, some brands focus on disability inclusion in employment (Sime Darby, CIMB,

Tenaga Nasional), YTL focuses on investing in special needs education, and Maxis in providing customer-oriented services for PwDs.

Sime Darby uses a signifier in the form of text on the organisation's fair employment practices and equal opportunities for PwDs without including an image. The signified is that disability inclusion is based on fairness and equal opportunities for PwDs upholding the organisation's Direction, thus conveying the Common Fate principle.

YTL focuses on Common Fate through the text signifier of YTL Foundation, transforming classrooms for children with disabilities coupled with the image of happy children in well-equipped classrooms that are student-focused and driven by technology is its way of providing a sustainable mode of support. This was indicated on the website through the Smart Frog classroom concept in the school, Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) Sin Min in Perak, Malaysia. The signified conveys YTL's practice of disability inclusion by providing education that embraces technology advancement to build a sustainable society. Education is one of the ways to equip children with disabilities with knowledge and skills for better empowerment, reflecting YTL's common Direction.

CIMB, in its Sustainability Report, embraces Common Fate reflected by the organisation's common Direction through its diversity and inclusion practices as part of its work culture that it claims leads to healthy perspectives for better decision-making, attracts quality talents, and results in a high-performing and sustainable organisation. The number of PwDs employed by CIMB in Malaysia and abroad is also mentioned. The signified reflects CIMB's association of disability inclusion with positives regarding sustainability and high-performance perspectives. Unfortunately, there is no image to support the text here.

TNB also used Common Fate, as highlighted in its *Integrated Annual Report 2020*. The signifier text under the heading "Diversity and Inclusiveness" touches on the common Direction for the organisation that was conveyed through the revision of core values by including the collaborative value of embracing diversity and inclusivity, thus dispelling any form of harassment, and increasing the employment of PwDs that saw an increase of 14% hired in 2020 by the organisation.

TNB mentions that it provides employees equal opportunities regardless of age, gender, religious affiliation, and disability. The revision of TNB's core values underlining Common Fate reflects the seriousness of embracing diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

When the keywords "disability inclusion" were used by the researchers to search for the signifier of Celcom's practices of disability inclusion, an article appeared in the search that only had text with the headline of empowering the differently abled (rather than PwDs) by providing them exclusive priority services through home visits. The Gestalt principle of Common Fate is apparent here as it provides customer-oriented products for people with different abilities reflecting the company's common Direction in customer orientation. The signified is that disability inclusion is provided through PwD-oriented services by prioritising those euphemistically referred to as the differently abled. Using a different label for PwDs in the Malay language by shifting from *Orang Kurang Upaya (OKU)* to *Orang Kelainan Upaya* is often contested, with *Orang Kurang Upaya* prevailing in keeping with the PwD Act 2008. The signified is evident through the organisation's support for customers with disabilities, mentioned euphemistically through products made for them. The signifier words "exclusive" and "priority" are used concerning the services provided by Celcom to PwDs, signifying their practice of disability inclusion.

Maxis is another organisation whose website, when mentioning disability inclusion, embraces the Common Fate principle by helping PwDs to move forward through exceptional services provided to ease their burden when communicating. When we searched on disability inclusion practices by Maxis, an article appeared with the signifier headline "Maxis committed to more affordable connectivity for OKU customers," and the rest of the article focuses on the sales promotion given to PwDs who sign up for the *Hotlink Post-paid Flex plan with More Data* at RM40 per month that will earn them an RM10 monthly rebate for life. The message of assisting and easing PwD customers' burden is further emphasised with the promise of more prioritised services for PwDs. It is comforting to note that the sales promotion effort comes with the idea by Maxis of easing the burden of PwDs. The signified conveys that Maxis practices disability inclusion through its services for PwDs underscoring its PwD-oriented approach.

Brands in US, Gestalt and Semiotics

Table 3: Gestalt Principles on Websites of Brands with high DEI scores in US

Brands in the US	Gestalt Principles
L'Oréal USA	Common Fate and Similarity
Microsoft	Common Fate and Similarity
Boeing	Common Fate and Similarity
Corning	Common Fate and Similarity
Nestle	Common Fate and Similarity
Johnson and Johnson	Common Fate and Proximity
Walmart	Common Fate and Similarity
Dell	Common Fate and Similarity
Ford USA	Common Fate and Similarity
P&G	Common Fate and Similarity

The signifier and signified were identified in the brand communication on websites by US brands that focused on their reports of them having the 100 percent Disability Equality Index (DEI) score. Most brands embraced the design principles of Common Fate and Similarity: Ford USA, L'Oréal USA, Corning, Nestle, Walmart, P&G, Dell, Boeing, and Microsoft. Nevertheless, Johnson and Johnson focuses on Common Fate and Proximity (see Table 3).

The L'Oréal USA webpage on disability inclusion has the headline "Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion." The image of two people of different races happily engaged is depicted at the top of the webpage. The webpage's text mentions that an organisation's strength is found when the brand associates itself with diversity and inclusion through acceptance and value. Disability inclusion practices are mentioned in terms of welcoming and valuing diverse staff, including those with disabilities. There is also a three-minute video posted by the brand

with a narration that conveys the specific names of the members of the team (presumably the staff) and their disabilities alongside other staff with unique characteristics using the theme “We are all different,” highlighting the diversity of its staff. The video uses copy without images. The signified is found through the depiction of the brand’s strategy of highlighting diverse communities in the same vein, thus emphasising the Common Fate principle and the embrace of unique people focusing on the Similarity principle and the positives associated with these differences. The brand mentions that staff differences lead to a more substantial and sustainable organisation.

Microsoft’s primary signifier is a purple banner with graphics of diverse people, including a person in a wheelchair, with the heading “Diversity and Inclusion.” Underneath, it conveys the message that there is transformative power by including many different perspectives through a diverse workforce inclusion, marking the common Direction of the brand regarding disability inclusion, hence upholding the Common Fate principle. The body copy underneath the banner mentions empowering everyone to achieve more and encouraging people to bring their whole self to work and do their best at the workplace. Again, the idea of the authentic self is impressed here, like for Nestle and Dell. An icon on the banner has the copy “How we work inside Microsoft,” which leads to another webpage. The second webpage contains information on nine resource groups representing diverse people (including PwDs) that are formed to engage with stakeholders inside and outside the organisation, thus upholding the Similarity principle.

Boeing uses on its website the Gestalt principles of Common Fate and Similarity, to relay disability inclusion. The brand’s website contains an image representing diversity inclusion in the form of four people with different racial backgrounds. In addition, the webpage carries Boeing’s *Global Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report 2021*, and the text conveys equity, diversity, and inclusion as values at Boeing through its commitment to creating a welcoming environment for all teammates for shared, long-term success, marking Common Fate or common Direction for PwDs. The report also focuses on the real stories of employees with disabilities as part of the diverse community representing Similarity. The signified puts forth the earnestness of Boeing in practicing disability inclusion rooted in its core values.

Corning's webpage contains the headline "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion." It also encompasses the image of typical people of different ages and a PwD on a wheelchair, all wearing the same blue-coloured shirts heading to the same direction, thus representing their practice of disability inclusion. The text focuses on the brand's 100 percent DEI score while claiming it as the "Best Place to Work." The brand also mentions the inclusive environment at the workplace for staff with disabilities, evidenced by a staff testimonial. It also mentions an employee resource group known as the Abled and DisAbled Partnering Together (ADAPT) that supports Corning employees in discovering resources to accommodate their different disabilities. The image signifies the integration between diverse people representing the common Direction of the organisation upholding a Common Fate. The similar colour of shirt and the proximity of the typical and the nontypical person's featured highlight Similarity. There is pride sensed through the 100 percent DEI score and a structured way of addressing the inclusion of staff with disabilities through ADAPT.

With Nestlé, the gestalt principles of Common Fate and Similarity appear to have been used on its webpage on disability inclusion. A webpage has the headline "Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at Nestlé," indicating the organisation's direction by putting the three concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the same level, thus promoting the Common Fate principle. The image of people from diverse racial backgrounds is at the webpage's top. The copy proceeding the image includes the subheading "Bring Your Whole Self to Work," subsequently mentioning the brand's commitment to fostering a diverse workforce that is inclusive of all that is the focus of the brand's culture, plus the idea of empowering staff to bring their whole self, unique perspectives, and talents to every challenge, and that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential practices of the company as it attempts to win consumers. Another depiction of Common Fate and Similarity principles is evident with testimonials by female employees commenting on their positive experiences of the brand's diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. One of the ladies with disabilities depicts her comfort of bringing her whole self to work, supported by Nestlé. The signified indicates that diversity, equity, and inclusion have become ingrained in the brand's culture, and letting employees be themselves is essential for the brand's business in serving customers.

Walmart's webpage on disability inclusion has the headline "Culture, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion." At the top of the page is the image of people from different racial backgrounds, but it does not seem to include PwDs. The text conveys, "Walmart is stronger as a company when people are heard, included and empowered." The brand highlights its seriousness in addressing the matter of culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion through multiple reports that focus on disability inclusion efforts. Walmart also mentions its launch of the Accessibility Centre of Excellence to advance the progress of disability inclusion and focuses on the Walmart score of 100 in the 2021 Disability Equality Index (DEI) for the sixth successive year. The signifier suggests that the brand's strength is by including diverse people, including those with disabilities, to make them heard, included, and empowered. Great pride is felt in its disability inclusion practices by the brand as evidenced by its reports on its activities and 100 percent DEI. Common Fate is brought about through its common Direction of diversity, inclusion, and equality set by the organisation. The similarity is found through the common ground established by people with diverse backgrounds placed on the platform of inclusion and equality. The signified is that Walmart's disability inclusion efforts strengthen it.

With Dell, the Gestalt principles are Common Fate and Similarity. Dell's website presents the *2021 Diversity & Inclusion Report* with a video encompassing diverse people who have different backgrounds, whether they are immigrants, Latino, gay, Asian, or with disabilities putting forth the principle of Similarity by putting the diverse people under one category. The theme of the Report is: "Driving Culture, Equity, and Belonging." It starts with the message "Be who you are" and the idea of taking yourselves with diverse backgrounds to the workplace in a welcoming environment. This message provides the Direction of the organisation, thus upholding Common Fate. The video ends with the message "Together we are unstoppable," reinforcing Similarity. The signifier is the image in the video of an employee with a disability exercising in a gym. The copy mentions the COVID-19 pandemic and the support given, that disability inclusion is part of the bigger picture of diversity inclusion, and that diversity is power by bringing people with unique perspectives. The signified is that Dell perceives the positives of diversity and disability inclusion, supports PwDs, and makes them feel welcomed as their authentic selves.

Ford's webpage appears with the headline, "The Mission," and mentions the inclusive supply chain developed by it to drive economic prosperity for people, communities, and businesses known as its Supplier Diversity and Inclusion (SD&I) programme. There is a timeline of the SD&I programme that includes milestones commencing from 1968 as an inner-city supplier programme that later developed into the SD&I programme in 1978 and included Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE) certified companies in 2018. The text signifier indicates that SD&I is aligned with Ford's Diversity & Inclusion programme, which it says is essential to uphold a solid and sustainable business. There is an image and the corresponding text of one of their suppliers certified as a DOBE. DOBEs are at least 51 percent for-profit organisations owned, operated, controlled, and managed by a PwD. The signified amount of structured attention given to Ford's embrace of disability inclusion in the form of including DOBEs appears to convey the seriousness of Ford's embrace of disability inclusion as part of the more significant inclusion of diverse companies belonging to several categories of people encompassing Women, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Native Alaskans, Canadian Aboriginal, LGBT People, Veterans, Disabled Veterans, People with Disabilities and Small Businesses. There is similarity in the communities banded together through the SD&I programme, then moving them in the same direction as suppliers, thus representing Common Fate. The signified upholds Ford's embrace of disability inclusion through a structured programme for including PwDs through DOBEs in its business activities.

With P&G, the Gestalt principles of Common Fate and Similarity appear on its website. The webpage entitled "We Are Unique, and We are United" presents information on DEI. The remaining text mentions the organisation's aspiration to create a company and world that practices equality and inclusion for all and the idea of respect and inclusion as part of a culture where equal access and opportunity to learn, grow, succeed, and thrive are found. Diversity for P&G entails people of various genders, disabilities, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others (LGBTQ+), and of different races and ethnicities. There is similarity through the common category of diverse communities reflected by the "We" in the headline. When the icon PwDs is selected, the image of 3 people of different racial backgrounds, including a PwD on a wheelchair in the middle, is found

at the top of the second webpage showing them walking in the same direction, thus upholding Common Fate. The image of the employees with differences walking together represents Similarity. The webpage's text focuses on P&G's commitment in creating a more inclusive world for all PwDs inside and outside the organisation. Disability inclusion at P&G touches on including employees with disabilities and consumers with disabilities through brand offerings such as tactile markings on brand bottles, developing partnerships, and helping communities thrive through inclusion and accessibility practices. The signified is P&G as a strong supporter of disability inclusion through their earnest efforts.

Johnson and Johnson uses the Gestalt principles of Common Fate and Proximity. The signifier is in the headline "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion," indicating the Direction the organisation is taking, thus underscoring Common Fate. This proceeds with the image of an Asian lady looking at the camera smiling, and below this is the copy "Diversity at Johnson and Johnson is about your unique perspective." There is also the image of a meeting between PwDs and typical employees with the subheading "Advancing our Culture of Inclusion and Innovation" with the body copy mentioning that the uniqueness of people brings the best solutions, thus associating diversity inclusion with something positive. The webpage also depicts another image of a meeting, including PwDs, evidenced by their wheelchairs and that the brand is part of Valuable 500. The signified depicts the organisation's sense of belonging to the Valuable 500 global movement and that disability inclusion is culturally embedded, as indicated through the text and image signifiers. The images of PwDs being included in meetings bring forth the principle of Proximity between the typical and PwDs.

Discussion and Implications

Several similarities were found between brands in Malaysia and the US in terms of the most frequently used Gestalt principles. First, all brands mainly focused on at least the Common Fate principle found from the common Direction undertaken by organisations or the Direction the organisation encourages PwDs to take. The factor of Common Fate is the perception of naturally grouping objects because they move in the same direction, like five hands pointing to the sky (Lester, 2020), thus, conveying that they are part of a group. After the organisations' websites were examined, they were moving in the same direction regarding their

practice of disability inclusion. For example, some Malaysian brands used human rights to support their Direction concerning disability inclusion (PETRONAS and Air Asia), others embraced the notion of producing customer-oriented products as part of their common Direction (Celcom and Maxis), some brands focused on disability inclusion at the workplace such as Sime Darby, CIMB, Telekom Malaysia and TNB. On the other hand, YTL focuses on providing a technological school setting for children with disabilities and Maybank trains PwDs to be entrepreneurs.

Most brands in the US that scored highly in the DEI also predominantly embraced the Common Fate principle, and the Direction taken by most brands is similar in that it provides support to staff with disabilities, except for Ford, which focuses on disability inclusion of the supply chain. However, this differs from the Malaysian brands that have adopted various directions under the Common Fate principle.

All brands in both countries use positive signifiers such as commitment, empowerment, power, priority, exclusivity, sustainability, and unique perspectives. Using appropriate nomenclature is essential as it could contribute to how a person perceives the world, as espoused by the Sapir Whorf's hypothesis (Mokhtar, 2019). Hence, the positive words chosen by the brands to convey on PwDs and disability inclusion reflect the organisations' perception of these concepts, leading to a positive brand reputation and purchases.

Another difference is that most US brands focus on Common Fate and Similarity Gestalt principles. For Wertheimer (1938), the Similarity factor reflects that elements that are alike come together in a person's perception, and in this case, PwDs in the US are placed together with other minorities as part of the diverse community. Some Malaysian brands also use the Similarity principle with Common Fate, such as PETRONAS, Air Asia, and Telekom Malaysia, that have put PwD employees under the banner of the diverse community. The remaining brands focus on PwDs alone. The notion of assimilating the diversity approach by putting PwDs under a bigger umbrella of the diverse community is an anti-discrimination effort through a systematic and planned policy to recruit PwDs for improved assimilation and equality practices in organisations (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2008); a practice also found by Montenegro (2020) through the recruitment of women with

disabilities. Some brands in Malaysia and in the US also focus on profit-making, customer satisfaction, increased productivity, and inclusion of PwDs upholding Mazzei and Ravazzani's diversity management model (2008), and others focus on the scholars' leveraging differences approach by using differences to engage with stakeholders.

The DEI has given brands in the US more standardised ways of reporting by focusing on diversity and inclusion at the workplace according to the criteria required for scoring the index. In contrast, Malaysian brands embrace diverse ways of reporting disability inclusion through websites, articles, Sustainability Reports, and Annual Reports. Perhaps a similar form of standards should be established in Malaysia for its brands, albeit adapting to our culture. The brands in the US appear to wear their diversity and inclusion programmes, 100 percent DEI scores, and affiliations with Valuable 500-like badges proudly on their sleeves, which should also be the practice of Malaysian brands. It is not just reporting on disability inclusion practices that need to be carried out but also practicing it sincerely that needs to happen.

Limitations and Future Research

Future research could be carried out quantitatively to generalise the findings better. The study focused on a qualitative research design by combining Gestalt principles and semiotic analysis, that examined the websites of selected brands in depth; however, the findings could not be generalised to brands in Malaysia and the US. A quantitative research study would be more representative in reporting how brands in Malaysia and the US practice and report on disability inclusion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that disability inclusion is practised in different ways by all brands in Malaysia and in the US. Brands in the US have a more standardised way of gauging the degree of disability inclusion practised at the workplace through DEI making it easier to search for this information on their websites. Brands in Malaysia communicate their practice of disability inclusion through different ways; by claiming the disability inclusion practice as part of human rights, PwDs as part of the diverse workforce, YTL's adaption of classrooms for children with disabilities, Maybank's entrepreneurship training for PwDs and Celcom's products-offering for PwDs. The

information on disability inclusion were sometimes found in reports or webpages that are separate from the main websites of the brands. Other than the practices of disability inclusion by both countries' brands, the Gestalt principle Common Fate conveying disability inclusion practices was found on all websites and reports by the brands in both countries. There are monumental benefits for brands to practice disability inclusion at the workplace which should make this a sustainable practice.

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Understanding the Decline of Pakistan-US Alliance and the Growing Influence of China in Pakistan

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Abstract: This article examines Pakistan's strategic options in order to understand its puzzling behaviour, which can be seen as a hedging strategy against the uncertain future of China-US relations in South Asia. The study sheds light on Pakistan's perplexing conduct towards its alliances with China and the US under the theoretical framework elucidated by Kuik Cheng-Chwee (2008). On one hand, Pakistan fears becoming excessively dependent on the US for security and economic support, particularly as India and the US forge a stronger alliance to counter China. On the other hand, it worries about getting enmeshed in the growing influence of China in Pakistan, which could come at the cost of its financial, conventional military, and strategic ties to the US. The study maintains that Pakistan is striving to position itself as a crucial security partner of the US in the fight against terrorism, which is currently a fading alliance, and as a strategic ally of rising China, an idea that has received scant attention in academic scholarship.

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Key Words: China, Hedging, Influence, Pakistan, the United States

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji pilihan strategik Pakistan demi memahami perilakunya yang membingungkan, yang dapat dilihat sebagai strategi “hedging” terhadap masa depan yang tidak menentu dalam hubungan China-AS di Asia Selatan. Kajian ini memberikan gambaran tentang perilaku rumit Pakistan terhadap pakatan dengan China dan AS di bawah kerangka teori yang diterangkan oleh Kuik Cheng-Chwee (2008). Di satu sisi, Pakistan bimbang menjadi terlalu bergantung kepada AS untuk sokongan keamanan dan ekonomi, terutamanya apabila India dan AS membentuk pakatan yang lebih kuat untuk menandingi China. Di sisi lain, Pakistan khawatir terjerat dengan pengaruh China yang semakin meningkat di Pakistan, yang memberi kesan kepada hubungan kewangan, ketenteraan konvensional, dan strateginya dengan AS. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa Pakistan tetap berusaha untuk menjadi rakan keselamatan yang penting bagi AS dalam perang melawan pengganas, yang saat ini merupakan pakatan yang semakin lemah, dan sebagai sekutu strategik China yang semakin kuat, sebuah pendapat ini masih belum banyak mendapat perhatian dalam akademik.

Kata kunci: China, Pengembangan, Pengaruh, Pakistan, Amerika

Introduction

Since Pakistan gained independence, the United States (US) has been the most important actor in the regional geopolitics South Asia. During the 1950s, Pakistan was known as the “most allied ally” of the US (Sunawar & Coutto, 2015), and eventually, it became a “major non-NATO ally” during the war against terrorism after the catastrophic events of 9/11. Consequently, the US has a significant impact on Pakistan’s foreign policy, whether through cooperation or non-cooperation with the country (I. Khan, Khattak, & Marwat, 2014). In response to President Bush’s warning that “every nation in every region had a choice, either you’re on our side, or you’re on the terrorists’ side,” Pakistan decided to join the US in its War on Terrorism (WoT) after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Bush, 2001). Islamabad had no room for maneuvering or peaceful negotiations after Washington threatened to bomb Pakistan “back into the stone age” if it did not comply (Goldenberg, 2006).

Although Pakistan’s participation in the WoT in September 2001 (Malik, Zhilong, & Ashraf, 2019) brought significant financial and military aid, which helped the country recover its military and economic

strength, it also brought forth a myriad of challenges that Pakistan has had to face. However, the obligation to remain in an alliance diminishes when the threat is minimised or removed, and states may seek better security options elsewhere when their interests change (Walt, 1997). The Pakistan-US alliance is also on the decline due to various factors, including a lack of trust and changes in the country's geopolitical situation. China has significantly impacted on Pakistan-US relations since the 1960s (Lavoy, 2005) and Pakistan is adopting a hedging strategy to balance its relations with both China and the US amid growing geostrategic competition between the two. However, this approach presents a significant challenge to Pakistan's broader alliance relationships with both countries.

To investigate the research question at hand, a wide range of literature was examined with a broad focus. The available sources mainly concentrated on the alliance between Pakistan and China, while neglecting Pakistan's current relations with both China and the US amid their increasing geopolitical competition (Blank, 2015; Curtis & Scissors, 2012; Gill, 2019; Z. Hussain, 2017; Kabraji, 2012; Kardon, 2011; D. Markey, 2020a; Singh & Singh, 2019; Small, 2015; P. J. Smith, 2011). Nonetheless, only a limited amount of literature was found that covered the developing trend of relations between the US, Pakistan and China, taking into account the more recent research that highlighted the trilateral conflict and cooperation (Anwar, 2020; Arshad, Rogers, & Daut, 2021; Boni, 2021; M. Hussain & Jamali, 2019; Joshi, 2012; Z. Khan, 2022; D. Markey, 2020b; D. S. Markey, 2013; Schwemlein, 2019). This study aims to address these gaps by suggesting a perspective on hedging, conceptualising the term, and applying it to the case of Pakistan's alignment behaviour in the China-US strategic competitions in South Asia. Specifically, it explains how Pakistan is reacting under the theoretical framework of hedging, which seeks to balance and manage two different types of relationships that fall into the category of tripartite, but not tandem, relations.

The study uses a qualitative methodology, employing thematic analysis to collect primary data through semi-structured interviews of the academicians, diplomats, and other officials from the US, China, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Singapore. By offering granular details about Pakistan's behaviour towards these two major powers, the study presents a shift in conventional wisdom and highlights a fundamental change

occurring in the empirical understanding of the events of the last two decades in this triangular relationship.

This paper is structured into six sections. The first section serves as an introduction, while the second section provides a theoretical and conceptual overview of the hedging approach. The third section presents the key factors leading to the decline of US-Pakistan alliance, drawing from the thematic analysis findings. The fourth section explores the weakening nature of the US influence in Pakistan and sources of increasing Chinese influence in the country. The fifth section evaluates Pakistan's hedging responses towards China and the US in the context of China's growing influence. Finally, the sixth section summarises the study's findings and provides a comprehensive conclusion. By employing thematic analysis and drawing from primary data collected through semi-structured interviews, this paper offers a detailed and nuanced examination of Pakistan's hedging approach and its impact on the US-Pakistan alliance.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides a foundation for examining Pakistan's use of the hedging strategy in its relations with the US during the anti-terrorism campaign amid China's expanding power since 2001. The concept of "hedging" emerged in the 1990s as a term used to characterise state behaviour that "adopts a middle ground between the two traditional strategies of balancing and bandwagoning" (Johnston & Ross, 1999; Lake, 1996). This approach is characterised by a mixture of selective engagement, limited resistance, and partial deference. Generally, it involves a state's national security or alignment strategy towards another state, which blends cooperative and confrontational elements. However, a broader understanding of hedging refers to a policy that is deliberately ambiguous and implemented without public announcement, as overtly identifying with it could invite pushback from competing great powers. Despite its widespread use, there is no consensus on how the term "hedging" should be defined and applied in International Relations. This is primarily due to the misconception that hedging is a sign of indecisiveness or fence-sitting.

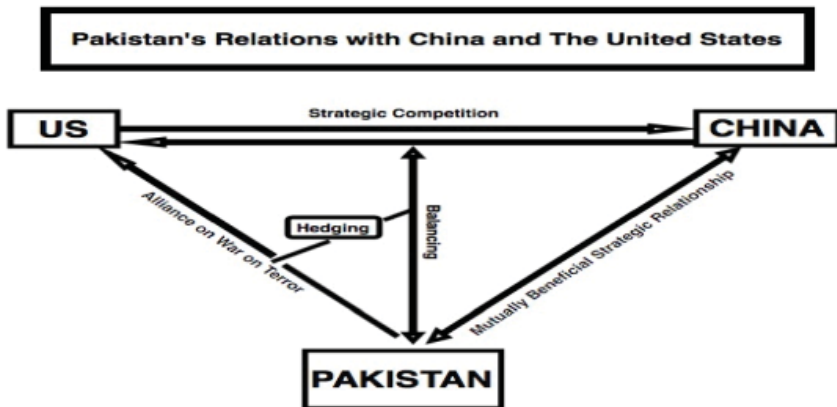
Scholars often compare hedging to balancing or bandwagoning, theories that emerged during the Cold War to describe different approaches for opposing or cooperating with a powerful threatening

state. The concept of hedging gained prominence as scholars examined the unique dynamics of international relations and recognised the insufficiency of existing theoretical approaches (Ciorciari & Haacke, 2019). According to Goh, hedging entails “a set of strategies aimed at avoiding (or planning for contingencies in) a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives such as balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality” (Goh, 2005). Similarly, Kuik Cheng-Chwee posits that hedging involves “a behaviour in which a country seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple policy options that are intended to produce mutually counteracting effects, under the situation of high-uncertainties and high-stakes” (Kuik, 2021). Kuik has provided a nuanced definition of “hedging” which pertains to the “strategy of seeking insurance” with three distinct attributes: (a) a commitment to avoiding taking sides or becoming firmly aligned with a particular position; (b) an effort to implement opposing or contrasting measures to mitigate various security, political, and economic risks; and (c) a proclivity to diversify and establish a backup position.

In this context, Pakistan’s hedging strategy influences its behaviour, enabling it to circumvent the uncertainties and ramifications associated with balancing or bandwagoning. Pakistan’s foreign policy has been complicated by the emergence of China as a strategic and economic rival to the United States. To navigate this complex landscape, Pakistan has adopted a “hedging” strategy aimed at maintaining its relations with both states while also guarding against American threats and warnings associated with the war on terrorism. During the Musharraf administration (2001-2008), there was a general perception that relations between the two states were growing stronger despite Pakistan’s reluctance to join the US coalition against terrorism. Musharraf was even regarded as Bush’s “favourite dictator” (Pollock, 2006) and a personal favourite among third-world leaders (Hoagland, 2007). However, the US Af-Pak policy of Obama administration in 2009, which labelled Pakistan a safe haven for terrorists and rising mistrust caused the close friendship to deteriorate after the end of the Musharraf and Bush regimes (Clary & Siddiqui, 2018) The period between 2001 and 2009 marked Pakistan’s alignment with the US as it pursued a hedging strategy to counter US threats and coercion, while concurrently enhancing its military and economic ties with China. However, following the deteriorating US-Pakistan alliance in the fight against terrorism, coupled with China’s

rise in late 2010, Pakistan's transition from bandwagoning to hedging strategies toward the US accelerated. This shift was predominantly driven by the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Iftikhar, 2020).

Positioned as an asymmetric power between two fierce competitors, engaged in fierce strategic competition for influence and regional hegemony, Pakistan attempts to maintain favourable relationships with both China and the US to ensure its survival through a hedging approach against an uncertain future (Kim, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates a hypothetical scenario that depicts Pakistan's strategic thinking. The following section presents the factors leading to the decline of Pakistan-US relations.



Source: Authors compilation

Figure 1: Hypothetical Relations of Pakistan with China and the US

Factors Leading to the Decline of Pakistan-US Alliance

The alliance between Pakistan and the US has faced a significant decline due to several factors that have contributed to a growing rift in their interests and motives since 2009. A major contributor to this decline has been the reduction in the US economic and military aid for Pakistan during America's involvement in the WoT between 2001 and 2009. Numerous factors have contributed to the tugged relations between Pakistan and the US. The US accused Pakistan of providing safe havens to terrorist groups, most prominently the Haqqani Network, and alleged support to the Afghan Taliban which caused an aperture in

the relationship, as the US considers Pakistan's cooperation essential in combating terrorism. Whereas, Pakistan has never accepted the US allegations of supporting the Haqqani Network, instead, it viewed US's increasing strategic partnership with India as a potential threat to its national security. Resultantly, it led to mistrust and suspicion in the bilateral relations. Additionally, Chinese investment through CPEC in Pakistan's infrastructure development and increasing military cooperation drifted Pakistan away from the US sphere of influence. More importantly the factors mentioned below have contributed to the decline in the Pakistan-US alliance and lead to its hedging behaviour.

Fluctuating Alliance in the War on Terrorism

Pakistan's military and economic development have been heavily reliant on US aid during peace and wartime since the country's independence (Gates, 2010). Consequently, under US pressure and persuasion tactics, such as threats of sanctions as well as economic and military assistance, Pakistan joined the coalition to fight against terrorism and drive out Al-Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan. Despite differing interests, this alliance remained the most viable option for both parties, given the immediate security threats they faced. According to the US, its involvement in everything from the fight against Soviet communism to the global war on terror was instrumental in addressing Pakistan's economic challenges and deterring Indian aggression. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, also recognised the significance of Pakistan's geostrategic position and emphasised the importance of a partnership with the US after independence. Jinnah reportedly stated that "America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America...Pakistan is the pivot of the world, as we are placed...[on] the frontier of which the future position of the world revolves" (quoted in Haqqani, 2005). The Pakistan-US alliance has been shaped by a complex set of historical, strategic, and economic factors. Despite the differences and challenges they have faced over the years, both countries have also recognised the benefits of a mutually beneficial relationship, particularly in the face of immediate security threats.

Pakistan's entry into the US-led alliance was more of a threat-centric response than a strategic alliance. The Bush administration's "coalitions of the willing" doctrine to combat terrorism through temporary alliances raised concerns among many nations, including Pakistan, about the lack

of progress. Despite this, President Bush referred to it as a “mighty coalition of civilised nations” (Hirsh, 2002). Pakistan’s approach to the US alliance was ambivalent due to its alternating support for the Afghan Taliban and its alliance with the US. This led to weakened ties with the US, as Pakistan’s alleged support for anti-American organisations such as the Haqqani Network and other terrorist groups undermined its reliance on US financial and military assistance (A. Nawaz, 2021). During the war against terrorism, Pakistan failed to comply with US demands that conflicted with its national interests and instead strengthened its ties with China through bilateral trade, military cooperation, and political cooperation. This further diminished the significance of the alliance for both sides.

Misalignment of Strategic Objectives

The frequent ups and downs in the Pakistan-US alliance can be attributed to the misaligned objectives of both partners and their history of mistrust indicating a failure of becoming firmly aligned with a particular position. The US-led anti-communist alliance during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was seen in Pakistan as an economic and military support in its conflict with India. However, Pakistan has felt let down by the US on multiple occasions. Pakistan believed that the US will not allow India to confront with it. However, resulting from a contradiction, Pakistan felt betrayed in the wars of 1965 and 1971 against India, and in the Afghan Jihad of the 1980s, and the US withdrawal of its support after fulfilling its interest. Despite these betrayals during the Cold War, another betrayal probably occurred in Pakistan’s perception during its alliance on WoT when the US started decreasing its military and economic assistance. Col. David Smith also noted that the inherent contradiction in the relationship is that Pakistan always feels betrayed by the US and believes that the US has not supported it (C. r. D. Smith, 2019).

Throughout the Cold War and the post-9/11 era, Pakistan and the US engaged in a complex and often confusing reciprocal relationship, with little to no genuine mutual interests between them (Kabir, 2019). Pakistan perceived the alliance with the US would help it to counter India. Conversely, during the Cold War, the US viewed a partnership with Pakistan as a means to deter communism, and in the post-9/11 era, countering the threat of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban became the

priority. Despite these concerns, both nations did not remain steadfast in their goals after 9/11 (Munshi, 2022). Pakistan continued to focus on India, while the US was more focused on Afghanistan. As a result, an uncompromising attitude and conditions on both sides have remained significant, leading to dissatisfaction and attempts at finger-pointing.

The Absence of Veneer of an Alliance

A long-held belief in international relations is that culture and values are entrenched and cannot be easily changed. This is exemplified by Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilisations," which emphasises the role of values in international relations. Similarly, an alliance built around a shared ideology is more likely to endure (Kim, 2007; Organski & Kugler, 1980). However, despite the potential longevity of ideological alliances, the Pakistan-US alliance lacks an ideological foundation. Adil Najam maintains that this relationship is "transactional on both sides, with neither state seeking an ideological bond. Instead, Pakistan regards the alliance as a source of economic and military aid to its fragile economy, while the US views it as an instrument of calling upon Pakistan's services when necessary" (Najam, 2019).

Pakistan's support for US core interests has always been contingent upon financial and military assistance from the US (Zaman, 2019). However, transactionalism is a short-term, zero-sum perspective that prioritises immediate gains over long-term strategic planning in bilateral and issue-specific transactions. As such, transactional relationships do not rely on shared values or long-standing bonds between states (Bashirov & Yilmaz, 2020). According to Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan, Pakistan has not had an alliance with the US since the late 1950s and 1960s. Although there have been periods of cooperation, these have been marked by differences and conditions, making the relationship selective and time-specific. The US only remains involved when it needs Pakistan's support and then withdraws when it no longer requires it. Ultimately, both sides acknowledge that the relationship is not transparent enough (A. R. M. Khan, 2019).

Thus, the Pakistan-US partnership has been primarily focused on the fight against communism or terrorism and has not evolved beyond a transactional relationship to an ideological alliance. This has resulted in the relationship being labelled as an alliance without any binding legal obligations and lacking the appearance of a strategic partnership.

Instead, it has been based on mutual needs and interests, indicating that it has not been a genuine alliance or strategic partnership.

Imperialistic Tendencies

It is not surprising that the US has imperialist attitudes towards Pakistan concerning the underlying issues of the alliance. This is because “American imperialism produces American interests overseas” (Rijnbeek, 2016). Pakistan, being a smaller partner, is always uneasy due to the US’s imperialist character and considers it an untrustworthy long-term partner because of its non-compliance. As Machiavelli warned against allying with larger powers, the US’s stance towards Pakistan has displayed features of imperialist tendencies (James, 2022). During the WoT, the US threatened and bullied Pakistan to achieve its goals, which further reinforces this notion.

Snyder observed that alliances are never entirely stable, and believed that “the fear of being abandoned by one’s partner is always present” (Snyder, 1984). This means that since the post-9/11 period, Pakistan has feared abandonment by the United States due to their unequal relationship. National security concerns have driven Pakistan to establish economic and military ties with the US, and various leaders, such as Prime Minister Imran Khan and former President Musharraf, have demanded fair treatment and respect. In fact, Musharraf expressed his humiliation over how the US had handled Pakistan diplomatically. This admission indicates that the US has shown signs of imperialism, which have contributed to the deterioration of the Pakistan-US alliance in the fight against terrorism and the rise of China’s influence in Pakistan. Additionally, Prime Minister Imran Khan stated that he did not want a relationship where Pakistan was treated like a hired gun and had lost its dignity due to its involvement in someone else’s war (Hathaway, 2019).

The US-China Strategic Competition in South Asia

The US-China strategic rivalry has significant implications for South Asian dynamics. China has posed challenges for the US in various economic and military arenas in different regions (Monck, 2018). As a result, the US National Security Strategy, disclosed in December 2017, identified China as a “revisionist power” and a “strategic competitor” of the US, marking the onset of a new era of competition with China that seeks to “shape a world that is against US values and interests” (Trump,

2017). Additionally, India and the US have formed a strategic alliance to counter China's military presence in the Indo-Pacific region, prioritising their strategic actions against it (P. Smith & Kartha, 2018). This has led smaller Indo-Pacific nations to seek alternative strategic options due to China's geopolitical rise and counteroffensive with the US. As Julian Gewirtz notes, "China aims to increase its geopolitical influence through the Belt and Road Initiative, an international network of infrastructure projects, and to strengthen ties with other economies worldwide. China is de-Americanising rather than deglobalising" (Gewirtz, 2020).

In this emerging geopolitical scenario, Pakistan is moving closer to China and seeking to rely less on the US. According to Dr. Asfandyar Mir, this "has less to do with US policy and more to do with China's grand strategy of integrating proximate regions to mainland China with trade and infrastructure projects. Pakistan's struggling economy and the reluctance of the US to provide hard cash for defence and economic needs made it easier for China to make inroads. Even if US policy were more favourable towards Pakistan, China's significant involvement would have made it challenging for Pakistan to rebuff China's advances" (Mir, 2019).

Pakistan's Geographic Proximity and Internal Dynamics

Pakistan's strategic location makes it important for superpowers like the US to maintain friendly ties with it. Pakistan shares borders with Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran, which makes it a critical player in the region. Additionally, Pakistan serves as a gateway to the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, and the Gulf, which are vital trade hubs and sources of economic stability for neighbouring nations (S. Nawaz, 2020).

Geopolitical features and constantly changing geographic conditions play a significant role in shaping a state's priorities and commitments (Bisley & Phillips, 2013). Therefore, Pakistan's perception of the US is influenced by its geography and its neighbours. The United States has long been concerned about Pakistan's proximity to destabilising Afghanistan and India, which makes the relationship between the two countries all the more important to maintain.

Pakistan-US relations have been affected by several significant issues related to the country's internal dynamics. One of the top issues

is political violence and extremism, as Pakistan has been accused of supporting militant groups. Furthermore, Pakistan is dealing with the negative effects of Afghanistan's ongoing war, which is taking a toll on its weak policy structure and leading to high "deadweight" costs. Since its independence, Pakistan's military has dominated civilian governments, and there have been repeated attempts at coups. Military generals have also been known to exploit their position in the coalition for personal gain (D. Markey, 2021).

The dynamism of military dominance in Pakistan has various advantages in terms of financial, political, and security interests that have close ties to China, which is exerting growing influence in the region (Siddiq, 2019). Despite CPEC being heavily tilted towards Beijing's interests, the Pakistani military sees it as a way to counter US diplomatic demands and potential threats. This presents a significant opportunity for the Pakistani army to strengthen its military ties and access advanced technology in the long run. Due to the deteriorating relationship between Pakistan and the US, the military is keen on cultivating its relationship with China to counterbalance the threats posed by India and the US.

The United States' Tilt Towards India

Pakistan has been aggressively attempting to boost its beleaguered economy and address security issues due to the power imbalance with India. The Kashmir dispute has been a source of conflict between the two nations for the past seven decades, sparking three wars in 1948, 1965, and 1999 (Cheema, 2020). Consequently, Pakistan has always viewed India as a potential threat, leading to a foreign policy that is both aligned with the US and heavily focused on India. The US de-hyphenation policy, aimed at severing historical ties with both India and Pakistan, has further decreased Pakistan's intrinsic value in serving US interests. As a result, the relationship between Pakistan and the US has become primarily transactional, prompting Pakistan to hedge against American policies. In contrast, the US has been placing increasing emphasis on India in its policy discussions (Pant & Joshi, 2017).

This shift in emphasis towards India reflects an entirely new status for the United States when it comes to Pakistan and India.

While Washington's relationship with Pakistan has been described as "complicated but necessary," its relationship with India has been described as "an affair of the heart" (Qazi, 2012). As ties between India and the US strengthen, it is inevitable that relations between Pakistan and the US will continue to deteriorate. Given the significant characteristics of Pakistan's relationship with the US during the WoT, China has an opportunity to replace American influence in Pakistan.

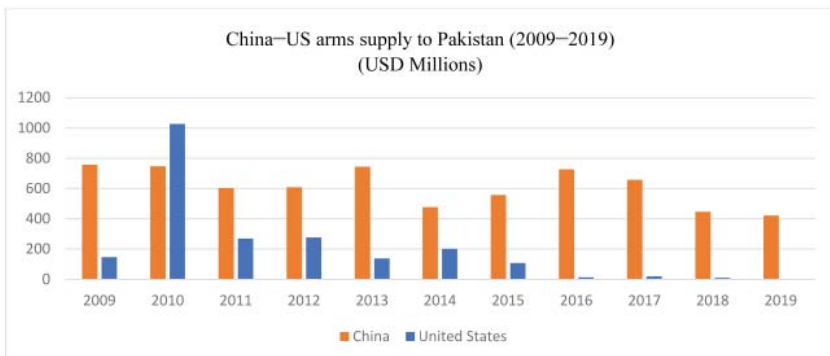
The Declining Nature of the US Influence in Pakistan

This section discusses the diminishing influence of the United States in Pakistan. While the terms "power," "control," and "dependence" are often used in conjunction with "influence," it is important to note that influence is a distinct concept. It focuses on the process and perception of an elusive and difficult-to-measure phenomenon. Ownership and influence can lead to dependence, even if only momentarily, for those who are influenced, regardless of the duration (Tahir-Kheli, 1982). The US international standing and foreign policy are widely acknowledged to be in crisis by commentators and policymakers across the political spectrum (Dobbins, Tarini, & Wyne, 2020). Despite the fact that China and Russia's economies and militaries are not comparable to that of the US, the unprecedented affluence and military supremacy of the US are under threat from these two military and economic giants. As Fareed Zakaria notes, "the largest trend today is the decline of American influence, not the decline of American power. The country remains economically and militarily in a league of its own. However, there is a decline in the United States' desire and capacity to use its power to shape the world. The creator, upholder, and enforcer of the existing international system is retreating into self-centred isolation." (Zakaria, 2017)

To demonstrate influence, there are several traits that accurately describe the assumptions of US influence in Pakistan since 1947, particularly after 9/11. Firstly, influence is a partnership between a source (the US) and a target (Pakistan) where the latter is the responding actor. Secondly, it is context and problem-specific, as the US sphere of influence is limited to the period in which it manifests itself, such as the Soviet-Afghan war or the war on terrorism since 9/11. Therefore, as the situation in Afghanistan changes, so will the US influence in the region.

Thirdly, influence is short-lived, and therefore, the unbalanced Pak-America alliance during the Obama administration from 2009 resulted in a decline in US influence over Pakistan. Fourthly, it is a complex interrelationship that rationalises the Pakistan-US asymmetrical connection. Finally, there is no interline of accomplishment costs on either side. Another defining characteristic of influence is that it encompasses a wide range of applications, from military and economic aid to arms control (Tahir-Kheli, 1982).

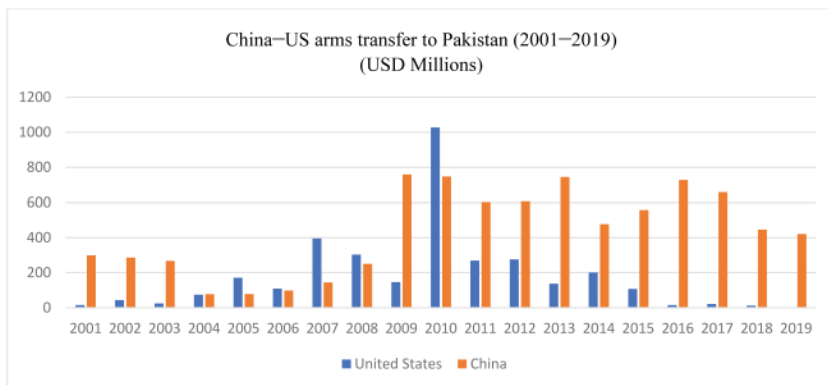
As a result, from the Cold War era until post-9/11, US policies towards Pakistan were heavily influenced by military and economic aid, including arms transfers, which often served its geopolitical and strategic interests in South Asia. However, over time, China has surpassed the United States in terms of outsourcing arms supplies to Pakistan. This suggests that China is exerting greater international influence on Pakistan by bolstering its ability to procure weapons.



Source: SIPRI (SIPRI, 2020)

Figure 2: China-US arms supply to Pakistan (2009-2019)

Similar to the data presented in Figure 2, Pakistan's growing dependence on Chinese weaponry since 2001 has weakened the structural influence of the US in Pakistan, reducing its vulnerability to Chinese assistance in developing its own domestic armament production capabilities. While Pakistan's strategic relations with the US have strengthened since 9/11, the recent US withdrawal from Afghanistan and shifts in its interests due to the China-US geopolitical rivalry have the potential to significantly alter these ties.



Source: SIPRI (SIPRI, 2020).

Figure 3: China-US arms transfer to Pakistan (2001-2019)

Additionally, as illustrated in Figure 3, the US was unable to reduce its economic and military aid and arms transfers to Pakistan in the initial decade of the Afghan conflict. However, starting in 2009, the US began to decrease its economic and military aid, as well as arms transfers, as part of its strategy to persuade Islamabad to align with its interests in Afghanistan and South Asia, using a carrot-and-stick approach (Staniland, 2011). In exchange for economic and military aid and weapons supply, despite differing objectives with the United States, Pakistan opted for limited American influence to accommodate its own interests.

Pakistan’s Hedging Responses Towards the US under Rising China’s Influence

Initially, to avoid US coercive actions, Pakistan adopted a limited bandwagoning strategy. However, as China’s influence grew and the US expressed concerns over China’s CPEC project under the BRI strategy, Pakistan chose a hedging strategy that rejected pure balancing and pure bandwagoning. This decision was made to prevent being drawn into superpower conflicts. Balancing is not strategically necessary for Pakistan’s asymmetrical relationship with the US since most threats posed by the US during the time of under-discussion alliance against terrorism were actual rather than prospective. Pursuing pure balancing may also backfire, as Pakistan’s alliance with the Taliban could lead to hostility from the US, turning potential threats into real ones.

Additionally, economic conflicts may pose risks to Pakistan’s trade relations with the US, which is a crucial market for Pakistani exports. Hedging, a strategy with multiple components, falls between balancing and bandwagoning, as defined by Kuik Cheng-Chwee’s parameters (see Table 1).

Table 1: Pakistan’s hedging responses towards the US under rising China’s influence

Pakistan’s responses towards China-US geostrategic competition

Countries	Balancing Strategy (Pure Form)	Hedging Strategy					Band Wagoning (Pure Form)
		Risk-Contingency Options		Return-Maximizing Options			
		Indirect-Balancing	Dominance Denial	Economic-Pragmatism	Binding-Engagement	Limited-Band Wagoning	
The United States							
China							

Degree of Power Rejection
Neutrality Point
Degree of Power Acceptance

Key:
 Full adoption
 Partial adoption

Source: Adapted from the hedging spectrum developed by Kuik (2021).

Pakistan’s strategy for maintaining a balance in its relationships with the United States and China involves a combination of pure-balancing, which entails rejecting the influence of one superpower, and pure-bandwagoning, which involves aligning with the other superpower. This approach can be visualised on a spectrum that measures the level of acceptance and rejection of power. To analyse Pakistan’s hedging strategy, we can refer to Kuik Cheng-Chwee’s study (Kuik, 2008), which identifies five elements of hedging as under:

1. **Economic–Pragmatism:** The concept of economic pragmatism refers to a state’s ability to maximise its economic interests through trade and investment links with a Great Power, regardless of any political differences. This practice designates a neutral point on the spectrum since economic interests have

no bearing on a state's acceptance or rejection of particular powers (Kuik, 2008). Despite political differences with the US during the Cold War and after 9/11, Pakistan has consistently emphasised economic pragmatism in its dealings with both China and the US since its independence. Although the US is Pakistan's main trading partner and receives 17% of its exports, Pakistan's trade with China is only 8%, but it is increasing due to Chinese investments made under the CPEC projects (Keeryo, Mumtaz, & Lakhan, 2020). In each case, Pakistan's economic considerations influenced its strategies for developing economic relationships with both China and the US.

2. **Binding–Engagement:** Kuik defined engagement as a state's policy of establishing and maintaining contacts with a Great Power to create communication channels, increase voice opportunities, and influence its policy choices. Binding, on the other hand, involves enmeshing a power in regularised diplomatic activities to institutionalise relations. The combination of binding and engagement aims to socialise and integrate a Great Power into the established order, neutralising its revisionist tendencies (Dexian, 2013; Kuik, 2008, 2021). Pakistan's engagement strategy with the US dates back to the Cold War era, when it acted as a mediator between China and the US to facilitate their diplomatic ties. After 9/11, Pakistan aimed to establish and maintain ties with the US to receive economic and military aid and influence its policy decisions on the war in Afghanistan. Despite the waning of the Pakistan-US alliance and shifting US interests due to geostrategic competition with China, the US has maintained a unified stance toward Pakistan in organisations such as the FATF, IMF, and World Bank. As a symmetrical power, Pakistan attempted to enlist China's help to avoid US pressure tactics in key situations because Chinese lending terms have the advantage of being appealing for two reasons: firstly, they do not place the same level of importance on the financial or political stability of the borrowing country as demanded by organisations like the IMF, ADB, or World Bank; secondly, borrowing from China often includes additional benefits such as access to technology and skilled labour from China, which are not typically offered by other international

lending institutions (Raju, 2021). Similarly, after 9/11, the US aligned its interests with those of Pakistan in the alliance against terrorism, resulting in coordinated efforts to provide economic and military support and ensnare Pakistan in IMF bailout packages. However, when the US interests diverged, Pakistan and the US pursued separate paths, such as during the Afghan peace process and the war on terror.

3. **Limited–Bandwagoning:** A state may pursue a bandwagoning strategy and align with a major power to advance its long-term interests or avoid a great power that poses a direct threat to its pre-eminence (Koga, 2018; Kuik, 2008). According to Stephen M. Walt, alliances are formed in response to threats, and states may choose between balancing or bandwagoning when faced with significant external threats (Walt, 1987). Pakistan initially adopted full-scale alignment with the US during their alliance in the war on terror to maximise its interests and minimise threats. Pakistan maintained its alliance with China while adopting pure bandwagoning (PB) with the US, resulting in a zero-sum scenario for the US. Later, Pakistan shifted towards a partial alignment for policy coordination with the US on specific issues. Pakistan became increasingly reliant on China for support and adopted limited bandwagoning (LB) with the US while still maintaining its alliance with China. Comparing Pakistan’s PB and LB with China and the US respectively, it can be seen that Pakistan is tilting towards China for its core national interests, as evidenced by its full embracement of PB with the China “to share the benefits” (Wu, 2016).
4. **Dominance–Denial:** The politics of dominance denial is a political approach aimed at preventing smaller states from undue interference and influence by dominant powers (Bloomfield, 2016; Kuik, 2008). In this policy, smaller states like Pakistan engage with other major powers in regional affairs to boost their diplomatic influence and resilience, as exemplified by Pakistan’s efforts to involve China and Russia in the Afghan conflict (Kuik, 2008). Unlike pure balancing, which focuses on balancing military power, dominance denial is not achievable by Pakistan as a weaker power against the US. To counter US threats, Pakistan sought to balance political power with China’s

assistance, while still maintaining the dominance denial policy. Throughout the Afghan conflict, Pakistan fully embraced a stance of denying US dominance, which was evident in its efforts to maintain a balanced relationship with the US while making the US more reliant on Pakistan in the war. The dominance denial policy has been in place since the beginning of the Pakistan-US alliance but became more prominent during the Obama administration in 2009 when Pakistan was labelled as a safe haven for terrorists (Aslam, 2012).

5. **Indirect–Balancing:** Indirect balancing differs from “soft balancing” in that it relies on military actions rather than informal alliances to address uncertainties, as opposed to balancing power. In the case of Pakistan, the strategy of indirect balancing is aimed at reducing apprehensions caused by US pressure tactics and Indian threats. Pakistan is partially practicing indirect balancing by strengthening its military capabilities through defence cooperation with China and reducing its dependence on US defence technology. The distinction between indirect and direct balancing may reflect Islamabad’s perceived threat from Washington. If the US is seen as a clear threat, Pakistan may turn to China and Russia as growing supporters in its regional affairs. However, if there are no signs of US threats, Pakistan will likely continue its indirect balancing stance towards the US in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan, as a symmetrical power, is attempting to balance potential risks from the geostrategic competition between China and the United States, as well as from the ambiguous regional order, by implementing a two-pronged strategy. Specifically, Pakistan seeks to safeguard its long-term interests by responding to US pressure tactics and maximising returns on China’s CPEC investments and US military and economic aid.

Conclusion

The article concludes with the aforesaid reasons behind the deterioration of Pakistan-US relations. Despite pressure for strategic independence, Pakistan carried out costly and unpopular US policies to build a trustworthy image in Washington. However, the increasing unreliability of the US forced Pakistan to shift its strategic partnerships towards

closer collaboration with China, though China's broad strategy and rivalry with the US also provided Pakistan with more opportunities to address US concerns.

While the breakdown of the Pakistan-US alliance cannot be primarily attributed to China, it is clear that the US prioritised its own interests and favoured India over Pakistan in light of China's growing influence in the region. In response, Pakistan relied heavily on economic and military aid from China, which diminished American influence in Pakistan. Throughout, Pakistan employed a range of hedging strategies, including balancing, bandwagoning, partial cooperation, negotiating, and cultivating alternative allies through China. This has led to a significant shift in Pakistan's security policy and relationship with the US, with Pakistani security interests taking precedence over US strategic priorities.

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Let's Think They are Safe Online! A Malaysian Perspective on The Classification of Children's Cyber Risks

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Abstract: Children currently spend more time on the Internet and corresponding technologies to socialise virtually and play video games. Scholars have not reached a consensus on whether children's participation in such recreational activities is beneficial or detrimental. Although Malaysian parents are concerned about the digital threats that may be encountered by their children, most of the detriments remain unknown. Children still hesitate to inform their

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families about their online exposure to inappropriate content, such as cybersex and pornography, which remain taboo subjects in Malaysian households. This study performed a descriptive analysis to determine the risk factors associated with children's internet use with 420 school-going children aged from 9 to 16 years around Selangor. Resultantly, children were highly exposed to unwanted exposure to pornography (17.4 %), potentially dangerous user-generated content (9 %), sexting (8.8 %), personal data misuse (6.4 %), cyber grooming (3.3 %), and cyberbullying (1.7 %) in the past 12 months of using the Internet.

Keywords: cyberbullying, digital generation, personal data misuse, sexting, unwanted exposure to pornography

Abstrak: Kanak-kanak pada masa ini menghabiskan lebih banyak masa di Internet dan menggunakan teknologi untuk bersosial secara maya dan bermain permainan video. Para penyelidik belum mencapai kata sepakat sama ada penyertaan kanak-kanak dalam aktiviti rekreasi tersebut bermanfaat atau memudaratkan. Walaupun ibu bapa Malaysia bimbang tentang ancaman digital yang mungkin dihadapi oleh anak-anak mereka, kebanyakan kemudaratan masih tidak diketahui. Kanak-kanak masih teragak-agak untuk memaklumkan keluarga mereka tentang pendedahan dalam talian mereka kepada kandungan yang tidak sesuai, seperti seks siber dan pornografi, yang masih menjadi subjek tabu dalam isi rumah Malaysia. Kajian ini melakukan analisis deskriptif untuk menentukan faktor risiko yang berkaitan dengan penggunaan Internet kanak-kanak dengan 420 kanak-kanak bersekolah berumur dari 9 hingga 16 tahun di sekitar Selangor. Penemuan penyelidikan mendapati kanak-kanak sangat terdedah kepada pendedahan yang tidak diingini iaitu pornografi (17.4%), kandungan yang dijana pengguna yang berpotensi berbahaya (9%), sexting (8.8%), penyalahgunaan data peribadi (6.4%), dandanan siber (3.3%) dan buli siber (1.7 %) dalam tempoh 12 bulan yang lalu.

Kata Kunci: buli siber; generasi digital; penyalahgunaan data peribadi; sexting; pendedahan yang tidak diingini kepada pornografi

Introduction

The Internet has transformed adolescents from a physical world to a virtual reality. Youths are more attracted to the leisure activities derived from the Internet, such as socialising, playing games, and watching television. In this vein, children denote the highest number of internet users. A survey revealed that 75% of internet users worldwide were under 24 years old (Statista, 2023). Similarly, 73% of internet users in

Asia-Pacific were under 24 years of age (Statista, 2023). Over 90% of the people in Malaysia use the Internet daily, not unlike other countries (UNICEF, 2020). Specifically, more than 80% of these users are children under 15 years old (UNICEF, 2020). Children in Malaysia could easily access the Internet through personal computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones, specifically following the emergence of COVID-19, which has characterised the Internet as a new norm in the education system. Students must connect to the Internet for educational activities. Despite the advantages of using the Internet (seamless information and knowledge attainment), children are susceptible to multiple internet-associated risks, such as cybercrime and cyberbullying.

Online risks generally denote a set of “intended or unintended” and “wanted or unwanted” experiences that adversely impact Internet users (Zlamal et al., 2020). Children who receive inappropriate content, participate in risky behaviour with communication, or contribute to harmful content or communication are vulnerable to online pornography or sexual solicitations (Keen et al., 2020; Kwan et al., 2020), online harassment and cyberbullying (Bakar et al., 2018; Blaya et al., 2020; Costello et al., 2020), exposure to hateful content (Costello et al., 2020), X-rated contents, such as “rough sex” on the Internet (Vogels & O’Sullivan, 2019), violent or coercive pornography (Landripet et al., 2019), and other desired or undesired and inappropriate behaviour arising from internet use.

Malaysian families are relatively aware of cyber dangers (Ahmad et al., 2019). As 80% of Malaysian children from 10 to 17 years old have access to inappropriate content, including pornography (Ahmad et al., 2019), Malaysian parents believe that their children may encounter such content. Nevertheless, most children are susceptible to online risks following their parents’ lack of supervision. Almost 89 % of adolescents between 13 and 17 years old, who were victims of internet grooming, fell prey to inappropriate acts (New Strait Times, 2019). Based on a national survey, 83% of students in Malaysia were exposed to various types of online risks. Specifically, 70% of them were victims of online harassment, while 64% received or sent improper messages or images online (DiGi Cyber Safe report, 2014). It is deemed challenging for parents to keep constant surveillance of their children, who are required to use portable devices (smartphones) to perform educational activities.

The Malaysian government has taken initiatives to decrease cyber risks by drafting laws on cyberbullying, such as cybersecurity outreach (Digital, 2020). Much research on cyber risk and cyberbullying has also been conducted. For example, Kee et al. (2022) investigated cyberbullying predictors through social media, while Ooi et al. (2022) examined the factors associated with adolescent cyberbullying. Notwithstanding, cyberbullying, and cyber risk in Malaysia are steadily increasing despite extensive research in this area and governmental initiatives. A recent survey revealed that “Malaysia is 2nd in Asia for youth cyberbullying” (Star, 2022). Overall, the question of how to decrease cyberbullying and cyber risk in Malaysia remains unaddressed.

The significant rise in internet-using children has garnered much attention from scholars and regulatory bodies. As such, this study aims to investigate the classification of cyber risk and its subsequent effect on children’s life. The empirical outcomes would facilitate regulatory authorities to establish and implement relevant rules and regulations.

Literature Review

The increasing use of digital technologies has highlighted cyber risk as a growing concern for children (Bevan Jones, 2020). Children are vulnerable to cyberbullying following the anonymity and accessibility of digital technologies, which serve as a platform for harassment and abuse (Mkhize, 2021). Children who are victims of cyberbullying may experience depressive symptoms, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Zhong, 2021). Online predators, such as perpetrators who utilise social media and other digital platforms to groom and exploit children, are a significant cyber threat (Karadimce, 2023). Such manipulations could negatively affect the victim’s physical and mental health and future prospects.

A multidimensional approach involving parents, educators, and law enforcement proves necessary to safeguard children from cyber risk (Abd Rahman et al., 2022). Parents can play a pivotal role in supervising their children’s online activities and establishing guidelines for the safe and responsible use of digital technologies (Lamsal, 2022). Meanwhile, educators could equip students with digital literacy and cyber safety knowledge and skills to remain safe online (Nascimbeni & Vosloo, 2019). Law enforcement agencies that effectively identify and prosecute cybercriminals indicate that such conduct would not

be tolerated (Graham, 2023). Community members must collectively address cyber risk challenges and protect children from digital hazards (Jain et al., 2021). Overall, relevant statistics reveal a steady rise in cyber risks despite the efforts of academicians, law enforcement institutions, parents, and teachers to decrease such risks.

Cyber risk is generally considered an online security issue (HWEE, 2009). Nevertheless, several studies have classified this risk in terms of cyberbullying and cyber harassment (Quayyum et al., 2021). Despite much research on the cross-cultural variation in cyberbullying in different countries (Smith et al., 2018), most of the empirical works were performed in North America, Europe, and Australia (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2014; Smith & Berkun, 2017). These scholars conceded that the meaning and classification of cyber risk differed across nations, cultures, and norms. Existing cyber risk and cyber bullying studies in the Asian Pacific region also highlighted certain classification-related drawbacks. As numerous studies categorised cyber risk differently following their local culture, scope, and context (Kamaruddin et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2019), this study posited that cyber risk is different in Malaysia compared to other countries. Hua et al. (2019), who explored the linguistic features of cyberbullying in Malaysia, analysed the language used in cyberbullying incidents on social media platforms to identify patterns and characteristics that could distinguish cyberbullying from other online communication types. The authors evaluated a sample of cyberbullying messages gathered from social media platforms, with emphasis on linguistic features: syntax, lexical choices, and use of emoticons. Resultantly, cyberbullying messages frequently employed negative language and derogatory terms and emoticons to convey negative emotions. The authors suggested using these linguistic features to develop algorithms that could automatically identify and classify cyberbullying messages. Internalising the linguistic features of cyberbullying could develop effective strategies to prevent and address this issue locally and globally. Based on the study, most of the abusive remarks began with the word “Kepala”, which means head in Malay. Other local studies on cyberbullying (Adebayo et al., 2020; Sivabalan et al., 2020) were also conducted in Malaysia.

The definition of cyberbullying varies following the research context and purpose. In Malaysia, de-hijabbing (a voluntary act of removing the hijab) (Noor & HAMID, 2021) and its promotion is considered

cyberbullying (Noor & HAMID, 2021). Thus, cyberbullying could be characterised in terms of harassment, flaming, denigration, impression, exclusion, cyberstalking, and impersonation (Willard, 2007). Relevant scholars have investigated cyberbullying with different linguistic methods. For example, several researchers used natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning programme to detect the matching text. The bag-of-words approach, part-of-speech tagging, and grammar features were initially applied for detection purposes (Dinakar et al., 2011), followed by content-based features: lexical, syntactic, and sentiment information (Ptaszynski et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2016).

Contrarily, some studies contended with the insufficiency of these methods and tools to detect cyberbullying given the pliability of the term, which changes based on the context (Zhong et al., 2022). Despite inconsistent statements about cyberbullying, the existing literature gap may be bridged by categorising cyberbullying based on profession, age, religion, and other demographic attributes. This research only included cybercrime categories and considered cyberbullying as inappropriate messages, receiving, or sending nasty messages, or being left out. Additionally, the study proposed cyberbullying as a personal insult and sexual harassment, albeit with insufficient literature to identify the cyber risk classification.

Classification of Cyber Risk

In line with the knowledge gaps, this study categorised the cyber risk type based on relevant literature and surveys:

- (1) Cyberbullying includes inappropriate messages, receiving nasty messages, and being left out. The Child Online Safety Index (COSI) is a global think-tank institute that collected data from 145,426 children and adolescents in 30 countries between 2017 and 2019 as part of the DG Every Child project. Reportedly, 60% of children from 8 to 12 years old were generally exposed to cyber risks, with 45% of them experiencing cyber-bullying, 39% experiencing reputational risks, 29% exposed to risky (violent or sexual) content, 28% exposed to cyber threats, 17% experiencing risky contact (offline with strangers or sexual contact), 13% at risk for a gaming disorder, and 7% at risk for social media disorder (DGInstitute, 2020). The DG Lab Report (2020) disclosed Spain and Australia to have the highest rate

of Child Internet Safety Act, followed by Malaysia ranking second, Singapore ranking third, and Singapore ranking fourth.

- (2) Sexting includes all received or sent inappropriate material, including images videos and text. Youth and Media (YaM) covers research and development initiatives among youths from 12 to 18 years old and digital technology whilst closely interacting with other teams at the Berkman Klein Cent. The dynamic global, social, and cultural environments impact the current discourse with input on new youth and digital media topics, whereby methodologies were introduced that could capture young adults' experiences to contribute to the economic and social effects of novel technologies (YaM, 2020). The Berkman Center has initiated the Internet Safety Technical Task Force (ISTTF) project to identify sexual solicitation, online harassment, and problematic content as a subgroup of online risks and digital technology (Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2008).
- (3) Risky online conversation includes sending phone numbers and addresses or seeking someone for an intimate relationship. The Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) surveyed adolescents from ages 13 to 17 and introduced classifications of teen identity theft, fraud, being tracked for marketing, being bullied, ugly or unflattering pictures posted, and security issues on the Internet (Family Online Safety Institute, 2013). The FOSI aims to promote a culture of responsibility online and encourages a sense of digital citizenship through research, resources, events, and special projects.
- (4) Unwanted exposure to pornography includes all the unwanted materials in pornography, such as unwanted e-mails, unwanted obscene materials on messages or links, and similar encounters. The Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS) group conducts another systematic study, which is repeated every five years in the United States. The YISS-1, YISS-2, and YISS-3 and the Fourth National Survey of Internet & Technology Facilitated Child Exploitation (Mitchell, 2020) were conducted in 2000, 2005, and 2010 to quantify younger Internet users' unwanted

or problematic experiences, including unwanted exposure to pornography and sexual solicitation or harassment.

- (5) Potentially harmful user-generated content includes all the content on danger or threat, such as bloody photos, videos related to being beaten up, and other related material, including images and texts. The Online Safety and Technology Working Group (OSTWG, 2010) defined the online risk categories as predator danger, cyberbullying, sexting, and inappropriate content.
- (6) Personal data misuse includes data misuse activities, such as password misuse and being hacked. The European Kids Online survey, known as “EU Kids Online”, is a research network that interviewed European children and their parents from 25 European countries from 2006 to 2009. The EU kids online has since conducted periodic research among European children. The latest project reports were published (Smahel et al., 2020; Zlamal et al., 2020) to evaluate online opportunities and risks for children. Another study entitled ‘Be safe, Go online’ was conducted in a Malaysian university-grant project (2012-2015) to study Internet usage and online risks among 1800 respondents, including 800 Malaysian adolescents from 8 to 16 years and their parents (Daud et al., 2014; Teimouri et al., 2014; Yusuf et al., 2014). The study included the risk of hacking activities and data misuse.

Multiple studies have been conducted on cyber risk. To date, cyber risks imply security risks, such as information misuse or hacking. Regardless, other empirically-excluded categories indicate a knowledge gap in cyber risk categories. The current study proposed some additional categories to fill the literature gap. As this research was conducted in Malaysia, multiple factors (parenting style in Malaysia, educational situations, norms, culture and language) were regarded while proposing new cyber risk categories.

Research Methodology

This study adapted global classifications of online risks and measurements, a modified national-classification version of online risks to children in the Malaysian index, based on the ‘Be Safe, Go Online’

project following Teimouri et al. (2016). The risks were classified into (1) unwanted exposure to pornography (adapted from Wolak et al., 2007), (2) potentially harmful user-generated content, (3) sexting, (4) personal data misuse (adapted from Livingstone et al., 2012), (5) risky online conversation that asked children whether they had sought someone online to talk about sex, have sex, or sent a sexual photo or video (adapted from Baumgartner et al., 2010; Finkelhor et al., 2011), and (6) cyberbullying. This study provided a descriptive outcome of the risks (adapted from Livingstone et al., 2012).

The current work included 420 children from primary and secondary schools, with an average age of 12, in two districts of Selangor (Gombak and Sepang), Malaysia. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. Muslim students who spent most of their time with parents after school were selected for data collection. The respondents should have at least one social media ID used in the last 12 months. Lastly, only students who felt comfortable providing data were selected as respondents. As this study aimed to test the cyber risk classification, the intensity of intent usage was not considered. Counsellors suggested the children at their respective schools. Empirical data were gathered with a classroom-administered survey method. Each session lasted for approximately one hour, during which students were accompanied by two researchers who assisted and guided them.

The researchers were required to substitute explicit terms in their study questions pre-data collection in adherence to Malaysian cultural appropriation. In Malaysian culture (specifically in Muslim families), some cyberbullying terms were deemed inappropriate while conversing with someone. The respondents may feel shy to use them directly. Hence, these words were rephrased without altering the original meaning. The sexually-explicit language was replaced for questionnaire validation. For example, the phrase “having sex” was replaced with “having an inappropriate intimate relationship, while “showing sexual actions and content” and “naked photos” were substituted with “obscene pictures” and “obscene acts or materials,” respectively. The data collected was classified into three levels ranging from 1 (low) to 3 (high).

The demographic results revealed that most students (66 %) were females and Malay Muslims from 9 to 16 years old (74 %). Statistically, children frequently used the Internet after school (80%) or under

parental supervision (79 %). Male students were more susceptible to cyber threats compared to their female counterparts.

Findings

This study performed a descriptive analysis to confirm the cyber risk classification. Resultantly, over 36% of the students encountered something on the Internet that “made them feel uncomfortable, upset, or that they shouldn’t have seen it”, while almost 58 % of them indicated having not experienced unfavourable scenarios. Meanwhile, 6 % did not respond to the question. Additionally, 61 % agreed on being exposed to unsuitable content, while 32 % disagreed and 7 % did not respond to the questions.

Most of the respondents (82.6%) reported a low level of exposure to “unwanted exposure to pornography,” while 17.4% of them denoted a high level of exposure. Meanwhile, 91% encountered low exposure to “potentially hazardous user-generated material”, whereas 9% accounted for excessive exposure. Many adolescents (91.2%) demonstrated low exposure to “sexting,” while 8.8% reflected significant exposure. Personal data abuse accounted for 93.6% and 6.4% of low-exposure and high-exposure cases, respectively. Most of the young adults (96.7%) engaged in low-level sexual online activity, while a mere 3.3% engaged in high-level sexual online behaviour. A majority of the adolescents (98.3%) experienced modest levels of “cyberbullying”, while only 1.7% experienced severe levels of “cyberbullying”.

Table 1: Descriptive report of child cyber risks exposure

Constructs/indicators	% of frequency			M	S.D	% of high-low rate	
	1	2	3			L	H
	Unwanted exposure to pornography						
1 Unwanted obscene materials on the web	45	47	8	1.62	0.62		
2 Unwanted e-mail or IM	69	26	5	1.35	0.57		
3 Unwanted obscene materials on messages or links	67	31	2	1.35	0.52		
4 Naked picture/inappropriate intimate relationship on message/link	80	19	1	1.20	0.43		
5 Anyone asks to talk about inappropriate acts	82	17	1	1.18	0.40		
6 Anyone asks to do inappropriate acts	91	9	0	1.09	0.30		
Overall mean				1.30	0.47		

Potentially harmful user-generated content							91.0	9
1	Seen bloody movies or photos	40	54	6	1.66	0.62		
2	Seen people beaten up	64	31	5	1.65	0.58		
3	Seen hate messages	80	18	2	1.40	0.58		
4	Seen anorexia or bulimic	94	6	0	1.22	0.45		
5	Talk about drugs	95	5	0	1.06	0.25		
6	Ways of physical harming	95	5	0	1.05	0.21		
7	Ways of committing suicide	97	3	0	1.03	0.19		
	Overall mean				1.30	0.41		
Sexting							91.2	8.8
1	Received inappropriate messages (words, pictures, and videos)	80	20	0	1.20	0.41		
2	Being posted inappropriate materials	80	20	0	1.20	0.41		
3	Being sent inappropriate messages	85	15	0	1.15	0.38		
4	Seen obscene images or videos	86	14	0	1.14	0.35		
5	Seen other people perform obscene acts	86	14	0	1.14	0.35		
6	Seen intimate images or videos in a violent way	87	13	0	1.13	0.34		
7	Seen someone's obscene images or videos	89	11	0	1.11	0.32		
8	Seen obscene images or videos about private parts	90	10	0	1.10	0.29		
	Overall mean				1.15	0.36		
Personal data misuse							93.6	6.4
1	Misuse of password	81	18	1	1.30	0.57		
2	Misuse of personal information you didn't like	90	10	0	1.08	0.29		
3	Being hacked	92	8	0	1.05	0.22		
4	Misuse of personal information	95	5	0	1.05	0.23		
5	Lost money by being cheated online	97	3	0	1.03	0.20		
	Overall mean				1.10	0.30		
Risky online conversation							96.7	3.3
1	Sent address or phone number to someone you only knew online	75	19	5	1.30	0.3		
2	Search for someone to talk about intimate relationship	92	7	0	1.08	0.29		
3	Search for someone to do intimate relationship	96	4	0	1.05	0.22		
4	Sent obscene photos to someone you only knew online	98	2	0	1.02	0.17		
	Overall mean				1.10	0.30		

Cyberbullying							98.3	1.7
1	Received inappropriate messages that bothered you	80	19	1	1.20	0.42		
2	Received nasty or hurtful messages	84	16	0	1.17	0.38		
3	Received another nasty message that hurt you	89	11	0	1.12	0.33		
4	Being left out or excluded	90	10	0	1.10	0.32		
5	Received nasty or hurtful messages about yourself	92	8	0	1.08	0.29		
6	Being threatened online	94	6	0	1.06	0.25		
7	Being asked to talk about nasty acts	95	5	0	1.05	0.21		
8	Being asked to show your private part	96	4	0	1.04	0.21		
9	Received inappropriate messages encourage you to run away	97	3	0	1.03	0.16		
Overall score					1.09	0.28		

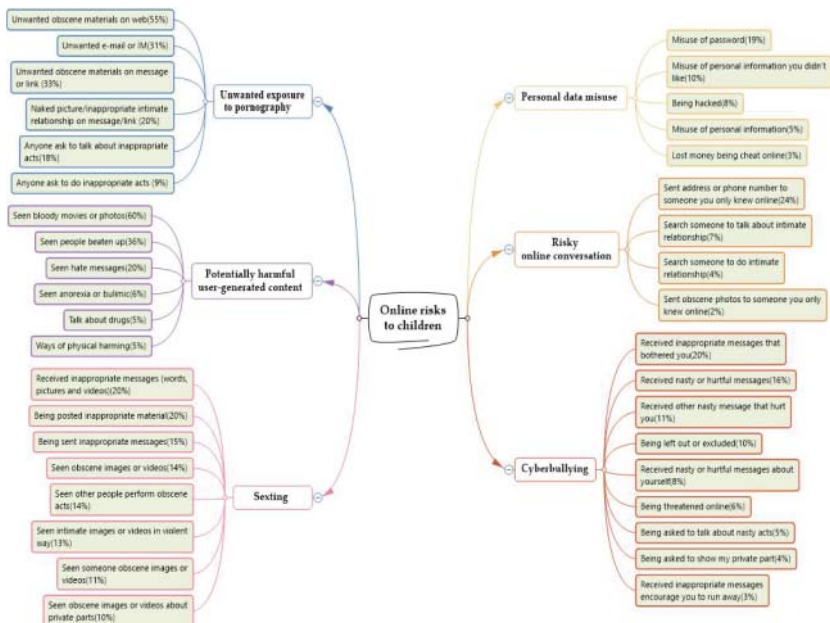


Figure 1: Malaysian classification of online risks model

Discussion

This study pioneers the purposing of cyber risk categories, all of which were confirmed based on the research outcome. Most of the

respondents reported encountering unwanted exposure to pornography, followed by sexting, and personal data misuse. Regardless, very few of them experienced risky online conversations and cyberbullying. As such, the study outcome confirmed six cyber risk categories as follows: unwanted exposure to pornography, potentially harmful user-generated content, sexting, personal data misuse, risky online conversation, and cyberbullying.

Unwanted exposure to pornography

This study considered unwanted exposure to pornography as unwanted material sent or received over the Internet. Empirically, 17.4% of the respondents encountered unwanted exposure to pornography following existing works on unwanted exposure to pornography (Henry, 2023; Kumar et al., 2016), which documented a high number of respondents encountering unwanted exposure to pornography. Despite a paucity of local studies on unwanted exposure to pornography, these empirical works underscored unwanted exposure as a primary issue (Teimouri et al., 2014). This problem may result from ineffective internet regulation and monitoring measures. Although the Malaysian government has enforced laws to regulate online content, these regulations are frequently disregarded. Many websites and online platforms continue operating without proper supervision. Unwanted exposure to pornography could significantly impact young people and increase their vulnerability to the adverse effects of exposure to explicit materials. Following past literature, exposure to pornography could instigate various problems, including addiction, desensitisation to sexual content, and distorted views of sexuality and relationships.

Potentially harmful user-generated content

In line with the study outcomes, only 9% of the respondents encountered potentially harmful user-generated content. Notwithstanding, past Malaysian studies revealed that most of the respondents encountered such content (Sofee et al., 2022). This contradiction may result from variances in the research definition and context. Following Sofee et al. (2022), user-generated content on social media encompassed harmful and fear-inducing elements. Nonetheless, the study did not incorporate other cyber risk materials, such as sexting and pornography. Hence, the results depended on the study definition and context. It is deemed necessary to increase public awareness of and education on responsible

online behaviour and the implications of online content by educating content creators and consumers on the significance of validating information pre-sharing, avoiding hate speech, and respecting people's privacy and dignity.

Sexting

Resultantly, only 8.8% of the children encountered sexting issues. This finding contradicted past studies, which highlighted sexting as a primary construct of cyber risk (Goh et al., 2022). This inconsistency could be attributed to the study respondents (children), who might have been hesitant to discuss such topics. Sexting could instigate content-sharing without consent, which could induce humiliation, embarrassment, and cyberbullying or harassment in some cases. Such content could lead to further harm or exploitation when manipulated by strangers or criminals. Sexting could also be used as a form of coercion or grooming. For example, an individual may be pressured into sending explicit photos or videos to someone in a position of authority (teacher or employer), who could then use the materials for exploitation purposes.

Personal data misuse

Only 6.4% of students encountered issues with personal data misuse. The current study results varied from past literature, where many people experienced data misuse (Sudarwanto & Kharisma, 2022). This contradiction could result from differences in terms of definition and context. In Malaysia, data misuse incidents in the context of cyber risk for children proved to be lower.

Cyberbullying and Risky Online Communication

Relevant literature considers risky online communication as cyberbullying (Yusop & Al-Shami, 2021). Notwithstanding, this study regarded the concept from different categories. The results revealed a minimal number of students who encountered cyberbullying. Regardless, past literature posited cyberbullying as one of the key concerns in Malaysia (ASANAN et al., 2016). The current study outcomes may be different, as cyberbullying was considered separately with lesser factors. Nevertheless, relevant literature regarded more factors under cyberbullying. Overall, this study proposed cyberbullying as a cyber risk category to attract researchers' and government bodies' attention towards this issue.

Conclusion

The Internet has become part of children's daily life following rapid advancements in digital technology, which may present new digital risks or threats. The current work expanded the current body of knowledge by proposing six cyber risk categories. Regardless, the risk associated with these categories is yet to be categorised. Researchers placed much emphasis on sex-related risks, sharing personal information with strangers, and cyberbullying as a range of online risks encountered by internet-using children. It is deemed crucial to categorise these activities for the government and regulatory bodies to undertake preventive measures and implement optimal strategies. For example, research by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, MCMC, and the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, and Digi Telecommunication Sdn. Bhd provide useful insights into cyber risk among the target groups (Ahmad et al., 2019). The survey results revealed the need to extensively examine cyber risk and its associated categories for a sound understanding of the issue.

The Internet exposes children to both risks and opportunities. Based on the study finding, online risk exposure towards children between 9 and 16 years old in Malaysia was not very high as they "never or seldom experienced risks online". Although the situation is not alarming, parents and society should seriously consider the online risks of "unwanted exposure to pornography" and "potentially harmful user-generated content" towards children. Over 50% of the current study respondents had been exposed to unwanted obscene materials (sexual content) on websites, while almost 60% had seen gory movies or photos and people being beaten up online. In addressing the concerns of family members, practitioners, and policymakers about the negative consequences of the online risks faced by children, it is deemed crucial to classify these risks: not all children feel uncomfortable, upset, or troubled upon encountering them (Zlamal et al., 2020). Strategies to mitigate such risks remain unexplored despite the digital threats encountered by internet-using children.

Due to sensitivity issues, the Malaysian Ministry of Education required the removal of some inappropriate or explicit words from the study questionnaire pre-data collection. For example, the phrase "having sex" was replaced with "having an inappropriate intimate relationship,"

while “naked pictures” and “showing sexual acts and content” were substituted with “obscene pictures” and “obscene acts or materials,” respectively. Hypothetically, the children may not have derived the actual meaning of the classified risks owing to the word replacements. Malaysian parents should be more realistic and open-minded as children-parent discussions on sexual matters remain taboo. Parents should face reality and initiate conversations with their children to create an awareness of online hazards and potential consequences. During data collection, the researchers observed the children’s reluctance to share their exposure to sexual content with parents and teachers. Visiting children at school in an isolated environment could also have influenced their responses. Future works could utilise different data collection methods to minimise the online risks encountered by children.

Limitations and Recommendations

The current work proposed six cyber risk categories that could be empirically examined. For example, potential researchers could investigate the intensity of these categories across multiple age groups. As this study did not investigate the risks associated with these categories, further research may analyse these risks in relation to various activities and their prevention. The present research only presented six cyber risk categories. As such, future works could introduce new classifications based on the Malaysian context and might use these classifications in a research framework. Given the current study limitations, which conducted a purposive study by confirming the cyber risk categories, further research may be performed to investigate these categories in different contexts and incorporate them into the research model. This empirical work proposed six broad categories of cyber risk. Hence, potential scholars could be more specific in considering these categories. As cyberbullying varies following the research context, each category should be sub-categorised based on future study contexts and aims. Prospective studies could perform sub-categorisation based on a country’s norms and culture, which was not included in this research.

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Social Media Use for English Learning in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Of the many uses of social media, educationists advocate its use for teaching the English language. The traditional method of learning the English language is associated with inattention among learners. The adoption of social media in teaching the English language can create a fun, stress-free, and pleasant environment that is able to cultivate a positive attitude among the learners. Hence, this study carried out a systematic review to assess the use of social media for English learning in the Southeast Asia context. The study systematically searched the peer-reviewed literature using the SCOPUS database and identified 46 articles. After thorough reading, 21 articles met the inclusion criteria. Articles that were excluded from the analysis were conducted outside Southeast Asia, do not focus on Southeast Asia's English learning, and do not engage with social media usage. The findings suggest that the use of social media for English learning was associated with improving communication skills, enhancing collaborative learning, encouraging self-directed learning, enhancing writing skill and learning experience.

Keywords: Communication skill; English; social media; Self-directed learning; Southeast Asia; Systematic review

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Abstrak: Media sosial mempunyai banyak kegunaan, dan ia juga boleh digunakan untuk pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Kaedah tradisional untuk mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris dikaitkan dengan kurang perhatian dalam kalangan pelajar. Penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dapat menghidupkan persekitaran pembelajaran yang menyeronokkan yang dapat menyemai sikap positif di kalangan pelajar. Oleh itu, kajian ini menggunakan kaedah tinjauan sistematik untuk menilai penggunaan media sosial bagi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dalam konteks Asia Tenggara. Kajian ini menggunakan pangkalan data SCOPUS. Melalui carian ini, sebanyak 46 artikel telah dikenal pasti. Setelah penelitian dibuat, 21 artikel telah dipilih kerana memenuhi kriteria. Artikel yang dikecualikan daripada analisis ini dikenal pasti seperti dijalankan di luar Asia Tenggara, tidak berfokuskan kepada pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dan tidak terlibat dengan penggunaan media sosial. Hasil dapatan mendapati pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris menggunakan media sosial dapat meningkatkan kemahiran komunikasi, meningkatkan pembelajaran kolaboratif, mendorong pembelajaran sendiri, meningkatkan kemahiran menulis dan pengalaman belajar.

Kata kunci: Kemahiran komunikasi, Bahasa Inggeris, media sosial, Pembelajaran sendiri, Asia Tenggara, Tinjauan Sistematik

Introduction

English education is very essential and crucial for everyone, especially primary, secondary, and tertiary learners. The learning of English should be conducted in an enjoyable environment and not just confined behind the four walls of a classroom (Rahmah, 2015). The learning process should be conducted in a fun, stress-free, and pleasant environment that is able to cultivate a positive attitude among the learners. In creating a fun and enjoyable environment for the learners, the educators, teachers, and lecturers can implement the 21st century learning which focuses on the student-centred approach over the teacher-centred approach.

The 21st century learning highlights three different kinds of competencies which are learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. The learning skills are comparatively crucial as it cultivates students' innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication and collaboration skills. Similarly, literacy skills highlight the information, media, and ICT literacy, while the life skills teach students to have adaptability, flexibility, initiative, and self-direction. In order for the students to develop these competencies in the 21st century learning,

the learning environment should be supportive and has the ability to communicate ideas and concepts that can stimulate students' interests to study (Rigolon and Alloway, 2011).

Correspondingly, the Malaysian education system should focus on implementing the 21st century learning by equipping the students with ICT knowledge and utilising interactive platforms like social media, social network sites (SNS) and application for the learning process. Undoubtedly, scholars have identified various benefits of social media for English learning. Opportunities arise for students as they can develop their own learning styles using different interactive media platforms (Girma, 2012). Besides, social media is ubiquitous, accessible, convenient and receive high engagement compared to the other media platforms (Chen & Xiao, 2022; Kamnoetsin, 2014).

This systematic literature review aims to respond to a research question – Why students prefer to use social media for English learning? This study's objective is to provide a systematic literature review on students' preferences using social media for English learning in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian region was selected for several reasons. Firstly, Malaysia belongs to the Southeast Asian region and it is important to study the use of social media for English learning in non-native English-speaking countries. Secondly, the researchers would like to examine social media preferences for English learning among Southeast Asian learners.

Social media for English learning

The use of social media in English education has grown and will continue to develop as a strategic teaching approach during the post-pandemic recovery phase. In scholarly works on social media, social media refers to a number of online platforms, such as blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks (SN), forums, microblogs, photo sharing, product reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing, and virtual worlds.

Social media platforms are ubiquitous, and research into their use has grown enormously. Social media has been used extensively in the education context as it provides the learners and educators with plenty of benefits in the learning process, such as providing assistance, enhancement of educational processes, communication and

collaboration and customising the learning styles (Zachos et al., 2018). In the educational context, a variety of social media platforms have been used to facilitate the learning process such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, Snapchat, WeChat, Line and TikTok (Ganapathy et al., 2020; Hafifah & Sulisty, 2020; Maulina et al., 2021; Nuraihan et al., 2020; Octana & Priyatno, 2020; Salehudin et al., 2020).

Despite the benefits of social media for English learning, other scholars have stated that university students' usage of social media is more detrimental than good. Social media is not always used for learning purpose, as students were drawn towards chatting and subjects that had nothing to do with their education (Slim & Hafedh, 2019; Chen & Xiao, 2022). The increase in social media use and the opportunities it has provided necessitate a research that will reveal social media use of English learning among students in Southeast Asia.

Methods

The review protocol – Established Guidelines

For completing the systematic literature review, there are several review protocols that can be applied by the scholars, such as BEME Collaboration, Joanna Briggs Institute, and Campbell Collaboration, which are commonly used in health-related fields. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA), created by Moher et al., (2009), is one of the review processes that can be used in non-health studies that involve the arts, humanities, engineering, computer science, and architecture. In addition, several scholars in fields like social sciences and supply chain management have developed established guidelines as a guide for systematic literature review (Durach et al. 2017).

The current investigation was guided by a review methodology based on published principles. The established guidelines are intended for systematic literature review in social sciences and management (Shaffril et al., 2020; Kraus et al., 2020). The purpose of established criteria is to encourage researchers to provide genuine and correct material with a high level of details. The researchers began this systematic literature evaluation based on this review process by developing appropriate research questions. Following that, the researchers must complete

the systematic searching approach, which includes three major subprocesses: identification, screening, and eligibility. Finally, the data were examined and validated.

Formulation of research questions

The formulation of research questions for this study involved the Research Question Development Tool (RQDT). For this study, the researchers utilised Population or Problem, Interest, Context (PICO). PICO is a tool developed to assist researchers in developing suitable research questions for the review. Based on PICO, the researchers have finalised three main aspects in the review, namely: use of social media (Problem), English language (Interest), and 21st century and Southeast Asia region (Context), which then direct the researchers to formulate the main research question – How has the use of social media benefited learners in learning English in the Southeast Asian region? This method determines how much the current studies have progressed toward clarifying the use of social media in studying English in the 21st century in the Southeast Asian context. It also helps to identify relations, gaps, and contradictions in the literature and explores reasons why researchers keep exploring the research area. Conclusively, it helps to formulate research questions and directions for future research (Shaffril et al., 2020).

Systematic searching strategies

Three main processes involved in the systematic searching strategies namely identification, screening and eligibility as depicted in Figure 1.

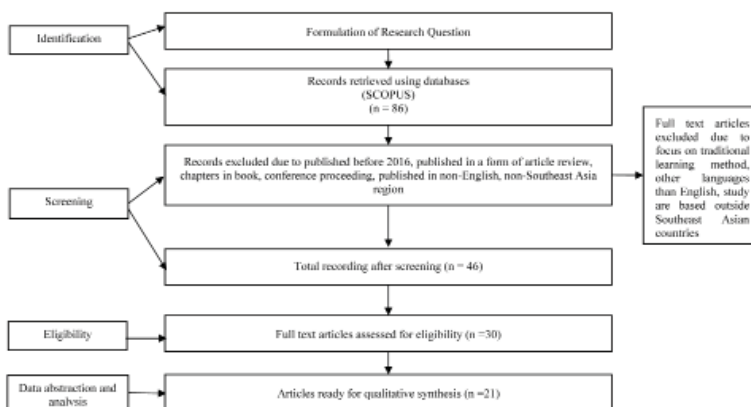


Fig.1. Review Flow Diagram (adapted from Shaffril et al., 2019)

Identification

The first step involves with identification. In this step, the researchers looked for synonyms and related terms, which are social media, English language and the twenty-first century. It provides more alternatives for the selected database to look for more related articles by searching for synonyms and related phrases. As a result, the previously established study topic can create keywords, as indicated by Okoli (2015). As shown in Table 1, the researchers enriched the existing keywords and created a full search string using several functions available in the databases, including the Boolean operator and phrase searching on a database, SCOPUS. The searches in the database, SCOPUS yielded a total of 86 articles.

Screening

This study screened all 86 articles by filtering the criteria for article selection, which was performed using the database's sorting function. It is critical to identify the time period. Hence, the use of Kraus et al.'s (2020) idea of study maturity to establish the appropriate range of publication for review. By referring to Table 1, the inclusion criteria for this study were a publication timeline ranging from 2016 to 2022. In addition, the empirical data and published journal articles were also included. Only publications published in English that cover Southeast Asia will be included in the review. This resulted in the exclusion of 46 articles because they all failed to meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 40 articles were used in the eligibility phase.

Table 1. The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	2016-2021	Before 2016
Document type	Article journal	Article review, chapter in book, conference proceeding, report
Language	English	Other than English
Region	Southeast Asia	Other than Southeast Asia

Eligibility

In this phase, the 40 articles were examined in terms of their titles and abstracts. An article was judged to be eligible if it is a full text version and focuses on the social media use of English learning. As a result, 19 articles were removed due to their emphasis on Chinese rather than English, on traditional learning methods rather than the use of social media, and on the Western region rather than the Southeast Asian region. After screening the titles and abstracts, 21 articles were chosen.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

According to Whitemore and Knafelz (2005), the ideal strategy to synthesise integrative data is to use qualitative or mixed method techniques that allow the researchers to perform iterative comparison across primary data sources. The qualitative technique was chosen for this study. The researchers attentively reviewed the 21 articles, paying special attention to the abstract, findings, and discussions sections. The data abstraction was carried out based on the research question, which means that any data from the examined studies that could answer the research questions was abstracted and placed in a table. Following that, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis, identifying themes and sub-themes based on efforts connected to recognising patterns and themes, clustering, numbering, noting parallels and relationships that existed within the abstracted data (Flemming et al., 2019).

Table 2. An overview of social media use for English learning in Southeast Asia region

Authors	Country	Social media platform	Research design	Themes				
				Communication skill	Collaborative learning	Self-directed learning	Writing skill	Learning experience
Maulina et al., (2021)	Indonesia	WA	Quantitative	√		√		
Razak & Din (2020)	Malaysia	OV	Quantitative					√
Nurairhan et al., (2020)	Malaysia & Thailand	IG	Quantitative				√	
Salehudin et al., (2020)	Malaysia	IG	Quantitative			√		
Sutasini & Melor (2020)	Malaysia	SM	Quantitative	√				
Octana & Priyatno (2020)	Indonesia	IG	Qualitative	√		√	√	
Wong, Ashairi & Melor (2019)	Malaysia	SM	Quantitative					√
Khusnul et al., (2019)	Indonesia	SM	Quantitative			√		
Haida et al., (2020)	Malaysia	VL	Quantitative			√		√
Anggraini et al., (2022)	Indonesia	YT	Quantitative	√				
Sun & Asmawi (2023)	Malaysia	WC	Quantitative	√			√	√
Alawiah et al., (2022)	Indonesia	YT	Quantitative					√
Riswanto et al., (2022)	Indonesia	YT	Quantitative	√	√			

Suprato & Sidupa (2019)	Indonesia	Line and WA	Quantitative						√
Prasetyawati & Ardi (2020)	Indonesia	IG	Qualitative		√				√
Anwas et al., (2020)	Indonesia	Line, WA, IG, FB, TW	Quantitative	√					
Arumugam et al., (2019)	Malaysia	YT	Quantitative	√		√			√
Maulina et al., (2019)	Indonesia	WA	Quantitative	√					
Rou et al., (2019)	Malaysia	FB, WA, IG, WC, YT	Quantitative	√					
Kitchakarn (2016)	Thailand	FB	Quantitative			√			
Bayoung et al., (2019)	Malaysia	FB, TW, WC, LINE, IG, YT, WA,	Quantitative						√

Social Media Platform

IG= Instagram	WC= WeChat
FB= Facebook	LN= LINE
T= Telegram	YT= YouTube
TW= Twitter	SC= Snapchat
WA= WhatsApp	TT= TikTok

Findings

Background of the articles

This study reviewed 21 articles, where 10 articles were written from Indonesia, nine from Malaysia, and two from Thailand. A total of 19 articles employed quantitative research methodology and two articles employed qualitative research design.

The themes

Five themes were created: (a) improved communication skill (b) enhanced collaborative learning (c) encouragement for self-directed learning (d) enhanced writing skill and (e) enhanced learning experience.

Improved communication skill

Using social media for English learning has numerous advantages for both students and teachers, including improved communication skills and abilities. Using Instagram as a learning tool in the writing process allows students to collaborate and communicate with others by providing criticism and remarks in the comment section (Octana & Priyatno, 2020). As a result, it fosters a sense of courage in the learners and improves their interpersonal abilities. It also enhances understanding between learners and lecturers, as well as learners with learners.

The significance of WhatsApp as a platform for speaking practise via audio and video recording was acknowledged by the students (Sun & Asmawi, 2023; Maulina et al., 2019; Sutasini & Melor, 2020). The demand for a platform where students may connect in a natural way is significant. Students in the WhatsApp group felt free to voice their thoughts and reply to those of their classmates and teachers through their recorded audio and video. Students enjoy learning English through the WhatsApp Based Speaking (WABS) platform. The majority of them choose to strengthen the vocabulary component of their basic speaking via WABS (Maulina et al., 2021). This strategy not only encourages students to speak out in class, but it also indirectly encourages students to actively participate in the class discussions (Maulina et al., 2021; Khalid, Linda & Zanariah, 2015).

Additionally, using YouTube in English-speaking classes helps students perform better in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and details (Anggraini et al., 2022; Riswanto et al., 2022; Rou

et al., 2019). Students are inspired to work on their pronunciation and broaden their vocabulary while listening to a native English speaker with an authentic accent, both of which assist them to increase their overall fluency. This helped them in building their confidence to interact using English language with others (Arumugam et al., 2019). The videos on the channel were utilised by the students as a discussion starter when they watched them, giving them something to speak about. This has resulted in improving their communication skill.

There is a substantial and positive correlation between the students' proficiency in speaking English and the frequency they consume English-language information on social media. Students have the opportunity to contact with individuals from all over the world by using social media, which gives them an additional opportunity to practise their speaking skill (Anwas et al., 2020).

Enhanced collaborative learning

Correspondingly, English learning through social media platforms enhance collaborative learning among students. The collaborative learning happens when students discuss ideas or finding answers to challenges in pairs or small groups. By implementing pair work strategy, students have real-time practice with the teacher as well as their partners. As they participate in more pair work activities and answer questions from the teacher, they have more chances to engage with one another (Riswanto et al., 2022).

The use of Instagram in writing exercises allowed students to collaborate and interact with others by giving feedback and comments in the comment section. By leaving comments, the students could edit each other's writing. As a result, individuals were able to receive writing-related comments. Consequently, the students may review and edit their own work in light of input from their friends (Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020). The peer review on social media has helped the students to learn English grammar and structure (Arumugam et al., 2019).

Additionally, Facebook would allow students to efficiently collaborate and learn. They were free to exchange any written resources they wished, including documents, assignments, and lecture notes. Receiving feedback and comments from peers gave them more

concepts, information, and processing abilities to consider (Kitchakarn, 2016).

Encouragement for self-directed learning

It is crucial for students to involve in self-directed learning when they engage with social media. Self-directed learning refers to the students' ability to identify their own learning needs, setting their own learning objectives, defining the resources they need to learn from, selecting and applying the best learning techniques, and assessing their progress whether they receive outside assistance (Knowles, 1975). Students may practise self-directed learning when they learn at their own pace and it fosters independence in them like in the use of WhatsApp Based Speaking (WABS) content (Maulina et al., 2021; Haida et al., 2019).

Besides, the use of Instagram in the class writing project encourages self-directed learning among students. This implies the goal setting, self-planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and revision. Students are allowed to plan their own learning styles that suits their needs and moods at the particular time. Hence, they are responsible towards their own learning and would complete the writing project at their own pace. At the end of the project, students revise their work based on the feedback received from their teacher or peers (Octana et al., 2020; Khusnul et al., 2019). Furthermore, using Instagram during the learning process offers a stimulation to students that explore their potentials, passions, and interests. This means students have control over the learning process (Salehuddin et al., 2020).

Enhanced writing skill

Most traditional learning techniques do not incorporate technology, which has increased learners' fear of writing. One study suggested that using technology in writing lowers learners' writing anxiety (Nuraihan et al., 2020). The broad audience on social media gives users an authentic setting in which to use the language. What was once a tedious chore for a language learner is now an integral part of their daily life. According to El Said Abdul Fattah (2015), students enjoy writing with instant messages and status updates. They were also found to write in English more frequently on Edmodo, a worldwide education network; massive open online courses (MOOC); and Google Classroom, which were commonly used for teaching (Nuraihan et al., 2020).

Instagram integration in writing classes promotes student engagement in various ways, including allowing students to be more active in the writing processes; creating a new learning environment; providing more target readers; and ensuring student participation and interaction (Octana & Priyatno, 2020). Moreover, most students admit that the use of WeChat for writing is good since it helps them to interact more with their peers, enable sharing of experiences and problems in writing (Sun & Asmawi, 2023).

Furthermore, in order to help students grow and improve their writing skills, English teachers might take use of this unique interest. For a writing class, the English teachers can provide students the option of selecting a topic from the social media (Bayoung et al., 2019). The replies will undoubtedly be used as opportunities for students to write better English. The replies, on the other hand, can expand their vocabulary by copying interesting words or phrases from social media into their books. Evidently, interactions in the social media help students write better when they are moderated by teachers.

Enhanced learning experience

Using social media to learn English improves students' learning experience. According to Razak and Din (2020), the majority of respondents in their research feel that edutainment video delivers an interesting sensory experience and that the video content can improve their level of proficiency. Similarly, using a video blog (vlog) can boost learners' interest and involvement in learning (Haida et al., 2020, Suprato & Sidupa, 2019; Alawiah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, primary school students believe that social media has influenced their reading habits since they can read items of interest to them and share them with their classmates (Wong, Ashairi & Melor, 2019).

Additionally, students believed that the use of WeChat in writing has enriched their learning experiences. The online interaction helped them to share their experiences, collaborate with and enhanced their critical thinking in writing. As a result, students' passion for learning Business English Writing grows over time, resulting in increased learning efficiency (Sun & Asmawi, 2023).

On the other hand, students feel satisfied with the integration of Instagram in the EFL writing. The students were interested in completing

their writing assignments on Instagram as it offers an appealing user interface and intriguing features. This has encouraged and pushed them to write their opinions and complete the task given. Similarly, some students admitted that they acquire new experience with the use of Instagram for writing (Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020). Previously, they normally worked their writing projects on paper. With this technique, they were given the opportunity to create and share their writing on Instagram. As a result, the students could upload the images or videos and add the captions from their writing assignments. In this way, students gain new experience for writing and it stimulates their interests for writing (Arumugam et al., 2019).

Discussion

This systematic review elaborates on the thematic analyses, which were divided into five themes. The fundamental theme explored throughout the literature was the improvement of communication skills. Notably, most students prefer to use social media for English learning since it helps them enhance their communication abilities, which can be measured by using a variety of components such as oral communication, written communication, nonverbal communication, and visual communication. Learners can improve their communication abilities by using social media to learn English. They may express themselves online without having to deal with the awkwardness of speaking in front of others. The learners will soon be able to respond to and comment on their own and others' posts, as well as receive feedback from the other learners.

Furthermore, the use of social media for English learning has increased the learners' communication skills by allowing them to improve and expand their vocabulary. Adult learners choose to use WABS, Instagram, and video blogging sites to overcome grammar challenges and enhance their vocabulary. Meanwhile, young students pick up new vocabulary from social media comment sections (Maulina et al., 2021; Octana & Priyatno, 2020; Haida et al., 2019). Although this has been seen positively by young learners, the negatives of others' inappropriate and imprecise language on social media remain a problem.

Nevertheless, different types of learners will benefit from the social media platform, including those who are introverted and reticent learners (Chew and Ng, 2021; Xin and Yunus, 2019; Halif et al., 2020). Introverted and reticent learners prefer to use social media to learn

English rather than in the classroom as they fear being mocked by their peers, making mistakes, or being judged by others (Cunningham & Watson, 2018; Shao & Gao, 2016). Thus, they remain reticent as an avoidance strategy in the classroom (Tian, 2022). However, recent research revealed that Thai learners are considered to be reticent and shy in the classroom as this is an embedded personality trait (Vinitwatanakhun, 2019). Additionally, Vietnamese learners were more inclined to speak English spontaneously in online environments where they felt they had less social presence. They used text and voice chat as both were perceived as less face-threatening than video chat. As a result, they were more inclined to speak in situations with less social presence (Cunningham & Watson, 2018).

Besides that, learners prefer to use social media to learn English as they can personalise their learning process. Learners can design the content, duration, and time based on their schedules. This allows the learners to have some flexibility over their learning process. Recent research reveals that learners engage in out-of-class learning activities more frequently. Out-of-class learning has been used in personalised learning to refer to the efforts of learners enrolled in classroom-based language courses to locate and exploit chances for language acquisition outside of class (Changzhen, 2018). When the learners are involved in self-directed learning, they can freely express their thoughts and respond on social media. This enables them to customise their learning style in terms of time and modes of learning (Slim and Hafedh, 2019).

However, learners need to also be aware of the drawbacks of the social media, such as the limited characters on Twitter force users to use abbreviations or shorten words, which is grammatically incorrect (Al-Sharqi and Abbasi, 2020). Hence, to be able to use social media effectively to boost their language learning process, learners would require well-prepared instructional supervision and specialised exercises (Lin et al., 2016). Other than that, annotated video technology in education has a growing research base that shows its potential role in student learning (Lam & Habil, 2021). Learners will be taught analogous practises through annotated video learning, which will help them concentrate and focus on their learning.

The government, schools and other related organisations can use the findings to improve language learning through social media. When

students use social media as an English learning tool, such as Facebook and Instagram, they study the language and communicate with people all over the world and complete language functions without ever seeing native speakers in person. Hence, the government through its Ministry of Education can leverage these platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, for English learning in the classroom. For example, Instagram use for photo essays.

Besides, other organisations such as the telecommunication providers can continue to provide special discount for students through education subscription plan. Students can enjoy special benefits such as YouTube for Education and Meta for Education to encourage the informal learning of English

Conclusion

This systematic literature review highlighted the social media use concerning English language learning in the Southeast Asian context, which was divided into five main themes: improved communication skills, enhanced collaborative learning, encouragement for self-directed learning, enhanced writing skill and enhanced learning experience. The variables derived from this study could contribute to the body of knowledge by highlighting the role and features of social media in facilitating the English learning process. Hence, it is hoped that this systematic review could provide learners with a better understanding of how to leverage social media applications for the learning process, especially in the English language.

Despite its contributions, this review has several limitations. Firstly, only one database was used, so the results could not be generalised. It was intended to gather data from additional databases. However, during the selection stage, the articles gathered did not meet the title and selection criteria. Thus, only one database was selected for the final stage. Secondly, this study is intended for the Southeast Asian context. However, data presented in this review merely covers several countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand since in the selection process, only literature on these countries meet our selection criteria. Other Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and Brunei are not included in this review because articles from those countries are not related to students.

This study proposes some suggestions for future scholars' consideration. Firstly, this study mainly focuses on English for learning purposes in Southeast Asian context. It is recommended to study and include the impact of social media on English language learning in the East Asia region, including Japan and Korea. This is because Korea has considered English as a global language and it has been recognised as a must-learn language based on the national agenda, *Segyehwa*, or globalisation in the Korean language. Secondly, several factors need to be considered when promoting social media as a learning platform. The researchers would suggest future studies to concentrate more on the challenges of using social media as a tool for teaching English. There is a concern over the use of ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot that mimics human speech in the process of English learning. The ChatGPT can be helpful for the learning process. However, some people were concerned that ChatGPT will complete the tasks that the students is expected to do. This would sap students' inspiration, creativity, and ability to think critically (Learning Network, 2023).

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***Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as Goal Framing for Sustainable Behaviours: A Conceptual Framework**

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Abstract: Positive values serve as a catalyst to the formation of sustainable behaviours at the individual level, which contributes to the achievement of a nation's sustainable development goals. With that, the current study introduces a new conceptual framework based on five pivotal values or goals of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*—preserving religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth—which serve as predictors in the framing of sustainable behaviours. This study presents an overview of goal-action research, establishes the identified research gaps and study's aims, which is then followed by an extensive review of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and its five goals. The proposed *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-based framework for sustainable behaviours offers new avenues to further establish novel understanding on the universal views of Islam, which are also applicable for the non-Muslim community. Moreover, this conceptual framework provides an alternative perspective to the normative Western viewpoint on sustainable behaviours.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*; Islam; goal; sustainable behaviour; value

Abstrak: Nilai-nilai positif menjadi pemangkin kepada pembentukan tingkah laku mampan dalam kalangan individu dan ianya sekali gus membolehkan

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pencapaian matlamat pembangunan mampan bagi sesebuah negara. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan sebuah kerangka konseptual baharu yang berteraskan kepada lima nilai penting dalam *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*—memelihara agama, nyawa, akal, keturunan dan harta benda—yang bertindak sebagai peramal dalam pembentukan tingkah laku mampan. Kajian ini memberikan gambaran menyeluruh tentang kajian matlamat-tindakan, mengenal pasti jurang penyelidikan dan matlamat kajian, serta menjalankan tinjauan literatur tentang *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* dan lima matlamatnya. Kerangka konseptual baharu untuk tingkah laku mampan yang berasaskan *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* telah memberikan peluang baharu untuk memahami pandangan universal Islam yang juga boleh diaplikasikan oleh komuniti bukan Islam. Selain itu, kerangka konseptual ini menyediakan perspektif alternatif kepada sudut pandangan normatif barat tentang tingkah laku mampan.

Kata kunci: Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, Islam, matlamat, tingkah laku mampan, nilai

Introduction

During the late 1960s, Edwin Locke proposed an idea about the importance of goals in motivating human behaviours (Donmez-Turan & Kiliçlar, 2021). A few years later, research and theories (e.g., goal-setting theory, goal-framing theory, goal systems theory, and goal-directed model) have demonstrated the relevancy and the role of goals in motivating, regulating, and guiding or directing human behaviours (Latham & Locke, 1991; Gollwitzer & Bargh, 1996; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg & de Groot, 2019). Accordingly, goals are considered starting points of deliberate control of a specific action. The expectation of goal effects depends on the basic assumption that individuals have desired states that they intend to continue to strive until the experienced state sufficiently approximates the desired state, while in consideration of their beliefs, wishes, desires, values, and values (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996).

There have been various studies on the impact of goals on individuals' cognition and behaviour from different perspectives and backgrounds in these past decades. Numerous studies, models, and theories have emerged as the outcomes of such endeavours. However, a significant portion of the existing body of literature related to goal

action, particularly on environmental behaviours, focuses on the Western tradition (Unanue et al., 2016). Less attention has been paid to non-Western perspectives on such domain (Clayton et al., 2016).

Previous studies on goal action focused on identifying the most effective types of goals to direct and predict behaviours. These goals vary in their contents, including specificity, size, level of abstraction, intrinsic or extrinsic orientation, gain or hedonic focus, and normativity, as well as whether they are framed in terms of positive or negative outcomes. The overriding goals and the foreground and background goals, among others, have remained in question (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996; Lindenberg, 2001, 2006; Unanue et al., 2016; Steg & de Groot, 2019). Other prior studies on goal action focused on goal content (Gollwitzer, 1996), which strongly influences the chances of achieving a specific goal (Gollwitzer, 2015). In addition, past studies showed that goal pursuit can be affected by the structural features of the goal, such as the strength of the goal, the aspiration or standard specified in the goal, and the context in which the individual strives for their goal (Gollwitzer, 2015).

Meanwhile, *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah*, as a framework, has recently gained growing attention from scholars and organisations in different fields. With the emergence of the environmental and sustainability research fields, many studies have attempted to address the relationship between *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah* and the sustainability phenomenon. However, the relationship between *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah* and sustainable behaviours has remained underexplored, as prior studies mainly focused on the relationship of *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah* with sustainability or the environment in general (e.g., Al Haq & Abd Wahab, 2019; Aziz et al., 2020), or sustainable development (e.g., Muhammad, 2017; Hasan et al., 2018). Moreover, most of these prior studies were normative, not empirical (Nizam & Larbani, 2016), or were of a different discipline, instead of sustainability, focusing on other issues related to banking, finance, economy, and so forth (Baharuddin et al., 2019; Baharuddin et al., 2021).

In view of the above, based on the existing literature on goal-action research and considering the importance of global environmental

change and degradation problems (e.g., Steg et al., 2014; Clayton et al., 2016), the current study aimed to introduce a non-Western perspective on goals and sustainable behaviours. Using an Islamic lens, this study introduced five necessary or higher goals of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as effective predictors of sustainable behaviours. Addressing the lack of empirical and conceptual research on *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, this study presented novel insights on the relationships of *Sharī'ah* goals and sustainable behaviours (McGregor, 2018).

Background of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

Etymologically, “Maqasid,” the plural form of “maqṣad” or “maqṣid,” conveys several meanings, such as goal or objective (Julia et al., 2018; Wani, 2018a; Aziz et al., 2020). Moreover, terms of “*Maqasid Sharia*,” “*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*,” or “*Al-Maqasid Al-Shariah*” have been used interchangeably. Contemporary Muslim scholars have recently started to define the concept of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. For instance, Al-Raysuni (2005) defined *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as the purpose for which law is established for the benefits of humankind. Wani (2018a, p. 40) stated that “*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is the umbrella term representing the higher goals and objectives of the *Sharī'ah*, the Divine path decreed by the Creator for the welfare of humanity herein and hereafter”. Meanwhile, “*Sharī'ah*” is understood as law or code. It is also regarded as a framework or path to one’s well-being (Murphy & Smolarski, 2020; Rasool et al., 2020; Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020).

The idea of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* has a historical origin and development in the conservative Muslim society. Scholars like Al Juwayni (d.478AH/1085CE), Al Ghazali (d.505AH/1111CE), and Al-Shatibi (d.790AH/1388CE) played a crucial role in extracting and constructing the idea from two primary sources, namely the Qur’ān and Hadith or teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Several prior studies highlighted the roles of these scholars in the development of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, including Luqman et al. (2020), Murphy and Smolarski (2020), and Yaakub and Abdullah (2020). These scholars unanimously agreed on three main components of the goals: necessities, needs, and embellishments (see Figure 1) (Luqman et al., 2020; Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020).

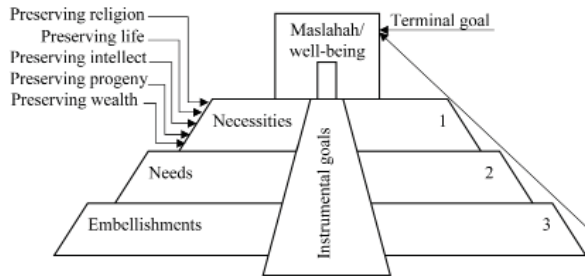


Figure 1. Pyramidical ladder of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (Author source)

Notes: The numbers on the right indicate the importance of each category (“1” denotes first-order goals; “2” denotes second-order goals; “3” denotes third-order goals). The size of each trapezoid shows the range of each category.

All these goals aim to achieve a terminal goal or state, which is the well-being of all human beings (Al Haq & Abd Wahab, 2019; Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020). In this context, a majority of classical and modern Muslim scholars have expressed their agreement on how a life system would either be completely or partially collapsed, and that massive chaos could be a consequence of missing or ignoring any of the five necessities (Amin, 2015; Jaelani et al., 2020; Luqman et al., 2020).

The current study only focused on the necessary goals due to their high importance (Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020). As shown in Figure 1, necessary goals comprise five overarching goals: preserving religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth. According to Muslim scholars, these goals are focal, as they can guide one’s behaviour towards achieving a better life for all humankind and ultimately, attaining the terminal goal of well-being (or *Maslahah*) (Al Haq & Abd Wahab, 2019; Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020). Accordingly, one’s well-being depends on the achievement level of these five necessary goals; for instance, a high achievement of these five goals would result in a high level of well-being, and vice versa.

Five necessary concepts of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

The necessities of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* have been widely applied in various disciplines, particularly in the economic field (e.g., Hasan, 2006), banking (e.g., Julia et al., 2018; Julia & Kassim, 2019), finance

(e.g., Abubakar, 2016; Amin, 2020), as well as in the bioethics field (e.g., Saifuddeen et al., 2014). Recent studies have attempted to discern the relationships of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* with environmental and sustainability issues.

For instance, Al Haq and Abd Wahab (2019) reported that the dimensions of sustainability (i.e., social, economic, and environmental dimensions) conform with the requirements of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Muhamad et al. (2020) discussed the embedded environmental and sustainability values in the Qur'ān and Hadith as the two primary sources of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. In the same context, Aziz et al. (2020) found that the necessities of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* are important indicators of awareness of environmental preservation. Similarly, Yaakub and Abdullah (2020) strived to offer knowledge on the concepts of environmental sustainability and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

However, only a few empirical studies (e.g., Nizam & Larbani, 2016; Mohamad et al., 2017; Julia et al., 2018; Yusof et al., 2019) examined the relationships of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* among each other and with other variables or phenomena. To date, the relationship between *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and sustainable behaviours has not been explored.

Accordingly, preservation is understood as sustained improvement and enrichment of five necessary elements of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* towards a better future for all time (Chapra, 2008; Yusof et al., 2019). Overall, preserving religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth can be executed in two complementary ways (Al-Raysuni et al., 2005; Nizam & Larbani, 2016): (1) by preserving their existence (i.e., legislating that which will bring them into being and then perpetuating and nurturing their existence); (2) by preventing actions that would lead to their disappearance, destruction, or neutralisation, either by an existing or anticipated thing, in order to protect them from annihilation. The following subsections further discuss these five fundamental concepts of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

Preserving religion

Various sustainability, environmental, and behavioural studies have explored the roles of religion. Due to the pivotal and influential roles of religion in human life, many scholars have considered preserving religion as the most important goal among the five goals. For instance, Weber (1946) pointed out the importance of institutions, such as religion,

to the gain goal, where individuals act on behalf of a reasonably well-established future self (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). Aziz et al. (2020), UNEP (2020), Kaplan and Iyer (2021), and Saputra et al. (2021) emphasised the pivotal roles of religion in environmental preservation, sustainable behaviours, and sustainable development. In another study, Lindenberg (2006) mentioned “some kind of mental representation that guides reasoning and action,” suggesting that religious belief systems are important factors that influence goals and mental models in a given situation of an action. Likewise, Hassan (2014) mentioned that prior studies established a connection between religion and consumer behaviours. Minton et al. (2015) also found that religiosity can affect sustainable behaviours. More religious individuals are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviours, such as recycling and using eco-friendly cleaning supplies. In addition, Stern (2000) and Minton et al. (2015) reported that religion and its values, if carefully executed, can enhance individuals’ environmental concerns and motivate them to change their unsustainable behaviours to sustainable behaviours.

Islam has paid close attention to issues related to the environment, sustainability, and the connectedness of humankind to nature. In this regard, various verses of the Qur’ān and Sunnah (Hadith), as the two primary resources of Islam, discussed issues related to the environment, sustainability, and human behaviours. For instance, when it comes to observing the environment, people should observe themselves and their surroundings: “Do they not look at the camels, how they are created? And at the heaven how it is raised? And the mountains how they are fixed firm? And at the earth how it is spread out?” (Qur’ān, 88: 17–20). In the same context, the heritage of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) presents numerous examples of his deeds and sayings, which have established the practices of sustainable living, and protecting and caring for the environmental capital. For instance, regarding the appreciation of the value of water, Prophet Muhammad told one of his companions who was using an excessive amount of water during ablution not to waste water, even if the act is done by a flowing river (Muhamad et al., 2020).

As a result, preserving religion (Islam) must be attained because it is the source of wisdom (knowledge), values, beliefs, and norms, especially in the Muslim community. Generally, a worldview reflects one’s belief system about the meaning, process, and essence of the environment

(Muhamad et al., 2020). It can also be understood as foundational assumptions and perceptions regarding the underlying nature of reality, the right social interactions or guidelines for living, and the existence or non-existence of essential entities (Hedlund-de Witt, 2012). In the same vein, Hanapi (2015) argued that an Islamic worldview consists of three basic elements: the relationships between humans and Allah, the relationships among humans, and the relationships between humans and nature. Al-Jayyousi (2016) also reported that the Islamic worldview views God as the creator of the entire world that benefits all human beings. It influences individuals' perceptions of human-environment relationships, particularly on how they manipulate and exploit the environment (Hedlund-de Witt, 2012; Muhamad et al., 2020).

Preserving life

Primarily, preserving life refers to preserving human life. Yaakub and Abdullah (2020) stated that protecting all lifeforms on earth is one of the requirements of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Similarly, Muhamad et al. (2020) pointed out that preserving animals and plants is intended to preserve life. Animals and plants must not be killed or destroyed for leisure or with any purpose against preserving life and protecting progeny, such as for deforestation or bushmeat trade, which may result in severe loss of biodiversity (Muhamad et al., 2020). Hence, it is necessary to maintain environmental balance by protecting various plant and animal species from being endangered and extinct to ensure the continuity of human existence (Muhamad et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, preserving life, particularly human life, is sacred and gains the utmost importance, especially in the Muslim community. The following verse of the Qur'ān shows the sanctity of human life (Murphy & Smolarski, 2020): "We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul ... it is as if he had slain humanity entirely. And whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved humanity entirely" (Qur'ān, 5:32). Al-Raysuni et al. (2005) described three ways to achieve the goal of preserving life: (1) establishing its foundation through the legitimacy of procreation (by entering into valid matrimony, not via forbidden one, such as sexual misconduct); (2) ensuring its survival after having it come into existence by providing food and drink that must not be harmful or lethal (ensuring its survival from within); (3) providing clothing and shelter (ensuring its survival from without).

Several contemporary scholars recently attempted to conceptualise the goal of preserving life. For instance, Amin (2015) defined the goal of preserving life as the preservation of human life (1) from the inside (through the fulfilment of physical and biological needs, such as food and drinks, spiritual or psychological needs, such as moral and spiritual uplift, and intellectual needs, such as education), (2) from the outside (protection against harm and danger in the natural environment) through clothing and shelter, and (3) through the fulfilment of social needs, such as social equality, family, and social solidarity. Likewise, Yusof et al. (2019) defined the preservation of life as ensuring the existence, sustenance, and development of human life through the fulfilment of basic needs, both physical and spiritual, and moral and social needs, as well as its protection against threats, both human and non-human, at the individual and collective levels.

Preserving intellect

Intellect is the characteristic that distinguishes human beings from other lifeforms in this world. It is the fountainhead, starting point, and foundation of knowledge where all information and knowledge are processed (i.e., cognitive processes). Hence, the perceptions, judgments, and decisions related to the environmental and sustainability issues, for instance, are made to be distinguished between what is right and wrong (Chapra, 2008; Sarkawi et al., 2017; Yusof et al., 2019). It is a special feature that enables human beings to make reasoned choices (e.g., how to act) and to maintain a higher position with respect to all other lifeforms (Rkiouak, 2016). In other words, it is a mechanism of responsibility (Rizk, 2014). It is an extraordinary and powerful tool that enables human beings to comprehend their environment and to create and regulate environmental events that touch every aspect of their lives (Bandura, 2001).

The development, protection, and ethical use of intellect are a central concern of *Shari'ah* (Murphy & Smolarski, 2020). *Shari'ah* presents special care on intellect and how it can be preserved. From the Islamic perspective, intellect can be preserved by preventing it from anything that would harm it (Amin, 2015). Likewise, Nizam and Larbani (2016) argued that preserving intellect can occur in two ways: (1) by placing critical importance on enhancing the power of intellect through knowledge acquisition; (2) by prohibiting anything that would harm the intellect of human beings, such as the consumption of alcohol and drugs, which are identified as prohibited substances in Islam.

Conceptually, Ibn Ashur (Amin, 2015) reported that preserving intellect means protecting individuals' minds from anything that would put them in disorder because any disorder of the intellect would lead to serious corruption and improper and perverted human conducts. In a more recent study, Yusof et al. (2019) reported that preserving intellect denotes the use and development of the human intellect by acquiring and utilising knowledge to distinguish right and wrong and safeguarding the mind from negative influences, such as drugs and superstitions.

The relationships of goals, cognitive or intellectual processes, and behaviours have been well-established, particularly in cognitive and social psychology research. The social cognitive theory provides an example of combining behavioural and cognitive explanations for human behaviours. It suggests that individuals' cognitive outcome expectations allow them to assess the likely consequences of engaging in any given behaviour and helping them to decide which behaviours to engage in (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Sumantri Oei & Hasking, 2013).

Preserving progeny

According to *Sharī'ah*, preserving progeny refers to preserving the progeny of human beings. However, maintaining the progeny of other species is also part of preserving the progeny of human beings. As previously discussed, *Sharī'ah* does not permit the destruction of other species' progeny or any plants for personal purposes, such as entertainment, profit-making, or any other purposes deemed to be against the preservation of progeny (Muhamad et al., 2020). Preserving progeny, in this sense, is believed to preserve biodiversity; thus, maintaining a balance in nature. For example, all biotechnological applications that may endanger progeny are prohibited under the framework of *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* (Saifuddeen et al., 2014). In other words, protecting human progeny and life is extended to protect all lifeforms and progeny on earth and ensures the circumstances that preserve the health and safe conditions of all lifeforms.

As for preserving human progeny is essential for a healthy, productive, and effective society (Amin, 2015) and individuals' well-being (Huinink & Feldhaus, 2009). From the Islamic perspective, preserving progeny can be achieved by legitimising marriage (sexuality) and prohibiting adultery and unnatural sexual orientations, such as homosexuality (gay and lesbian sex) (Amin, 2015; Nizam, 2016). In addition, preserving progeny is related to the prevention of

the breakdown and cessation of procreation (Nizam 2016). It protects the future generations and the continuity of humankind (Amin, 2015). It is part of an ecological balance.

Several contemporary academics attempted to conceptualise preserving progeny. Amin (2015) defined preserving progeny as the protection of everything that would ensure the survival and progress of the family (physically, materially, spiritually, and emotionally) and the preservation and development of future generations. Likewise, Yusof et al. (2019) viewed preserving progeny as the stability of the family institution through marriage. It involves everything that would ensure the survival and progress of the family, physically, materially, spiritually, and emotionally, to ensure the preservation and growth of the future generations (Yusof et al., 2019). In other words, it is about the existence and the protection of the current and future generations through the fulfilment of their basic needs (Yusof et al., 2019), which include social needs, the right to grow up in a healthy and clean environment, and to benefit from all natural resources and services. As a result, sustainable development can be achieved, and social and physical-material well-being can be attained.

Preserving wealth

Preserving wealth is necessary for individuals and societies. Through wealth preservation, people can stave off poverty, enhance societal well-being, fulfil essential needs, contribute to economic growth, accelerate development, and so forth (Chapra, 2008; Murphy & Smolarski, 2020; Rasool et al., 2020). In the same context, Hasan (2006) mentioned that equity in the distribution of wealth and prosperity, conservation of resources, and sustenance of the environment ensure the preservation of progeny and, thus, the continuity of life. Through *Maqāşid al-Sharī'ah*, Islam has placed great concern to preserving wealth (Muhammad et al., 2020), so that the different aspects encompass it, such as acquisition, protection, saving, distribution, development, etc., have been comprehensively discussed and explained by scientists.

Nowadays, preserving wealth is no longer confined only to money, assets, or properties but has transcended to include the environment. For instance, Muhamad et al. (2020) classified preserving the environment as preserving wealth. Similarly, Yosuf al-Qardhawiy affirmed that Islam is an eco-friendly religion and considers preserving the environment as part of the *Maqāşid al-Sharī'ah* (Saputra et al., 2021). Yusof et

al. (2019) elaborated that all resources belong to Allah, and human beings are agents or *Khalifah* (vicegerent) of Allah upon the earth. Human beings are permitted to benefit from natural resources for their livelihood and well-being (Muhammad et al., 2020). However, their use of resources should be sustainable, productive, and reasonable, so that the environment would not be harmed (Muhamad et al., 2020; Murphy & Smolarski, 2020).

In terms of the conceptualisation of preserving wealth, several contemporary scholars attempted to define the goal. Ibn Ashur stated that preserving wealth means protecting the wealth of the community from being ruined and shifting it to the hands of others without compensation (Amin, 2015; Nizam, 2016). Additionally, Amin (2015) and Yusof et al. (2019) defined preserving wealth as protecting ownership and property from damage, harm, theft, exploitation, or injustice. It also encompasses acquiring and developing wealth by making it available through circulation and equitable distribution, as well as preserving wealth through investment and good governance.

Proposing a Conceptual Framework of *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* as Goal Framing for Sustainable Behaviours

Sustainable behaviours have recently gained growing research interest in multiple disciplines. For instance, Navarro et al. (2020) examined the relationships of connectedness to nature, spirituality, well-being, and sustainable behaviour. Choi (2020) examined how grit influences sustainable behaviours and emotional well-being. In a more recent study, Agudelo and Cortes-Gómez (2021) explored the potential relationships of religiosity, environmental perception, and pro-social and sustainable behaviours. However, most of these prior studies conceptualised sustainable behaviours differently due to the varying researchers' perspectives and backgrounds and the nature and contexts of their studies.

Table 1 summarises the key concepts of preserving religion, life, intellect, and progeny, wealth. Meanwhile, Table 2 summarises the varying definitions of the concept of sustainable behaviour. Accordingly, the current study conceptualised sustainable behaviours as a set of responsible behaviours guided and motivated by multiple goals to mitigate environmental, social, and economic harms, resulting in the preservation of the socio-physical environment for the present and future generations.

Table 1: Definitions of the five key concepts of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah*.

Concepts	Definitions	Sources
Preserving religion	<p>Refers to salvaging the faith of every individual Muslim from being affected by anything that may undermine and confuse his or her beliefs and distort his or her behaviour.</p> <p>As for the community as a whole, preserving religion means to prevent anything that may violate and destroy its fundamentals, which include defending Muslim land and sovereignty and preserving the means of Islamic learning and education among the present and future generations of the Muslim community.</p> <p>Preservation and development of human faith through spiritual enrichment, embracing good moral standards, and performing religious practices at the individual, family, and (ummatic) society levels</p> <p>Preservation of religion means to prevent anything that may violate and destroy its fundamentals, which include defending Muslim lands and sovereignty and preserving the means of Islamic learning and education among the present and future generations of the Muslim community.</p>	<p>Ibn Ashur in Amin (2015)</p> <p>Amin (2015)</p> <p>Nizam & Larbani (2016)</p> <p>Yusof et al. (2019)</p>
Preserving life	<p>Preserving religion refers to preserving a way of life encompassing the belief system, acts of worship, moral and ethical values, and conduct at the individual, society, and state levels.</p> <p>Ensuring the existence, sustenance, and development of human life by fulfilling basic needs, both physical and spiritual, as well as moral and social needs, and its protection from threats, both human and non-human, at the individual and collective levels</p> <p>Means physically preventing human life from any danger, whether it be crime, diseases, or others, and preserving the honour of human life through mutual respect and brotherhood</p>	<p>Amin (2015), Yusof et al. (2019)</p> <p>Nizam & Larbani (2016)</p>

Concepts	Definitions	Sources
Preserving intellect	(Ibn Ashur) protecting individuals' minds from anything that would put them in disorder	Nizam & Larbani (2016)
Preserving progeny	<p>The use and development of human intellect through the acquisition and utilisation of knowledge to distinguish between right and wrong, and safeguarding the mind from negative influences, such as drugs and superstitions</p> <p>Protection of everything that would ensure the survival and progress of the family (in all dimensions—physical, material, spiritual, and emotional dimensions) and the preservation and development of future generations.</p> <p>Prevention of the breakdown and cessation of procreation</p>	Amin (2015), Yusuf et al. (2019)
Preserving wealth	<p>Stability of the family institution through marriage for the continuation of progeny</p> <p>(Ibn Ashur) protecting the wealth of the community from being ruined, and from shifting to the hands of others without compensation</p> <p>The protection of ownership and property from damage, harm, theft, exploitation, or injustice and encompasses the acquisition and development of wealth by making it available through circulation and equitable distribution, as well as preserving the wealth through investment and good governance</p>	<p>Amin (2015)</p> <p>Nizam & Larbani (2016)</p> <p>Yusuf et al. (2019)</p> <p>Amin (2015), Nizam & Larbani (2016)</p> <p>Amin (2015), Yusuf et al. (2019)</p>

Table 2: Definitions of the concept of sustainable behaviour.

Definitions	Sources
Sustainable behaviours are the kind of activities people engage in to preserve the environment and its resources.	Corral-Verdugo et al. (2010)
Sustainable behaviour generally encompasses a series of actions intended to protect both physical and social environments. It is a set of deliberate and effective actions that result in the conservation of the socio-physical environment for the present and future generations.	Corral-Verdugo et al. (2011), Corral-Verdugo et al. (2012)
Sustainable behaviours represent “a set of actions aimed at conserving the integrity of the socio-physical resources of our planet”.	Tapia-Fonllem et al. (2013), Agudelo & Cortes-Gómez (2021)
Sustainable behaviour is a set of effective, deliberate, and anticipated actions aimed at accepting responsibility for conservation and preservation of physical and cultural resources. These resources include the integrity of animal and plant species, as well as the individual and social well-being, and the safety of the present and future human generations. Sustainable behaviour is a form of moral or norm-oriented behaviour directed by norms and posited by the concept of sustainability.	Lülfes & Hahn (2014), Tapia-Fonllem et al. (2017)
Sustainable behaviours refer to consumer actions that meet the needs of the present consumer generations without compromising the ability of future consumer generations to meet their own needs.	Minton et al. (2015)
Sustainable behaviours are behaviours of environmental responsibility that thoroughly permeate into one’s daily activities.	Rakic & Rakic (2015)
In general, sustainable behaviours are environmental responsibility behaviours in every aspect of an individual’s daily activities, and are grounded on an action’s consequences and implications.	Wai & Bojei (2015)

Definitions	Sources
Sustainable behaviours would be conceived as actions that contribute to the quality of life of the present and future generations without compromising the resources of the biosphere.	Tapia-Fonllem et al. (2017)
The set of effective, deliberate, and anticipated actions that result in the preservation of natural resources, including the integrity of animal and plant species, as well as in the individual and social well-being of the current and future human generations.	Navarro et al. (2020), adopted from Corral-Verdugo & Pinheiro (2004)
Sustainable behaviour refers to the continuous effort to protect humans and the environment.	Choi (2020)
Sustainable behaviour is the product of situational motivators (e.g., group competition) and dispositional factors (e.g., dispositional competitiveness), as well as their interaction.	Nockur & Pfattheicher (2020)
Pro-sustainable behaviour refers to enduring and repetitive actions taken with the intention to change, benefit, or minimise human impact on the environment.	Ajibade & Boateng (2021)
Sustainable behaviour refers to the sense of care of the environment, an emotional connection with sustainability, and the cultivation of pro-environmental attitudes. Sustainable behaviour is a process based on consumers' perceptions of the characteristics of environmental sustainability.	Liu (2021)

As previously discussed, the five concepts of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* are interrelated and function together to achieve the terminal goal, specifically the well-being of human beings or *Maslahah* through their behaviours. In this context, Āshūr (2011) stated that the established goals and *Maslahah* (terminal goal) can be attained through human behaviours. The proposed conceptual framework in Figure 2, which was developed based on the review of related literature and the assumptions regarding the influence of different goals on behaviours, is deemed theoretically meaningful. It makes sense, at least within the Muslim community. In other words, the proposed conceptual framework is conceptually robust. The conceptual framework depicts the interrelationships of the five concepts of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah*, sustainable behaviours, and well-being.

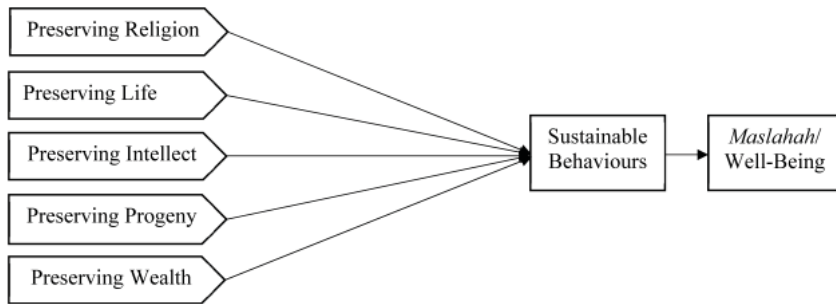


Figure 2. Proposed conceptual framework of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* as goal framing for sustainable behaviours (Author source)

In particular, the current study developed the proposed hierarchical conceptual framework based on the existing literature on *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah*, goal-action, and sustainability. The identified five overarching goals of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* (Figure 1) are regarded as instrumental goals that lead one's sustainable behaviours towards the terminal goal of well-being (Huinink & Feldhaus, 2009; Āshūr, 2011). These five goals cover the fundamental aspects of life, namely spiritual, physical or biological, psychological, sociological, and economic aspects. For instance, the spiritual aspect can be attained through the preservation of religion (Navarro et al., 2020; Agudelo & Cortes-Gómez, 2021). The biological, psychological, and sociological aspects are attained through the preservation of life, intellect, and progeny. In contrast, the economic

aspect is attained through the preservation of wealth, which is believed to foster one's behaviours and wellbeing (Unanue et al., 2016).

In addition, these goals cover all three fundamental dimensions of sustainability (i.e., environmental, social, and economic dimensions) and the spiritual or ethical dimension, which influence sustainable behaviours. The social dimension of sustainability is related to the preservation of life, intellect, and progeny (biological, psychological, and sociological aspects), while the economic aspect of sustainability is related to the preservation of wealth. In contrast, preserving religion targets the spiritual and environmental dimensions, which contribute to one's worldview and enhance environmental values, beliefs, and concerns (Hiratsuka et al., 2018; Unal et al., 2019).

In summary, these five aforementioned determinants serve as significant predictors of a wide range of behaviours, including sustainable behaviours, due to their capacity to cover a wide range of life-related aspects. Therefore, the proposed conceptual framework in this study can be applied across various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and economy, for both Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Conclusion

The five concepts of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* have been widely explored in various studies but not in the environmental and sustainability realms. Recent studies have attempted to establish the relationship between *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and the environment (Muhamad et al., 2020; Saputra et al., 2021). However, prior studies addressed the relationship of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* with the general concepts of environment and sustainability. In contrast, the current study presented a more specific conceptual framework linking these concepts to the phenomenon of sustainable behaviours. Perceiving these five concepts of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as goals that can predict and frame sustainable behaviours would add significant value to the study of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and environmental sustainability.

Based on the comprehensive review of related literature on how different types of goals influence human behaviours from multifaceted perspectives, the current study introduced new perspectives by presenting alternative variables (goals) to predict human behaviours within the Islamic context. Additionally, this study established the relationships

of five principles (goals/objectives/values) of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* with sustainable behaviours. Although the proposed conceptual framework in this study primarily concentrated on the domains of environment and sustainability and related human behaviours, it would benefit other fields and behaviours, such as consumer behaviours (Mustafar & Borhan, 2013; Amin, 2017), pro-social behaviours (Unanue et al., 2016; Agudelo & Cortes-Gómez, 2021), and health-related behaviours (Davis et al., 2015).

Although the mutual relationships between human beings and their environment have been explored in numerous studies, linking the concepts of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* with behaviours in general and sustainable behaviours, in particular, has received inadequate conceptual or empirical attention, which may be attributed to the novelty of sustainable behaviours as a new research area (Navarro et al., 2020). The majority of the existing empirical studies on sustainable behaviours focused on addressing the relationship between religion and sustainable behaviours (e.g., Leary et al., 2016; Agudelo & Cortes-Gómez, 2021; Kaplan & Iyer, 2021) and goals and sustainable behaviours (e.g., Baxter & Pelletier, 2020; Hameed & Khan, 2020; Onwezen, 2023). Another plausible reason for the lack of related literature on *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* and sustainable behaviours may lie in the lack of attention on how *Sharī'ah* goals can influence individuals to behave more sustainably. In addition, past studies used similar predictors of human behaviours. For instance, Hassan (2014) and Minton et al. (2015) used religion to predict consumer and sustainable behaviours. Preserving religion can be used as a predictor of environmental concerns and beliefs. Prior studies adopted theories like Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory to establish the relationships of cognitive/intellectual processes with human behaviours. Other prior studies also found that wealth is potentially related to pro-environmental behaviours (Ertz et al., 2016).

Overall, the proposed conceptual framework in this study extended the concept of *Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah* in the fields of environment and sustainability, particularly sustainable behaviours. Although this study developed the conceptual framework to mainly address issues in the field of environmental sustainability, it can also be applied to other areas like economy, education, psychology, and sociology. However, this proposed conceptual framework was not empirically tested. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to empirically test the conceptual

framework in diverse contexts using different methodologies (e.g., quantitative approach, qualitative approach, or mixed-methods approach) and data collection techniques (e.g., survey method or interview method).

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Faith in The Time of Coronavirus: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: This article explores language used in online writings on the Coronavirus from an Islamic research institution compared to those written for a more general audience. Using the corpus linguistic approach, keywords analysis of a collection of these articles against the Covid-19 corpus on Sketch Engine reveals salient words that are more faith-based in terms of discussing the topic like words referring to God, acts of devotion and martyrdom. Further analysis showed that the main difference in language use between the two corpora is noticeable in the way that there are more words referring to God and the Prophet as well as words related to faith/the religion. Accordingly, these articles “tackle” issues relating to the virus in terms of the concept of Tawakkul, which means reliance on or trust in Allah (or God), whether the virus is a punishment or a mercy, as well as how to deal with grief.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Covid-19, Corpus Linguistics, Sketch Engine, Islamic Views

Abstrak: Makalah ini meneliti perbandingan penggunaan bahasa antara penulisan atas talian berkenaan Coronavirus daripada institusi penyelidikan Islam dengan penulisan kepada khalayak umum. Berdasarkan pendekatan linguistik korpus, analisis kata kunci terhadap koleksi artikel-artikel ini telah dibandingkan dengan korpus “Covid-19” daripada Sketch Engine. Kata kunci yang menonjol adalah berkenaan dengan kepercayaan dalam membincangkan topik Coronavirus seperti kata-kata yang merujuk kepada Tuhan, perbuatan penghambaan dan konsep mati syahid. Analisis lanjutan juga menunjukkan bahawa perbezaan utama dalam penggunaan bahasa antara kedua-dua korpus ini adalah ketara, misalnya terdapat lebih banyak kata-kata yang merujuk

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kepada Tuhan dan Nabi serta kata-kata yang berkaitan dengan kepercayaan atau agama (Islam). Oleh itu, artikel-artikel ini “menangani” isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan virus dalam konteks berkonsepkan tawakul, iaitu bergantung kepada atau mempercayai Allah (atau Tuhan), sama ada virus itu merupakan hukuman atau rahmat, serta cara menghadapi kesedihan apabila berhadapan dengan dugaan seperti Coronavirus.

Kata kunci: Coronavirus, Covid-19, Korpus Linguistik, Sketch Engine, Pandangan Islam

Coronavirus or COVID-19 Discourse

In a recent meeting with the International Health Regulations (IHR), the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General concurred that COVID-19 “is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern” (WHO, 2023, Statement, para. 3). Three years on talk surrounding the pandemic can be seen as globally widespread and until only recently that the end of the Coronavirus pandemic has been officially declared. Nevertheless, COVID-19 discourse has sparked much interest that it could even be ongoing given the rise of variants and reproduction rate across many countries. A simple check on research between four countries (Japan, United States, Germany, and Brazil) by Mathieu et al. (2020) reveals new Covid-19 cases per one million that indicate the virus as still present and a threat to global citizens (<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>).

Since the unprecedented COVID-19 unravelled, information or discussion on the novel coronavirus can be described as a specific or specialised discourse. From early 2019, various news and information on COVID-19 can be found on the Internet. This includes governmental actions on preventive/safety measures surrounding the pandemic, public outcry of the certain resistance to governmental solutions, evidence of language change/invention that was necessary during this time as well as social expressions on the new norm as more people were instructed to work from home (WFH), observe social distancing and even face potential lockdown (quarantine). Interest on COVID-19 research has revolved around communication strategies that range from presenting evidence relating to the psychosocial and behavioural aspects involved during the pandemic and how various population groups understand and

react to the pandemic in particular (Généreux et al. 2021). Généreux and colleagues assert that:

[i]nterdisciplinary and international studies could contribute to improve our understanding and management of risk information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (how it is delivered by authorities and media, and how it is received, understood and used by the public). Such knowledge is urgently needed to support the widespread social measures already in place to encourage PHB [preventive health behaviours] and mitigate the negative psychological and behavioral consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Généreux et al., 2021, p. 1181).

Nevertheless, much less were reported on how people of faith responded to the pandemic. In their paper on reflecting the pandemic in terms of theology, Xiong, Isgandarova and Panton (2020) provide practical resources and theological reflections from the Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian point of view. Building from their spiritual care provider backgrounds, there seems to be a multi-perspective view on COVID-19 and that as faith practitioners, this contributes to the dynamic response of the public to the pandemic. Other type of research includes situated case studies like Osei-Tutu et al.'s (2021) that examined perceived impacts of the virus and restrictions of religious gatherings on congregants in Ghana while another examined the Jesuit perspective on metaphors for COVID-19 in an online journal (Pasaribu, Dewi & Bram, 2021). Other similar studies discussed ways in which spiritual-religious coping is a mechanism when people face with COVID-19 related fear and anxiety as well as practicing hygienic and wellness (e.g., Prazeres et al., 2021; Edara et al., 2021; Amin et al., 2020).

In Malaysia, a search on studies related to the crisis in terms of spiritual-religious views resulted in a number of qualitative or critical (theoretical) analysis that range from specifying former COVID-19 patients and how they endured such an experience (Ab Rahman et al., 2020), investigating preventive measures from an Islamic perspective (Hedayatul Islam, Md Saidul Islam & Fadzli Adam, 2020), and examining resilience and patience in terms of the Islamic view during a community wide containment (Kamarudin Salleh et al. 2020). These studies have in a way, emphasised the significance and importance of

the religious approach in rejuvenating patients' mental health as well as promoting the spiritual-religious approach as a psychological healing system for illnesses (including COVID-19). From this existing pool of research on the virus with a focus on the spiritual-religious perspective, several examined this discourse linguistically. In times of uncertainty, spiritual-religious sources are referred to when it comes to seeking advice, counsel or even comfort and assurance. One of these sources includes online religious focused websites that can be accessible from anywhere in the world during a period of mass lockdown surrounding most countries.

In this paper, interest lies in the ways online faith-based articles are written by one specific type of organisation that offer researched and credible means of information and content from the Islamic scholarship view. These articles are highly specific in that they are written with the focus on readers during the COVID-19 pandemic from the discussion grounded within the Islamic faith and was further compared against a comparable reference set of articles –one that is more generic in terms of readership on the internet, through use of the corpus linguistics approach that is more empirical. Findings reveal that the faith-based articles point to a more frequent discussion of the pandemic in relation to God, i.e., these articles “tackle” issues surrounding the virus in terms of the concept of *tawakkul*, which means reliance on or trust in *Allah* (or God), whether the virus is a punishment or a mercy, as well as how to deal with grief.

Corpus linguistics and Discourse Analysis: A Methodological Synergy

Corpus linguistics can be considered a sub-branch of linguistics, one that employs use of computerised software to analyze language data (Lee, 2010; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). These corpus-based studies usually make use of language data (also known as a corpus; corpora for plural) and employ sophisticated computerised software to extract words or phrases that would then be explained about how the language was used in the corpus (see McEnery & Hardie 2012 for a comprehensive description of the history and development of corpus linguistics). More importantly, a corpus represents attested data of real world spoken and/or written discourse, which is then investigated empirically. Among the

many benefits of using corpus to explore language use is its “growing ease and cheapness of data collection [that] has led to an explosion in the compilation of ad hoc “bespoke” corpora, compiled to investigate a particular research question, often several corpora to study a single one” (Partington, 2018, p. 5).

In recent corpus trends, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS)—which Mautner (2019) acronymised to solidify and make prominent the approach as a “shared scholarly identity” (p2)—have been gaining popularity mainly for its synergy between marrying corpus linguistic approaches that are highly quantitative, with discourse analysis that is more qualitative in nature. By “discourse” here, it would be sufficient to operationally define it as what Mautner describes: “that discourse and society are mutually constitutive; that meaning is “a product of social practices” (Angermuller, Maingueneau and Wodak, 2014, p. 3); and that social phenomena can be usefully studied through the textual fall-out they generate” (2019: p. 4). This means investigating language used in a particular discourse would reveal sociolinguistic features and other ideologies relevant to the said interactants of that particular discourse, and therefore worthy to be studied using corpus methods. On a similar note, Rebechi (2019) argues that:

semi-automatic analyses of corpora can play an important role in discourse analysis, as they lead researchers to identify patterns in authentic texts with greater objectivity, besides helping them to emphasise patterns of association (collocations), which, in general, surpass the interpretative ability that results from the close reading of a small number of texts (ibid: p. 147).

In this paper, the collection of selected articles for the purpose of the current study represents the target corpus in that they will be compared to another set of similar topic-related articles online and are analysed according to the typical methods in corpus studies. Normally, these are carried out by investigating frequency lists, significance testing of salient words and their co-occurring words (also known as collocates) as well as examining use of words in context via corpus tools such as the web-enabled one, known as Sketch Engine. In sum, the present study adopts CADS as a research framework that will underpin the overall research design methodology (which will be explained under section

“Methodology”) as well as guide the analysis of the following research objectives: 1) to examine differences in the way faith-based articles on COVID-19 discuss about the topic compared to another more general set of articles and 2) to explore these differences in terms of Islamic teachings.

Linguistic research on the Coronavirus has shown numerous corpus-based type of studies such as Yang and Chen (2021), Schweinberger, Haugh and Hames (2021), and Sardinha (2020) to name a few. The specialised type of discourse has been particularly examined with regard to the secular view of either a political, economic or social problem, but rarely are there corpus research exploring how the virus is viewed or communicated from the Islamic lens/point of view (Maravia et al. 2021 is an exception, where their paper investigated Islamic documents that are entitled either “fatwas,” “other,” and “guidance,” which were circulated in the UK during the COVID-19 outbreak using corpus linguistics methods and tools). In response to Génèreux et al. (2021) who called for more international studies to examine how COVID-19 information is delivered by authorities and media, this paper acts as a case study that described one Islamic-based institution and its efforts to compile writings on scholarly view of the pandemic for their online readers, which will be analysed through corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS). Findings in turn, provide a snapshot of how this particular population group (Muslim scholars and their readers) make sense and react to the pandemic.

Sketch Engine as a web-based corpus tool

Sketch Engine, which is a web-based corpus tool, is not only used for data extraction and analysis, but also for data visualisation (Kilgarriff et al., 2004). This form of approach is otherwise known as query language for corpora or CQL (Corpus Query Language). Some of the main features that will be incorporated and highlighted in this paper are keywords automatic extraction (under “Keywords” tool), “Word Sketch” for collocation or word combinations analysis and “Concordance” (to see examples used in context), which help to detect linguistic patterns in the articles studied. The web-based corpus tool can be accessed at <http://www.sketchengine.eu/>

More importantly, Sketch Engine was chosen because comparisons can be made between the selected articles used in the study with a large comparable word database that is the “Covid-19” corpus listed as part of their available online corpora. This corpus consists of over 50,000 texts (scientific papers on COVID-19 and related historical coronavirus research) that were released as part of the COVID-19 Open Research Dataset (CORD-19) (see [https:// www.semanticscholar.org/cord19](https://www.semanticscholar.org/cord19)) and accumulated into some 280 million running words (tokens). This makes the corpus suitable to be used as a reference corpus particularly for extracting keywords—words that are unusually more frequent and/or infrequent in one (target) corpus relative to its occurrences in another (often bigger in size). To put simply, by using Sketch Engine, the articles collected from the target corpus (articles compiled from Yaqeen Institute) can easily be compared against the reference corpus, i.e., “Covid-19” to examine how the former type of corpus is more specialised in nature.

Yaqeen Institute as a Case Study (Target Corpus)

Yaqeen Institute is a non-profit research initiative that makes all of its content free and accessible on the Internet. Based in Irving, Texas, its aim is to “actively participate in the current day discourse touching on all topics that are related to establishing conviction in the hearts and minds of young Muslims” (Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, “About Yaqeen Institute”). The institute promotes reliable, well-researched Islamic content that is presented in various formats (e.g., articles, infographics, animations, videos), which are also integrated into curricula that can be used by various educators and community leaders to educate the society (Muslim youth specifically).

In keeping with the pandemic, Yaqeen Institute launched a reflection series in April 2020 in “an effort to provide timely, thoughtful, and Islamically grounded perspectives by its Research Fellows surrounding the global outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19” (Khan, “Return to the Maskan”). This was argued to be a reliable platform for obtaining critical and sound viewpoints related to the Coronavirus, particularly by Islamic scholars in the West. Below is a screenshot of their website and where articles were taken from.



Figure 1: Screenshot of the Source of Articles

Source: yaqeeninstitute.org

Methodology

To reiterate, this study adopts the CADS approach, where the integration of discourse analysis using techniques and tools from corpus linguistics is highly advocated (Partington, 2010; Mautner, 2019). To begin, selected articles were firstly collected and built into a corpus (henceforth, Yaqeen Institute Corpus or YIC). Given the specific aim to examine how the faith-based institution communicates about the Coronavirus to its viewers, only reading files or articles that are compiled under the section or heading “Faith in the Time of COVID-19” (as shown in Figure 1) were chosen.

These series of papers or reflections began in April 2020 and out of the 18 papers found on the website, 16 were deemed appropriate (the remaining ones consisted papers on a compilation of supplications that were mostly in Arabic and purpose was to provide Muslims a list of prophetic prayers for relief and protection as well as list of books and infographics that were not part of the purpose of the current study). YIC therefore represents a specific (or specialised) corpus that contains faith-based reflections, particularly from the Islamic perspective during the pandemic that contains 69,095 running words (tokens). At the time of writing, the research was conducted during a worldwide lockdown and collection of articles was only made up of the ones mentioned here. An expansion of this particular dataset was not found from the website as the world gradually moved from pandemic to the endemic stage.

Meanwhile, the reference corpus – COVID-19 Open Research Dataset (CORD-19) – as mentioned earlier, has over three billion running words (3,371,382,556) and this is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Corpora Description

Corpus	Size (tokens/ running words)
Yaqeen Institute Corpus (YIC)	69,095
Covid-19 Corpus (on Sketch Engine)	3,371,382,556

The second step was to conduct a keywords analysis to examine differences between lists of salient words from YIC and the reference corpus (“Covid-19”) available from Sketch Engine. A keywords list is essential to identify words that are statistically significant in YIC relative to their occurrences in the “Covid-19” corpus (known as key words) in order to explore what is unique in the first (target or YIC) corpus compared to the second (reference or “Covid-19”) one. These were done automatically through use of the Sketch Engine feature, “Keywords.”

On Sketch Engine, keywords are calculated and extracted by comparing normalised (relative, per million) frequencies in the focus and reference corpora, called “Simple maths.” The keyness score of a word is calculated according to the following formula:

$$\frac{fpm_{focus} + n}{fpm_{ref} + n}$$

fpm_{focus} is the normalised (per million) frequency of the word in the focus corpus, *fpm_{ref}* is the normalised (per million) frequency of the word in the reference corpus, and *n* is the simple Maths (smoothing) parameter (*n* = 1 is the default value) (see Kilgarriff 2009). Table 2 presents top 50 key words that are particularly more and less salient in YIC compared to its occurrence in the “Covid-19” corpus (Reference) that will be explained further in the next section.

Table 2: YIC Keywords

	Word	Focus	Reference	Focus	Reference	Score
1	allah	7,714.02	0.06	15	11	7,299.10
2	الله	2,113.03	< 0.01	15	1	2,106.50
3	عليه	2,084.09	0	15	0	2,085.10
4	صلى	2,011.72	0	15	0	2,012.70
5	جسرو	1,997.25	0	15	0	1,998.30
6	evil	2,576.16	0.43	7	89	1,801.00
7	prophet	2,011.72	0.26	16	47	1,601.90
8	god	2,257.76	0.64	12	102	1,373.40
9	ibn	1,042.04	0.22	10	32	856.9
10	tawakkul	810.48	0	1	0	811.5
11	ramadan	998.63	0.25	7	47	802.4
12	mercy	940.73	0.21	12	40	780.5
13	masjid	752.59	0.01	5	3	745.6
14	abū	723.64	0	11	0	724.6
15	blessings	723.64	0.01	12	4	714.5
16	hadith	651.28	0	9	0	652.3
17	punishment	1,230.19	0.92	6	127	642.8
18	ن	636.8	0	5	0	637.8
19	ل	636.8	0	5	0	637.8
20	grief	868.37	0.44	6	78	603
21	م	593.39	0	5	0	594.4
22	worship	636.8	0.15	11	28	553.1
23	muslims	1,027.57	0.93	12	136	533
24	believer	535.49	0.02	8	7	523.4
25	salamah	492.08	< 0.01	1	1	491.3
26	wisdom	1,099.93	1.27	9	282	485.4
27	him	2,937.98	5.26	15	841	469.4
28	islamic	998.63	1.26	10	156	442.8
29	ي	434.18	< 0.01	5	1	432.1
30	du'ā'	405.24	0	5	0	406.2
31	ا	405.24	< 0.01	4	1	404.8
32	و	390.77	0.01	5	2	387.6
33	paradise	434.18	0.13	5	31	384.5
34	blessing	434.18	0.17	8	41	372.8
35	whoever	405.24	0.14	9	35	357.8
36	believers	376.29	0.07	9	17	351
37	prayer	419.71	0.21	9	52	346.6
38	muslim	781.53	1.26	14	195	345.6
39	umm	347.35	0.05	3	8	332.9
40	love	796.01	1.42	9	256	329.2
41	pray	332.88	0.07	7	17	311.7
42	marriage	506.55	0.67	2	127	304.6
43	yourself	463.13	0.61	7	123	289.1
44	eternal	303.93	0.07	5	20	284.7
45	evidential	303.93	0.08	1	23	281.8
46	ر	274.98	0	5	0	276
47	أ	274.98	< 0.01	5	1	275
48	martyrdom	274.98	< 0.01	4	2	274
49	faith	535.49	0.97	11	194	272
50	divine	332.88	0.24	6	51	268.8

Findings and Discussion

Based on the findings, this section is separated into two main subsections. It begins with presenting recurring salient patterns in the corpus that demonstrate guided use of corpus techniques, which in turn, facilitates the second part that is the close readings of concordance lines. As mentioned in the methodology earlier, the former demonstrates use of corpus methods and tools as empirical while the latter highlights the technique as more qualitative in nature (CADS approach). For the purpose of this corpus-assisted discourse analysis, findings are discussed in terms of Ahmad and Ahad's (2021) related paper on Islamic and Scientific perspectives to deal with pandemics such as COVID-19.

Repeating lexical features as recurring themes of the Islamic perspective

Table 3 presents classifications of the keywords shown in Table 2 earlier. Keywords were firstly categorised in terms of English and Arabic (loan) words where nouns in Arabic were found to mainly refer to proper nouns like the name of God: *Allah*, the prophet, and the honorary phrase "Peace and blessings of *Allah* be upon him" (PBUH hereafter), written either in English or as an Arabic symbol, the month of *Ramadan* as well as names of other people like *ibn*, *abū*, *salamah*, and *umm*. English nouns were more generic in that they did not refer to any particular proper noun but could still be subcategorised into nouns related to Islam like "prophet," "god," and "muslim(s)," while others did not necessarily have an Islamic association at face value: "believer(s)," "him," "whoever," and "yourself."

The main difference in language use between YIC and "Covid-19" is firstly noticeable in that the former presents more Islam-related words and these are further highlighted in the next group of Arabic words that are sub-classified as words pertaining to Islamic concepts or terminologies (*tawakkul*, *masjid*, *hadith*, *du'ā'*). The English words that similarly relate to this sub-category could still be described as spiritual in nature where notions of "evil," "blessing(s)," "punishment," "worship," "paradise," "prayer," "martyrdom," "faith," and the "divine" for instance, can be argued to be associated with the religious or spiritual discourse even further. Other keywords found in YIC that were less frequent (or not found) in the reference corpus were Arabic letters pointing to the reference made to the Quran and abstract concepts like

“grief,” “wisdom” and “marriage” that are topics, which may be more likely discussed in YIC compared to in “Covid-19.”

More importantly, first observations of these keywords indicate a focus on God (*Allah*), His messenger or the Prophet PBUH and concepts of mercy, blessings and worship related to Islam that is not as significant in the reference corpus (“Covid-19”). This is not surprising as lexical analysis was primarily conducted on a corpus of faith-based articles from an Islamic website compared to a website on COVID-19 targeted for a more generic audience, but what is interesting would be how this particular source of information make sense of the COVID-19 discourse through highlighting issues concerning the religion, which would deem it an area worthy to be studied.

Table 3: Classifications of Keywords in YIC

	<i>Sub-categories</i>
Arabic words/loanwords (23)	
<i>Names (proper nouns)</i>	<i>Allah, الله, عليه, وسلم, prophet,* ibn, ramadan, abū, salamah, umm</i>
<i>Islamic concept or terminologies</i>	<i>tawakkul, masjid, hadith, du‘ā’</i>
<i>Quranic characters</i>	ند، لد، مد، يد، اد، ود، رد، أ
English words (28)	
<i>Names (nouns/pronouns)</i>	prophet, god, muslims, believer, him, whoever, believers, muslim, yourself
<i>Spiritual-religious concepts</i>	evil, mercy, blessings, punishment, worship, Islamic, paradise, blessing, prayer, pray, eternal, martyrdom, faith, divine
<i>Abstract concepts</i>	grief, wisdom, love, marriage, evidential

According to Ahmad and Ahad (2021, p. 36), both “Quranic and Biblical narratives suggest that plagues most likely strike when commandments of God are not followed” and therefore, “continuity of evil practices may result in the emergence of plagues and disasters such as COVID-19.” They further assert that the emergence of a plague (or disaster) can be

found more documented in the Prophet's stories (known as *hadiths*) and are referred to as Islamic teachings on how to manage or respond to such events (Ahmad & Ahad, 2021: pp. 35-36).

This could be made sense in relation to the keywords in Table 2 that point to Islamic-based concepts such as *tawakkul* – i.e., to have faith in God or trust in God's plans, and “*hadith*.” Other keywords like “blessings.” and “martyrdom” exemplify how “*Allah* made epidemics as a source of mercy for the believers (*mu'minīn*). If a *mu'min* dies due to a plague, s/he will be considered as a martyr (*shahīd*)” (Ahmad & Ahad, 2021, p. 36), which in turn, is considered a blessing. In a similar vein, Suyadi et al. (2020) argue that a disaster [such as the Coronavirus] is a form of love from *Allah* SWT and a medium of introspection (Suyadi et al., 2020: p. 2), and therefore explains how YIC keywords indicate abstract concepts like “love,” “wisdom” and so on.

This first observation into YIC keywords has shown how there are more mention or reference to a theology degree and that examinations of these words in context would further tell us how these faith-based articles discuss COVID-19 in more detail. As Brookes and McEnery (2020, p. 352) point out, language is viewed as ideological when text creators' (in this case the website content of these YIC articles) lexical and grammatical choices serve to promote a particular perspective – in this case, evaluating COVID-19 discourse from an Islamic perspective.

Contextualised reading of the articles from the Islamic perspective

The next part focuses on the three most significant keywords, i.e., reference to God/*Allah* (7,299.10), on the authority of the Prophet PBUH (1,601.90), and faith-based concepts that were found to be more salient in YIC compared to the reference corpus (i.e., “mercy” – 780.5). By focusing on verbs that occur immediately to the right of the keyword *Allah*, Table 4 presents types of verb collocates (or co-occurring words) that show how it is used in relation to *Allah* as a subject such as lexical verbs that are transitive (e.g., *answers, changed*), linking (e.g., denoted by the expression “surely is!”), dynamic and static (e.g., *deems, depicts*), and auxiliary verbs that illustrate God's attributes (e.g., *al-Bāṭin, the Knower of the Hidden*), actions (e.g., *is with us, has brought*), and forms of negation where He is not doing something without purpose/reason (e.g., *Allah does not send us trials/ charge a soul*).

Table 4: Verb Collocates of *Allah*

Verb collocates (focus on verbs occurring immediately to the right) <i>Lexical verbs</i>	Examples from the corpus
<p>Transitive (expressing action and requires a direct object) and intransitive e.g., <i>Alice sees the candle; Alice dances</i></p> <p>Linking (joins the subject of sentence –word/phrase that tells something about the subject) e.g., <i>The boss is unhappy</i></p> <p>Dynamic and static (action verb; describing state or situation) e.g., <i>They throw the ball; We are what we believe we are</i></p> <p>Regular and irregular (conjugation of base forms) e.g., <i>looks –looked; bring –brought</i></p>	<p>answers, changed, commands, CREATE, executes, GIVE, grants, GUIDE, indicates, intends, MAKE, promises, protect, refers, reminds, removes, revealed, reward, subjects, used</p> <p>Tomorrow is not certain, but <i>Allah</i> surely is!</p> <p>deems, depicts, describes, dislikes, elaborates, FORGIVE, fortify, KEEP, knows, loves, MENTION, responded, SAY, SEND, tells, wants, warns</p>
<p>Auxiliary verbs (be, have, do)</p>	
<p><i>IS</i></p>	<p><u>Describing qualities/attributes to God</u> –e.g., <i>al-Bāṭin</i>, the Knower of the Hidden; All-Encompassing, Wise; Knowing of all things</p> <p><u>Sense of being (action)</u> –e.g., <i>Allah</i> is with us; <i>Allah</i> is with you too</p>

referred to by English-speaking Muslims as the Prophet and Messenger of Allah and therefore, look to him as an unconditional authority in their faith (or role model), which supports the writers’ arguments when making a certain claim.

doc#4	a number of hadiths that someone who dies from a plague (30:36) will receive the reward of a martyr	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"Whoever dies from a plague is a martyr"47 and "Whoever remains in a plague-ridden land to die therein...
doc#4	is authentic. In light of other evidence, this hadith refers to an illness resulting from the plague.57	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"Whoever dies of an illness is a martyr."
doc#4	the side of the boat would be a clever attempt to avoid registering under those in the upper deck.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"If those in the upper deck leave them to do as they please, they will all be destroyed together...
doc#5	urgent and comprehensive expression	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"Assuring his beloved wife, the Mother of the Believers Aisha, the agent and possible punishment for others..."
doc#6	it be the end of the world.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then...
doc#6	die Once when Umm Salamah and A'ishah were sitting together in their home.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"Whoever is married on earth will be married in paradise..."
doc#6	and recte online.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"A person who recites the Qur'an and masters it by heart will be with the noble upright records..."
doc#7	real Muslims are encouraged to remain optimistic even during challenging and unprecedented times.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"I am amazed by optimism, the good word, the kind word..."
doc#11	ry and was questioned about this.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"This is mercy..."
doc#11	was in your loved one's honor, care for others with the intent of your loved one sharing in the reward.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"The best of what a man leaves behind are three: a righteous child who supplicates for him..."
doc#11	a young child?"	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"What can I do if Allah has taken away mercy from you?"
doc#11	that they have a messy home or need your help as this may make them feel self-conscious or guilty.	الشيء الذي يروى	Prophet	"when the news of the death of Ja'far bin Abi Talib came, 'Prepare food for the family of Ja'far..."

Figure 2: Concordance Lines of “Prophet” and “said”

We can infer from the above instances (Figure 2) that the prophetic teachings and stories have been referred to when analysing issues related to the pandemic as well as reassurance of ways in conducting oneself during a pandemic that relates back to how similar incidences happened to the Prophet and therefore are used as a guideline (Ahmad & Ahad 2021 refer to it as “Scientific protection” based on teachings of the Prophet). In fact, it was found that the four highest occurrences of these collocations occurred in documents that were titled or on the topic of grief (32 times); “how to rely on God;” “punishment vs mercy;” and “prophetic wisdom on contagion.” Recurring mentions of the prophetic *hadith* such as:

“...if a person in time of an epidemic plague stays in their home [“stays in their land,” as per al-Bukhari] patiently hoping for God’s Reward and believing that nothing will afflict them except what God has written for them, they will get the reward of a martyr” (Al-Bukhārī, 60, 141).

Among others, it suggests that exemplifying the Prophet and his responses during similar events would not only be the simplest resolution but in fact, illustrates a reward (in afterlife) in disguise.

YIC mentions numerous sayings of the Prophet PBUH and these range from the adherence to rely on Allah (“Tie her and trust in Allah” – doc#0; doc#13), reminder of death and that life is temporary (“Remember often the destroyer of pleasures”–by which he meant

“death” – doc#15), to seek forgiveness that would attain *Allah*’s mercy during trials (“If anyone constantly seeks forgiveness, *Allah* will create a path out of every distress and relief from every anxiety” – doc#3), but one specific *hadith* on plagues was cited in more than one YIC article:

“The closest precedent to this question may be when ‘Āishah, the wife of the Prophet PBUH asked him about the plague. He responded, “It is a punishment that *Allah* sends upon whomever He wills, but *Allah* has made it a mercy for the believers. Any servant who resides in a land afflicted by plague, remaining patient and hoping for reward from *Allah*, knowing that nothing will befall him except what *Allah* has decreed, will be given the reward of a martyr.” (Al-Bukhārī, 60: 141).

Ahmad and Ahad (2021, p. 36) highlight that this *hadith* indicates the emergence of an epidemic in that a plague is a form of ‘adhāb (i.e., punishment), which is controlled by *Allah* and that He can inflict it upon anyone He wishes. However, Ahmad and Ahad assert that examples of such incidents or punishments can be found in the Quran too (e.g., it was sent to the Egyptians due to their disbelief, and to the Israelite nation because of transgressions and breaching promises with God). The authors also point to Biblical literature that confirms these Quranic accounts – “The Book of Exodus notes ten disastrous plagues that were sent to the Egyptians because they refused to free Israelites” (Ahmad & Ahad, 2021: p. 36). In terms of martyrdom, another saying of the Prophet PBUH was quoted in YIC: “Whoever dies from a plague is a martyr” and “Whoever remains in a plague-ridden land patiently and hopeful of reward, knowing that only what *Allah* decrees will reach him, will get the reward of a martyr” (doc#4), which is also discussed next.

In terms of the faith-based concepts, close readings of the concordance lines were focused on the keyword “mercy” since it was ranked quite highly (#12) and occurred across 75% of the articles (12 out of the total 16), and therefore was considered interesting to be explored further. On the topic of punishment versus mercy, doc#3 refers to the prophetic *hadith* (Al-Bukhārī, 60: 141) on opinion of the plague. It was found that reference to the *hadith* supports the argument made that mercy is described as “reward of a martyr.” The writer concludes that “[thus], the coronavirus (or the plague) may be a great mercy and blessing for

the believer who exercises patience, appropriately quarantines him or herself, hopes in reward” (doc#3).

Meanwhile, on the topic of grief, doc#13 also referred to the prophetic *hadith* on opinion of the plague. Mercy was described as *Allah*'s protection except for what He has written as the concept of *al-qada'* (the divine decree) and *al-qadar* (divine fore-ordination), which Isgandarova argues that “[a]lmost all theological schools in Islam agree with [...] and suggest that the existence of evil and suffering has some *hikmah* (wisdom) or function” (Xiong, Isgandarova & Panton, 2020: p. 19). This was found in the below excerpt taken from the article:

During this unprecedented time, you are following the prescription provided by the Prophet PBUH when asked about the plague. He said, “That was a means of torture which *Allah* used to send upon whomsoever He wished, but He made it a source of mercy for the believers, for anyone who is residing in a town in which this disease is present, and remains there and does not leave that town, but has patience and hopes for *Allah*'s reward, and knows that nothing will befall him except what *Allah* has written for him.” (doc#13).

This resonates with how Xiong, Isgandarova and Panton (2020) summarise in their paper that Islam in general –as reflected in the teachings of the Quran, “respond to the dilemma of the existence of evil and suffering in the context of finding a spiritual lesson in every suffering, for a believer needs to be tested in order to discover his/her true essence” (p. 19). They further argue that this is central to the fostering or building of self-awareness and constructive attitude among Muslim believers on how to behave in accordance with the self and society. In this way, for Muslims, “an epidemic becomes a source of mercy for *mu`minin* [believers] by not only bringing them closer to *Allah* but also ensuring their success in this world and the Hereafter” (Ahmad & Ahad, 2021: p. 36).

Conclusion

In this study, faith-based articles related to the COVID-19 discourse from the Yaqeen Institute were examined compared to wider and more generic reading of scientific articles taken from the “Covid-19” corpus available on Sketch Engine. The corpus-assisted discourse analysis of these texts led to a discovery that there are many perspectives when it

comes to making sense of COVID-19, this one in particular revolved around discussions based on the Islamic discussions put forth by writers from the institute. The analysis revealed that there are three main highlights with regard to the discussion of the Coronavirus, mostly relating to God, the sayings or guidance from the Prophet PBUH and faith-based concepts like mercy, blessings and martyrdom, which were not salient in the reference, more generic COVID-19 corpus. This highlights the specialised or stylistic use of Arabic loanwords or words relating to Islam in YIC that resonate more with readers of the Islamic faith and to a certain extent could be argued for why it could appeal to Muslims in general.

More specifically, findings echo other Islamic views on how best to respond to pandemics such as the Covid-19, namely: 1) that to earn the mercy and reward of God, one must stay in his house or his town and trust the infinite wisdom of *Allah* (having *tawakkul*), 2) that any plague, including the Coronavirus, can be either a punishment or mercy for someone depending on if one is patient and trusting in *Allah*, 3) that to make a plague (or any deadly contagious disease) a source of mercy and reward, one must believe in the Oneness of *Allah* and that all good and bad happens because of *Allah's* will, 4) that the importance of being patient during this struggle with Coronavirus is highlighted such that it is an important trait of the creed/deen, and finally 5) that martyr, according to the *hadith*, means the one whose actions serve as a witness to his patience (by not leaving his house/town) and trust in *Allah*, which in turn, alleviates a person's station in the Hereafter should he or she be tested by the effects of the pandemic (Hirani n.d.). As Muslims, the response to worldly conditions are structured according to the Islamic theology and Prophet Muhammad PBUH' guidance (*hadith*) and therefore, this study has shown that platforms like Yaqeen Institute provide the means for its users to obtain relevant information with regard to COVID-19 that is specific to their beliefs/needs.

Text producers, including authors of web-based content are now more relevant than ever as consumers of modern-day technology look to the Internet for well-informed (researched) content that they may depend on for the right information to surf their way through rough times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. During a global widespread community containment (or lockdown) as we have seen in the past few years, readers turn to the Internet for reliable content and Muslim

scholars are no different to provide the source and platform for their viewers, especially in terms of the religion. This small-scale study is limited by the data, because only COVID-19 related articles were included in the YIC. Further examination of other faith-based websites on COVID-19 discourse may prove to be useful in order to gain additional insights into how this is discussed (mainly by and for Muslim viewers) on the Web. It is also hoped to have shown the qualities of adopting a corpus linguistic approach to discourse analysis, and that social scientists may want to explore the COVID-19 discourse through use of the CADS methodology as Mautner rightfully points out: “[s]ocial cause and linguistic effect – or linguistic cause and social effect – are fiendishly difficult to match up, and rarely can a single discovery procedure do the trick” (2019: p. 4).

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COVID-19: Analysing the Principle and Application of *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* in the Selected *Fatwas* Issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI)

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Abstract: About 650 years ago, al-Shāṭibī advocated new reforms on *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* with the introduction of some novel legal theories. The principle *i'tibār ma'ālāt* was among the legal theories he proposed in his magnum opus, *al-Muwāfaqāt*. However, due to some complicity, his theories received little attention and remain stagnated. In fact, few classical jurists have previously paid attention to the principle of *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. Nonetheless, in accordance with the development of the discipline of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, the discussion on the principle of *ma'ālāt*, which was previously stagnated, has recently begun to gather traction among researchers worldwide in general, as well as in Malaysia in particular. Interestingly, al-Shāṭibī's theory is applicable in solving several emerging religious concerns, particularly, in the event of COVID-19 pandemic. Several *fatwas* have been issued at the national as well as state levels in Malaysia to curb this pandemic. In this qualitative study, several *fatwas* issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI)

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has been selected to analyse the principle and application of *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. This study explores the principle and application of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* which was implicitly and explicitly applied in each *fatwa* selected. Furthermore, this indicated that the MKI has successfully implemented the principle in issuing *fatwas* responding to the emerging religious issues.

Keywords: *Fatwa*, pandemic preventive measures, *i'tibār ma'ālāt*, COVID-19

Abstrak: Sekitar 650 tahun yang lalu, al-Shāṭibī telah menganjurkan pembaharuan pada Uṣūl al-Fiqh dengan pengenalan beberapa teori baru. Prinsip *i'tibār ma'ālāt* adalah antara teori yang telah dikemukakan oleh beliau dalam *magnum opus*nya, al-Muwāfaqāt. Walau bagaimanapun, disebabkan beberapa keterbatasan, teorinya kurang mendapat perhatian dan kekal terbantut. Malah, sebelum ini para fuqaha klasik kurang memberi perhatian kepada prinsip *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. Namun begitu, sesuai dengan perkembangan disiplin ilmu *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, perbincangan mengenai prinsip *ma'ālāt* yang sebelum ini terbantut, baru mula mendapat tarikan di kalangan pengkaji seluruh dunia amnya, dan juga di Malaysia khususnya. Menariknya, teori al-Shāṭibī boleh digunakan dalam menyelesaikan beberapa kebimbangan agama yang muncul, terutamanya, sekiranya berlaku wabak COVID-19 yang tidak dibincangkan oleh sarjana Islam terdahulu. Beberapa *fatwa* telah dikeluarkan di peringkat kebangsaan dan juga negeri di Malaysia bagi membendung pandemik ini. Dalam kajian kualitatif ini, beberapa *fatwa* yang dikeluarkan oleh Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Malaysia (MKI) telah dipilih untuk menganalisis prinsip dan aplikasi *i'tibār ma'ālāt* yang diwarisi di dalamnya. Kajian ini telah berjaya mencari prinsip dan aplikasi *i'tibār ma'ālāt* yang diaplikasikan secara tersirat dan tersurat dalam setiap *fatwa* yang dipilih. Tambahan pula, ini menunjukkan bahawa MKI telah berjaya melaksanakan prinsip ini dalam mengeluarkan *fatwa* bagi menjawab isu agama yang timbul.

Kata Kunci: *Fatwa*, Langkah pencegahan wabak, *i'tibār ma'ālāt*, COVID-19

Introduction

The Prophet (p.b.u.h.), the Companions (r.a.), and the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) taught us that preventing communicable disease outbreaks is the effective strategy. They have taken a number of prophylactic measures in response to the bubonic plague (*al-tā'ūn*) outbreaks (Che Mohamad, Shahar, Md Tahir, & Syed Abd. Hamid, 2020; Mutalib et al., 2020b), including movement control orders (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5729; Muslim, 2016, no. 2219; Sābiq, 2004),

quarantine (Abu al-Hasan Ibnu al-Athir, 1997; al-Ṭabarī, 1989), social or physical distancing (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5707 & 5771; Muslim, 2016, no. 2221), and *shurā* with specialists (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5729; Muslim, 2016, no. 2219). These initiatives served human interests (Ibnu 'Ashūr, 2016). Their precautions set Islamic norms and standards for the Fiqh Outbreak. This would let Islamic scholars issue contemporaneous *fatwas* to address Islamic concerns during an outbreak.

The recent Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has reminded humanity of the need of health precautions (Islam, Islam, & Adam, 2020). Several issues pertaining to Islamic affairs that have occurred owing to the COVID-19 outbreak are new issues that have never been explored by prior scholars. These issues demand *fatwas* from the *muftis* that align with Shariah's objectives (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) and present reality. As a consequence, Shariah rulings are once again needed, particularly for Muslims in Malaysia, as a pandemic prophylactic. This may be done through issuing *fatwas* on Islamic religious concerns.

However, to be successful, *fatwas* must adhere to the greater purposes of law, be moderate, embrace a range of community groups, and the *Mufti* need to be thorough (Ismail, 2020). In addition, Islam includes several principles to help *Muftis* handle contemporary Islamic affairs via thorough *fatwas* (Khunain, 2018). One of these principles is analysing the *fatwa*'s final outcome (*i'tibār ma'ālāt*), whether it is compatible with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, or whether it is in conformity with Shariah principles. This research focuses on this idea of the compatibility between *i'tibār ma'ālāt* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

The Evolution of *I'tibār Al-Ma'ālāt* Theory: From Stagnation to Continuous Advancement.

The word "*ma'ālāt*" or "*ma'āl*" is derived from the verb "*a-wa-la*" which literally refers to return, resort, or consequence (al-Zabīdī, 1993; Ibnu Faris, 1979; Ibnu Manzur, 1992). Meanwhile, the word "*ma'āl*" is actually a verbal noun with a prefixed *ma* (*maṣḍar mimi*) to the verb "*āla*" (Umar, 2008). Classical jurists have applied *i'tibār ma'ālāt* to practical and hypothetical cases in their writings, but they haven't defined it (Jadiyyah, 2010). Contemporary scholars, on the other hand, have proposed technical definitions of *ma'ālāt* based on traditional practises (Hamitu, 2018; Jadiyyah, 2010). It can be deduced that *ma'ālāt* technically refers to: "A universal principle that requires

it to consider the ruling to be imposed on certain conduct in proportion to its anticipated future consequences.” (Farid al-Anṣārī, 2004, p. 416). This indicates that the *mujtahid* modifies the *fatwa* to what it may often become as a result of the conduct. It is a kind of insight that aims to predict the future of conduct based on the circumstances of time and its people.

Furthermore, al-Shāṭibī argues for further modifications to *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. In his work, he introduces many new ideas, including *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. His reform, however, was diametrically opposed to the dominant intellectual current at the time, in which the bulk of intellectual endeavours were focused on the continuation of past works centred on a certain School (al-Raysūnī, 2015). Al-Shāṭibī's theories were hard to grasp at the time because he combined numerous disciplines into one topic without properly explaining them or effectively elaborating on his rationale (al-'Ubaidī, 1992; Ishak, 2018b). His work revising *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* is complex and nuanced.

Only a few classical jurists formerly considered *ma'ālāt*, forming views or decisions on it because *ma'ālāt* was difficult to be applied at the time (al-Qaraḍāwī, 2012). Al-Shāṭibī (2017a) recognised this painful fact. Two factors explain why academics ignored Al-Shāṭibī's thesis of *ma'ālāt* (al-Husin, 2009). First, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, which concentrates on Islamic legal methods, neglected features about *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, particularly the idea of *ma'ālāt*. Second, although earlier jurists did not advocate *ma'ālāt* in their religious works, they had already applied its essence via other methods without the need to integrate them.

With the growth of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, the principle of *ma'ālāt* has lately gained popularity among academics globally and in Malaysia. Recent studies on *ma'ālāt* include theses and dissertations (al-Husin, 2009; Jadiyah, 2010; Nur Syahirah, 2019), research articles (Asni & Sulong, 2021; Ishak, 2018a, 2018b; Nasir, Ismail, & Ishak, 2019), and books (al-Sanūsī, 2004; Hamitu, 2018; Uthmani, 2015). On June 26-30, 2012, the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) conducted its 22nd regular session in Istanbul, Turkiye, to discuss research related to the topic: “The impact of considering the final outcomes of actions in determining the rulings and its implementations.” The council found that repercussions are vital in developing and implementing Shariah rulings (European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2017). This relies

on preventing excuses and fulfilling goals, as most Islamic scholars agree.

In Malaysia, a study conducted by Asni and Sulong (2021) blended *murū'āt al-khilāf* and *ma'ālāt* in *fatwa* rulings and applies it to *fatwa* coordination pertaining to conditional *hibah*. Ishak (2018a, 2018b) focused on the conceptual framework of *ma'alat*, and recommended applying it to Islamic finance, criminal law, and family law. Nasir, Ismail, and Ishak focused on the usage of *ma'ālāt* in *fatwas* on Muslim minorities (Nasir et al., 2019). To extend the context of the discussion, this study will briefly analyse al-Shāṭibī's *i'tibār ma'ālāt* framework. The research will next evaluate its application in various MKI *fatwas* relevant to COVID-19.

Methodology

This study used qualitative document analysis, in which documents are analysed and translated to get insight into topics (Bowen, 2009; Baharuddin, 2021). Like interview transcripts, document analysis involves topical categorisation that can be supplementary or stand-alone research (Merriam, 2009, Bowen, 2009; Chinedu & Mohamed, 2017). In this study, we evaluated several primary documents: Islamic legal scriptures from the Quran and Hadiths, prominent Islamic jurisprudence from five authentic Schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Zahiri), and finally *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah* by al-Shāṭibī regarding the principle of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* discourses, as well as a few selected *fatwas* issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The examinations of these primary documents were further supported by secondary documents in order to substantiate the outcome of the research. Secondary data were acquired from the indexed journals. Bowen's document analysis approach was used to analyse the documents involving skimming, reading and interpretation that incorporated aspects of content and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009). Following the extraction of persuasive and significant interpretations through content analysis, the collected data were thematically analysed to produce several themes such as the concept of *ma'ālāt*, determining *ma'ālāt* in dealing with contemporary issues, parameters to be used in considering *ma'ālāt*, and appraising *ma'ālāt* consideration in Malaysian *fatwas*. There has been a more concentrated re-reading and examination

of the data conducted by the researchers, as well as the assignment of pertinent coding to the data.

Findings and Discussion

1. The *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* Conceptual Framework Developed by Al-Shātibī

Al-Shātibī championed *i'tibār ma'ālāt* as he reformed the *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* of his era (Asni & Sulong, 2021; Ishak, 2018a; Suleiman, 2022). He expounded his idea on this principle in his *magnum opus*, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, that it is vital for the *mufti* to assess the results of his rulings and *fatwas* (al-Shātibī, 2017a, pp. 218-219). The *mufti* must assess the final outcomes of each human action he mandates or omits before making a decision (al-Raysūnī, 2015; Kamali, 2012; Ismail & Baharuddin, 2022, 2021). The criterion is whether the conduct will achieve *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* or not (al-Shātibī, 2017a; Ishak, 2018b). The declared objectives were to improve mankind by avoiding damages or corruptions (al-Āmidī, 2003; al-Ghazālī, 2015b; al-'Izz Ibnī Abdissalam, 2020; Baharuddin, 2017; Mutalib et al., 2020c).

When permissible behaviour causes injury or corruption, it is illegal (Khunain, 2003). This approach is similar to the principle of blocking the means, in which the *Shariah* blocks the means (*sadd al-dharā'ī*) when the potential for negative effects outweighs the initial benefit (al-Jizānī, 2009). Similarly, the idea of comfort (*tawṣī'ah*) and alleviate hardship (*raf' u al-ḥaraj*) permits the legalisation of previously illegal conducts that provide benefits (al-Jizānī, 2009).

Al-Shātibī has not explained how a judgement's outcomes might contradict its objective, but al-Sanūsī has offered three variables: wrongful intention to attain an unlawful objective through lawful conduct; abuse and exploitation of rights; and misapplication of the ruling into the wrong context (al-Sanūsī, 2004).

Moreover, this *i'tibār ma'ālāt* concept is related to one of al-Shātibī's *maqāṣidic* cause-and-effect theories (al-Mariniyyi, 2002; al-Shātibī, 2017a, p. 457). Designing causes demonstrates the Lawgiver's intention of bringing about outcomes. Causes, consequences, and objectives are tied to divine and human purposes, but more to human purposes. After all, it would be nonsensical for the Lawgiver to construct causes without meaning their effects (al-Raysūnī, 2015).

The three ideas above complement one another. If they are merged into cause and effect [second principle], the higher Shariah purposes [third principle] become the cause, and the final outcomes [first principle] are the effect. Considering the ultimate results requires analysing it in the context of the flow of causes.

Several Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions justify applying *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. A careful inductive examination of *Shariah* law literature may provide evidence for this. In *Surah al-A'raf* verse 108, despite the benefits, Allah forbade His prophets and followers from cursing polytheists' gods. This is because they will blaspheme the God of the believers, even though Allah is the *Rabb* who has no other God (Ibnu Kathir, 1999).

Much of the Quran's evidence is general, stressing the significance of contemplating consequences (al-Shāṭibī, 2017a). In prophetic traditions, the Prophet prioritised the final outcomes of his rulings above other factors. These traditions include:

1. Though he knew who they are and those are worthy to die, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) refrained from putting the hypocrites to death, and saying "Leave him, lest the people say that Muhammad kills his companions" (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 4905; Muslim, 2016, no. 2584).
2. The Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) avoided relocating the Ka'bah from its original foundations, which was built by Prophet Ibrahim (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 1585; Muslim, 2016, no. 1333).

Thematically, these traditions demonstrate how Prophet Muhammad clearly did not pursue what would be considered the normal courses due to the prejudicial consequences that were feared as a result of doing so, and such final outcomes posed greater harm than benefit of performing the normal courses (al-Shāṭibī, 2017a; Kamali, 2012).

The essence of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* has actually been used in different principles in Islamic law, and it can be classified into three categories; (1) preserving the holiness of the Lawgiver's intention by blocking the means and stratagem (*Hiyāl*), (2) preserving the human's interests by juristic preference (*Istiḥsān*) and consideration for opposing points of view (*Murū'āt al-Khilāf*), and (3) originally legitimate rules are not

alleviated by external contingents (*al-Qawā'id al-Mashrū'ah bil-Aṣali la Tarfa'ahā al-'Awāriḍ al-Khārijiyyah*).

It is submitted that if a person learns the rules that are built on the consequences of actions, as well as their importance in jurisprudence principles, he will recognise the significance of this principle as one of the principles in *ijtihād* (al-Qaraḍāwī, 2012).

2. Determine *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* in Dealing with Contemporary Religious Issues

In general, the *mufti* will give a *fatwa* after going through four stages: *taṣwīr* (problem description), *takyīf* (adaptation), *ḥukm* (legal explanation), and *iftā'* (*fatwa* determination) (Hassan & Khairuldin, 2020; Khairuldin, Embong, Hassan, Yasin, & Anas, 2019). The fourth step, *fatwa* determination, applies *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. Once the study is complete and the law is decided based on Islamic law and *ijtihād*, the *mufti* must undertake final research on the *fatwa*, which will be given to the *mustafti* or local community. Such research should address many issues. The *mufti* must also evaluate the *fatwa's* outcome.

Determining the final outcomes and consequences of an issued ruling that result in either benefit or harm is a tough undertaking that few individuals are able to complete (Ishak, 2018b). It necessitates careful observation, as well as a plethora of knowledge and experience. That is why al-Shāṭibī expressly states that only *mujtahids* are qualified to do so (al-Shāṭibī, 2017a):

There are several conditions required in the actual practice of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* that make it difficult to put into practise (al-Shāṭibī, 2017a), including: (1) knowledge of conditions pertaining to times, places, events, conducts, and individuals; (2) expertise in the field of human psychology; (3) the ability to read people's souls with their subtleties and peculiarities; and (4) knowledge about social realities and influences. These criteria are actually what al-Shāṭibī refers to as *Tahqīq al-Manāṭ al-Khaṣ* (al-Raysūnī, 2015; Kamali, 2012). The terminology of *Tahqīq al-Manāṭ* has been elucidated by numerous classical and contemporary scholars, such as al-Ghazālī (2015a), al-Āmidī (2003), Ibn Amīr Ḥāj (1983), Ibn Qudāmah (2002), Taqiyuddin al-Subkī and Tājuddīn al-Subkī (2004), Wahbah al-Zuhaylī (2013), Zaydān (2013),

and Kamali (2013). Thematically, their definitions can be summarised and understood as the process of verifying, ascertaining, or establishing the anchor point of the established legal rule in any new cases or situations. Accordingly, it deals with authenticating the presence of *'illah* in individual cases.

At this point we can understand why implementing *i'tibār ma'ālāt* is not simple. This is owing to the fact that, in order to execute this principle, a person must have another particular qualification known as *taḥqīq al-manāṭ al-khaṣ* as stipulated above, in addition to being a legal specialist with competence in dealing with legal texts and their complexities. Technically, *Taḥqīq al-Manāṭ al-Khāṣ* is one of the divisions of *Taḥqīq al-Manāṭ* made by al-Shāṭibī, whereby he divided it into two large divisions, namely *Taḥqīq al-Manāṭ al-'Ām* and *Taḥqīq al-Manāṭ al-Khāṣ* (al-Shāṭibī, 2017a).

In fact, al-Shāṭibī admits that *i'tibār ma'ālāt* is difficult to execute due to the expertise required, but if successful, it will be beneficial. It also affects a person's ability to master multiple fields and disciplines. Therefore, a pragmatic strategy is needed to use *i'tibār ma'ālāt* and overcome its implementation issues.

The remedy is to shift *ijtihād* from an individual to a group of recognised scholars via *shūrā*. Even if a *mufti* is very intelligent, a *fatwa* via collective *ijtihād* will be closer to the truth (al-Mulāḥ, 2011). Meetings and conversations amongst *muftis*, specialists, and academics will result in more mature discussions and understanding (al-Zarqā, 2014; Ishak, 2018b). New issues need not only *fiqh* and *uṣūl fiqh* knowledge, but also scientific and contemporary knowledge (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1998). By exchanging facts throughout the debate, this collective *ijtihād* may help comprehend the time, place, and persons involved with the *fatwa* (al-Raysūnī, 2015).

By convening collective *ijtihād* via *fiqh* academies like National and State Fatwa Committees, specialists from numerous domains and disciplines are called upon for *Shariah* rulings. The academy should record their contributions, experiences, and views, and then issue a legal ruling based on the experts' scientific facts, by *ijmā'* or majority opinion (al-Zarqā, 2014). Thus, *i'tibār ma'ālāt* will be realised, and *fatwas* will be more flexible, effective, moderate, and adaptive (Bin Bayyah, n.d.).

3. Appraising the Application of *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* Consideration in Syariah Rulings Related to the COVID-19 Issues in Malaysia

Since the COVID-19 pandemic struck Malaysia, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs), the *Ashābus Samāḥah Muftis*, the State Islamic Religious Council, and the State Islamic Religious Department have met several times with the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) and the National Security Council (MKN) to discuss issuing directives, *fatwas*, or public policies to preserve Muslims' religious affairs (Mutalib et al., 2020a; Ruzki, 2020). A series of national Fatwa Committee Meetings were held to discuss possible directives or *fatwas* in light of Malaysia's current situation (Mahaiyadin, Bhari, & Sirajuddin, 2021; Ruzki, 2020; Wan Ismail, et al., 2021). All related *fatwas* were issued as collective *ijtihad*, and some will be addressed here.

i) The ruling of physical distancing during congregational prayers in mosques and suraus

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Malaysian mosques and *suraus* physically separate attendees by one metre during congregational prayers which has prompted intense debate (Qotadah, 2020). This rule appears odd because there is a general ruling for shortening the distance between worshippers during collective prayer, which completes and beautifies prayer (Minister's Office in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs), 2020a, p. 35).

Modern scholars' views on the subject are based on the ruling of closing the rows during congregational prayers. Minority of scholars, *inter alia*, al-Bukhārī (al-Bukhārī, 2018; Ibnu Hajar al-ʿAsqalāni, 2013a), Ibn Taimiyyah (Jādallah, 2013; Syamsuddin Ibn Mufliḥ, 2003), Ibnu Ḥazm (2003), Ibnu Hajar al-ʿAsqalāni (2013a), al-Ṣanʿānī (1997), and Ibn ʿUthaimīn (1992, 2002, 2005, 2006), are of the view that closing the rows is obligatory. They have substantiated their view on several evidences from the Prophetic traditions (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 719; Abu Dāud, 2013, no. 667; al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 723; Muslim, 2016, no. 124). The injunction in these *hadiths* indicates that it is obligatory (Fajar Rachmadhani, Mualimin Mochammad Sahid, and Mokhtar, A. W., 2022; al-Ṣanʿānī, 1997; al-Shawkānī, 2000; Ibn ʿUthaimīn, 2002). Meanwhile, the majority of scholars, especially the Shafi'iyyah School, held that closing the row is strongly recommended (not amounting to

obligatory) and that deviating from it is *makruh* (al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbinī, 1994a; al-Suyūṭī, 1987; Ibnu Hajar al-Haitami, 2006). They support their view of it being strongly recommended by relying on the same evidences, but with different perspectives and interpretations.

They argued on the verbatim of “*tamāmi aṣ-ṣalāh*” in the *hadiths* clearly referred to *Sunnah* and are not included in the pillars or valid conditions of prayer (Ibn Baṭṭāl, 2003; Ibnu Daqīq al-‘Id, 1987). Nonetheless, a legal maxim indicates that “the ruling of *makruh* is discarded if there is a need” (Kafi, 2004; Tantawi, 2013). In resolving the issue of physical distancing during congregational prayer, the MKI has applied the view of majority scholars (MOPMD (Religious Affairs), 2020a). The researchers concur with the MKI’s determination. Although it is one of the *makruh* concerns, if done for the purpose of necessity, let alone an emergency, that *makruh* is lifted.

The *fatwa* to maintain physical distance during congregational prayers was issued after consulting experts and authorities, particularly from Malaysia’s Ministry of Health. This religious ruling was made after calculating the risk of viral infection from COVID-19 patients with or without symptoms, who may infect others at the same rate (MOPMD (Religious Affairs), 2020a). This *fatwa* may preserve religion and human life, two *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. Allowing Muslims in Malaysia to worship in mosques or suraus, even if it means separating from other congregations, preserves religion. Muslims who pray in mosques and suraus must maintain a safe distance. This protects them against COVID-19, which may be deadly affect human.

ii) The ruling on the postponement of pilgrimage to Mecca for the year 1441H

The Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Religious Affairs) announced the postponement of the pilgrimage in 1441H on Thursday, 11 June 2020. This decision was negotiated with the country’s authorities to benefit Malaysians, especially future pilgrims in 1441H (MOPMD, 2020b, pp. 39-40). Muslim history has long seen pilgrimages to Mecca postponed - 40 times throughout the history of Islam; The first time it happened was in 930 AD, when the Shiites of Qaramithah stole the Black Stone (al-Ḥajaru al-Aswad). The last time the postponement happened was in 1987, when there was a Meningitis outbreak. Meanwhile, former Egyptian *Mufti* Sheikh Dr. Ali Jum‘ah claims that

the pilgrimage to Mecca had been postponed 22 times in complete and partial postponement (MOPMD (Religious Affairs), 2020b, p. 20).

In addition to being physically and financially able to make the journey, pilgrims must also be safe, or terminologically referred as “*al-istiṭā‘ah al-amniyyah*” or “*amnu al-ṭarīq*” (al-Nawawī, 2011; Ibnu al-Naqīb al-Miṣrī, 2020; Hanafī, *et al.*, 2022), that is, safe or secure on the trip, even if he passes every area with reasonable tranquility (Ibnu Hajar al-Haitami, 2016). If someone is afraid about himself, his wife, or his property being in danger from wild animals, adversaries, or street thugs, and there is no other way out, the trip to Mecca is not compulsory for him as there is harm (Syamsuddin al-Ramli, 1984).

Furthermore, one of the physical abilities cited by the scholars is that there is no restriction from the oppressive ruler (*al-sulṭān al-jā‘ir*) to travel on pilgrimage to Mecca (al-Kāsānī, 1986). If this notion is understood via superior analogy (*qiyās al-awlā*), then a restriction order given by a just ruler is more important to comply. A fair government will not ban worship without *Shariah*-justified grounds. The Saudi Ministers of Hajj and Umrah and Islamic Affairs, Da‘wah, and Guidance informed the MOPMD (Religious Affairs) that overseas pilgrims could not go to Mecca in 1441H (MOPMD, 2020b). It was exclusively accessible to residents and foreigners in Saudi Arabia during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, after examining the final outcomes, including the threat of COVID-19 infection to Malaysian pilgrims, difficulty in satisfying the obligatory conditions of *istiṭā‘ah*, specifically *al-istiṭā‘ah al-amniyyah*, and permission not granted by the Saudi Arabian government, the *Muzakarah* has decided to postpone the pilgrimage for 1441H. This is undertaken to safeguard Malaysian *Hajj* pilgrims, most of whom are elders susceptible to COVID-19.

iii) The ruling of vaccination against COVID-19

MKI has also issued a legal ruling regarding COVID-19 vaccine (MOPMD, 2020c, p. 31). The mode of *i‘tibār ma‘ālāt* is taken into account as the COVID-19 vaccine protects 16-year-olds and older against SARS-CoV-2. Vaccines are a kind of medication, and medicine has a close bond with *Shariah* (al-‘Izz Ibnī Abdissalam, 2020, p. 8). In recent decades, Muslim jurists have made various justifications in

favour of vaccines (Maravia, 2020). Islam supports vaccinations to prevent contagious diseases. In Malaysia, the MKI Muzakarah Fatwa Committee has issued six *fatwas* advocating vaccination from 1988 to 2013 (MOPMD, 2020c). These *fatwas* advocated vaccinations to avoid contagious such diseases such as Rubella, Hepatitis B, Measles, Tuberculosis, Pertussis, Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Polio.

Vaccinations are efficient in preventing diseases and reducing death. On this premise, it's consistent with an Islamic legal maxim: "Prevention is easier, worthier, and stronger than elimination" (*al-daf'u ashal – awlā – aqwā min al-raf'i*) (al-Zarkashī, 1985; Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, 2002; Jalāluddīn al-Suyūfī, 1990; Tājuddīn al-Subkī, 1991). This legal maxim, which comes under the umbrella of "prevention is better than cure" (Muhammad al-Zuhaylī, 2006), relates to taking precautions and being prepared for a crisis before it occurs (Burnu, 2003; Mohd Aswadi, *et al.*, 2021). At this juncture, Ibnu 'Ashūr (2016) and other researchers held that the greatest approach to safeguard human life was to decrease the likelihood of harm and devastation (Ali, Mohd, & al-Shafi'i, 2017, Othman, *et al.*, 2022).

After evaluating the prospective outcome, this *fatwa* encourages and convinces people to receive the COVID-19 vaccination to boost self-immunisation against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and avert life-threatening pandemic transmission. On the flip side of the vaccination debate is whether the government may compel citizens to acquire vaccines. Vaccine is part of medicine and is *Sunnah* for humans to take (al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbinī, 1994b; Sa'id Ba'ishin, 2004). This ruling is based on the hadith in Abu Dāūd (2013, no. 3855) and al-Tirmidhī (2011, no. 2038). Therefore, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended. Depending on the scenario and circumstances, this initial ruling may be overturned. When the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, causing an increase in infection and mortality, as well as negative impacts from the anti-vaccine movement's stigma and propaganda, the government has the right, based on *Siyāsah al-Syar'īyyah*, to impose a COVID-19 vaccine immunisation programme on the people under his jurisdiction. This is in agreement with the Islamic legal maxim "*Taşarrufu al-Imāmi 'alā al-Ra'īyyati Manūṭun bil-Maşlahah*" (The actions of an Imam (leader) are driven by the interest of the community). According to scholars, the government's authority to obligate people whether they wish to or not depends on outcomes and benefits (Burnū, 1996; Ibnu Nujaym, 1999;

Zaydān, 2015). People must follow their ruler if it does not violate *Shariah* principles. This requirement is mentioned in the hadith 1839 in Muslim (2016). At this point, it's important to study the *al-Fatāwā al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kubrā* by Ibnu Hajar al-Haitamī:

If the ruler commands anything that is in conformity with the opinions of the imams' authoritative school, we shall carry it out. We should not blame him, and we do not say he has to know the incorrect thing like everyone else. This is due to the fact that in-depth discussion of this kind of issue leads to significant criticism, which should be avoided. (Ibnu Hajar al-Haitamī, n.d., p. 331)

According to the advice above, scholars want us to obey the ruler's directives without questioning or disputing, if such directives are in conformity with Islamic jurists. The MOPMD (Religious Affairs) (2020c) has also included scholarly viewpoints from major Islamic contemporary scholars and *Fatwa* Institutions worldwide. None of the opinions rejected COVID-19 vaccination.

Several parties would undoubtedly attempt to reject government's decision to take the COVID-19 vaccination. In several hadiths, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) is quoted as saying, "Do not pour medicine in my mouth" (al-Bukhārī, 2018, nos. 4458 & 5712; Muslim, 2016, no. 2213). From this hadith, they will say it is not acceptable to compel someone to take medication. This mistake and misperception must be remedied since a hadith must be viewed holistically. The hadith cannot be seen from one standpoint or taken literally.

According to scholars, Rasulullah (p.b.u.h.) did not want *ladud* because it was not suitable for his disease, not because he denied treatment (Abu Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī, 1994; al-Qaṣṭallānī, 1996; Ibnu Hajar al-'Asqalānī, 2013b). "Do not pour medicine in my mouth" does not include a legal injunction that a person cannot be compelled to consume medicine. If a disease presents a danger to human life if not treated and avoided, preventive measures such as immunisation may be imposed (al-Muhammadi, 2000, p. 1574).

Furthermore, alleging that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) refused to cure or use medicine based on this *hadith* may lead to contradiction with other *Shariah* scriptures. Other *hadiths* of the Prophet advocate utilising medicine to avert disease, *inter alia*, "make use of medical treatment,

for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease; viz., old age.” (Abu Dāūd, 2013, no. 3855; al-Tirmidhī, 2011, no. 2038). Similarly, various *hadiths* encourage us to take precautionary measures while facing an infectious disease crisis (al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5707; al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5771; Muslim, 2016, no. 2221; Malik, 2013, no. 31; al-Bukhārī, 2018, no. 5730; Muslim, 2016, no. 2219).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, al-Shāṭibī introduced *i'tibār ma'ālāt* in “*al-Muwāfaqāt*”. This notion was difficult to implement in the past. Later, as knowledge and information developed, the notion of *i'tibār ma'ālāt* became feasible for realisation via collective *ijtihad*, as is evidenced through *fatwa* institutions in Malaysia. This is because *fatwa* committee members have diverse experience and expertise, and they collaborate to ensure that *fatwas* issued are effective and adhere to Islamic standards.

The analysis of selected *fatwas* shows that the MKI National Fatwa Muzakarah has applied *i'tibār ma'ālāt*. Collective *ijtihad* has always been a key part of this achievement. This is because, while issuing a *fatwa*, members of the *fatwa* committee with diverse educational backgrounds and experiences gather and analyse the topic thoroughly. An exchange of ideas based on each other's expertise will occur, and the outcomes will be of high quality. Finally, *muftis* must employ *i'tibār ma'ālāt* while issuing *fatwas* so that each *fatwa* issued is rational, effective, and acceptable as pandemic prevention measures for Malaysians, particularly Muslims.

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The Challenges of Civil Society Organisations: NGO-isation of Resistance in Malaysia?

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Abstract: Numerous academic studies asserted the positive contribution of Malaysian civil society organisations in national policymaking and democratisation. Nonetheless, several issues have recently posed significant challenges to civil society organisations, including NGOs. These include, for instance, reported sexual harassment incidents and controversies of purported democratic aid or funding to the NGOs. Meanwhile, the phrase “uncivil society” and the relevant definition are ambiguously applied to the existing Malaysian NGOs, as past scholarly works solely concentrated on investigating civil society. The current study aims to explore the concept of “uncivil society” in Malaysia and its relevance to the NGO-isation of resistance. Specifically, this study reviews literature on the existing concepts of civil-uncivil society, the NGO-isation of resistance, and the development of CSOs and NGOs. This study revealed different experiences of individuals, who collaborated with four different NGO types, namely human rights, women, education, and the environment. Resultantly, three main concerns regarding “uncivil society” and NGO-isation of resistance are identified. The three identified concerns, namely undemocratic work culture, the NGO establishment motive, and ineffective resistance, could occur in Malaysia.

Keywords: Malaysia; civil society; uncivil society; resistance; NGO; democracy assistance

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Abstrak: Terdapat banyak kajian akademik yang menegaskan sumbangan tinggi organisasi masyarakat sivil Malaysia dalam penggubalan dasar dan pendemokrasian. Namun, beberapa isu baru-baru ini telah menimbulkan cabaran yang signifikan kepada organisasi masyarakat sivil, termasuk NGO. Sebagai contoh, insiden gangguan seksual yang dilaporkan dan kontroversi tentang bantuan demokrasi atau pendanaan kepada NGO. Sementara itu, frasa “masyarakat tidak sivil” dan definisi yang relevan digunakan secara samar-samar kepada NGO Malaysia yang sedia ada. Hal ini kerana sarjana-sarjana terdahulu hanya menumpukan penyelidikan tentang masyarakat sivil. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka konsep “masyarakat tidak sivil” di Malaysia dan kaitannya dengan pen-NGO-an perlawanan. Secara khusus, kajian literatur telah dilakukan ke atas konsep masyarakat sivil-tidak sivil yang sedia ada, pen-NGO-an perlawanan, dan perkembangan organisasi masyarakat sivil dan NGO. Kajian ini mendedahkan pengalaman individu-individu yang pernah bekerja atau bekerjasama dengan empat jenis NGO berlainan, iaitu hak asasi manusia, wanita, pendidikan dan alam sekitar. Hasilnya, tiga kebimbangan utama mengenai “masyarakat tidak sivil” dan pen-NGO-an perlawanan telah dikenal pasti. Tiga kebimbangan yang dikenal pasti, iaitu budaya kerja tidak demokratik, motif penubuhan NGO dan perlawanan yang tidak berkesan, dapat terjadi di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Malaysia; masyarakat sivil; masyarakat tidak sivil; perlawanan; NGO; bantuan demokrasi

Introduction

Discourses on democracy often include the concept of civil society, which comprises third-sector organisations beyond the government (first sector) and the market (second sector). Civil society is considered to play a role in the democratisation process, as in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea. In those countries, civil society exerted political pressure to demand reforms to the political and economic systems, thereby successfully assisting the overthrow of dictatorial regimes (Alagappa, 2004). Although the term “civil society” refers to various actors, the connotation of the term is, in reality, synonymous with NGOs. The term interchangeability reflects the prominence and importance of NGOs in civil society (Ishkanian, 2007).

In recent years, the euphoria of the General Election (GE-12) in 2008 and GE-13 in 2013 spurred a surge of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Malaysia. In fact, the Barisan Nasional (BN) government

lost power in several states including Selangor and Penang where many civil society organisations such as NGOs are concentrated (Rodan, 2014). The BN was finally defeated in the historic GE-14 in 2018 after 60 years of rule. In this context, the development of NGOs in Malaysia is increasingly gaining the attention of international bodies. Many funders realise that they need to work with local NGOs to achieve their goals. Apparently, many multinational NGOs have their regional or global headquarters in Malaysia. For example, Consumers International Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (CI ROAP), Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP), and Wetlands International Malaysia (Weiss, 2004). Accordingly, progressive NGOs and those fighting for freedom, transparency, human rights, and democracy are seen to display the civic and democratic values that are typically present in civil society (Cohen & Arato, 1992). For example, in Malaysia, NGOs include the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH), Voice of the Malaysian People (SUARAM), and All Women's Action Society (AWAM). Meanwhile, NGOs that are based on race, or that are nationalist or populist, are classified as uncivil society organisations (Ruzza, 2009). Uncivil organisations are criticised for obstructing democratisation and creating conflict in society. This perspective then leads to a dichotomy where civil society appears to be the “good guy” and non-civil society the “bad guy.”

However, while it is true that civil society organisations such as NGOs contribute to the democratisation and improvement of communities through advocacy work (Clarke, 1998), several issues that have recently plagued CSOs in Malaysia have received much criticism. Among them are cases of sexual harassment in the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) and controversy over democratic aid and funding to NGOs in the country (Muhamad Takiyuddin, 2019). These examples can give the impression that CSOs are not free from weaknesses or are constrained by funding. Their philosophy, ideology, intellectuality, and struggle raise question marks. Thus, even though civil society is a righteous idea that cannot be disputed, are civil society organisations in the form of NGOs that often speak out about human rights and the environment, better than uncivil organisations? Who do CSOs represent – funders, staff, or marginalised groups?

This article aims to challenge the mainstream idea presented in much academic writing by offering an alternative narrative on the civility of

CSOs, particularly NGOs in Malaysia. While the lack of transparency, internal accounting, and achievement of CSOs are not new, so is the position of NGOs in an authoritarian context. Nevertheless, this article intends to define the connection between the shortcomings of CSOs and the questions of NGO-isation of resistance that may well happen in Malaysia. It also serves as a study in this country that provides a critique from a civil-uncivil perspective and complements the existing studies on civil society.

Therefore, the article begins by examining the concepts of civil society, uncivil society, and NGO-isation of resistance. Although there are differences between CSOs and NGOs, the two terms are used interchangeably in this article to refer to the same unit of analysis: civil society organisations in the form of NGOs. Moreover, NGOs are perceived as a popular and well-established type of existing CSOs. Thus, the article focuses on NGOs as an important part of civil society. Next, the article briefly discusses the development of CSOs and NGOs in Malaysia. Then, this article explores the experiences of four individuals who have worked or collaborated with CSOs. Three main issues, namely undemocratic work culture, the NGO establishment motive, and ineffective resistance, were subsequently analysed as the challenges encountered by CSOs, which might be perceived as the NGO-isation of resistance.

The Other Side of Civil Society

The existence of CSOs has become an important sign of democracy, and in fact was noted as the most important idea at the end of the 20th century (Sunil, 2001). The four characteristics that are usually present in CSOs are that they act voluntarily, they are independent from government and political parties, they possess civility, and they put the public interest first. They can operate simultaneously as an operating organisation and an advocacy organisation. In this context, CSOs such as NGOs seek to achieve small-scale change through the programmes they organise as well as large-scale change by influencing policymaking (Willets, 2011).

Furthermore, CSOs are ethical entities, the core of democracy, and agents that can help to shape good governance. Thus, CSOs are placed alongside the public and private sectors as a check and balance mechanism (Etzkowitz, 2008). There are four dimensions of CSOs, namely: (1) organisational structure, (2) operating space,

(3) the values they promote, and (4) the effects of their activities on policymaking (Anheier, 2004). They also possess the ability to carry out political agendas at the national and international levels, influence political discourse, and criticise undemocratic parties. Therefore, CSOs have become an important part of implementing, developing, and strengthening democracy (Ishkanian, 2007). Consequently, they have to deal with varying policies, political conflicts, and extortions in authoritarian governments that can affect their advocacy role.

Importantly, the definition and history of CSOs may differ between Western societies and Eastern societies. Although Western society has always been presented as a role model for civility, the current situation of the West cannot necessarily be applied directly to the whole of the Eastern society. There are differences in terms of sociopolitics, culture, economy, and religion. Thus, the definition of civil society based on the experience of Western society may not be in line with the specific experience of Eastern society which tends to be parochial and emphasises tribal politics (Kamruzzaman, 2019). The homogenisation and corporatisation of NGOs also means that such CSOs serve to strengthen Western hegemony. Marginalised groups do not have the opportunity to provide their ideas from their local context and environment because the programmes start from the top and are all based on a similar format. Moreover, the development of the middle class in most Eastern countries did not start from the bottom and did not mature. In Malaysia, the development of the middle class occurred abruptly due to the implementation of certain policies – for example, the New Economic Policy (Rahimah, 2012). Therefore, they may not always be passionate about democracy and democratisation. On the one hand, this difference has been used by the government to stigmatise the NGOs relationship with foreign partners so that the government can use it to gain support for its political agendas. They exploited the defiance of the NGOs to highlight the pernicious effect of Western culture or to bring to the fore the danger of Western interference in the country (Walton, 2015).

Civil society organisations in the form of NGOs also compete for funding. Usually, only those that can realise the funder's agenda or that do not question the agenda will succeed. They have good skills in writing proposal papers and project reports. Hence the term "briefcase NGOs" refers to individuals who hold briefcases containing proposal

papers and get funding – but in the absence of any clear programme. These funds are obtained from various sources within and outside the country such as philanthropists, government, corporates, institutions, and other NGOs (Pallas & Nguyen, 2018). Thus, fund recipients become representatives to implement the funder’s agenda in their respective communities. In practice, this collaboration may be more of a subcontractive or co-optation than a partner relationship because of the funder’s bigger control over the NGOs (Alqatabry & Butcher, 2020). A further issue is that of separation between Northern NGOs (from developed countries) and Southern NGOs (from developing or less developed countries) (Lewis & Sobhan, 1999), reflecting a superior-inferior relationship. In countries that are poor or do not have policies that favour the marginalised, NGOs can easily get international funds from the Northern NGOs which are “easy money.” Hence, Southern NGOs depend on the Northern NGOs. It is this dependence that brings into question the legitimacy of Southern NGOs as CSOs. In fact, such dependence seems to embody the relationship of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism of this sort can occur not only between Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs but also when Southern NGOs place marginalised groups under their patronages (Hearn, 2007). As a result, the programmes they organise are more top-down, hence causing the “donor trap.”

Democracy assistance is no exception when it comes to accountability. Southern NGOs must report their financial statements to funders as the stakeholders. However, marginalised groups rarely receive such reports. As a result, technical matters become the focus of NGOs. Although the NGOs represent civil society, they become isolated from the daily lives of the marginalised. Moreover, NGOs also need to ensure their programmes are cost-effective if they want to continue to be funded, even though such cost savings may limit the efforts of CSOs to provide help to those who need it. Therefore, fund recipients must not only practice upward accountability, but they also need to gain trust from society by implementing downward accountability (Stecher & Kirby, 2004).

Unfortunately, civil society organisations such as NGOs may also be co-opted by neoliberalism. For instance, an NGO acts as a subcontractor in providing funds and assignments to other NGOs or works to “patch” the problems that come from capitalism. In such circumstances, NGOs can be more like consulting companies than CSOs, functioning as service

providers, professionals, and technical experts (Banks et al., 2015). Thus, their ability to carry out democratisation tasks can be affected because of the overlap with neoliberalism. In these circumstances, it is difficult for the underlying concept of civil society to materialise, given that the theories and agendas of NGOs tend to contain elements of neoliberalism, such as the idea of development and modernisation (Allen, 1997). Furthermore, NGOs are functioning within the existing market-based and competition frameworks rather than advocating for systemic transformations. The issue of competing for funds could also lead to the marketisation of services and the privatisation of public interests (Kamat, 2004). Hence, NGOs are regarded as providing a social responsibility veneer for corporations while depoliticising social issues and prioritising market-based solutions.

Moreover, most NGOs are urban in nature as they are based in major cities. Many individuals in the organisation come from the middle class and the elite. They are university graduates but lack genuine knowledge and experience in the grassroots movement. This background results in such NGOs not being able to represent or speak on behalf of the marginalised in the best possible way (White, 1999; Muhamad Takiyuddin, 2019). Furthermore, the middle class in such NGOs may be inclined towards political liberalisation. This contrasts with the marginalised, who need social and economic justice (Kasian, 2007). Thus, an NGO may not be internally democratic, either in terms of its organisational structure or its operations (Sabatini, 2002; Makumbe, 1998). For example, the membership of civil society organisations in the form of NGOs in Malaysia is not appropriately diverse as there are more non-Malays represented (Abbott, 2009; Muhamad Takiyuddin, 2019). They are also hierarchical and bureaucratic (Fadzilah, 2003). There are also times when NGOs are used as a stepping stone for a person to build a profile and gain followers before contesting elections – a previously unfamiliar phenomenon that occurred among many political activists in Malaysia leading up to GE-14.

With these complications in mind, a simplistic definition of NGOs as civil society organisations may be riskily inaccurate, and it can be quite difficult to know their true colour (Thompson, 2007). The concept of civil society often ignores the possibility that CSOs also have weaknesses manifesting clientelism and hierarchy (Portes & Landolt, 2000). Consequently, CSOs can be at odds with democracy (Schechter,

1999) and should not be blindly designated as *Deus ex Machina* (Howell & Pearce, 2001). In fact, as agents of democratisation and change, civil society organisations such as NGOs should be able to avoid actors, groups, and issues that could harm democracy or their reputation. However, they do not always act decisively when an issue or problem occurs within their organisation. Such NGOs can be said to violate the basic elements emphasised in the Guidelines for Good Policies and Practices for NGOs, which include values, transparency, legal structure, governance, management, financial management, collaboration, and networking (Ball & Dunn, 1995).

Meanwhile, the typical understanding of uncivil organisations is that they consist of government NGOs (GONGOs) and pro-government NGOs that are extremist, interfere with democratic rights or human rights, and disregard laws. This causes the GONGOs to become outcasts in civil society studies (Hasmath, 2019). Some local NGOs such as the Association of Islamic Welfare and Dakwah of Malaysia (PEKIDA), Malaysian Indigenous Power Organisation (PERKASA), or Islam Defenders' Associations (PEMBELA) seem to fit into this definition. Uncivil organisations can also be associated with gangster activities (Lemièrre, 2014). These organisations were also likewise ardent backers of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and BN government as well as right-wing agendas (Chin, 2014).

Yet, according to Kopecky and Mudde (2010), labelling NGOs based on race, nationalism, populism, or reactionism as uncivil organisations would negate the fact that they also represent the voices of their supporters who come from the grassroots and lower classes. In addition, in terms of freedom of speech, they should arguably have the same opportunity to voice their different views. This contrasts with NGOs from civil society which seems to be relatively exclusive and consist of the middle class and elite, who created the petty bourgeoisie. Muhamad Takiyuddin and Shah Mohd (2022) in their study on PERKASA and Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA) also explained that the label of uncivil society in Malaysia is typically focused on Malay-Muslim NGOs. In contrast to the uncivil society that Western and non-Malay scholars have categorised these two organisations as, civil society may be a better classification for them. Among the arguments given is that they are not encircled by the framework of terrorism, militancy, and

weaponry, have legally registered by law, and they also bring grassroots issues.

The shortcomings of CSOs and NGOs suggest an uncivil aspect, which would subsequently result in the NGO-isation of resistance. Specifically, CSOs and NGOs might prioritise funding and donor requirements over the community needs by considering different resistance movements as isolated and technical projects instead of collective and political struggles. A hierarchical structure would be created when individuals with abundant resources and connections acquire higher degrees of power and influence on various movements. Resultantly, a CSO would forfeit relevant civil influences when being integrated into the mainstream political and economic systems while neglecting civility and democracy. Roy (2014) admonished that NGOs could diminish citizens' political consciousness and relevant democratic resistance. Particularly, NGO-isation refers to the specialisation and institutionalisation of democratic struggle or activism through incorporation into capitalistic structures and conventional jobs. Roy (2014) propounded that NGOs depoliticised resistance by emphasising negotiation instead of confrontation.

Activist engagement became a career and a division of labour compared to the actual and uncompensated citizens' democratic struggle. In addition, activists are individuals who are considered experts and more sophisticated in propelling social change. Although numerous NGOs support progressive groups when criticising certain governmental actions, capitalism and imperialism are frequently tolerated. The selective approach is comparable to ineffective elections, which sustain unfavourable circumstances. Meanwhile, several CSOs are dependent on continuous funding of certain parties, which would lead to further marginalisation of underprivileged communities and concealed support for imperialism (Petras, 1999). Chandhoke (2003) insinuated that although societies expect the existence of civil society organisations, what they get is NGOs. Accordingly, the present study sought to explore the current discourse on "uncivil society" and the relevance to the NGO-isation of resistance in Malaysia. The findings would bridge the existing gap engendered by the dearth of academic discourses in Malaysia, due to previous academicians' emphasis on "civil society." Thus, this study would contribute an alternative perspective

on the issues of uncivil society and the NGO-isation of resistance in Malaysia through a more inclusive and unbiased context.

Development of Civil Society Organisations and NGOs in Malaysia

The history of the emergence of NGOs in Malaysia can be divided into two periods, namely pre-independence (before 1957) and post-independence. The first period began with the migration of many people from China and India to Malaya for trade and work. These immigrants set up their organisations to protect their welfare. In response, the British legislated the Societies Ordinance to monitor such organisations and prevent subversive activities. Vigorous associational activities then encouraged the locals, especially the Malays, to form their own organisations. In addition, the political awareness and associative awareness of the local population were on the rise when the Malayan Union 1946 plan was proposed. Thus, organisations in Malaya are also divided into two groups, political and non-political (Makmor & Robi, 2017).

After independence and the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the government introduced the Societies Act 1966 to regulate the movement of NGOs. The Act also established the Department of Registration of Societies Malaysia (ROS). Most of the organisations formed at this time were youth and social organisations. However, the developments that triggered various movements internationally also affected the CSOs in Malaysia. More NGOs are emerging to campaign and lobby the government to formulate better policies. Global issues such as human rights, feminism, consumerism, and the environment are now the focus of NGOs in Malaysia. Among such organisations are the National Consciousness Movement Society (ALIRAN), the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), and the Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM). Some of these NGOs have developed strained relations with the government (Weiss, 2006). At the same time, two factors influence the increase in the number of civil society organisations such as NGOs in Malaysia. First is the authoritarian attitude of the government; and the second is the growth of the urban middle class and the increase in young people obtaining education abroad (Tan & Singh, 1994).

Currently, there are 10,866 active NGO branches throughout Malaysia. These organisations cover a range of categories such as politics, welfare, social, recreation, mutual benefit, culture and arts, trade, profession, human rights, security, and religion (Open Data, 2020). They are registered with the ROS. However, there are also some NGOs under the auspices of non-profit companies registered under the Companies Act 2016. While they still retain their NGO character, the constraints of obtaining registration as an organisation or non-governmental organisation have forced them to register as a company. Freedom of association is still limited in the country, especially for NGOs that are vocal about human rights and have a political orientation. For instance, the 1981 amendment to the Societies Act 1965 required all NGOs to declare whether they are political in nature. NGOs that declared themselves as political were concerned about the potential for government restrictions that would prevent them from obtaining democratic aid from foreign countries. In 1983, the government withdrew this amendment after receiving many objections (Hilton, 2007).

Furthermore, civil society organisations in the form of NGOs in Malaysia strive to be independent, non-profit, and separate from the government. They have been the subject of political dissent in society for acting as critics and watchdogs. Thus, when CSOs in Malaysia play a role in humanitarian and development aspects, they emphasise human beings and seek to empower society. They also educate the public about democratic values (Korten, 1990; Taylor, 2002). This fosters the belief that civil society organisations, especially NGOs, can help transform the political culture and promote democratisation in Malaysia, including a change of government. Civil society organisations such as BERSIH and Green Assembly (*Himpunan Hijau*) are seen to have contributed to the political tsunami and the success of opposition political parties during elections in 2008, 2013, and most recently 2018 (Chan, 2018).

Insights from Inside

The search for informants for this study was informed by the author's knowledge of the experiences of individuals who are familiar with or have worked for or with civil society organisations such as NGOs in Malaysia. Therefore, purposive sampling which also includes snowball sampling techniques was applied in this study. However, this article only

focuses on the experiences of four informants who were interviewed in depth. These informants discussed their respective experiences with four different categories of NGOs, namely human rights, women, education, and the environment. Their identities and those of the NGOs are not disclosed in this study. Instead, pseudonyms have been assigned to them. The codes NGO 123, NGO XYZ, NGO ABC, and NGO 789 represented the four categories. All informants were interviewed online because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic constraints. Open-ended questions about, for instance, organisational culture, work culture, the meaning of resistance, and the importance of NGOs in Malaysia were asked to all the informants.

NGO-isation of Resistance in Malaysia?

Co-optation could assist in understanding the relationship between civil and uncivil societies and appraising the NGO-isation of resistance. Existing NGOs might depoliticise democratic resistance and reduce the capacity to challenge established power structures and advocate for systemic change. NGOs could be incorporated and co-opted by governments or corporations into the existing system resisted by citizens to diminish the ability to advocate for actual transformations (Fernandes, 2022). The situation is currently occurring in Malaysia, in which the study informants conveyed that certain NGOs, which are considered CSOs in supporting human, women's, educational, and environmental rights, possess structural weaknesses and internal organisational issues. Particularly, the incivility of Malaysian NGOs led to employee exploitation, the suspicion of the establishment motives due to the misuse of funds, and the neglect of community needs. The shortcomings manifested the NGO-isation trend of resistance in Malaysia, with the findings revealing three main issues, namely undemocratic work culture, the NGO establishment motive, and ineffective resistance.

Undemocratic Work Culture

Informants working with NGOs in this study have experienced employee exploitation. They must work overtime to cover the heavy workload. But they did not get paid overtime. The reasons given for this were lack of budget, organisational policy, and allocation only for the organisation's activities. Organisational managers also strictly control the inflow and outflow of money and direct expense savings for all their programmes. However, employee wages are still low. This overtime work is not

paid, and employee welfare is not taken into consideration. Therefore, this gives the impression that the establishment of the organisation is allegedly only to raise funds but then again ignores the interests of the employees.

One informant, Mark, described his job as being very challenging and that he was exhausted. Mark is a former clerk at NGO 123, one of the human rights NGOs in Malaysia that is synonymous with pro-opposition. He not only had to perform administrative and financial management work, but also assisted programme officers when the NGO organised events such as workshops, press conferences, and protests. As a clerk, Mark was supposed to work from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., but most meetings were held from 8 p.m. onwards. This situation caused him to work until late at night almost every day, which was burdensome as he relied entirely on public transport (Mark, personal communication, July 24, 2021).

Furthermore, the organisation holds programmes on weekends. Employees like Mark are given meal allowances and replacement leave when required to work on Saturdays and Sundays. However, they find it difficult to take replacement leave or annual leave because the NGO is too busy. The number of employees is about five or six people and cannot accommodate a large workload. Mark also felt stressed because he was often instructed to do something right away even though office hours were over or on weekends. This pressure interfered with his privacy and time with his family. Eventually, Mark quit the organisation. He wondered why a human rights organisation could treat employees poorly in such a way.

Meanwhile, Nurul had the same experience too. Nurul was initially interested in working with NGO XYZ because the organisation's mission is to guarantee women's rights, fight for feminism, and create gender equality in Malaysia. Currently, the organisation has fewer than ten employees. The organisation has no plan to add more employees despite the increasing workload. She also highlighted two issues. First, employees are unable to file complaints if there is a conflict with the organisational manager. The organisational manager and human resource officer are the same person. This overlap of positions results in a conflict of interest and employees are forced to remain silent if they have a problem with the manager. Second, there are irrational

rules in the organisation. For example, employees cannot communicate with each other in the office, employees cannot eat together during lunch breaks, and employees cannot go home from work with other employees. These rules have created an unhealthy work environment and put stress on employees (Nurul, personal communication, July 1, 2021). Therefore, Nurul argues that the toxic work culture at NGO XYZ illustrates that working for the organisation is no different from working in a factory or a corporate company. Many employees would not remain working at the NGO due to constant pressure. Turnover of employees is also quite high. They struggled with a work culture that is more autocratic than democratic. A former employee of the organisation once told Nurul that NGO XYZ is an organisation that is not feminist even though it discusses women's rights: the organisation itself oppresses its employees, most of whom are women.

Besides, this study also found that small and recently founded NGOs in Malaysia tend to have a power-based culture. Individuals in these organisations must rely on their leaders. But this dependence will result in the organisation not being able to grow well. For example, NGO 789. Meanwhile, larger and long-established NGOs such as NGO XYZ emphasises role-based culture with a focus on stringent rules and procedures. As a result, the organisation can become bureaucratic and rigid (Bob, 2003). The top structure of NGOs in this country such as NGO 123, NGO XYZ, NGO ABC, and NGO 789 tends to consist of committee members, professionals, intellectuals, and activists. Some of them have the privilege of traveling, attending meetings and conferences locally and overseas, being popular, becoming icons, gaining awards or recognition, as well as scholarship opportunities, and studying abroad.

This privilege will divert them from a radical approach and make them more focused on technical or image competence. Most of them are idealistic intellectuals but have no experience in practical action. This failure resulted meetings being held many times, and employee workloads not reduced. By contrast, the number of administrative employees is small, and they are pressed with a heavy workload. Most of their backgrounds are from the lower middle class and working class, as related by the informants in this study. They have no choice but to work for the NGOs, but then again are paid inadequate salaries around RM1,500 to RM2,500 per month (USD350-USD600) which do not commensurate with their heavy workload. Employees also are not

entitled to overtime pay. They are told that their work is a sacrifice for the sake of humanity or “*perjuangan*” (struggle). However, they are not involved in decision-making.

Meanwhile, NGO leaders such as managers or chairmen of organisations get salaries or allowances close to five figures a month and have power and authority in many aspects. The position and privileges of these individuals lead to abuse of power and oppression within the organisation. Mark also argued that praise in the mass media or social media about certain NGOs is just too good to be true. He was tired of the practice of organising events in luxury hotels, which results in a waste of money. These attitudes and actions contradict the values of those who supposedly seek to oppose capitalism. Mark explained it is a bit worrisome that so many activists in the civil society movement in the country seem to be “dinosaurs.” The term “dinosaur” is often used in CSOs to describe leaders who are outdated but are still in power. So, dinosaurs can also exist in CSOs when there are a handful of individuals who can disguise or camouflage themselves in the name of human rights fighters (Mark, personal communication, July 24, 2021). Therefore, elements of democracy and collectivism do not exist because the NGOs adopt a static concept of leader and subordinate within the organisation. Hence, there are various factors why the informants do not voice or complain about the issue of employee exploitation to the authorities such as the Department of Labour. Among them are fear of the power of the organisation, fear that no one will trust them, feelings of inferiority, and indebtedness to the organisation. Some of them are only able to express themselves in non-mainstream media. This situation suggests that they may be trapped in Stockholm Syndrome.

The NGO Establishment Motive

Several NGOs in this country also failed to understand the real needs or problems in the communities. As a result, the objective to help the communities seems to turn into a competition among the NGOs to do good. Salmah quit NGO ABC, an organisation that aims to provide education and protect the city’s poor children. One of the factors that prompted her to no longer be involved was that the organisation was not trying to understand the marginalised. The organisation designs its programmes to suit the needs of funders and not the marginalised. Instead, these marginalised groups must listen and follow the tune of the

NGO (Salmah, personal communication, July 14, 2021). Therefore, civic values and democratic norms are absent. As a result, the organisation is at odds with its objectives.

Salmah's experience and observations suggested that the key constraint in the activism of CSOs in Malaysia is the influx of NGOs such as NGO ABC that are egoistic and refuse to learn from society. They do not respect the privacy or sensitivity of the communities or the marginalised. There are also NGO movers who consider welfare as an industry. Moreover, organisations like NGO ABC that want to help the urban poor rarely criticise the economic system that oppresses the people. They mostly just touch on the issues of the urban poor who do not have enough food and live on the streets. The romanticisation of such issues always happens. However, broader questions such as expensive housing and low wages stemming from capitalism are not highlighted.

In addition, suspicion arises when no agency closely monitors the activities of the NGOs, especially in the financial aspect. While they may need to submit financial reports to ROS, leakage or misuse of funds has not been fully examined. The ROS seems to focus more on registration and technical matters, rather than monitoring any misconduct of the NGOs. Hence, Adam argues that there are indeed several activists who set up environmental NGOs merely to raise funds. Adam was once involved with NGO 789, an environmental organisation while researching the problem of environmental pollution in Malaysia. Such NGOs can be said to use environmental issues in the country for their own benefit. Their direction may be different if compared to the struggle of the indigenous people who are closest and more affected by changes in the environment. This situation can also be seen in NGO 789 (Adam, personal communication, July 10, 2021).

Adam explained that there are two types of environmental NGOs in the country: big organisations that have committee members, and relatively small organisations. Big organisations may be less problematic because committee members can hold discussions before they make decisions. In small organisations, monopolies tend to prevail. The chairman of the organisation buys assets at will and monopolises the use of those assets, including for personal advantage. There was no discussion or criticism in NGO 789 about asset acquisition. This

situation illustrates that the organisation does not seem to practice internal democracy because there is no space for the employees to speak out on an issue or express their doubts. For that reason, Adam also questioned the motives of setting up environmental NGOs such as NGO 789 – whether they were fighting for the environment, just following trends, or wanting to apply for funds. In addition, NGOs in Malaysia face Third World problems rather than the First World problems encountered by NGOs in Northern countries. For example, the problems of poverty, corruption, and education gaps stem from marginalisation and power struggles by the elite. However, some NGOs are actively pursuing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even though the SDGs do not change the power relationship between North and South, the gap between rich and poor, and the discrimination between men and women (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016). Meanwhile, communities living in relatively privileged and prosperous conditions in Northern countries may experience smaller or more trivial problems. Likewise, NGOs in Malaysia face various constraints in achieving the SDGs through localisation. Among these are the gaps between advocacy and implementation, non-priority of human rights, limited resources, lack of capacity among NGO employees, and lack of empowerment in the communities (Ying & Lii, 2019).

There are Northern NGOs that obtain funding from their governments. So, when these Northern NGOs provide funds to Southern NGOs such as in Malaysia, it seems unreasonable to still contend that the NGO is an organisation separate from the government or is a non-governmental organisation (Wright, 2012). Furthermore, the programmes that they hold each year usually follow specific themes and trends. For example, in recent years, stateless people have become a hot topic in Malaysia. Many new NGOs are emerging that organises a range of programmes such as discussions, forums, and alternative schools. They also regularly appear on social media, in television interviews, and in online fora. There is no denying that such actions aim to expose the issue of stateless persons, attract attention or monetary donations from the public, and augment their visibility in society.

However, such developments can also result in the NGO-isation of resistance in Malaysia. Public space can become closed and unable to grow because it is dominated by NGOs that use certain issues in the name of civil society and marginalised groups to follow trends or

merely to raise funds. This situation can be seen as more and more new NGOs appear in Malaysia. A book entitled *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* edited by INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence also question the credibility of NGOs in fighting for radical social justice as they receive democratic aid or funds from certain parties. Moreover, the trustworthiness of such NGOs can be assessed through the knowledge they have to manage the organisation, their ethical responsibility, and their power or political interests (Srinivas, 2009).

Most informants also agreed that the heavy workload and high administrative demands were for the sake of satisfying the funders. Organising programme is a priority to ensure the survival of the organisation and to gain the trust of funders so that they continue to provide funds in the following years. Here, such NGOs become merely service providers. The result is a neglect of civic and democratic values in the organisation. Initially, individuals in CSOs may think of changing the system from within. However, the bureaucracy of struggle and the taming of activism through NGOs has diverted public attention from the bigger picture, restrict the emergence of more critical movements, and undermine political participation.

Many of these NGOs are also non-membership-based CSOs. This type is different from the membership-based CSOs such as trade unions and professional associations that can generate their finances through membership fees or business activities. Thus, non-membership NGOs, whether large or small, rely on democratic aid or funds to carry out their activities. Research conducted by Lyons and Nivison-Smith (2008) on 492 NGOs in six Asian countries also clarified that internal hierarchy is closely linked to funding. NGO leaders are seen to be influential in organisations and respected because they can persuade and convince funders to fund their organisations (Lorch, 2017). Therefore, some individuals may establish NGOs to obtain funding or personal gain, meaning that they have no real impact on the issues they claim to address. These organisations may be viewed as dishonest, and they can harm the reputation of the broader NGO community.

Ineffective Resistance

The sharing from Mark, Nurul, Salmah, and Adam on some NGOs in Malaysia also illustrates that NGOs as CSOs have become classless. The game is geared to be inter-NGO rather than a class or collective struggle.

The focus of the campaigns of all these NGOs is on one issue only. They rarely organise society consistently and seldom provide class analysis. They are now at risk of becoming co-opted by capitalism's hegemony. Furthermore, after Pakatan Harapan (PH) won the historic 14th General Election in 2018, several NGOs were co-opted into the system. They have been demobilised and failed to address the economic gap and social inequality. Additionally, they have been protesting in the same place for years. For example, outside the SOGO shopping mall, around Bukit Bintang Street, *Pasar Seni* (Central Market), or *Dataran Merdeka* (Merdeka Square) in Kuala Lumpur. There is no radical and meaningful change, especially in their strategy to push for democratisation.

At the same time, given that there are many successful civil society organisations such as NGOs that are well-established in Malaysia and able to attract attention and funding up to the international level, many new NGOs are emerging in the capital city and are now starting to enter other places – for example, in rural areas or Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia). These two states are also popular among NGOs not only because of the many issues that can be explored to implement various programmes, and because it will be easier to get funds and donations. These states are rich in natural beauty, making it fun to do activism compared to places that have no such attractions. As a result, too many NGOs and activists are concentrated in one place. Existing NGOs are typically used as guides or models. The new NGO will talk about human rights, democracy, and good governance.

Some of them also frequently use English in their platforms and conversations, rather than the Malay language which is more inclusive among ordinary people. What started as an organic movement for change now seems to be an NGO system that relies on democratic aid or funds. Furthermore, the NGO may later intervene and disrupt the local opposition by controlling the agenda. This situation can hamper local efforts to build a more representative engagement. Hence, the communities may not need NGOs anymore if the existence of such organisations is just to spread awareness. Almost all current issues can be known and shared quickly on social media, especially with the increase in social media influencers in Malaysia who regularly share about human rights and environmental problems with thousands of their followers (Adam, personal communication, July 10, 2021).

Therefore, the main challenge for CSOs in Malaysia is how to remain loyal and steadfast to their original objectives. The biggest dilemma that hinders the progress of any NGO is funding. No organisation will last long acting voluntarily and without funds. Thus, NGOs should not be entirely blamed if they rely on funding. NGOs should work not only to change society but also to change the corrupt system. Companies or agencies that do damage to humanity and the environment also need to be fought. In Salmah's view, not everyone who enters and joins the NGO world thinks about and clearly understands the struggle (Salmah, personal communication, July 14, 2021). Indeed, the informants' experience with several NGOs in this country illustrates that there are weaknesses among these CSOs in terms of accountability, transparency, and ability to make changes. While they are manifesting altruism, their actual nature resembles the uncivil characteristics that influence the NGO-isation of resistance. Among these traits are professionalisation, institutionalisation, depoliticisation, and demobilisation (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that there may be negative externalities from the CSOs that could result in an uncivil element if the NGOs failed to establish sound relations, trust, and mutuality within their organisation or outside the organisation such as the communities.

Ideally, NGOs as civil society organisations are not profit-seeking people because their mission is to fight for human and environmental rights. Therefore, they should be more sensitive to the welfare of employees or their real objectives. They must focus on their original goals and not act hastily or in a reactionary way on all issues or give a response to every statement made by politicians (Mark, personal communication, July 24, 2021). However, the problems in NGO 123, NGO XYZ, NGO ABC, and NGO 789 reflect the negligence of CSOs in this country that do not practice the civic and democratic values they champion. Issues such as employee exploitation, the motive for the establishment of NGOs, and ineffective resistance present a challenge for the NGOs to ensure that the uncivil aspect or the NGO-isation of resistance does not happen in Malaysia.

Conclusion

Without civil society organisations such as NGOs, diversity is unlikely to be seen in the democratic landscape in Malaysia. These

organisations remain as important actors in democratisation because they are a platform for society to speak out and demand rights. Civil society organisations in the country such as NGO 123, NGO XYZ, NGO ABC, and NGO 789 conduct advocacy aimed at law enforcement for human rights, elimination of discrimination against women, the right to education, and environmental protection. They also create a network with each other if there are strategic issues that require joint efforts. They develop collaborations at the national level to influence the policymaking process. Relationships with various NGOs in other countries are also established to gain international publicity. In this regard, there are still many people who believe in the role of NGOs and work in such organisations with dedication.

However, it is important to put these issues in perspective. The rise of civil society organisations such as NGOs in Malaysia is not a guarantee that they will be the agents of social change or democratisation. They tend to reduce the quality of resistance. Power relations also occur among NGOs, within the NGO itself, or between NGOs and the communities. Moreover, most of these NGO approaches are not localised in nature and are organised to implement a programme or project according to the allocation of funds or targeted timelines. A relatively short duration can mean that it is quite difficult to measure the effectiveness of the programme or project. Besides, the informants of this study also narrated their experiences with NGOs that are viewed as civil society organisations, but the values of civility and democracy do not seem to be applied in the organisation itself. There are issues of employee exploitation, misuse of funds, and absence of responsibility to the communities. This article, therefore, presents the critique that CSOs could exhibit weaknesses and uncivil characteristics that may be an indicator of the NGO-isation of resistance in Malaysia. The communities are meant to benefit from and be empowered through the engagement of NGOs, but some of these organisations are inclined to use negotiation, dialogue, or diplomatic approaches as opposed to radical or more real action.

The surge in growth of many NGOs in Malaysia seems ironic when the organisations themselves—such as NGO 123, NGO XYZ, NGO ABC, and NGO 789—can exploit their employees and be dishonest in financial management. Therefore, the process of institutionalisation and professionalisation tends to transform civil society organisations

such as NGOs into more hierarchical, corporate, and centralised agents that focus on organisational sustainability as opposed to trying to organise and mobilise society. They are also not able to practice democracy and good governance internally, making them uncivil. In this situation, the concept of civil-uncivil perspective and NGO-isation of resistance becomes useful to understand and examine the direction of the movement of civil society organisations such as NGOs in Malaysia.

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The Authenticity of Theology in Scientific and Technological Thinking

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Abstract: The deprivation of knowledge from the bond of true belief will destroy and ruin human life and nature. This has been demonstrated in the Western scientific and technological civilisations that dominate the world today. Western scientific civilisation today is the product of scientists who have no real faith in the Creator of the universe. Nevertheless, there are efforts among Western scientists who have awareness in this modern era, who began to take steps to restore the agenda of Science and Technology within the framework of religious beliefs. This literature-based study discovers many negative effects resulting from the absence of true theology in understanding Science and Technology, which is based on a secular understanding. Apart from that, this article also reveals the nature and appearance of Science and Technology that are firmly embroidered with natural theology leading to universal well-being.

Keywords: Theology, Science and Technology, modern science, Muslim society, *Tawhidic* science

Abstrak: Kurangnya pengetahuan dari sistem teologi yang benar akan memusnahkan kehidupan manusia dan alam yang dibuktikan dalam tamadun sains dan teknologi Barat yang mendominasi dunia saat ini. Ironinya, tamadun

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sains Barat ketika ini merupakan produk ilmuwan Barat yang tidak memiliki asas keimanan yang sebenar kepada Pencipta alam semesta. Meskipun demikian, terdapat usaha dalam kalangan ilmuwan Barat yang memiliki kesedaran untuk mengembalikan agenda sains dan teknologi dalam kerangka kepercayaan agama. Kajian berasaskan kepada tinjauan literatur ini menemui banyaknya kesan negatif yang terhasil daripada ketiadaan teologi yang benar dalam pemikiran saintifik dan teknologi, yang didasarkan pada pemahaman sekularisme. Selain itu, artikel ini juga menonjolkan sifat dan ciri sains dan teknologi yang didasarkan kepada teologi fitrah semula jadi yang mengarah pada kesejahteraan universal.

Kata kunci: Teologi, Sains dan Teknologi, Sains moden, Muslim, Sains Tauhidik.

Introduction

Today, human life enjoys many benefits due to the progress and development of knowledge (Science and Technology, S&T) sourced from the West. Within the limitations of its scope, science is unlikely to answer all the questions that arise (John Malone, 2001). This is generally understood and accepted. On the other hand, there are undesirable elements in science that include the destruction of human nature (*tadmir al-insān*). This is because Western Science and Technology have lost the value of theology as the core of human spirituality. Solihin (2004), in his argument on the importance of *Sufistic psychotherapy*, displayed the description of many human bodies today that have lost their “souls.” Their lives and existence are not much different from robots. Such depiction is being referred to the writings of, among others, Lewis Yablonsky (1924-2014), a behavioural science researcher in his book *Robopath* (1972), Ashley Montagu (1905-1999) and Floyd Matson in *The Dehumanization of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), and Erich Fromm (1900-1980) in *The Art of Loving* (1956). According to Solihin (2004), human tendency in this modern century is experiencing mental instability due to being alienated by a way of thinking and working that must be efficient, orderly, predictable, and mechanical.

Then came a “new human” whose character is like a robot. Yablonsky sees people as machines, a “Robopath” – a cruel creature, easily aggressive and devoid of feelings. This robopath personality is characterised by automatic behaviour (rigid obedience, dry from

emotion, not spontaneous, and very obedient to authority). *Robopath* personality gave birth to two ends of truly tragic life attitudes, namely:

1. *Malevolent robots*, i.e., “undead,” like characters that roam everywhere in search of cruel prey (zombies); and
2. *Cheerful robots*, that is, the attitude of people who overcome their existential anxiety (from this living corpse) with hedonism in the fields of entertainment and sensual pleasure, especially sexuality. As a result, self-identity is lost, dissolved in violent, unfeeling, and hedonistic-sensuality attitudes to the point of self-forgetfulness. Here, it is clear that one’s spirituality is completely destroyed. Therefore, the effort to re-function one’s spirituality is almost the only therapy (solution medicine).

The above comment explains that human beings, whose souls are empty of having faith in God or a faith that is not firm, will act beyond the limits of humanity. Their actions are not based on the commandments of God, but according to their own lusts. This is so because human souls that are empty of faith should be filled with the clarity of the souls. Man, whose soul is filled with the values of faith, will shape Science and Technology towards universal harmony and submit to the will of the Creator.

Definition of Authenticity Theology

The definition of authenticity theology derives from the word of “authenticity” and “theology.” Generally, the word authenticity refers to the “quality of being genuine or real.” The word authenticity also is the state of something being authentic or legitimate and true. Authenticity is important when the value of something is dependent on where it comes from or how it is made. The concept of theology in Islamic tradition targets one’s life actions in a true, authentic, honest, and clear way; whatever is done in this life is based on commands and prohibitions from God. The implementation of theology in Science and Technology lead into harmony, love, equality, justice, and compassion. In contrast, Science and Technology without theology lead to universal destruction, offer opportunity and space to rebel against God, and as such, are out of the authentic concept of theology.

In Qur’anic terminology, theological authenticity refers to the believers as *mu’minūna haqqan* [*al-Anfal*, 8: 4]; *al-Ṣādiqūn* [*al-Hujurat*,

49:15]; *al-Muslimūn* [Āli ‘Imran, 3:102; al-Ahzab, 33:35] with their respective characteristics. Opponents to them are *kāfirūna haqqa* [al-Nisa’, 4:151], *munāfiqūn* (al-Munafiqun, 63: 4) and *fāsiqūn* (al-Anfal, 9:67; al-Hasyr, 59:19) with their respective characters. True Muslims and believers are human beings who spread the truth of Allah and keep to His commandments. They prevent others from bad things. Those who disbelieve, deviate, are hypocrites and wicked, forget God, do not obey the commandments of God, and do damage to man and nature.

The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) elaborates the good Muslims’ qualities as in the following narration: al-Bukhari in *Sahīh al-Bukhāri* [no. 10,11, 6484] and Muslim in *Sahīh Muslim* [no. 40, 41, 42] reported, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said: “[a] Muslim is a person who protects others from the disorder of his tongue and hands.” Al-Tirmidhi in Sunan al-Tirmidhi [no. 2329] reported: From Abdullah bin Busr, an Arab asked: “O Messenger of Allah! Who is a good person? The Prophet said: “[p]eople who are long-lived and do good deeds.” al-Bayhaqi in *Syu‘ab al-Iman* [no. 7578] narrated, a woman asked: “O Messenger of Allah! Who is a good person? He said: Those among you who are most pious to Allah, connect the cords of brotherhood, enjoin what is good (ma‘rūf) and forbid what is evil.”

The good deeds accepted by Allah are those based on pure faith without being tainted with the elements of idolatry (*shirk*), whether hidden or real. In different terms, human behaviour that is not based on theological authenticity will result in calamity and destruction to himself, man, and nature. Man’s deviation from the hold of theological authenticity makes the invention of technology unfit for the purpose of peace. In weapons technology, the invention is to provoke war and make a profit. Without war, weapons will be abandoned. Security creates a total loss. Thus, chaos, unrest, and fear should be created for the sale of arms trade. This fact was mentioned by Matthias Chang (2005): “[w]ar is a big business. Retired US Admiral Gene La Rocque remarked: Military product is manufactured primarily not for the defence of the USA or of any other country, but merely for profit.”

Humans who do not have real faith will use the technology of their creation as a means of murder and tyranny. According to a study conducted by one of the Vietnamese scientists, Dr. Nguyen Viet Nhan, children in areas affected using Agent Orange were identified to have

health problems, including cracked palates, mental defects, hernias, and excess on fingers and toes. In the 1970s, dioxin levels were found in the breast milk of South Vietnamese women and in the blood of U.S. military members who had served there. The most affected zones were the mountainous areas along the Truong Son (Long Mountains) and the border between Vietnam and Cambodia. The population involved lived in substandard conditions with various genetic diseases.

The True Face of Western Science

In August 1925, Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) wrote an article entitled Religion and Science in *The Atlantic*. In the paper, Whitehead (1925) asserted that the religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as science does. The statement gives an understanding of science and theology each has different directions in the debate of knowledge about science (*‘ilm*) in the Western world. There is really no need for intense debate and scientific evidence to convict the conspicuous negative impacts of modern scientific activity today. Expressions for the sake of a sense of frustration with Western science are spoken by scholars. Among them, Hoodbhoy (1992) noted the existence of criticism of science in the past with the assumption of damaging religious morality. According to him, the level of public frustration in science today is even worse (on a larger scale) than before.

Comments on the same matter made by several Western scholars (Crosby & Smith 1998) are increasingly convincing. According to them, the philosophy of the modern Western science development has now lost the value of human nature. In other words, the value of pure faith, which is the pillar of human glory, is no longer possessed by them. The loss of confidence in the sense of God’s oversight in the life of the modern world of science now causes it to be traded in the name of the pursuit of materialism. Through faith in the supernatural God, scientists can achieve their identity. In fact, this will make them active beyond the real world which directly prevents them from acting outside the limits of their monotheistic beliefs. Their search and hope for the reward of pious deeds in the hereafter will cleanse all the activities of their sponsored S&T from the elements that are deemed to be *fasād fil arḍ* (damage on earth). The value of the hereafter is more meaningful to them than the temporary world in the form of *lahwun wa la‘ibun* (jokes and toys).

Islam, as a religion based on the purity of theology, has in its teachings the harmony between science and religion. Meanwhile, this feature does not exist in any belief system of human creation. This has coloured the whole world under the touch of unity (monotheism). The assertion highlighted by Osman Bakar (2014) in this case further reinforces what was stated. He asserted that in Islam, the idea of harmony and unity of religion and science is very much cherished. The harmony between religion and science is a major characteristic of Islamic civilisation. In Islamic civilisation, science was born in the cradle of religion. More precisely, it was born in the cradle of monotheism – belief in the one true God – or what Muslims traditionally love to call *tawhīd*, which literally means “unity.” This situation is different from the Western world where their lives are not based on theology. Some use technology in order to build hostility and fear against Islam.

The hatred against Islam and Muslims is embedded in the latest communication technology. Jack Shaheen (2012), through his observations, highlighted how America has been projecting a frightening bad image of Islam through films and other mass media tools for so long. This is seen as part of an effort to remove God from life and to directly develop the concept of “deifying science,” or that science is indirectly forced to replace religious beliefs. This was voiced by Ziauddin Sardar (1989) when he explained the fundamental differences between Western science and Islamic science. Scientists who support atheism will do anything to achieve what they want. There is no inner shield of the self that prevents them from acting non-humanist. They have no divine or humanitarian agenda. The agenda they have is temporary material gain, fame, and praise, aside from the gratification of worldly lusts. It is this catastrophe that is gripping the world of modern Science and Technology today.

***Tawhīdic* Scientists**

Scientists involved in research on the phenomena of nature are not able to explain the truth about them unless they first accept and acknowledge that nature has its owner. The rejection of this fact and putting nature as a natural phenomenon without an owner creates lacunae in their thoughts. Despite the various achievements in the field of Science and Technology, these scientists failed to connect the phenomena of nature

with the reality of absolute truth. This is different from Muslim scholars who believe and seek the truth in their studies.

This fact can be exemplified from the confession of Abu Raihan al-Biruni (973-1048), an expert in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, Islamic law, language, theology, medicine, and other fields of science. TRT World published an article written by Ufuk Necat Tasci (2020) in connection with al-Biruni's dedication to exploring knowledge in the field of science:

[m]y experience in the study of astronomy and geometry and experiments in physics revealed to me that there must be a planning mind of unlimited power. My discoveries in astronomy showed that there are fantastic intricacies in the universe which prove that there is a creative system and a meticulous control that cannot be explained through sheer physical and material causes.

The words spoken by a Muslim scholar in the 11th century are similar to a discourse of another Muslim scholar in the 20th century. Muhammad Javad Bahonar (1985) notes, the systematically ordered universe can help mankind to know God who is all-wise and all-powerful. Every phenomenon in this world is the result of a certain and reasonable cause that already exists in nature, and the incarnation of all those phenomena is in accordance with the will of God. Observations and research on nature are highly emphasised by the Qur'an as a revelation from Allah. Such studies will generate knowledge of Science and Technological design for human well-being. According to Khawaja Abdul Wahid (1978), the Qur'an introduces to the world "the idea of the law and order of nature, connects natural phenomena with material causes, instils the spirit of rational thinking, encourages direct study of nature through observation and experiment, produces the universal desire of scientific study with the call of *tafaqquh*, *tafakkur* and *ta'qqul*, and this paves the way to the right way of understanding nature and natural phenomena."

The above statement shows how the development of science in Islamic civilisation is not hindered by religion. Islam itself serves as a catalyst to the development of science, unlike the role played by Christian religious institutions in Western Europe. Based on the spirit of revelation that calls for the use of reason, it is this that has led to the development of Science and Technology in Islamic civilisation. Muslim

scientists have a pure agenda to dedicate themselves to God and uphold the status of “the caliph of God on earth” (*khalifatullah fil Ard*). Such scholars are able to understand and respect nature according to the will of the Creator – Allah.

Although the Western world has achieved great advancement in Science and Technology, such progress is detached from theological ties. In this regard, A. Khudri Soleh (2004) notes, although what modern (Western) science has achieved in its various aspects is something amazing, the progress also turned out to have terrible impact. According to al-Faruqi (1921-1986), as a result of the secular paradigm, modern knowledge became dry, even completely separated from monotheistic values; a global principle that encompasses five units, namely the unity of God, the unity of nature, the unity of truth, the unity of life, and the unity of mankind. Clearly, modern science has detached from theological values (A. Khudri Soleh 2004).

Islamisation of Science

In view of theological deficiencies in modern science, scholars try to find a formula to justify the shortcomings. Some of them look at it from the point of view of science, which touches on aspects such as thought, philosophy, epistemology, paradigm, and conceptual errors. It is clear that humanities (science) aspects are the target. Meanwhile, others see that the factor stems from the individual scientists themselves (human). Therefore, the individual needs to be justified. Whatever the debate is about, the main thing is that their direction is to fix the shortcomings that are going on. Thus, both human and humanity aspects can be discussed to repair the failures of modern Science and Technology today. Furlow (2005) stressed that although they have different tendencies based on different expertise and backgrounds, the ideas should not be set aside for the benefit of the people. Scholars such as al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas, Osman Bakar, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, and a few others saw the need for the Islamization of this knowledge (Furlow, 2005).

For example, Naquib al-Attas saw modern thinking and knowledge as having a negative effect due to inhaling knowledge from various conflicting sources and rejecting revelations. So, he stressed the need for knowledge to be guided in accordance with God’s teachings. He reminded that the main problem of Muslims is “the problem of knowledge.” In his works, since the early 1970s, Naquib al-Attas explained the basics of

ontological, epistemological, ethical, and cultural differences between Islam and the dominant secular West. For that, a discourse was held on de-westernisation and de-colonisation through the current Islamisation of knowledge project. For al-Attas, Islamisation is an effort to free human beings first of all from the magical tradition, myth, animism, national culture, and then free from the secular snares that shackle the mind and language. Muslims are people whose intellect and language are no longer controlled by magic, myth, animism, and nationalist and cultural traditions. This is the difference between Islam and secularism (Furlow, 2005).

Osman Bakar (2008) in this case had a view that is not much different from al-Attas. A compilation of his writings published under the title *Tawhid and Science: Islamic Perspectives on Religion and Science* emphasises on the close relationship between the concept of the Oneness of God (*tawhīd*) and science in the Islamic tradition. This is what led to the excellence of Islamic science. The impact of Western sciences is affected by thought alone and in a limited dimension of its scope. It grips the whole of life, especially the Muslims. Aspects of westernisation and colonialisation in new forms can emerge through the framework of applied Western sciences. Avoidance of such elements is necessary. Therefore, according to Wan Mohd Nor, the goal of de-westernisation, de-colonisation, and Islamisation of current knowledge and education should focus on the formation of the right human beings who will perform various roles in the society. The projection of de-colonisation, de-westernisation, and Islamisation is not merely a reaction to non-Islamic external conditions. Still, more importantly and fundamentally, it is a return to the original human purpose and nature that lead man to the goal of receiving and disseminating knowledge, meaning, and purpose (Hashim & Rossidy, 2000). Education deals with the formation of good and civilised human beings. Strictly, civilised human beings are those who have faith and bring the divine message into the life of mankind.

Indeed, the explanation of this Islamic education expert is very important to be reflected in order to evaluate and continue to strengthen the Islamisation of science. Although there are still ongoing debates on the idea of Islamisation of science and steps towards realising it, in general, this idea has its own importance at making a change in the paradigm of Science and Technology in the Islamic world today. The

universal nature of Islam allows Western Science and Technology to be aligned with Islamic spiritual values although at the same time, it may invite prejudicial reactions to non-Muslims, especially in a world situation that is overshadowed by Islamophobia and Islamic demonological movements in the Western world (Ramli Awang et. al, 2012).

Therefore, the steps towards “humanising” science also needs to be undertaken. This means that the Western world needs a comprehensive awareness that the insecure situations they have created themselves need immediate change. Supposed the offer of “Islamisation of knowledge” invites suspicion to the West, in that case, science which is based on divine theology should replace the emptiness of Secularism, Darwinism, Atheism, and Materialism. Indeed, Science and Technology need to move in line with religion in order to create a balanced dynamic between knowledge, faith, and deeds.

When human beings do not have a deep faith in God, the knowledge they possess with the support of available technology will create something that is immoral. Among the examples is toxic elements in baby food (Škrbić et al, 2017). The question is, has the world today run out of raw materials to produce baby food? Or what is the reason that drives people to think of including toxic elements into a baby food? And what is the value of such-minded human beings in the world of Science and Technology? It is the purpose of human life in the world to enjoy peace and security. These are the two important agendas in human life that every human being, government, political party, and organisation that exists wants to achieve.

Science and Technology: A Lesson from the Islamic Republic of Iran

Islam emphasises on the need to seek knowledge in a broad sense (Hussain & Ramli, 2020). Today, the Muslim community is gradually showing a high interest and awareness towards a revival in the field of Science and Technology, and a new spirit is also emerging in certain countries inhabited by Muslims. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the Muslim countries at the forefront of scientific and technological achievements. The history of such success was recorded after the Science education curriculum modelled after the American approach during the Shah’s regime was replaced with the

Islamic approach after the 1979 revolution. While Shi'ite theology, as the dominant Iranian Muslims' theology, deviated from the authentic Islamic theology, the Iranian case suggests that de-secularised science education is equally able to compete with Western science.

Data in *Science-Metrix in 2010* placed Iran as the top country in scientific growth rate with scientific productivity 11 times faster than the average world growth of 2009. Iran's total scientific output per year has surpassed the scientific achievements of countries like Sweden, Switzerland, Israel, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Austria, and Norway. The report's author, Eric Archambault, asserted: "Iran is showing the fastest worldwide growth in science." He also explained that Iranian publications are abundant in the fields of nuclear Science and Technology, particle physics and organic chemistry at a speed of 250 times the world average growth. Iran's reach is also growing in medicine, agriculture, aerospace, computers, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, stem-cells, and cloning technology. *Thomas Reuters' Science Citation Index (SCI)* reported that Iranian Science and Technology articles increased 123% between 1995-2005 (Soofi & Goodarzi, 2016).

The other Science and Technology productivity data analysis board, MoSRT, examining the growth in the number of articles of Iranian scientists in international journals, found that the publication of research results of Iranian scientists experienced the fastest growth in the world. Despite facing the difficulties of sanctions and Western hostility, scientific articles through international collaboration increased dramatically. In 1998-2008, Iranian scientists published nearly 14,000 articles in international journals. Research conducted by *The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)* recorded a drastic jump in the scientific productivity of Iranian researchers and scientists after 30 years of Iranian Islamic Revolution. Between 1990 and 2008, Iranian scientists have published a total of 60, 979 scientific articles in major international journals (ISI). There was a sharp increase in the following years, namely 15,000 (2009), 18,000 (2010), and 33,000 (2011) (Heriyanto, 2013; Soofi & Goodarzi, 2016).

The achievements of Iranian scientists and researchers were also recognised by the British Royal Society (Matin et. al, 2021; Bonakdarian, 2010). This world-renowned scientific community mentioned that a number of developing countries such as Iran, China, Brazil, Turkey, and

India have been rivals for previous scientific superpowers, namely the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. The Royal Society, among others, cited its report on the revenues of world countries from 1993-2004 in scientific publications and budgets for scientific research and development. The findings were so encouraging that Iran was listed as the fastest developing country in the field of science. Year 1996 recorded Iran producing only 736 scientific articles, but in 2008 it produced 13,238 scientific articles. This means an increase of 18 times. In data released by the *Dutch Scopus Database*, which examined statistics on scientific journals around the world (January-August 2012), Iran is placed 16th in the world ahead of developed European countries, such as Switzerland, Russia, Austria, and Denmark; Iran ranked fifth after China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in Asia; surpassing all Middle Eastern regional countries, including Turkey and in fact, Iran is the top country in the Islamic world in scientific achievement.

Akhondzadeh et al. (2017) reported that over the past decade, Iran had achieved significant success in medical science. Based on Scopus index, Iran ranked first in the publication of scientific papers and the number of citations in the region, as well as all Islamic countries. In addition, 2% of the world publications are owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran. On innovation, the number of Iranian patents submitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) was three and 43 respectively in 2008 and 2013. During these years, there was an increase in the number of staff in the Science and Technology sector, including postgraduate students, researchers, and academics at the University of Medical Sciences (UMS). Female students in Medical Sciences account for about two-thirds of all students. Also, women make up about one-third of the faculty members. Over the past five years, Iran has had growth in Science and Technology parks. This achievement was gained even though research spending in Iran is still very low (0.5% of gross domestic product [GDP]) due to economic difficulties and sanctions.

Based on a report published in *Science and Technology in Iran: A Brief Survey of Iran 2019*, it stated: "Iranian universities and research institutes conduct over 3700 doctoral dissertations related to nanotechnology and more than 16,200 master's theses." In another development, the Number and Rank of Iranian Nanotechnology ISI Articles in the World (2001-2017) showed a significant increase. In 2001, the number of articles was ten at a ranking of 57. In 2010, the

number of articles was 2019 with a ranking of 14. While in 2017, the number of articles was 9,360 and in the fourth position (Akhondzadeh et al. 2017).

Currently, there are 25 active biotechnology S&T parks and incubators across the country. Five specialised biotechnology incubators have also been established in Iran. Besides, 527 biotechnology companies have been registered, of which 211 companies are placed in 20 S&T parks and scientific research towns. The Iranian biotechnology companies produce more than 230 types of biotechnology products. This wide variety of products include recombinant medicine, monoclonal antibodies, organic phosphate, and nitrate fertilizers (in both solid and liquid forms), and biotechnology-related equipment. Almost 30 percent of the Iranian biotechnology companies are qualified to export their products. Over 50 types of Iranian biotechnology products are exported to other countries. Moreover, 81 universities and 18 research centres and institutes are engaged in biotechnology research and training in Iran (Akhondzadeh et al. 2017). Also, there are 24 specialised research centres conducting biotechnology-related research in the country, including 15 research centres affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology; seven research centres affiliated to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education; and two research centres affiliated to the Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (ACECR). (Iranian Technology and Innovation Development Institute, 2017)

Recent developments reported that there are 25 active S&T biotechnology parks and incubators nationwide. Five specialised biotechnology incubators have also been established in Iran. In addition, a total of 527 biotechnology companies were registered, of which 211 were located in 20 S&T parks and scientific research cities. Iranian biotechnology companies produce more than 230 types of biotechnology-based products. The range of these products includes recombinant drugs, monoclonal antibodies, organic phosphate, and nitrate fertilizers (in both solid and liquid forms), and biotechnology-related equipment. Nearly 30 percent of Iranian biotechnology companies are eligible to export their products. More than 50 types of Iranian biotechnology products are exported to other countries. Currently, there are 81 universities and 18 research centres and institutes involved in biotechnology research and training in Iran. In addition, there are 24 specialised research centres conducting biotechnology-related research

in the country, including 15 research centres affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology; seven research centres affiliated with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education; and two research centres affiliated with the Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (ACECR) (Akhondzadeh et al. 2017).

Western World Awareness

There is a new awareness in the West of the need for a relationship between science and theology. This situation arose in the 1970s. At first, several scientists gathered to discuss the connection between science and spirituality. The association eventually became a movement with the construction of several centres and organisation of a series of seminars. This effort is known as building a bridge between science and theology (Dillenberger, 1973). John Milbank (1952-) argues that the Western world's secularisation and the subsequent divorce of scientific and technological endeavours from religious beliefs have had profound implications for contemporary society. One of Milbank's central assertions is that the separation of science and technology from theology leads to a fragmented understanding of the world. By disregarding the spiritual dimensions of human existence, scientific and technological thinking tends to reduce reality to its materialistic aspects. This reductionism disregards the profound metaphysical questions that theology seeks to address.

According to Milbank (2006), this reductionist approach can lead to a loss of meaning and purpose in human life, as well as a disregard for the ethical and moral implications of scientific and technological advancements. Moreover, Milbank emphasises the need for a reintegration of theology into the realms of science and technology. He advocates for an approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of knowledge and recognises the importance of theological perspectives in shaping scientific and technological endeavours. By reestablishing this connection, Milbank argues that a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the world can be achieved. In the context of the discussion of Western scientific civilisation, Milbank's ideas highlight the potential negative consequences of divorcing scientific and technological thinking from theological considerations. The absence of true theology in understanding science and technology, as often based on a secular understanding, can lead to various detrimental effects. These

effects include a diminished sense of purpose and meaning in human life, an ethical vacuum in scientific and technological advancements, and a fragmented understanding of reality.

Another scholar who shares Milbank's views regarding the integration of theology and science is Alister McGrath (1953-). McGrath, a theologian and scientist, advocates for the integration of theology and the natural sciences. He emphasises the compatibility of faith and reason, suggesting that both realms can enrich one another and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of reality. McGrath (2003) argues that theology and science address different aspects of human experience and should not be seen as opposing disciplines. Instead, he proposes that they can mutually inform and enhance each other. He emphasises the importance of recognizing the limits of scientific inquiry and the need for philosophical and theological reflection to address questions beyond the scope of empirical science. Furthermore, McGrath (2019) highlights the role of theology in providing a framework for understanding the meaning and purpose of scientific discoveries. He argues that theological perspectives can offer insights into the ultimate significance of scientific findings, providing a broader context for their interpretation and application. Considering Milbank and McGrath's insights, it becomes evident that efforts are required to restore the agenda of science and technology within the framework of religious beliefs. By recognising the inherent connections between theology, science, and technology, we can foster a more comprehensive and holistic approach that promotes universal well-being.

There are three organisations established to build relationships between science and divinity-based spiritual values. Firstly, the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) in Berkeley, California. This center promotes the creative mutual interaction between theology and the natural sciences through research, teaching, and public service (Davison, 2022). Such was the case when Robert J. Russell and some of his colleagues began to realise the flaws of the modern philosophy of science in the West. They see the initial catastrophe that befell the world of Western science as due to the rejection of revelation and the spiritual aspects. This heritage is partly and still firmly ingrained in the tradition of modern Western science. For that, Western science had to be reconnected with religion and awareness in that direction had begun to be felt by some scholars. Secondly, The Foundation for Science, Technology, and

Civilization (FSTC) in the UK. The organisation focuses on the legacy of Science and Technology in Islamic civilisation. FSTC also seeks to correct social and cultural misconceptions by providing professional expertise to Muslim and non-Muslim institutions. It is internationally recognised as the expert in Islamic scientific and technological heritage issues. Thirdly, the Center for Sacred Sciences (CSS) in Eugene, Oregon. The centre aims to assist individuals seeking the spiritual aspects of life. Apart from that, it also seeks to cultivate a new worldview in which the dimensions of spiritual and scientific truth are seen as two different but complementary ways of describing a single fundamental reality.

The Concordance of Science and Divine Revelation

In the Islamic view, science and Divine Revelation have never been in conflict. Its historiographical aspect reveals that this knowledge is part of the teachings brought by the previous prophets to realise the will of Allah: “*innī jā’ilun fil ardhi khalifah*” [I am going to place on earth a caliph – al-Baqarah, 2: 30]. Contemporary Islamisation of knowledge injects “spirit” into knowledge (science) and instils human qualities in it. The growing awareness that is taking place in the West today in an effort to build a bridge between science and theology (religion) should not be underestimated. Muslims do not need to build such bridges because science is part of the teachings of Islam. The Qur’an as the verses of *maqrū’ah* (recitation) never contradicts the verses of *manzūrah* (observation). The time has come for Muslims to seek and restore the glory of their scientific civilisation in facing the global challenges of modern science that have lost their direction.

Muslims need to prepare themselves with all the strength they have to face the challenges of the modern world which is increasingly heading for destruction as a result of human disobedience to God. The Western world which is now facing a crisis can no longer hope for anything else in leading the world of modern Science and Technology, especially in the field of values because it decouples values from science. The need for a science based on revelation and human nature should be highlighted to the world as a new alternative (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1993).

Conclusion

Disengaging knowledge from the bond of theology will destroy and tarnish human life and nature. Western scientific and technological

advancement, rooted in secularism and atheism, have demonstrated this. In contrast, the Islamic tradition emphasises that the authenticity of theology in scientific and technological endeavours cannot be achieved except by referring to the divine source. In addition, the Qur'an enjoins a strong relationship between science and theology. Muslim scholars who integrate science with theology, with reinforced purpose of serving humankind while fulfilling their divine purpose can lead a revival of Islamised, de-Westernised and decolonised knowledge. In doing so, authentic theology will regain its rightful place in Science and Technology.

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Research Notes

The Seminar on *Da‘wah* in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 and the Emergence of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia

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Abstract: In the late 1970s, a new awareness of wearing *hijab* emerged in Indonesia, especially among Muslim students in public schools. Even though it was banned by the New Order government throughout the 1980s, *hijab* was finally permitted to be worn in public schools and its use continued to spread in Indonesia since then. One of the activists who was involved in the emergence of *hijab* awareness suggested that it arose after The Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on *Da‘wah* that was held in Kuala Lumpur in February 1977. This seminar was attended by representatives of Muslim youth organisations from several Asian countries. Using thematic analysis approach via library research and interviews, this study explores the extent to which the seminar relates to

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the rise of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia in that period. Although the seminar was not the only factor driving the emergence of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia, this research found that there was a close and dynamic relationship between the two.

Keywords: Seminar on *Da'wah*, Kuala Lumpur, *hijab* awareness, 1970s, Islamic revival

Abstrak: Pada penghujung 1970-an, satu kesedaran baru dalam memakai *hijab* muncul di Indonesia, terutamanya dalam kalangan pelajar Islam di sekolah awam. Walaupun ia diharamkan oleh kerajaan Orde Baru sepanjang 1980-an, *hijab* akhirnya dibenarkan dipakai di sekolah awam dan penggunaannya terus berkembang di Indonesia sejak itu. Salah seorang aktivis yang terlibat dalam kemunculan kesedaran berhijab mencadangkan bahawa ia timbul selepas *the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah* diadakan di Kuala Lumpur pada Februari 1977. Seminar ini telah dihadiri oleh wakil pertubuhan belia Islam dari beberapa negara Asia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis kandungan menerusi penyelidikan perpustakaan beserta kaedah temubual, kajian ini meneroka sejauh mana kaitan seminar tersebut dengan kebangkitan kesedaran berhijab di Indonesia dalam tempoh tersebut. Walaupun seminar itu bukan satu-satunya faktor yang mendorong kemunculan kesedaran berhijab di Indonesia, kajian ini mendapati terdapat hubungan rapat dan dinamik antara kedua-duanya.

Kata kunci: Seminar *Da'wah*, Kuala Lumpur, kesedaran *hijab*, 1970-an, kebangkitan Islam

Introduction

Islamic clothing for women, commonly referred to as *hijab*, was not widely worn by urban Muslim women in Indonesia in the 1970s. The *hijab* referred to here is clothing that covers a woman's entire body except for the face and hands from wrist to fingers, as required by Islam – the issue of the *niqab* or face cover for Muslim women will not be discussed in this article. Religious Muslim women in Indonesia at that time only wore typical headscarves, known as *kerudung*, which still showed some of their hair. Interestingly, *hijab* awareness began to appear in Bandung and several other cities in Indonesia in the late 1970s and has continued to grow since then. *Hijab* in public schools was initially rejected by the Indonesian government, and students who

wore it ran into difficulties throughout the 1980s. However, it was approved in the following decades and was increasingly prevalent in society. Today, *hijab* is not only a part of Indonesian culture but has also developed into a very profitable fashion industry.

There are several factors that contributed to the emergence of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia in the late 1970s. One of the factors was a seminar on *da'wah* held in Kuala Lumpur in early 1977 (henceforth the seminar or the Kuala Lumpur Seminar). The seminar, which was organised by *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*/Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), was titled The Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on *Da'wah* and lasted for five days. A source person for this research, who contributed to the initial spread of *hijab* awareness in Bandung, attended the seminar and underlined the importance of the seminar pertaining to the emergence and early development of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia. Therefore, this study investigates how the Kuala Lumpur Seminar had contributed to the emergence of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia. What was the content of the seminar, and who were the people involved? This study uses thematic analysis approach via library research and interviews to comprehend the relationship between the 1977 Seminar in Kuala Lumpur and *hijab* awareness in Indonesia.

The Emergence and Development of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia Since the End of the 1970s

In this section, the emergence and development of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia are treated as a background for this study before discussing the role of the seminar. In the late 1970s, a new awareness of *hijab* emerged in Indonesia, especially among students in public schools. Several Islamic youth and student organisations advocated the ideal form of *hijab* for Muslim women. This reflected a fresh consciousness of *hijab*, which was then disseminated through *da'wah* efforts. The content of this new *da'wah* was, of course, not only related to the issue of *hijab*. However, this research will only focus on the development of *hijab* in Indonesia in that era. The New Order government initially suspected the new *da'wah* and *hijab* awareness as a form of political movement. This created antagonism throughout the 1980s between those who supported the *hijab* and those who opposed it. Public schools controlled by the New Order government became a battleground of these two different

perspectives, as more and more female students decided to wear *hijab* in public high schools.

During this period, *Pelajar Islam Indonesia*/Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) actively promoted *hijab* to female students who participated in their Islamic trainings. Struck by the new awareness, some female students decided to wear *hijab*. The appearance of *hijab* at schools, which differs from the approved uniforms, prompted mixed reactions. Some schools allowed *hijab* or tolerated it, but some saw it as a violation. Initial friction arose at some schools in Bandung (Hidayat, personal communication, 2019; “Siswi Berjilbab Tersingkir,” 1985). After that, the trend of *hijab* in public schools increased, and the conflict also increased between the *hijabi* students and the school administrations.

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, responded to this situation by issuing Surat Keputusan/Decree No. 052 (SK 052) that introduced a national school uniform (Surat Keputusan Dirjen PDM No. 052, 1982). This regulation became the basis for many public schools to prohibit *hijab*. This regulation, however, did not stop the *hijab* trend. Throughout the 1980s, many *hijabi* students were pressured, kicked out of class, and forced to move to other schools. A report, for example, stated that in mid-1983, around 100 *hijabi* students were expelled from public senior high schools (Tamam & Arifin, 1984). The following year, around 350 students in Bandung were threatened with expulsion from public schools for wearing *hijab* (Anas, 1984). The *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*/Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (MUI) and several other Islamic organisations tried to persuade the government to relax its stance on *hijab*, but these efforts did not immediately give the expected result. The *hijab* trend in public schools was perceived by the government as a clandestine Islamic political movement. In the mid-1980s, for example, the Ministry of Education issued a brochure which stated that the *hijab* movement (*aksi jilbab*) “yang dilancarkan oknum-oknum tertentu, bukan suatu gerakan agama, melainkan merupakan gerakan politik” [launched by certain individuals, is not a religious movement, but a political movement] (*Wartasiswa*, n.d.).

In the late 1980s, a few *hijabi* students brought their cases to court. This had attracted widespread public attention and support (Alatas, 2021). As tensions related to *hijab* escalated, the New Order government

changed its policies and became more friendly to Islam (Gaffar, 1993; Thaba, 1996). In 1991, the Ministry of Education issued a new decree that accommodated the use of *hijab* in public schools (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1991), thus largely putting an end to the *hijab* ban controversy. Since then, the awareness and use of *hijab* has continued to spread in Indonesia.

The Link between the Kuala Lumpur Seminar and the Emergence of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia

The emergence of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia in the late 1970s was influenced by a number of factors, such as Muslim dauntless responses to the government's unfavourable policies and religious optimism driven by the idea of centennial Islamic revivalism. These factors and detailed account of *hijab* ban in the 1980s have been discussed in the authors' previous research (Alatas & Desliyanti, 2001), which later reprinted under different title (Alatas, 2021). However, the role of the Kuala Lumpur Seminar is a new finding that has not been discussed before, hence the focus of this article. One of the Indonesian attendees of the Seminar, Bambang Pranggono (personal communication, November 11, 2022) from *Pemuda Istiqamah Bandung*, asserts that *hijab* awareness in Indonesia emerged after this seminar. The key figures and the content of the seminar are analysed below to understand their influence on the emergence of *hijab* movement in Indonesia.

The Seminar on *Da'wah* in Kuala Lumpur was held on 24-28 February 1977 and organised by ABIM and WAMY in cooperation with the Malaysian Foundation of Islamic *Da'wah* and *Pusat Islam Malaysia/ Islamic Centre of Malaysia*. The Malaysian government supported this activity through *Pusat Islam Malaysia*. The seminar was attended by representatives of Muslim youth from dozens of Asian countries and a few non-Asian countries. Among the international figures who attended this seminar was Dr. Taufiq Shawie from the World Federation of International Arab Islamic Schools, Dr. Ahmad Totonji, Assistant Secretary General of WAMY, Dr. Abdullah Nasif, Vice-Chancellor of King Abdul Aziz University, and Prof. Osman Raliby from the *Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia/Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII)*. Among the speakers at the seminar were Anwar Ibrahim, as President of ABIM, and Dr. Mohd Kamal Hassan, an academic in Malaysia. The seminar featured presentation of working papers,

speeches, panel discussions, and reading of reports on the development of Islam in several countries. Some Indonesians were registered as organising committee members, representing *Pemuda Muhammadiyah/Muhammadiyah Youth*, *Pelajar Islam Indonesia/Indonesian Islamic Students (PII)*, *al-Jam'iyatul Wasliyah*, *Gerakan Pemuda Islam/Muslim Youth Movement (GPI)*, and DDII (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977).

The Kuala Lumpur Seminar, in which the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwanul Muslimin) seemed to have an important influence, primarily represented reformist organisations and modern Islamic movements. The main figures mentioned and referred to in the seminar were Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Abul A'la al-Maududi, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Qutb, and Mohammad Natsir. Dr. Taufiq Shawie, one of the main speakers in the seminar, was an early member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt who lived and worked in Saudi Arabia in the late 1960s and 1970s. ("Tawfiq al-Shāwī," n.d.). Shawie put the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, *Jamaat-i-Islami* of Pakistan, and *Majlis Syura Muslimin Indonesia/Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations (Masyumi)* of Indonesia in the same ideological-intellectual movement category in his speech. According to him, all of those movements are popular, view Islam as an all-embracing way of life, and support *sharī'ah* and *jihād* (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977). Dr. Ahmad Totonji, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was involved in the early development of several Islamic organisations: Muslim Student Associations (MSA) in 1963, the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation (IIFSO) in 1969, World Assembly Muslim Youth (WAMY) in 1972, and International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in 1981 (Baran, 2008). WAMY played an important role in the seminar and, along with MSA and IIFSO, was mentioned for its assistance and contributions to several countries.

Several important themes were repeatedly mentioned in the seminar: Islamic revivalism or renaissance, Islam as a complete way of life, the challenges of Western secular ideologies and Soviet communism, and the importance of education, *da'wah* and non-violence popular Islamic movement. In the opening of the seminar, Zakaria Hashim, the chairman of the organising committee, clearly expressed that the seminar is "a manifestation of ... renaissance of the Muslim ummah, especially among the youth" (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on

Da'wah, 1977, p. 26). Anwar Ibrahim described his era as “a very critical and challenging period of history,” pointing at the danger of secularism, cultural imperialism, and the battle of the minds (*al-ghazw al-fikr*). However, he was optimistic about the “sudden emergence of a new *ghairah* [spirit] towards Islam, a renaissance of the Muslim ummah – the rising tide of Islam” (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977, p. 30).

The aim of the seminar, as highlighted by the chairman, is “to continue the efforts towards the attainment of greater awareness ... of ideals in realising Islam as a complete way of life” (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977, p. 27). During the report on Islam in Malaysia, ABIM stated that it promotes Islam as a religion (*al-dīn*) that covers the whole aspects of life (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977). Osman Raliby from DDII repeatedly referred to Islam as “total submission and complete obedience to God” (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977, p. 183). DDII itself is known as an Islamic organisation that promotes a thorough (*kaffah*) implementation of Islam in Indonesia (Rosidi, 2021).

It is important to note that there is no mention of *hijab* or Muslim dress in the entire seminar report and there is only a brief section on women at the end of the report (Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da'wah, 1977). However, *hijab* is actually one of the important articulations of Islam as a complete way of life, and it was worn by Malaysian and many other delegates during the seminar. As mentioned by Pranggono (personal communication, November 11, 2022), the Indonesian delegates from Bandung were surprised to see many female attendees wearing *hijab* in the Kuala Lumpur Seminar. They got a leaflet with information about the development of *hijab* in Malaysia in the last five years. The spread of *da'wah* and *hijab* in Indonesian public schools might also be encouraged by the seminar's recommendation to strengthen the leadership of Muslim scientists and by the exemplary role of some international figures in the seminar, who are themselves important Muslim scholars with a high degree of education and strong international network.

Some Indonesian institutions that sent their representatives to the seminar, such as PII and DDII, would be actively involved in the emergence and advocacy of *hijab* in Indonesia. The young activists of

Masjid Istiqamah Bandung agreed to propagate *hijab* awareness soon after returning from the seminar. The female members of *Pemuda Istiqamah* started to wear *hijabs*. In 1979, an article on *hijab* written by Sumarni Suhendi (1979) was published in the *Bulletin Kulliyatul Mujahidin Istiqamah*. The article provided information about clothing design that ideally covers the body of Muslim women. *Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Masjid Indonesia* (BKPMI) – later changed into *Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Remaja Masjid Indonesia* (BKPRMI) – was founded on 3 September 1977 in Masjid Istiqamah Bandung (Mulyono, 2018). Toto Tasmara became the first chairman of this organisation and Bambang Pranggono its secretary; both attended the Kuala Lumpur Seminar. The organisation was concerned with the tendency in the direction of Indonesian national development to create a secular society. Another background of its establishment is “*isu kebangkitan Islam Abad XV Hijriyah yang ditandai dengan kesemarakannya kegiatan keagamaan*” [the issue of Islamic revivalism of the 15th century Hijri that was marked by the vibrancy of religious activities] (“Sejarah berdirinya BPKRMI di Indonesia,” 2018). The first committee of this organisation was inaugurated by KH. E. Z. Muttaqien on behalf of *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI). E. Z. Muttaqien would play an important role as the head of MUI of West Java in supporting students with *hijab* in Bandung (Majelis Ulama Propinsi Daerah Tingkat I Jawa Barat, 1980; “Larangan buat si kudung,” 1982).

According to a West Java PII activist, Dadan Dania (personal communication, 2022), PII held a congress in Surabaya in 1980, during which the participants from West Java took the lead in wearing *hijab*. In the same year, PII Bandung and West Java organised a seminar on *hijab*, attended by many high school students, boosting the enthusiasm to wear *hijab* among students in the region. Dania does not mention any relation with the seminar in Kuala Lumpur. However, this study believes that there was a connection between the two, though maybe indirectly, since PII had a representative in the Seminar’s committee. Besides, Dania’s activities centred in Bandung and he had a connection with Masjid Salman, *Institut Teknologi Bandung* (ITB), in which ‘Imaduddin Abdul Rahim had an important influence. PII Jakarta also received influence from West Java. Zainal Muttaqien (2000), a leader of PII Jakarta, informed that the members of PII Jakarta started to wear *hijab* and actively promoted it after attending a training in Puncak, Bogor, in June 1980. The instructors were mostly from West Java.

One of the most important figures in Bandung, West Java, is Muhammad ‘Imaduddin ‘Abdulrahim. Pak ‘Imad, as he is fondly known, had an important role in spreading Islamic *da‘wah* in Indonesia and Malaysia, and he was also one of the speakers in the Kuala Lumpur Seminar. He was born in 1939 in North Sumatera to a religious family with high social status. He started his intellectual career by studying religion and participating in local Islamic organisations. He studied electrical engineering at ITB, Bandung, in the 1950s and graduated in 1962. In Bandung, he was active in *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam/* Islamic Student Association (HMI) and involved in the establishment of Masjid Salman ITB (Harahap, 2011). In 1963, he continued his study at Iowa State University in the USA. He finished his master’s in 1965 and directly continued his doctoral studies in Chicago. However, he had to return to teaching at ITB that year (Hidayat & Zarman, 2010).

In HMI, ‘Imaduddin trained students through *Lembaga Dakwah Mahasiswa Islam* (LDMI), and he continued this program in Masjid Salman ITB under a new name, *Latihan Kader Dakwah* (LKD), then changed into *Latihan Mujahid Dakwah* (LMD) and after that *Studi Islam Intensif* (SII). LMD trainings had triggered a new Islamic consciousness, which was expressed, among others, through the wearing of *hijab* by female student activists (Latif, 2005). In these training activities, ‘Imaduddin got his inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the *Jama‘at-i-Islami* of Pakistan (Alhumami, 2020). Most probably, he was exposed to the ideas and networks of those Islamic movements when he studied in the USA, which may also explain his involvement in IIFSO. He represented IIFSO at the regional conference on *da‘wah* in Muslim minority countries, organised by WAMY and held in Hong Kong in December 1977, while Anwar Ibrahim represented WAMY on the same occasion (“World Assembly Muslim Youth regional conference on *da‘wah* in Muslim minority countries,” 1977). ‘Imaduddin was imprisoned in 1978 by the New Order government for his critical attitude towards the government. Furthermore, he later played a major role in the founding of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia/*Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), which epitomised the shift of the New Order’s Islamic policy from suppression to inclusion (Hefner, 1993).

All of the above shows the dynamic interaction of intellectual figures and ideas that streamed into the Seminar on *Da‘wah* in 1977 in

Kuala Lumpur and its relation to the emergence of the *hijab* movement in Indonesia afterwards. This study, of course, does not claim that the seminar was the only or the main cause of the emergence of the *hijab* movement in Indonesia. However, it shows that this seminar had an important contribution to the emergence of new awareness about *hijab* in Indonesia since the end of the 1970s.

Conclusion

In the late 1970s, influenced by several factors at home and abroad, a new awareness and spirit of *da'wah* emerged in several cities in Indonesia, which, among other things, gave rise to a *hijab* movement among students and the young Muslim generation. Despite the initial ban on *hijab* in public schools by the Indonesian government, the enthusiasm to wear *hijab* did not subside. In 1991, the New Order government changed its policy and allowed the wearing of *hijab* at public schools. In the following decades, *hijab* was increasingly worn by Muslim women in Indonesia.

This study discusses one of the factors that triggered the new awareness of *hijab* in Indonesia, which is the Seminar on *Da'wah* among Muslim youth in Asian countries held in 1977 in Kuala Lumpur. The seminar invited representatives from various Asian countries including Indonesia. The main themes discussed as well as the presence of certain figures and institutions in the seminar showed important link with the emergence of *hijab* in Indonesia in the following years. Coming home from the seminar, some of the Indonesian participants from Bandung started spreading awareness about *hijab*. *Hijab* awareness spread to many cities and Muslim girls and women wearing *hijab* were increasing in public schools and other places since then. Although the seminar in Kuala Lumpur was not the only factor behind the emergence of *hijab* awareness in Indonesia in the late 1970s, this study finds a link between the seminar and the emergence of *hijab* in Indonesia in that period.

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Book Review

Osman Bakar, *Environmental Wisdom for Planet Earth: The Islamic Heritage [Revised New Edition] (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2022). 114 pp. ISBN 978-967-2795-00-1.*

Reviewer: Senad Mrahorović, Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Sultan Omar ‘Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Amid ever-increasing discussions on various levels concerning the environmental crisis brought about by science and technology in the hands of modern man and his hunger to conquer the natural world solely for his selfish and materialistic benefits emptied of any sort of spiritual values and qualities, the work entitled “Environmental Wisdom for Planet Earth: The Islamic Heritage” by Osman Bakar offers a whiff impregnated with perennial Islamic aroma. It is like a fresh air to bring in while approaching the subject of environment. For centuries now, the dominant perspective on the environment was developed based on modern Western philosophical thought in the post-Renaissance period, known for its multitude of schools all of which, contextually and conceptually belong to the modern, or even post-modern thought that in principle stands opposed to what is known as Tradition, in its proper understanding. Here and there, the voices of the latter, have tried to bring in a new viewpoint concerning the environment as something that contains within itself a dimension of sacredness, not only in spiritual or inward sense, but also in its physical or outward appearance that bear an outstanding and astonishing beauty not to be disturbed, let alone dismissed or discounted for something of much lower quality and quantity. However, due to overwhelming tumults of modern thought, those traditional voices have not been heard well, especially by masses who usually follow the current of the wind flow. Therefore, it is always worth repeating the messages of traditional wisdom as their content is relevant regardless of time and space.

The book is not that lengthy in size, but it offers plenty of judicious ideas. It is a revised and expanded edition of the author's work published fifteen years ago. It also includes an additional chapter entitled "The Qur'anic Idea of Earth as Our Only Planetary Home," with which the author complements his traditional perspective on Nature with the Qur'anic inputs concerning the subject of discussion. It is a well-known fact that Nature viewed from the Qur'anic perspective represents not simply a physical aspect of existence but also spiritual signs to be contemplated upon the same way one contemplates the signs of the Qur'an itself. Thus, some Muslim scholars have rightly regarded Nature as "*al-Qur'ān al-Takwīnī*" or the Cosmic Qur'an, that complements the Qur'anic revelation contained within a book called "*al-Qur'ān al-Tadwīnī*", or the Compiled Qur'an. The reason for such an approach to the natural world is the fact that both the Qur'an, and Nature are comprised of various layers of meaning contained within their respective numerous pages and phases called *āyāt* (the pl. of *āyah*) that stand for signs or symbols, to use the Qur'anic terminology. So, by incorporating the Qur'anic viewpoint on nature, Bakar offers a complete picture of the traditional analysis of the problem discussed in this book.

In the first chapter titled "Ecological and Environmental Wisdom in Islamic Legacy," the author firstly offers a general outlook concerning the prime cause of the environmental and ecological crisis, situated, as it were, in a mode of philosophical thought, then proceeds to the exposition of the development of environmental consciousness in both modern Western and Islamic traditions. Further, under a few subheadings of the chapter, the author has explained the two different routes to environmental consciousness that the modern West and traditional Islam had taken aimed at the preservation of the environment for the benefit of all inhabitants of the planet Earth. Apart from the extensive exploration into ecological wisdom within Islamic civilisation, the author has suggested a number of possible solutions to the current ecological problems that may be sought from the rich and diverse Islamic intellectual tradition. In the course of that exploration, he makes references to some contemporary ecological initiatives undertaken in Malaysia, especially in relation to the ideas of Islamisation and "Islam Hadhari" or civilisational Islam policy pursued during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's term as Prime Minister (2003-2009). These and other concepts that are underpinned by the eternal principles of Islamic faith, as the

author believes, can be further broadened and practically applied in other parts of the Islamic world to improve ecological conditions and reduce the increasingly alarming environmental calamity. In addition to that, the chapter is contextually enriched with fundamental ideas concerning Islamic ecology and environmental science dispensed directly from the essential sources of Islam. The author has well explained the link between the unity of Divine Being and that of natural world, as a perfect reflection of the former, which is why, one finds in the classical Islamic scholarship in particular, a vast corpus of literature dedicated precisely to the concept of nature and its significance for the overall economy of Islamic tradition.

The second chapter is entirely dedicated to the exposition of yet another traditionalist scholar and philosopher, namely Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his pioneering work in contemporary Islamic scholarship concerning ecological and environmental crisis brought about by modern science and technology. Here, the author under the heading title "Dialogue on Man and Nature," has presented readers with the insights and significance of Nasr's famous work entitled "*The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*." Although Nasr has been credited for his relentless critique of the philosophy of modern scientific tradition, especially that of the West and its devastating impact on ecology and nature, this book, one may say, represents a sort of intellectual summary of the said critique. For Bakar, the most important contribution of this work within the global discourse on the environment, apart from the scientifically expounded problems of ecological crisis and the ecological awareness it brought to the contemporary world, "was its compelling arguments for the restoration of the spiritual vision of nature." Again, we are reminded here, Islamically speaking, of the spiritual link between immutable principle of Islamic faith, namely, the *Tawhid*, and its reflection across the cosmic plane of existence. Furthermore, as emphasised by Bakar, Nasr's book was credited for its enormous contribution in the fields of interfaith dialogue and comparative religion on account of its presentation of various religious perspectives on Nature. Bakar sees this book of Nasr as a work that indirectly calls for inter-civilisational and inter-religious dialogues and cooperation in order to find adequate solutions to the environmental crisis. Finally, the chapter was concluded with an exposition of Nasr's traditional doctrine regarding Islam and nature, bringing to light some

of Nasr's philosophical and exegetical ideas pertaining to this subject of study.

In the third and final chapter of the book entitled "The Qur'anic Idea of Earth as Our Only Planetary Home," Bakar has dwelled at great lengths on the Qur'anic perception of nature. The chapter is to be regarded as the seal of the book, whereby the author manages to bring readers back to the Qur'an as the essential source of Islamic perspectives regarding not only the environment, but the whole of existence in all its hierarchical order. After explaining how modern scientific outlook has replaced the religious one, especially in the West, the author explored the impact of such an unfortunate transition on the natural environment with its wide range of predicaments brought to our world. All this has served as the needed prolegomena for a better understanding of the Qur'anic standpoint when dealing with nature and its significance for our physical sustenance and spiritual life. A great deal of the Qur'anic doctrines concerning the position of man on the Earth as his contemporary home was discussed. The philosophical concepts of "*al-insān al-kabīr*" (macrocosm) and "*al-insān al-ṣaghīr*" (microcosm) and correlation between them as well as the idea of man as divine *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth are among the issues discussed in this chapter.

Needless to say, the author has enriched his arguments not only with a judicious and substantial selection of Qur'anic verses on the subject but also its insightful exegetical interpretations based on classical theological and Sufi perspectives that would help deepen our understanding of the Qur'anic concept of the environment. In this manner, the whole range of different aspects of Islamic environmental wisdom pertaining to the planet Earth has been ingeniously put forward to the readers for their contemplation and evaluation as a basis for their action towards preserving the planet Earth as one of their fundamental responsibilities in a religious sense, by virtue of their ordained positions as divine representatives on the Earth.

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Al-Faruqi & al-Faruqi (1986)

Reference:

Al-Faruqi, I. R., & al-Faruqi, L. L. (1986). *The cultural atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Chapter in a Book

In-text:

Alias (2009)

Reference:

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

In-text:

Chapra (2002)

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Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10, 214-232.

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.

Ḥadīth

In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible

In-text:

Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:

The new Oxford annotated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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In This Issue

Note from the Editor

Research Articles

Muhammad Faris Abdullah, Mohamad Sahari bin Nordin, Suhailah binti Hussien, Norhayati Mohd. Alwi & Noor Suzilawati binti Rabe

Validation of a *Sejahtera* Living Index Using the Rasch Model

Fatmir Shehu

Investigating Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī's Methodology in the Study of Christianity through Selected Textual Analysis from His *Christian Ethics*

Mirsad Karić, Šejma Aydin, Huseyin Korkut & Muhidin Mulalić

Paradoxical and Insufficient? Gender Quotas and Placement Mandates in Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2020 Local Elections

Aida Mokhtar & Faiswal Kasirye

Gestalt and Semiotic Analyses of Brand Communication on Disability Inclusion: The Case of Malaysia and the US

Roy Anthony Rogers, Noraiz Arshad & Iftikhar Ali

Understanding the Decline of Pakistan-US Alliance and the Growing Influence of China in Pakistan

Sarina Yusuf, Misha Teimouri, Muhamad Shamsul Ibrahim, Nan Zakiah Megat Ibrahim, Syahida Mohd Nazri & Stephanie Ann Victor

Let's Think They are Safe Online! A Malaysian Perspective on The Classification of Children's Cyber Risks

Farah Fazlinda Mohamad, Khazaila bt Zaini & Nur Syahidatul Idany

Social Media Use for English Learning in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Review

Ali Mehellou, Mohamad Saifudin Mohamad Saleh & Bahiyah Omar

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as Goal Framing for Sustainable Behaviours: A Conceptual Framework

Siti Aeisha Joharry

Faith in The Time of Coronavirus: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis

Abdul Manan Ismail, Ahmad Syukran Baharuddin & Muhammad Hazim Ahmad

COVID-19: Analysing the Principle and Application of *I'tibār Ma'ālāt* in the Selected *Fatwas* Issued by the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI)

Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar & Muhamad Takiyudin Ismail

The Challenges of Civil Society Organisations: NGO-isation of Resistance in Malaysia?

Anhar Anshory, Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli & Ramli Awang

The Authenticity of Theology in Scientific and Technological Thinking

Research Notes

Alwi Alatas, Agus Setiawan, Achmad Sunjayadi & Yunadi Ramlan

The Seminar on *Da'wah* in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 and the Emergence of *Hijab* Awareness in Indonesia

Book Review

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