Intellectual Discourse

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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	'
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

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

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

Note from the Editor

The Vol. 31, No. 2 edition of Intellectual Discourse presents articles from a wide range of Islamic and human sciences' discipline; including Islamic philosophy, political science, education, law, and economics. Academics from various institutions worldwide contributed their research works to be shared with the wider community. A total of eleven research articles and a review article is included in this edition.

In the first article, (The Philosophical Sufism of Harun Nasution: A Phenomenological-Historical Investigation of The Influence of Neo-Mu'tazilism), Ahmad Farouk Musa and Piet Hizbullah Khaidir apply the phenomenological-historical approach in investigating the seeming contradictions in Harun Nasution's (1919-1998 CE) thoughts. A strong advocate of rationalism (Mu'tazilism), Nasution was also a Sufi who consistently engaged in *dhikr* and other sufistic spiritual practices. The authors of this article show how Nasution reconciled the two opposing dimensions through the development of the latter's thoughts that occurred in four stages. Throughout the article, the authors suggest that Nasution's neo-Mu'tazilism has a strong and positive impact on Islamic reforms in Indonesia.

Almasa Mulalić wrote the second article (Students' Awareness and Participation in the Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina), where she discusses the viability of the education for peace (EFP) in post-conflict, multicultural Bosnia and Herzegovina. In her survey, she finds that awareness and participation of students in EFP are very low. However, this is caused by insufficient implementation of EFP in high schools and colleges in the country. Considering the tragic wars and conflicts that Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced in the 1990s, it is imperative that the country should emphasise on the need to introduce EFP in high school and colleges to inculcate pacific values that can strengthen the culture of peace and tolerance in the multicultural nation.

Fazlida Mohd Razali, Jamaliah Said, Razana Juhaida Johari and Norezilini Ibrahim, in the third article (Objectivity Threats: Would it Jeopardise Malaysian Internal Auditors' Risk Judgment Quality?), analyse the existence of objectivity threat in Malaysian internal audit environment and its effect on internal auditor's risk judgment performance. Their study uses an experimental research design, where they found that the nine objectivity threats listed in the "International Standards for Professional Practices of Internal Auditing (IPPF): Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity" also exist in the Malaysian internal audit environment and are negatively related to risk judgment performance, regardless of the level of complexity of the task given. Three most prevalent objectivity threats are social pressure, familiarity, and intimidation threats. Such objectivity threats, they suggest, may impair internal auditors' objectivity, which in turn reduce their ability to make sound risk judgment.

The fourth article (Shifting Tides: Malaysia's 2023 State Assembly Elections), written by Abdul Rashid Moten, discusses the state assembly elections that were held in six states in Peninsular Malaysia on 12 August 2023. His analysis shows that although the results preserved the status quo in all the six states, *Perikatan Nasional* (PN) was the better performer among the competing parties. In addition to winning the majority in the three states it ruled, PN also managed to reduce the number of seats that *Pakatan Harapan-Barisan Nasional* (PH-BN) held in the other three states. He argues that the PN's narrative that PH-BN could not ensure the dominance of Malay-Muslim leadership had worked to the former's advantage. Evidently, this only reinforces the polarisation that Malaysia is experiencing especially since the 15th general elections in November 2022.

In the fifth article (Legitimacy of Smart Contracts Written in Encrypted Code on Blockchain Technology Under Current Contract Law: A Comparative Study), Ghassan Adhab Atiyah, Nazura Abdul Manap and Saidatul Nadia Abd Aziz evaluate the legality of smart contract language and the validity of blockchain as an electronic medium from the perspectives of current laws. This study is timely considering the fact that parties engaged in smart contracts face difficulties in terms of incompatibilities with current legal frameworks. Using a qualitative doctrinal legal research approach, this study suggests that there is a need

to enact laws that recognise the language used for smart contracts and the transactions recorded on the blockchain.

In the sixth article (The Main Tendencies of Discourse Representation of Immigrant Workers in Malaysia: A Critical Discourse Analysis in The Star and Malaysiakini Online News Portals), Noorfarida Filzah Mohd Sobri Paridaluddin and Ainul Azmin Mohd Zamin analyse the main tendencies of discourse representation of immigrant workers in Malaysia, as reported in The Star and Malaysiakini News Portals. Their critical analysis suggests that reporters or text producers transmitted their ideological standpoints through explicit or sometimes subtle discursive elements. There are possibilities, however, that readers may not be aware of the elusive ideologies that were embedded within the text. They conclude that the dichotomy between The Star Online and Malaysiakini in the use of discursive structures and strategies simply mirror the principalship of these media organisations. However, they believe that reporters of both media outlets still account for credibility in reporting truth in their news.

Faizah Idrus and Zurina Abdul Ghani examine the relationship between prophetic leadership and Cultural Intelligence as shown by the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* in the seventh article (Examining the Relationship between Prophetic Leadership and Cultural Intelligence (CQ): Lessons from the Cultural Diplomacy of *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*). In their analysis, the authors focus on the relationship among CQ, Values-Based Competencies (VBR) and Prophetic Leadership. According to them, there is an urgent need for education, cultivation, and coaching of current and emerging leaders at all levels, from socio-political to organisational leaders, on how to be quality, judicious, and diplomatic leaders, for building better organisations, societies, and a better world.

In the eighth article (Management Factor Key for Sustainability and Challenges of Religious Radio Stations in Sabah), Juliana Abdul Wahab, Intan Soliha Ibrahim and Azlan Abas explain how religious radio stations stay relevant in the radio industry dominated by commercial radio. Using a qualitative approach, through interviews with religious

radio station managers, the study finds that that management strategy is the core factor influencing community response to religious radio. Despite the absence of competition between commercial and religious radio stations, commercial radio has sought to emulate the religious radio strategy. This is especially true in the context of defining the target listeners and using a good scheduling structure. In short, religious radio stations have excellent management record.

The ninth article (Education in the Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era: The Challenges of Edutourism in Malaysia), written by Mohammad Moshiur Rahman, Ahasanul Haque and Fatin Husna Suib, investigates the challenges of edutourism in Malaysia for sustaining viable education in the post-COVID-19 era. It examines the determinants of sustainable education, perceived value, risk assessment, quality service, and knowledge management on the choice of institutions recommencing edutourism. Using quantitative analyses based on a non-probability survey sample of 308 international students, the findings suggest that most of these predictors highly influenced the choice of the institution. Consequently, the government must acquire appropriate pedagogical knowledge to assure learning coherence.

The tenth article ('Morning Slaps' Da'wa: A Study on @taqy_malik Instagram Account's Registers) by Rizki Amalia Sholihah and Dawam Multazamy Rohmatulloh is a register study on an Instagram account of Taqiyudin Malik (@taqy_malik (Taqy), a young Indonesian entrepreneur-preacher with around 2.4 million followers. Using sociolinguistic, netnography and descriptive qualitative methods, this study examines Taqy's account posts, specifically those collected in the *#TamparanPagi* (Morning Slaps) category. The authors analyse six categories of posts: remembering and preparing for the afterlife, Allah's commands, the fruitfulness of *ibadah*, the oneness of Allah, call for marriage, and improving personalities. This study suggests that social media, specifically Instagram, can be a tool for spreading *da'wah* to the public.

In the eleventh article (Gender Issues and the Distorted Narrative in Women Leadership in China: The Case of Empress Dowager Cixi

(1861-1908)), Muhamad Daniel Ibrahim Yaacob, Siti Zuliha Razali and Muhammad Fabriansyah examine the rule of Empress Dowager Cixi of the Qing Dynasty from the lens of gender bias. They argue that the demonisation of Cixi was the result of fabrication of history from scholars and foes, who were most probably the product of the Qing's social system known for its instrument of prejudice and discrimination which fostered a gender-biased mindset and disparity against Qing women like Cixi. Despite the negative narrative that was painted on her, the authors maintain that she was a remarkable political figure who substantially contributed to her country, especially when she revived China when it was on the brink of ruin after losing two Opium Wars.

As is the tradition, we thank everyone—authors and reviewers—who is involved in the production of this edition. It is our hope that this journal continues to be a platform for scholarly dialogue and communication on issues related to Islam and the Muslim World.

Tunku Mohar Mokhtar
Editor

The Philosophical Sufism of Harun Nasution: A Phenomenological-Historical Investigation of The Influence of Neo-Mu'tazilism

Ahmad Farouk Musa[*]
Piet Hizbullah Khaidir[**]

Abstract: Sufism is the mystical form of Islam that emphasises spirituality which is commonly seen as irrational. Conversely, rationalism (mu'tazilism) stresses the rational dimension of Islam. Is philosophical or rational sufism then an oxymoron? Surprisingly, Harun Nasution manages to reconcile the two seemingly opposite dimensions in Indonesian Muslims' way of thinking and weltanschauung. Genealogically, his thought emerged in four stages: firstly, his religious upbringing during childhood; secondly, the impact of Muhammad Abduh's rationalism on his progressive thought which challenged the Ash'arite school of theology in Indonesia; thirdly, his sufistic spiritual practices (*riyāḍah*) as he engaged in *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and embraced a simple lifestyle; and finally, the influence of his much-criticised rational approach similar to the Mu'tazilites on Indonesian Islamic thought. This study uses the historical-phenomenological theory to investigate the influence of neo-Mu'tazilism on Nasution's thought and its impact on the struggle for Islamic reformation.

Keywords: Harun Nasution, sufism, rationalism, Islamic thought in Indonesia, neo-Mu'tazilism

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Abstrak: Sufisme merupakan suatu bentuk mistik dalam Islam yang menekankan perihal kerohanian, di mana ia secara lazimnya dilihat sebagai tidak rasional. Sebaliknya, rasionalisme (aliran mu'tazilah) pula memberi penekanan terhadap dimensi Islam yang rasional. Maka, adakah sufisme rasional atau filsafat sebuah percanggahan? Anehnya, Harun Nasution berjaya mendamaikan dua dimensi yang tampak bertentangan tersebut dengan cara fikir dan sarwa pandang umat Islam Indonesia. Secara genealoginya, pemikiran beliau terbangun dalam empat peringkat: pertama, didikan agamanya semasa kecil; kedua, kesan rasionalisme Muhammad Abduh terhadap pemikiran progresifnya yang mencabar mazhab teologi Asy'ariah di Indonesia; ketiga, amalan kerohanian sufistiknya (*riyāḍah*) yang mana dia terlibat dalam zikir dan mengamalkan gaya hidup sederhana; dan akhirnya, pengaruh pendekatan rasionalnya yang banyak dikritik kerana mirip dengan Mu'tazilah terhadap pemikiran Islam Indonesia. Kajian ini menggunakan teori sejarah-fenomenologi untuk menyelidik pengaruh neo-Mu'tazilisme terhadap pemikiran Nasution dan impaknya ke atas perjuangan ke arah reformasi Islam.

Kata kunci: Harun Nasution, sufisme, rasionalisme, pemikiran Islam di Indonesia, neo-Mu'tazilisme

Introduction

Harun Nasution was a well-known presence in the Sufi circle in Indonesia. Donned in his white clothes and thick glasses, he was an unmistakable sight every Friday right before the congregational Jumu'ah prayer at the Fathullah Mosque of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta. Huddled in the left corner of the first row of attendees, Nasution could be seen completely dissolved in *dhikr* or solemnity of remembrance of Allah.[1] Since *dhikr* is the embodiment of Sufi practice, Nasution's embrace of sufism certainly raises eyebrows given that his Islamic thought is widely known to be aligned with the *Mu'tazilite* camp.

Mu'tazilism was a theological movement that appeared in early Islamic history and flourished in Basra and Baghdad (8–10th century). Mu›tazila school developed an Islamic type of rationalism based around

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[1] Testimony of Piet Hizbullah Khaidir, one of the authors of this article, who attended several Friday prayers at the Fathullah Mosque when he was a student at the Faculty of Usuluddin, IAIN Jakarta, in the 1990s.

five fundamental principles (*Al-Usul Al-Khamsa*): (1) *At-Tawhid* –
Divine Unity, (2) *Al-'Adl* – Divine Justice, (3) *Al-Wa'd wal-Wa'id* – the
promise and the warning, (4) *Al-Manzilah bayna al-Manzilatain* – the
intermediate position, and (5) *Al-'Amru bil-ma'ruf wa an-Nahyu 'an-
al-Munkar* – advocating the good and forbidding the evil. Muʿtazilites
are best known for rejecting the doctrine of the Qur'an as uncreated
and co-eternal with God. In defending the doctrine of *at-Tawhid,* the
Oneness of God, they claim that the Qur'an must be created and cannot
co-exist with God, which would made it a duality. (*Cf.* Christians with
the Doctrine of Trinity). They asserted that if the Qur'an is the literal
word of God, then logically, *God must have preceded his own speech*.
This went against the orthodox Sunni position followed by the Ash'ari,
Maturidi, and the Traditionalist (Athari) schools, which argued that
with God being all-knowing, His knowledge of the Qur'an must have
been eternal, hence uncreated just like Him. Furthermore, adherents to
the notion that the *Qur'an is created* believed that the Qur'an, and by
extension the Sharia, was created for a certain time and place only—
in this case only during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. This
ultimately meant that the Sharia could potentially change in time and
place, especially if a certain law is not in line with '*aql* (reason). The
Muʿtazila school worked to resolve the theological problem of evil,
arguing that since God is just and wise, He cannot command what is
contrary to reason or act with disregard for the welfare of His creatures;
consequently, evil must be regarded as something that stems from
errors in human acts, arising from man's divinely bestowed *freewill*.
Muʿtazilites opposed secular rationalism, but believed that human
intelligence and reason allowed man to understand religious principles;
that good and evil are rational categories that could be established
through unaided reason.

In essence, Nasution's rational orientation has positioned himself
as the icon of neo-Mu'tazilism in Indonesia. How then could a rational
Islamic thinker have such a strong sufistic tendency? Is it possible to
reconcile what is allegedly two diametrically opposed positions? This
paper attempts to answer these questions.

Research Methodology

To examine the dynamics of rationalism and sufism in Nasution's
thought, this article adopts a phenomenological-historical approach

which emphasises subject analysis. It posits that the subject is fully conscious and aware of motives, vocabulary choices and diction in exploring ideas (Hasbiansyah, 2008). To start with, a definition of phenomenology is warranted:

> It is the motive of questioning back to the last source of achievement of knowledge, of reflection in which the knower reflects on himself and his knowing life. In which all the scientific constructs which have validity for him occur teleologically and as permanent acquisitions are kept become freely available to him. (Lyons, 1985, p. 634)

In Husserl's phenomenological insight, the subject has the authority and autonomy to constantly assess his own knowledge (1965, pp. 71-192). The motives of Nasution's Islamic thought can be traced to his meticulous choice of diction and themes in his scholarly works. The term historical in this study refers to the temporal context in which the subject's thought emerged. More concretely, it situates Nasution's thought in the constellation of Islamic renewal thought in Indonesia as well as its influence on Indonesian Islamic academic circles.

The early development of Harun Nasution's thought

Nasution grew up in a devout religious environment. His family was the religious elite or aristocrat of his neighbourhood. His father 'Abd Jabbar, besides being a trader from Mandailing, was also a chieftain (*qāḍi*) in Simalungun Regency, the Siantar challenger during the Dutch East Indies government. His mother Maimunah was the daughter of a descendant of a Meccan alumnus scholar. Thanks to his easy access to original Islamic literature and books written in *pegon* Arabic-Malay script, he could attain a good level of religious literacy (Mujani, 1994, p. 72).

In Nasution's family, it was a tradition to educate the children in religion strictly, diligently, and with discipline. But for the young Nasution, the religious knowledge imparted by his parents was not the *best practice* of religious education. Dissatisfied with the predominantly traditional religious pedagogy, he embarked on a search for a better method that was more in touch with modern realities. So huge was Nasution's curiosity and thirst for knowledge that he did not shy away from questions that were unorthodox if not taboo in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) such as the permissibility of a Muslim to keep a dog,

to touch the Qur'anic *muṣḥaf* without ablution, or to perform prayer
without reciting the intention (*niyyāt*) (Thahir, 2003, p. 26).

Was it not for his parents' insistence, Nasution could have turned out
to be a historian or a scientist. After studying at *Hollandsch-Inlandsche
School* (HIS), he developed more interest in history and the natural
sciences instead of Islamic studies. The reason is not because of a loss
of interest in religion, but rather because of the approach to teaching
religious sciences in his immediate environment which he felt was
regressive. Only after studying at *Moderne Islamietische Kweekschool*
(MIK), a modern Islamic high school located in Bukit Tinggi, West
Sumatra, did he feel motivated to deepen his knowledge of Islam.
Unfortunately, that private school soon ran into financial difficulties,
and the young Nasution thought of moving to Solo to continue his
education (Mujani, 1994).

Nasution's initial plan to study at a Muhammadiyah school
in Solo was not approved by his parents who wanted him to pursue
religious studies in Saudi Arabia. Even though only a handful of
Indonesian Muslims could dream of studying in Makkah, Nasution had
a predilection for Egypt instead; the learning environment in Cairo, he
felt, was more conducive to his unorthodox temperament. However,
after his parents adamantly opposed this idea, a defiant Nasution left
them with two choices: either they allow him to study in Egypt, or he
will take up a job as a local taxi driver. Nasution eventually moved to
Egypt where he could immerse himself in the thoughts of Muhammad
Abduh (1849-1905). Thereafter, after a career in the diplomatic world,
Nasution went to McGill University in Canada to further his studies. At
McGill, in his search for religious truth, he explored the significance of
the faculty of reason in Muhammad Abduh's thought. To him, Abduh
was a prominent Islamic reformer who agreed with the Mu'tazilite
doctrine and was even more radical than the Mu'tazilites themselves.
Nasution's PhD dissertation titled *The Place of Reason in Abduh's
Theology: Its Impact on His Theological System and Views* attests to
this (Ali, 2019).

Nasution's dissertation became the initial milestone of his
rationalist line of thought. He affirmed that Abduh's thought was even
more progressive than the Mu'tazilites in correcting the theology of
the Ash'ārites, the predominant school of theology in the Malay world

that believes in the uncreated Qur'an and predetermination. But it must be stressed here that Nasution's rationalism did not compromise his obedience and submission in worship to Allah. In the end, he was able to reconcile the rationalism of a very progressive religious thought with a strong practice of sufism. In a way, Nasution's thinking is similar to Ahmad Amin—another Egyptian rationalist thinker and student of Abduh—who always used a rational approach in understanding the Qur›an and the *sunna* (traditions of the Prophet) (Peta, 2022).

Islamic Rationality and the Rational Thought of Harun Nasution

Nasution believed that the dominance of fatalism, especially in Ash'arite theology—the predominant position of the Malay Muslims of the *Nusantara*—hampered Islamic rationality to such an extent that Muslims are unfazed by change, engage awkwardly with modernity, and lack the ability to develop science and technology. Historically, during the Abbasid period, the Islamic civilisation could progress thanks to the rapid development of science in various fields. This was enabled theologically by the acceptance of the primacy of reason. The state theology at that time was the Mu'tazilite, a school of *kalām* that favoured reason in understanding Islam. As a result, Islam became a beacon of world civilisation for advancing in science and technology (Watt, 1985, pp. 33-55). This explains Nasution's emphasis on the importance of embracing a theology that favours rationality. His dissertation upholds the urgency for Muslims to adopt rationality in their lives in order to achieve progress (Nasution, 1987).

Nasution contends that Abduh's theology went beyond the theology of the Mu'tazilites with its focus on human autonomy and the use of reason. Abduh, according to him, transcended the Mu'tazilites by discussing the ability of reason in making social *laws* that can be obeyed by the public. Therefore, for him—like Muhammad Abduh—the rational theology as developed by Mu'tazilites serves not merely as an intellectual exercise and academic discourse, but as a theological basis for Islamic reform and modernism (Mujani, 1994, p. 101).

This confirms Nasution's position as a reformer with a rational ethos, a commitment to scientific pursuit, and the courage to question what is traditionally established in religion. He firmly believed that the advancement of Islam is premised on its belief in science and religion as a tool for the modernisation of the Muslim community in Indonesia.

It is therefore no wonder that when offered the mandate to become
the head of *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN, State Institute for
Islamic Studies), he accepted it and earnestly embarked on a process of
curriculum change together with institutional and thought reforms. His
goal was to turn IAIN into a model Islamic educational institution—
the beacon of modern Islamic thought and progress that could be felt
reverberating within the archipelago (Ali, 2019, pp. 6-7).

In this regard, Nasution's rational thought is distinctive in at least
three aspects, namely: (1) his emphasis on rational theology of the
Mu'tazilites and Muhammad Abduh, borrowing the latter's views on
absolute and relative terminology, (2) his efforts to develop a broader
understanding of Islam including but not limited to the Qur'an and
Hadith, and (3) his understanding of the inextricable relationship
between reason and revelation.

Nasution contends that the rational theology of the Mu'tazilites
brought progress. When the Ash'arites marginalised the Mu'tazilites,
Muslims were in decline due to the neglect of science and technology.
He believed that Islam is a rational religion created by Allah without
any contradiction. As with his emphasis on the rational Mu'tazilite
theology, his views on rational Islam were heavily influenced by Abduh
(Ali, 2019, pp. 6-7).

After an in-depth study of Abduh's work in *Risālat al- Tawḥīd*,
Nasution concluded that Abduh's theology is in fact more radical than
the Mu'tazilites. In *Risālat al- Tawḥīd* (1898), 'Abduh notes in its
opening words that *tawhid* refers to "the belief that God is One and
has no associates (*lā sharīka lahu*)". This is the fundamental pillar of
Islam, the one that every Muslim acknowledges through the *shahādah*,
the profession of faith: *la ilāha illa Allah*, "there is no god but God."
In fact, since God's oneness and self-sufficiency does not allow for
intermediation between the Divine and the human, *tawḥīd* becomes the
basis for invoking an egalitarian political ethos: everyone is equal before
God, and subject only to His will as expressed in His revealed law—any
social hierarchy based on class, race, or nationality is illegitimate.

It was an idea that could bring about a backlash from the relatively
conservative Indonesian religious landscape. Nasution therefore
thought it was wise to delay publishing a translation of his dissertation
in Indonesian language until he had a more receptive audience (Mujani,

1994, p. 100). In fact, Nasution does not regard rationalism and sufism as mutually exclusive. He defines sufism as the moral qualities emanating from a rational understanding of revelation, a claim that he defends in his books *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (Nasution, 1982) and *Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam* (Nasution, 1973).

Nasution's rational philosophy was influenced by Abduh, especially with regard to the *muhkamāt* (absolute) and the *mutaghayyirāt* (relative or changing). Abduh neatly divided the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith into two areas: firstly, areas of worship which are unambiguous and immutable (*muhkamāt*); and secondly, areas of social relations that are sometimes ambiguous and mentioned in general terminology whose specific understanding, interpretation and application can be adapted to the time and place (*mutaghayyirāt*).

The absolute *(muhkamāt)* contains monotheism and other fundamental teachings, while the relative *(mutaghayyirāt)* is understood through historical interpretation and application related to economic, political and governmental issues. Thus, the caliphate system of government is considered relative while leadership based on justice is absolute. A good example of this principle is Caliph Umar's decision to stop giving money to converts because he saw no more reason to do so when Muslims had already achieved a reasonable level of prosperity (Ali, 2019). Umar's rational decision is drawn from his understanding of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* which affirms the use of reason.[2]

As a riposte to his critics who claim that his rational thinking was influenced by Orientalism, Nasution retorts that they understand neither him nor his thinking (Mujani, 1994, p. 115). He affirmed that his rational theology is influenced by Muhammad Abduh and the Mu'tazilites. Moreover, he reminded his critics that since Islam itself mandates intellectual curiosity, Muslims have a rich legacy of rational thinking—which is not the prerogative of the West—from classical Islamic scholars.

For Nasution, the overarching role of rationality in Islam is not restricted to *fiqh* (jurisprudence), worship, *tafsīr* (hermeneutics) and

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[2] Based on the story told by Faris Pari to the second author (interview, February 25, 2020) in the Postgraduate classroom of UIN Jakarta (S2 and S3).

ḥadīth (transmitted reports attributed to what the Prophet said and did). Rather, it extends to history, civilisation and culture, economics and politics. Therefore, rationality is needed to transform these aspects of Islamic teachings into the theoretical and practical realms. Especially with regard to *fiqh*, he warns that an overreliance on *fiqh* will trap Muslims into futile debates that revolve around traditionalist and textual ways of thinking.

Nasution's views regarding the *text* of the Qur'an and *hadith* are similar to Muhammad Imārah (1931-2020), an Egyptian Islamic thinker. They both believe that insofar as it is properly interpreted through the faculty of reason, the text is never contradictory or incoherent with respect to the Islamic ethos. Hence, contrary to the Orientalist argument, there is no need to cherry-pick and only accept verses that satisfy our whims and fancies. If there is seemingly any discrepancy between the text and *maṣlaḥah* or common good, then *maṣlaḥah* must be prioritised (Imarah, 2020, pp. vii-x).

However, in the West, Harun Nasution is more often likened to Abdulkarim Soroush, a radical Iranian thinker who calls for an Islamic reformed theology. Soroush meticulously examined the historical and human nature of religion, religious experience, revelation, the role and place of the Prophet in the prophetic mission, the position of scripture and how these are all interrelated. He then concludes that a viable and meaningful Islamic reform in modern times cannot simply mean posing new questions to an outdated frame of references and working out their solutions by using outdated concepts. Hence, Soroush stresses the need to create new concepts and frames of reference of which rationality is the most important component (Soroush, 2000, pp. xi-xix) (Sadic, 2022).

According to Nasution, only the Qur'an and *hadith* in the category of *mutawātir* (sound hadith with successive narration) can be used as the basis for Islamic creed. While some discern a certain Orientalist influence in this radical view, the Indonesian thinker is simply cautioning against the use of controversial *hadith* when issuing religious edicts. In fact, the history of *hadith* codification itself shows that hadith was not written in the early days of the *sahābah* (companions of the Prophet) because it was feared that it might get mixed with the Qur'an (Jamal, 2020).

Nasution clarifies his stand on rationalism in the concluding chapter of his book *Akal dan Wahyu (Reason and Revelation)*:

> In this regard, it is necessary to emphasise that the use of the words rational, rationalism and rationality in Islam must be detached from the true meaning of the word, that is, to merely using reason and to disregard revelation, or to make reason higher than revelation, so that revelation can be nullified by reason. In Islamic thought, some have been seen in the description given above, both in the field of philosophy and the science of kalam, what more in the field of *fiqh*, reason never cancels revelation. The intellect remains subject to the text of revelation. The text of revelation is still considered absolutely true. The intellect is used only to understand the text of revelation and not to oppose revelation. The intellect only gives interpretation to the text of revelation according to the tendency and ability of the interpreter (Nasution, 1982, p. 101).

The above excerpt confirms that Nasution does not subscribe to an unbridled rationalism. Being itself created by God, rationalism cannot be above *kalam Allah* or revelation. Thus, contrary to the Western enlightenment project, Nasution's aim is to modernise Islam through rationalism without secularism, that is, through a rational interpretation of revelation.

Harun Nasution's Sufism

Does the rationality of Nasution's Islamic thought prevent him from practicing sufism? When we examine the book *Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam*, sufi practices (also known as *sulūk*)[3] promoted by him is a form of philosophical sufism. Sufi teachings emphasise the knowledge and spiritual application of concepts such as *maḥabbah* (love), *ma'rifah* (interior knowledge or mystical knowledge of God), *fana'* (the complete denial of self and the realisation of God), and *baqā'* (subsistence or permanency which describes a particular state of life

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[3] *Suluk* In sufism is basically translated as traversing a path. While a *murīd* (Arabic مُرِيد one who seeks') is a novice committed to spiritual enlightenment by *sulūk* under a spiritual guide, who may take the title *murshid* or *shaykh*. A *sālik* or Sufi follower only becomes a *murīd* when he makes a pledge (*bay'ah*) to a *murshid*.

with God) (Nasution, 1973). They also underscore the importance of *ittihād* (mystical union with God)*, ḥulūl* (relation between a body and its place, an accident and its substance), and *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[4] In sufi virtue, a sufi is a person who is pure of heart, views humans equally, loves Allah through *ḥusnu ẓān* (positive thinking in Islam towards man and also towards Allah). In his book on *Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam*, Nasution condemns Sunni sufism and the tariqa system.[5] He castigated their followers for their aversion to Islamic rationality, and even accused them of closing the door of *ijtiḥād* (independent reasoning) (Nasution, 1973, pp. 70-95). To our understanding, his idea of sufism is more akin to that of the Muhammadiyyah's—one of Indonesia's leading socioreligious organisation — "*sufism without tariqa.*"

What are we to make then of Nasution's sufi habits such as always doing *dhikr*, going to the mosque early every Friday, and living a moderate lifestyle? His modesty in living the life of al-Qur'an opens up two possibilities of interpretation. On the one hand, a rational Muslim is not necessarily against sufi practices such as *dhikr*. Indeed, Islamic rationality is intertwined with the worship of Allah. On the other hand, Muslim rationalists are people who are not heretical and far from Allah. They are very different from Western rationalists who, as mentioned by Max Horkheimer, are stuck in instrumental rationality and are confined to technological fetishism (Braun, 2017, pp. 183-190).

A careful reading of *Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam* indicates that Nasution has a strong moral argument to justify the practice of sufism. In his study of Nasution, Saude in his interview with one of Nasution's students named Darun Setiady (d. 2015), a lecturer at Faculty of Theology at *Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Jati,* found that the foundation of mysticism in Nasution's thought was always accompanied by moral and intellectual insights and practices (Saude,

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[4] *Waḥdat al-wujūd* literally means "the Unity of Existence" or "the Unity of Being." *Wujūd*, meaning "existence" or "presence", here refers to God. On the other hand, *waḥdat ash-shuhūd*, meaning "Apparentism" or "Monotheism of Witness", holds that God and his creation are entirely separate. The concept of the relationship between God and the universe is still actively debated both among sufis and between sufis and non-sufi Muslims.

[5] A *tariqa* (or *tariqah*; Arabic: طريقة *ṭarīqah*) is a school or order of sufism or specifically a concept for the mystical teaching and spiritual practices of such an order with the aim of seeking *haqiqa* which translates as "ultimate truth".

2011). This shows that he had a strong commitment to spiritual perfection. Saude asserted that Nasution was one of the few intellectuals—not only among Muslims, but also among Indonesian intellectuals in general— who often talks about moral obligation in everyday life.

Criticisms and Appreciations of Nasution's Thought

Mukti Ali was a scholar who appreciated the thought of Harun Nasution, while HM Rasyidi was his main critic. According to Mukti Ali, Nasution's rationalism paved the way to the progress of Islam in Indonesia. On the contrary, HM Rasyidi felt that Nasution's rationalism—which stresses the primacy of the Qur'an—had a pernicious effect with respect to his position on the *hadith*. While subscribing to the absoluteness of *hadith* as the second source of Islam, he was concerned that by following Nasution's thinking, *hadith* might be discarded as unimportant. He added that the *umma* would view the *sunna* as less sacred if *hadith* is considered just a supplementary source. Similarly, in the realm of sufism, HM Rasyidi criticised Nasution's genealogical perspective of Islamic sufism. In HM Rashid's view, the teachings of sufism do not derive from Islam. While Nasution's believes that sufism is an important aspect of Islamic teachings with strong sources in the Qur'an and *hadith*, HM Rasyidi rejects the concept of *ittihad* because it degrades the *Khāliq* or God as equal to a servant while, on the contrary, Nasution views *ittihad* as an important dignifying position of a servant who is close to God (Syakur, 2018, p. 343).

Regarding his views on sufism, Nasution explains:

> However, the understanding that God and man, which is based on the basic teachings of mysticism, is found in the Qur'an and *hadith*. So regardless of whether or not there may be outside influences, the verses of the Qur'an can lead to the emergence of sufism in Islam, when you mean sufism are teachings about being as close to God as possible (Nasution, 1985, p. 47).

As described by Muhammad Imārah, Islamic public discourse is now dominated by two strands: admirers of the West and slaves of the Text (Imarah, 2020, pp. 5-7). Admirers of the West are radically rational and not dismissive of everything from the West. On the contrary, slaves of the Text are uncritical and dismissive of reason in understanding the text. Harun Nasution does not fit into any of these two categories.

According to M. Amin Abdullah, religious studies and discourses are split along the lines of normativity and historicity (Abdullah, 1996, pp. 318-319). It should be such that Islam should be understood as a historical reality, which is what Nasution proposes with his project of rationalisation of Islam or rational Islam. Therefore, Islam needs to use a broader and integrative approach incorporating philosophy, anthropology, sociology and so on, instead of an *an sich's* (by itself) religious textual approach.

As we explained in the previous section, opposition to rational Islamic thought or philosophical Islam, in the language of Amin Abdullah, takes the form of thought that has crystallised and fossilised into orthodoxy. This can be traced to two poles of thought: Ghazalian[6] and Taymiyahan[7]. According to Amin Abdullah, although both al-Ghazali and Ibn Taimiyyah use philosophy to attack philosophy, it still shows the authenticity of their thoughts: they are both textual. Al-Ghazali *takes for granted* the *hadith* without wanting to consider the degree of validity, while Ibn Taymiyah was too literal in his view of the *hadith*, such that anything that deviates from *hadith* was branded as heresy (Nasution, 1969, pp. 263-267).

How do we then answer the challenges of modernity? This concern has preoccupied Muslim intellectuals such as Muhammad Imārah, Abdul Karim Souroush and Harun Nasution himself; their aim was to present a virile Islam which is able to address contemporary problems.

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[6] Ghazalian refer broadly to the followers of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1055 -1011) who contributed significantly to the development of a systematic view of sufism and its integration and acceptance in mainstream Islam. He belonged to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and to the Ash'arite school of theology. He is viewed as the key member of the influential Ash'arite school and the most important refuter of the Mu'tazilites. Thanks to his unparalleled mastery of *falsafa* and Islamic Law, al-Ghazali injected a certain repugnance among Muslims for science that ultimately led to its decline.

[7] Taimiyahan refers to the followers of the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah (January 22, 1263 – September 26, 1328). Ibn Taymiyyah was a controversial Sunni Muslim 'alim, *muhaddith*, judge, traditionalist theologian, ascetic, and iconoclastic theorist. A polarising figure in his own times and in the centuries that followed, Ibn Taymiyyah has emerged as one of the most influential medieval writers in late modern Sunni Islam.

Nasution's rational Islamic project has become the entry point to the renewal of Islamic religious thought and modernism in Indonesia through institutions such as IAIN.

Islamic Reformism via Neo-Mu'tazilism

Indeed, the main challenge confronting us today is the same one the past reformists faced: intellectual stagnation. As a result of the decline in rationalism among modern Muslims, we witness the decay of the Islamic world today after being a great civilisation at a time when the West was still in the dark ages. We produced thousands of scientists, physicists, mathematicians, chemists, astrologists and physicians, and excelled in many disciplines established at the House of Wisdom (*Baitul Hikmah*) in the Mu'tazilite era. Sadly, those achievements are now fondly remembered only as distant history.

The Mu'tazilites consider *tawhid*—alongside divine justice (*'adl*)—at the core of their theological reflection, defining themselves as *ahl al-ʿadl wa al-tawḥīd* or "the people of justice and unity." They believed that one of the principal traits of God is justice, which is embodied in their *uṣūl al-khamsah* (five principles) or one of the five principles of their doctrine as explained earlier. Being *Just*, God gave man *freewill* in the form of reason that he could use to differentiate between right and wrong, and to strive to uphold justice.

For the Mu'tazilites, a *Just* God will not respond to good and bad human deeds arbitrarily. Man will receive God's response be it the blessings of heaven or the torture of hellfire as a result of the choices he made based on his own *freewill*. Thus, as the maker of his own actions, man is responsible for whatever response God gives him. This position conflicts with what has been extracted from works of the Ash'arites. For them, God is the most Compelling; He may cast someone who is pious and just into the hellfire and place someone who is cruel and evil into heaven. That, the Ash'arites explain, is the reality behind the power of God who is the most Compelling and the most Powerful.

Conversely, according to the Mu'tazilites, God is *Just* and cannot be an irrational dictator. This theological dispute has been carried to the present day after being passed on from generation to generation. From this perspective, we can appreciate the struggle of Muslim reformists such as Harun Nasution. In fact, this problem was first realised by

Muhammad Abduh in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when he assessed that the *umma* has declined with its thoughts fossilised. According to Abduh, this decline was caused by the abandonment of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) in favour of *taqlīd* (the blind imitation of past scholars). Similar to Nasution in the 20th century, the revival of rational reasoning was Abduh's lifelong goal. In fact, it would not be far-fetched to characterise the emergence of Nasution as a resurgence of neo-Mu'tazilism.

Indeed, Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) had the most profound impact on Nasution's thought. As the latter wrote in his 1968 PhD dissertation on rationalism in the theology of the Egyptian reformer Muhammad Abduh, Abduh promotes "a Mu'tazili theological system with almost identical theological doctrines" (Nasution, 1969, pp. 263-267). Although Nasution translated his thesis at a much later stage into Indonesian, he took it upon himself to propagate Abduh's idea of rationalism in Indonesia. He somehow managed to spread Abduh's reformist idea far and wide in the Nusantara. Not surprisingly, Nurcholish Madjid's (1939-2005)—a proponent of modernisation within Islam—fitting description of Nasution's ideology as *Abduhisme*, celebrating the latter's intellectual prowess in disseminating the idea of Islamic reformism via neo-Mu'tazilism (Madjid, 1989, pp. 102-110).

In Nasution's mind, the idea that the Qur'an is absolute, eternal and immutable does not mean that it describes everything in detail for human life (Nasution, 1995, pp. 27-28). The absolute and immutable are within the realm of ʿaqīda (creed) and ʿibāda (religious rituals) or what is known as *al-thawābit* (the absolute, immutable). However, a larger sphere exists that requires human reasoning in the field of *al-mutaghayyirāt* (the changing, relative), which includes economy and politics. Nasution emphasises Qur'an as a revelation that encourages the use of reason or intellect. Of course, the main thrust of the Qur'an is on creed or ʿaqīda but where the Qur'an is silent, we need to use our intellect or human reasoning although some details can be found in the *Sunna*.

Mohammed Abdul Haleem, an expert in Qur'anic studies, also asserted that the main thrust of the Qur'an is on ʿaqīda or creed (Haleem, 2017, p. 243). Hence, Nasution believes that the Qur'an would leave certain particulars to be deliberated by human beings themselves,

based on the concept of *al-thawābit* (the absolute, immutable) and *al-mutaghayyirāt* (the changing, relative) explained above. He criticises those who hold the idea that the Qur'an contains everything and explains everything, a category that includes many contemporary Islamists for whom the Qur'an is a complete text with even the finer details fully elaborated for mankind to implement in their lives and in their country's constitution (Nasution, 1982, p. 31).

Interestingly, a renowned Islamic scholar in Indonesia, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Hamka) (1908-1981), the author of the famous *Tafsir Al-Azhar*—an exegesis of the Qur'an in Indonesian language—shared a similar view to Nasution. Both of them believed in the necessity of reviving rationality through the Qur'an, and they drew their ideas from the exegesis of Al-Zamakshari (1075–1144), a Mu'tazilite theologian and an interpreter of the Qur'an. To Hamka, as to Nasution, the Qur'an was not revealed as an ever-encompassing text. Rather, it exhorts its readers to use their intellect to search for non-revealed truths about life and the universe (Hamka, 1982, p. 275).

During his lifetime, Nasution realised the existence of two trends among Muslims that he found alarming: secularism and fatalism. Both of these theologies have shaped the Muslims' view of their future in a globalised world (Ishak, 2009, pp. 39-51). On the one hand, the secularist theology sidelined God and claimed that the progress of mankind depends on man alone without any guidance from religious texts, a view that Nasution believes would lead to destruction of civilisation itself (Nasution, 1985, p. 41). On the other hand, the fatalist theology, which is the more common ideology among Muslims in the Nusantara who adheres to the Ash'arite school, relies heavily on predetermination such that making any effort to change one's destiny is a vain pursuit: no matter how hard we try, what is fated cannot be changed. This explains why Muslims often end up as the most backward people, if not the most unproductive in their contribution to science and technology.

This is where Nasution offered an alternative theology which he felt could change, especially in the Nusantara, the way Muslims think and act (Nasution, 1982, p. 6). He called it the theology of divine constants, which can also be referred to as the rational theology. It is a theology that recognises God as the originator of the natural laws (*sunnatullāh*) of the universe (Nasution, 1972, pp. 150-151). Divine constants, which

include laws of gravity, entropy and so on, are scientific laws governing the universe; they are timeless and cannot be changed, as ordained by God Himself. This rationalist philosophy brought the Mu'tazilites to contend that God, and the firmaments of His creation, should operate in accordance with rational rules that He himself has created. It was this view that successfully spurred Muslims towards scientific research and to the pinnacle of scientific excellence in various disciplines.

This realm operates through a system that is determinate in as much as it is orderly, where everything functions in an organised manner, from the smallest atoms to the biggest planets and stars that revolve in their respective orbits. All of them revolve in a manner that is neatly arranged by the divine natural rules that are entirely pure, many of them with mathematical properties. Thus, water will boil at 100°C and it will freeze at 0°C; everything that is thrown from above will land on the ground due to the attractive force of gravity. All of these are the natural laws of the universe created by God. Only when we understand and study these natural laws and universal rules can we understand how a particular phenomenon occurs based on scientific knowledge, knowledge that itself originates from God. By pursuing and equipping ourselves with such scientific knowledge, we may bring about civilisational progress.

During their heyday, the Mu'tazilites deeply understood these natural laws. They pursued knowledge from the East and the West, translated new scientific ideas and improved upon them without discriminating against knowledge emanating from people from other cultures, civilisations and belief systems. Accordingly, they excelled in all fields of knowledge which led to the construction of the House of Wisdom. They were the people that held firmly to the rational theory that everything that happens must be in accordance with the natural laws determined by God, which in modern language translates as scientific knowledge.

Sadly, Muslims influenced by the Ash'arite doctrine assume that God can even do whatever conflicts with the natural law simply because He is the most Compelling. Thus, His power does not require Him to abide by the natural laws that He created, in the same manner that He is empowered to cast someone pious into hellfire or to place an evil person in heaven.

Conclusion

Indeed, the advent of Islam shook Arabia and freed its people from endless tribal conflicts. Within the span of a few decades, the Qur'an spread its worldview across the Arabian borders and gave birth to the first ever borderless ideological community in history through its insistence on awareness and knowledge. It enlivened amongst its followers the enthusiasm to seek knowledge based on rationalism and the natural laws, which brought the Islamic world to its zenith. The culture pioneered by the Mu'tazilites penetrated middle-ages European thought in many ways and through many paths. Ultimately, it sparked a revolution in European culture called the *Renaissance*, which played a major role in giving rise to the *scientific age* in which we live today. Only by reigniting the scientific spirit can we return to the glory of our predecessors. Even though Nasution's ideas did not translate into a mass movement, his idea of Islamic rationality has been dearly embraced by some circles of the Muslim intelligentsia in the *Nusantara* (Salleh, 2001, p. 197).

Acknowledgements

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Students' Awareness and Participation in the Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract: This research explores the education for peace (EFP) in a multicultural and post-conflict state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose of this study is to determine *EFP awareness and participation among high school and college graduates*. This research used the survey method to analyse students' awareness and participation in the EFP in their high schools and colleges. The same method was used to analyse students' perceptions of the EFP and the culture of peace among the students. The results indicated very low awareness and participation of students in the EFP. Regarding the student's perception of EFP and the culture of peace among the students, the results indicated that there is insufficient implementation of EFP in high schools and colleges in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This indicates that with an introduction of the EFP in the schools, curricula, seminars, programmes, and textbooks the culture of peace would increase among the students, which is one of the main assumptions of this study. These findings led to our main recommendation that an introduction of EFP in high schools and colleges and active involvement of students through the learning process may lead to greater multicultural understanding within the culture of peace, tolerance, and understanding in Bosnian multicultural society.

Keywords: *Education for Peace; Student's Awareness; Student's Participation; Dialogic Culture; Culture of Peace*.

Abstrak: Penyelidikan ini didorong oleh minat penulis untuk mengetahui persepsi pelajar terhadap pendidikan untuk keamanan (EFP) dalam keadaan berbilang budaya dan pasca konflik Bosnia dan Herzegovina. Tujuan kajian

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ini adalah untuk menentukan kesedaran dan penyertaan EFP dalam kalangan graduan sekolah menengah dan kolej. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kaedah tinjauan untuk menganalisis kesedaran dan penyertaan pelajar dalam EFP di sekolah menengah dan kolej mereka. Kaedah yang sama digunakan untuk menganalisis persepsi pelajar terhadap EFP dan budaya keamanan dalam kalangan pelajar. Keputusan menunjukkan kesedaran dan penyertaan pelajar yang sangat rendah dalam EFP. Mengenai persepsi pelajar terhadap EFP dan budaya keamanan di kalangan pelajar, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pelaksanaan EFP tidak mencukupi di sekolah menengah dan kolej di Bosnia dan Herzegovina. Ini menunjukkan bahawa dengan pengenalan EFP di sekolah, kurikulum, seminar, program, dan buku teks budaya keamanan akan meningkat dalam kalangan pelajar, yang merupakan salah satu andaian utama kajian ini. Penemuan ini membawa kepada cadangan utama kami bahawa pengenalan EFP di sekolah menengah dan kolej dan penglibatan aktif pelajar melalui proses pembelajaran boleh membawa kepada pemahaman pelbagai budaya yang lebih besar dalam budaya keamanan, toleransi dan persefahaman dalam masyarakat berbilang budaya Bosnia.

Kata Kunci: pendidikan untuk keamanan; kesedaran pelajar; penyertaan pelajar; budaya dialogic; budaya keamanan.

Introduction

Research Background

Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multicultural state is home to different ethnic groups, religions, and traditions. Throughout history, diverse ethnic interests, influenced and shaped by the neighbouring countries, have affected Bosnian interethnic relations (Mulalic, 2019, 57-81). Bosnian multiculturalism has been praised within former Yugoslavia but during the 1990s it could not prevent a violent conflict. Consequently, more than three years of war were fought in Bosnia and Herzegovina between internally self-proclaimed quasi-states, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was closely related to the breakup of former Yugoslavia and territorial pretensions by the neighbouring countries. The war also resulted in greater polarisation of the society and the emergence of three distinct ethnic groups such as Bosniaks (50.12%), Serbs (30.83%), Croats (15.43%), and Others (2.73%). After the end of the conflict, the

negative implications of ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and genocide have further widened the multicultural gap.

Ethnic cleansing occurred in the majority of Bosnia territories, whereby large numbers of Bosniaks were forced to flee their homes. In 1995, ethnic cleansing culminated in the Srebrenica Genocide in which the Serb military forces executed systematically 8,372 Bosniak men and boys. Then, ethnic and territorial polarisation has been constitutionally strengthened due to the ethnically framed Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). Almost three decades after signing the DPA it is evident that it prevents more lively progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. Annex IV (Constitution) of the DPA had envisioned a highly decentralised and ethnically divided state, composed of two entities, one district and ten cantons. This polarisation has enabled ethno-nationalist leaders to use right-wing populism and nationalist ideology to ensure political support, which resulted in an expression of negative perceptions among the people and further divisions and polarisation.

With the rise of populism, right-wing nationalism, and hate speech, the manipulation of ethnicity, religion, and language became a political tool for further polarisation of the society, which was primarily aimed at political support and winning the elections (Torsti, 2003, 148; Hayden, 2011, 487-517). In this regard, the education system became highly politicised, and the schools replicated and reinforced socio-political and ethnic divisions within the education system. There are 56 schools that work according to the "two schools under one roof" system, which resulted in administrative and ethnic polarisation of school principals, teachers, and pupils. The school directors and principals are appointed by the majority ethnic political parties in power. Then, the universities purposefully create and propagate the ethno-nationalist ideology and narrative of a particular ethnic group, which is based on the exclusion and radical negation of the other ethnic groups on their territory. In addition, very often teachers, students, and parents are misled and manipulated to support such ideological and ethno-nationalistic narratives (Plasto, 2019, 231-233; Pašalic-Kreso, 2008, 353-374; Perry and Keil, 2013, 832).

Moreover, the education system has not been harmonised with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Convention of the Rights of the Child,* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of*

Racial Discrimination (CERD) (Bakić and Mujagić, 2021, 228-237). On the contrary, there is a permanent need to defend one's ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, and language, which has created a strong sense of ethnocentrism, ethnic divisiveness, and polarisation (Mujkić, 2012, 1-24; Pašalić-Kreso, 2008, 356-357; Veličković, 2012, 8). In the last few decades, very few limited attempts have been made to introduce the EFP in schools and colleges. Very few EFP training programmes were introduced after the end of the war to foster peace, reconciliation, the democratisation process, and the building of a new post-war society (Tinker, 2016, 38-39; Emkic, 2018, 38-46; Fairey and Kerr, 2020, 142-164). Such limited EFP activities have been carried out under international tutelage, for example, those of the International Education for Peace Institute based in Switzerland.

The Rationale for the Research

This study was motivated by the researcher's curiosity about students' awareness and participation in the EFP and the belief that an ethnically polarised education system could be encountered by the EFP programmes. The researcher is convinced that such programmes could become a vehicle for promoting and fostering understanding, reconciliation, and co-existence in a Bosnian multicultural society. This is especially the case with students who need to develop peace capacity, which requires knowledge, skills, and experience. In this regard, educational institutions, schools, and universities have a role to play in the promotion and implementation of the EFP (Emkic, 2018, 37-45). However, to what extent do peace activists and educators advocate peacebuilding, reconciliation, and interethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Belloni, 2001, 163-180; Kappler and Richmond, 2011, 263-265)? Then, to what extent has the education system been actively used in fostering the EFP in countering ethnic, religious, ideological, and cultural polarisation of the society? Social change as such depends on the education system because it must ensure not only the dissemination of knowledge and skills but also equality, cooperation, mutual understanding, cross-community understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

These challenges should be assessed within the framework of the EFP, especially regarding students' awareness and participation in EFP programmes, which is one of the main objectives of this study.

In addition, the EFP should purposefully raise students' awareness to develop a culture of peace and dialogue. Current challenges to the multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be encountered through the EFP. Fostering peace, reconciliation, and a dialogic culture to counter ethno-nationalism could prevent new interethnic conflicts. Thus, our main aim is to test how the culture of peace could further enhance the culture of tolerance, understanding, kindness, empathy, social integration, and universal love, especially in multicultural and multiethnic post-war societies (Hermans, 2001, 24-28; Slatina, 2005, 89). All the reasons mentioned above provoked an interest of the researcher to dwell deeper into the issue of EFP and to look for the right insights for its implementation.

Objectives

If the Education for Peace (EFP) is fundamentally a process of engaging young students, the main question that arises what is the level of awareness and participation of the students in high schools in the EFP? Analysing awareness and participation shall certainly provide an answer to the question of how young people cope with a polarised society and hostile multicultural environment. Have they participated in EFP programmes and how new multicultural and peace narratives might help them in coping with such polarisation? Most of the survey questions in this research examine students' exposure and participation in the EFP courses, lectures, and programmes. It is essential to question to what extent students are aware of the EFP, whether they have attended any course or activity in the EFP, or whether have they read any textbook or text that explores the EFP in their high schools and colleges. Thus, the main objective of this paper was to measure students' awareness and participation in the EFP programmes. Then, it is significant to determine the perception of the EFP and the culture of peace among young people, which is especially the case with conflict and post-conflict societies.

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse students' awareness of the EFP in their high schools and colleges.
2. To examine students' active participation in the EFP programmes, lectures, seminars, and training.
3. To find out the students' perceptions about the EFP and the creation of a culture of peace among young people.

Theoretical Review and Contextualisation

The concept of peace education

The EFP is both an educationally and socially directed process that involves knowledge of values and virtues, which will enable young people to develop a culture of peace capacities. Thus, in post-conflict societies, social awareness, and consciousness of a need for the EFP is a precondition for peace and stability. Society should continuously promote values of peace, understanding, coexistence, human rights, and democracy to prevent prejudice, discrimination, and violence. In this regard, the power of the EFP is to integrate multicultural societies by creating awareness and involving students in active learning about EFP. With the adoption of a World Declaration by UNICEF in 1999, different peace-related programmes have been introduced, especially in post-conflict societies. According to the UNICEF definition, the EFP is "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level" (Günçavdı and Polat, 2020, 239). Following these developments, UNICEF initiated curriculum reforms and the integration of peace studies in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Then, the International Institute for Peace Education incorporated the peace curricula into a national cluster of subjects (Close, 2011, 269-281; Clarke-Habibi, 2005, 9-20).

The EFP as a concept and definition has undergone different stages of development. Some definitions focus primarily on the EFP as a vehicle for conflict prevention and promotion of the culture of peace. In this regard, Harris and Morrison (2013) argued that the EFP includes "listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution . . . nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life" (p. 11). Other definitions consider the EFP as a process wherein the students learn about values, virtues, and attitudes important and sensitive to others. Thus, the EFP aims at "peace capacity building" among young people and students, which is inevitable in resolving and preventing conflict and building a culture of peace and dialogue. The process of the EFP begins with inculcating a culture of peace in the minds of the students and the young people (Saloman, 2002; Bar-Tal, 2002). These

definitions indicate that the EFP is grounded on knowledge, skills, and capacities that bring about behavioural and thinking change among students who tend to understand better the meaning and the purpose of the culture of peace in multicultural societies.

The EFP is based on the noble values of love, trust, justice, understanding, coexistence, and respect for all human beings. Therefore, the EFP is inevitable for multicultural societies that need to maintain and strengthen their interdependent diversities. Not only would the EFP nurture these values, but it would educate and create new generations that will take an active role in fostering a culture of peace. This was the idea that primarily motivated this study. Thus, the EFP engages students in active learning and equips them with the tools, skills, and knowledge to promote a culture of peace in multicultural societies and the ever-changing global world. In highly polarised societies, where right-wing populists use social media and modern digital technologies to promote radical and violent ideas, schools and universities must give alternatives to young people by providing them with EFP courses, lectures, training, and programmes.

Teaching Peace Education

The EFP requires active learning and a conducive educational environment. In this regard, parents, teachers, and schools take up the responsibility of the EFP implementation and achieving a culture of peace and understanding. In this regard, teachers have the responsibility of fostering student interaction, collaboration, and cooperation. Students' capacity greatly depends on their learning, knowledge, skills, and experience in the EFP, which is greatly extended to universal values. These learning components also correspond to Bloom's taxonomy of learning (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2016). In this regard, teachers play the most important role in peace pedagogy. Besides teachers, the education institutions and schools must (re)consider their educational objectives, curricula, textbooks, instructional materials, and teachers' training in the EFP.

A cooperative learning environment that includes opportunities for speaking and expressing views about the EFP shall necessarily contribute to the development of a culture of peace. Such objectives of cooperative learning could be reached through experience-based learning, teamwork, class discussion, and open discussion. In this regard, a cooperative

learning environment and the facilitating role of the teachers can enhance the students' skills of listening, reflection, cooperation, and dialogue. Cooperative learning is closely related to critical thinking that enables students to work together and tackle opposing views, motives, biases, assumptions, prejudices, and viewpoints (Adetoro, 2015, 325-330; Mulalić & Obralić, 2019). Critical thinking is key to communication competencies and the arts of dialogue, which are inevitable for post-conflict societies, in countering racism, chauvinism, ethno-nationalism, discrimination, and xenophobia (Roberts, 2003, 169-183).

Research design and instrument

This research employed a survey consisting of two parts: the first part used a Likert scale to measure three main constructs such as awareness, participation, and culture of peace and the second part used open-ended questions to explore participant's opinions. The descriptive data about students' awareness and participation in the EFP was obtained through the quantitative and qualitative survey methods. Then, open-ended questions were analysed through the basic classification of the answers.

This survey was developed by reviewing the literature on the EFP and the research instrument was based on the contextual requirements of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Flower-Petal Model and Integrative Theory of Peace (ITP) were used for structuring questions on a culture of peace (Toh, 2006, 1-17; Danesh, 2010, 253-268). In addition, an adapted survey was contextualised according to the education framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: a) demographic data, b) survey questions on awareness, participation, and perceptions of the culture of peace, and c) open-ended questions. Considering the objectives of the study, we used questionnaire items with a 5-point Likert Scale. To ensure that the questionnaire had content validity a broad literature review was conducted on similar studies and the number of redundant items in the survey was eliminated. To determine the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire Cronbach's Alpha was used. The total number of items in the questionnaire was 17, and overall, the value of Cronbach's Alpha was .838.

A Case Study of IUS Students

A case study is a research method that involves an in-depth analysis of a particular individual, group, or situation. It is often used in social

sciences, business, education, and other fields to explore complex issues and understand real-world problems. In a case study, researchers collect and analyse data from multiple sources, such as interviews, surveys, observations, and documents. The data is then organised and presented in a detailed and comprehensive manner, often including quotes and descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives. Case studies are typically conducted to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon or to explore a particular research question. They can be used to investigate complex issues, examine how and why certain events or behaviours occurred, or test theoretical concepts in real-world situations.

This case study addressed the awareness of EFP among IUS students. In their educational experience, they were supposed to participate in different activities through workshops, study trips, and short courses. All these activities are determined by the law and are mandatory extracurricular activities in all primary and secondary schools in BiH. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a tumultuous history, marred by conflict, war, and ethnic tensions. In the aftermath of the Bosnian War, which lasted from 1992 to 1995, the country has made significant strides towards rebuilding and promoting peace. One important component of this effort has been peace education, which seeks to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity among different communities in Bosnia.

The first-year enrolled students at the International University of Sarajevo (IUS) were selected for the study. In the Academic Year 2022/2023 the International University of Sarajevo enrolled 850 students in five different faculties and 21 different study programmes. The researcher selected newly enrolled students and distributed the questionnaire to them during their classes. Students come from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They graduated from Gymnasiums, *Madrasas*, and Technical or Vocational high schools. Theoretically, newly enrolled students at the International University of Sarajevo should have been exposed to the EFP in their high schools and colleges. The researcher was actively involved in the process of data collection, visiting classrooms, and explaining to the participants the scope and purpose of the survey.

Results, Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative results and analysis

A total of 366 students returned completed survey forms. The participant demographics are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	160	43.7	43.7	43.7
Valid	Female	206	56.3	56.3	100.0
	Total	366	100.0	100.0	

160 male and 206 female students participated in the research.

RQ1: *Are students aware of the EFP in their high schools and colleges?*

Table 2. Awareness

AWARENESS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Most of the students are aware of the presence of the Education for Peace (EFP) during their primary and secondary school studies.	21.3	37.7	23.5	13.7	3.8
2. Education for Peace (EFP) is often present in public discussions like newspapers, TV and digital media.	16.9	40.4	23.0	18.6	1.1
3. Education for Peace (EFP) is being promoted via social and digital media.	15.8	29.5	30.1	21.3	3.3
4. I am aware of the Education for Peace (EFP) because my teachers talked about issues related to it in their courses.	29.5	30.6	19.7	16.4	3.8

According to Table 2, statement number 1, 59% of the respondents stated that they were not aware of the presence of the EFP in their primary and secondary schools. It's possible that the information about the EFP programme was not communicated effectively to the students, leading to a lack of awareness. Also, the programme may not have been promoted extensively or effectively, leading to limited awareness among the students. The 2nd statement tested respondents' opinions on whether peace education is present in public discussions, whereby 57% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with this statement. Many people may not be aware of what peace education is and how it can be promoted through public discussions. Hence, there may be misconceptions about peace education, with some people thinking that it is a soft or unrealistic approach to dealing with conflicts. In some cases, political polarisation may lead people to reject the idea of peace education because they associate it with a particular political ideology. To address this issue, it may be helpful to increase awareness about the benefits of peace education and its potential to contribute to a more peaceful society. This could involve promoting peace education in public discussions, providing information about successful peace education programmes, and engaging with individuals and organisations that are resistant to the idea of peace education. It may also be important to address any misconceptions or misunderstandings about peace education and to emphasise its importance in promoting social cohesion and conflict resolution.

The third statement attempted to determine whether students are aware of peace education on social and digital media. 45% of the participants strongly disagreed and disagreed with this statement while 30% were undecided. Thus, the participants held the belief that there was not enough information about peace education on social and digital media. Peace education content may be limited or difficult to find on social and digital media platforms, particularly if there are not enough content creators or if the platforms are not designed to promote peace education. The 4th statement *"I am aware of the education for peace (EFP) because my teachers talked about issues related to it in their courses"* was designed to check the application of the (EPF) in Bosnian high schools and colleges. According to the results, 30,6% of the students agreed that there was no mention of EFP in their schools, and 29,5% of the students strongly agreed with the statement. 16,4% agreed

that they heard about EFP from their professors and 3,8% strongly agreed with the statement. 19,7% of students were undecided regarding this statement.

Similar questions as in above Table 2, related to students' awareness of the EFP, were examined in several studies (Clarke-Hibbi, 2005; Zainab, Lodhi & Fatima, 2021). The results in these studies and our results depict very low EFP awareness among high school and college students. Therefore, increasing students' awareness requires EFP promotion via specific programmes, courses, lectures, and digital media. Such awareness shall contribute to developing awareness of the importance of knowledge of the EFP. This is especially the case with post-conflict societies where students' awareness of the EFP is often the first step towards coping with diversity, post-conflict feelings, traumas, and the sense of guilt and justice.

RQ2: *To what extent did students participate in EFP?*

Table 3: Participation

PARTICIPATION	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. I have had peace education as a course during my high school education	52.5	30.1	4.4	9.8	3.3
6. I still remember some instructional materials on the Education for Peace (EFP) from my high school	48.1	27.9	10.4	12.0	1.6
7. Education for peace is integrated into the high school curriculum	47.5	28.4	15.3	8.2	0.5
8. I still remember some interethnic students' debates from my high school	28.4	30.1	16.4	20.8	4.4
9. Participation in the education for peace can effectively foster non-violent ethics among youth	6.0	9.8	27.9	37.7	18.6

In determining students' participation in EFP, statement number 5 queried whether students had a course related to the EFP and how far they actively participated in EPF. 52,5% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement, 30,1% of the students disagreed with the statement and 13,1% of the students stated that they had a course on EFP in their schools. Then, statement 6 *"I still remember some instructional materials on the education for peace (EFP) from my high school"* was designed to test students' experience with the EFP from their high schools. 48,1% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement and 27,9% of the students agreed with the statement. This indicates that students do not remember some materials related to the EFP, provided by their teachers in their schools and colleges. Very similar results are shown about the integration of the EFP into high schools' curricula, i.e., statement number 7. Then, statement 8, *"I still remember some interethnic student's debates from my high school"* yielded somehow different results. Several students reported that they remember students' inter-ethnic debates from their schools. 20,8% of the students agreed on the statement whether they remembered debates about interethnic topics, however still 58,4% of students strongly agreed and agreed that there were no such debates in their schools. Then, students presented different beliefs about statement 9, i.e., participation in the EFP and its' contribution to fostering non-violent ethics among young people. 37,7% of the students agreed with the statement and 18,6% of the students strongly agreed. It is interesting to note that 27,9% of the students were undecided regarding this statement and only 15,8% of students disagreed.

Students' active participation in the EFP requires curriculum changes and syllabi purposefully designed for high schools and colleges. Many participants in their open-ended questions also articulated a need for the introduction of the EFP as a course, which also requires a direct commitment from schoolteachers. Adequate training is mandatory for teachers so that they develop knowledge and skills to impart to students with a sense of importance to the EFP. Then, active participation in the EFP also involves co-curricular activities whereby students could participate in peace clubs and programmes. The results in Table 3 indicate a lack of EFP lectures, materials, training, and debates, which inhibit students' active participation in the EFP in Bosnian high schools and

colleges. Therefore, education policymakers and education institutions must (re)consider their mandate in delivering the EFP to the citizenry.

RQ3: *To what extent students are aware of the culture of peace?*

Table 4: Culture of Peace

CULTURE OF PEACE	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. The Education for Peace (EFP) can help in shaping the future based on cooperation, intercultural awareness and common social interests in BiH	1.6	1.6	20.2	46.4	30.1
11. Participation in the Education for Peace (EFP) can reduce conservative and violent attitudes among youth	2.7	5.5	24.6	41.5	25.7
12. Education for peace (EFP) can help in enhancing social harmony and intercultural sensitivity in BiH	3.3	4.9	25.7	45.9	20.2
13. Education for peace should be included in the curricula alongside a national group of subjects like language, history, and geography.	5.5	6.6	22.4	38.8	26.8
14. Education for peace (EFP) can help in dismantling the culture of war and violence	7.1	6.6	24.6	37.7	24.0
15. BiH high schools are very effective in the promotion of education for peace	30.1	37.7	21.9	7.7	2.7
16. There is an obvious mismatch between the Education for Peace (EFP) and the effective promotion of human rights and responsibilities	4.4	8.2	59.0	21.3	7.1
17. There is an obvious mismatch between the education for peace (EFP) and conflict resolution and transformation	3,8	9,8	62,8	18,0	5,5

According to the survey results and statement 10, 30.1% of the students strongly agreed that EFP can help in shaping the future based on cooperation, intercultural awareness, and common social interest in BiH, while 46,4% of the students agreed with the statement. 20,2% of the students were undecided and only 3,2% of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Then, on statement 11, whether participation in the EFP can reduce conservative and violent attitudes among youth, 25,7% percent of the students strongly agreed with the statement and 41,5% of the students agreed with the statement. 24,6% were undecided and only 8,2% of the students strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. Then, on statement 12, "*The education for peace (EFP) can help in enhancing social harmony and intercultural sensitivity in BiH*" 66,1% of the students strongly agreed and agreed while 25,7% of the students were undecided. Only 7,2% of the students strongly agreed and agreed with this statement. According to the students' observation, 26,8% strongly agreed with statement 13 that *"The education for peace should be included in the curricula alongside with a national group of subjects like language, history and geography"* while 38,8% of the students agreed with this statement, and 22,4% of the students were undecided. Only 12,1% of the students strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. Then, statement 14, "*The education for peace (EFP) can help in dismantling the culture of war and violence*" indicates that 61,7% of students mostly strongly agreed and agreed with the statement while 24,6% were undecided and 13,6% of the students strongly agreed and agreed with this statement. Then, statement 15 tested school effectiveness in the promotion of the EFP. According to the results, 67,8% of the students strongly disagreed and disagreed with this statement while 21,9% of the students were not sure about the statement. Only 10,4% of the students strongly agreed and agreed with the statement. In statement 16, *"There is an obvious mismatch between the education for peace (EFP) and an effective promotion of human rights and responsibilities"* most of the students were undecided, which shows that students were confused regarding the general potential positive effects of EPF on population in BiH. A very similar response was yielded from statement 17 *"There is an obvious mismatch between the education for peace (EFP) and conflict resolution and transformation"*.

The main determinant of postmodern society is risk and it contributed to polarisation among the people, which is strongly present in post-conflict societies with a weak democratic system. Besides these challenges, Bosnia and Herzegovina must cope with ethno-nationalist determinants that also affect social cohesion and coexistence. According to the results in Table 4, the participants strongly agreed on the importance of the EFP and the culture of peace among the people. The participants supported the idea that cooperation, intercultural awareness, social harmony, dialogue, and intercultural sensitivity could be fostered through the EFP. In addition, the EFP is inevitable to counter the culture of war, violence, and any form of discrimination. Slatina (2018), one of the leading Bosnian peace education scholars, argued that peace and dialogic culture could transform the interethnic relationships in Bosnian post-conflict society. If properly implemented, the culture of peace could enhance the culture of tolerance, understanding, kindness, empathy, social integration, and universal love. In addition, the culture of peace is grounded on knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are inevitable for students' development of mindfulness, attitudes, solidarity, and respect for diversity (Harmans, 2001). Slatina (2009) furthermore argued that peace and dialogic culture are important for interdependent communication among peoples and nations, especially in countries with cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. In this regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina can use diversity to enhance individual, social, and national development, and progress, whereby socialisation, acculturation, and accommodation processes may become vehicles towards cultural pluralism.

Qualitative results and analysis

Enhancing social harmony, social solidarity and intercultural sensitivity in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the process. The Bosnian society needs to (re)consider its past to prevent violent history from repeating itself. However, lessen from Bosnian example can be considered in other multiethnic societies as well. Therefore, the values of peace, non-violence, tolerance, human rights, and democracy will have to be inculcated in the youth through the education system. According to the views of young students in the above open-ended question, the culture of peace has no alternative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because the country is composed of three major ethnic groups that have lived together side by side for centuries. We need to propagate peaceful cooperation in the

economy, politics, and education. Today's world is cosmopolitan and is characterised by risk, which is an additional argument for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to consider larger social cooperation and collaboration. A culture of peace can only develop if it is built on trust and dialogue coming from all diverse levels of society. Building a culture of peace requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, and institutions to work towards the common goal of creating a peaceful society.

Trust and dialogue are essential ingredients in building a culture of peace. Trust involves having confidence in the intentions and actions of others. Without trust, individuals and groups are less likely to engage in cooperative and collaborative efforts toward peace. Trust can be developed through mutual respect, understanding, and shared experiences. In this regard, the culture of peace could be seen as the essence of the new Bosnian society and other nations with similar problems, especially among the younger generations. These new social trends are supported by the participants in the above open-ended question, whereby most of them argue for the urgent introduction of the EFP in schools and colleges. Overall, they believe that the EFP implementation through curricula, lectures, workshops, and projects shall enhance social harmony, solidarity, and intercultural sensitivity. However, some participants have accepted the idea of a polarised society, expressing doubt about a positive change, and building social harmony, solidarity, and intercultural sensitivity.

Table 5. Enhancing social harmony, solidarity, and sensitivity

Examples of Open-Ended Questions 1 How the education for peace (EFP) could enhance social harmony, social solidarity, and intercultural sensitivity in B&H?
● *Make themselves more present in schools and organise more workshops, projects, and lectures. It is not that well known.*
● *Participation in EPF can reduce violent and conservative attitudes among youth.*
● *We did not have any to begin with but expanding knowledge would help.*
● *It could be very helpful and eye-opening for Bosnian students. And it is an important topic to educate on.*
● *Young students can change their opinions on an issue, so it's a great chance for improving social harmony.*

> • *I think that EFP may have a strong effect on the youth, especially kids who grow up in poverty and attend low-quality schools and receive below-average education.*
>
> • *EPF should be represented more among students in Bosnia. Most students are not aware of its existence.*
>
> • *I think that it will help a lot if it exists more in schools. In my opinion, people here do not know very well how to live in harmony.*

Since the 1990s the fragmentation of the education system according to ethnic lines has significantly contributed to the development of such perceptions among students and young people. For instance, a good example of forceful polarisation and prevention of interethnic exposure and communication could be illustrated through the practice of "two schools under one roof." In Bosnia and Herzegovina in many cities with mixed Bosniak and Croat populations, the pupils attend a school that is physically divided into two parts, with different administration and curricula (Pašalić-Kreso, 2008; Kapo, 2012). Although this practice is against international conventions, ethno-nationalists, and hardliners fight for the division of schools into Croat and Bosniak. However, the recent attempt to divide such schools in the city of Jajce was prevented by the public, parents, and students. Most of the respondents argue that due to the lack of interethnic exposure and communication young people in the schools are very much divided. The ethnic organisational structure and composition prevail in most of the schools which prevents socialisation and interaction among students. These results point to the urgent need for the introduction of the EFP in schools to foster values of tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity among the students and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 6. Interethnic Dialogue

Examples of Open-Ended Question 2
To what extent do interethnic dialogue and a culture of peace prevail among students in high schools? Provide some of your examples.

• *It does not happen very often, mostly with friendly chats in the classroom.*

• *Mostly we do not care about ethnicity.*

• *I know someone who's of a different ethnicity and we get along well.*

• *I never observed the behaviour of others, but obviously, it is different for some ethnicity than for others. In my school, a lot of hate is being expressed toward the Roma ethnicity.*

• *Personally, my schools were not too diverse religiously, culturally, or anything familiar, so we did not bother to talk about such topics too often. I think that is a shame.*

• *It is always "they and us" students from other backgrounds are usually "othered" even if everyone gets along and doesn't harass one another.*

• *In my school, there was only one ethnicity, so I do not have much experience with ethnic communities.*

• *Most students learn from their parents, and that is where it all comes from. In high school, we could see a bunch of exams like that.*

• *It is a very little thing in high school. They do not talk about this topic very much, but it is in some classes or just chatting.*

Conclusion

In Bosnia and Herzegovina EFP has been primarily developed out of activities and experiences of international peace activists. This culture began after the end of the conflict and continued with the greater involvement of the International Education for Peace Institute based in Switzerland. In the past few decades due to these initiatives, several seminars, programmes, training, and lectures have been conducted in high schools and colleges across Bosnia and Herzegovina. For instance, USAID supports a two-day conference on "peace education – to grow in peace" in Sarajevo on October 25, 2022. The conference was the main outcome of the project but the programme in the past two years was implemented in more than 60 schools in cooperation with different ministries. However, the literature review indicated that there is a very serious lack of initiative by the local stakeholders and institutions. The peace activities have not been institutionalised and are run mostly by international organisations with the support of local non-governmental organisations. In this regard, by exploring the EFP within the context of awareness, participation, and culture of peace, this pioneering paper fills in the research gap and calls on local policymakers and institutions to implement the EFP in schools and colleges.

Students in multicultural societies are aware of social challenges that are strongly felt throughout their education process and a good example of such kind of awareness is the "two schools under one roof" phenomenon. This is one of the reasons why our research findings depict very negative results regarding students' awareness and participation

in the EFP. Therefore, this research argues for the implementation of the EFP not only to foster students' participation in the EFP but also to integrate students in critical thinking within the framework of the culture of peace and dialogue. Once students are involved in critical thinking and a culture of peace and dialogue they begin to deal with diverse views, whereby they manage their motives, biases, assumptions, prejudices, and viewpoints. A culture of peace and dialogue are the foundations of socio-cultural life, especially for post-conflict societies in countering racism, chauvinism, ethno-nationalism, discrimination, and xenophobia. The EFP is vital for high school and college students because of students' knowledge, skills, and capacities to cope with hate speech, radicalisation, and violence.

This research has significant implications for EFP in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It demonstrates the importance of the EFP, especially regarding high school and college awareness, participation, and the development of a culture of peace. This paper adds to the peace studies literature on Bosnia and Herzegovina, provoking peace activists, professors, and graduate students to explore and promote the EFP among the youth, policymakers, and institutions. Future research could continue to evaluate the EFP activities, programmes, projects, and strategies. Furthermore, this study could be replicated with a larger number of participants, as well as schools and colleges. Finally, this study promotes EFP in multicultural societies for encountering radicalism, violence, and extremism.

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Objectivity Threats: Would it Jeopardise Malaysian Internal Auditors' Risk Judgment Quality?

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Abstract: In the realm of internal auditing, the rise of Risk-Based Internal Auditing has heightened the demand for auditors to excel in risk assessment. Failing in this role not only endangers audits but also exposes companies to significant losses and reputational harm. Internal auditors entrusted with critical decisions grapple with objectivity challenges that impede their ability to assess a company's risks accurately. This study investigates objectivity challenges in Malaysian internal auditing and their impact on risk assessment. Employing experimental tasks of varying complexity, it reveals that all nine objectivity threats outlined in the "International Standards for Professional Practices of Internal Auditing (IPPF): Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity" are prevalent in Malaysia. These threats negatively affect risk assessment,

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regardless of task complexity. Prominent objectivity threats include social pressure, familiarity, and intimidation. Crucially, these threats have a more significant impact on risk assessment during simpler tasks, especially when auditors assess familiar, less intricate areas. These highlight the urgent need for internal auditors to manage objectivity effectively, strengthening their role as impartial, dependable risk assessors.

Keywords: Objectivity Threat, Risk Judgment Performance, Internal Auditor, Malaysia

Abstrak: Dalam bidang pengauditan dalaman, perkembangan dalam Pengauditan Dalaman Berasaskan Risiko telah meningkatkan permintaan juruaudit untuk cemerlang dalam penilaian risiko. Kegagalan dalam peranan ini bukan sahaja membahayakan audit tetapi juga mendedahkan syarikat kepada kerugian besar dan kemudaratan reputasi. Juruaudit dalaman, yang diamanahkan dengan keputusan kritikal, bergelut dengan cabaran objektiviti yang menghalang keupayaan mereka untuk menilai risiko syarikat dengan tepat. Kajian ini mengkaji cabaran objektiviti dalam pengauditan dalaman Malaysia dan kesannya terhadap penilaian risiko. Menggunakan tugas eksperimen dengan kerumitan yang berbeza-beza, ia mendedahkan bahawa semua sembilan ancaman objektiviti yang digariskan dalam "Piawaian Antarabangsa untuk Amalan Profesional Pengauditan Dalaman (IPPF): Panduan Amalan Kemerdekaan dan Objektiviti" berleluasa di Malaysia. Ancaman ini memberi kesan negatif terhadap penilaian risiko, tanpa mengira kerumitan tugas. Ancaman objektiviti yang menonjol termasuk tekanan sosial, kebiasaan, dan intimidasi. Yang penting, ancaman ini mempunyai kesan yang lebih ketara terhadap penilaian risiko semasa menjalankan tugas yang lebih mudah, terutamanya apabila juruaudit menilai bahagian audit rutin dan kurang rumit. Ini menyerlahkan keperluan mendesak bagi juruaudit dalaman untuk menguruskan objektiviti dengan berkesan, mengukuhkan peranan mereka sebagai penilai risiko yang tidak berat sebelah dan boleh dipercayai.

Kata Kunci: Ancaman Objektiviti, Prestasi Penilaian Risiko, Juruaudit Dalaman, Malaysia

Introduction

The incidents of corporate collapses due to the fiduciary negligence of corporate governance actors have continuously reduced the public trust in the overall corporate governance system. The persistence of corporate failures has raised apprehensions about internal audits' efficacy in both identifying and mitigating critical risks and in delivering the value they are anticipated to provide. In some cases, there appears to be a misalignment between the expectations set by industry standards and the actual performance of internal audits in practice (Kotb et al., 2020). Internal auditors, considered among the cornerstone actors of corporate governance, have faced mounting criticism for their perceived shortcomings in discharging their duties diligently. This criticism has been substantiated by the exposure of high-profile scandals involving well-established conglomerates, such as Toshiba, which overstated profits by a staggering USD1.8 billion, and Silver Bird Berhad, where the falsification of invoices amounting to RM64.7 million came to light. In both of these instances, the failure of internal auditors to effectively assess accounting irregularities and fraud risks resulted in undetected fraudulent activities, causing significant financial losses and severe damage to the reputation of the companies involved. This failure contradicts the concept of audit quality (Deangelo, 1981).

In addition to genuine failures, there are instances where internal auditors successfully identified and raised concerns about irregularities but faced undue pressure to suppress their findings within the internal audit reports. A recent example of this occurred with The Star Entertainment Group, which became the subject of an investigation by the Independent Casino Commission in New South Wales, Australia. The allegations included money laundering, organized crime connections, and fraud taking place at its Pyrmont casino. The internal auditor had flagged these concerning indications, but they were unfortunately disregarded by the top management (Wootton, 2022).

This clearly indicates that the primary underlying factors responsible for the shortcomings in an internal audit's risk assessment can be attributed to a lack of objectivity (Chambers, 2015:AL Fayi, 2022). The issue of "objectivity" becomes prevalent in the internal audit context due to the uniqueness of the internal audit's dual role functions, which, on the one hand, acts as an agent to monitor the

effectiveness of the governance system (independence assurance on the effectiveness of internal control), whereas on the other hand acts as one of the management partners (consulting and advising management on governance matters). The dual roles of an internal auditor (i.e., providers of both assurance services within the organization and consultancy services to managers) expose them to conditions that threaten objectivity (Jameson, 2011). The situation deteriorates when internal auditors compromise their professional values as independent assessors in favour of their commercial interests, leading them to align more closely with the top management at the expense of other stakeholders (Khelil & Khlif, 2022). Specifically, in making judgments, the internal auditor may be influenced by objectivity threat, which is "situations, actions or relationships that are likely to lead the internal auditor to subordinate their judgment on the audit matters to that of others" (Jameson, 2011). By upholding objectivity, the internal auditor successfully resisted any external pressures that could have compromised the quality of the internal audit, including any attempts to manipulate or alter the audit report's findings (AL Fayi, 2022). Internal auditor's objectivity could be further enhanced if the independence at the internal audit function level is preserved, which indirectly leads to the overall internal audit effectiveness (Alqudah et al., 2023).

As the sources of information highly relied upon by multi-stakeholders such as the Board of Directors (BOD), Audit Committee (AC), and external auditors (Trotman, 2013), the issue of an internal auditor's objectivity needs to be addressed thoroughly, especially on how it could reduce internal auditor's ability to make sound risk judgment. The impact of objectivity on internal auditors' risk judgment performance might vary depending on the level of complexity of the task given. As such, this study is set up to examine the relationship between objectivity threat and internal auditors' risk judgment performance in both scenarios, namely low- and high-complexity risk judgment tasks. Specifically, the present study will provide the answer to two research questions. Firstly, it will answer the question of whether Malaysian internal auditors encounter objectivity threats and highlight the most prevalent objectivity threats they experience. Secondly, it will provide an answer on whether the objectivity threats will cause a detrimental effect on internal auditors' risk judgment performance in two levels of

task complexity that could contribute practically to the internal audit profession.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Risk Judgment Performance

The auditing process is described as a sequence of processes (Bamber, 1980) which requires internal auditors to exercise their professional judgment. A study on audit judgment is crucial to evaluate the need for improvement and to identify the sources of internal and external factors and the remedies for such impairment (Bonner, 1999; Libby & Luft, 1993; Trotman, 1998). The importance of risk judgment is clearly stated in the International Standards for Professional Practices of Internal Auditing (ISPPIA), particularly in the planning stage, where the Chief Audit Executive (CAE) is required to establish a risk-based plan to direct the internal audit activity (IIA, 2016). CAE would usually depend on the input from the risk judgment made by subordinates. The expertise of both the CAE and the internal audit staff members in forming a sound risk judgment will determine the result of the risk assessment exercised, which is undertaken at least once a year. Specifically, ISPPIA states that an internal auditor "must be alert of significant risk affecting the objectives, the operation and resources" (IIA, 2016), be it the existing risk or emerging risk (Ibrahim, 2016; KPMG, 2008; Soh & Martinov-Bennie, 2011: Taha, 2023).

Kotb et al. (2020) have aptly underscored the necessity for future research endeavors aimed at exploring the evolving role of internal auditors within risk-based corporate governance. Such research should delve into how this role can be best defined, evaluated, and adapted in response to contemporary business developments. Concurrently, Hazaea et al. (2022) have passionately emphasized the urgent need for an investigation into the integral role played by internal auditors in the realm of risk management, given their pivotal function in ensuring the long-term sustainability and stability of organizations. The weight of responsibility carried by internal auditors in this context is undeniably substantial. Collectively, both studies have illuminated the critical importance of conducting in-depth research on the topic of internal auditors' risk judgment within the domains of governance, risk management, and control (GRC)."

Low-quality judgment is presented in the form of inconsistency, inaccuracy, and lack of consensus among auditors in their judgment (Iskandar & Isellin, 1996; Trotman, 1985, 1998). The case of Toshiba, Olympus, and Silver Bird Berhad present real case examples of low judgment quality by an internal auditor (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Chambers, 2015; Ibrahim, 2016; Tabuchi, 2012; The Star, 2012:Wootton, 2022). With the growing criticism of internal auditors' ability to make sound risk judgments, there is a crucial need to identify the source of flaws, especially objectivity threats.

Objectivity Threat

Agentic Perspectives of Social Cognitive Theory (APSCT) argues that in many conditions, people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their day-to-day lives (Bandura, 2001). This limits the chances to secure the outcomes they desire with the given scarceness of time, energy, and resources. In an internal auditing context, the internal auditor is surrounded by social conditions (the organization's member attitude towards internal audit practices) and institutional practices (the reporting structure) that fall beyond their control. Specifically, in discharging his or her duties, an internal auditor may be influenced by objectivity threats, which are "situations, actions, or relationships that are likely to influence internal auditors to subordinate their judgment on audit matters to that of others" (Jameson, 2011). The variances in quality of assurance made by an internal auditor depend so much on individual auditor differences in exercising "objectivity" or "unbiased mental attitude" and response toward the objectivity threat from its environment.

A study by Miller and Rittenberg (2015), "The Politics of Internal Auditing", provides evidence that threats come in many forms; they can be managed and mitigated but not eliminated. The authors highlighted that professional competence alone is not sufficient to manage or mitigate threats. It also depends so much on the individual internal auditor's adherence to Standards and their commitment towards internal audit professions. Internal auditors' commitment to ethics, especially objectivity, was found to minimize audit quality behavior (Yulianti et al., 2023). Specifically, higher adherence to the Internal Audit Core Principles by internal auditors is associated with a lower likelihood of being pressured to modify audit findings (Calvin, 2021). As one of the

key corporate governance actors whose opinions are highly relied upon
by the other key corporate governance actors (BODs, AC including
external auditors), internal auditors need to be able to manage the
objectivity threats to provide confidence in their services as independent
assurers. Ashfaq et al. (2022) conducted interviews with stakeholders
of internal auditors, revealing that objectivity is a pivotal factor
contributing to the trust that external auditors and stakeholders place in
the work of internal auditors. It serves as a determining factor in their
effectiveness. This observation is further reinforced by the findings of a
regression analysis, which identified a significant positive relationship
between the objectivity of internal auditors and both its effectiveness
and the degree of reliance placed on it by external auditors. It is
thought-provoking to consider how much the job of internal auditors is
influenced by the competing interests of different groups of people and
the necessity to uphold their organization's credibility by maintaining a
balance between being independent and objective, as suggested by Kotb
et al. (2020). The enduring challenge of upholding objectivity remains a
subject of scrutiny, as there exists skepticism regarding the tendency of
internal auditors to align more closely with management interests, often
to the potential detriment of other stakeholders (Khelil & Khlif, 2022).

IPPF Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity (Jameson,
2011) listed nine main objectivity threats that could impair the internal
auditor's objectivity. The details of each threat are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Objectivity Threats

Threat	Detail
Social Pressures	Social pressure threats may arise when an auditor is exposed to, or perceived to be exposed to, pressures from external parties.
Economic Interest	This threat may arise when the auditor has an economic stake in the performance of the organization. An auditor may fear that significant negative findings, such as the discovery of illegal acts, could jeopardise the entity's future and, hence, the auditor's own interests as an employee. This threat also arises when the auditor audits the work or a department of an individual who may subsequently make decisions that directly affect the auditor's future employment opportunities or salary.

Threat	Detail
Personal Relationship	This threat may arise when an auditor is a close friend or relative of the manager or an employee of the audit client. The auditor may be tempted to overlook, soften, or delay reporting negative audit findings to avoid embarrassing the friend or relative.
Familiarity	This threat may arise because of an auditor's long-term relationship with the audit client. Familiarity may cause an auditor to lose objectivity during an audit by making the auditor overly sympathetic to the client. Alternatively, familiarity may cause an auditor to prejudge an audit client based on previous problems (or non-problems) and assume a posture consistent with the prejudgment rather than taking a fresh, objective look.
Cultural, Racial and Gender Biases	This threat may arise from cultural, racial, or gender biases. For example, in a multidivisional organization, a domestically based auditor may be biased or prejudiced against audit clients located in certain foreign locations. Alternatively, an auditor may be unduly critical of different practices and customs or an audit client managed or staffed by employees of a particular race or gender.
Cognitive Biases	This threat may arise from an unconscious and unintentional psychological bias in interpreting information depending on a person's role in a situation. For example, if someone takes a critical audit perspective, he or she may overlook positive information. Conversely, if someone takes a positive facilitative perspective, he or she may discount negative information. In addition, an auditor may come with certain preconceived notions and tend to see evidence confirming such notions.
Self-Review	Self-review threats may arise when an auditor reviews his or her own work performed during a previous audit or consulting engagement. For example, an auditor may audit a department repeatedly or in consecutive years, or the auditor may provide consulting services in connection with a system implementation that he or she subsequently must audit. Furthermore, the auditor may provide recommendations for operational improvements

Threat	Detail
	and subsequently review processes that were changed in accordance with those recommendations. All of these examples represent situations in which the auditor could conceivably become less critical or observant of the errors or deficiencies due to the difficulty of maintaining objectivity when reviewing his or her own work.
Intimidation	Intimidation threats arise when an auditor is deterred from acting objectively by threats—actual or perceived—or being overtly or covertly coerced by audit clients or other interested parties.
Advocacy	Advocacy threats arise from auditors acting biased in promoting or advocating for or against the audit client to the point that subsequent objectivity may be compromised.

Source: IPPF: Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity (Jameson, 2011)

Comparing the listed objectivity threats, the most highly cited objectivity threats in the academic literature are the social pressure threat, familiarity threat, and self-review threat resulting from certain conditions, especially the internal audit's organizational status, dual roles (assurance versus consulting) and the use of internal audit as a management training ground (Stewart & Subramaniam, 2010). A study conducted in the Middle East found that social pressure is present in the form of persistent workplace bullying over an extended period, which has a detrimental impact on an internal auditor's ability to confidently voice valid opinions and identify flaws, mistakes, and unethical conduct (Taha, 2023). At times, internal auditors may find themselves compelled to offer somewhat partial information and reports in an attempt to evade bullying from senior managers. Additionally, they may face isolation as they hesitate to openly discuss the challenges they encounter in the workplace. These factors collectively contribute to a diminished dedication to improving internal audit processes and practices (Taha, 2023). In Malaysia, Razali et al. (2016) found the most prevalent objectivity threats are social pressure threats, cognitive biases threats, and intimidation threats. The result of the study indicates a loophole in the governance of internal audit, particularly in the aspect of the reporting line (Chambers & Odar, 2015), which need to be addressed to ensure that internal auditor can discharge their duties objectively. The

results supported Ali et al. (2012) and Shamsuddin et al. (2014), who found that internal auditors are threatened to the extent that they are hindered from performing their duties efficiently and effectively.

Samagaio and Felício (2023) found that the quality of internal auditing is boosted when internal auditors can perform their work without threats of self-interest, intimidation or otherwise. When the objectivity of the internal auditor is threatened, they tend to subordinate their judgment on audit matters (Jameson, 2011; Khelil & Khlif, 2022). Objectivity threats have been proven to have a negative impact on external auditor judgment performance (i.e., accuracy, consistency, and consensus). In both scenarios, low- and high-complexity tasks and the level of social pressure experienced by an individual internal auditor will explain the variance in their risk judgment performance. While the existence of social pressure in the Malaysian internal audit environment is known (Ali et al., 2012; Razali et al., 2016; Shamsuddin et al., 2014), its influences on internal auditor's risk judgment performance are yet to be explored. This argument leads to the following hypothesis:

H_1: Internal auditor's objectivity threats negatively influence internal auditors' risk judgment performance.

Research Methodology

Participants

The questionnaires of this study were randomly sent to internal auditors of 300 Public Listed Companies and 300 Government Agencies located around Wilayah Persekutuan, Selangor, and Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya. A booklet containing the research instrument was distributed to 600 potential respondents. Of the distributed booklets, 274 completed instruments were returned, indicating a 45.6% response rate.

Data Collection

A sample of 274 individuals working as internal auditors in the private sector (188 samples, 69%) and public sector (86 samples, 31%) organizations in Wilayah Persekutuan, Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya were collected. Table 2 presents the selected demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study.

Table 2: Demographic Information

Demographic	Detail	Private Sector		Public Sector		Total n = 274	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	85	45.2	43	50	128	46.7
	Female	103	54.8	43	50	146	53.3
Race	Malay	140	74.5	78	90.7	218	79.6
	India	14	7.4	5	5.8	19	6.9
	Chinese	33	17.6	1	1.2	34	12.4
	Others	1	0.5	2	2.3	3	1.1
Position	Chief Audit Executive	8	4.3	2	2.3	10	3.6
	Senior Manager	22	11.7	8	9.3	30	10.9
	Manager	50	26.6	6	7.0	56	20.4
	Assistant Manager	28	14.9	15	17.4	43	15.7
	Senior Executive	50	26.6	16	18.6	66	24.1
	Executive	29	15.4	37	43.0	66	24.1
	Others	1	0.5	2	2.3	3	1.1
Experiences	Less than 5 years	78	41.5	47	54.7	125	45.6
	5 to 10 years	72	38.3	29	33.7	101	36.9
	10 to 15 years	21	11.2	8	9.3	29	10.6
	More than 15 years	17	9.0	2	2.3	19	6.9
Professional Qualification	Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)	30	16.0	7	8.1	37	13.5
	Chartered Accountant (CA)	27	14.4	13	15.1	40	14.6
	Certified Public Accountant (CPA)	5	2.7	2	2.3	7	2.6
	Certified Global Management Accountant (CGMA)	7	3.7	1	1.2	8	2.9
	No Professional Qualification	119	63.3	63	73.3	182	66.4

Out of the total respondents, 128 were males (Private: 85, Public: 43) and 146 were females (Private: 103, Public: 43). The 274 internal auditors comprised ten (Private: 8, Public: 2) Chief Internal Auditors (CIA), thirty (Private: 22, Public: 8), senior managers, fifty-six (Private:

50, Public: 6)   managers, forty-three (Private: 28, Public: 15) assistant managers, sixty- six (Private: 50, Public: 16) senior executives, sixty-six (Private: 29, Public: 37) executives, and four respondents under other positions. Meanwhile, 54.4% of the respondents have more than five years of experience (101 less than ten years; 48 more than ten years); 33.6% of the respondents possess a professional qualification, while the rest have no professional qualifications.

Research Instrument

The employed research instrument contained three main sections. The first section presented the audit task for the experiment. The task related to risk judgment has two levels of complexity: high and low. Respondents were required to perform both high-complexity and low-complexity audit tasks. The second section contained items concerning "objectivity threat". The last section concerned respondent's demographic characteristics, which also included questions on experience.

This study used risk judgment associated with the internal control findings related to procurement and collection procedures, as this area is reported to be susceptible to irregularities and fraud. The instrument was placed in a booklet together with a cover letter and prepaid envelope. Prior to the actual survey, the contents of the audit task that were to be used as the experimental instrument were validated by experts comprising six internal auditors (with more than 10 years of experience as an internal auditor) and five senior accounting lecturers. The objective of the validation was to ensure that the information and statements contained in the instruments were realistic and reflected the actual nature of risk judgment performed by internal auditors. Based on the experts' feedback, improvements were made in both cases concerning word choice, sentence structure, and case format. The participating experts agreed that the two cases differ in their level of complexity.

Operationalization of Variables

Risk Judgment Performance

The measurement for risk judgment performance used in the main study is presented via two risk judgment task scenarios, namely Audit Task 1 (less complex) and Audit Task 2 (complex). Bonner (2008) stated that the task factors could influence one's judgment. Accordingly, Shaw (1981), as cited in Kim and Soergel (2006), stated that the chances of the outcome

of the task being substandard increases as task difficulty increases. Therefore, to provide a robustness of the result, Audit Task 1 has been specifically developed to be less complex than Audit Task 2. Audit Task 1 involves the risk judgment on internal control deficiencies in property, plant, and equipment procedures, whereas Audit Task 2 involves the risk judgment on internal control deficiencies in collection procedures. The potential risk for property, plant, and equipment procedure in Audit Task 1 has been developed to be direct and straightforward, thus enabling the auditor to easily perform risk judgment without exercising extra cognitive effort. Risk judgment performance on the less complex task is evaluated based on the percentage of the correct answers to questions on the risk associated with property, plant, and equipment procedure, as depicted in Figure 1.

Panel A: Potential Risk
• Misappropriation of assets.
• Unrecorded property, plant, and equipment.
• Financial loss due to unexpected damages.
• Misclassification to conceal unauthorized purchases.
• Unauthorized purchase of property, plant, and equipment.
• Overstatement of property, plant, and equipment.
• Unauthorized disposal of property, plant, and equipment.
• Physical loss of equipment.
Panel B: Internal Control Deficiency
• Authority limits for procurement (manual and system) are not updated in line with the latest authorization limit approved by the Board of Directors. Five out of ten properties purchasedexceeded the manager's approval limit.
• Three incidents of capital expenditure (all items above RM10,000 have been expenses under "Miscellaneous Expenditure" in the Statement of Income. The payment has been approvedby the Head of Department.
• All items are disposed of with prior approval from authorized personnel. However, there is no procedure for the sale of the disposed assets (i.e., quotation from the potential buyer of wreckage, and recordings of the disposal's proceedings).

- The insurance coverage for material properties is not consistently monitored (i.e., expiry,no insurance coverage, etc.)

- The Property, Plant and Equipment Listing does not tally with the General Ledger.

- The useful lives of the assets are not consistently applied to similar assets.

- Properties are recorded in the Property, Plant, and Equipment Listing but they do not exist.

- The equipment is not properly tagged.

Figure 1: Audit Task 1 (Less Complex task) - Risk Judgment on Internal Control Deficiencies for Property, Plant and Equipment Procedure

On the contrary, the potential risk for the collection procedure in Audit Task 2 has been constructed to be long and detailed. It has also been constructed to be closely related to each other, thus indirectly forcing internal auditors to exercise extra cognitive effort. The instrument has been validated by an expert to ensure that the level of difficulties and level of cognitive effort for completion of the task differs between Audit Task 1 and Audit Task 2. This is crucial since the level of task complexity might explain variance in the internal auditor's risk judgment performance. The risk judgment performance of the highly complex task is determined based on the percentage of correct answers to questions on the risk associated with the collection procedure, as depicted in Figure 2. The total scores for each task were pre-determined based on the answers developed following a series of discussions with professionals and senior academics.

Panel A: Potential Risk

- Collection on misappropriated accounts, concealed by debits into other accounts besides cashaccounts (e.g., expense account) or by incorrect issue of credit note.

- Invalid or incomplete data and information could possibly cause delays in the decision-making process.

- Collectable accounts are written off or otherwise credited; customer remittances are misappropriated.

- Lack of audit trail on the handover of cash.

- Cheques received are deposited but not recorded; cheques written to employees for the same amount are also not recorded.
- Fictitious customers or invoices are added to the trade debtor's master file.
- Unauthorized disposal of property, plant, and equipment.
- Delays in the detection of the manipulation of accounting entries to perpetrate fraud.

Panel B: Internal Control Deficiency

- There is no segregation of duties in the collection process. The designated Accounts Clerk received (cash/cheque), recorded it in the Collection Register and prepared an official receipt.
- A review of the data entry for cash receipts from January 2015 to December 2015 discovered that important information (i.e., official receipt number, payer name) was left blank. This contributes to unresolved, long outstanding, unreconciled items.
- There is no segregation of duties between the Cashier and Debtor Officers (responsible for sending monthly statements to all or overdue customers). Complaints are handled by the same person.
- Long unreconciled transactions are not promptly investigated.
- The sharing of the password for data entry of the sales transaction.
- No limits for the approval of customer credit notes (including write-offs) in the system.
- A daily reconciliation does not include the procedure to match proof of cash deposit/cheque bank-in to the journal ledger and cash collection register.

Figure 2: Audit Task 2 - Complex task - Risk Judgment on Internal Control Deficiency in Collection Procedure.

Objectivity Threats

Objectivity threats were measured by nine (9) items representing nine (9) types of objectivity threats, as listed in the IPPF Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity (Jameson, 2011) (see Table 1 for details). The respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1= never; 7=always) the frequency of possible threats that they have encountered in task situations with an auditee.

Manipulation Check

The manipulation checks on the task complexity are measured by three different questions: whether the task requires coordination among different activities, whether the task is complex, and whether the task is mentally demanding. These items were adapted from Iskandar and Sanusi (2011). Upon completion of the task, respondents were requested to rate each of the questions on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1= strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on risk judgment performance for low- and high-complexity audit tasks. The mean value of risk judgment performance is the percentage of the total scores of the correct answers obtained by each participant over the overall scores assigned to each task.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistic-Risk Judgment Performances

Variables	Low Task Complexity n=274				High Task Complexity n=274			
	Mean	Std. Dev	Lowest Mean	Highest Mean	Mean	Std. Dev	Lowest Mean	Highest Mean
Risk Judgment Performance	55.931	24.935	12.5	100.0	40.967	16.417	12.5	75.0

The mean value of risk judgment performance for low-complexity tasks is 55.9%, ranging from 12.5% to 100%. Meanwhile, the mean value for risk judgment performance for high-complexity tasks is 41.0%, ranging from 12.5% to 75%. The variance of the means score between low- and high-complexity tasks reflects a higher level of difficulty and effort needed to perform high-complexity tasks.

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of social pressure experienced by Malaysian internal auditors. Out of 274 respondents, 76.3% agreed that they had been directed to suppress or significantly modify valid internal audit findings or reports *(M=3.201, SD=1.708)*. More than half of the respondents (68.2%) agreed on the fact that the

situation that led to such pressure was due to "operational audits that would reflect badly on key operational management" *(M=3.058, SD=1.811)*. Other situations that led to pressure to suppress or significantly modify valid internal audit findings or reports include a) financial reporting issues conflict with the external auditor or the Chief Financial Officer (59.5%, *M=2.577, SD=1.680*), b) the executive's misuse of corporate funds (52.6%, *M=2.431, SD=1.683*), and c) the executive's misuse of travel-related funds (53.3%, *M=2.343, SD=1.621*).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics-Objectivity Threats
Experienced by Internal Auditor

Types of threats	Mean Score	SD	Percentage of respondents who reported that objectivity threats occur at least sometimes
Social Pressures	4.507	1.404	97
Cognitive Biases	3.989	1.658	90
Intimidation	4.033	1.754	90
Familiarity	4.398	1.469	88
Personal Relationship	3.307	1.559	87
Self-Review	3.927	1.564	93
Economic Interest	3.781	1.395	95
Advocacy	3.799	1.480	93
Cultural, Racial and Gender Biases	3.945	1.490	93

The analysis and discussion of the results were structured around the answers to the two research questions specified above. Thus, the response relating to RQ1 allowed us to conclude that objectivity threats existed in the Malaysian internal auditing environment. Data from Table 4 addressed RQ1 and indicated that internal auditors in Malaysia did encounter all nine objectivity threats (social pressure, economic interest, personal relationship, familiarity, cultural, racial and gender biases, cognitive biases, self-review, intimidation, and advocacy), as listed in the IPPF: Practice Guide on Independence and Objectivity (Jameson, 2011). Furthermore, the results showed 97% of respondents admitting to social pressure threats (mean=4.51, 97%) as being the most prevalent threats in the Malaysian internal audit environment. This is followed by familiarity threats (mean=4.39, 88%), intimidation threats (mean=4.03,

90%), and cognitive biases (mean=3.89, 90%). Social pressure, by definition, is a threat that may arise when an internal auditor is exposed to or perceives that he or she is exposed to pressures from external parties. Meanwhile, intimidation threat is the threat that may arise from actual or perceived pressures or being obviously or secretly pressured by audit clients or other interested parties (Jameson, 2011). This finding was consistent with Miller and Rittenberg (2015), who found that internal auditors were pressured to omit high-risk areas and were directed to purposely audit low-risk areas. The result of the current study indicates a loophole in the governance of internal audit, particularly in the aspect of the reporting line (Chambers & Odar, 2015), which need to be addressed to ensure that internal auditor can discharge their duties objectively. The results also supported Ali et al. (2012), Shamsuddin et al. (2014), and Taha (2023), who found that internal auditors were threatened to the extent that they were hindered from discharging their duty efficiently and effectively.

In contrast to social pressure and intimidation, cognitive biases originate from the internal auditors themselves. Cognitive biases are defined as threats that may arise from an unconscious and unintentional psychological bias in interpreting information (Jameson, 2011). In this condition, an internal auditor may have a predetermined notion and tend to find evidence confirming the notion while neglecting important information. This finding might indicate a lack of attention to the need for professional scepticism in the internal audit profession. While IPPF is silent about the concept of professional scepticism, ISA 200 (applicable for external auditors) stresses the need for "*an attitude that includes a questioning mind, being alert to conditions, which may indicate possible misstatement due to error or fraud, and a critical assessment of audit evidence* (ISA 200: Para 13(l): page 79)" (IFAC, 2009). Overall, in addressing RQ1, the results are consistent with the study done in other jurisdictions, which reported social pressure threats (Stewart & Subramaniam, 2010) as the major objectivity threat. However, Malaysian internal auditors experienced a low occurrence of self-review threats (mean=3.85) as compared to other jurisdictions, for instance, in Singapore (Goodwin & Yeo, 2001). This is supported by Ahmad and Taylor (2009), who found that Malaysian internal auditors did not perceive a conflict between their assurance and consulting roles and thus experienced low self-review threats.

Data Analysis

To test the model developed, we used the partial least square (PLS) approach. PLS is a second-generation multivariate technique (Hair et al., 2012) that can simultaneously evaluate the measurement model (the relationships between constructs and their corresponding indicators) and the structural model (the relationships between construct and construct).

Measurement Model

The current study used partial least squares (PLS) modeling using the SmartPLS 3.3.3 version (Ringle et al., 2015) as the statistical tool to examine the measurement and structural model. We followed the suggestions of Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to test the model developed using a 2-step approach. First, we tested the measurement model to test the validity and reliability of the instruments used, following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019) and Ramayah et al. (2018). Next, we ran the structural model to test the hypothesis developed.
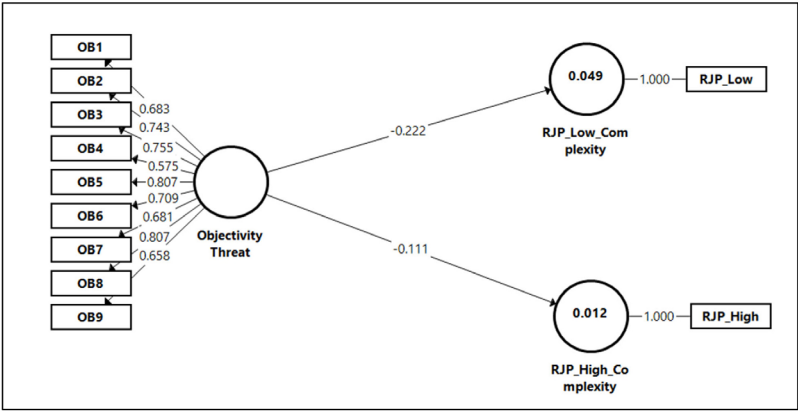
Figure 3: The PLS Algorithm Results

Before interpreting the results of our structural models, we evaluate the quality of our measurement models. Objectivity threat was measured reflectively by 9 indicators: social pressure, economic interest, personal relationship, familiarity, cultural, racial and gender biases, cognitive biases, self-review, intimidation, and advocacy. The measurement model of the study is depicted in Figure 3. As summarized in Table 5, the reflective measurement model for objectivity threat performs well

with regard to standard quality criteria. All outer loadings are above the 0.70 threshold except for social pressure (0.68), familiarity threat (0.58) and economic interest (0.68), which is adequate as long as the AVE meet the threshold of 0.50 (Thurasamy et al., 2018). The average variance extracted of 0.513 exceeds 0.50, indicating appropriate convergent validity of the construct. Finally, the composite reliabilities are above 0.90 but below 0.95, indicating appropriate construct reliability. The discriminant validity of the objectivity threat construct fulfils the criterion of HTMT 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001), thus signifying that discriminant validity has been ascertained. Besides, the result of HTMT inference also shows that the confidence interval does not show a value of 1 (Henseler et al., 2015), which also confirms discriminant validity. Taken together, both these validity tests show that the measurement items are both valid and reliable.

Table 5: Reflective Measurements and Quality Criteria

Reflective and Single-item measure	Loading > 0.70	AVE > 0.50	CR > 0.70	HTMI CI without 1
Objectivity Threat				
Social Pressures	0.683	0.513	0.904	RJP_High [0.056:0.175]
Cognitive Biases	0.743			RJP_Low [0.105:0.175]
Intimidation	0.755			
Familiarity	0.575			
Personal Relationship	0.807			
Self-Review	0.709			
Economic Interest	0.681			
Advocacy	0.807			
Cultural, Racial and Gender Biases	0.658			
Risk Judgment Performances	1			

Note: AVE average variance extracted, CR composite reliability, CI 90% bias-corrected confidence interval, HTMT heterotrait-monotrait-ratio

Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square

To evaluate the structural models' predictive power, R^2 was calculated to represent "*the amount of variance in the dependent variable explained by all the independent variables linked to it*" (Hair Jr et al., 2017, p.209). Internal auditor's objectivity threats explained 5% of the variance in the low-complexity risk judgment performance, whereas it explained only 1.2% of the variance in high-complexity risk judgment performance. Using a bootstrapping technique with a re-sampling of 500, the path estimates and *t*-statistics were calculated for the hypothesized relationships.

Specifically, RO2 of the present study is to examine the effect of objectivity threat on internal auditor's risk judgment performance. As depicted in Figure 4, it was found that social pressure was negatively related to audit judgment performance regardless of the level of complexity of the risk judgment task performed (low complexity: $B= -0.222, p<0.05$; high complexity: $B= -0.111, p<0.10$).
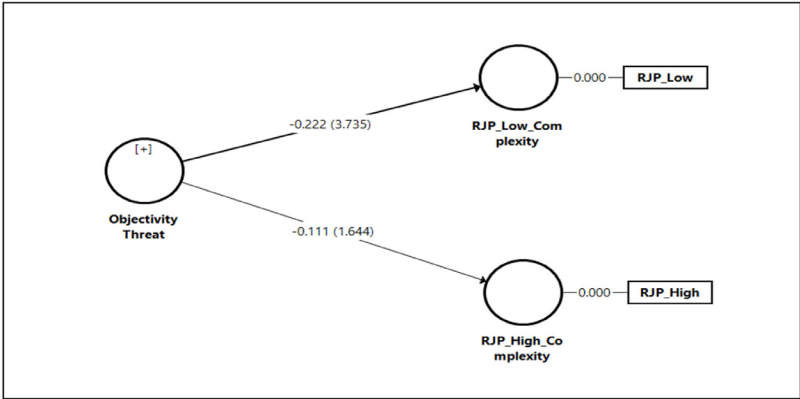
Figure 4: Structural Model

The impact of social pressure on risk judgment performance is higher in the low-complexity task ($B= -0.222$) than in the high-complexity task ($B= -0.111$). This result indicates that the severity of the objectivity threats in influencing risk judgment performance is higher when internal auditors perform risk judgment in the area that they are familiar with and less complex. On the other hand, in a high-complexity task that involves a high level of uncertainty in performing the task successfully, the internal auditor might exercise a high level

of scepticism and precaution to reduce the risk of making improper risk judgments. Hence, in this condition, the severity of the objectivity threat on the risk judgment could be minimized. Thus, H1 is supported in both low- and high-complexity tasks. The result of hypothesis testing is depicted in Table 6 as follows:

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis		Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Objectivity threat -> Risk Judgment Performance (Low Complexity)	-0.222	0.059	3.735*	0.000	Supported
	Objectivity threat -> Audit Judgment Performance (High Complexity)	-0.111	0.068	1.644**	0.050	Supported

Notes: *p< 0.05, **p< 0.10

Conclusions and Practical Implications

Recently, there has been growing criticism toward internal auditors (as one of the key corporate governance actors) for their failure to discharge their responsibility diligently. Internal auditors' failure to assess the existence of accounting irregularities and fraud risk led to fraud when undetected, causing huge company losses and reputation damage. The main root cause might be the influence of objectivity threat, which is "situation, actions or relationships" that are likely to lead internal auditors to compromise their judgment on the audit matters to that of others. This study yielded persuasive empirical evidence of the existence of all nine objectivity threats listed by IPPF (social pressure, economic interest, personal relationship, familiarity, cultural, racial and gender biases, cognitive biases, self-review, intimidation, and advocacy) in the Malaysian internal audit environment. Malaysian internal auditors perceived that social pressure threat, familiarity threat, intimidation threat, and cognitive biases were the most prevalent threats that existed in their environment. The existence of social pressure and intimidation threats signal loopholes in the current governance, especially in the context of the reporting line of internal auditors. Internal auditors are hindered from discharging their fiduciary duty independently and objectively. The condition worsens with the existence of familiarity threats. This might be the main cause of internal auditors' failure to detect and report frauds and irregularities objectively. In contrast to

social pressure and intimidation threats, internal auditors also concede the existence of cognitive biases (psychological threats), which signal the need for more attention to be paid to the importance of the concept of professional scepticism in the internal audit profession. Most importantly, the existence of objectivity threats has been proven to cause detrimental effects on the internal auditors' risk judgment performance, especially when the threats are imposed by those entrusted to govern internal audit activity in an organisation, such as the audit committee.

Practically, this empirical evidence is important to create awareness among the individual internal auditors as well as their stakeholders on the negative impact of objectivity threat on the internal auditors' risk judgment performance. In order to perform risk judgment with an unbiased mental attitude, individual internal auditors should recognise the possible action, situation or relationship that could induce social pressure. Implementation of possible mitigating measures that may reduce or eliminate the social pressure should be undertaken to increase internal auditors' ability to perform risk judgment, thus enhancing the quality of assurance made. Since the impact of objectivity threat on risk judgment performance is severe in the low complexity task as compared to high complexity task, mitigating measures such as rotation of audit assignment assigned to an individual could be implemented. Governance of internal audit should be strengthened so that the loopholes that lead to the existence of objectivity could be improved. Quality assurance by an external independent party, such as the Institute of Internal Auditor Malaysia, can be an alternate mitigating measure that could oversee the quality of internal audit governance in an organization. For instance, the quality of the audit committee (such as competency of audit committee members, conflict of interest, etc.) will be monitored in the quality assurance exercise. Given the findings derived from this current study, future studies could explore the individual internal auditors' characteristics that could reduce the impact of objectivity threats on internal auditors' risk judgment performance. Future research could also consider environmental factors that could minimize the impact of objectivity threats, such as external quality review so that internal auditors could provide high-quality risk-based assurance on an organization's governance, risk management, and control.

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Shifting Tides: Malaysia's 2023 State Assembly Elections

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Abstract: Six states in Malaysia concluded their elections on August 12, 2023, fiercely contested by major party coalitions. Major changes have taken place in seat composition for the respective state assemblies. How did the respective coalitions campaign and fare at the six state elections? The coalitions issued manifestos as part of the campaign but the content of the manifestos had not been adequately discussed during the campaign, and hence did not have much bearing on the voting public. Based on the documentary analysis backed by informal interviews with voters, this study analyses the state assembly elections that showed a status quo in all six states. Anwar Ibrahim-led progressive, multi-ethnic alliance, Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional (PH-BN), had been re-elected in three of the states it had held prior to the election. Perikatan Nasional (PN), the opposition bloc led by former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and backed by a conservative Islamist party, also held the three states under its control but it managed to wrest several seats in the states held by PH-BN. PN took 60 percent of the 245 state assembly seats contested, relying on the contention that Anwar and his multi-ethnic coalition would not protect Malays and Islam. These elections have no direct impact on the political stability of the country. The unity government has four years to unite an increasingly polarised country as it appeared during the election, and needs to improve its social and economic performance.

Keywords: Malaysia, Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, Perikatan Nasional, State elections.

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Abstrak: Enam buah negeri di Malaysia telah mengadakan pilihanraya Dewan Undangan Negeri masing-masing pada 12 Ogos 2023 yang menyaksikan pertandingan sengit antara gabungan-gabungan parti yang besar. Perubahan besar dapat disaksikan dari segi komposisi kerusi di negeri-negeri ini. Bagaimanakah gabungan-gabungan ini berkempen dan apakah keputusannya di enam negeri ini? Gabungan-gabungan ini meluncurkan manifesto masing-masing, namun isi kandungannya tidak dibahaskan secara menyeluruh kepada para pengundi. Berdasarkan analisis dokumen dan temu bual tidak formal dengan para pengundi, kajian ini menyelidik pilihanraya negeri ini yang menunjukkan status quo di kesemua enam negeri. Gabungan Pakatan Harapan dan Barisan Nasional (PH-BN) yang dipimpin Anwar Ibrahim telah diundi semula untuk memimpin di tiga negeri yang dikuasainya sebelum ini. Perikatan Nasional (PN), blok pembangkang yang diketuai bekas Perdana Menteri Muhyiddin Yassin juga menang di tiga negeri yang dikuasai mereka sebelum ini di samping berjaya memenangi beberapa kerusi yang sebelum ini dimenangi PH-BN, termasuk negeri-negeri yang dipimpin PH-BN. PN memenangi 60 peratus dari 245 kerusi yang dipertandingkan, hasil kempen bahawa gabungan multietnik pimpinan Anwar tidak melindungi nasib orang Melayu dan Islam. Pilihanraya ini tidak memberi dampak langsung terhadap kestabilan politik negara amnya. Kerajaan perpaduan mempunyai empat tahun lagi untuk menyatukan sebuah negara yang semakin terpolarisasi seperti yang dapat disaksikan semasa pilihanraya ini, di samping memperbaiki prestasi sosial dan ekonomi.

Kata kunci: Malaysia, Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, Perikatan Nasional, Pilihanraya negeri.

Introduction

Elections make a major contribution to democratic governance. State elections allow citizens to select their representatives, hold them accountable for their performance in office, and influence policies and overall development. Elections to the House of Representatives and the Legislative Assemblies of the States in Malaysia are conducted by an independent Election Commission using the "first-past-the-post" system in which the candidate securing the highest number of votes wins the seat contested. Article 113 (1) and 114 (1) of the Federal Constitution (2023) states that:

> 113. (1) There shall be an Election Commission, to be constituted in accordance with Article 114, which, subject

to the provisions of federal law, shall conduct elections to the House of Representatives and the Legislative Assemblies of the States and prepare and revise electoral rolls for such elections.

114. (1) The Election Commission shall be appointed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* after consultation with the Conference of Rulers and shall consist of a chairman, a deputy chairman, and five other members.

The Election Commission of Malaysia was established on 4 September 1957 according to Article 114 of the Federal Constitution. During its establishment, the Election Commission comprised only one Chairman and two (2) members. In 2002, the Federal Constitution was amended and the membership of the Election Commission was increased to seven including a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman, and five members. The Election Commission aims to preserve, supervise, and maintain the process of democracy in this country through free and fair elections (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2023).

Elections are about selection, and candidates communicate with voters to provide information. Voters rely on two types of information before casting their votes: the candidates' performance in office and their campaign statements. The model of electoral competition by Downs and the probabilistic voting model introduced by Lindbeck and Weibull emphasise campaign premises (Downs, 1957; Lindbeck & Weibull, 1957). They argue that voters cast their votes on the basis of campaign promises. Voters generally use campaign promises in the form of policy platforms and vote for candidates whose policies they find most appealing (Ashworth & Mesquita, 2008). Campaign promises are found in a "manifesto," a publication containing a set of policies that the party stands for in an election. Candidates then contest elections rallying behind a manifesto. It is generally recognised that only a few voters read party manifestos, nevertheless manifestos "do constitute the major indirect influence on what parties are seen standing for" (Budge 1987, 18). This, according to Ian Budge (1987, 18), "is because they form the basis of comment in the mass media and provide the cues for questions raised with party candidates at all levels, as well as staple issues for their campaigns." Thus, manifestos aim, in different degrees, at direct and indirect effects on the voters. Laver and Garry (2000, 620) pointed out that manifestos are "strategic documents written by

politically sophisticated party elites with many different objectives in mind."

This study analyses six state assembly elections, considered a "referendum" on the newly formed "unity government" at the federal level under the premiership of Anwar Ibrahim, held in Malaysia in August 2023, the electoral process, key political parties, and major issues. The study is based on available documents, participant observation, and informal interviews conducted with 37 randomly selected individuals who voted in four polling centres in Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan on 12 and 14 August 2023.

The Federation of Malaysia consists of three federal territories, and 11 states in Peninsular Malaysia (i.e., the former Federation of Malaya, which gained independence from the British in 1957), the states of Sabah (formerly British North Borneo), and Sarawak on the island of Borneo, which joined the Federation of Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Besides being federal, the form of government is constitutional, monarchical, and parliamentary at both the state and federal levels. The federal parliamentary system has an elected lower house (*Dewan Rakyat*) based on single-member first-past-the-post constituencies and an appointed upper house (*Dewan Negara*). At the state level, legislative assemblies led by a Chief Minister or Menteri Besar are normally elected concurrently with the federal parliament, except in East Malaysia because of their later entry into the federation. State elections allow citizens to elect ADUNs (*Ahli Dewan Undangan Negeri,* or State Assembly Members) who formulate policies affecting the lives of their constituents.

Malaysia has a population of 32.5 million of whom about 65 percent are classified as Bumiputera (lit. Sons of the Soil), 23 percent ethnic Chinese, 7 percent ethnic Indians, and the rest are classified as Others (Ministry of Economy, 2022). The total number of eligible voters for the 15th General Election was recorded at 21.1 million (Anis & Joseph, 2022). *Pakatan Harapan* (the Alliance of Hope, PH) led by Anwar Ibrahim won the most seats but fell short of a majority. The *Perikatan Nasional* (The National Alliance, PN) alliance led by former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin received the second-largest number of seats. The election did not yield a clear mandate and Malaysia, for

the first time in its history, experienced a hung parliament (Moten, 2023). Subsequently, Anwar Ibrahim succeeded in getting the support of several parties to form the government. He got a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by coalitions and parties pledging their support to the "Unity Government" under his premiership. The agreement was signed by PH, BN (*Barisan Nasional*), GPS (*Gabungan Parti Sarawak*), GRS (*Gabungan Rakyat Sabah*), and Warisan (*Parti Warisan*). The MoU required all the signatories to support Anwar Ibrahim in all matters including those that could have a bearing on the legitimacy of the unity government. Members of Parliament (MPs) who do not comply with the MoU would be considered as having resigned from their party, triggering the anti-hopping law which came into effect on 5 October 2022, and enshrined in the Constitutional (Amendment) (No. 3) Act 2022. The agreement, according to Anwar Ibrahim, was a landmark in the country's political history that will assure political stability (Mazwin & Ibrahim, 2022).

After several counting of the party positions in the parliament, the *Yang di Pertuan Agong*, Malaysia's constitutional monarch, appointed Anwar Ibrahim as the Prime Minister leading the unity government composed of the PH, the BN, and other smaller parties. The King wanted to end the political impasse caused by the hung Parliament and create stability following a period of political unrest. Noticeably, Malaysia had three prime ministers in the past four years before the November polls as members of parliament switched sides for political gain. Since 2018, Malaysia has had five prime ministers, six elections at the state and federal levels**,** different coalition governments**,** and greater political uncertainty.

State Elections

Traditionally, state governments, with the exception of Sabah and Sarawak, hold their elections concurrently with federal polls. The polling machinery is used once and voters indicate their choices for Parliament and their respective state assembly. During the 15th General Elections (GE15), only three states, Perlis, Perak, and Pahang held their state elections concurrently. Due to the ongoing political crisis, the States of Melaka, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak held their state elections before the 15th General Elections. The remaining six states, Kelantan, Kedah,

Terengganu, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Penang decided not to dissolve their legislative assemblies as a form of protest against the federal government's decision to hold GE15 despite strong objections due to concerns over the annual monsoon floods.

Consequently, the elections to the six states were held in August 2023 with increased attention paid to the local issues and quality of state governments. Prior to the elections, three of these states, Penang, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan, were under the governance of Pakatan Harapan, PH. These are urbanised, ethnically diverse states on the peninsular west coast. The remaining three, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu, were controlled by PAS (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, the Malaysian Islamic Party), the dominant member of the *Perikatan Nasional* (PN). These states in the north, are more rural and ethnically homogenous.

Elections in six states were considered by many as a contest of national significance. *Perikatan Nasional* (PN) viewed the polls as an opportunity to strengthen its grip on the three states, Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan, as well as to potentially capture Selangor. "The upcoming state elections in Malaysia represent a referendum on the first eight months of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's 'Unity Government'" (Jamaluddin, 2023). However, the results of these state elections, according to Anwar Ibrahim, are not likely to affect the stability of the federal government (Leong, 2023).

As announced by the Election Commission, elections in the six states in Peninsular Malaysia were held on 12 August 2023. Nominations were held on 29 July 2023, while early voting took place on 8 August 2023 (Povera, 2023). A total of 9.7 million individuals were eligible to vote in the state polls. The elections were held to fill 36 state legislative assembly seats in Kedah; 45 in Kelantan; 32 in Terengganu; 40 in Penang; 56 in Selangor, and 36 in Negeri Sembilan. Kelantan was the first state to dissolve its state assembly on 22 June 2023, followed by Selangor on 23 June 2023. Penang, Kedah, and Terengganu state legislative assemblies were dissolved on 28 June 2023, while Negeri Sembilan was the last to dissolve its state assembly on 1 July 2023. Altogether 245 state assembly seats were contested in the 12 August 2023 polls.

The Contesting Parties

The state election was participated by several coalitions of political parties including PH, BN, PN, MUDA (The Malaysian United Democratic Alliance), PSM (*Parti Sosialis Malaysia* or the Socialist Party of Malaysia), PRM (*Parti Rakyat Malaysia*, or Malaysian People's Party), and independents.

Pakatan Harapan (PH), led by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, has been the ruling coalition since the Malaysian general election held in November 2022. It is the largest coalition in the Dewan Rakyat with 82 seats, 30 seats short of a majority in the lower house, and hence formed a coalition government, called "unity government," with several other parties and coalitions. In the state election, PH included *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (The People's Justice Party, PKR), founded by Anwar Ibrahim, Democratic Action Party (DAP), a centre-left social democratic political party, and the *Parti Amanah Negara* (National Trust Party, AMANAH) advocating a reformist strand of political Islam. PH is believed to enjoy broad-based support from diverse ethnic groups predominantly from the non-Malay community. To retain the support of the non-Malay community, PH relies on multi-ethnic political narrative, is committed to social justice, and emphasises good governance. In the aftermath of the 2022 general election, Anwar formed the coalition composed of PH, UMNO-dominated *Barisan Nasional* coalition, and three other parties from East Malaysia. The grand coalition assumed the name "unity government."

The second largest coalition that took part in the election was the *Barisan Nasional* (the National Front, BN), a coalition of centre-right and right-wing political parties led by Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. Its largest component parties are the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), a Malay nationalist party that aims to prioritise the interests of the ethnic-Malay majority, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), representing the Malaysian Chinese ethnicity; Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), representing the Indian community in Malaysia. Only UMNO took part in the election. The other two component parties, MCA and MIC, decided not to contest the upcoming polls admittedly to focus on building a stronger party for the 16th general election. These two parties performed poorly in the 15th national election held in November 2022. MCA won two of the 44 seats it contested, while the MIC won

one out of 10 seats. The BN is part of the unity government. PH and BN were in an alliance to contest seats in the six-state election.

The third major competitor in the election was the *Perikatan Nasional*, PN, a coalition composed of the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (*Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia*, Bersatu), formed as a strong Malay-based opposition party to *Barisan Nasional*, the pro-Islamic and pro-Malay Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, PAS), a liberal political party, Malaysian People's Movement Party (*Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia*, Gerakan), and Sabah Progressive Party (*Parti Maju Sabah*, SAPP). The PN coalition, led by the former prime minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, was the second largest political coalition in the federal parliament with 74 seats after PH with 82 seats. The PN positioned itself as a defender of race and religion. In an informal discussion, the leader of the PN, Muhyiddin Yasin, told the author that the PN would be the choice for the Malays as it fights to protect their interests and Islam. However, he said that "we will not neglect the interests of the non-Malay citizens of Malaysia."

The youth-centric MUDA (The Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, MUDA), with one elected member of the parliament, "reluctantly decided to run solo" (Dermawan, 2023). MUDA volunteered to be the third component of the unity government. The party did not receive a positive response from PH and hence, according to MUDA President, Pakatan Harapan (PH) ignored its offer to cooperate in the upcoming state elections. "However, not only were we left hanging, but we were also ridiculed when PH chief secretary Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail stated that he did not have time to read the letters" (Alias, 2023). MUDA's president, Syed Saddiq, was critical of the leaders of the unity government for making little progress on campaign promises such as limiting the term of the office of the prime minister, anti-corruption, and reform of government-linked companies.

PSM (*Parti Sosialis Malaysia* or the Socialist Party of Malaysia) also contested the state assembly seats. The party embraces a socialist ideology aiming at ensuring a fair distribution of wealth in a democratic and equal society, free of exploitation. PSM and MUDA entered into an electoral understanding and focused on the Bottom-40 and Middle-40 socioeconomic demography during the election (Vethasalam, 2023).

Another party that took part in the state elections is PRM (*Parti Rakyat Malaysia,* Malaysian People's Party) which promotes the values of socio-economic development, democracy, and basic human rights. The party has been contesting elections without winning any federal or state legislative seats.

Candidates

The nomination process began at 9 a.m., July 29, 2023, and officially closed an hour later at 10 a.m., with 173 candidate nomination centres witnessing a submission of 573 nomination papers. For all practical purposes, the election was a clash between the Unity Government pact comprising PH and BN and the opposition alliance, PN. There were 9,773,571 eligible voters made up of:

- 9,674,456 normal voters,
- 49,660 armed forces members and their spouses,
- 47,728 police force members and their spouses, and
- 1,727 absentee voters based overseas.

The state of Selangor showed the highest number of young voters between the ages of 18 and 20, totaling 274,194 people. This was followed by Kedah with 104,284 voters, Kelantan 96,513 voters; Penang 67,633 voters; Terengganu 64,264 voters, and Negeri Sembilan 55,017 voters. Of the 9,773,571 voters, those aged between 21-29 years old made up the biggest group at 2,169,120 voters or 22.2% followed by those aged between 30-39 years old making up 2,163,982 voters or 22.14%. The youngest group aged 18-20 constituted only 661,905 or 6.7 percent. There were 146,883 or 1.5% voters aged between 80-89, and a total of 28,991 voters aged above 90 years constituting 0.3 % (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2023a).

There was a total of 572 candidates vying for the 245 seats. *Perikatan Nasional* (PN) nominated 168 candidates followed by *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) with 138 candidates, *Barisan Nasional* (BN) 108; *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS) 78; Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA) 19; PRM (People's Party of Malaysia) 14; *Parti Sosialis Malaysia* (PSM) four, and independent candidates 41. It must be noted that while PAS is a member of PN, for the states of Kelantan and Terengganu, PN decided to contest under PAS's logo because of its familiarity with the voters there. One nomination paper belonging to

an independent candidate was rejected. Of the 245 seats, 180 or 73% are straight fights between the PH-BN pact and PN. The remaining 65 seats saw multi-cornered fights: 51 saw 3-cornered fights; and 13 seats saw a four-way contests (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2023a), and one (1) five-cornered fight. Among the candidates contesting, 501 candidates were male, and 71 candidates were female. The oldest candidate was an 80-year-old who contested in Pantai Jerejak, Penang, while the youngest was a 23-year-old contesting Bukit Antarabangsa, Selangor (Kasinathan, 2023). It was estimated that the six state elections would cost RM420 million (US $122 million).

Issues Raised

The 14 days of campaigning for Malaysia's six state polls kicked off on Saturday, 29 July 2023, and ended at 11:59 pm on Friday, 11 August 2023. The campaign period was considered, by 37 voters interviewed, sufficient to assess and elect qualified candidates as representatives of the people. The contesting parties were prepared with banners, billboards, and other materials put up in the very first days of the campaign. Parties organised public gatherings (*ceramah*) but these nightly political events did not attract much traction from the voters. *Ceramahs* organised by the PH and PN, the two major coalitions, were poorly attended. This was in contrast to the *ceramahs* held during the 15th general election (GE15) in November 2022, which were usually attended by many voters to get a closer view of the candidates or leaders on stage. Ceramahs organised by MUDA, promoting a "new politics" devoid of racial and religious fear, suffered the same fate.

This may have led the parties and candidates to focus more on posting on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and circulating videos in WhatsApp groups. TikTok was a particularly influential medium, especially among young voters. Social media, in general, played a positive role during the campaigning period. Noticeably, according to Malaysia's Election Commission, 44.16 percent of the 9.773,571 million voters, registered for six state elections were between the ages of 21 to 39, placing this demographic perfectly within the characterization of digital natives. They received their information through social media which shaped their views of prospective members of state assemblies. Politicians used Facebook, YouTube, and other devices to arouse the emotions and prejudices of the electorate.

As reported in *The Malay Mail,* the Islamist Party, PAS, under Perikatan Nasional, PN, has taken the lead in the use of the TikTok platform to capture the attention of young voters and fence-sitters. *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) and *Barisan Nasional* (BN), lagged behind PAS in terms of the use of this platform (Kasinathan, 2023a). The PAS youth wing account is well organised with followers amounting to 146.8 thousand. PAS, UMNO, PKR, and others in the coalition, through their Youth wing, have their own TikTok accounts. The Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, MUDA has also been actively posting TikTok contents by using the platform as a medium to broadcast their mission and vision to reach a wider audience. MUDA has a large base of followers who are from the age of 18 to 29, with 15.8 thousand followers on TikTok. PN, PH-BN, and MUDA have also been using other platforms, including Meta's Facebook and Google's YouTube. MUDA's president Syed Saddiq was very media-savvy with about 1.9 million followers on Instagram alone. The PH was more comfortable on Twitter and was backed up by the government media. In a Facebook video on August 11, 2023, Anwar Ibrahim urged Malaysians to vote wisely and choose PH-BN candidates for a stable future, a strong economy, and to save the country from racial and religious bigotry.

A rough content analysis of the messages on the platform shows that the PH and BN coalitions were campaigning along familiar narratives of the need for a clean and honest government. PH-BN leaders raised issues related to corruption, accusing the PN of misusing some RM93 billion in economic stimulus funds during the COVID-19 pandemic. Muhyiddin Yasin faced graft investigations since losing to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in November 2022. Anwar Ibrahim promised as well to bring in more businesses to uplift the lives of Malaysians. The PN and its coalition partner, PAS, also promised a clean non-corrupt government emphasising that they would do their best to uplift the morality of Malaysians.

The health of Malaysia's economy was the major focus during the campaign period. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was heard saying that he has tried to tackle unemployment, address inflation, and move foreign investments since assuming office in November 2022. He informed the public that the ministry has undertaken programmes to develop entrepreneurs in agriculture, food, and services industries to upgrade

its economy. The government plans to position the energy sector as a catalyst for social and economic development.

PH-BN's campaign was poor and disorganised. The messaging was defensive and lacked traction on TikTok. They relied extensively on their leader rather than the substance of their leadership record. Anwar Ibrahim has gone to all six states praising his administration's economic success including attracting billions of dollars in foreign direct investment. He used the holidays to celebrate the feast of sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*) to move around six states months before the state elections. Unlike the usual practice of hosting one grand Eid "open house" at the prime minister's official residence, Anwar Ibrahim took the party to the masses, with events spread across six states in the Malaysian peninsula over three weekends. These events were fully covered by all main broadcasting stations, *viz*. RTM 1, RTM 2, TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9. The unity government made full use of the Radio and Television of Malaysia (RTM), the broadcast arm of the Ministry of Information, to publicise its activities. In his capacity as the PH chairman, Anwar Ibrahim ended his campaigning by delivering a speech at the Madani Unity Tour Grand Finale programme.

The opposition PN leaders accused the government of its failure to tackle the cost of living and price hikes hurting the public. The PN focussed on corruption and integrity of the unity government and strongly criticised Anwar for forming an alliance with his coalition's former rival, the graft-tainted UMNO, in order to gain a majority in parliament. They accused Anwar Ibrahim of cooperating with corrupt politicians and appointing them as ministers in his Cabinet. In particular, the PN components criticised Anwar for choosing UMNO president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who faced several corruption charges in the courts, as the deputy prime minister. According to them, Anwar—to become the Prime Minister—accepted kleptocrats who expropriated the wealth of the people (Alhadjri, 2023). They tried vigorously and reached out to voters through TikTok and other social networks. Anwar's deputy, Zahid Hamidi, is on trial for corruption and money laundering making his position as the deputy prime minister all the more controversial. It is to be noted that Zahid Hamidi was discharged—not amounting to an acquittal (DNAA)—for his 47 graft charges by the high court of Malaysia a few weeks before the state elections (Ibrahim and Lee, 2023).

Both the coalitions, PH-BN and PN issued manifestos as part of the campaign for state elections. The two coalitions issued specific manifesto each for the six states. MUDA took the lead and announced its election manifesto on July 20, 2023, titled "New Politics Manifesto", with four main pillars: to be pro-rakyat, to be a voice for the youth, to digitalise the economy and government services, and to preserve the environment (Tong 2023; Zahiid 2023). The Kelantan PN launched its state election manifesto termed "*Kelantan Maju Rakyat Sejahtera*" listing 18 plans and 96 programmes. It pledges, among others, to resolve water issues as well as to ensure socio-economic and agricultural productivity development (Yunus and Mahadhir 2023). In contrast, PH-BN issued their manifesto "Kelantan Madani Unity Manifesto" containing 34 offers and promising to redouble efforts to provide a clean water supply and waive outstanding water bills.

In Penang, the PH-BN's "Penang Unity Manifesto 2023" comprised 16 main themes, 15 highlights, and 50 manifestoes. The 16 main themes include concern for the people's welfare; advocating socioeconomic well-being; boosting high-skilled employment; rural development and housing for all. The PN countered by its "Umum Manifesto" containing 8 thrusts and 33 promises including a review of the Penang Transport Master Plan, an introduction of the Autonomous Rail Rapid Transit (ART), RM1,000 annually for e-hailing and taxi drivers, and free medical check-ups for all.

The two coalitions also prepared manifestos for the remaining four states (as shown in Table 1) with the aim of retaining their holds on the states under their governance, and to capture the states held by their opponents. The manifestos contained long-term development plans and immediate assistance to alleviate the suffering of the people. The manifestos offered monthly or annual assistance, increases in allowances paid by state agencies, and subsidies, or loans. They all promised cash handouts for first-time mothers, first-time married couples, and first-year university or training institute students. However, the manifestos issued by PH-BN and PN in Kedah did not include any direct cash handouts (Nation, 2023).

Noticeably, the manifestos were not debated or discussed in public, and the electoral promises did not form a core part of the campaign. A leading member of UMNO criticised PH-BN for the delayed

announcement of the manifesto for Kelantan. She said: "Our offers were great but not many voters knew about them. We couldn't get to everyone in time. I don't understand why we couldn't announce it earlier." The manifesto was revealed almost a week into the campaigning period. None of the 37 voters interviewed in Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan has seen the manifestos. They voted on the basis of information available on their handphones, on the front page of newspapers, and in the *ceramahs* they attended. Five of the interviewees were lucky to have been visited by the candidates in their houses. Among the voters interviewed, 25 of them were seriously concerned about economic issues such as rising prices, slowing growth, and the weakening ringgit currency.

Table 1: Manifesto of the two coalitions in six states

State	Coalition	Manifesto Title	Key Pledges
Penang	PH-BN	Unity Manifesto	16 main themes, 15 highlights, 50 promises
	PN	Better Penang, *Jom Kalih* (Let's Change)	8 main thrusts, 33 promises
Negeri Sembilan	PH-BN	Negeri Sembilan Unity Aspiration	5 Targets, 10 Thrusts, 70 initiatives
	PN	Manifesto	8 main pillars
Kelantan	PH-BN	Kelantan Madani Unity Manifesto	34 offers
	PN	Kelantan Maju Rakyat Sejahtera	18 plans and programmes
Selangor	PH-BN	Kita Selangor	5 pledges, 53 programmes
	PN	Selangor Baharu, Kita Bangkit	7 pillars, 25 approaches, 112 offers
Kedah	PH-BN	Alor Star's Great Aspiration	3 main frameworks
	PN	Manifesto	17 0ffers

	PH-BN	Unity for Stability and Prosperity	Cash Aids, several pledges
Terengganu			
	PN	Manifesto	10 promises, loan facilities

Source: *Malaysiakini,* July20, 2023 and August 10, 2023*; The Star,* July 15, 2023 and July 28, 2023; *New Straits Times*, August 3, 2023.

Results

Voting began on Saturday, 12 August 2023 at 8 a.m. (0000 GMT) and ended at 6 p.m. (1000 GMT) the same day. The results were released gradually until the counting ended at 12 midnight. The Election Commission hoped for an 85% voter turnout, but the overall voter turnout across the six states fell short of this target. A total of 70.1% or 6.86 million of eligible voters cast valid ballots in Saturday's poll as against 82.32 percent voter turnout in the 14th General Election held on 9 May 2018.

State elections did attract the attention of scholars, some of whom embarked upon projections a month before the election. A pre-election survey conducted in March and April 2023 showed a greater likelihood of BN Malay voters transferring their votes to PN candidates. The authors of the survey concluded that "winds of change are blowing in Selangor." They are cautious, however, in declaring the success of PN winning in Selangor. It "depends on how much strength they gather leading up to polling day" (Mohamad and Khairul 2023). PN did gain some seats in Selangor but not enough to form the government.

Ong Kian Ming used the results from GE15 and projected that PN will control Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu and the remaining three states will be controlled by PH-BN component parties (Ming, 2023). Similarly, according to an independent pollster, Ilham Centre, the results of the six state elections will remain status quo: PH-BN will continue to govern Selangor, Penang Negeri Sembilan, while Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu will remain under PN. The survey results showed that "PN has the opportunity to increase seats in the Malay-majority seats in Selangor, but it will not be sufficient to form the state government," that it will be difficult for PN to challenge PH-BN in Negeri Sembilan, and that PH-BN will be in full control in Penang with PN's potential for

victory concentrated in the Malay majority constituencies. The survey was conducted between July 28 and August 8, 2023, involving a total of 2,304 respondents (Bunyan, 2023). Another survey was conducted by the Merdeka Center in six states involving a total of 6,976 voters from July 3 to August 11, 2023. It found the results for the state elections to be as follows: "A status quo outcome in the six states" and predicted PN "to make further inroads in Malay seats in Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu at Barisan Nasional's main party Umno's expense, and may also pick up a few seats in Negeri Sembilan" (Lim 2023).

The credibility of the projections and survey results can be seen from the results of the state elections shown in Table 2. The results of the elections may be characterised as the status quo, as predicted by pollsters, the PH-led unity government and PN retained their respective strongholds of three states each. The PH-BN alliance retained the control of Penang, Negeri Sembilan, and Selangor while the PN also held the three states--Kelantan, Kedah, and Terengganu—under its control while expanding its support among the country's ethnic-Malay Muslim majority.

Table 2: Seats won by PN and PH-BN before and after the election

States	PN		PH-BN		% Votes	
	Before election	After election	Before election	After election	PH-BN	PN
Penang	1	11	35	29	66.6	32.7
Selangor	5	22	45	34	60.6	37.8
Negeri Sembilan	0	5	36	31	60.8	37.7
Terengganu	22	32	10	0	32.0	67.9
Kelantan	38	43	7	2	30.5	69.2
Kedah	20	33	12	3	30.1	68.9
Total	86	146	145	99		

Source: Election Commission, https://dashboard.spr.gov.my/ (Accessed August 14, 2023); Razak Ahmad, Diyana Pfordten, Meikeng, Yuen And Jaayne Jeevita, Six-State Election Results Overview. *The Star,* Aug 13, 2023.

The PN coalition performed better in the three states it governed before the election. In Terengganu, PN won all 32 seats in the state assembly. In Kedah, PN won 33 of 36 seats, while PH-BN won the remaining three. The coalition previously held 20 seats before the state assembly was dissolved. PN also performed well in Kelantan by winning 43 of the 45 seats, leaving two seats for the PH-BN coalition. The credit must go to the conservative PAS, which has long positioned itself as a defender of Islam and Malays. Its emphasis on Islamic principles and governance is firmly anchored in the socio-cultural essence of the Malay heartland. PAS is currently the biggest political party in the 222-member *Dewan Rakyat*, or parliament, with 43 MPs. The party has now spread its wings throughout other rural areas and into the country's urban cores. PAS won a stunning 105 of the 127 seats (83 percent) it contested. PAS is apparently the stronger party in the PN alliance, even though it is led by former premier Muhyiddin Yassin from Bersatu. The seats it won in Penang, Selangor, and even Negeri Sembilan made PAS a mainstream national party. It has broken out of regional confines, claiming the largest number of seats in parliament for a single party at the expense of some of the most established pro-Malay stalwarts. The electoral success of PAS reflects the Malay community's desire to preserve and enhance the privileges it has been accorded in the Malaysian constitution.

Table 2 shows that the PN coalition won 146 seats across the six states, a 60 percent success rate. The coalition's success in defending the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah with bigger margins in the Malay heartland shows that PN has greatly improved its credentials, particularly among Malay voters. PN also succeeded in denying the two-thirds majority of the PH-BN coalition in Selangor.

Even though PH-BN succeeded in retaining the three states it controlled before the election, the coalition has performed rather poorly in this state election. PH-BN won a total of 99 seats against 146 won by PN. Some of the seats in Selangor, for example, were won with a small majority against PN. Among the coalition partners, the DAP performed best with a win rate of about 98 percent. Of the 47 candidates the party fielded across 245 constituencies, it won all but one seat in Derga, Kedah. The party won most of its seats in the state of Penang, which is traditionally regarded as the DAP's stronghold due to its high

percentage of ethnic Chinese residents. PKR won 26 seats and lost 33 seats across the six states.

BN/UMNO performed very poorly. UMNO contested 107 seats under the banner of the PH-BN unity coalition but won only 19 seats (i.e., 17 percent of the seats it contested). It failed to win a single seat in Kedah and Terengganu, and only one seat in Kelantan. This proves UMNO's diminished role as a national political force after its previous six decades of uninterrupted rule, from 1957 until its downfall in the 2018 general election amid anger over corruption by party leaders. Selangor UMNO treasurer, Tengku Zafrul Aziz, the International Trade and Industry Minister in the unity government, conceded that UMNO was rejected by Malay voters. He urged the UMNO leadership to regain the confidence of the people instead of chasing after "short-term power." To Zafrul, "If the results of this state election aren't a final warning of its survival as a party for the Malays, I don't know what warning should be given to make us realise that we have been rejected" (Staff Writers, 2023). According to James Chin, the six state elections at the weekend were an unmitigated disaster for UMNO. He is of the opinion that "the future of UMNO and that of party chief Zahid Hamidi, now hangs in the balance" (Chin, 2023). Quite predictably, PN Chairman Muhyiddin urged the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to resign (Parzi 2023). UMNO is viewed by 24 of the 37 interviewees as corrupt and deviating from its mission of safeguarding Malay interests. They appreciated PAS's commitment to Islamic tenets and Malay privileges.

MUDA, the party of young leaders, suffered the worst defeats in all the seats it contested with its candidates losing their deposits of about RM 95,000 (US$ 20,323) in 19 constituencies as they failed to obtain a mandatory one-eighth or 12.5 percent of the total number of votes counted for the state constituency involved. One of the MUDA candidates collected 253 votes in the Perai constituency, the lowest in the election.

Election results have received a variety of interpretations from several quarters. Some analysts interpreted the results as a "huge blow" for PM Anwar Ibrahim despite the apparent status quo. The opposition led by PN made significant gains while the coalition led by Anwar Ibrahim has lost large tracts of Malay support. Others praised the Anwar-led coalition for retaining three states under its control but

argued that "its victories have come at a great cost" affecting political stability at the federal level (Malaysiakini Team 2023). These opinions may be considered as an overinterpretation of the particularities of state elections. The overall results of these state elections have no immediate effect on the stability of the federal government. The election results do portray that the country:

> … is visibly resolving itself into three main zones: the East Malaysian zone, which is as ever *sui generis*; a Malay-dominant and Malay-Islamist nationalist zone covering much of the country north of Kuala Lumpur (with the exception of Penang Island); and an ever more closely contested southern peninsular zone, the residually cosmopolitan-pluralist zone in and south of Kuala Lumpur, where the PAS and PN forces driving the "Green Wave" will be seeking to make further advances and to become politically ever more competitive (Kessler 2023).

The Prime Minister has the daunting task of uniting an increasingly polarised country, strengthening his eight months old unity government, and improving the economy.

Conclusion

Elections in Malaysia exist at the federal and state levels. State elections are usually held alongside federal parliamentary elections. However, six of the thirteen states of Malaysia decided not to hold elections concurrently with the federal parliamentary elections held in November 2022 citing the need to prepare for floods during the year-end annual monsoon season. Consequently, about nine months after GE15, the six state elections were held and the two contending coalitions campaigned vigorously to woo the voters. They came out with manifestos for the six states. The manifestos were of not much importance in attracting voter interest. Parties resorted to *ceramahs* and to social media to appeal to the voters. PH-BN campaign was disorganised and lacked traction, where it centred too much around the leaders, i.e., Anwar Ibrahim. PN ran a better campaign making it a national narrative, and focused on economic dissatisfaction. PN also extended its outreach to voters by focusing on economic dissatisfaction, reaching out to voters through TikTok and its social networks. The overall mood and interest in this election were relatively low as evidenced by a low voter turnout.

Elections in six states of Malaysia were held on 12 August 2023, following the dissolution of their state assemblies between 22 June and 1 July 2023. Polling proceeded in an orderly fashion, and there was no election-related violence. The results showed that the two coalitions retained control of their respective states. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's PH coalition and its unity government ally, BN, officially retained Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Penang but ceded many seats to the opposition. PN not only retained but performed better in Kelantan, Kedah, and Terengganu exceeding the two-thirds majority needed to bring about constitutional changes in these states. Parties in the PH-BN coalition were all but wiped out in the three PN-held states. This result reflects the trend of the so-called green wave – the party colour of PAS – from the November 2022 election that gave the PN all-Malay minority stake in parliament.

What is striking, however, is the extent to which PN managed to grow its footprint in the states of Selangor and Penang, the country's two richest and most developed states. The poor performance of PH-BN and the emergent dominance of PN are indicative of an electorate fragmented by evolving political loyalties and ethnic and racial priorities. The PN's electoral success may be attributed to increased Malay support. PN won 146 out of 245 seats, especially in Malay majority areas. UMNO faced a serious erosion in political support, winning less than a fifth of its seats and continuing a pattern of electoral decline since 2008. Deeply fragmented and weakened, UMNO cannot deliver the Malay vote in its current condition. UMNO is no longer seen as a party that represents the Malays that has now been taken over by PN and mainly its partner, PAS.

Finally, MUDA has been pushed into the corner and they are left fighting for survival. However, its prioritisation of young people and their concerns strengthened political dialogue and increased attention to the problems of the youth.

While the unity government's parliamentary majority was not at stake in this election, the polls were viewed as an early referendum on the Anwar-led government less than nine months after the November general election in 2022, which gave Malaysia its first ever hung Parliament. After an encouraging performance in the six state elections, PN chairman Muhyiddin Yassin asked the PH-BN leaders, the Prime Minister, and his deputy, to resign from their posts in Putrajaya (Kessler

2023). Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who enjoys a two-thirds majority in Parliament, however, asked: "Everyone across all parties, despite winning or losing, to unite and uphold peace." In a post on his official Facebook page, the Prime Minister said he would remember the support for the unity government. He assured Malaysians that his coalition government "will work hard and continue to serve the people, in line with the aspirations of the Madani Economy" (Tan and Vethasalam, 2023). The unity government has four years to bring together the various zones resulting from the just concluded state elections and to create a positive track record in governance through dedication, collaboration, and adaptability.

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Legitimacy of Smart Contracts Written in Encrypted Code on Blockchain Technology Under Current Contract Law: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: Using smart contracts as a new technology for online contracting has become the best option today when working in non-trustworthy environments to execute automated irreversible agreements. However, such contracts have issues relating to the language used for expressing the obligations of the involved parties. Additionally, smart contracts have no legal recognition of blockchain as a means of record-keeping for smart contract transactions. Parties engaged in smart contracts face difficulties in terms of incompatibilities with current legal frameworks. The objective of this article is to evaluate the legality of smart contract language and the validity of blockchain as an electronic medium from the perspectives of current laws. This article adopts a qualitative doctrinal legal research approach. The findings indicate that there is a need to enact laws that recognise the language used for smart contracts and the transactions recorded on the blockchain.

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Abstrak: Menggunakan kontrak pintar sebagai teknologi baharu untuk kontrak dalam talian telah menjadi pilihan terbaik hari ini apabila bekerja dalam persekitaran yang tidak boleh dipercayai untuk melaksanakan perjanjian tidak boleh ditarikbalik dan automatik. Walau bagaimanapun, kontrak sedemikian mempunyai isu yang berkaitan dengan penggunaan bahasa bagi menetapkan tanggung jawab pihak yang terlibat. Selain itu, kontrak pintar tidak mempunyai pengiktirafan undang-undang terhadap blockchain sebagai cara penyimpanan rekod untuk transaksi kontrak pintar. Pihak yang terlibat dalam kontrak pintar menghadapi kesukaran dalam menyesuaikan transaksi tersebut dengan kerangka undang-undang semasa. Objektif artikel ini adalah untuk menilai keesahan bahasa kontrak pintar dan blockchain sebagai medium elektronik dari perspektif undang-undang semasa. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan undang-undang doktrin kualitatif. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat keperluan untuk menggubal undang-undang yang mengiktiraf bahasa yang digunakan untuk kontrak pintar dan urus niaga yang direkodkan dalam blockchain.

Kata kunci: Kontrak pintar, kontrak tradisional, bahasa komputer, blockchain, kod

Introduction

The formality of writing contracts is one of the topics that is of great importance in legal studies. It is important to the extent that researchers have described it as the fourth essential element to the contract, and the formality of writing in smart contracts should be the same as in traditional or other electronic contracts. (Abd, 2015)Written contracts require an 'official formality' which means that the parties must commit to them through mutual consent. This consent takes a certain formality in some kinds of contracts in addition to the key elements of the contracts. The purpose of a written contract is to protect the parties of the contract and alert them to the seriousness of the legal behaviour they provide by showing the parties the possible consequences of their actions. This is meant to protect them by concluding the contract, certifying it as proof of existing rights and reliable evidence in case of any dispute arising between them in the future.

The required formality of a written contract is intended here to be the formality to conclude or the formality required as proof that a contract follows certain procedures, such as registering contracts for

selling real estate in the Department of Real Estate Registration. (Hsyn, 2016) Faced with this legal situation, the difficult challenge for Iraqi legislators lies in the difficulty of issuing laws stimulating innovation and at the same time safeguarding consumer welfare as well as meeting their requirements. This article hopes to solve these challenges by compiling a large body of disparate literatures relating to smart contract regulation in selected jurisdictions. Thus, the researcher first examines the issue of whether writing smart contracts using encrypted codes can be valid for contracting and then analyses how blockchain technology could potentially revolutionise the rules of evidence for smart contracts, where the application of it in electronic evidence may also indicate the difficulty of the fusion between decentralised technology and traditional, centralised juridical mechanisms. (Wu & Zheng, 2020).

Smart Contracts and Blockchain

The idea of smart contracts was invented for the first time when proposed by the American legal scholar, computer programmer, and cryptographer, Nick Szabo (Rohr, 2019) in the mid-1990s. Smart contracts are defined as automatic electronic instructions written in a computer program which enables the computer to "read" the contract and perform the terms of an agreement or a business contract between two or more parties. Through automated algorithms, the contract will be self-executable when certain conditions are met by effectuating the instruction and hence the "smartness" of the contract (O'SHIELDS*, 2017).

Szabo described a vending machine purchase as a basic form of a smart contract which includes the spontaneous transfer of ownership of any assets, such as a candy bar or a can of cola, following the receipt of a preset input of a specific amount of coins. Smart contracts could be used for a variety of things, according to Szabo, such as automated digital assets transfers like shares following a certain incident, motor vehicle inactivation (in which the vehicle will only resume functioning upon fulfillment of the contract's security protocols) and peer-to-peer asset lending (in which the lent asset is returned to the lender upon the borrower's failure to meet certain requirements) (Giancaspro, 2017). In order to secure relationships on public networks, Szabo sought to use smart contracts to prevent parties from reneging on a contract, according to his notion. A contractual provision may be built in the

utilised hardware and software which renders a breach of contract costly for the party committing the breach (Rohr, 2019). It is noteworthy that smart contracts were stymied and utilised before the invented blockchain theology due to general ambiguity, issues with identity and transaction verification, challenges, and concerns with unsecured transactions(McKinney et al., 2017).

However, with the introduction of Bitcoin and its underlying technology blockchain, smart contracts can now automate the agreement terms upon fulfillment of the set conditions. The contractual parties utilise cryptographic security for "signing" the smart contract and subsequently use it on the blockchain. When the criteria specified in the code are satisfied, the software performs the specified action. For instance, if a product or service is provided, the smart contract might compel payment through the blockchain. It may commence the recovery of the product or suspension of the service in the case of non-payment. This technology has a plethora of possible applications, including financial instrument trading, syndicated loan operations, and securities settlements.

Blockchain is the technology that invented the first cryptocurrency called Bitcoin, which was founded in 2008 by an anonymous person or group using the moniker called Satoshi Nakamoto. Where the popularity of cryptocurrencies as a means of payment has grown over the past two years, most of the current attention, notably in the banking and financial sectors, has been on enabling blockchain technology. The blockchain is a public record, or ledger, of all cryptocurrency transactions ever made. A computer network validates each transaction, or block, prior to adding it to the chain of past transactions. This is accomplished via the use of cryptographic algorithms and a significant amount of computational power. Blockchain is open and clear to anyone; however, the addresses shown may not always correspond to the individual linked with the address, where the system is structured, constructed or built in a standardized manner. This prevents the data from being hacked, thus making blockchain secure and immutable (Nick Barney, 2023).

The blockchain record is meant to be everlasting and unchangeable. The technology's security, permanence, and immutability have piqued the interest of the world's major banks as well as financial startups.

For security, blockchain employs encryption and a mix of public and private "keys". For each participant in a transaction, the system uses mathematical algorithms that take a public address and matches it with a private security access key. If these two things are the same, the transaction is broadcast to the other blockchain participants for verification and recording on the blockchain (distributed ledger). For security reasons, cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin use the "proof of work" mechanism, although there are various methods for ensuring that transactions are genuine and not repeated. The capacity to monitor ownership and property transfers sans a middleman, as well as the capability to conduct direct peer-to-peer property transfer have been cited as two advancements of blockchain. Smart contracts work along with blockchain technology by ensuring the record-keeping of transactions on blockchain as trusted ledger (O'Shields*, 2017).

Nowadays, smart contracts are considered to be a step above typical electronic contracts whereby the actual agreement is computer coded instead of written in conventional languages such as English or Arabic. However, smart contracts are not unique in many other aspects, such as the fact that they must originally consist of a detectable agreement between persons having legal ability to create that agreement. As a consequence of the characteristics of smart contracts built on the blockchain, global financial institutions have started utilising automated computer processes to perform transactions that are devoid of human involvement. Dispensing with the need for physical presence and other rigorous traditional pen and paper work and cumbersome processes.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this paper is that the terms of a smart contract are conveyed via encrypted computer programming codes using limited and absolute contractual terms written by programmers or computer experts instead of lawyers or legal consultants. Legal issues may occur due to this in which the contractual parties will have a problem understanding the analogous obligations when any of the parties fail to fulfill the smart contract obligations because of the coded logic (Eenmaa-Dimitrieva & Schmidt-Kessen, 2019) or scheme of 'if x pay, then y will release subject matter of contract (e.g., If.../Then...) (Cuccuru, 2017). In light of this background, this paper inquires about the legality of encrypted codes under the current legislation and how

such coded smart contracts would hold in the court of law. Additionally, this paper aims to elucidate the legality of the registered writing or transactions of blockchain smart contracts.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, adopting a pure legal research methodology; hence, a comparative doctrinal approach or library research is applied. The aim of this doctrinal study is to systematically discover, clarify, and examine the work of certain legislations. It will attempt to evaluate and analyse the legitimacy of legal writing by encrypted codes in smart contracts from the perspective of current contract laws in the USA, the UAE, and Iraq. The reason for the choice of these three jurisdictions is because, smart contracts originated form the USA from the works of Nick Szabo the American cryptographer. Smart contracts have equally developed over the years since inception and is gradually having legal backing in the USA. As such Iraq has a lot to learn from that jurisdiction. While the UAE just like Iraq are both Arab countries and are both in the Middle East. They share similar culture and the religion, which is Islam, is the same. However, the UAE have advanced technologically including its openness and acceptance of smart contracts as a new form of contractual agreement. Having UAE as a model, becomes easier for Iraq to adapt smart contracts and incorporate into its financial system without much difficulty.

The data are analysed to examine the nature of smart contracts in Iraq focusing on: i) the challenges in developing and using encrypted language in writing smart contracts; ii) whether the coding language is considered valid according to the provisions of Iraqi legislation, and iii) how written transactions recorded for smart contracts on the blockchain will be proven.

Findings and Discussion

Legal Challenges of Writing Smart Contracts

The legal inquiries about code are not new. Lawrence Lessig discussed the topic in 1999 in his book Code is Law. He argued that the code-based regulation theory was mainly established, along with the "open code" or open-source software, as a structural guarantee to protect the related parties (Weber, 2018). What brought the topic back again was the emergence of the expression of smart contracts in code, where the

terms require translation from human to computer language, which is accomplished by the programmer via a sequence of written steps to be carried out automatically through code (Eenmaa-Dimitrieva & Schmidt-Kessen, 2019). The programmer must write what must be done and how to execute it (Governatori et al., 2018). The issue faced by the parties to the contract is how the translation of contractual expressions to instructions is parsed by computers. Computer language removes the disadvantages of traditionally ambiguous contractual terms which allow for the flexibility of interpretation in fulfilling the commitments of the parties to smart contracts as well as allowing them to adapt contracts to unforeseeable future scenarios, including to the obligation to good faith, standards of best efforts, force majeure or permitting non-performance and hardship (Tai, 2018). Another issue is the incapacity of judges to understand the contents of smart contracts. Resultantly, there will be an increase in the costs and length of legal proceedings in relation to smart contracts owing to the requirement for experts to translate written codes (Eenmaa-Dimitrieva & Schmidt-Kessen, 2019).

In contrast to that, there is the view of other researchers in support of smart contracts, referring to them as contributing to reduce ambiguity by way of written terms in computer language. This is seen as reducing misunderstandings of contractual terms in cases of disputes in relation to the interpretation of smart contract codes that could possibly lead to lawsuits.

Furthermore, the self-executing, automated and decentralised nature of smart contract code on the blockchain poses various repercussions for the obligatory trust in closing a contract between individuals; hence, agreements have usually been concluded between parties in a more conventional, traditional manner. In brief, the parties must trust each other. This does not change anything in a normal sales contract; the purchaser must trust that the seller will be timely in delivering the purchased product and ensure the quality and quantity agreed upon. The seller also needs to trust that the purchaser will accept and pay for the product as agreed. Upon the closing of a smart contract, each contracting party must trust that the performance of the smart contract code will be in accord to the expectations of the counterparty. A party has no obligation to trust the other party's ability to meet its duties as the repercussion for fulfilling or not fulfilling those duties has been

programmed into the smart contract; upon execution, the smart contract can no longer be stopped.

A good example of using smart contracts is in a gambling transaction. The correct programming of a code will enable the self-execution of the smart contract only if both sides of the transaction have paid their agreed-upon wager to the contract account. Once the event has been concluded and a winner has been established, the smart contract meets the obligation of the losing party to pay via the disbursement of the wagers to the winning party. Whilst traditional contracts necessitate trust between the contracting parties, smart contracts shift the trust to the code (de Graaf, 2019).

In order to overcome these obstacles, parties to the smart contract must conduct lengthy negotiations and agree on all the details. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume there are PDF documents written in natural language that describe the essence of the agreement. Otherwise, the terms and conditions of a coded contract may also be considered a type of adhesion contract that takes the form of a ready-made template designed by a seller who wishes to provide the buyer with a take-it-or-leave-it contract. Lastly, the researcher sees smart contracts as a means of providing a legally binding contractual solution through the computer codes that are fully or partly self-executing, aided by the use of the internet in an environment like Iraq that is affected by insecurity and political instability. Compared to other jurisdictions, litigation procedures are complicated and lengthy but adopting smart contracts in financial transactions would help to reduce to complexities associated with litigations in Iraq.

Formalities in the Written Contract

The formalism of writing contracts is in the form required for the contract to be validly concluded. In this regard, the Parliament of England adopted An Act for the Prevention of Frauds and Perjuries in 1677, considered to be the first law of its kind, which required a signature on a written contract for the sale of goods in excess of ten pounds. Likewise, American law in the Uniform Commercial Code adopted a similar doctrine, requiring the writing of contracts in some types of contractual agreements because such contracts come under the Statute of Frauds (Camero, 2013).

These contracts were determined as: 1) contracts for marriage, 2) contracts for a suretyship, 3) contracts for an executor or administrator, 4) contracts for land sale, and 5) contracts extending performance to more than one year since the contract's formation date. Apart from the Statute of Frauds, Article 2 of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) necessitates signed written contracts for moveable goods sales of more than $500 in value(Camero, 2013).

It is worth noting that the US Uniform Electronic Transaction Act (UETA) is congruent with Articles 5 and 6 of the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce, which considers most of the digital messages contained in well-formatted written contracts as acceptable pursuant to the UETA. These articles also specify that digital symbols and emails composed of writing in as much as they can be retrieved in an understandable form would be recognised. Moreover, UETA Section 7(c) states that an electronic record can be used to satisfy laws that require a record to be written. Additionally, according to UETA Section 2(7), a typical "electronic record" is any record that is created, developed, transferred, sent, disseminated, obtained, or stored by any electronic means. Also, UETA Section 2(13) describes a "record" as any written information on a physical channel (or electronic mediums and the likes) that can be retrieved in a comprehensible form (Ramberg, 2001).

Likewise, Iraqi and Emirati legislators have determined that some contracts whose value exceeds a certain amount are required to be written in order to be used as evidence of contractual obligations. Furthermore, according to Article 112 of the UAE Civil Transactions Law, it is considered that one of the best evidences as proof of existing rights is a written contract in that contracts expressed in writing are undeniable ("the Civil Transactions Law," 1987). UAE law demands that contracts be created by the exchange of mutual intentions accomplished through the integration of an offer by one party that is subsequently accepted by the other pursuant to Article 125 of the UAE Civil Code. The expression of intent may be made orally or through contracts which require the expression of the intent of parties to be in written form or by acts demonstrating mutual intent (Nazanin Aleyaseen). Despite the importance of traditional written contracts, the Federal Law of the UAE No. (1) of 2006 on Electronic Commerce and Transactions and Electronic Transactions (ETC, 2006) as well as the Commerce Law

in Dubai No.2/2002 cover a mix of electronic writing and electronic documents. Though the above-mentioned laws do not contain an explicit definition of writing, the Federal Evidence Law No. 36 of 2006 (Article 17 Section 2) defines electronic documents as all documents involving an instance of the diffusion, receipt, or storing of symbols, signals, writing, images, sounds, or information via an information technology medium (Mshtfaee, 2020).

The ETCL of the Emirate of Dubai addresses the concept of "writing" in the context of Article 9 of the law, stating the following: In cases where the law stipulates that any data, document, record, or explicit transaction should be produced in writing (or a stipulation for the arrangement of certain results in the absence of this writing), the document or electronic record adheres to the law as long as it abides by the provisions of Article 7, Section 1 of the same law, which allows electronic communication. In such cases, no legal effect or enforcement shall be denied for any electronic communication based merely on the fact that it is in electronic form.

In the Iraqi position, the Electronic Signature and Electronic Transactions Law No. 78 of 2012 (Article 1, Section 5) provides its own definition of electronic writing. According to this law, when writing is stored electronically, its meaning should be perceptible and understandable. In other words, every letter, number, symbol, and any other mark affixed using an electronic, digital, optical, or other similar means gives a connotation and understandable indication (Electronic Signature & Electronic Transactions Law, No. 78, 2012. Article (1) section 5). According to what has been discussed supra, it should be noted that the requirements and conditions of the written contract must be met, whether the language of the contract is expressed via legal prose or by codes. These requirements are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Electronic Writing must be Readable and Understandable

Electronic writing of smart contracts or transactions must be clear and understandable, whether in the form of encrypted codes or letters, pursuant to US contract law and takes into account the rule of the duty to read doctrine. According to that, the contracting party must read an agreement before assenting to its terms, which is considered a key element of the US contract law. Although duty to read is generally a

contract law doctrine, it poses significant repercussions to consumer standard contracts in that consumers, as well as consumer law academics, prominent law professor, and the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court do not read such contracts. Furthermore, courts typically enforce the duty to read to consumer agreements inclusive of online boilerplate contracts.

Although some states have enacted laws requiring the writing of contracts in clear language, the United States legislation has not provided criteria or a general explanation or definition of what constitutes a "readable" text (Benoliel & Becher, 2019). However, the courts typically enforce the duty to read to consumer contracts inclusive of standard online agreements. Consequently, in US law, the duty to read doctrine is unilateral. Hence, despite the notion that individuals do read contracts, suppliers are not generally required to provide readable contracts to consumers (Benoliel & Becher, 2019).

In addition, the duty to read binds individuals to the contract's terms despite not reading them in cases of smart contracts written by code (Benoliel & Becher, 2019), and the courts typically enforce the execution of these agreements even if the parties have not read them. Contracting by electronic means permits online firms to make contracts with millions of users, with no negotiation, and without verifying that the contract was read or was understandable; hence, sellers are not obliged to provide purchasers with readable contracts (Benoliel & Becher, 2019). The UCC does not determine the manner in which a signature needs to be represented, whereas the courts assent to a valid signature by assessing whether there is evidence that the parties accepted or adopted the writing. Thus, a seller or purchaser of a good relying on a smart contract could effectively indicate the parties' assent to an agreement when they sign with their private keys on a smart contract (DLx Law LLP October 16, 2018).

Cases involving disputes before the courts could present great difficulties in examining smart contracts because they do not have the necessary experience for this. Since most of the contract terms are represented by codes on a blockchain and judges at present, do not have the expertise to interpret these codes. As such the parties to a contract would not be able to dispute that they have not read the contract because the signature is evidence before the court regarding the acceptance of

the conditions of the contract written in code. But from the perspective of Iraqi and UAE legislation and jurisprudence, the reading condition is fulfilled if it can be read using an electronic computer or by any other mediator such as a programmer (Sahb, 2016). Therefore, potentially, developers could create artificial intelligence applications to translate the code language to the English language in order to make smart contracts understandable and readable for anyone in the future. Recent trends advocates the use of AI to enhance smart contracts (Krichen, 2023).

Electronic Writing must be Characterised by Permanence and Stability

This condition means the writing by code of contracts or transactions in electronic media must have stability and permanence so that its content can be referred to and inferred from it before the court in the event of a dispute between the parties, and it is stated in Article 13/Section (1) of the Iraqi Electronic Signature and Electronic Transactions Law that electronic documents, electronic writing and online contracting have the same legal validity to their paper equivalents according to conditions stipulated by the law. One condition for this is that the writing be preserved and kept to enable its retrieval at any time (Electronic Signature & Electronic Transactions Law, No. 78, 2012. Article (13) section 1).

In the same vein, the UAE law in Article 5(1)(A) states that for any law requiring the retention of documents, records or information due to any purposes, the necessity is fulfilled by keeping electronic records in the form in which they were formed, disseminated or received, or in a form proven to be accurately representative of the information created, sent or received (Federal Law No. (1) of 2006 on Electronic Commerce and Transactions (ETC) 2006). With regards to Iraq and the UAE, the lawmakers need to regulate the recognition of recordkeeping or documents on the blockchain, specifying the recognised type of blockchains, whether private or public, to ensure the permanence and stability of transactions and written smart contracts.

The United States has recognised in some states, such as Illinois, the regulated use of blockchain in transactions and procedures, as per state law (i.e., Act House Bill 3575), which pointed out that when the statute requires documents or records to be in writing, the evidence

electronically recorded on a blockchain is sufficient. But the recognition of transaction records on blockchains is not absolute, such as where Act House Bill 3575 of the state of Illinois imposes a limitation on evidence recorded on the blockchain. The legal validity of a smart contract may be rejected if the blockchain contains transactional records that are not storable or reproducible for all the parties (Pollacco, 2020). Thus, there could be consequences leading to losing the character of permanence and stability of the electronic writing.

Electronic Writing must be Immutable to Adjustment and Change

This condition means that all contracts must contain zero defects (e.g., changes, additions, deletions, amendments) pursuant to the Iraqi Electronic Signature and Electronic Transactions Law. As stated in Article 13 (Sections A and B), the electronic writing must be kept either in the form it was formed, disseminated, or received or in some other form that proves that no part of the text has been amended, added, or deleted since being sent. The law also mentions that the information contained must indicate who created it and the receiver of it as well as the date and time on which the information was sent and received (Electronic Signature & Electronic Transactions Law, No. 78, 2012. Article 13(B&C).

As for UAE legislation, there is a blend between the phrases "electronic writing" and "electronic document". In cases like this, the law often requires a document, record, or information to be preserved. Therefore, if any document, record, or information is saved electronically, the following rules must be followed:

> a. The electronic record must be kept in the form in which it was created, sent, or received or in some other form that proves that it accurately represents the original information. In other words, the original document or record cannot be changed in any way when it is saved electronically.

> b. The information should be kept in ways in which it can be used for subsequent reference.

> c. Any information must be retained that identifies the origin of the electronic message, its destination, and the date and time of its dissemination and receipt (ETC, 2006 Article 5).

In the case of smart contracts, the writing would be recorded and saved on the blockchain, where it is not subject to change and adjustment and is thus compliant with the provisions of the Iraqi and UAE laws. Rather, the blockchain will be decentralised and the parties involved in a smart contract are anonymous, so the parties must use a platform relying on private blockchains to ensure that authentication of transactions are not taking place unless the parties are known.

The American position is different, wherein some states such as Nevada and Arizona in 2017 enacted laws that apply to smart contracts. Per these laws, records that are available only in electronic form will not be considered unenforceable because of their electronic nature. Meanwhile, in cases where records are legally required to be provided in writing, an "electronic record" satisfies the law. For this purpose, in addition, an electronic record is defined as a "record created, generated, sent, communicated, received or stored by electronic means" in order to include blockchain transactions (McKinney et al., 2018). Therefore, registering written transactions on a blockchain ensures that writing cannot be modified. The nature of blockchains makes information immutable, decentralised, consensus-driven, and transparent. Moreover, all transactions on blockchains would be open files, meaning that any user can access them and evaluate the validity of any transactions associated with them.

Admissibility of Written Smart Contract as Transaction Recorded on Blockchain

Usually, online contracts are written on electronic devices or physical mediators that are certified or authenticated by bodies approved by governments. The relevant laws of a state may determine permitted organisations or individuals, such as notaries public, to certify electronic records or written documents. These may fall under the authority of the contracting parties or a legally recognised central authority. But in the case of a smart contract, the content of the contract is an encrypted program written in a programming language documenting the will of the parties and the terms of the agreement via digital signatures represented by private keys. These signatures grant approval to users of blockchains or miners to implement smart contracts using blockchain technology so that solely miners or users of the blockchain network can access them. Establishing a new block that documents the smart

contract and digital signatures involves solving mathematical problems and algorithms, which will establish the new block in the blockchain on which the smart contract is recorded. In this regard, the blockchains substitute the (electronic) records that document electronic transactions and smart contracts. Therefore, the courts will need to recognise the blockchain technology as an electronic record in order to use it as evidence proving the terms of the written smart contract using many of the traditional legal principles that are currently used in adjudicating disputes involving electronic contracts. Because of the decentralised nature of record-keeping with blockchain technology, there is a need to legally recognise the record-keeping or transactions relating to smart contracts that are created, stored, or verified via blockchains by the legislative authorities in the selected jurisdictions in order to help the courts deal with disputes arising about smart contracts.

From another standpoint, the researcher envisions that the presentation of blockchain technology as proof will face no objection (as being the same as any electronic evidence) before a court provided that its reliability is provable (e.g., via expert admission of the blockchain's reliability as written evidences in front of the courts). Nevertheless, this would lead to monetary and time losses, thereby limiting the advantages of the blockchain. To avoid these losses, a jurisdiction could acknowledge the permissibility of the blockchain and electronic evidence by firstly allowing the evidence at the legislative level and secondly using the blockchain technology implicitly at the government level (Polydor, Jan 05, 2020).

In the next section, this paper discusses the extent to which written and recorded smart contracts on blockchains can be accepted as evidence of the existence of the terms in written smart contracts by codes on the blockchain and their recognition before a court of law. Therefore, in the following discussion, the researcher examines and analyses the uses of the blockchain as an electronic medium.

United States of America

In the United States, the federal government has not yet acted on its constitutional power to introduce legislation that regulates blockchain admissibility as written record-keeping as evidence before courts of law as there is an overlap in jurisdiction due to the presence of multiple authorities trying to regulate the admissibility of the blockchain.

Therefore, the federal government has taken two methods to regulate the recognition of evidence on the blockchain, firstly by taking the legal principle known as the "best evidence rule"(Pollacco, 2020).

Prior to the invention of the blockchain, a specified minimum requirement was established in the Federal Rules of Evidence (FRE) which stipulates that, at trial, it is necessary to use the best available evidence. In accordance with rule 1002 of the FRE, this rule is applied upon the desire of a party to use the contents of a written document, recording, or photograph as evidence at trial, despite the unavailability of the original document. As such, the court could accept a secondary evidence the demonstrate the document's contents and utilise it as permissible evidence (Institute). Unless otherwise provided in federal law or the FRE, and by the measurement of that, the transactions or documents recorded on blockchains are considered sufficient evidence before the courts according to the "best evidence rule". Otherwise, this could be accomplished through the US federal government allowing the freedom of states to independently enact laws, state by state. Thus, several states have begun individually issuing laws on admissible record-keeping of transactions on blockchain technology, allowing its admission as evidence before the courts.

Consequently, an initial legal recognition of transactions stored on the blockchain was enacted in the state of Vermont in June 2016 with House Act 868, which is an act related to various economic developments, containing a specific section on the acknowledgement of the validity of blockchain records and their court-related permissibility. According to the act, an electronically-registered digital record on the blockchain self-authenticates if it comes with a written declaration of a capable individual. In the same vein, a number of states have established state-specific rules and legislation for blockchain regulation, especially in the area of cryptocurrency. Such as California (Zain et al., 2019) and New York which was the first state to begin legislation in this area by regulating cryptocurrency organisations, and 32 other states soon proceeded along the same path. Furthermore, New York, Illinois, Vermont, Virginia, Arizona, Washington, and Ohio introduced or passed legislation to regulate the admissibility in court of all evidence stored on the blockchain, smart-contract validity, and the recognition of the blockchain as secured storage for the record-keeping of transactions (Pollacco, 2020). Thus, from this perspective, the statutes require any

written records or documents digitally recorded on the blockchain to be regarded by courts as acceptable evidence.

UAE (United Arab Emirates)

The Emirati legislature did not refer to the electronic media used to store or record electronic transactions or writings in explicit form, but referred to it implicitly as stipulated in Article 2 of the ETCL of the Emirate of Dubai No. 2/2002. This defines an electronic "record" or "document" as an established, kept, retrieved, copied, sent, notified, or received record or document, all of which are electronically performed via a physical medium, or via other electronic mediums where it would be retrievable in an understandable form (ETCL, Article 2). The tangible medium is considered an electronic medium for storing electronic writing or an electronic "record" or "document". In the same vein, "electronic medium" is defined by the ETC, 2006 in Article No. 1.

Additionally, the amendment to the Federal Evidence Law No. 36 of 2006 has defined electronic documents, in Article 17 Section 2 Duplicated, stipulating that an "electronic document" is any diffusion, receipt, or keeping of symbols, signals, writing, images, sounds, or information in any form that is conducted through an information technology medium. "It is clear through the definition that the UAE legislator has mixed between electronic writing and the electronic document, as well as merging between the electronic record and the electronic document, although jurists assert that there is a difference between them"(Mshtfaee, 2020).

Emphasising this, there are several conditions mentioned in Article 5 of the ETC, 2006 which provide that if the law requires preservation of a written document, record, or information for any reason, then this condition will be fulfilled if that document, record or information is saved in the form of an electronic record, provided it takes into account the following:

> a. Keeping the electronic record in the form it was developed, disseminated or received, or in any form, which can prove, that it accurately represents the information originally created, sent or received.
>
> b. Preserving saved or stored the information in a manner that enables it to be used for subsequent reference.

c. Preserving any information – if found – which allows for
the origins of the electronic data message, its destination, and
the date and time of sending and receiving it to be identified
(ETC, 2006 Article 5).

It is clear from the supra discussed and from the definition of electronic
"record" or "document" including the term any other "electronic
medium" that it would be valid and deemed as evidence pursuant to law
regardless of whether this medium is tangible or not. Hence, the UAE
law may accept the recognition of transactions on blockchains without
needing to explicitly state the fact. The documents specifically referred
to in this article will be in a form that is not possible to change as they
will be kept in new blocks and nodes within the blockchain, which can
only be viewed by the participating or licensed parties in the case of
private blockchains. Therefore, they are considered valid documents
and records, as long as they adhere to the conditions mentioned in
Article 5 of the ETCL.

Notwithstanding the fact that the current laws of the United
Arab Emirates do not deny the authenticity of transactions recorded
on blockchains, the government has initiated practical steps using
blockchains in the field of government and judicial transactions. This
began in April 2018 when the government launched the Emirates
Blockchain Strategy 2021, with a target to make the UAE the first
government in the world to use blockchain technology. This strategy
aims on capitalising on blockchain technology for the purpose of
transforming 50 percent of governmental transactions into blockchain
by 2021.

With regards to the judicial domain, the Dubai government is
planning on launching blockchain-based services in the judicial and
financial fields, where it will launch the first court in the world depending
on the blockchain in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).
This system also provides automated dispute resolution of smart
contracts to solve issues between involved parties, which increases
the efficiency and reliability of record-keeping. This technology will
perform an important role in simplifying judicial processes, avoiding
duplication of documents by enabling the parties to access the same
versions of the documents, thus achieving greater efficiency across the

entire judicial system. This is in addition to Dubai's launching of Dubai Pay, an online payment portal with the integration of blockchain, thus enabling real-time reconciliation (Southon, May 1 2019). All of this will contribute to achieving Dubai's endeavours regarding the adoption of advanced technologies to support the process of transforming the UAE into the happiest and smartest country, worldwide.

Iraq

Electronic writing or code is stored, transactions are recorded, and electronic records are maintained in order to present them as legal arguments before the courts and to prove the existence of the contracts and record them as electronic documents that are immutable in the event of disputes. Although the Iraqi legislature did not recognise blockchains, the lawmakers defined the electronic medium in Article (1) Section 7 of the law on an attestation of the Convention on the Regulation of the Provisions of the Electronic Signature in the Field of Electronic Transactions in the Arab Countries as a physical mediator for the preservation and circulation of electronic writing, such as CDs, other types of optical disk, magnetic disks, electronic memory, or any other similar medium (law of an attestation of the Convention Regulation the provisions of the electronic signature in the field of electronic transactions in the Arab countries No. (101) for the year 2012 Article 1(7). It is evident from the previous definition that structured writing of information cannot be valued as proof except by installing it on a physical medium such as an optical disk (e.g., CD or DVD), a hard drive, flash drive, or any modern electronic means. Although the electronic medium, as defined by the Iraqi law, has to be digital, optical or of any other similar means that is understandable, it would be commendable if the Iraqi legislature made room for any developments that may occur in the future in the field of technology due to the nature of some electronic media on which electronic data are carried may be damaged due to technical reasons beyond the user's control. Technical defects or misuse may lead to the destruction of electronic data, which makes it impossible to resort to it again for any purpose whatsoever (Sahb, 2016).

It can however be said that the technological development that is taking place now in terms of storage methods, as well as the volume of

electronic data storage in blockchain, confirms the reduced risks of the exposure of electronic written evidence to damage or loss, especially where the possibilities of preservation and storage in different memories are within one electronic medium. Thus, the form in which electronic documents are stored on the blockchain fulfils the conditions of continuity and stability necessary for admissibility as written evidence or proof.

Nevertheless, and despite all the advantages of blockchain technologies, it is clear from the foregoing that the electronic medium in the case of smart contracts relating to the blockchain cannot have legal standing unless the blockchain technology is explicitly recognised by Iraqi legislation. This is because Iraqi legislation narrowly defined an electronic medium in Article 1(7) as a "material medium" in order to conserve the deliberate nature of electronic writing, therefore considering the blockchain a virtual, non-physical medium.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A majority of jurisdictions deem a written agreement as the best proof of a contract's rights, as exemplified by the US's UETA legislation as well as the Iraqi legislation that have explicitly defined electronic signatures and electronic transactions in the law. Most applicable existing laws have specifications on pictures and different forms of writing, generally specifying that any writing should indicate meaning to capable individuals, regardless if it is coded. Emirati legislation has not defined electronic writing in any separate legislation; however, there is text on it in a section on electronic records. UAE law stipulates that writing and electronic documents do not lack legal effect or enforceability simply because they are in electronic form. Laws generally recognise writing in the form of code or programming language in smart contracts if they can be read by a computer after the decoding of the encryption by experts or via a program so that the content of the contract becomes legible, clear, and understood by the parties concerned. But the written code's validation as proof of the smart contracts' terms would be the key stumbling block in Iraqi law which requires for the writing to be kept in electronic media (physical media) to preserve it. Yet, smart contract terms are contractually recorded or are written transactions in the blockchain, whilst the blockchain technology is deemed as an

intangible medium. Hence, smart contracts written in coded language and kept in blockchain are not deemed as legal evidence usable in court except if the legislation overtly acknowledges the blockchain via new law enactment.

In conclusion, this paper suggests several recommendations. Firstly, it is necessary to add a new curriculum in law schools to familiarise students with any programming language utilised in smart contracts so that lawyers and lawmen in the future are able to convert the legal language or legal prose of contracts, including conditions and obligations, for storage and use in blockchain implementations. At the very least, infrastructure for legal expertise should be initialised that will enable understanding of the computer implementation of smart contracts. Secondly, there is a need to amend the article related to electronic media, specifically its restrictive concept of requiring the physical existence of an electronic storage medium for legal documents such as contracts. Alternatively, new legislation could be enacted such as that of some states in the US, where lawmakers have recognised smart contracts and transactions on the blockchain and given legitimacy to them to be used as evidence admissible before the courts.

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The Main Tendencies of Discourse Representation of Immigrant Workers in Malaysia: A Critical Discourse Analysis in The Star and Malaysiakini Online News Portals

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Abstract Being one of the most industrialised nations in Southeast Asia, Malaysia has been receiving many immigrant workers from neighbouring countries to provide labor for the economic expansion. The government was heavily criticised following its announcement on the intake of 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers into the country. The local media have profoundly reported on the issues of immigrant workers in Malaysia. This study focuses on the main tendencies of discourse representation of immigrant workers in Malaysia, specifically in The Star and Malaysiakini online news portals. A total of 20 news articles, 10 from each news portal concerning the issues of migrant workers from year 2016 to early 2017 are analysed according to Fairclough's (1995) Discourse Representation in Media Discourse framework. Each phrase undergoes five level parameter analysis to investigate the language and the strategies employed. This research is to identify the main tendencies of discourse representation of immigrant workers in Malaysia in The Star Online and Malaysiakini. As a whole, both online news portals maintained the ideational meaning of the primary discourse in their news reports.

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Abstrak: Sebagai salah sebuah negara yang membangun di Asia Tenggara, Malaysia telah menerima ramai pendatang asing dari negara-negara jiran bagi memenuhi keperluan buruh yang meningkat selaras dengan perkembangan ekonomi. Namun, kerajaan Malaysia telah dikritik hebat berikutan pengumuman pengambilan 1.5 juta pekerja asing ke dalam negara. Media di Malaysia juga banyak melaporkan tentang isu-isu berkaitan pekerja asing. Kajian ini berfokuskan kepada kecenderungan utama wacana perwakilan pekerja asing di Malaysia terutama dalam dua portal berita dalam talian iaitu The Star and Malaysiakini. Sebanyak 20 artikel berita - 10 dari setiap portal yang melaporkan isu-isu berkenaan dari tahun 2016 hingga 2017 telah dianalisis berdasarkan kerangka kajian Perwakilan Wacana Media oleh Fairclough (1995). Setiap klausa telah dianalisa mengikut lima aras parameter bagi menyiasat penggunaan bahasa dan strategi dalam portal-portal tersebut. Secara menyeluruh, kedua-dua portal mengekalkan makna berdasarkan wacana utama dalam portal-portal berita berkenaan.

Introduction

Recent studies have brought attention to a range of immigrant-related concerns involving both documented and undocumented migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. As of 2022, Malaysia hosted approximately 2.2 million officially registered migrant workers (IOM, 2023). The United Nations (UN) (2023) further estimates that the number of undocumented or irregular migrants could be anywhere from 1.2 to 3.5 million, positioning Malaysia as one of the leading countries in Southeast Asia for receiving migrants. The influx of migrants in Malaysia particularly from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar are for industries like plantation, agriculture, construction, hospitality and security and domestic services. This requires an effective immigration system to ensure a balanced and maximum economic development.

The Malaysian government started to regulate the movement of migrants in the country in 1991 due to its heavy dependence on the immigrants for labour. To encourage the locals to participate in the labour

force, the government froze the recruitment of international labourers in April 1993, but lifted two months later (Yusuf, Ismail & Pathmanathan, 2012). The increase of social problems caused by the immigrants in Malaysia triggered discomfort among the locals, hence, the effort to deport thousands of migrants to their country (Avila, 2015). But with the unwillingness of the locals to work as labourers, the government is left with no option but to grant immigrant permits.

Immigrants mainly from neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and the Philippines have contributed to the Malaysian economic development by working in industries such as construction, agriculture, and manufacturing, The labour force participation rate in Malaysia was only 67.5 percent when the population was indicated to be 31 million (Muhamad Badri,2015). This shows that the nation is desperate to take immigrant workers in various industries to sustain the economic development.

Many studies have been done to investigate the relationship between rural and urban migration, along with the causes and effects of the movement (Dokubo, Sennuga, Omolayo & Bankole (2023); Harris & Todaro (1970); Huang, Hou, Sun, Dou, Liu & Zhang (2017). However, not many studies have analysed the pattern of remittances from international migrations. Chin (2017) proposed that migration is triggered especially when the pull factor is high. The pull factors are mainly depending upon the socioeconomic status and the labour market of the host country (Spitzer et al., 2023). Iskandar et al. (2017) stated that despite Malaysia's high dependency on foreign workers especially in 3D (Dirty, Dangerous, Difficult) industries, it still attracts an inflow of migrants to the country due to the average monthly wage. The National Wages and Productivity Commission (2022) reported that Malaysia was ranked among ASEAN top payers at $334 monthly followed by Indonesia at $299, Thailand at $277, Vietnam at $199, Cambodia at only $194 monthly.

The main factors in influencing the movements of migrants outside the country are firstly, the increase in poverty experienced by developing and underdeveloped countries that has led to the movement of immigrants to search for job opportunities (Mohd Radzi,2006). Secondly, immigration happens when people are confronted with issues of demarcation like economic discrepancies. The last factor is

inconsistencies in population size, the movement of citizens between regions, and the issue of urbanisation.

The two elements that influence migration activities are the economic status of the emigrating country and the performance of the destination country (Idris & Rahmah, 2014). In the 1970s, many Asian citizens went to the Middle Eastern countries to fill in the labour force since the economy was starting to evolve due to oil value (Kar & Rusmawati, 2015). Japan, Korea and Taiwan became the ideal destinations for migrants when these countries were beginning to develop economically. Pasadilla (2011) mentioned that Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are among the three ASEAN countries which were receiving many immigrants as these countries were embracing industrialisation.

Intra-ASEAN migration has become a common phenomenon caused by geographical positions, wages disparities between countries and the state of borders (Tuccio,2017). Indonesia and the Philippines become the highest labour exporters due to the encouragement given by their government because of the local labour (Kar & Rusmawati,2015). Malaysia is second after Saudi as the most preferred host country for Indonesian migrant workers (Fariasturi & Mohd Khairul,2012). Indonesians make up 23% of the migrant workers in Malaysia because of its proximity and similarity in religion, language, and culture. The Muslim nation, warm welcome and economic stability also contributed to the choice made by migrants who found Malaysia appealing for employment opportunity (Zehadul, Nurazzura and Md. Shahidul, 2014).

However, issues pertaining to migrants are continuously discussed in news media. It is considered to be a significant news to publish issues on migrant in terms of human resources; policies for immigrants to enter the country, the implications of immigrants for the nation's security, crimes associated with migrant workers, their wages, their entitlement to health policies and the mistreatments that they received. Paul (2023) from Malaysiakini discussed the pressing need for policy revision to overcome the exploitation of migrant workers. Junaid (2023) from The Star Online stressed on the effort to oversee and coordinate migrant workers by 'One Channel System' in promoting a reciprocal relationship of reliance between Malaysia and Indonesia. From these reports, it can be acknowledged that some of these issues were framed and reported in different ways towards the masses.

Nuurrianti, Siti Aeisha and Sabariah (2022) investigated how the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was represented in The Star Online, Malay Mail, Malaysiakini and Free Malaysia Today and discovered that all English online news portals tended to portray ICERD in an unfavourable manner. The media in Malaysia, both traditional and online, provide different insights when discussing the issues of immigrants in Malaysia. Information provided may also vary due to the different stances of these media organisations. Due to this, the proliferation of diverse online media platforms has reshaped the way news about these immigrants is disseminated.

However, there is a lack of comprehensive research that investigates how these various online media platforms transmit news regarding labor immigrants in Malaysia, and the subsequent impacts it may have on public perception, policy discourse, and the integration of these immigrant communities. Thus, this research aims to investigate the tendencies in the written discourse of online portals practised by two popular online news portals - The Star Online and Malaysiakini.

This research is significant to better inform the public on issues involving foreign worker minimum salaries, their welfare, immigration concerns, and how they are framed and represented in different news platforms. Moreover, this study is expected to chart a new path of research in linguistic studies.

Online News Media in Malaysia: The Star Online and Malaysiakini

The Star Online

The Star is the first English tabloid in Malaysia. First known as The Star Publications (M) Berhad (SPMB), the publishing company was first established in 1971 (Selvanayagam, 1999)and now has rebranded and changed its name to Star Media Group Berhad. The company's biggest shareholder belongs to the political coalition party, MCA and has one of the highest circulations nationwide (Fong & Kit, 2016). SPMB made history in June 1995 when the Star Publications marked its name as the first Malaysian newspaper, which was also ranked third in Asia to launch its web edition of news. The Star remains one of the most popular choices of the Malaysian people (Statista, 2023). Currently, The Star Online today has successfully gotten the attention of many readers

locally and worldwide. The recent data by Statista (2023), noted that The Star Online was ranked the fifth highest at 25% online readership by Malaysians surpassing Malaysia Today, Bernama.com and even CNN.com.

Malaysiakini

Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran took the initiative to pioneer an independent news portal of quality Malaysiakini in 1999 (Rajaratnam, 2009). Carrington (2015) quoted:

"First, it has increased demand for reliable and independent news, along with support for human rights, open government, and free expression; second, it has built a viable business model that enables it to employ about 40 reporters, publish in four languages, and expand into video products and business news." (p. 1)

In 2019, Malaysiakini mentioned that they have successfully reported over 500,000 stories in the past 20 years since its establishment. Malaysiakini provides three other versions written in Bahasa, Chinese and Tamil other than the English version. Operating under the slogan "News and views that matter," Malaysiakini aims to build a community that acknowledges the importance of independent journalism while also providing trustworthy, newsworthy, and reliable news and information (Carrington, 2015).

The public gains information from Malaysiakini that is not being disclosed in the mainstream media. The public thus, prefer an alternative media to look for neutrality in the news establishment (Rajratnam, 2009) alongside its easy accessibility online as compared to offline news (Omar, Ismail & Ng, 2018). Malaysiakini has the highest online readers by 48% among Malaysians (Statista,2023). Ultimately, this proves that the public turns to independent journalism, or the alternative media in helping them voice out their opinions and views. Rosyidah (2015) mentioned that the alternative media allows for 'democratisation'; voices of the suppressed in the mainstream media are finally getting the attention they deserve.

Fairclough's Discourse Representation in Media Discourse

Discourse is language use conceived as social practice. Fairclough (1992) described discourse representation as relationships between

texts, which is also known as intertextuality, where devices such as quotations of reporting clauses are marked in the discourse. Discourse representation is often associated with social practices where ideologies are embedded and need to be analysed for their social implications. Fairclough (1992) he said that media discourse, also known as primary discourse, employs indirect discourse (ID) in which it modifies and alters the original speech or direct discourse (DD) of the speaker. The author's intention will eventually decide on the discourse used in the media and whether or not it reflects the DD with the actual wordings. Therefore, the analysis of media discourse is crucial to examining to what extent ID is demarcated from DD. This study will employ the discourse representation framework by Fairclough (1995).

This theoretical model is chosen due to its nature of investigating language, the strategies employed, the media ideological intentions and the implications they serve. The discourse representation in media discourse will give a descriptive and thorough analysis on the discursive practice and the ideologies they represent. Figure 1 is a brief representation of the framework:
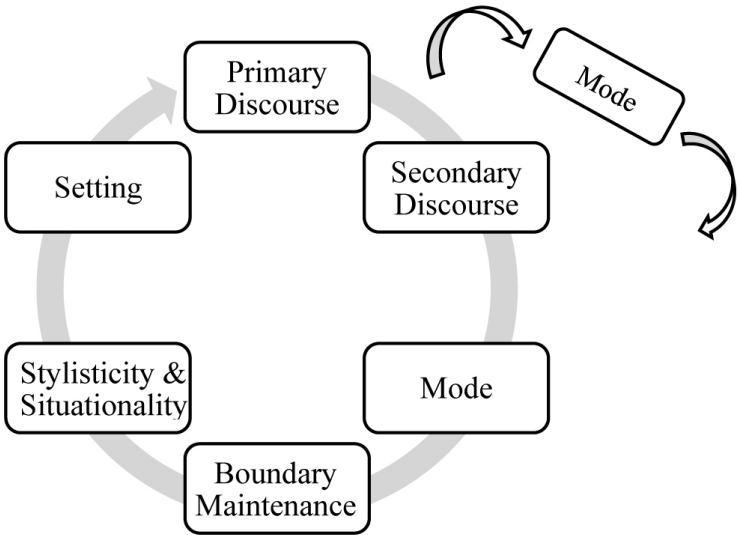

Figure 1: Summary of Fairclough's (1995) Discourse Representation in Media Discourse

Fairclough (1995) drew his framework of discourse representation in media discourse into five parameters: mode, boundary maintenance, stylisticity, situationality and setting. Mode operates, by distinguishing two 'voices': Direct Discourse (DD) as the discourse of the person of interest and Indirect Discourse (ID) as the discourse used by media practitioners in their newspapers. There are, however, situations such as news importance, interest and intensity that do not require secondary discourse to be represented differently. Boundary maintenance on the other hand, explains the degree of differentiation and fusion between these two types of discourses in media representation (Fairclough, 1995).

Stylisticity assesses how discourse representation is made "non-ideational, interpersonal" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 60), while situationality considers how secondary discourse is represented based on its conditions and situations. Lastly, setting particularly stands as a crucial element to identify how the audience decode and elicit their thoughts on the already influenced, structured secondary discourse within certain conditions (Fairclough, 1995).Fairclough (1995) introduced the term unsignalled or free indirect discourse (Rafatbakhsh & Jafari, 2015) which is a thin representation between primary and secondary discourse. In this research, 'unsignalled' is identified as 'UNSIG'; an indicator that text producers did not utilise quotation marks within the primary discourse in representing an actual secondary discourse.

Fairclough (1995) specified two tendencies of discourse representation: the minimal segregation between primary and secondary discourse and the focus on words used to illustrate the ideational meaning that is being represented. These tendencies depend on how media practitioners provide a discourse platform to accommodate the public's understanding of what is represented. In other words, journalists need to speak on behalf of the audience.

Overall, Fairclough's framework on discourse representation in media discourse evaluates the tendencies of discourse representation, which will also reflect the organisations' stance on certain issues. By using this framework, the researchers will also be able to investigate the implicit ideologies that are being perpetuated according to certain discursive strategies represented. Conclusively, the purpose of this study is to investigate the tendencies in the representation of written

discourse in the online portals. The study aims to analyse the tendencies of discourse representation of The Star and Malaysiakini online portals.

Method

Data collection

The researcher has collected 20 news articles (10 each selected from The Star Online and Malaysiakini). These online news portals were selected based on the high readership - Malaysiakini at 48% and The Star Online (25%) among online Malaysian users as reported by Statista (2023). In terms of the sampling number, it was decided based upon the inclusion criteria, where the researcher considers the occurrences and relevance of immigrant-related issues portrayed within a one year duration (2016 until 2017) as reported on the news portals. This specific timeline was chosen as research by Muhd Azlan (2018) mentioned that Malaysia has one of the highest intakes of immigrant workers which stood at 49,496 workers, with a gap of around five thousand workers intake in 2018.

The data was collected within two phases simultaneously - data extraction from Malaysiakini and The Star Online and the retrieval of original quotations from speeches or comments made by people of interest who spoke on the issues. In terms of news report, the articles selected were on keyword basis such as 'migrant workers', 'foreign workers', 'PATI' or known as '*pendatang asing tanpa izin'*. Other than that, the researchers went through each report manually by date to ensure that any news regarding foreign workers in Malaysia was collected and to be considered as data. At the same time, the author went to YouTube, a popular video streaming platform online as an instrument to search for the original interviews primarily based on the articles that have been retrieved online. Also, press releases that were made public by any reported party were gathered. These methods were crucial to ensure that primary and secondary discourse could be compared for the analyses. The researchers then carefully selected only the articles that have primary or original quotations to be compared to how they were reported as secondary discourse.

Following that, the researchers scrutinised each issue presented and categorised them according to ten themes: (1) foreign worker intake freeze, (2) levy postponement, (3) levy rates hike, (4) temporary card for illegal foreign workers, (5) employers levy responsibility, (6) MoU

pact between Malaysia and Bangladesh, (7) MOHR on foreign worker freeze, (8) foreign workers intake, (9) foreign workers with temporary permits and (10) respect and attitudes foreign workers.

The following discussions will be explained according to the ten themes summarised above.

Research Design and Discourse Approach

The approach of this research is qualitative with a slight aspect of quantitative. The qualitative approach is based on the methods of analyses which were based on Fairclough's five parameters of discourse representation in media discourse. This method came after data extraction and categorisation. The researcher analysed each article by phrase. Each phrase underwent five stages of thorough analysis; mode, boundary maintenance, stylisticity, situationality, and setting. Firstly, in examining mode, the researcher located the primary discourse, or DD, to determine the tendencies of how ID was being represented according to DD. The researcher then classified these modes of representation, which reflected how the represented discourse was distinguished from the representing discourse. It was then identified whether (a) the primary discourse was subordinated, (b) there was a shift from first and second person pronouns to third person pronouns, (c) shift of deictics was apparent, and (d) there was 'back-shift of tense." (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). Next, the researcher examined boundary maintenance, which determined whether the voices of both primary and secondary discourse were similar or different. Here, the researcher investigated the mode of incorporation or dissemination, along with the vocabulary items incorporated in the primary discourse, to see the changes in interpersonal or stylistic meanings from the secondary discourse (Fairclough, 1995). The analysis continued with stylisticity and situationality, in which the former examined the representation of the non-ideational, interpersonal meanings of the secondary discourse while the latter analysed the phrases according to the context and situation of the secondary discourse (Fairclough, 1995). Lastly, the researcher determined the parameter of setting, which inspected how readers interpret and understand the secondary discourse after being positioned in a specific textual context, also known as 'cotext'. Having analysed all phrases according to the five parameters, the researcher then summarised how both online news media represented the issue of immigrant labour. By then, the researcher

was able to determine the tendencies of this media discourse, which resulted in the product of primary discourse.

Results and Discussion

UNSIG

The Main Tendencies of the Discourse Representation of The Star Online and Malaysiakini and the Validity for Media Discourse

The research question inquires on the main tendencies of the discourse representation of both portals and whether they have wider validity for media discourse. To answer this research question, each tendency will be elaborated.

Tendency 1: A low incidence of ambivalence between primary and secondary discourse, involving both ID and UNSIG

The first tendency which is a low incidence of ambivalence between primary and secondary discourse, involving both ID and UNSIG, reflects that the level of demarcation between primary and secondary discourse of both portals are low in general. The reporters, or the "news givers" did not separate the ideational meaning of DD in the ID, which basically reflects the superiority of the primary discourse in shaping the secondary discourse.

These news givers principally took on the role of mediators in perpetuating the main idea of DD into news for the audience. This low demarcation between primary and secondary discourse reflects, as mentioned by Scott (2008), the process or strategy taken by the writers or reporters in making sure that the news constructed should be comprehensible by the assumed readers. This manifestation of transparency as mentioned by Karlsson (2022), proves intricate - while it serves as a significant indicator to reflect the integrity of news reporters, its efficacy is subjected to readers' evaluation to either be neutral, trusting or sceptical about it. Further elaborated by Hall et al. (1978), the process of news production is deemed one of the most crucial aspects after taking into account the standpoint of the media organisation and the selection of news categories within its constructed principals. By framing ID in a similar context of DD, the reporters ease the readers' processes of "identification and contextualisation" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 54) where the audience's background knowledge is met with a familiar

representation of the setting. One of the examples that can help explain this condition is from Malaysiakini under the second category (levy postponement) where the ID wrote, "The cabinet has agreed to postpone a move requiring employers to pay their foreign workers' levy, to next year" ("Cabinet agrees to postpone new levy ruling to next year, 2017) from DD, "In view of that, the Cabinet decided to defer the levy till 2018." The ideational meaning of DD was retained in ID with some elaboration on the workers' levy embedded in the secondary discourse. This elaboration of context was structured by the reporter to ensure that the audience was able to comprehend the setting of the situation.

The tendency of low demarcation between these two voices can be seen from the result where the mode of representation in the category of shifting from first and second person pronouns to third person pronouns appeared to be low in occurrences. The condition, however, was represented in one of the news by Malaysiakini, where the reporter shifted the first-person pronoun to the third-person pronoun as ID. Derived from DD, originated from Hannah Yeoh: "You want to talk about some bad hats? Can I suggest you first start with Putrajaya?" was translated into ID, "Yeoh added that if Malaysians wanted to talk about bad hats, they should first start with Putrajaya," ("Don't belittle Bangladeshis over Zahid's migrant plan", 2016). It is evident that the reporter shifted the first- and second-person pronouns "I" and "you" to the third-person pronouns "Yeoh" and "Malaysians." This type of representation was made by the reporters to build rapport with the audience by inserting specific pronouns to enhance the degree of familiarity in their discourse. By shifting the second person pronoun "you" to a more general pronoun, "Malaysians", the reporter was trying to include the readers in the context of the ID. This finding can be supported by Andersen et al. (2019) in which the term 'Direct Reader Address' to build rapport with readers within its journalistic authority. The ideational meaning, however, may experience subtle changes through this type of discourse representation. It was also exemplified in The Star Online, in which the DD said, "*With the 2.2 million Bangladeshi workers and other foreign workers, we have far exceeded what was planned under the 11th Malaysia Plan,*" translated to ID, "Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) says the number of foreign workers in the country has exceeded what was targeted under the 11th Malaysia Plan" ("MEF: 11th Malaysia Plan target exceeded", 2016).

The value of solidarity was being put forward with the shifting of the first-person pronoun "we" to "the country" in the secondary discourse. The reporters of both portals principally utilised this type of mode to convey a certain set of ideational meanings by just changing the subject of the discourse. In translating "you" to "Malaysians" in Malaysiakini, the reporter was trying to imply to all citizens that Putrajaya should be a place of attention, while The Star Online utilised the mode to increase the level of intensity of the issue through a bigger lens. This type of mode, however, was not used frequently in both portals, as the reporters did not intend to stray from the ideational meaning embedded in DD.

This tendency of low demarcation between the primary and secondary discourse can also be reflected in the low occurrences of back-shift of tense in both portals. Throughout 2016 and early 2017, the issue of immigrant workers was concentrated upon, and news regarding the intake and freeze of foreign workers, levy imposition, foreign worker passes, and respect for the immigrants was actively presented. Since many of the news were time-sensitive, tense was an important mode of representation. An example from The Star Online that depicts a shift of tense is from issue 10, in which the DD said, "We have received reports saying Bangladeshi workers are involved with rape and others..." and was shifted to ID, "...the policy of bringing in foreign workers in view of the current soft labour market, there were also other social issues to consider," (The Star Online, February 17, 2016). The shift of the present tense "are" from DD to "were" in ID can be interpreted as an incorporation of the reporter's standpoint, other than just a simple discursive style. This shift was used to lower the intensity of the issue for the audience. As discussed in the primary discourse, there were major social issues involving immigrant workers in Malaysia, which were downplayed by the shifting of tense in ID. These discursive strategies helped reduce the intensity of the problem as well as present the authorship of the reporter as a news-giver. An example from Malaysiakini however, reflects a different form of shift, which was from a simple present tense "are" in DD to a future perfect progressive tense "will be" in ID. The ID said, "Under the EMC, employers are fully responsible to pay foreign workers' levy starting 1st January 2017" and was translated to the ID as "Employers will be responsible for paying the levy of their Malaysian foreign workers effective tomorrow, Jan 1, 2017..." ("DPM: Bosses, not workers have to pay foreign worker levy

from Jan 1", 2016). This shift of tense conversely, did not separate the ideational meaning of the primary discourse in the represented news. It is fair to say that this particular mode is highly dependent on the contextualisation provided by the reporter. This aligns with the findings made by Gorchev (2021) where he mentioned that ultimately, readers' interpretation relies heavily on how the media commit to the primary or original discourse in their journalistic pieces. The modification in meaning may or may not occur through this shifting, but as demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2, reporters from both portals chose to retain the actual tense used in the primary discourse.

Table 1: Overall Mode of Representation for The Star Online

THE STAR ONLINE														
TOTAL	DD	ID	**Modes of Represented and Representing Discourse**								**Slipping**			
100	36	64	Subordination of secondary discourse (that-clause to reporting-clause)		Shift from 1st and 2nd person pronouns to 3rd person pronouns		Shift of deictic		'Back-shift' of tense		Direct quote/ quotation marks		Shift 3rd person pronouns to 1st person pronouns	
			Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
			47	42	21	68	11	78	22	67	7	82	0	91

Table 2: Overall Mode of Representation for Malaysiakini

MALAYSIAKINI														
TOTAL	**DD**	**ID**	**Modes of Represented and Representing Discourse**								**Slipping**			
118	31	87	Subordination of secondary discourse (that-clause to reporting-clause)		Shift from 1st and 2nd person pronouns to 3rd person pronouns		Shift of deictic		'Back-shift' of tense		Direct quote/ quotation marks		Shift 3rd person pronouns to 1st person pronouns	
			Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
			69	45	22	91	16	99	32	81	14	98	1	109

As for the low occurrences of UNSIG in the secondary discourse for both portals, it shows that the reporters practised acknowledging the primary discourse when embedding it in ID in the form of direct quotation or quotation marks. To compare, the incidents of UNSIG were mostly identified in Malaysiakini. For example, in issue two, the ID was quoted as saying, "The policy is to ensure all employers are responsible for their foreign workers, from the point of their hiring until they return to their home countries," (Malaysiakini, 2017) which derived from DD,

"The EMC is made to ensure that employers are fully responsible for their paid foreign workers from their point of hiring until they return to their home countries." Note how similar the secondary discourse was structured to the primary discourse, as it was not explicitly marked as DD – without the use of quotation marks or references.

To evaluate, the unsignalled ID that can be identified both in Malaysiakini and The Star Online were mostly information-based, involving facts and figures, and very few were found to be personal. Since UNSIG was not prevalently used in both portals, it can generally be implied that the reporters practised objective reporting in their news.

Tendency 2: Low boundary maintenance, correspondingly high in dissemination but low in incorporation and incorporation-plus-dissemination

The study indicated that most of the secondary discourse in The Star Online and Malaysiakini took over the primary discourse, which was a high case of dissemination. In other words, despite the changes made in vocabularies, sentence structures, and other features, the reporters retained the ideational meaning of DD in ID. The frequency of incorporation was marked as low because the process of translation or paraphrasing did not occur broadly throughout the news represented.

As presented in Tables 3 and 4, the distinction between the number of ID in The Star Online and Malaysiakini can be considered vast, but the tendencies of each category for both portals turned out to be consistent. The reporters of these news agencies tend to modify the original structure of DD, inclusive of their sentence structure, vocabulary, linguistic features and reporting clause, but did not stray from the ideational meaning. This reflects what was mentioned by Fairclough (1995) to be an incident of naturalisation, where the reporters shape the secondary discourse to suit the spectrum of understanding possessed by the assumed audience.

Table 3: Overall Representation of Boundary
Maintenance for The Star Online

ID	D/I	Boundary Maintenance			Dissemination: 26	Incorporation: 13
39	1	1	Structure	Present	8	1
				Absent	18	12
		2	Vocabulary	Present	12	1
				Absent	14	12
		3	Linguistic Features	Tense	5	1
				Etc.	2	3
		4	I.M.	Present	26	0
				Absent	0	13
		5	Reporting Clause	Beginning	17	11
				Middle	0	1
				End	6	1
				Absent	3	0
		6	Voice of Representation		1	3
		7	UNSIG.		6	0
		8	DD(S)		4	0

THE STAR ONLINE

Table 4: Overall Representation of Boundary Maintenance for Malaysiakini

ID	D/I	Boundary Maintenance			Dissemination: 51	Incorporation: 11
62	2	1	Structure	Present	22	0
				Absent	29	11
		2	Vocabulary	Present	26	0
				Absent	25	11
		3	Linguistic Features	Tense	12	0
				Etc.	0	0
		4	I.M.	Present	51	1
				Absent	0	10
		5	Reporting Clause	Beginning	35	5
				Middle	2	4
				End	5	0
				Absent	9	2
		6	Voice of Representation		3	5
		7	UNSIG.		10	3
		8	DD(S)		4	1

To exemplify, an excerpt from issue four of Malaysiakini experienced changes in vocabularies in which the terms "social visit pass" and "declined" in DD were translated to "Temporary Work Visit Pass" and "gone down" in ID. These terms were moulded to be simpler and more conventional, to heighten solidarity with its target readers through the understanding of the discourse represented. By doing so, the reporters, who have adopted the role of mediators, – were responsible for not only building rapport with the audience, but also sustaining it. It was also in The Star Online that the change in vocabulary was apparent. Extracted from issue nine, rather complex terms such as "ascertain" and "actual" in DD were converted to simpler terminologies; "completed" and "real" in ID. Terms or wording that were rather difficult to understand were changed and replaced with simpler ones. Fowler (1991) referred to this type of discursive principle as 'productive consumption' (Fowler, 1991, p. 20), which involves writers placing texts or discourse in a context that is associated with meaning familiar to the readers. In other words, alterations in vocabularies or terminologies made by reporters in news production need to be within the system of knowledge possessed by the readers. This aligns with what was mentioned by Djellou (2023) that specially chosen discursive types will be utilised by reporters to increase association with their audience in influencing perceptions. Texts should be made comprehensible and intelligible to maximise message transparency while at the same time maintaining the original meaning of DD.

In terms of the reporting clause, both online portals highlighted their original sources of news within their discourse. This contributed to the low boundary maintenance between DD and ID as the reporters were complying with the news construction system held by their institutions, instead of translating the DD within their "own" voices. Both portals were seen to place the sources mainly at the beginning of the news, – for example, "Dr Ahmad Zahid said the Government had been criticised..." (The Star Online, 2016) or "The minister, however, did not elaborate on the implication of the freeze on the MOU..." (Zahid's worker freeze won't affect Bangladeshi MOU, says Riot, 2016) and many others. This also shows that news reporters strategically highlighted pertinent sources to attract readers' attention. By highlighting important individuals or quoting controversial statements in the discourse, the reporters amplified the readability of the news portals.

Since incorporation was identified to be low for both online portals, not many ideational meanings were altered. However, it was noted that changes in structure and vocabularies under incorporation were obvious, and the voice of the reporters was subtly included within the ID. For example, in the second issue of The Star Online, the ID said, "Yesterday, Liow said the EMC gave employers full control of their foreign workers, without the need to go through middlemen," (Kaos Jr, 2017) which derived from DD, "*The Cabinet has been told that the employers will support the EMC if they do not have to deal with the middlemen.*" The process of incorporation here mirrors the authorship of the government in ID, where the Employer Mandatory Commitment (EMC) was presented with power over the employers. DD on the other hand, was emphasizing the rights of the employers over the EMC. The voice of the reporter in this case was subtly induced by changing the structure, wordings and most importantly the main idea of DD. It was however mentioned by Fairclough (1995) that, "*It is not necessary to see these transformations of secondary discourse as always or generally conscious distortion or manipulation; they can perhaps rather be regarded as built into common-sense professional practice,*" (p. 63). Thus, the varied representation of ID between The Star Online and Malaysiakini simply depict the professionalism of the reporters in upholding the principles of their respective news organisations.

As for Malaysiakini, an instance of incorporation was noted in issue two where the ID quoted, "Master Builders Association Malaysia (MBAM) had asked the government to shift levy payments back to foreign workers and warned that consumers may end up footing the extra cost borne by contractors in paying workers' levy," (Malaysiakini, 2017) was translated from DD, *"This imposition of levy, by shifting to the employer will cause a cash flow problem to the industry and making our contractors, our industry more expensive and less competitive."* In this context, the imposition of levy in DD was on the consequences of its shifting to the employers while the ID highlighted the need for the government to shift the levy back to the foreign workers. The reporter basically characterised the news to be different in terms of angle and subjects, which contributed to variations in meaning. By placing the government as a subject of action, the reporter was embedding his or her personal views on the matter.

The case of dissemination-plus-incorporation was minimal, as the reporters used reporting clauses, placed either at the beginning; middle or end of the discourse. There was an instance where the reporter did not include quotation marks in reference to DD, where the ID said, "The cabinet has agreed to postpone a move requiring employers to pay their foreign workers' levy, to next year," ("Cabinet agrees to postpone new levy ruling to next year", 2017) from DD, "In view of that, the Cabinet decided to defer the levy till 2018," said Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai. " The reporter was simply (conveying a statement without referencing Liow Tiong Lai as a source of the information. This type of case however, was only found to be 1% in The Star Online and 2% in Malaysiakini.

Tendency 3: A slight ambivalence in stylisticity, which is low in The Star Online whereas high in Malaysiakini but both high in situationality

Media discourse is usually constructed within the convention of ideational meaning of DD. Statements, announcements and information that are of importance, especially ones concerning the mass, need to be structured according to the 'public domain' (Fairclough, 1995, p. 64) and their understood setting. However, The Star Online and Malaysiakini have different stylisticity approaches to addressing the issue of immigrant workers in Malaysia.

The low level of stylisticity in The Star Online shows that the news portal tends to be more conceptual than personal when discussing these issues. Throughout the analysis, the author found that most of the ID in The Star Online expressed the government's voice and point of view in justifying its decisions on the issue of foreign workers in the country. Most of the secondary discourse was shaped to be less personal, as exemplified in the eighth issue, where the ID said, "Dr Ahmad Zahid said the Government had been criticised following the announcement, however the request to bring in the workers was made by employers and the Government was merely fulfilling the market demand for more foreign workers," (The Star Online, 2016). The stylisticity of this discourse basically justified the government's decision to bring in more foreign workers to the country. The reporter shaped the ID to be non- personal with the use of the subject 'the Government', instead of the pronoun 'he' in reference to Zahid Hamidi. To compare with

Malaysiakini, the stylisticity of the discourse was made more personal, as exemplified in the last issue, - where the ID quoted, "Syed Saddiq said coincidentally his roommate is a Bangladeshi and an Asian Debate Champion," (Malaysiakini, February 16, 2016). This instance illustrated the attachment of the subject's personal information and experience to ID. This high level of stylisticity is utilised to assign greater impact to the readers while also creating an impression on certain news items.

The secondary discourse of The Star Online and Malaysiakini went through several discursive processes when conveying their news. The former preferred expressing, followed by revealing and justifying the message, while the latter used urging, expressing, and revealing in the ID. These particular discourse processes were in line with the sentiments induced by adhering to the principles of each news agency. As an organisation affiliated with the government, The Star Online mostly utilised defence, followed by urgency and relevance as embedded sentiments in their news. The reporters took over the role of mediators in representing the government and its aspirations, which at the same time educated the public about the technicalities of the decision-making process. Unlike Malaysiakini, the reporters counterbalanced by promoting sentiments of inadequacy, unfairness of the decision made by the authority in bringing in foreign workers to the country, along the sentiments of request made by the employers' associations. The news portal also included sentiments of cynicism in their discourse. This practice of check-and-balance, as mentioned by Fairclough (1995), debunks "the myth that the media are a 'mirror' to reality" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 64). Malaysiakini, which claimed to represent the voice of the people, provided an interpretation of the presented discourse along wider social dimensions. These greater orientations allowed Malaysiakini to offer readers different perspectives on news, which not only conveyed but also convinced the public that power should not be concentrated in the hands of the authorities.

As for situationality, The Star Online and Malaysiakini appeared to be high in levels, which reflects an elaborative projection of social contexts of ID in both portals. This discursive style enhanced greater readability and viewership while ensuring full-disclosure of information. With ample space provided in online news portals, reporters were able to include a more extensive setting, which increased the credibility of the secondary discourse presented.

Tendency 4: A high degree of setting

A high degree of setting in both portals illustrates that the conventions of discursive techniques and strategies were very apparent in ID. The vast differences in the types of discourse and the rhetorical strategies used between The Star Online and Malaysiakini reflect different ideological beliefs held by the news agencies. These discursive productions are closely related to the principals of these media organisations, whether to enact power over authority or to differ. The Star Online and Malaysiakini have different discursive styles and ways of contextualising the discourse, which depend on the voice of the authority of emphasis. Kress (1983) mentioned that lexical choices have the ability to contextualise a discourse while being governed according to ideological beliefs. This can be seen in the rhetorical strategies practised by the reporters of these media organizations, where The Star Online contextualised more directives, informative comments, and hopes in their discourse while Malaysiakini used predictions, warnings, and fear and regret as dominant discursive voices.

The emphasis on authority was mediated through both portals in two ways: subtle or explicit. These were operationalized through careful selection of phrases and texts, as mentioned by Fairclough (1992), which are social and ideological in nature through the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of a discursive practice. Thus, the high degree of setting found in The Star Online and Malaysiakini confirms the plausible tendency to contextualise the discourse on the basis of ideological framing. In the effort of the reporters from both media outlets to maintain most of the ideational meaning between primary and secondary discourse, the reporting discourse was still structured and contextualised according to certain ideological beliefs and socio-political stances, which can be in the form of ascribing authority over the government or endorsing critics of power abuse.

After an elaborative analysis of these tendencies, it can be concluded that The Star Online and Malaysiakini have wider validity for media discourse. Both online news portals did not appear to report 'false' news, and the voices of reporters were not very apparent in both portals. The ID in both The Star Online and Malaysiakini remained in close proximity to DD, even though changes were identified to be more visible in the latter news portal.

Conclusion

The issues pertaining to the immigrant workers in Malaysia portrayed variations in representations in both The Star Online and Malaysiakini. The critical analysis has proven that reporters or text producers transmitted their ideological standpoints through explicit or sometimes subtle discursive elements. There are also possibilities that readers will not be aware of the elusive ideologies that were embedded within the text.

The tendencies represented show that both online news portals mostly maintained the ideational meaning of the primary discourse in their news reports. This result is expected due to the concentrated supervision of the Malaysian media via licensing of the regulatory authority. The dichotomy between The Star Online and Malaysiakini in the use of discursive structures and strategies simply mirror the principalship of these media organisations. Despite minor disparities, reporters of both media outlets still account for credibility in reporting truth in their news.

In terms of theoretical implications of this study, it is significant to consider both discursive and ideological perspectives in the analysis of media representation. In understanding how discourse is shaped according to regulations imposed on media outlets, this study calls for attention to the need for awareness among readers to be critical of subtle ideologies embedded in news reports. This discovery that unveils content that is strategically curated and framed which could influence the public's perception underpins the need for media literacy.

Some limitations of this research can be located in the methodological aspect. Firstly, this research focuses only on two online news portals, which are The Star Online and Malaysiakini. This selection restricts a better variation, which can give a broader analysis of the study. Secondly, in terms of collecting the materials, the researcher encountered several challenges in retrieving news reports, especially from Malaysiakini. As a private paid-news agency in Malaysia, some of the news dated 2016 were categorised as archived news, which were not made available for free readership. Since this research studies news reports from 2016 and early 2017, a considerable amount of money was required for a subscription to access the archived news.

Thirdly, with the various reporting categories available in both news agencies, the researcher had to make careful selections when collecting materials. Since the issue of immigrants in Malaysia is considered a rather controversial topic, it has been heavily discussed through many genres, which include editors' opinions, letters and political reviews. In realising this research, however, the researcher was required to only select the generic journalistic reporting to ensure standardisation in news structure across both online portals. The limitation came as the news reporting on the issue was rather limited, which made it time consuming for the researcher to collect the data.

One of the most crucial methods in this research was to locate and evaluate the original sources or the DD mentioned in the news reports. By using YouTube as the main source of the instrument, the researcher found it challenging to trace the exact wordings or phrases in the video recordings of press conferences, interviews, or even statements from press releases. Due to restrictions and privacy constraints, the sources of primary discourse were mostly found to be incomplete and inadequate, where the videos were either edited, censored or came in short clips. This led to the inaccessibility of some of the primary discourse. Among the many constraints, this particular limitation has been shown to be one of the major drawbacks of the study.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future research is recommended to examine how diverse online news platforms, extending beyond Malaysian-based newspapers, represent and frame the issues of migrant workers in the nation which are still left unabated. With advent sources available in today's media coverage, comparative linguistics studies on journalistic discourse can be better understood through the framework of discourse representation in media discourse by Fairclough (1995). Moreover, a more exhaustive examination is warranted to investigate how alternative media, such as social media platforms and their users contribute to shaping the narrative surrounding immigrant issues, discernible through the application of framing frameworks.

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Examining the Relationship between Prophetic Leadership and Cultural Intelligence (CQ): Lessons from the Cultural Diplomacy of *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*

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Abstract: The Muslim world is at a crossroads in that genuine leadership is almost obliterated. Research has shown that there were leaders who lacked values-based competencies which are paramount in any leadership style. Although a handful of Muslim worlds/nations are making progress in nurturing and managing leaders, the over-arching picture is incredibly worrying and depressing. Undoubtedly, understanding Cultural Intelligence (CQ) can benefit leadership, and cognisance of others' cultural practices is pertinent. The greatest leadership practices that we could strive to follow is the leadership of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and how the Caliphates learned from the Prophet (PBUH) to build not only human civilisation but also the personalities that form a unique culture for a sustainable society, especially during the time of Sayyidina Umar Al-Khattab. A dearth of studies on the relationship among CQ, Values-Based Competencies (VBR) and Prophetic Leadership is apparent. Thus, the main purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between prophetic leadership and Cultural Intelligence and most importantly to unveil how leaders can grasp and learn from the diplomacy shown by the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*; in that, the prophetic leadership qualities were aptly applied. Additionally, there is an urgent need for education, cultivation, and coaching of current and emerging leaders at all levels, from socio-political to organisational leaders, on how to be quality, judicious, and diplomatic leaders, if we are to build better organisations, societies, and a better world. Prophetic leadership

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Ways in which the brotherhood between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn reflects the prophetic leadership and the notion of Cultural Intelligence and values-based competencies.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) motivated the two groups to work together, support each other, and entrenched a strong Islamic community based on the principles of brotherhood and compassion, by exemplifying prophetic leadership. This emphasises the importance of building a strong relationship based on trust, empathy, and mutual respect. His leadership style was characterized by his ability to inspire and influence his followers, his commitment to justice and fairness, and his emphasis on creating a supportive and inclusive community.

In the same vein, the brotherhood between the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* reflected the notion of Cultural Intelligence, which can be traced back to their ability to understand, appreciate, and adapt to different cultural norms and values. The *Muhājirūn* came from a different cultural background than the *Anṣār*, and it was essential for them to learn and adapt to the customs and traditions of the Madinian community. The *Anṣār*, on the other hand, welcomed the *Muhājirūn* and were willing to integrate them into their community, despite their cultural difference. This reflects the importance of cultural intelligence in leadership, which requires leaders to be aware of, and sensitive to, cultural diversity and to create an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes cultural understanding and acceptance. Their brotherhood authentically reflects values-based competencies, such as empathy, compassion, and respect.

Prophetic Leadership

Prophetic leadership refers to the leadership style and qualities demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his role as the pillar of Islam and leader of the Muslim ummah (Abd, Rahman, 2016; Adil, 2018; Al Aidros & Abd Wahab, 2017; Al Tamimi, 2013). This type of leadership is based on the principles and values of Islam and is considered an ideal model of leadership for Muslims and undoubtedly for the world. Prophetic leadership is characterised by qualities such as humility, compassion, justice, wisdom, and courage (Al Aidros & Abd Wahab, 2017). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his ability to inspire and motivate people through his actions, words, and personal examples. He was also known for his ability to build strong

qualities are authentic, timeless, and universal. It genuinely involved the social, economic, and political realities of the communities they serve.

Keywords: Prophetic Leadership, Cultural Intelligence, *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*, Cultural Diplomacy, Values-Based Competencies, Leadership

Abstrak: Dunia Islam kini berada pada persimpangan jalan di mana kepimpinan sejati hampir terhapus. Kajian lalu telah menunjukkan bahawa terdapat pemimpin yang kurang mempunyai kompetensi berasaskan nilai yang sangat penting dalam mana-mana gaya kepimpinan. Walaupun beberapa negara Islam sedang membuat kemajuan dalam membina pemimpin yang cekap dan berwibawa, gambaran keseluruhan sangat membimbangkan dan membingungkan. Memahami Kecerdasan Budaya (CQ) boleh memberi manfaat kepada kepimpinan secara keseluruhan, dan kesedaran terhadap amalan budaya lain adalah sangat penting. Amalan kepimpinan terbaik yang perlu kita ikuti adalah kepimpinan Nabi Muhammad SAAS dan bagaimana Khilafah mempelajari dari Nabi SAAS untuk membina bukan sahaja peradaban manusia tetapi juga personaliti yang membentuk budaya unik untuk masyarakat yang mampan, terutama semasa zaman Sayyidina Umar Al-Khattab. Kekurangan kajian tentang hubungan antara CQ dan Kepimpinan Nabi amat nyata. Oleh itu, tujuan utama artikel ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara kepimpinan nubuwwah dan Kecerdasan Budaya, dan yang paling penting, untuk mendedahkan bagaimana pemimpin dapat memahami dan belajar dari diplomasi yang ditunjukkan oleh golongan *Anṣār* dan *Muhājirūn*; di mana sifat-sifat kepimpinan nubuwwah diaplikasikan dengan baik. Selain itu, terdapat keperluan mendesak untuk pendidikan dan latihan pemimpin semasa pada semua peringkat, dari pemimpin sosio-politik hingga pemimpin organisasi, tentang bagaimana menjadi pemimpin berkualiti, bijaksana dan diplomatis; ke arah organisasi yang lebih baik, masyarakat dan dunia yang lebih baik. Sifat-sifat kepimpinan nubuwwah adalah autentik, abadi dan universal. Ia melibatkan realiti sosial, ekonomi, dan politik masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Kepimpinan Nubuwwah, Kecerdasan Budaya, *Anṣār Muhājirūn*, Diplomacy Budaya, Kecekapan Berlandaskan Nilai, Kepimpinan.

Introduction

Who were the Anṣār and Muhājirūn?

The *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* were two important groups in the early Islamic community. The *Muhājirūn* were the early Muslim converts who migrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE, due to the persecution and oppression they faced in Makkah. The term *Muhājirūn* means "the emigrants" in Arabic, and they played a crucial role in establishing the first Islamic community in Madinah (Esposito, 1998; Watt,1953; Ibn Kathir (1370 CE) in Salahi, 1998)

The *Anṣār* were the inhabitants of Madinah who welcomed and supported the *Muhajjrun* upon their arrival. The term *Anṣār* means "the helpers" in Arabic, and they provided the *Muhājirūn* with shelter, food, and protection, and helped them integrate into the Madinah community (Nasr, 1975, Khan, 1998). The *Anṣār* was crucial in building a strong foundation for the early Muslim community in Madinah and played a significant role in the early Islamic conquests. Together, the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* formed the core of the early Islamic community and established a strong bond based on their shared faith and commitment to the teachings of Islam. The relationship between the two groups is regarded as an example of Islamic brotherhood, and their cooperation and solidarity are praises as a model for future generations of Muslims.

The complex Relationships Between Prophetic Leadership, CQ, and Values-Based Competencies in Light of the Anṣār and Muhājirūn

One way in which leaders can learn from the diplomacy shown by the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* is by studying the examples set by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his interactions with these groups. The Prophet's leadership style involved building strong relationships based on mutual respect and trust, and he was able to bridge cultural and social differences between these groups through his diplomacy approach.

The relationship between prophetic leadership and the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* is deemed significant as it exemplifies the leadership style of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the principles of Islamic leadership. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was an exemplary leader who established a strong sense of brotherhood between the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* based on their shared faith in Islam. The Prophet recognised the importance of building a cohesive and inclusive community based

on mutual respect, empathy, and compassion. He emphasised the importance of creating a supportive and nurturing environment where individuals can thrive, grow, and realize their full potential.

In essence, the relationship between the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* demonstrates the principles of prophetic leadership in several ways. Most importantly, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) inspired and motivated his followers to work together towards a common goal of establishing a strong Islamic community. He encouraged the two groups to support each other, learn from each other's experiences, and overcome their differences through mutual understanding and respect.

The relationship between the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* reflects the principles of prophetic leadership in terms of fairness and justice. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) treated both groups equally, and he ensured that the *Muhājirūn* received the same rights and opportunities as the *Anṣār*. He promoted social justice by encouraging the redistribution of wealth and resources to ensure that everyone in the community had their basic needs met.

Ultimately, the relationship between the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* exemplified the principles of prophetic leadership by showing compassion and empathy. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed concern for the well-being of his followers, and he encouraged them to be compassionate and empathetic towards each other. He taught his followers to listen to each other, respect each other's opinions and work together to create a supportive and nurturing community. Thus, it is not surprising that the relationship between the prophetic leadership and the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* exhibits the principles of Islamic leadership, including the importance of building a cohesive and inclusive community, promoting fairness and justice, and showing compassion and empathy towards each other.

Therefore, it can be said that the relationship between prophetic leadership and cultural intelligence is an important area of study for Muslim leaders, as it can help them to navigate the complexities of multicultural societies and to build strong and effective relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. By observing the examples set by the Prophet and his followers, and by developing their own CQ and leadership qualities, Muslim leaders can contribute to building harmonious and sustainable societies.

relationships based on trust and respect and for his commitment to social justice and equality.

Prophetic leadership emphasises the importance of serving others and working towards the common good, rather than seeking personal gain or power (Farooq, 2016; Hossain, 2019). It also stresses the importance of leading by example and treating others with kindness, respect, and empathy. Prophetic leadership has had a significant impact on Muslim societies throughout history and continues to be an important model of leadership for many Muslims today. Therefore, it suggests that there is a significant leadership crisis within the Muslim world, with the lack of competent and effective leaders (Javed & Javed, 2015; Khattak et al., 2016).

Despite the centrality of Prophetic leadership in Muslim societies, there is a dearth of research examining the relationship between Prophetic leadership, values-based competencies, and Cultural Intelligence (CQ). This is concerning, given the pressing need for competent, ethical, and culturally-sensitive leaders who can navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which values-based competencies and Cultural Intelligence are integral to Prophetic leadership in light of the brotherhood of the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*. It also seeks to identify strategies for cultivating these competencies among Muslim leaders. Thus, we aspire to address the following research questions: (1) What are the key values-based competencies and CQ skills demonstrated by Prophetic leadership? (2) To what extent do Muslim leaders exhibit these competencies in their leadership roles? (3) What strategies can be implemented to enhance the development of values-based competencies and CQ among Muslim leaders?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of Prophetic leadership and to provide practical recommendations for developing effective, culturally sensitive, ethical leadership within Muslim societies.

The challenges of the Muslim world have been compounded by factors such as terrorism, sectarianism, and foreign intervention, which have had a destabilizing effect on many Muslim societies (Javed &

Javed, 2015). One of the key factors contributing to the leadership crisis within the Muslim world is the lack of values-based competencies among many leaders. Research has shown that many leaders lack the qualities and skills necessary to lead effectively, including integrity, empathy, and cultural intelligence (Derakshan & Farsi, 2019; El Sayed & Tawfik, 2015). Furthermore, while there are some examples of Muslim nations making progress in nurturing and developing effective leaders, the overall picture is concerning. The lack of genuine leadership within the Muslim world has led to a sense of disillusionment and despair among many people, who feel that their leaders are not able to address the pressing issues facing the societies.

Values-based competencies are skills, qualities, and behaviours that are rooted in ethical principles and values, and are critical for effective leadership (Kim, 2019). They include a range of qualities such as integrity, empathy, CQ, fairness, honesty, and accountability. According to Kim and Joo (2019: 351):

> Values-based leadership is defined as leaders' behavior and decision-making process that is influenced by their own values and belief systems. The values-based leadership approach is more people-oriented and ethical in nature and is fundamentally different from the traditional leadership approach that focuses on the bottom line. Leaders who possess values-based leadership competencies are able to identify and articulate their own values, and apply those values in their decision-making processes to create a more sustainable and ethical organization.

In the same vein, integrity is an essential values-based competency that involves being honest, ethical, and consistent in one's actions and decisions. It also involves being transparent and adhering to ethical principles and values, even in the face of pressure or opposition. Empathy is another values-based competency that involves being able to understand and appreciate the perspectives and feelings of others. This necessitates being able to put oneself in someone else's shoes and to see situations from their perspective.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is also a values-based competency that involves the ability to understand, appreciate, and adapt to different cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours. It implies recognising and valuing the contributions of people from different cultures, promoting

inclusivity and respect, and challenging bias and discrimination when they arise. Fairness is another CQ element that demands treating people equitably and impartially, regardless of their backgrounds or status. This entails being objective and making decisions based on merit and evidence, rather than personal bias or prejudice. Similarly, honesty involves being truthful and transparent in all interactions. This requires being accountable for one's actions and decisions and willing to admit mistakes and take responsibility for them. Therefore, values-based competencies are critical for effective leadership and involve a range of qualities such as integrity, empathy, CQ, fairness, honesty, and accountability. By developing these competencies, leaders can effectively lead and serve their organisations and communities, and contribute to building a better world.

Additionally, CQ is a concept that refers to an individual's ability to adapt and function effectively in culturally diverse settings. Ang, et al.,(2007) mentioned:

> Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the capability to function effectively in culturally diverse situations. CQ involves a set of interrelated skills that include the ability to detect, understand, and adapt to the values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours of people from different cultural backgrounds (p.2).

It is the capability to understand and appreciate the values, beliefs, norms, customs, and behaviours of individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds, and to adapt one's own behaviour and communication style accordingly. It is a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, behavioural, and motivational components. The cognitive component involves knowledge about different cultural norms, values, and behaviours, as well as an understanding of how culture shapes human behaviour and communication. The behavioural component involves the ability to adapt one's behaviour and communication style to fit different cultural contexts and to effectively navigate cultural differences. The motivational component involves the willingness and openness to engage with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and to learn from their perspectives.

CQ is becoming increasingly important in today's globalised and interconnected world, as individuals and organisations are faced with the

challenge of working and interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Developing and enhancing CQ can help individuals and organizations to build stronger relationships, promote cross-cultural understanding, and achieve greater success in multicultural settings

From a theoretical perspective, it could be argued that individuals who possess higher levels of cultural intelligence are better equipped to understand and navigate cultural differences in the context of prophetic leadership. For example, a leader who is highly culturally intelligent may be able to more effectively communicate and build relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, which could facilitate the spread of prophetic teachings and the growth of religious communities.

However, empirical research on the relationship between CQ and prophetic leadership is relatively limited. Some studies have examined the impact of prophetic leadership on cultural intelligence and related constructs. Cemaloglu and Aktas (2015) found that individuals who perceived their religious leaders as exhibiting more transformational leadership behaviours (which are often associated with prophetic leadership) reported higher levels of cultural intelligence and a greater willingness to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Other research has suggested that religious leaders who possess higher levels of cultural intelligence may be better equipped to promote interfaith dialogue, facilitate cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, and foster greater levels of social cohesion and harmony (Ang, et al, 2007; Aamir, 2017; Abdi & Colakoglu,2018; Ahmed, et al, 2016; Karam & Lichtigfeld,2015).

CQ is a critical skill for Muslim leaders who operate in an increasingly globalised and multicultural world (Abdi & Colakoglu, 2018). It requires recognising and valuing the contributions of people from different cultures, promoting inclusivity and respect, and challenges in navigating cultural differences, given the diversity of Muslim communities and the complexity of Muslim cultural practices and traditions. Muslim leaders must be able to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, build trust and positive relationships, and leverage to drive creativity and innovation. By developing CQ, Muslim leaders can effectively lead diverse communities, promote inclusivity and respect, and contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous world.

With these in mind, the study aims to explore the key values-based competencies and CQ skills demonstrated by Prophetic leadership, examine the extent to which Muslim leaders exhibit these competencies in their leadership roles, and identify strategies that can be implemented to enhance the development of values-based competencies and CQ among Muslim leaders. All these will be examined in light of *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*'s diplomacy.

Methodology

This study involved a qualitative inquiry involving the analysis of Muslim leaders' discourse from a webinar entitled "Cultural Intelligence: The Case of *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*." In the webinar, nine speakers were invited, who included selected Muslim leaders, Muslim community members, and experts in Muslim leadership. This webinar intended to explore their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards Prophetic leadership, CQ, and values-based competencies in light of the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*. These qualitative data would provide in-depth insights into the complex and context-specific nature of leadership within Muslim societies and enables the exploration of complex phenomena such as leadership style, cultural norms, and social structures.

The participants in the one-day webinar included (1) Muslim leaders from different backgrounds including politics, business, education, and religious sectors, who held different leadership position levels, starting from middle management to top management leaders; (2) Muslim community members. This included those who have had experiences working with Muslim leaders or those who are knowledgeable on Prophetic leadership, CQ, or values-based competencies; and (3) Experts in Muslim leadership. This included experts, academicians, consultants, and trainers.

The audio of the speakers was transcribed, analysed, and synthesised. Thematic analysis was conducted based on the data compiled and collated from the speakers of the webinar.

Table 1: Participants

SPEAKERS FOR THE WEBINAR	CODES		
Muslim Leaders	ML1	ML2	ML3
Muslim Community Members	MCM 1	MCM 2	MCM 3
Experts in Muslim Leadership	EML 1	EML 2	EML 3

Note: The webinar speakers consisted of three females and six males; four local and five international speakers

Themes derived from data collected

1. Prophetic leadership, CQ and values-based competencies
2. Character education
3. Educational institutions' roles
4. Spiritual intelligence (SQ)
5. Safeguarding rights in conflicts

Findings and Discussion

1. Prophetic Leadership, CQ and Values-based Competencies

The analysis of the data collected in this study has revealed several key findings that shed light on the research question. Overall, the results from the interview with the Subject Matter Experts as highlighted in the methodology part, indicated that there were a few main points that need to be addressed in ensuring values-based competency (VBC) is applied and how to strategise to enhance the VBC among Muslim leaders in order to develop effective, culturally-sensitive and ethical leaders.

The first important issue is to understand the sacrifices, struggles, and context of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* to develop personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. According to ML1, the sacrifices and struggles of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* have been a subject of admiration and inspiration for Muslims throughout history. Their stories illustrate the importance of values such as perseverance, loyalty, and compassion, which are central to Islamic ethics. He continued by saying that the experiences of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* can also be seen as a source of wisdom and guidance for developing personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility.

ML 2 added that the story of *Anṣār*'s generosity and kindness towards the *Muhājirūn* exemplifies the values of hospitality, generosity, and community. The *Anṣār* welcomed the migrants into their homes and shared their resources with them, even though they were not wealthy or powerful. He quoted from the Quran:

> "And [they] give food, in spite of their love for it (or for the love of Him), to the *Miskīn* (the poor), the orphan, and the captive, (Saying) 'We feed you seeking Allah's Countenance only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you.'" (Quran 76:8-9)

This act of selflessness and compassion created a bond of brotherhood between the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* that endured for generations.

In the context of Prophetic Leadership, EML 3 shared his opinion by saying understanding the sacrifices and struggles is essential to develop personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a deep understanding of the situation of *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* and the challenges they faced during their migration and integration into the Madinah community. He recognised their sacrifices, hard work, and contributions to the Islamic community and encouraged his followers to learn from their example.

EML 2 on the other hand stated his point on CQ and society by saying that:

> People are the makers or breakers of the society, hence, the nature of the people living in the society will determine the nature of the society itself and it is very important to address the people through education i.e. Cultural Intelligence (CQ) (EML2,58)

In addition to that, all the speakers of the webinar agreed that there is a need to foster positive moral characters in education to face community challenges. MC 3 clarified that Prophetic Leadership taught us that the development of personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility is rooted in the ability to empathise with others and to understand their experiences. She continued by saying the example of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* demonstrated that personal growth and development are not just individual pursuits but are deeply connected to the community and the society in which one lives. It enables leaders to develop a deeper sense of empathy and compassion

and to use this understanding to guide their interactions with others. By developing these qualities, leaders can inspire their followers to work towards the betterment of society, to be more socially responsible, and to embody the values of the Islamic faith.

ML 3, MC 1 and EML 2 shared several *Aḥādith* in relation to the importance of understanding the sacrifices, struggles, and context of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* in developing personal values, ethical principles, cultural intelligence, and social responsibility:

> The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The best of people are those living in my generation, then those who will follow them, and then those who will follow the latter. Then there will come some people who will bear witness before taking an oath and take an oath before bearing witness." (Bukhari).

This *Ḥadīth* highlights the importance of learning from the example of the earlier generations, including the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, in developing personal values and ethical principles.

Another *Ḥadīth* mentions: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are like one body; when one part of it feels pain, the rest of the body responds with sleeplessness and fever." (Muslim).

This *Ḥadīth* emphasises the importance of cultural and emotional intelligence and social responsibility in the Muslim community, which can be developed through understanding and empathising with the struggles and challenges faced by the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*. It highlighted the interconnectedness and solidarity that should exist within a community, and how individuals should support and care for one another in times of need.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children, and all mankind." (Sahih Bukhari 15 narrated by Anas).

This *Ḥadīth* highlights the importance of love and compassion in the Islamic faith, which can be exemplified by the sacrifices and struggles of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*. By understanding their context and experiences, Muslims can develop a deeper sense of love and compassion for one another and for humanity.

2. Character Education

Fostering positive moral characters in education is essential for developing strong and effective leaders who can face the challenges of their communities with compassion, empathy, and integrity. ML 3 is of the opinion that these positive moral characters include honesty, humility, responsibility, kindness, respect, and self-discipline. He claimed that one approach to fostering these qualities is through modelling, where leaders demonstrate these qualities themselves and encourage others to do the same. She quoted a *Ḥadīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim:

> Whoever among you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; and if he cannot, then with his heart, and that is the weakest faith."
> (*Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim) (ML3,102).

All these, she continued, can be achieved through educational programmes and training that emphasise the importance of ethical leadership and positive character development. He added another approach which is to incorporate ethical principles and character development into the curriculum, particularly in subjects such as history, literature, and religious studies. By examining the stories and experiences of individuals who exemplify positive moral characters, such as the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, we can learn from their examples and develop a deeper understanding of the importance of these qualities.

ML3 further explained that character education can also involve experiential learning opportunities, such as community service projects and internships, that allow us to put our learning into practice and develop leadership skills in real-world settings. These experiences can help future leaders to build empathy, compassion, and a sense of social responsibility, which are critical qualities for effective leaders.

In addition to these approaches, it is also important for educational institutions to create a culture of trust, respect, and accountability, where everyone feels safe to express themselves and to take risks in their learning. This can be achieved through positive discipline strategies that focus on problem-solving, dialogue, and conflict resolution, rather than punishment and negative reinforcement.

3. The Role of Education Institutions

The third highlight from the findings was the integration of *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* as a new model of community that translated the Quranic concept of ummah or society. According to ML1, the integration of *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* as a new model of community that translated the Qur'anic concept of the *Ummah*, or society can be found in various Quranic verses and *Aḥādith*.

One of the most significant Quranic verses regarding the integration of Muhajirin and *Anṣār* is found in Surah Al- Ḥashr, verse 8:

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

And those who have taken up residence [in Medina] and believed before them love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.

He shared that this verse highlighted the love and compassion that the *Anṣār* had for the *Muhājirūn*, and how they prioritised the needs of others over their own, which is a key characteristic of ethical and effective leadership.

4. Spiritual Intelligence

EML1 further emphasised the importance of cultural and spiritual intelligence in manifesting Islamic values in actions. She said, "the world is a global village. Whether we are interacting physically face to face or virtually, the ability to function effectively in multi-cultural settings is in fact CQ and SQ complements it perfectly" (EML1,132). She then added that "spiritual intelligence encourages individuals to align their actions with ethical and moral values derived from religious teachings. This can contribute to a more principled and ethical *Ummah*, fostering a sense of integrity and responsibility" (EML1, 155).

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) and cultural intelligence (CQ) are both important aspects of leadership competencies, but they differ in their

focus and scope. Spiritual intelligence refers to the ability to understand and apply spiritual and ethical principles in one's personal and professional life (Farook & Yusoff, 2016). It involves being aware of one's own spiritual beliefs and values and using these to guide decision-making and behaviour. EML3 believes that spiritual intelligence also involves developing a sense of purpose, meaning, and direction in life, and using this to motivate oneself and others. He clarifies that CQ, on the other hand, refers to the ability to understand and adapt to different cultural contexts. It involves being aware of one's own cultural biases and assumptions and being able to adjust these to interact effectively with people from different cultures.

To reiterate, CQ also involves understanding the norms, values, and beliefs of other cultures, and being able to communicate and work effectively with people from these cultures. Both SQ and CQ are important for effective leadership in diverse and complex environments. A leader with strong SQ can provide moral guidance and direction, inspire others with a sense of purpose and meaning, and promote ethical behaviour and decision-making.

Al-Swidi and Mahmood (2015) investigated the relationship between spiritual intelligence, cultural intelligence, and transformational leadership, that in a globalised business environment, leaders need to possess not only technical skills but also spiritual intelligence to effectively manage diverse teams and create a positive work culture. The findings of the study suggested that spiritual intelligence and cultural intelligence are positively related, and both have significant effects on transformational leadership behaviours.

5. Safeguarding Rights in Conflicts

Another finding mentioned by MCM3 and EML3 was safeguarding rights in conflicts. This refers to the importance of upholding the rights and interests of all parties involved in a conflict while working to find a just and equitable resolution. Both of them said that it is important to approach conflicts with a mindset of empathy and compassion, recognising that all parties involved are human beings with their own fears, hopes, and dreams. By safeguarding the rights of all parties involved, we can work towards a peaceful and equitable resolution that promotes long-term stability and prosperity for all.

In the same vein, overcoming Muslims' inward-looking tendencies through education and cultural exchange was underlined. One way to overcome Muslims' inward-looking tendencies was through education and cultural exchange. By providing opportunities for Muslims to learn about other cultures and perspectives, they can develop a broader understanding of the world around them and become more outward-looking (ML3, MCM1, EML1). Research has shown that cultural exchange programmes can have a positive impact on intercultural attitudes and empathy. A study by Jackson and Csizmadia (2017) found that study-abroad programmes increased students' intercultural competence and cultural empathy. Another study by Jones et al. (2018) found that short-term study abroad programmes can positively impact cultural intelligence and intercultural communication skills. In addition to cultural exchange programmes, education can play a crucial role in fostering a more outward-looking mindset. By incorporating multicultural perspectives and diverse voices into the curriculum, students can develop a greater appreciation for diversity and learn to think critically about issues related to culture and identity. Furthermore, leadership education can also emphasise the importance of developing an outward-looking perspective. A study by Kim and colleagues (2018) found that leadership development programmes can positively impact intercultural competence and global leadership skills. Thus, providing opportunities for education and cultural exchange can help Muslims overcome inward-looking tendencies and develop a more outward-looking perspective. Incorporating multicultural perspectives into the curriculum and emphasising the importance of intercultural competence in leadership development programs can also help promote a more diverse and inclusive society.

Discussion of Findings

The key leadership competencies and qualities highlighted by this study are closely related to the concept of Prophetic Leadership in Islam. Prophetic Leadership emphasises the importance of embodying the values of the Islamic faith, such as compassion, empathy, and social responsibility, in one's leadership style. This style of leadership is based on the example set by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions, including the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, who exemplified these qualities in their daily lives.

The first competency highlighted by this study, understanding the sacrifices, struggles, and context of individuals like the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, is an important aspect of Prophetic Leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a deep understanding of the situation of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, and the challenges they faced during their migration and integration into the Madinian community. He recognised their sacrifices, hard work, and contributions to the Islamic community and encouraged his followers to learn from their example. By understanding the experiences of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, leaders in Islamic context can develop a deeper sense of empathy and compassion and use this understanding to guide their interactions with others.

A leader with strong CQ can navigate different cultural contexts with ease, build relationships and rapport with people from diverse backgrounds, and lead teams that are culturally diverse through the love, compassion, and solidarity that existed. Leaders with strong spiritual intelligence focus on one's own spiritual and ethical principles, and cultural intelligence focus on understanding and adapting to the cultural norms and values of others. Both are important for effective leadership in today's global and diverse world.   Understanding the sacrifices, in the context of individuals like the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* is essential to develop personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. Leaders who possess this competency are able to empathise with the experiences of others and draw on those experiences to inform their decision-making and behaviour. This quality is particularly important in the Islamic context where leaders are expected to embody the values of the Islamic faith.

The second competency highlighted by this study, fostering positive moral characters in education, is also an important aspect of Prophetic Leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his exemplary moral character and encouraged his followers to develop positive moral behaviours such as honesty, humility, and kindness. By modelling positive moral behaviours and encouraging others to do the same, leaders in the Islamic context can inspire and motivate their followers to embody the values of the Islamic faith. Fostering positive moral characters in education is crucial for developing strong and effective leaders. Leaders who possess this competency are able to model positive moral behaviours and encourage others to do the same. This quality is important in any context, as leaders who demonstrate positive moral

behaviours are more likely to inspire and motivate their followers and promote ethical decision-making and behaviour.

Subsequently, leaders must possess spiritual and cultural intelligence to effectively manage diverse teams and create a positive work culture. Leaders who possess this competency can understand and apply spiritual and ethical principles in their personal and professional lives, as well as to adapt to different cultural contexts. This quality is particularly important in globalised and diverse environments, where leaders must be able to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. This emphasised the fact that possessing spiritual and cultural intelligence is also important in the context of Prophetic Leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his spiritual and ethical wisdom and encouraged his followers to develop their own spiritual intelligence. Similarly, the concept of cultural intelligence is closely related to the Islamic concept of intercultural understanding, which emphasises the importance of understanding and respecting the customs and traditions of other cultures.

The fourth competency highlighted by this study, approaching conflicts with empathy and compassion, is also an important aspect of Prophetic Leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his ability to resolve conflicts in a just and equitable manner, and for his emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation. By approaching conflicts with empathy and compassion, leaders in the Islamic world can work towards a resolution that takes into account the needs and interests of all parties involved and promotes long-term stability and prosperity. These leaders need to safeguard the rights of all parties involved while working toward a just and equitable resolution. They who possess this competency can see conflicts from multiple perspectives and work towards a resolution that takes into account the needs and interests of all parties involved. This quality is particularly important in situations where conflicts can escalate quickly and have significant consequences for all involved.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that education and cultural exchange is also closely related to the concept of Prophetic Leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasised the importance of education and lifelong learning and encouraged his followers to seek knowledge

from diverse sources. By promoting education and cultural exchange, leaders in the Islamic context can help overcome inward-looking tendencies and promote a more diverse and inclusive society, in line with the values of the Islamic faith. They can appreciate diversity, and equity and promote a culture of inclusivity (DEI), where everyone is able to express themselves and contribute to their full potential. This quality is particularly important in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected and diverse, where leaders must be able to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives.

In summary, having the required leadership competencies are essential for promoting ethical and effective leadership, regardless of the context in which leaders operate. By possessing these competencies, leaders can inspire and motivate their followers, promote ethical decision-making and behaviour, manage diverse teams effectively, resolve conflicts in a just and equitable manner, and create a more inclusive and diverse society. The sacrifices and struggles learned from the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* offer a rich source of insights and lessons for developing personal values, ethical principles, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. By analysing and reflecting on their stories, we can learn from their wisdom and apply it to our own lives and communities. The leadership competencies qualities highlighted in this study are closely related to the concept of Prophetic Leadership which is timeless and universal. By embodying these competencies, Muslim leaders will promote ethical and effective leadership and inspire and motivate their followers to embody the values of the Islamic faith for a sustainable society.

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Management Strategy and Challenges for Religious Radio Stations in Malaysia

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Abstract: The landscape of radio transmission has changed as a result of the advent of digital technologies. It has indirectly affected how people listen to the radio. This study seeks to understand how religious radio stations stay relevant in radio industry when commercial radio rules. Hence, this research aims to determine the factors contributing to religious radio sustainability and its challenges in the digital age. This research used a qualitative approach by interviewing religious radio station managers. The findings reveal that management strategy is the core factor influencing community response to religious radio. Even though commercial radio dominates the radio business in the country, there is no competition between religious and commercial radio. Nevertheless, the commercial radio seeks to emulate religious radio strategy, unexpectedly. By defining the target listeners and using a good scheduling structure, management has proven to be the cornerstone of religious radio stations' success.

Keywords: sustainability, radio, religious, Malaysia

Abstrak: Landskap transmisi radio telah berubah hasil daripada kemunculan teknologi digital. Ia secara tidak langsung telah menjejaskan cara radio.di dengar. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana stesen radio bersifat

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keagamaan kekal relevan dalam industri radio apabila radio komersial yang mendominasi industri. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kelestarian radio bersifat keagamaan dan cabarannya dalam era digital. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menemu bual pengurus stesen radio bersifat keagamaan. Penemuan mendedahkan bahawa strategi pengurusan adalah faktor teras yang mempengaruhi respons masyarakat terhadap radio bersifat keagamaan. Walaupun radio komersial mendominasi industri radio di negara ini, sebenarnya tidak ada persaingan antara radio bersifat keagamaan dan komersial. Namun begitu, radio komersial berusaha untuk mencontohi strategi radio bersifat keagamaan. Dengan menentukan sasaran pendengar dan menggunakan struktur penjadualan yang baik, pengurusan telah terbukti menjadi asas kejayaan stesen radio bersifat keagamaan.

Kunci Kata: kelestarian, radio, agama, Malaysia

Introduction

Before television, the first electronic communication medium was radio. It is undeniable that radio serves as a conduit between the public and the government and that it has a big impact on how people think and how societies are shaped globally. Radio has changed from being a commodity product for exchanging information to one that is now more entertainment focused. Radio stations today are commercial in nature and target communities or audience segments. Based on who owns it, radio may somehow fall under commercial, national, or community radio stations.

Based on the literature review done, it indicates a scarcity of global research that specifically addresses religious radio. Dick (1966) compiled a bibliography on religious broadcasting spanning from 1920 to 1965, encompassing books, pamphlets, theses, dissertations, and articles from "K" through "Z." This extensive coverage included the inception of American radio broadcasting up to 1965, and, in some instances, part of 1966. Griffen-Foley (2008) undertook a similar study within the realm of Australian commercial radio, examining the period from the 1920s to the 1960s. She observed the diverse landscape of religious broadcasting on Australian commercial radio, influenced significantly by American broadcasting, facing challenges, particularly in the transitional decade

between television and talkback radio (Griffen-Foley, 2008). In a more recent context, McDonnell (2023) wrote a chronology of religious radio broadcasting from 2000 to 2021, covering regions such as Latin America, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. Notably, such research remains inadequate in the Malaysian context.

From 1921 until 2000, most radio stations in Malaysia were commercial and non-commercial stations that broadcast information, education, and entertainment rather than promoting any one religion. Religious programming, on the other hand, was broadcast in slots or portions with broadcast times ranging from 30 to 90 minutes to inform the audience. The first religious radio station was established in 2001 through the initiative of Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (The Institute of Islamic Understanding) (IKIM). The goal is to improve Muslims' and non-Muslims' understanding of Islam. Eight years later, the national broadcasting department broke the status-quo by launching Salam FM in 2009. It is a joint venture between Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Development Department) (JAKIM) and Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). In 2017, Astro Radio debuted the first religious radio station in the organisation by introducing Zayan FM.

According to our observations, the only radio stations that are now in service are Islamic ones. While some religions use the FM platform for transmission, others rely on the digital platform. Ibrahim et al. (2019) carried out a preliminary study on Christian-themed religious radio in Sabah. The study concentrated on the Cahaya Kinabalu radio station administered by Father Nick, a parish priest at St. Peter Claver. Ibrahim et al. (2019) highlighted the difficulties or hurdles the radio station faced in this particular investigation. They identified management as a challenge because radio stations are often managed by religious figures, typically a priest. In essence, effective management of a radio station demands knowledge, skills, and wisdom specific to radio operations. The crucial findings underscored that possessing managerial abilities and experience in radio broadcasting is vital to ensuring timely and effective radio operations.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that affect religious radio stations long-term survival as well as their challenges in the current digital era. This is because radio in this country has transitioned to a digital era, which puts the conventional radio industry

under pressure (Ibrahim, 2020). The introduction of digital technology has revolutionised the technological landscape of radio transmission and has also had an impact on the traditional ways on how radio operates and affected the status quo on the employment of radio producers and presenters.

Literature Review

While radio stations did broadcast religious programming, we discovered that there were no radio stations that initially only broadcast religious (as a niche) programming. Numerous other stations across the nation decided to copy these programmes as a result of their popularity. For instance, WJBT ("Where Jesus Blesses Thousands") in Chicago carried the first regularly scheduled religious programming in 1922. When the mayor of Chicago asked for help in generating programme material for the city, Evangelist Paul Rader responded to the mayor of Chicago's request for volunteers to assist in creating programme material for the city (Neuendorf, Kalis, & Abelman, 1987). From these rocky beginnings, religious radio quickly developed into a minor but crucial component of the early broadcast industry.

According to Barna Research Group (2002), religious radio in the United States played an essential role for Christians. This is evident when more than 141 million Christians utilised the platform to listen to sermons rather than attending masses organised by the church or other denominations (Barna Research Group, 2002). However, the positive feedback captured by Barna is not enough to convince Johnstone (2009) about the acceptance of religious radio among listeners. Our investigation of prior research revealed that there have been few studies on religious radio stations. This limitation might have led Johnstone (2009) to question religious radio listening. Additionally, studies conducted by the Barna Research Group (2002), Lipka (2015), and Pohlman (2021) examined religious radio stations in the US between 1920 and 1950. Stiernstedt (2021) then examined the development of religious radio in Sweden from 1979 to 1990. There appeared to be a gap in the aforementioned research years. As a result, radio research must be cultivated and re-documented for future expansion of this field.

As per Lee's findings in 2016, the primary determinant of radio program quality is operational effectiveness, with standard procedures and organizational design outweighing the significance of enhancements.

In the same year, Hur and Lee introduced a group key management scheme aimed at enhancing scalability and efficiency in broadcast encryption. This scheme allows legitimate receivers to recover the current group key even in the absence of key update messages. This highlights the pivotal role of management functions in ensuring smooth and systematic business operations. In contrast, Greer and Phipps (2003) propose that non-commercial religious radio stations leverage websites to improve communication with their audiences. However, only a few concentrated on boosting donations or streaming programming online. According to Lambert (1948) and Greer and Phipps (2003), the management of religious radio stations entails addressing distinct challenges such as financial sustainability, content regulation, and community representation.

In the Malaysian context, we used Google Scholar and Dimensions AI as search engines to locate research on religious radio. Using keywords such as radio, management, religious, *agama* (religious) Islam and Malaysia, we obtained 4710 results in 0.14 sec. We opted for the exact keywords in Dimensions AI and detected 1812 publications. However, after using scanning and skimming techniques, not all publications listed by Google Scholar and Dimensions AI met our requirements. We found that more research on religious radio can be done in Malaysia. This research thus looks at determining factors contributing to religious radio sustainability and its obstacles in the digital age.

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative strategy to collect data for this study. This approach was used to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of this research. There were three aspects to consider (1) the method and process of data collection of the study; (2) the data analysis process; and (3) a qualitative approach to addressing validity and credibility issues.

The descriptive qualitative approach was used. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), a qualitative approach is a method of analysing a problem that does not rely on statistics and flexible questioning to understand the issue at hand. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) interpret the qualitative approach as a situation in which researchers use observational methods for data collection. A qualitative approach can also be defined as a way or method of obtaining data in an open-

ended manner (Campbell, 2014). According to these researchers, the qualitative data was gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. However, it could also be supported by field notes and the researcher's notebook. For this study, the researchers used qualitative approach for data collection in answering the research questions through interviews with industry professionals.

This research identified the sustainability factor of religious radio and the challenges it faced in the digital age. This study used interviews to gather data on factors and challenges to better understand the issue at hand. According to Syed Arabi Idid (2002), interviews could be performed based on three principles: (1) the ability to gather information; (2) the respondents' knowledge of the interview process; and (3) the respondents' motivation to answer accurately.

Respondents possessing the authority to elucidate complex matters and guide the religious radio industry were identified as individuals capable of sharing valuable information. Consequently, this study will engage three informants affiliated with the religious radio station – two serving as radio station managers, and one with past experience as a radio presenter in the religious radio domain. This approach is essential to mitigate the risk of data falsifications and discrepancies. Leveraging the expertise of these informants in comprehending the topics discussed during the interviews enabled the researchers to obtain the necessary insights and responses. All informants agreed to the interview being recorded. As this research was done during the Movement Control Order because of the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted utilising Google Meet software. The objective of the recording was to ensure that all information collected by the researchers gathered from informants were clear and would allow researchers to focus on the interview. The recorded interviews were subsequently replicated in the form of transcripts using MAXQDA software for data analysis. The researchers transcribed three interviews in all.

Purposive sampling was used in this study, with informants chosen for interviews based on their direct and indirect engagement in religious radio industry and as key players. This purposeful selection is important in assisting researchers in understanding the research phenomenon through the experience and field of work of informants. The number of informants in this study was neither too large nor too small. According

to Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2013), there is no definitive answer for the number of informants that should be interviewed. However, the number of informants depends on the suitability of the research objectives, research questions, researchers' time, and financial resources. Therefore, this study used only three (3) informants. The interview data acquired from informants 1-3 indicated the presence of new information, according to our researchers. This indicated that the data or information obtained had reached saturation level and that additional informants were not needed.

Data analysis is the most important process and the findings of a research. Qualitative research data analysis differs due to differing philosophical background and paradigm (Othman, 2014). It was labelled as a complex process by Othman (2014).   It is dependent on the researchers' interpretive, subjective, and intuitive process in understanding the issues studied (Othman, 2014). The researchers used MAXQDA 2020 software as one of the approaches for analysing the data. The software was used for the purpose of transcribing of interview results.

Findings and Discussion

IKIM, Zayan and Salamfm are the only three (3) religious radio stations in the country that broadcast using frequency modulation (FM) license. Only two out of the three radio stations, nevertheless, consented to cooperate. Consequently, the interview incorporated two informants from separate radio stations, with one being a former producer and presenter in Islamic radio who currently serves as a lecturer. The following are codes for the informants involved:

Table 1: Informants Code

| Informant Code	Informant Institution	Informant Status
Informant 1	Zayan Radio	Manager
Informant 2	Kolej Universiti Islam Selangor (Selangor Islamic University College)	Former producer and presenter of Islamaic Radio Station/Lecturer
Informant 3	IKIM Radio	Manager

From the interviews, the researchers found that management is a common theme cited by informants while addressing the broadcast environment, as shown in the table below.

Table 2: Theme Classification

Colour	Parent code	Code	Segment Code
●		Management	15
●		Direction	6
●		Technology	5
●	Broadcast environment	Competition	4
●		Environment	2
●		Segment/Content	9
●		Presenter/on-air personality	6

Researchers found that under the management theme, there was a reciprocal relationship in scheduling, direction, audience tastes, branding, career development, segmentation/content and mentoring and monitoring as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Elements in Management

Colour	Parent code	Code	Segment Code
●		Scheduling	1
●		Direction	2
●		Listener's taste	3
●	Management	Branding	1
●		Career Development	3
●		Segment/Content	2
●		Mentoring & Monitoring	2

The researchers discovered that management is a major factor in the religious radio industry's sustainability based on the interviews coded in MAXQDA 2020 (see Tables 2 & 3). This is because management cannot organise and control the daily and annual operations of religious radio stations without a defined direction. Even the type of segments and content created by the radio stations' programme production unit showed the stance and identity of religious stations. Religious-oriented radio is distinct from commercial radio primarily in terms of its content and segmentation. As such, the data from this study were grouped by theme.

Management & Target Audience Idenfication

The key aspect of radio station management is to recognise and understand our target audience. Compiling segments and schedules without a target audience is pointless and has no financial implications. In this context, financial implication is revenue generated from advertisements resulting from the selling of airtime.

> "The most critical thing is how to ensure that the content of the programme can have an impact on the listeners."
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

> "We segmentised our programmes, contents, programmes that would be accepted by all ages. Because this is different from commercial radio stations".
> (Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Thus, identifying our target audience is critical in producing broadcast contents that can have an impact on the listeners and not produced sloppily. Past studies by Gogalid & Muhammad, 2021; Paudel, Bastola, & Lopchan, 2020; and Intan, 2020 had underlined the importance of recognising the target audience. In Malaysia for example, most commercial radio stations have a target audience – Era radio caters to listeners aged 16 to 23.

Therefore, radio stations' programming is based on the preferences of listeners in the specified age groups. This is to ensure that the radio stations are always accepted by their target audiences. According to Informant 3, religious-oriented radio had a unique composition of target listeners;

> "…we (religious radio/IKIM) are unique in that we (religious radio/IKIM) have to face the challenge of having listeners of all ages"
> (Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

This contrasts with Informant 1's claim that the radio station's target audience only focused on the 18–34 years old group.

> "If we target…18-34 years old, which is a young age group. It is a challenge to deliver positive, inspirational, and religious message. We need… really need to know these 18-34 years old audience."
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The disparity in target listeners for the two radio stations indicates that they are not in competition. This is the distinctive and uniqueness of radio with a religious concept. Although both offer airtime for income generation purposes, the term competition does not exist. Even Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) used an analogy to explain the dissimilarities between IKIM and Zayan.

> "But Zayan is like a kindergarten for religious approach. So, IKIM can teach Jawi but IKIM probably at a detailed degree or PhD or Master's level, equivalent to writing a thesis"

The preceding statement demonstrates the diversity and uniqueness of religious radio stations based on the target listeners. Instead, both religious radio stations focus on religious matters and societal goodwill. Furthermore, Informant 1 was highly positive when he indicated that research and consultancy were important for enhancing the content and format of radio;

> "I see that the business culture or practice carried out is usually based on research. Astro Radio does have its own researchers, its own consultant. Every direction, every content uploaded were based on the advises given. Of course, by international advisors and local researchers. They were never done by ear or by heart according to their whims and fancies. It is always based on reference." (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The findings on the study of the listening patterns were dissimilar to the block programming strategy used by most broadcasting stations worldwide prior to globalisation and privatisation. In Malaysia for example, following privatisation, the importance of understanding listeners was critical to increasing radio stations' profitability. Hence, Astro Radio utilised that formula when developing their broadcast content. Finally, it has become a global trend for most broadcast stations to understand their target audience.

Thus, radio station management must identify and understand their target listeners in accordance with the radio stations' mission and vision. This is critical to avoid conflicts of interest between the radio stations' management and staff.

Management & Control (Monitoring & Mentoring)

As a progression to identifying the target listeners as mentioned earlier, Informat 1 (Radio Zayan, 25 November 2020) emphasised on the importance of acting in response to listeners' changes and requests.

> "…for broadcast content, errr...of course content is the key thing. As content managers, we are aware that there are requests for various contents. At times, people crave for something funny. Then, as an example, during this Covid-19 pandemic they will look for something that can fulfil their spiritual nourishment. So, you have to be aware, we must immediately react to that change".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

In other words, Informant 1 recommended that the radio industry follows any shifting trend. The radio industry must be sensitive to these changes. Issues related to religion involves all walks of life. So, radio is responsible for all religious contents. However, providing such content is a challenge for religious radio stations. To meet the challenges, both informants emphasised on the importance of Nielsen and GfK ranking and rating studies. This is because the consulting firm's study can assist the radio station in determining the demographics of its target listeners. Thus, the relationship between management, target listeners, and radio content is reciprocal.

Informant 1 mentioned about control. While the programmes were created according to listeners' preferences, radio stations must adhere to rules and regulations outlined by the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). From the aspect of content control, religious radio stations need to adopt the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) as their primary source of reference when it comes to content control.

> "…but we must adhere to the legal guidelines outlined by the ministry of communications and, of course MCMC. Even if we want to forge ahead, we must still be alert with the on-air guidelines set, in terms of law. And of course, as a religious radio station, we must immediately get in touch with JAKIM for all religious laws".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Above and beyond, to ensure its broadcast quality, Zayan Radio took into consideration and viewpoints of their listeners via phone calls and comments on social media. According to our researchers, this approach had brought Zayan Radio closer to their listeners owing to the open attitude practiced by their management.

> "Through observation via phone calls or comments on Instagram, YouTube and others. This group feels a sense of belonging…that Zayan is part of the family, their friend..the only challenge is whether we are able to accept their view, or are we offended? Is our ego hurt? Or do we feel insulted, or open? For Zayan to grow positively and sincerely; every comment, every criticism must first be accepted. Take it in a non-emotional manner. There will exist words that are random, emotional words, for sure. Randomly, during fasting month or whatever situation they feel like commenting, or posts that they feel responsible to correct, for sure. So, at the end of the day, I take the approach of establishing friendship with them because if they are not sincere, they will remain silent and stop commenting. They will ignore.".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) also elucidated by giving examples of the form of comments and intervention that had been taken by the radio station in monitoring and controlling the quality of their broadcasts. Even the practice of being open (providing their personal telephone number to those commenting) in maturing Zayan by the radio station's management can be a successful method when the radio station succeeded in converting those who commented into friends.

> "If there are comments…presentation, contents are being commented. In the Facebook I will share my personal phone number for them to contact me directly. For example, an *ustazah* who commented on our Mawi Jawi segment. She is an ustazah, but on social media we do not know if they're hackers or trollers, but she insisted on making corrections of Mawi Jawi. I requested that she contact me. She did call me. She introduced herself, she was from Pahang and teaching in a religious school. She liked our Mawi Jawi segment but there were some incorrect and inaccurate parts".

> "I explained to her. I said that at university you are lecturing with a PhD or degree. However, at Zayan we employ

celebrities. And celebrities are bound to make mistakes. When someone commits an error, they are not afraid of getting brickbats. I expressed my gratitude to her for her kind advice. We got her to make a video and uploaded it, utilising her knowledge. Finally, we became friends. She commented on Zayan for its actions".

Our researchers concluded from the interviews that challenges in management are not only in understanding the listeners, producing quality programmes, but also in having a clear vision, mission, and direction for the radio station. It is difficult for any religious radio station to progress without a clear vision, mission, and direction. Hence, planning, monitoring, and mentoring are crucial.

"The challenge in management is to pursue the same target or direction. We need to have a weekly or monthly meeting. We constantly reset and never lose our direction. When we go on-air and do our own thing, we get carried away, and forget. Zayan was established with the intention of promoting contemporary Muslim style and targeting on the 18-34. So, when you are focused, you will walk towards the same direction. Only when there are many, numerous departments, sometimes we tend to forget. That's why meticulous and well-organised planning is compulsory. And of course, when we progressed and created a variety of titles, we are well-known, it can get into our hearts. But with the reset we stay focused and regrouped, if there are any unusual or questions that are not within our field of expertise, we will refer them to the respective experts".
(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 even gave examples on the importance of control and to develop it as an engagement or networking;

"If it's COVID-19, you should consult the experts on COVID-19. Of course, in religion, we refer to JAKIM. Federal, KL Jawi. We are in the process of expanding to JAIS if religious perspectives on religious issues varies by state. We are the platform through which messages are delivered. The primary key is to be open. When Intan (researcher) called me, I am open. Zayan is a new baby with a new dream to be known. So, every day is a learning process. You have your opinion, let me know and I will discuss them with my superiors. For your info, I have conveyed your proposal to

> my supervisor at the communication department. This is how
> we react to these challenges".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Thus, religious radio stations must exercise control over their content to ensure that it does not contradict the Quran and Sunnah.

Management & Content Segmentation/Scheduling

Both informants agreed that scheduling and segment formation had a significant influence on the target audience's reception and listening to overcome the challenge of listener-based wishes. According to Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020);

> "We begin by segmenting; we have segments and
> programmes…errr...we have some targeted segments, we
> schedule our two segments for prime time, driving time
> in the morning and evening, just like other radio stations'
> strategies. We target listeners who are on their way to work
> or in their vehicles".

Theoretically, radio slots are divided according to clock or hot clock (McLeish, 2005). However, the slot division of the show is determined by the duration of the broadcast; i.e. 24 hours, 12 hours, or 7 hours. It is contingent upon the workforce's capacity and the broadcasting licence.

Figure 1: Hot Clock

Based on Figure 1, Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020) has identified two (2) prime time radio slots, namely the breakfast show and the drive-time show. This demonstrates that the morning and evening listener demographics in Malaysia are quite high. For both, on the way to, and from work. Slot division and segmentation were made in response to a study conducted by Nielsen and GfK that showed the hearing patterns in the country. However, this study is limited to Peninsular Malaysia. It excludes Labuan, Sabah, and Sarawak.

According to Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25November 2020);

> "…we target listeners who are on their way to work or in a vehicle. Apart from that, we segmentised our next following programmes which begins at 10.00 a.m. and geared towards housewives and those who listen to the radio while working".

> "Errr…we divided the night programmes into 2 segments. Knowledge and entertainment segments. The segment on knowledge starts at 9-10 p.m. We target listeners who are keen and who have a penchant for scholarly content. And then after 10.00 p.m. we adjust our programme to suit the youngsters, who stay in dormitories and who are studying etc., and a rather relaxed content. That is how we respond to our listeners' challenge".

In fact, Informant 1 referred to the use of a sandwich-shaped scheduling. This indicates that the type of scheduling arrangement is important and should not be made haphazardly. So, it is not surprising why Informant 1 (25 November 2020) emphasised on the importance of scrutinising comments from listeners on Facebook, Instagram or via phone calls as discussed in the management and control section.

> "So, you have to sandwich everything. You cannot be directly educating them, insulting them. Meaning, you need to be arty. With the help of the announcers, personalities, or even the invited ustaz or invited artistes, we must combine our creativity to ensure that each content provides inspiration and accurate information while remaining compliant with Islamic laws and guidelines. Because you need to adapt to those 18 – 34, you need to discover young ustaz; that's why you have PU, and JAKIM also has young experts. That sort of thing. We need to sandwich it. We cannot be dictatorial or too direct, nor can you lecture or preach excessively. You

have to be subtle in your preaching. This entails taking the approach that everyone is sinful. We pique their interest first. We cannot immediately go and read the Quran nor the hadith…so that's the challenge. We have to be very, very subtle".

In summary, it is critical for religious radio stations to develop scheduling strategies that engage listeners. The use of on-air personalities is desirable to entice the target listeners' interests.

Management & Rebranding

Informant 3 emphasised that rebranding is a strategy to strengthen the content and format of radio;

"…we did our rebranding in 2019…2018..errr..in 2018 we rebranded the station, changed the way it's pronounced – previously it was known as IKIM FM, we changed it to IKIM or IKIM radio. Second, we changed our tagline. Previously, it was known as Your First Choice. We introduced the new tagline, 'Inspirasi Info Ria Islami' following the rebranding. We even updated our logo with new features and colours. Apart from that, for content, we use a new format in our talk-show programmes. Prior to this, our talk-shows did not have any break, it was completely just talk. Now, we alternate with commercial break and zikir as well as songs during the talk-show. That is the format we use following the rebranding of our station and content".
(Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Based on the interview above, this is the first time in IKIM radio's more than 19-year history that the station has undergone a massive rebranding that includes changing the station's name, tagline, logo, and radio format. These changes were made in accordance with the consultants' recommendations, as stated by Informant 2, in order to maintain an 'invigorating' broadcast content;

"…previously, IKIM uses the tagline, IKIM FM Your First Choice, we switched to IKIM' Inspirasi Info Ria Islami' in early January 2019 with a new logo after hiring external consultants who suggested we rebrand after a few years…18 years".
(Informant 2, Lecturer, 25 November 2020)

The inference made by our researchers is that after the status-quo as Malaysia's only religious radio station; after Zayan was established, it served as a wake-up call for IKIM radio to rebrand. Rebranding is critical to ensuring that the broadcast's quality and format remain consistent over time.

Career Development & Management

Employee career development is important in the management chain. It not only add value to the employees, but it can also help elevate the radio stations' image. All three informants agreed that career development for radio staff over enhancement of skills through courses is critical. This is because the radio industry has evolved technologically. The evolution of technology eventually altered the way radio conties operate, control, and broadcast. Thus, both technical and non-technical skills are relevant and necessary for radio operators.

According to Informant 3, e-courses for staff are important for strengthening skills and preparing staff to be influencers.

> "It has surely developed into a requirement and is now included in the annual work target. Each staff of IKIM radio must attend courses at least 5 times a year, 3 of those are directly related to the field of work and 2 general courses. These courses are implemented internally by IKIM, while others are sent or selected for external courses. Most of these courses are related to the field of work such as among others a course on improving announcers' presentation and so on. Other courses that we implement internally are technology related. Now is the time for us to establish our presence on social media. That is one of our new methods, and for that purpose, through our presenters we provide influencers, video editing, and social media content creator. That is why we implement courses for our presenters".
> (Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Career growth, according to Informant 2, is a must for all radio employees. It is not restricted to normal radio broadcasters, but also includes scholarly guest lecturers. Even efforts in professional development are made by inviting renowned figures in the hosting industry to help radio presenters improve their existing talents;

"Certainly, courses are available. That is a necessity and important. Every year, IKIM requires all permanent staff, announcers to attend development courses. We recommend inviting popular figures in addition to those arranged by IPPTAR. Aznil Haji Nawawi, Rizal Rashid, Nazri Kahar… are some of the figures or facilitators whom we have invited to give courses on aspects of hosting, handling, and delivery. At IKIM, we not only bring in announcers, but also academicians who are guests to the shows, and these academicians are included as one of the participants so that they can gain confidence and be prepared to be on radio. Because IKIM radio slots aren't solely for outside guests, IKIM academic officers must fill the slots as well. It's their SKT".
(Informant 2, Lecturer, 25 November 2020).

Even Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) emphasised the necessity of career development courses to avoid violating ministry, commission, and Astro regulations. It is referred to or repeated twice in several literature. This shows that each radio station is extremely concerned about the legal aspects to ensure that there are no violations of the law that could harm the reputation of radio.

"We have in-house compliance training. The important point for us is that when these individuals are involved in the broadcasting world or become ambassadors for Astro, or become the face of Astro, they must know how to comply with laws governing the protection of our licence".
(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

"If we trained them to be someone, we might recruit those who are from the said field or from reality shows and of course by top hosts from top shows so that you become like them. But if we hire you as a comedian or ustaz, we want your personality, we want your originality. However, you need to attend our compliance training so that you understand the rules for working in the broadcasting world that are governed by rules, and Astro".
(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 also clarified that Astro selected presenters, celebrity or comedians based on their appealing personalities and those who can captivate the listeners.

> "So, compliance training is a must. All announcers, presenters, and celebrities who appear in public should attend this compliance training. That is the main key. However, in terms of personality and public speaking, the reason we hired them is because of their originality".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The preceding interviews highlight the importance of courses as a career development tool. Without planning for courses, radio management effectively plans to fail by failing to strengthen their assets. Radio staff are creative workers. To ensure a radio station's effectiveness and success, creativity must constantly be polished.

Informant 1 was very optimistic about change and felt it was normal. It is important for radio stations to maintain effective communication with their stakeholders. Especially when it involves approval and verification matters.

> "…in the changes that have taken place, of course, in terms of administration, employees, so to improve the management aspect of radio, we need to communicate because Astro is a large company. Top-level directives, directives from all bosses, directives from stakeholders. As a radio station operating under a big organisation, we are unable to make decisions even though I am the content manager for Zayan, I cannot simply do as I like. We must maintain order, and everything need confirmation. Appropriate approvals, recommendations, and so forth are required. It is all in the administration, change of bosses or staff, etc. However, as a content manager for a radio station, you must follow the SOPs, adhere to the arrangement made".
> (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The previous statement demonstrates unequivocally the importance of a positive relationship between radio employees and the management. Radio staff must be disciplined, trustworthy, and responsible in their given tasks. It is normal to receive instructions and act accordingly as directed.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the culture of knowing one's target listeners is the primary point that most broadcasters should emphasise on. Without

getting to know the listeners and adhere to the block programming approach, it might be difficult for radio broadcasts to be widely accepted. It is common knowledge that the way radio is listened to today is different than it was 10 years ago. Hence, research on radio listening is important to ensuring radio's continued relevance in the future.

Additionally, control through monitoring and mentoring are crucial, as the content broadcast by religious radio stations are governed by religious laws and principles. Thus, any comment, criticism, or suggestion made by listeners should be openly accepted without reservation. Here, management faces a significant issue in taking in comments, and criticism as the community will always observe and listen.

Rebranding is viewed as a strategy for revitalising the radio stations' tagline, logo, and format. It can turn out to be its uniqueness and strength for that radio station apart from adding variation to an existing programme. The rebranding is not viewed as a threat; rather, it is viewed as a period of refreshing the format and radio broadcasts to maintain a high level of quality for listeners.

Scheduling and broadcast content must be relevant and adhere to the demographics of the intended listeners. In addition, the use of on-air personalities such as celebrities serves as a significant draw to listeners. As such, it becomes a component of the management strategy for engaging listeners.

The findings imply that courses and training development are critical for the announcers and producers in developing their skills. As a result, religious radio stations are eager to invest in the career development of their employees. Based on the research findings, managerial strategy is the main factor influencing how religious radio operates. Despite the fact that commercial radio predominates the country's radio business, it was also discovered that religious and commercial radio do not compete. Management has proven to be the key to the success of religious radio stations through the identification of the target listeners and the use of an effective scheduling system.

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The Confronts of Edutourism in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Era: A Malaysian Perspective

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Abstract: COVID-19 triggered a crisis and sliced through every facet of humankind. People were advised to practise physical distancing, and most educational institutions have integrated different digital technologies and virtual learning environments (VLE) to limit the likelihood of pandemic pedagogy. This study sought to investigate the challenges of edutourism in Malaysia for sustaining viable education during this delicate time. Therefore, it examines the determinants of sustainable education, perceived value, risk assessment, quality service, and knowledge management in choosing institutions to resume edutourism. Based on a non-probability survey sample of 308 international students in Malaysia, the data were analysed with SPSS for fundamental analyses and SEM-AMOS for hypothesis testing. The results demonstrated that most predictors highly influenced the choice of the institution; thus, the government must acquire appropriate pedagogical knowledge to assure learning coherence. This study has presented a collection of influencing factors that impact how students adjust their objectives when choosing academic institutions in Malaysia.

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Keywords: Sustainable Education System; Knowledge Management; Virtual Learning; Pedagogy; Edutourism

Abstrak: COVID-19 mencetuskan krisis dan menghiris setiap aspek umat manusia. Orang ramai dinasihatkan untuk mengamalkan penjarakan fizikal, dan kebanyakan institusi pendidikan telah menyepadukan teknologi digital dan persekitaran pembelajaran maya (VLE) yang berbeza untuk mengehadkan kemungkinan pedagogi pandemik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat cabaran edupelancongan di Malaysia untuk mengekalkan pendidikan berdaya maju pada masa yang sukar ini. Oleh itu, ia mengkaji penentu pendidikan mampan, nilai yang dilihat, penilaian risiko, perkhidmatan berkualiti, dan pengurusan pengetahuan mengenai pilihan institusi yang memulakan semula edupelancongan. Berdasarkan sampel tinjauan bukan kebarangkalian terhadap 308 pelajar antarabangsa di Malaysia, data dianalisis dengan SPSS untuk analisis asas dan SEM-AMOS untuk ujian hipotesis. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan peramal sangat mempengaruhi pilihan institusi; Oleh itu, kerajaan mesti memperoleh pengetahuan pedagogi yang sesuai untuk memastikan kesepaduan pembelajaran. Penemuan ini akan memberi kesan psikologi terhadap cara pelajar mengorientasikan semula matlamat mereka untuk memilih institusi pendidikan di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Sistem Pendidikan Mampan, Pengurusan Ilmu, Pembelajaran Maya; Pedagogi, Edupelancongan.

Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 as a threat has stopped daily activities in the local and international arenas and reminded us of the strong effects of diseases on humanity. It is unbound by geographic limits like earlier outbreaks, and its biological processes also impact nature. The coronavirus pandemic affected education systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closure of schools, universities and colleges. About 1.72 billion students were affected by the closing of institutes as a response to the pandemic, and 191 countries have implemented national closures, affecting approximately 98.4% of the world's student population (Chinazziet al., 2020). Education is also a sector that promises more revenue for the nation. International students spend over RM40 billion annually on higher education in Malaysia (Choi et al., 2021). For overseas students to select a Malaysian educational institution, it is

necessary to maintain a favourable image and revamp the whole idea of the education system. Undoubtedly, it must be more aggressive in promoting the nation's strengths in higher education. Consequently, it is widely held that the learning cycle in higher education has undergone a transformation and that government-funded assistance in enhancing digital infrastructure is imperative.

In this study, five significant variables are proposed, i.e., Sustainable Education System, Perceived Value, Risk Assessment, Quality Service, Knowledge Management and as precautions to make the education system sustainable and demand for local and international students. COVID-19 is likely to affect students from many countries in many educational institutions. The institutes should handle the disease beyond ethnicity or nationality. Quality support services should be provided to the students involved. However, it is also necessary to have quality support services, even in normal situations, to be competitive and make educational institutions sustainable. Many students and faculties now find themselves functioning in unfamiliar situations and struggling emotionally. Regarding a specific facet of this pedagogical unreadiness, a dearth of studies has addressed the challenges of edutourism in Malaysia. This investigation is the first systematic attempt to (re)claim the feature as essential for the future development of edutourism. This time of crisis is generating stress among the students. Therefore, risk assessment for mental health is also necessary. Quality support service is also essential, and a few things must be there so that academics develop their system.

While the pandemic has influenced the overall education system, international students' flow to Malaysia has been particularly affected. Additionally, because of the nature of the courses, students need face-to-face work to obtain practical exposure (Choi et al., 2020). In this aspect, this article examines the issues of edutourism in Malaysia for a more in-depth examination of past efforts. The rest of the paper is divided into five major sections. Section 2 briefly addressed the several factors that impact students' selection of Malaysia as their educational destination and the study's hypotheses. In section 3, the methodology is discussed. Section 4 contains the results and discussion. Section 5 concludes with an assessment of the recommended and suggested techniques.

Literature Review

Edutourism and COVID-19 in Malaysia

The global COVID-19 pandemic has secluded countries, including the education sector. The Malaysian education system has undergone significant modifications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to examine the impact of these alterations on the main parties involved, namely the students, educators, and parents/guardians. The advent of COVID-19 as a formidable menace has halted routine operations in both domestic and global spheres, thereby serving as a poignant reminder of the profound impact of illnesses on the human race. Malaysia has been portrayed as the ideal destination for students from all over the world. Over a hundred thousand international students reside in Malaysia (Husaini, 2021). The government has worked for years to safeguard the quality of higher education in Malaysia. Maintaining a high level of education is contingent upon becoming the top choice for students pursuing higher education overseas (Ma et al., 2021). It has become a popular destination due to the worth of the currency, the breath-taking scenery, and the variety of activities available. People admire Malaysia's type and the ease with which they may move around the country. Students from abroad have become a significant source in the tourist business. Higher education institutions and the economy benefit from the inflow of international students. Moreover, edutourism in Malaysia promotes the nation as the top destination for individuals seeking opportunities in higher education. Having kept its borders closed to visitors and international students, Malaysia has had little progress in the edutourism industry in the last few years (Sayahir, 2021). Costs for overseas students in Malaysia ranged from around RM46,000 before the pandemic to a whopping RM88,000 per year if they bring their families along (MOHE, 2020). Malaysia has generated an average of RM7.2 billion yearly in revenue from tuition fees, living expenditures, and other student-related expenses (Tey & Chandrashekar, 2021). A different study revealed that if 250,000 overseas students continued their education in Malaysia by 2025, it would have a multiplier impact, generating a cash flow of around RM15.6 billion (Abdul, 2021).

Unfortunately, since the pandemic began, edutourism in Malaysia has not been faring well. The travel ban has compelled many overseas students to postpone their semesters and return home. The unexpected

disruption to the influx of international students has generated concern about institutions shutting down since many universities primarily comprise international students. Therefore, it is necessary to address the difficulties associated with edutourism and implement successful promotional initiatives and efficient educational tourism-friendly policies.

Sustainable Education

Sustainability education (SE), also known as education for sustainable development (ESD), proposes a scientifically sound curriculum that integrates sustainability into academic studies and research (Reza, 2016). The educational paradigm gives prominence to the pedagogy and emancipation of the person. These ideas on sustainable development integrate policy and process management in institutions and communities (Balakrishnan, 2021). Consequently, there is a consensus that SE, as a force, phenomenon, or tool in contemporary education, involves issues of ethics, equality, and new ways of thinking and learning (Balakrishnan et al., 2021). The UN Agenda 2030 outlines 17 SDGs to be reached by 2030. These 17 objectives cover all three aspects of SD, and 93 nations have vowed to implement Agenda 2030 to foster economic progress, promote social inclusion, and safeguard the environment; notably, educational institutions play a crucial role in accomplishing the 17 SDGs to protect the ecosystem and living beings from development-related devastation (UNESCO, 2017).

Sustainability has recently posed a challenge to the concepts, institutions, and successful practices in higher education (The & Koh, 2020). Because they must contribute substantially to sustainability, universities and other institutions of higher learning must cope with this challenge (Tang, 2018). According to Barbier and Burgess (2020), sustainability satisfies human needs without compromising natural resources, eventually motivating humans to engage in responsible everyday activities. Nousheen et al. (2020) argued that a balance between social development, environmental conservation, and economic growth is necessary, and SD can accomplish this ratio.

In this regard, education for sustainable development (SD) is pivotal in sustaining edutourism. Therefore, the academic programmes offered by Malaysian Higher education (HE) were analysed to see how these institutions address various aspects of sustainability

within their educational programmes (Jerry, 2020). It is found that substantial attempts have been made by government programmes to incorporate sustainable development goals into the Malaysian higher education system. Therefore, an adequate number of academic courses are devoted to sustainability studies. Nonetheless, many aspects of education sustainability, such as curriculum, pedagogy and campus-based activities, have not yet been included in educational institutions (Reza, 2016).

The significance and function of sustainability have experienced a surge in the realm of higher education in recent times. Academic institutions have formulated customised strategic plans that cater to their response to SDG, spanning medium- and long-term durations (Alturki & Aldraiweesh (2022). Educational institutions increasingly acknowledge their responsibility as significant institutional players within local communities to establish a distinct sustainability standard. Numerous academic institutions have incorporated sustainability as a fundamental component of their strategic plans, aspirations, and objectives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary suspension of certain strategies. The higher education sector has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a shift towards online and digital curricula to facilitate education during periods of lockdown and emergency remote teaching. This study entails a methodical examination of written works to examine the concept of sustainability in the context of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, there has been a continuation of sustainability research that predates the pandemic. However, many of these studies have not been adequately contextualised within the pandemic literature. This study aims to comprehend the literature on sustainability in higher education in the context of the pandemic.

Perceived Value

It is enthralling to observe students leaving their native country to pursue higher education overseas (Deng & Ritchie, 2018). Researchers contend that in addition to being a valuable source of income for the economic development of the host nation, the international higher education sector also boosts the local economy (Jamaluddin et al., 2016; López et al.,2016). In recent decades, the study of perceived value has garnered significant academic interest (Williams & Soutar,

2009; Bajs, 2015). The perceived value notion is mainly founded on the equity theory, which proposes that a consumer would judge what is fair, right, and merited based on the perceived costs that have been sacrificed (Oliver, 2015). In order to make it simpler to study the interactions with other constructs, the idea of perceived value should be introduced in a unidimensional manner in every new field of inquiry (Gallarza & Gil-Saura, 2006). Researchers assess perceived value in unidimensional and multidimensional ways (Yi et al., 2014). This study defines perceived value as the difference between students' real advantages and sacrifices when participating in edutourism. In light of the novelty of the concept of perceived value in the context of edutourism in this field, it is essential to know the concept as a whole.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant strain on Malaysia's higher education sector. As education institutions recuperate, exploring novel approaches to enhance their strategies is imperative. The aggregate of perceived value propositions can be regarded as articulating a university's position in the marketplace. The recommendation is that transactional marketing strategies fit potential and existing students, whereas relational marketing strategies are better suited for internal and external academics.

Risk Assessment

There are calls for conducting a theoretically motivated, systematic study on consumer perceived risk in light of the recent global pandemic and its devastating effects on every industry, particularly the edutourism sector, so international students know their travel experience. It is crucial to examine how students' beliefs are impacted by their perception of the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic and how those beliefs may influence the students' predicted emotions, affecting their future desire to study abroad. The scenario highlights the crucial concern of whether edutourism is prepared to endure and recover from the time of operational interruption induced by pandemic breakout waves (Foroudi et al., 2021). Therefore, it is not unexpected that edutourism and the hospitality industry are among the most affected sectors of the economy. However, delaying the spread of the virus prolongs business interruptions. In actuality, the duration of the pandemic is impossible to estimate, which moves this risk to an undefined persistence and heightens the fear (Ma et al., 2021).

This research study also contributes to the current knowledge on risk and crisis management in edutourism. According to Paraskevas and Quek (2019), the literature on risk in the hospitality sector, including edutourism, has remained primarily concerned with comprehending crisis circumstances and analysing recovery routes. The emphasis on risk assessment for international students travelling overseas for higher education and a prospective edutourism viewpoint are significant additions to this work. It satisfies the demand for research that helps better comprehend resilience capacities.

Quality Service

The study of service quality made a significant stride in the 1980s. There are several interpretations of the term "quality" in higher education. In the previous two decades, one of the most significant issues facing the educational system has been the quality of education (Huliatunisa, 2022). Three of the most general classifications are highlighted: one that focuses on the concept of service, analysing quality from the student's perspective, and the idea from the standpoint of the lecturer (Olmos-Gómez et al., 2020). Improving services in education and research necessitates continually enhancing academic services (Almeyali & Al Mousawi, 2021). The definition of quality has been the subject of extensive discussion; educational institutions and students in higher education may have divergent perceptions of quality (Zuhairi et al., 2020). Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggested a model characterising consumer expectations and perceptions, usually known as the SERVQUAL model. The researcher also recommended that the model has five dimensions, i.e., tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. However, the educational institution uses the scales derived from this model to evaluate service quality.

One of the primary aims of this study is to evaluate the service quality of tourism-focused institutions in Malaysia. Therefore, it varies from others in this subject in that it tries to quantify the quality of educational services. While institutions adjust to the pandemic effects, students and lecturers have worked to preserve students' post-pandemic access and ability to absorb. From the preceding, it can be deduced that the quality of academic services is essential for meeting international students' educational expectations (Azam, 2018).

The words "higher education" and "quality service" were used in the process of edutourism in Malaysia. However, there was a fractional decrease in the number of international students in 2020 and 2021 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The deliverance of quality education and learning services is imperative after the pandemic, necessitating the enhancement of facilities and equipment by educational institutions to optimise the efficacy of the teaching network. This optimisation should encompass tangible and intangible aspects, including aligning student perceptions and expectations.

Knowledge Management

Evaluation of knowledge management is a crucial and intricate challenge in edutourism. In addition to advancing education and research, effective knowledge management is essential for success (Velásquez & Lara, 2021). This study has shown that evaluating knowledge management (KM) capabilities in higher education encounter challenges in Malaysian edutourism in the post-COVID-19 era. The research on knowledge management has been sporadic, with a time-bound concentration in correlation with the prior pandemics, resulting in scattered and disorganised progress (Ammirato et al., 2020). However, the first step in the knowledge management process is to generate information demonstrating the organisation's capacity to develop new or innovative suggestions for problems that may be solved but are not reducible or readily reproducible (Ichijo & Nonaka, 2006). Rowley (2000) argued that although higher education institutions would benefit greatly from knowledge management, they must make significant changes to their culture and values; consequently, a suitable institution where culture is essential for implementing knowledge management. Critical facets of knowledge management (KM) include the systematic collection, storage, dissemination, and reuse of physical and intangible information or knowledge (King, 2009).

The study demonstrates that various knowledge management-related themes are more important for research, and it has been proposed that knowledge management principles, models, and practices may be advantageous for university instructors, students, and administrators (Bolisani, 2019). However, the impact of knowledge management processes on educational institutions is examined from the theoretical

and practical sides. One of the knowledge management objectives in the current study is to develop and enable knowledge management processes to analyse the students' perceptions and acceptance of edutourism in Malaysia, specifically after the COVID-19 era. Numerous studies have investigated the elements influencing knowledge management in various sectors and emphasised its characteristics (Rhodes et al., 2008; Kim and Lee, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to execute the assessment of knowledge in moulding the image and brand of educational institutes in excellence, which is the key to the successful and sustainable growth of edutourism in Malaysia.

Choice of Institution

This study explored the influence of COVID-19 on students' psychological preparedness concerning the selection of educational institutions in Malaysia to a limited extent. The abrupt transition towards a full e-learning approach is expected to present multiple challenges for students. Additionally, looking at students' perceptions of purely online learning has altered the educational process amid this crisis (Stambough et al., 2020). University tenure is considered a crucial stage of student life, and students' active involvement in learning practical and theoretical experiences may be essential (Rahman et al., 2021). Therefore, the choice of institution for students is vital.

The higher education sector in Malaysia is being encouraged by the country's current rapid educational expansion to offer the best programmes that support national goals (Hussin, 2019). These choice determinants include future career, passion, and parental and associate influence. Over the past 20 years, there has been a considerable growth in the number of students enrolling in higher education, especially in Asia; if there is foreign collaboration, Malaysia can improve its higher education system (Shahijan et al., 2016). As a result, the choice of institution for edutourism is connected to obtaining ongoing success for universities for a predetermined period to reach their educational goals.

Hypothesis Statements

Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses below are proposed for this study:

H_1: Sustainable education system significantly correlates with the choice of institution

H_2: Perceived value significantly affects the choice of institution.
H_3: Risk assessment significantly influences the choice of institution.
H_4: Quality Service has a significant effect on the choice of institution.
H_5: Knowledge Management has a significant impact on the choice of institution.

Methodology

The current study aims to identify the challenges that Malaysian edutourism faces by examining the variables that influence students' institution preferences. As the respondents were international students from private and public universities in Peninsular Malaysia, surveying in the university setting provided a unique context for the study objectives. This study adopted a quantitative method using a non-purposive sampling technique to select the respondents for the study since the number of international students attending public and private universities in Malaysia varied significantly. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The researchers gathered the data for this study from university campuses, residences for students, and open spaces between January 2022 and July 2022. The unit of analysis for this study is an individual student pursuing undergraduate or post-graduate studies. The Ministry of Higher Education reports that there are 50 private institutions and 20 public universities in Malaysia (MOHE, 2021). Notably, most international students in Malaysia were enrolled at private universities.

The questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies (Greiner & Westbrook, 2002; Lim, 2003; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Noh & Vogt, 2013; Al-Naqbi & Alshannag, 2018; Adeinat & Abdulfatah, 2019). The relevant factors were identified and formulated to address the knowledge gaps. The selected factors and items were evaluated by Malaysian and Bangladeshi experts in higher education and modified before the primary survey. Four academics from private and public universities were contacted, and the most frequent recommendation was to eliminate some questions and rectify language and spelling mistakes. The questionnaire items (except demographic) were closed-ended, with Likert scale ratings, from which the students may decide their responses (Appendix 1). The study utilised a 5-point Likert scale to measure items encompassing independent and dependent variables, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire comprised two sections and guidelines to complete. Section 1 described information on the socio-demographic variables of the respondents with six questions. Section 2 was related to the measurement items of 41 questions based on sustainable education (SE), perceived value (PV), risk assessment (RA), quality service (QS), knowledge management (KM) and choice of institutions.

The data were analysed using SPSS for descriptive analysis, and to evaluate the causal hypothesised associations and model fit, the researchers employed structural equation modelling in AMOS-25. A total of 308 usable surveys were collected from the respondents, as illustrated in Table 1. However, to determine the sample size for the present study, Hair et al. (2019) suggested that 300-400 is adequate for SEM analysis. The present study used CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) to evaluate the model's fitness. It also assesses a model's convergent and discriminant validity (Table 3). It entails calculating the proportion of the coefficient of determination (R^2) that measures the variability of each dimension on its corresponding construct in the second-order measurement model to examine the determinants of international students' behaviour at each stage of the selection process. Before factor analysis, reliability measurements were taken to evaluate the extent to which each underlying variable collected from questionnaire responses was free of random measurement errors.

Results

Participants' Demographic Information

Of the 417 questionnaires distributed, 350 responses were collected, and 308 were retained for the final analysis. Among the respondents, 178 (57.9%) were males, and 130 (42.20%) were females. The highest age group, which included 195 people (63.31%), fell between the ages of 21 and 25, the typical age range for universities. Regarding the country of origin, 111 (36.03) were Asian, which was understandable as Malaysia is one of the Southeast Asian countries. About 190 (61. 69%) respondents engaged in bachelor studies. Regarding the source of the fund, most students declared themselves self-sponsored (209; 67.86%). Based on the survey, 188 students (61.04%) stayed inside the campus.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	178	57.80
	Female	130	42.20
Age	18-25	195	63.31
	26-35	76	24.67
	36-45	37	12.02
Country of Origin	Asian	111	36.03
	Africa	89	28.90
	Europe	11	3.57
	Middle East	78	25.33
	Others	19	6.17
Level of Study	Bachelor	190	61.69
	Masters	91	29.54
	PhD	27	8.77
Source of Funding	Self-Sponsored	209	67.86
	Scholarship	67	21.75
	Loan	32	10.39
Place of Residence	On-campus	188	61.04
	Off-campus	120	38.96

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Reliability and Validity Analysis

Factor analysis and reliability analysis were employed to determine the goodness of the data. It was evaluated using maximum likelihood estimation. However, several items were excluded due to inadequate factor loadings (Table 2). Hair et al. (2019) indicated that the factor should be greater than 0.50 to be included for further analysis. Table 2 shows that the factor loading exceeds the suggested threshold, ranging from 0.523 to 0.874 > 0.50.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of the Constructs

Construct	Code	Loadings	(α)	CR	AVE
Sustainable Education	SE1	.688	0.847	0.511	0.843
	SE2	.717			
	SE3	.753			
	SE4	.615			
	SE5	.723			
	SE6	.715			
Perceived Value	PV1	.719	0.912	0.627	0.819
	PV2	.813			
	PV3	.792			
Risk Assessment	RA3	.735	0.779	0.764	0.840
	RA4	.714			
	RA5	.621			
	RA6	.619			
	RA7	.874			
Quality Service	QS3	.523	0.839	0.537	0.807
	QS4	.662			
	QS5	.780			
	QS6	.664			
	QS7	.732			
Knowledge Management	KM1	.617	0.798	0.514	0.886
	KM2	.762			
	KM3	.810			
	KM4	.818			
	KM5	.774			
	KM6	.617			
Choice of Institution	C1	.524	0.914	0.696	0.860
	C2	.615			
	C3	.672			
	C4	.728			
	C5	.683			
	C6	.714			
	C7	.834			

The average variance extracted (AVE) varies from 0.807 to 0.886 >0.70, and the composite reliability (CR) values for the study ranged

from 0.511 to 0.764 >0.50, which are higher than the thresholds and demonstrate appropriate discriminant and convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3: Fornell-Lacker Criteria

Constructs	Correlations					
	SE	**PV**	**RA**	**QS**	**KM**	**CI**
SE	0.821					
PV	0.434	0.801				
RA	0.419	0.494	0.824			
QS	0.311	0.205	0.331	0.832		
KM	0.325	0.413	0.401	0.607	0.772	
CI	0.416	0.204	0.345	0.502	0.511	0.732

Assessment of Structural Model

This study proposed a model to establish the relationships between independent variables (Sustainable Education, Perceived Value, Risk Assessment, Quality Service and Knowledge Management) to the choice of institution in a single framework. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to analyse the correlations between the variables.

Figure 1: Structural Model of the Study
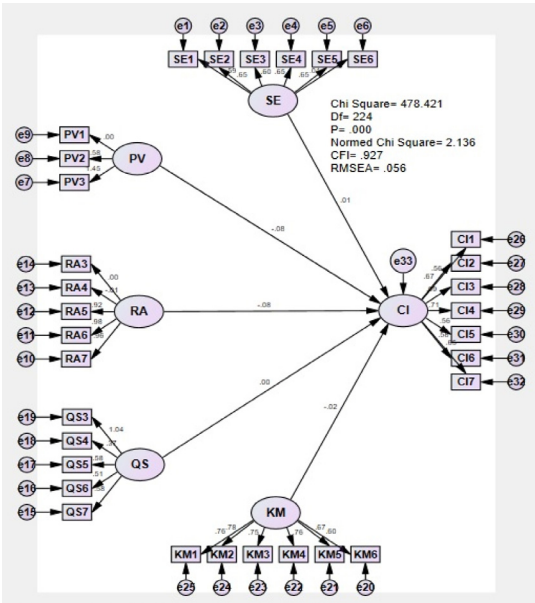
The model's (Figure 1) overall goodness-of-fit metrics were evaluated to determine model fit. The findings indicate that the goodness-of-fit indices are all within their acceptable ranges and that the model fits the data well (Chi-Square = 478.421, cmin/df = 224, RMSEA = 0.056, and CFI = 0.927). As a result, the structural model met the standards suggested by Hair et al. (2019) and showed an acceptable level of fit.

Additionally, the R^2 value is the primary standard for assessing structural models in SPSS-SEM. Depending on the research context, the coefficient of determination of R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33 and 0.19 can be considered substantial, moderate and weak, respectively (Chin, 1998; Hair, 2019). In this study, the R^2 coefficients for "Sustainable Education" (SE) (0.43), "Perceived Value" (PV) (0.46), "Risk Assessment" (RA) (0.38), "Quality Service" (QS) (0.52), Knowledge Management (KM) (0.49) and Choice of Institution (CI) (0.58), suggesting the model's constructs were well predicted.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model examined the hypotheses to respond to the study's objective. As indicated in Table 4, the outcomes of the hypothesis testing showed several significant relationships. Relationships were found to have positive and significant impacts, accepted as *t*-values (>1.96) and *p*-values (<0.05) met the suggested requirement, supporting H_1, H_2, H_3 and H_5.

Table 4: Results of the Hypothesised Relationships

H(x)	Path	Coefficient (β)	¾²	*t*-value	*p*-value	Result
H_1	CI←SE	.036	.076	1.992	.008	Supported
H_2	CI←PV	.017	.041	2.183	.019	Supported
H_3	CI←RA	.132	.053	2.501	.001	Supported
H_4	CI←QS	-.027	.059	-.593	.713	Not Supported
H_5	CI←KM	.137	.044	2.869	.000	Supported

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the factors that affect international students' choice of institutions for regaining edutourism in Malaysia. The data analysis shows that the impacts of sustainable education (*H_1*), perceived

value (H_2), risk assessment (H_3), and knowledge management (H_5) predict the choice of institutions and are thus determined to be significant using a suggested model based on literature.

Considering Table 4, the first hypothesis (H_1) concerning sustainable education regarding the choice of institution shows that a significant positive relationship occurred as the results suggested $\beta = 0.036$ $t = 1.99$ $p = 0.008$. A total of six questionnaire items were involved in the final analysis of this construct. This portion of the study suggested that sustainability may cover various programs; however, regarding the choice of institutions, it is necessary to identify the potential for applying sustainable approaches to edutourism. It is vital to develop a practical and efficient pedagogy for practical teaching-learning. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of the current curriculum and modules and making improvements based on research is essential. Nonetheless, this finding also supports and aligns with previous studies (Reza, 2016; The & Koh, 2020).

The finding shows a significant relationship between perceived value and choice of institution ($\beta = 0.017$ $t = 2.18$ $p = 0.019$); thus, H_2 is accepted. As reported by Kamdi et al. (2018), a preliminary study was conducted to determine how students perceived the value of edutourism packages; therefore, it is suggested that edutourism programmes should focus on instilling values in the students. It demonstrates a considerable impact on the perceived value of international students, which determines their future behaviour since this is consistent with earlier findings (Kamdi, 2018; Lam & Ariffin, 2019).

The predictor of risk assessment and institution selection was shown to be significant among international students in Malaysia. The uncertainty generated by the COVID-19 outbreak causes students to make riskier decisions and experience negative feelings. Consequently, the ideas of risk and institution selection are relevant to the setting of edutourism. However, the result shows $\beta = 0.132$ $t = 2.50$ $p = 0.001$, and H_3 is supported. The finding is validated and consistent with prior research (Paraskevas & Quek, 2019; Ma et al., 2021).

However, the interactions between quality service and institution choice have been investigated. Universities have undergone a paradigm change in teaching and learning due to the closure of several higher education institutions due to COVID-19. It was somewhat necessary to

increase the quality of the university services. Nevertheless, the result was insignificant (β = -0.027 t = -.593 p = 0.713) as H_4 is rejected and aligned with the same as previous instances (Li & Yin, 2021).

Finally, this study inspected the effect of knowledge management on the choice of institution and dulled the significant results (β = 0.137 t = 2.86 p = 0.000), and H_5 is accepted. Notably, knowledge management is a unique predictor of aspects of education. Knowledge management influences international students who amass learning in the context of edutourism in Malaysia. If the transmission of knowledge is ineffective, that hinders learning. Therefore, students must be imparted knowledge and abilities in all aspects of sustainability. It will guarantee that edutourism has the correct attitude and impression to attract more international students to Malaysia. In other ways, this outcome is similar to past circumstances (Adeinat & Abdulfatah, 2019).

Implications

This study contributes some managerial and methodological concepts to the current body of literature as it presents the notion of edutourism and empirically demonstrates some elements that would influence a student's overall edutourism value toward Malaysia. The government and institutions' reaction to COVID-19 ensures learning continuity, showing online teaching and learning adoption despite the knowledge and facility limitations in some aspects. Given such circumstances, it is imperative to adhere to the most recent guidelines outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2023), which recommend improved natural or mechanical ventilation, air purification, appropriate spacing between students' desks, and more frequent environmental sanitation. Even though most Malaysian institutions can provide classes online, there are certain obstacles since students believe they would not have an atmosphere to adjust. The results also revealed that some elements related to a pleasant host environment are necessary for the growth of edutourism. However, it has been asserted that several sustainability-related topics must be covered in the curriculum and pedagogy to be given substantial weight. As the study argued, problem-solving abilities can occasionally help but not always be fostered in an online setting (De Klerk et al., 2022). In addition, overseas students are encouraged to engage mainly in institutions with institutional and internationalisation qualities. Therefore, the value of building advertising strategies in that

manner is essential. On a separate note, quality service in the research stream is also significant. Finally, this study's findings are relevant since these may be applied and customised to any educational institution for long-term sustainability toward the growth of edutourism.

Conclusion

This study aims to identify the challenges of edutourism in Malaysia after the COVID-19 epoch. The education paradigms are shifting; therefore, it is not easy to generalise as a contextually based piece of research. The transition from online classrooms to face-to-face segments at universities is underway, but some obstacles influence edutourism. This study's components illustrate the research field's origins and depict the current and potential future of edutourism research in the context of strategic alliances in a relevant manner. However, a more in-depth study is required to evaluate the effectiveness further, identify gaps in the pedagogy, and develop an effective curriculum for sustainable edutourism development. All stakeholders must adhere to the same principles for edutourism to succeed nationally and regionally.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire Items

Construct & Code		Scale Items	Loadings	Source
Sustainable Education	SE1	Education in Malaysia is vital for the well-being of society.	.688	(Al-Naqbi & Alshannag, 2018)
	SE2	Responsible for taking care of the institute environment.	.717	
	SE3	Economic opportunity must be given to all students.	.753	
	SE4	The price of basic needs should be affordable for all levels of students.	.615	
	SE5	Gender equality is essential, especially for those admitted to the university.	.723	
	SE6	The protection of both current and future students on campus is essential.	.715	
	SE7	The tuition fees are affordable for different income groups.	.413	
Perceived Value	PV1	Malaysia has many beautiful natural sceneries that attract students.	.719	(Noh & Vogt, 2013)
	PV2	Malaysia offers many engaging travelling activities.	.813	
	PV3	Malaysia has excellent value for the edutourism experience.	.792	
	PV4	Malaysia has famous heritage attractions while visiting the surroundings.	.311	
	PV5	Malaysia has tasty food that attracts all levels of students.	.410	
	PV6	Malaysia has excellent shopping opportunities, especially for students.	.397	
Risk Assessment	RA1	Some students may feel like not returning to university in the future.	.309	Lim, 2003
	RA2	Not worth recommending the university in the future.	.337	
	RA3	There is a possibility of having a physical injury while visiting the surroundings.	.735	
	RA4	The institution's standard service may take too much time.	.714	
	RA5	Possibility of not getting value for money spent by the students.	.621	
	RA6	Possibility of suffering any disease while travelling.	.619	
	RA7	The possibility of having sessions shut down may be an obstacle to studying.	.874	

Construct & Code		Scale Items	Loadings	Source
Quality Service	QS1	The lecturers understand the technology used in the classroom very well.	.487	(Greiner & Westbrook, 2002)
	QS2	The lecturers communicate smoothly with students.	.429	
	QS3	The lecturers provide learning as promised in the course outline.	.523	
	QS4	The lecturers use modern learning technology in the classroom.	.662	
	QS5	The lecturers know the specific need of the students.	.780	
	QS6	The lecturers provide the subject matter accurately.	.664	
	QS7	The lecturers meet the specific knowledge needs.	.732	
Knowledge Management	KM1	Actively seeks information form-relevant external sources.	.617	(Adeinat & Abdulfatah, 2019)
	KM2	Creating new knowledge from existing knowledge.	.762	
	KM3	It uses modern technology to exchange information.	.810	
	KM4	The institution applies appropriate knowledge for critical competitive needs.	.818	
	KM5	All processes and procedures are documented clearly.	.774	
	KM6	Protect knowledge from inappropriate or illegal use.	.617	
	KM7	Exchange views and ideas with each other in the office and classroom.	.401	
Choice of Institute	CI1	Affordable travel cost encourages the selection of this institute.	.524	(Chen &Tsai,2007)
	CI2	The availability of facilities that meet up the basic need.	.615	
	CI3	Reasonable travel time inspires to select this institute.	.672	
	CI4	Convenient connectivity encourages to select this institute.	.728	
	CI5	A strong reputation for safe trips for both the students and guardians.	.683	
	CI6	A strong reputation for environmental sustainability.	.714	
	CI7	Students may find it suitable for family and group tours.	.834	

'Morning Slaps' *Da'wah*: A Study on @taqy_malik Instagram Account Registers

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Abstract: The use of social media as a tool to convey religious thoughts has a considerable impact when carried out on/by accounts of public figures that are popular among millennials. Technological savviness and religious knowledge acquisition are not only required to be possessed by those accounts but also the creativity to engage with the audience by formulating genuine rhetorics. An example is the Instagram account of Taqiyudin Malik (@taqy_malik – hereinafter referred to as Taqy), a young Indonesian entrepreneur-preacher with around 2.4 million followers. Using sociolinguistics and netnography approaches as well as employing a descriptive qualitative method, we examined Taqy's account posts, specifically those collected in the #TamparanPagi (Morning Slaps) category. Through a register study on 12 posts, found that Taqy carried out digital *da'wah* in simple, humorous, and casual rhetorical ways filled with satirical irony. We categorized six categories of Taqy's posts, namely remembering and preparing the afterlife, the Allah's commands, the fruitfulness of *ibadah*, the oneness of Allah, call for marriage, and improving personalities. The finding confirms that the use of social media, specifically Instagram, can be a tool for spreading *da'wah* messages with no explicit impression of being patronizing or intimidating.

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Keywords: digital *da'wah*, Indonesian Muslims, Instagram; netnography, sociolinguistics, Taqy Malik

Abstrak: Penggunaan media sosial sebagai alat untuk menyampaikan pemikiran agama mempunyai kesan yang besar apabila dilakukan pada/ oleh akaun tokoh masyarakat yang popular di kalangan generasi milenium. Kecerdasan teknologi dan pemerolehan ilmu agama bukan sahaja diperlukan untuk dimiliki oleh akaun tersebut tetapi juga kreativiti untuk melibatkan diri dengan penonton dengan merumuskan retorik tulen. Contohnya adalah akaun Instagram Taqiyudin Malik (@taqy_malik – selepas ini dirujuk sebagai Taqy), seorang usahawan-pendakwah muda Indonesia dengan kira-kira 2.4 juta pengikut. Menggunakan pendekatan sosiolinguistik dan netnografi serta kaedah kualitatif deskriptif, kami memeriksa siaran akaun Taqy, khususnya yang dikumpul dalam kategori #TamparanPagi. Menerusi kajian daftar terhadap 12 kiriman, mendapati Taqy menjalankan dakwah digital dengan cara retorik yang ringkas, jenaka, dan santai namun penuh dengan sindiran satira. Kami mengkategorikan enam kategori kiriman, iaitu mengingati dan mempersiapkan akhirat, mentaati perintah Allah, kenikmatan ibadah, keesaan Allah, seruan untuk berkahwin, dan memperbaiki peribadi. Penemuan itu mengesahkan bahawa penggunaan media sosial, khususnya Instagram, boleh menjadi alat untuk menyebarkan mesej dakwah tanpa kesan sebagai merendahkan atau menakutkan.

Kata kunci: dakwah digital, Instagram, Muslim Indonesia, netnografi, sosiolinguistik, Taqy Malik

Introduction

The use of the internet has become a ubiquitous phenomenon nowadays, including for the majority of Indonesians. As of January 2022, internet users in the country had reached an estimated 204.7 million of the total population, somewhere around 275 million (Statista, 2022b). While the online audience is projected to reach 233.03 million users by 2025, Degenhard (2021) stated that there was also an estimated 188.59 million mobile users. They usually spend an average of eight hours and 36 minutes online daily, primarily for social media connections, shopping, and streaming videos (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2021). Therefore, Indonesia is among one of the largest social media markets in the world. It was ranked fourth globally after China, India, and the United States (Statista, 2022a).

Being highly connected to digital media caused Indonesian people to utilize technology in virtually all aspects of their daily lives, including religious purposes (Fakhruroji, 2021). Most religious scholars (*ulama*) or preachers (*da'i*) were prompted to use social media as an alternative to proselytize their messages (*da'wah*). The use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok, aids them in easily sharing Islamic teachings or their views concerning trending issues to the public (Cheong, 2014; Fakhruroji, 2019; Islam, 2019; Pabbajah et al., 2020). Furthermore, the participating audience, namely the *netizens* – citizens of the network, tend to spread the messages previously proselytized by the core population. This cycle generally produces new terminologies, among others are Islamic authority online, cyber *ummah*, clicktivism, and religious digital creatives (Ahyar, 2017; Bunt, 2003; Campbell, 2021; Khamis, 2021).

Presently, the use of social media to learn Islam is an effective way to develop religiosity (Fakhruroji, 2021; Latepo et al., 2021; Mokhtar & Bahari, 2021; Rusydiyah et al., 2020). According to a study, 69% and 66% of undergraduates stated they follow online da'wah content on social media occasionally and regularly, respectively (Purwanto et al., 2017). Another survey carried out by Jinan (2013) reported that students who are active users (54%) prioritize searching for answers on the internet, leading to the establishment of Islamic websites or institutions. Those familiar with the virtual technology are encouraged to solve problems quickly without waiting to meet the ustadz or other traditional authorities in person. Meanwhile, only 14% "physically" asked the ustadz or people who were deemed able to provide the relevant answers, and 32% resorted to reading books, including magazines, newspapers, and leaflets.

To some extent, the process of *da'wah* in digital media requires the preacher's genuine and genius creativity in reaching out to the audience (Muthohirin, 2021). The messages are appropriately disseminated and have good engagement. The connection between the *ulama* or *da'i* and their audience critically transforms Islamic values. The communication pattern enables the audiences, such as followers, subscribers, or simply viewers, to embrace a two-way communication style with the preacher and engage in multiple ways with other parties. Therefore, the strategies adopted by the preacher to manage the engagement could not omit certain considerations (Setyawan, 2020). There is also a need to consider that

the internet user is allowed to select the preferred scholars or preachers due to the democratic character of social media (Bunt, 2018). This also paves the way for new religious authorities. The "market" of religious authority also produces famous and influential figures, some of whom were unrecognized as non-Muslims and the traditional authorities who were among their audience before the digital technology era (Lukens-Bull & Woodward, 2021). These include socialites, celebrities, politicians, and business people willing to share their experiences as part of Islamic da'wah. Kiai Haji Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym), Ustadz Yusuf Mansur, and Felix Siauw were included in this category (Hamdani, 2020; Hoesterey, 2016). The netizens who possess personal agencies are free to select one preacher and leave the others, specifically those who did not survive the "contestation" (Akmaliah, 2020; Hidayatullah et al., 2020). It depends on the market mechanism where the preachers must possess both religious knowledge and technological savviness and utilize them properly (Chairiyah et al., 2021; Makhutla, 2021; Rohmatulloh, 2022). To successfully disseminate *da'wah* on digital platforms, Indonesian social media preachers cannot escape all necessary prerequisites, namely sufficient religious knowledge and technological savviness, as well as genuine and genius creativity to engage with the audience.

The choice of platform used for *da'wah* is also regarded as an essential task because the media technology developments are highly dynamic. This study compared only Facebook and Instagram, the two most popular social media platforms in Indonesia, and other minor platforms, such as Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.
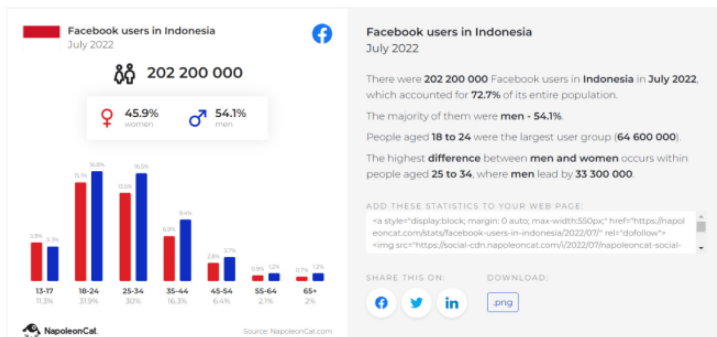
Figure 1: Facebook users in Indonesia as of July 2022
(Source: NapoleonCat.Com, 2022)
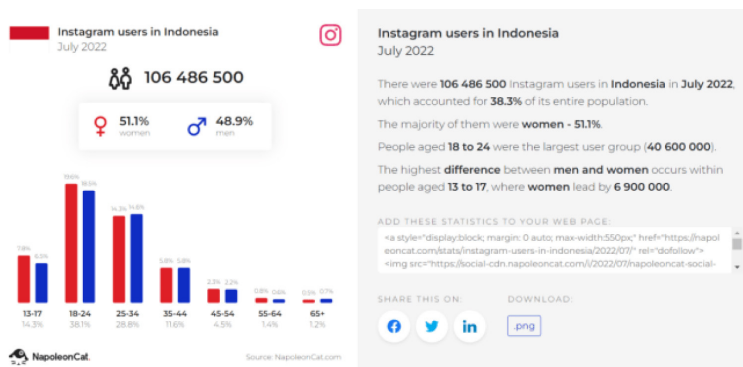
Figure 2: Instagram users in Indonesia as of July 2022
(Source: NapoleonCat.com, 2022)

Both platforms have distinctive characteristics, except that the total numbers of Facebook users far outweigh those of Instagram. However, considering the study by Bhakti (2020), Instagram has become increasingly popular among youths, specifically female students, and it was finally selected rather than Facebook. The tendency to make a choice based on gender from studies on the importance of female netizens as "information collectors" as well as their vulnerability to digital literacy (Gelgel et al., 2020; Kotler et al., 2016; Kurnia et al., 2020; Setia, 2019).

Furthermore, several individuals who actively preach or engage with their fans on social media, such as Buya Arrazy Hasyim, Felix Siauw, Gus Baha, Gus Miftah, Hanan Attaki, and Taqy Malik, were considered. Compared to the other personalities, Taqy Malik has the least flashy background in religious training. He is publicly known as a *hafidh* (memorizer of whole verses of the Qur'an), and more famous as an entrepreneur rather than a religious scholar or preacher. The unique profile of Taqy was initially considered before it was finally discovered that the young *da'i* has an interesting rubric on his Instagram account, namely #TamparanPagi (Morning Slaps), used to deliver his ideas of *da'wah*.

Taqy Malik, or Ahmad Taqiyuddin Malik, is one of the successful preachers to employ an online personal brand (Qonitat, 2019). He was trained in a religious institution named Pesantren Darul Qur'an under the auspice of another popular entrepreneur-preacher, Ustadz Yusuf Mansur, to become a *hafidh* saddled with the responsibility of

memorizing the whole verses of the Qur'an (Pesantren Daarul Qur'an, 2016). He was also a student of Hadith studies at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, and a popular entrepreneur with some product lines promoted through social media (Walisyah, 2021). Asides from the fact that he is an entrepreneur who promotes commercial activities on social media, he also performs as a celebrity who attracts many netizen's attention to many of his activities (Sunaryanto & Syamsuri, 2022). Taqy started gaining popularity thanks to his ability to memorize and recite the Qur'an beautifully (*tilawah*), thereby branding himself as a *hafidh* or *qari'* (Jannah, 2020; Purnama, 2020). However, through a series of Qur'an recitation videos mainly uploaded on Instagram and YouTube, perceived as a kind of *"shared interest pool"* (Rohmatulloh & Marwantika, 2021), he attracted a significant female audience.

Taqy had 2.448.720 followers or netizens as of August 30, 2022, as shown in Figure 3, as well as was branded as *Juragan Saffron* (the merchant of saffron) and a public figure. This 25-year-old was also known as a Muslim couple traveller – because he regularly uploaded photos of himself together with his wife in several tourist destinations. Taqy not only tagged his business as a brand ambassador and influencer or marketing manager, but also stated his ability to recite the Qur'an and imitate 40 international Imams, not to mention his call for philanthropic crowdfunding to build a mosque.

Figure 3: Instagram account of @taqy_malik

On Taqy's account, several thematic rubrics were collected in the Instagram feature Highlight, such as Masjid 4M, Al-Haram, Makkah, Taqy Story, Tamparan Pagi, Donasi Palestina, Bisnis Saffron, and Taqychan (Figure 4). In this study, the rubric #TamparanPagi, which means Morning Slaps, was in particular discussed.
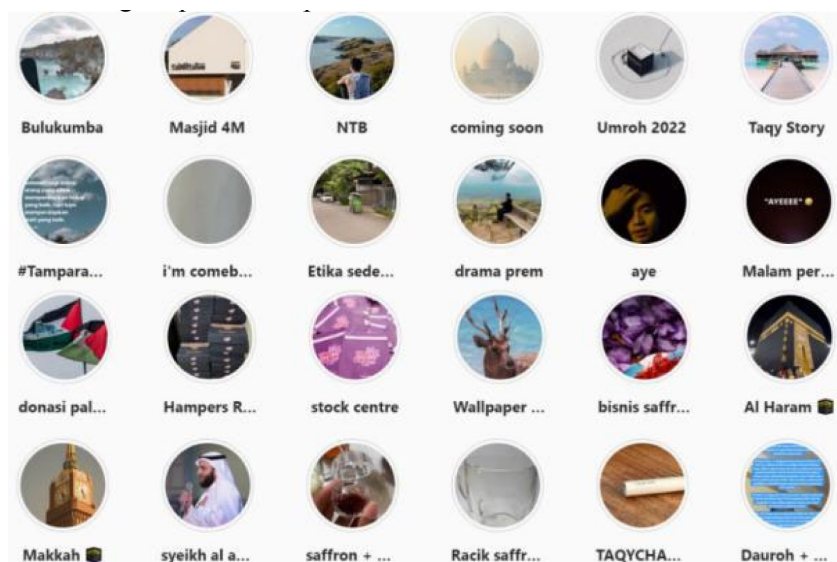
Figure 4: The Highlights of @taqy_malik's Instagram account

The interesting fact on posts under the #TamparanPagi is that Taqy routinely posted them in the mornings; therefore the posts are called as morning slaps. Besides, Taqy's posts show the usage of polite and humble dictions, while their importance and significance were used to disseminate acceptable messages to the audience (Sholihah, 2022). This young *da'i,* who highlighted a number of Instagram posts (on feed and story) under the rubric #TamparanPagi, was deliberately examined. It was realised by adopting a sociolinguistics approach concerning the registers of the evaluated subject's activities on the platform to understand the strategies employed to engage with his audience. A register refers to functional groupings of the actual realisations of the text, for example, how a statement was made and the reason it was delivered in such a manner (Liimatta, 2019). Register study is a branch of linguistics that studies language from a certain point of view. It is based on the varying styles and mediums of use. This can be used in sports, religion, journalism, radio, work, and social media. In accordance with a specific purpose, the register, as opposed to a social variety, differs with respect to the speakers. This variation is used in certain professions that make communication within a group more efficient. The members agree that communication needs to be established in a suitable manner that reflects their professions. This is in line with the opinion that registers can be

intended as a variety of languages based on their usage (Halliday, 1994). Therefore, by examining the registers on the Instagram account of Taqy Malik and his interaction with the audience, based on a particular interest (*da'wah*), this study is aimed to understand how social media facilitate religious preachers to engage with their audience in a specific manner actively.

Methodology

This qualitative study employed netnography and sociolinguistics approaches. The use of netnography in the context of this study is adequately relevant, since the existence of the examined subjects were in cyber network. Through netnography, the data were not only acquired from interviews and observations but also lurking activities on the aforementioned digital platform, where vast information might be gathered without being noticed by the researched culture members (Kozinets, 2010). The netnography principle makes it easier to examine the data obtained from Taqy Malik's posts, including the pictures, texts, captions, as well as responses raised by his audience, especially of the posts under the rubric #TamparanPagi. Furthermore, the sociolinguistics approach concerning the register of the reviewed subject's activities on the platform was also used to understand the strategies adopted to engage his audience. The use of religious registers in the form of Instagram stories and feeds posted on Taqy's account shows that he communicates with his followers using a language that is easy to understand while still inserting religious symbols. Although, many of the used words are mainly of non-standardised variety as they are used in the form of spoken conversations on social media (Chaer, 2012). On his account, Taqy also uses non-standard dictions as well, such as *nuntut, ga, dijalanin, dinikmatin, halalin, nyadar, dengerin, dikecilin, nyari, mikirin, baper,* and *ayang* (spoken words' variety) as well as foreign dictions including *handphone, wife,* and *iman*.

The data used for the study were carried out from twelve @ taqy_malik's posts (on feed and story) highlighted under the rubric #TamparanPagi, selected based on the relevance and resonance of the topic under investigation, which were posted on January 9th to April 3rd, 2022. The data were obtained by ''an attentive observation'', such as studying the use of languages in the form of ''an uninvolved conversation observation technique'' (Sudaryanto, 1993). Therefore,

those working on the analysis acted merely as observers of Taqy's selected posts. Each word, phrase, clause, and sentence contained in the data is transcribed. These transcriptions are then read repeatedly while the clauses containing the register of #TamparanPagi are recorded. By performing analysis through "the identity method" (Kesuma, 2007) to distinguish linguistic units according to the reaction, as they show the topic similarities, the data might be classified into a number of categories. The data classification/categorisation is pivotal to avoid redundancy in analysing the similar data and presenting them as the study findings. The data validity was then determined through persistent observation and peer-reviewing techniques. Finally, by examining the registers used by a certain group (Taqy and his audience) for a particular interest (*da'wah*), this study is aimed at answering the question centred on the activities of the young digital *da'i*.

Results and Discussion

The registers of @taqy_malik's #TamparanPagi

Taqy Malik has uploaded a series of posts on several topics and keeps them highlighted on his Instagram account, among others are those under #TamparanPagi rubric. Of the rubric, 12 of these posts were deliberately selected. On the selected posts as well as Taqy's style in writing on #TamparanPagi, the variety of languages used ranges from informal, colloquial, written, to jargon and slang, which consecutively affected the choice of words. On #TamparanPagi, Taqy plays figurative language by showing the contradiction between clauses one and two in each post. Clause one is used to seek the audience's attention and exhibits what occurs typically or is done by people, while the second one is the #TamparanPagi core clause which shows how Taqy sarcastically reminds his audience of the matters related to *ibadah* (worship). To connect both clauses, Taqy usually uses the conjunction *tapi* (but), which signifies the informality of the registers as it should be written *tetapi* as the formal one.

Of the 12 selected posts under #TamparanPagi, we have categorised based on the topic similarities of the data into six categories, namely: (1) remembering the afterlife and its preparation, (2) obeying the commands of Allah, (3) enjoying the fruitfulness of ibadah, (4) Allah is the one and only, (5) marry!, and (6) be a better person!

a.   *Remembering the afterlife and its preparation*

Data 1: *Selamat pagi orang yang sibuk mempersiapkan hidup yang baik, tapi lupa mempersiapkan mati yang baik.* 'Good morning, people who prepare for a better life, **but** forget to prepare for a better death.'

Data 2: *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang sibuk memikirkan pakaian terbaik di depan manusia, tapi berpakaian seadanya saat menghadap Sang Maha Pencipta.* 'Good morning people who are busy thinking for the best outfit to wear in front of others, **but** dress plainly in front of the God the Creator.'
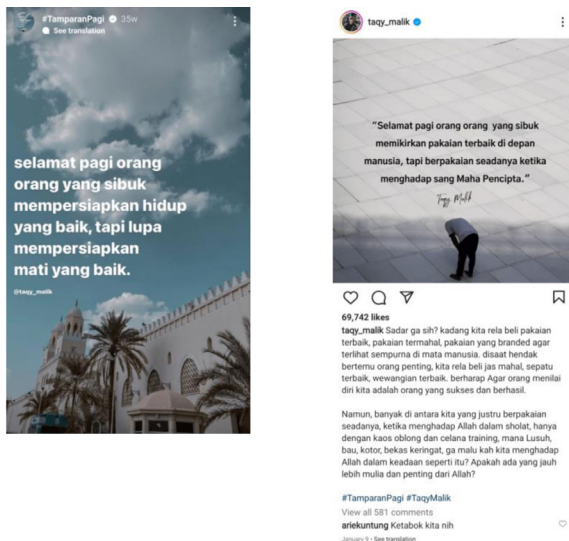
Figure 5: Data 1 and Data 2

In data 1, the clause 1, *people who prepare for a better life,* is contrasted with the clause 2, *but forget to prepare for a better death* depicts a form of #TamparanPagi (morning slaps). The clause of *people who prepare for a better life* is a description of what most of people do in general, namely thinking about the daily life challenges, such as working hard, thereby intriguing them to forget worshiping God. Furthermore, the phrase *a better death* was intended to invite Taqy's followers not only to think about worldly affairs but also of the hereafter. The phrase *a better life* as opposed to *a better death* are certain forms of ironic satire, as mentioning the words "life" and "death" based on

the Islamic concept is an interconnected chain. This means that death is a dimension of the next life and will definitely occur after the first life process. In the Qur'an, these events are considered forms of creation that deserve careful attention. Interestingly, death and life require actual analysis by referring to the nature of God through the representation of *Asmaul Husna*, that the level of God's goodness is indeed infinite. In other words, death and life were created by God and needed to be gratefully acknowledged and accepted as sincerely as possible as the basis of a Muslim's piety in the context of faith (Latif, 2016).

Meanwhile, in data 2, the clause 1 states that *people who are busy thinking about the best outfits to wear in front of other*s portray a condition where people are usually in the habit of always thinking about their appearance. As humans, people always try to appear in the best outfit to meet others or in the course of an event. However, it contradicts the clause 2, *but dress plainly in front of the God the Creator.* This condition portrays that people often do not think about their prayer clothes, and even the ones (*mukena* or *sajadah* - prayer mat) worn are rarely changed or even cleaned. In contrast, people usually feel embarrassed to wear the same clothes at different events. In the caption of this post, Taqy added a 'slap', "… is there anything more important than Allah?". The post itself was liked more than 69.000 times and earned 581 comments, including one from another public figure, a *hijrah* celebrity, @ariekuntung, who confirmed that he also felt slapped by the post.

b.   *Obeying the commands of Allah*

Figure 6: Data 3 and Data 4

Data 3*: Selamat pagi orang-orang yang banyak nuntut ke Allah, tapi kewajibannya ga dijalanin, larangannya malah di nikmatin.* 'Good morning, people who usually demand much from Allah, **but** the obligation is not performed, the prohibition is rather enjoyed.'

Data 4: *Selamat pagi orang-orang lucu, yang kalo sholat cepat, tapi minta rezeki cepat.* 'Good morning, funny people who pray very fast, **but** ask for instant fortune.'

Data 3 is a story post with the clause 1 stating that *people who usually demand much from Allah*, and it contrasts with the clause 2, *but the obligation is not performed, the prohibition is rather enjoyed*. Clause 1 shows that people are demanding in nature. It contrasts with the clause 2, which also exhibits an aspect of human nature that rarely carries out its obligations to worship, but often violates and enjoys God's prohibitions. In this post, Taqy uses four dictions in the form of non-standard words, namely *nuntut*, *ga*, *dijalanin*, and *dinikmatin* -- which should be written as *menuntut*, *tidak*, *dijalani*, and *dinikmati*. However, considering that the post was uploaded on a personal social media account, the use of non-standard words is acceptable as it is a written form of oral communication. Its use also makes it easier for the audience to understand the conveyed message and feel the closeness because it seems as if they are casually discussing with the preacher.

The next register in data 4 is the clause 1 with the content *funny people who pray very fast*. This is a pretty hard slap because a proper prayer session is to be conducted solemnly and not ended quickly. It is contrasted with the clause 2, *but ask for instant fortune*, which is also a similarly hard slap. Besides, people often ignore how good they worship but do not hesitate to ask for answered prayers instantly. The #TamparanPagi in this context is relevant because Taqy also mentions the subject of "funny people". It can be interpreted as a funny act when people pray fast but ask for the fortune and its sustenance to be quickly granted. Implicitly, Taqy also reminded the audience to humbly and earnestly worship God, while the answered prayer is God's authority over all.

c.   *Enjoying the fruitfulness of ibadah*

Data 5: *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang panik handphonenya mati, tapi ga nyadar kalo imannya mati.* 'Good morning people who

worry when the phone is dead, **but** unaware that the iman (faith) is dead.'

Data 6: *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang menghayati dengar lagu, tapi gak ada rasa pas dengerin Al-Quran.* '*Good morning people who enjoy listening to music, **but** have no feeling when the Qur'an is recited.*'

The next register is in data 5 with the clause 1, *people who worry when the phone is dead,* is a portrait that often happen nowadays. This is because virtually everyone is addicted to smartphones, which makes them always on the hand. Its existence as the primary communication tool has become a mandatory object and is always present in every activity carried out currently, therefore, when the phone battery runs out, many people tend to panic because they are unable to connect with others anymore. It is then contradicted by the clause 2, ***but*** *unaware that the iman (faith) is dead.* This is meant to remind them that a dying or weakening *iman* (faith in Allah) is of huge concern. This fact is often not realised by several people, and this caused Taqy to make it such a #TamparanPagi.

In data 6, the clause 1 states that *people enjoy listening to music.* It is contrasted with the clause 2 *but have no feeling when the Qur'an is recited.* There is a need to slap such followers who prefer music rather than the recitation (*tilawah*) of the Qur'an. People are often more aware of the lyrics or meaning of a song than the verses of the Qur'an. This unfair condition motivated Taqy to compare music and the Qur'an in his post. A comment shown on the screenshot was made by @rizalarmada, a vocalist of the pop music band Armada. As another celebrity who follows the *hijrah* trend, the post must be "slapping" very well against him. This vocalist is publicly known among the Indonesian netizens to follow Islamic religious learning (*pengajian*) alongside other *hijrah* celebrities. Irrespective of this, he kept practising music with his band. The question of whether a *hijrah* musician intends to continue playing music or abandon the former professional life is indeed intriguing. It was observed that some other musicians who embraced the *hijrah* have completely left music and even publicly declared that it is un-Islamic. Some of them even went as far as destroying their musical instruments, such as Sakti of Sheila on 7 who is now more popular with his *hijrah* name, Salman al-Jugjawi (Hasyim, 2020; Lyansari, 2018). However,

some other *hijrah* musicians kept practising their musical prowess while exhibiting the *hijrah* impacts on their lifestyles and physical appearances (i.e. beards and clothes), such as Derry Sulaiman and Komuji (Huda, 2021; Qomaruzzaman & Busro, 2021). Rizal's short comment, "*Ya Rabb* (Oh, God)", shows not only the relevance of the #TamparanPagi on his musical activity, but also the engagement between Taqy Malik and the audience.
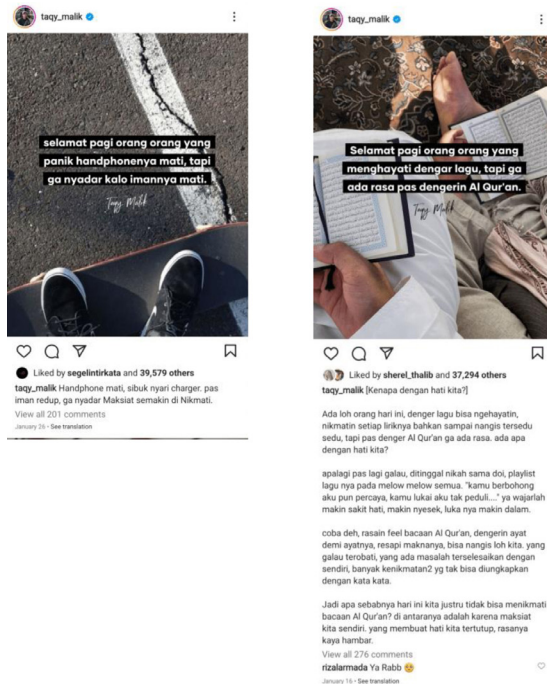

Figure 7: Data 5 and Data 6

d. *Allah is the one and only*

> **Data 7:** *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang sudah mengakui Allah sebagai Tuhan, tapi masih menjadikan manusia sebagai sandaran.* 'Good morning people who acknowledge Allah as God, **but** keep relying on humans.'

> **Data 8:** *Selamat pagi untuk kamu yang berharap punya ayang, tapi lupa berharap kepada yang Maha Penyayang.* 'Good morning for you who hope to have a darling, **but** forget to hope for the Most Merciful.'

Figure 8: Data 7 and Data 8

The *da'wah* register in data 7 appears in the clause 1, namely *people who acknowledged Allah as God*. Considering the fact that Taqy's audience is Muslim by recognizing Allah as their God. Taqy further argued that every Muslim is meant to worship Allah. This is then contradicted by the clause 2, *but keep relying on humans*. It is interpreted as many people fail to surrender everything in their lives to God; rather they prefer to believe in fellow humans, who are impossible to guarantee their lives. Taqy's choice of background on the post is also interesting, as he selected the picture of *Ka'bah* in Makkah.

In data 8, the clause 1 states that *those who hope to have a darling* are addressed to Taqy followers who long to have a partner. This is because the diction *ayang* is interpreted as "dear, lover, or darling". The register is then contradicted by the clause 2, namely *but forget to hope to the Most Merciful*. It simply implies that some people who intend to have a lover usually fail to directly ask their creator, namely God the Most Merciful. In fact, all human hopes and wishes need to be directed only to God Almighty. The choice of *ayang* diction also shows the use of slang (spoken variety), intended to attract the readers and make them absorb the content posted by Taqy as the post author. Additionally, the choice of *ayang* (darling) diction is also meant to equate the *Penyayang* (the Most Loving) rhyme at the end of the second clause. The feed post was successfully used to obtain more than 51.000 likes and 340 comments. Obviously, it is evident that the diction *ayang* was appropriately used.

e.　*Marry!*

Data 9: *Selamat pagi orang-orang cuman mau pacarin, tapi gak mau halalin, lemah. '*Good morning people who just want to date, **but** do not want to propose. Weak.'

Data 10: *Selamat pagi untuk orang-orang yang sibuk mencari wifi tapi justru lupa mencari wife. '*Good morning people who are busy looking for wifi (internet signal), **but** forget to search for a wife.'
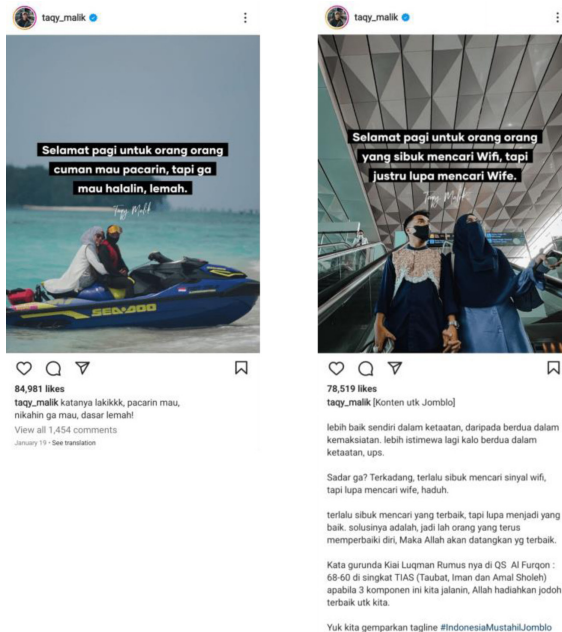

Figure 9: Data 9 and Data 10

Clause 1 of data 9, *people who just want to date,* is simply defined as a romantic relationship between a man and woman, and it was depicted by using the diction *pacarin* (to date, to have a lover). This is contrasted with clause 2, *but do not want to propose. Weak*. Taqy seems to "challenge" those followers who only dare to date or go into courtship relationships, but fail to upgrade and legalize their relationship status by getting married. Taqy also included the word *lemah* (literally means "weak") at the end of the second clause to sarcastically quip the couples that are still afraid of legalizing the relationship. The register is indeed based on Islamic law that there are no lawful relations between a man and a woman except marriage. Therefore, Taqy promoted his followers to desist from this act by simply legalising their relationship.

Data 10 shows the register of clause 1, *people who are busy looking for wifi (signal).* It is contrasted by the clause 2, *but forget to search for a wife.* The register shows how Taqy slapped his followers, who were busy thinking about worldly necessities. The "wifi" in this context is intended to be used for surfing cyberspace for worldly purposes, while the "wife" is juxtaposed to provide a contradiction as a form of worship that is not only worldly but also in the hereafter. The diction "wife" was selected not only to give advice on selecting to think about worship and marriage, but also to match the rhymes of the word "wifi".

Both data 9 and 10 have certain similarities and are the most interactive posts, comprising 84.981 likes with 1.454 comments and 78.519 likes with 1.070 comments consecutively. Both promote the audience to get married (*halalin* and *search for a wife* in data 9 and 10, respectively). The call for marriage and blame against premarital dating is indeed an important topic in the *hijrah* communities (Khumairoh, 2018; Sari et al., 2020; Sulaiman, 2020). This led to the reason why the posts were perceived as the most interactive or simply assumed to be a popular topic among the netizens. Taqy himself is also a practitioner of youth marriage as he has been married since he was 21 years old. Therefore, it is highly reasonable of him to make such teasing posts.

f. *Be a better person!*
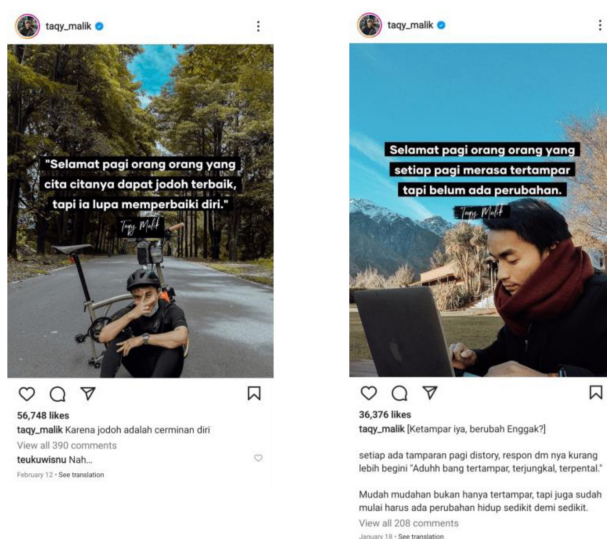
Figure 10: Data 11 and Data 12

Data 11: *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang cita-citanya dapat jodoh terbaik, tapi ia lupa memperbaiki diri. '*Good morning people whose dream is to have the best mate, **but** forget to be a better person.'

Data 12: *Selamat pagi orang-orang yang setiap pagi merasa tertampar, tapi belum ada perubahan. '*Good morning people who feel slapped every morning, **but** do nothing to change.'

In data 11, clause 1 states that *people whose dream is to have the best mate* is interpreted as everyone who desires to get the most exceptional partner for themselves. However, that hope is often not accompanied by good efforts. It is ironically contradicted by the second clause, namely *but forget to be a better person*. People usually forget to improve themselves while attempting to search for a good mate as well. This slap is a simple form of *da'wah* to motivate the audience to become self-improved ones. Incidentally, it is observable on the screenshot where a short comment was also written by @teukuwisnu, another *hijrah* celebrity who was a movie actor and tv program host before his spiritual conversion.

Finally, the last register, namely on the data 12, is indicated by clause 1 *people who feel slapped every morning* are interpreted as many people, particularly his audience, who have received advice, warnings, and suggestions to be a better person, both from individuals around or social media, specifically Taqy's posts. This post tends to conclude the rubrics #TamparanPagi, by selecting the phrase of feeling slapped *every morning*, which is then contrasted by the second clause *but do nothing to change*. Taqy might have realised that most of his followers have failed to become better people. It was also argued that the situation is basically human nature to heed the advice.

Conclusion

This study explains that Taqy Malik has managed to carry out digital *da'wah* in a simple, humorous, and casual rhetoric way filled with satirical irony. The study finding confirmed that the use of social media, specifically Instagram, is beneficial for everyone to spread *da'wah* messages. Taqy, in his #TamparanPagi posts, has performed digital *da'wah* in a humble manner, with no explicit impression of being patronising nor intimidating. Based on the linguistics finding, the language style that serves as the main study data is the clause in the

12 #TamparanPagi selected posts and the contradictory coordinating conjunction (but). In the analysed clauses, there are words and phrases that indicate the register of religious terms such as *imannya mati* (the faith is dead) and *mati yang baik* (a better death), *Maha Pencipta* (The Creator), *Shalat* (prayer), *kewajiban* (obligations), *larangan* (prohibitions), *Tuhan* (God), *Allah*, *Maha Penyayang* (The Most Merciful), and *halalin* (make it lawful or marry her). Meanwhile, the #TamparanPagi rubric was categorized into six parts, namely *(1) remembering the afterlife and its preparation, (2) obeying the commands of Allah, (3) enjoying the fruitfulness of ibadah, (4) Allah is the one and only, (5) Marry!,* and *(6) Be a better person!*. Taqy's posts might be used as examples of the digital *da'wah* by disseminating the ideas using humble terms as well as interacting with the targeted audience. He has shown his capability to play the words figuratively using the appropriate terms relevant to the *da'wah* messages intended to be delivered. Furthermore, Taqy's social media activities have also shown a good engagement he has with the audience, his fellow millennials.

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Gender Issues and the Distorted Narrative in Women Leadership in China: The Case of Empress Dowager Cixi (1861-1908)

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Abstract: Throughout history, the controversial Empress Dowager Cixi has been portrayed as a cruel and ineffective leader, despite contradicting evidences. This study assesses the narratives that vilified her via library and historical research methods, and analysed using critical discourse analysis. The Qing's social system became an instrument of prejudice and discrimination which fostered a gender-biased mindset and disparity that was used against Qing women like Cixi. This scenario paved the way for prejudiced and fabricated narratives about Cixi written by scholars and foes, and were accepted and cited in the vast majority of subsequent English historical and scholarly works, which are still regarded as accurate today. The study discovers that Cixi's contribution can be traced through China's political, development, and social sectors, such as in the empowerment of Qing women. This article examines Cixi under the theme of gender, and accentuated how gender has become a crucial key in creating a massive impact on her life and how Qing's societal system itself becomes a tool of suppression, bias and discrimination towards Qing women, specifically Cixi. This article bridges a major research gap in gender and political studies by filling in the studies on historical women's leadership. Cixi broke down gender barriers to reform China, and she should be honoured for her contributions to society.

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Abstrak: Sisipan sejarah menggambarkan Maharani Cixi sebagai pemimpin kontroversi yang gagal dan kejam walaupun ada pembuktian yang menunjukkan sebaliknya. Justeru, artikel ini membincangkan naratifnya menerusi kaedah kajian sejarah dan kepustakaan dan dianalisa menerusi metod analisis wacana kritikal. Sistem sosial Qing menjadi instrumen yang memupuk diskriminasi dan pemikiran prejudis terhadap wanita Qing seperti Cixi. Senario ini mejurus kepada kewujudan naratif berat sebelah dan terpesong yang dihasilkan oleh sarjana dan musuh Cixi sendiri terhadap dirinya dan kemudian dirujuk oleh kebanyakan penulisan sejarah dan akademik berbahasa Inggeris dan diterima sebagai fakta sehingga hari ini. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa sumbangan Cixi boleh dikesan menerusi sektor politik, pembangunan dan sosial China misalannya pemerkasaan wanita. Kajian gender ini menumpukan pada bagaimana konsep gender itu memainkan peranan signifikan di dalam kepimpinan Cixi serta bagaimana kod sistem kebudayaan masyarakat patriarki Qing itu menjadi alat diskriminasi dan prejudisme terhadap wanita Qing terutamanya Cixi yang menjurus kepada pendemonisasiannya. Kajian ini berperanan mencerahkan pemahaman masyarakat awam dan akademik mengenai sumbangan Cixi serta memenuhi kelompangan kajian gender dan politik mengenai keterlepasan pandang kajian kepimpinan wanita. Cixi berjaya menafikan halangan gender untuk menjadi pemimpin yang mereformasi China dan sumbangannya patut diiktiraf.

Kata Kunci: Cixi; Demonisasi; Konfusianisme; Patriarki; Wanita

Introduction

Today, some countries such as China have attempted to distance themselves from aspects of gender inequality and discriminatory sociocultural context of their past by renouncing old patriarchal systems and reforming their societal structures and cultural practices. China's dynastic monarchical system was abolished after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911. This dynasty used Confucianism as its primary moral teachings, which were ingrained in the social framework (Wang, 2004). Qing society practiced a maximised form of patriarchal culture, whereby women were subjected to oppression and denigration. This was due to the reinforcement of the patriarchal rule, which aimed to prevent the return of women's sovereignty, given the historical ascendancy of Wu Zetian (623-705 CE). Ancient Chinese women were

subjected to more strictness and oppression. Besides being forbidden from participating in public affairs, they were relegated to only women-related responsibilities (Gao, 2003). These principles, which were ingrained in Qing culture and customs, established the patriarchal culture. According to Chang (2020), women were required to be obedient to men throughout their lifetimes, a principle that subjected them to exploitation and injustice. Notably, the lives of women were shaped to achieve the ideal characteristics of the patriarchal system and thus maintain the superiority of this gender-biased society which can be perceived as a form of hegemonic masculinity.

However, this hegemony was shattered by Empress Dowager Cixi as she rose to become the empress dowager which ruled as China's regent for 48 years until her death in 1908. She took over the Qing Empire when it was at its lowest point after losing two major wars. While other countries such as Japan advanced through rapid industrialisation, China regressed and deteriorated. Nevertheless, Cixi was able to reverse the tide and pushed China to join the wave of advancement. During her administration, various sectors (e.g., defence, economy, and education) improved, which helped to enhance the survivability of China (Chang, 2013).

Unfortunately, Cixi's life and her substantial contributions were overlooked in every possible narrative, such as that of Laidler (2003). Her leadership was questioned and she did not receive the credit she deserved for her contributions. The reasons why Cixi was stigmatised and denounced remain untapped due to the lack of contemporary research. Was she propelled down the path of demonisation by her political adversaries or by the bigotry and patriarchal attitudes prevalent at that time? This study challenges the existing negative perceptions of Cixi by highlighting her positive image, which has been ignored and maligned, as well as examining how gender-based norms contributed to the demonisation of women using critical discourse analysis to conduct the in-depth analysis for the arguments. We examine Cixi as the research subject using secondary sources through library and case study research to figure out and draw public attention to:

1) gender-biased notions that persisted across Qing's social structure

2) how Confucianism being misused as a tool to strengthen the patriarchal society

3) (hegemony of masculinity) the gender issues and factors which led to Cixi's demonisation

4) recognise the leadership of Cixi.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, we have adopted steps and criteria used by Kodak and Meyer (2009) for data collection and incorporated them with data triangulation which covers on:

1) specific discourse

2) specific period that connected to the issue and political or social actors

3) specific political units (state, international, region)

in which every data from past literature that is related to the study is collected through non-cherry-picking data procedure to create a transparent and non-biased analysis. This study encourages the public, especially scholars, to delve into Cixi's gender-influenced narratives to learn more about her value within gender scholarship. This study aims to highlight the importance of Chinese politics, women's leadership, and patriarchy in the contemporary setting. Despite the unique past, present, and future of each dynasty, they operated in their distinctive fashion, while their commonalities could be traced back to the country's underlying patriarchal social structure.

This study elaborates on how gender-biased notions persist in the social structure. To comprehend contemporary politics or find a means to modify or enhance the current status quo, one should look back into history. A thorough analysis of dynasties and gender may improve the status of contemporary women. Women today are still facing the same discrimination and demonisation, and despite improvements in contemporary politics, remnants of the past continue to linger, such as gender preference (Attane, 2012). With gender as the focus, this study examines the importance of historical women figures, particularly Cixi and draws attention to the neglected components that led to Cixi's demonisation. The aim is to enlighten gender scholars and the public about her demonised life and leadership. It is time for her to be acknowledged as one of the great women leaders of the past, in line with others such as Wu Zetian.

The Context of Cixi's Demonisation

Cixi has been viewed as a *femme fatale* and a failed leader in the historical narratives, which remains the current perspective in modern society. There has been a lack of significant favorable research or narratives concerning her accomplishments and role in modernising China and the Qing Empire during the late Qing dynasty. These topics have not been extensively cited or discussed. The focus has been more on the distorted and prejudiced narratives of her. This was largely due to how Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Backhouse (1873-1944) perceived Cixi in their writings. Backhouse's writing especially has been highly influential in creating the negative perception of her. Lo Hui-Min (1991) argued that Backhouse's writing was cited extensively by scholars. Seagrave (1993) has also argued that scholars choose to cite and favor Backhouse's writing while ignoring other works that were more favorable to Cixi (Schwegler, 2019). Some positive depictions of Cixi were produced by Cixi's own confidants, such as Yu Der Ling (1881-1944). Schwegler (2019) argued that a possible reason for this was that confidants like Yu Der Ling were simply not men and they wrote about Cixi in less critical ways. We view this action as a form of gender bias, whereby prejudice was involved in the making of Cixi's narratives, as well as the related academic research and writing, which has led to Cixi's leadership and life being negatively portrayed to this day.

Cixi was stigmatised by accusations that circulated during her era and in the majority of subsequent English-based historical narratives, which highlighted her as an ineffective ruler who brought about the collapse of the dynasty. Ong (2005) claimed that Cixi's leadership caused China terrible misfortune. Therefore, she alone was blamed for the collapse of the Qing dynasty, which led to the perception that she was a poor leader. She was blamed for the failure of Guangxu reformation plan due to the Wuxu Coup (1898), which created the idea that Cixi was anti-modernisation. Zhang (2010) argued that when Cixi retook the regency, she did little to ensure China's survivability and she passively adjusted policies due to external influence. She was held accountable for the end of the Qing dynasty, mainly because she failed to take the appropriate effective actions or preventive measures.

However, we discover that her leadership did prolong the dynasty from collapse. According to Chang (2013), Cixi took progressive steps

to re-implement the open-door policy that began the reformation of the country and the building of diplomatic ties with the West. Cixi managed to improve many sectors, including defense, the economy, and the social system. Some of her substantial contributions were the halting of the Taiping Rebellion, an enhanced military system, the clearance of Opium War debts, the installation of a telegraph system, and new forms of energy (e.g., coal mining). A popular custom was footbinding, which, according to Mann (2011), caused women excruciating pain in their feet in the name of beauty and marriage prospects, which worked as a tool for patriarchal control that reflects women's submission and oppression, was also abolished. Most importantly, Cixi also made her contribution to Qing women's empowerment through the education sector. For instance, she issued a decree entitled "The Regulation for Women's Education," which issued scholarships and enabled female students to pursue education abroad (Rhoads, 2000). One of the teenage girls to receive a scholarship was Song Qingling, the future wife of Sun Yat-Sen (President of the Republic of China). Her period also saw the production of magazines and journals which promoted women's liberation and life (Chang, 2013). Another example was *Nü xuebao* 女學報 (*Journal of Women's Education*), which was first published in 1898 (Barish, 2018). Even with the angst of, and rejection from, some officials due to the alleged potential threat to social stability posed by women's education and newly educated women, other officials saw these same women as potential frontline soldiers in the battle to define the nation (Barish, 2018). According to Judge (2001), officials like Rong-Qing and Zhan Zhidong were involved in drafting the documents on education for girls and proposed that family education should be taught within female education due to various concerns, as well as the arguments that it could impaired traditional values and that it was too early to establish formal education for girls and women. Nevertheless, Cixi decided to support this move to ensure Qing survivability (Chang, 2013).

We perceive her move as a step to reforming the Qing system while pushing for women's empowerment and life improvement, even if this contravened the societal culture at the time in which Qing women were restricted by *Nü sìshu* 女四書 (*The Confucian Four Books for Women*) and household management. At the same time, the reform managed to break down the original Qing societal system, which differentiated the hereditary Manchu nobility caste from the Chinese civilian populations.

This led to Cixi being praised by certain Chinese writers and influential journalists, such as Diao Minqian, for promoting women's education and gender equality (Barish, 2018).

However, her contribution was neglected in most narratives. Although she had absolute power as regent to make final decisions, her officials received most of the credit (Wong, 1992). Cixi was branded as greedy, selfish, and a failed leader who opposed the reformation (Chang, 2013). According to McMahon (2020), Cixi was accused of leading the Qing dynasty into ruin when she failed to ensure improvements due to her luxurious lifestyle. *We perceive that her boldness shook the Qing patriarchal society and this, together with the distortion and extensive citation of negative narratives, has led to her demonisation.*

Gender-biased Cultures

This paper believes that Cixi's demonisation were caused by the Qing's gender-biased culture which promotes hegemonic masculinity. This resulted in the historical narratives that have tarnished her reputation and denied her role and contributions. Cixi's demonisation and lack of recognition can be regarded as a form of women's discrimination as Jiang (2009) suggested that women in ancient China neither had similar opportunities nor received the same recognition as men. The gender-biased society and one-sided narratives of that time led to her demonisation in the historical narratives (Chung, 1979). This article does not intend to dive deeply into Confucianism debates as our focus is Cixi's demonisation. However, we choose to include a small element of the Confucianism perspective to illustrate how this teaching itself was misused and manipulated as a form of justification by the Qing's patriarchal system to enable the oppression of Qing women such as Cixi. Clark and Wang (2004) argued that few scholars have deemed Confucianism to be the sole cause of Qing women's oppression. Scholars such as Fang (2021) contended that Confucianism contains the essence of gender biasedness that led to women's oppression.

Such essence that raised up, such as in Analects 17.23 (some version was on verse 17.25), as follows:

> "子曰：「唯女子與小人為難養也，近之則不孫，遠之則怨。」"

Pang-White (2018) translated the verse as "only women and morally inferior men seem difficult to care for. If you keep them close, they become insubordinate; but if you keep them at a distance, they become resentful".

Nevertheless, Clark and Wang (2004) argued that the establishment of this gender-biased culture was not fully instigated by Confucianism teaching, although some Confucianism ideas might imply this. This perception existed due to how Confucianism served as the guidelines with immense influence in Qing society and it was socio-historically and culturally conditioned, and pushed to suit the traditional gender hierarchies, in which the succeeding imperial culture increasingly promoted the idea of men being ontologically superior to women (Clark & Wang, 2004). We perceived this system itself where the men trying to uphold their dominance over women as the hegemony of masculinity, in which Hirsch & Kachtan (2018) stated that the hegemony can be seen through the dominant social status of men and subordinate social status of women, and in this study, can be traced through Qing's men superiority and Qing's women inferiority and oppression.

Jiang (2009) argued that the sexism in later Confucianism is an outgrowth of the sexism implicit in early Confucianism. However, Rosenlee (2012) argued that Confucianist literature such as Analects did discuss women but never suggested that men should dominate or oppress women adding that the gender roles and division during the early stages of Confucianism were meant to create a proper gender distinction that would differentiate the Han culture and barbarians. Confucianism might have made statements about gender perspectives, such as that of Analects 17.23, that are rationally questionable. Yet recent research has pointed out how Confucianism did not push for women's oppression and men's superiority. Clark and Wang (2004) added:

> The history of Imperial China is littered with emperors
> and bureaucrats who abused their power under the name
> of Confucianism but who violated the Mandate of Heaven;
> these rulers were but legalists in Confucian clothing.

Chang (2020) stated that politicians such as Dong Zongshu, who was also an influential Confucian scholar, subscribed to a dualistic theory of Confucian ethics that defined the men as *Yang*; rulers, husbands, fathers, sons; and *Yin*; wives, daughters, daughters-in-law. Hence,

women were encouraged to follow men and be filial as part of the fundamental belief that filial piety was the basis for the deeply rooted law and customs of the Chinese people (Tang, 1995; Chang, 2020). This indicates how politicians/men themselves misused the teachings and promoted women's oppression. This shows how the teachings were interpreted and misused by politicians and the state for their own benefit, where those teachings were passed down through the generations until the Qing dynasty. Confucianism was misused by the societal system itself—for instance, family institutions, politicians, and rulers might take advantage of it and use it as a tool to justify women's denigration, demonisation, and denial of recognition or to explain any sort of negative treatment toward them.

Zhen He-Yin depicted how Qing society led to the establishment of problematic institutions that not only divided and isolated women and men but also empowered men (Liu, Karl, and Ko, 2013). The Qing societal system itself was the root of the biased and prejudiced society that discriminated against Qing women, regardless of their status. The patriarchal system enforced stringent norms to oppress and control women. One of the biased beliefs was that women were unsuitable for education as they could cause trouble (Ko, 1994). Female access to advanced education, such as classical reading and writing proficiencies, was prohibited, thus depriving them of their entitlement to a decent education that matched the ones enjoyed by Qing males. The hegemony of men was preserved through educational inequality and by denying women their rights to a better life and education. Nevertheless, women still received a basic education about women through *Nü sìshu*, but *Nü sìshu* was manipulated as an instrument to establish the gender role of women and the need for them to obey the men (Hinsch, 2022).

According to Pang-White (2018), *Nü sìshu* teaches ideal female traits, such as how women should serve their parents-in-law, husbands, and get along with their brothers and sisters-in-law but *Nü sìshu* did not condone women's oppression and blind subordination to men. However, certain virtues (e.g., *lǐ* and *xiào*) were misused in the name of Confucianism and become a restraint to women as they had to be loyal and filial to men. These Confucianist virtues gradually got infused with the law and culture, which turned into the base of a variety of legal and moral obligations (MacCormack, 2006). This paper contends that Qing women were oppressed and discriminated, the blame for which cannot

be placed on Confucianism but on the state and societal institutions that forced it through the patriarchal system and misused it to safeguard men's stakes and maintain control over women. This patriachal system's problematic nature includes the acts of denial of proper education (only *Nü sìshu*) footbinding, widow chastity, suicide, infanticide, and selling wives for prostitution (Mann, 1987; Huang, 2001). The upholding of such customs was a constraint that became a trap for women; if they crossed the line, they were not regarded as morally upright or decent. Women were not allowed to participate in general matters (men's affairs) as this was regarded as only likely to wreak havoc and result in catastrophe (Gao, 2000). Women were deemed as harmful figures whose participation in men's affairs could lead to disaster, demonstrating how they were restrained and discriminated against. Women's participation in administration was viewed as a sign of men's weakness and thus regarded as taboo. Women were the subjects of blame and held liable if a man overindulged them (Gao, 2003). They had to be obedient to men and their role was severely constrained, which signifies the discrimination and cruel treatment meted out to Qing women. The patriarchal system itself acted as a chain to women for which Mann (2021) commented that the tradition is an overt display that serves to protect the patriarchal system as well as a tool for social control and the subjugation of women.

Thus, in Cixi's case, even if she was a ruler, she was like any other Qing woman in being subjected to ethics and rules. She herself was ultimately regarded negatively and mistreated in numerous ways, such as the creation of the image of her as a *femme fatale* or an unruly non-ideal Qing woman. Schell and Delury (2013) described Cixi as Qing's last leader and a national *femme fatale* on a par with Wu Zetian. A *femme fatale*, according to Minowa, Maclaran, and Stevens (2019), refers to a seductress who disrupts the traditional ideals of feminity and the usage of such term exist in Sinology, which was *Gu:* 蠱 (Enchantment) and *Mei*: 媚 (Art of Charming). Zhang Hanmo (2013) presented an approach of using these terms interchangeably with *femme fatale* to express the same notion, hence the same approach was adopted in this article.

Laidler (2003) claimed that Cixi swayed Emperor Xianfeng using her sexual prowess and craft, thus amusing him so that she could become involved in court affairs, which helped her to rise in power. Cixi was seen in this light as she did not adhere to the ideal behaviour of the time, instead acting promiscuously and using men to gain power (Ku, 2021).

We believe that her being branded as a *femme fatale* is because scholars such as Laidler perceived that she displayed improper behaviour to seduce Xianfeng in order to gain power, given that she was permitted to assist Xianfeng in managing national affairs by reading the memoranda of officials and writing decrees or responses on the Emperor's behalf.

We contend that her involvement in assisting Xianfeng with state matters was due to her exceptional literacy skills, as Ku (2021) argued that her literacy proficiency earned her the opportunity to assist Xianfeng in this way. It was uncommon for Qing women to possess literacy skills due to the strict controls over their education. Since it was better for Qing women to stay illiterate, the presence of educated women was extremely rare. Cixi was misunderstood for seducing Xianfeng for reasons of power. She was blamed for Xianfeng's overfavouring of her, and her involvement in the national affair was deemed a taboo. This notion supports the remark by Gao (2003) about how Qing women were blamed for the indecent behavior of Qing men. The view that women should not be educated, talented, or involved in men's affairs is an additional indication that women were discriminated against. This demonstrates how a biased and prejudiced mentality contributed to the development of a negative perception. It also illustrates how the situation of the time, which adhered to patriarchal norms, suppressed the advancement of women's abilities and denied them the right to improve themselves.

Concerns have been expressed regarding Cixi's political role in comparison to Wu Zetian's role during the Tang Dynasty. The discriminatory phrase, "the calamity of Wu Zetian is again before us," was deployed by future dynasties as a warning about Wu Zetian's reign (McMahon, 2013). This informed subsequent monarchs about the alleged impacts of women on men's affairs. Cixi's role was perceived as blasphemous and equated to catastrophes as she was associated with the curse of the Yehenala clanswoman who would cause the ruin of the Qing dynasty (Wakeman, 1977). Chang (2013) explains that this particular notion was sensationalised in the historical narratives and was, in fact, invented. This paper argues that it was exaggerated to make it appears more plausible for Cixi to be responsible for the collapse of the dynasty. We discovered that discrimination played a role in Cixi's accreditation denial. Chang (2013) explained that in the majority of the English historical writings, Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909)

and Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) tend to be credited for their major roles in the transformation of China during Cixi's regency, and Cixi did not receive the same degree of recognition. McMahon (2020) argued that as a leader, Cixi oversaw and led the entire reformation process, and Wong (1992) stated that the reformation program could not have been introduced without Cixi's consent. Hence, this article stresses that this reformation could not have been achieved without Cixi's role, thus refuting the claim that she was an anti-reformist. Some writers, such as Barish (2018), have discussed her contributions, yet these aspects were not fully discussed in other majority historical narratives that have mentioned her. Jiang (2009) suggested that Chinese women had neither similar opportunities nor recognition to those of men which led to women being subjected to horrible treatment and unable to achieve the same degree of achievement as males. This happened to Cixi, where her role and contributions were neglected, and her negativity was amplified and exaggerated. The current authors contend that the gender-biased culture and prejudiced mindset led to Cixi's demonisation. It was easier for the society at the time to accept negative narratives and perceptions of wicked women due to prejudiced norms. The society and scholars of that time accepted the narratives of Cixi's misconduct because the perception of women as capable of causing destruction was instilled in the culture. These views have affected Cixi's narratives until today, which have led to recognition denial and the view that she was a villain.

The Distorted and Exaggerated Narrative

Distortion of the facts led to Cixi being demonised, signifying how distorted narratives could lead to women being vilified and treated negatively. One component that contributed to her demonisation was gender bias, whereby the narrative itself was recounted and concluded in a biased manner. These narratives have been cited and affected writing and perceptions about her until the present day. For example, the narratives by Backhouse and Kang substantially influenced the perception of Cixi in the subsequent narratives. Chung (1979) commented:

> Scholars have been prejudiced against feminine influence in court, and they have been presented with a one-sided view and given undeserved credence to numerous myths and misconceptions about Cixi. Historians long relied upon the works of Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao

(1873-1929), for their information about the of the court
during the period 1898 to 1900. Since these men opposed
Cixi, their prejudice is reflected in their writings**.**

Kwong (2000) argued that Cixi was portrayed in such a negative way
through Kang's writing that subsequent scholars came to regard the
situation as one involving good versus evil and Kang as a victim of
Cixi's power and greed and clearly impacted the subsequent academic
writing flow as previous narratives were cited. This can be seen in the
works of Hsu (2000) and Ong (2005), who viewed Cixi as a selfish
woman who failed to regenerate and modernise the country while Kang
was lauded as a reformer who wanted to save the country. Hence, this
article examines Kang's involvement as one of those responsible for
Cixi's demonisation. This article does not refute the contributions of
Kang and his disciple Liang during Guangxu's administration, such as
the founding of a Western-style university, Imperial University, which
enhanced the education system to a new level (Wong, 1992). Although
Kang made significant contributions, he was a highly ambitious man
with his own political interests and a part of anti-dowager faction
and conspirators in the anti-dowager scheme that spawned countless
rumours about Cixi (Chung, 1979; Chang, 2013). Chang (2013) state
that Kang had listed the charges against Cixi, such as initiating the 1898
Wuxu Coup, killing Tongzhi and Alute, as well as using naval funds
to build the Summer Palace, which led to China losing the Sino-Japan
war. The anti-dowager faction took advantage of any possible scenario
to create a negative perception of Cixi so that she came to be portrayed
as a failed leader (Jia, 2020).

Cixi's actions were exaggerated to imply that she was fully
responsible and accountable for the country's demise. For example,
the 1898 Wuxu Coup that Cixi launched was used as a propaganda
tool to smear her reputation and label her a treacherous, anti-reform,
and greedy leader. This was stated by Kang Youwei and his circle
through their writings in newspapers such as *The China Discussion*,
and this perception has lasted till the present day (Li & Harriet, 2012).
Her participation in men's affairs demonstrated her acts of treason,
disobedience, and disrespect toward cultural teaching as women were
not allowed to get involved in men's affair. Upon participating in the
Wuxu Coup, she returned to the regency after Guangxu's administration
was replaced. Wong (1992) claimed that Cixi's coup functioned as an

attempt to protect her interests, and McMahon (2020) asserted that Cixi felt that the Guangxu reforms would imperil her interests and authority. Wong added that Cixi did not oppose reform because it was with her agreement that edicts could be issued, but she felt obligated to intercede due to Kang's potential to mislead Guangxu and a concealed conspiracy to murder her. Chang (2013) noted that the reason for her comeback was government corruption and, as regent, she continued the reform process. Nonetheless, Wong (1992) stated that Kang used her coup to demonise her as a treacherous dowager and to claim that she defied the idea of filial piety to the Emperor to become regent again (Jia, 2020). This corresponded to the idea that Cixi was also perceived as a *femme fatale* as she had committed a taboo against the Emperor. While striving to protect her interests, it was equally important to emphasise that she was defending herself against an antagonist who aimed to destroy her. However, this was unimportant at the time because she was viewed as immoral for committing treason against the Emperor. Nevertheless, we have to clarify that we do not reject the possibility that Cixi still wanted to hold onto power despite her retirement.

The analysis and narratives by Kang were easily accepted, indicating bias in the writing and how most writings relied on the view of a single party. Similarly, Chung (1979) stated that Western writers had drawn their facts from the writings of radical reformers and highly biased newspapers, such as the *North China Herald* and *Ch'ing-i pao*, which were personally edited by Liang. Wong recounted the argument that many scholars relied on the writings of reformers such as Kang:

> Scholars have uncritically adopted Kang's analysis of his own role in 1898. Kwong gathers examples of the pro-reform or pro-revolution bias of modern historians and suggests that it tends to favour a large role of Kang. It is also true that many of the sources drawn on by conventional interpretations come from Kang and his friends. (Kwong 1984; Wong 1992).

The other narrative that has continued until today was that Cixi murdered her son, Tongzhi Emperor, and daughter-in-law, Empress Jiashun; this idea was created by Kang's faction to smear her (Jia, 2020). Library research shows that the majority of academic writings have cited false narratives and portrayed her negatively. McMahon (2020) stated that some versions mentioned how Jiashun had killed herself to prove her

devotion to Tongzi, while others claimed that Cixi compelled her. One rumour was that Jiashun lost the power struggle to Cixi but, if Jiashun had lived, she would have become the new dowager, thus weakening Cixi's dominance. Cixi was blamed for the death of Jiashun Tongzhi. Ferla (2021) stated that Cixi neglected Tongzhi and Jiashun, which caused their illness and death. This paper depicts how this perception was exaggerated to demonise her, which was refuted by Yu (2015), who said that Cixi loved her son Tongzhi and stated that the murder accusations were a lie. Her reputation has suffered throughout history due to the biased and misleading accounts written about her, some penned by Kang. The story narrated by Kang was widely accepted, primarily because he was viewed as a reformer who wished to preserve China, despite being an ambitious and powerful man who eliminated anyone who did not align with him, such as his removal of his patron, Weng Tonghe (Wong, 1992). We perceive that the same methods were deployed against Cixi when Kang used propaganda and narratives to damage Cixi's image. He used all means and opportunities to destroy Cixi's reputation, and the narratives were widely received because they originated from a reformer who became a political victim to a conservative leader. This smear campaign that led to her demonisation has lasted throughout the previous century, indicating how badly her reputation and leadership have suffered from the political clash between Kang and herself.

Scholars such as Ong (2005) claimed that she was a failed leader and that the downfall of the Qing was due to her lavish lifestyle and greedy behaviour. Spence (1982) stated that Cixi was criticised for wasting money to rebuild the Summer Palace using funds that were allocated for the development of the military system, and Ong (2005) further elaborated how this, in turn, caused China's defeat in the Sino-Japan War. Along the lines directed at Cixi about her misuse of funds for her personal purposes, Chang (2013) commented:

> Some of the funds came from her own. The navy was allocated a colossal fund each year, which was deposited in a foreign bank. Exactly how much she took is unclear. In just under a decade, she may have siphoned off enough amounts that tally the overall cost of the building works. This money did not come from the capital of the naval funds deposited in the bank, and Chinese scholars have concluded that the arrangement did not significantly impact the navy.

This article does not deny the possibility of her misuse of the funds, even if some writings claimed that the money did not come from these sources. Even if misuse of funds occurred, this did not exert a significant impact on the defense system, which has been exaggerated in some writings. As a political figure, Cixi might have misused her position for her own interests, but we contend that the issue was amplified to demonise her reputation. For example, her role and contributions were misinterpreted to highlight her negatively, and it is unfair to blame her for the dynasty's downfall as she had played a significant role in advancing and modernising the country. McMahon (2020) claimed that people vilified her and accused her of living an extravagant life in dire times, but it is unfair to blame her alone.

Narrative distortion was also noted in the work by Backhouse, which pioneered the majority of past and present academic studies. We perceive this as the mold for the contemporary perception of Cixi. Hugh Trevor-Roper (1978) refuted Sir Backhouse's literature, such as his views on China under the Empress Dowager, and dismissed Décadence Mandchoue as sheer fiction, fraud, and imagination. In Décadence Mandchoue, Backhouse claimed to be Cixi's favorite sexual companion (Backhouse, 2011). Backhouse claimed that his book about China under the Empress Dowager was based on a journal by a Qing official that he had found (Bland & Backhouse, 2009). However, Trevor-Roper (1978) outlined the heinous crimes and slanders perpetrated against Cixi by Backhouse, who forged the journal he claimed had belonged to a Chinese aristocrat and which he used as his primary literary source. In a similar vein, Lo Hui-Min's (1991) article included the copied primary source of ChingShan's diary, which Backhouse had primarily used and asserted to be authentic but which was then debunked by Hui-Min as a forgery. Backhouse's writing was referenced for decades as truth, which tarnished Cixi's image. Seagrave (1993) criticised Backhouse for exploiting hoaxes and fraudulent references in his books and for destroying sinology as a whole. The work of Backhouse is one of the tools used to attack and discredit Cixi. Backhouse is an example of a scholar prejudiced against women, particularly those who were powerful and assertive. Such scholars would not question the sources or facts in the story. It is easy for these women to be targeted when hearsay, gossip, or criticism circulates about their actions or behaviours. Backhouse's fabrication and narrative distortion revealed how biased a

scholar could be when writing about women. Prejudice and sexism are unquestionably present in historical documents when written by people such as Backhouse. The patriarchal standard of the period showcased women as a scourge and as destructive instruments, whereby societies readily accepted stories about them. Cixi was demonised in the last century due to viral defamation based on prejudice and bias.

Conclusion

Most English-language depictions of Cixi portray her as a wicked leader who failed to prolong China's survival. Most of these narratives referred to the works by Backhouse and Kang as their guides until they were discredited as forgery and narrative distortion. Almost no in-depth studies of Cixi's demonisation exist because most studies including Chang's (2013) book concentrated on her biography. The relevant questions are why she was demonised, as well as why her role and contributions were left unrecognised in the historical narratives. This paper bridges these gaps and offers explanations by analysing the central feature – gender. This paper has thoroughly examined how gender differences emerged as a crucial factor that contributed to the distortation of the narratives of Cixi. This article expands on the issue faced by Qing women such as Cixi, particularly in terms of how patriarchal rules resulted in women's subordination and discrimination at all levels of the social hierarchy. We strive not to mimic past work, such as Brent Hinsch's "Women in Imperial China" (2016), in which Lin (2019) elaborated Hinsch's argument about how ancient Chinese women constructed their identities and positions. This short account of women's challenges helped to establish the content flow and enable a better understanding of the factors that led to her demonisation. This study does not deny that Cixi was a political actor who took the initiative to preserve her dominance in China's politics. Nevertheless, she was a remarkable political figure who substantially contributed to her country. Cixi revived China when it was on the brink of ruin after losing two Opium Wars. We do not deny that her officials deserve recognition for their achievements. However, Cixi also deserves to be recognised and celebrated for her role and contributions, which have been largely overlooked in the English-language narratives. Cixi's demonisation was related to gender-related factors such as the prejudiced mindset, discrimination, and patriarchal notion in Qing culture. This promoted the superiority of men over women, thus limiting women's freedom,

forcing them to defer to male authority, and denying their opportunities and rightful recognition for their work and contribution.

The purpose of this article is to bring greater attention to Cixi as a figure who played an important role in the history of China. The study of Cixi has enabled us to comprehend how gender studies in the context of sinology have evolved. This study has resketched the perception of Cixi's narrative, which had previously been told from a biased perspective. According to Teng (1996), the gender sinology scholars sought authoritative sources of ideology that resulted in an elite-focused bias in the literature. Some terminologies, such as *femme fatale*, were viewed as foreign in the context of sinology gender studies but served to illustrate the background of our argument, which we hope will help the reader to better understand the demonisation of Cixi. Examining various works such as Pang-White (2018), has newly exposed how Confucianism is not sexist or discriminating toward women, yet it was misused for discriminating purposes that denigrate women and championing the men. This in return paired with the gender card led to the outcome that implicated Cixi's leadership throughout history which ultimately led her to be painted in such negative ways and being disregarded as an important historical agent during the transformation of late Qing period due to the biased creation of narratives. Even with the latest contemporary research such as Barish (2019) celebrating her contribution, her leadership records were still scrutinised and she did not receive proper accreditation. This paper presents a thorough discussion of the conditions that led to Cixi's demonisation and accreditation denial, as well as how she was a victim of the oppressive patriarchal system itself, thus revealing the immense impact of gender on society. To quote Li and Harriet (2012), it is now time to consider Cixi about her place in Qing history.

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Review Article

The Sun Rises in the West: A Review Essay on Ismailism

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THE FATIMIDS 2. THE RULE FROM EGYPT, by Shainool Jiwa. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2023, pp. VIII + 240. ISBN: 9781780769486.

COMMAND AND CREATION. A SHI'I COSMOLOGICAL TREATISE. A Persian edition and English translation of Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī's *Majlis-i maktūb*. Edited and Translated by Daryoush Mohammad Poor. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies (Ismaili Texts and Translation Series, 25), 2021, pp. XVI + 138 + LXXXIV. ISBN: 9780755602971.

FAITH AND ETHICS: THE VISION OF THE ISMAILI IMAMAT, by M. Ali Lakhani. London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018, pp. 1 colour illustration + XXIV + 248. ISBN: 9781788312486.

Since it became a subject of study in the social sciences and humanities, in the 19th century, the canonical history of 'Islam' has been something like this:

1 Pre-Islamic Arabia or *Jahiliyyah* (The Age of Ignorance);
2 The Prophet Muḥammad, 570-632 Christian Era (C.E.);
3 The first four caliphs or the *Rashidun* Caliphate, 632-661 C.E.;
4 The Umayyads, 661-750;

5 The 'Abbasids, 750-1258, or the 'Golden Age' of 'Islam';
6 Decadence of 'Islam', until the 1850s (there are many who consider that 'Islam' is still in decadence…); and

7   The Resurgence/Revival/Return of 'Islam', from mid-19th century till now.

Conspicuously absent from this unidimensional, flawed, and hollowed narrative are the Fatimids, the only sustained Shi'i, in this case Ismaili, dynasty to rule over substantial parts of the medieval Muslim world, rivalling both the Umayyads of Al-Andalus and the 'Abbasids. At its peak, the Fatimid Empire extended from the Atlantic shores of North Africa, across the southern Mediterranean and down both sides of the Red Sea, also covering Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. One of most prosperous and influential dynasties of the Muslim world, the Fatimids (909–1171) were distinguished by their Imam-caliphs, who asserted spiritual as well as political authority, in direct descent from the family of the Prophet. Their conquest of Egypt in 969 marked the inception of a burgeoning Mediterranean empire. From there, they refined their systems of administration, judiciary, and governance, instilling principles of inclusion which contributed to stability during their caliphate. Fatimid Cairo flourished as a vibrant cultural and intellectual centre through patronage of the arts, architecture, and scholarship.

This absence from the canonical narrative is even more baffling if we consider all the fantasies swarming the Western imagination when it comes to the contact between the Crusaders and the Ismailis in the 11th-13th centuries, the Order of the Assassins, or all the media coverage surrounding the Aga Khans, be it the 'celebrity press' or more serious outlets. In an ironic turn of mood, and after the release of the video game *Assassin's Creed* in 2007 and then the movie with the same name in 2016, people who were once depicted as suicidal fanatics or forerunners of '"Islamic" "terrorism"', became symbols and beacons of freedom…[1] But, alas, this is how the modern, scientific, rational, Western mind works, in a mercurial, whimsical way, constantly jumping from realms of fantasy into other realms of fantasy.

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[1] Just to give two examples from the field of fiction, we can refer the 1938 novel *Alamut* by Vladimir Bartol (1903-1967) or the book *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, first published in 1967) by Bernard Lewis (1916-2018), the latter wearing a garb of scholarly and scientific language.

Side by side with the Sunnis and the Twelver Shi'is, the Ismailis constitute one of the most important communities within Islam, represent the second largest Shi'i Muslim community after the Twelvers (*Ithna 'Asharis*) and are today dispersed as religious minorities throughout more than twenty-five countries of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. The bulk of the Ismailis recognise the Aga Khan as their Imam or spiritual leader, in this case the 49th Imam, who is considered to be the descendant of, and legitimate successor to, the Prophet Muḥammad.[2]

After a period of concealment, Ismaili propagators and missionaries began to operate in the second half of the ninth century, and in less than a quarter of a century they had founded a network of communities extending from the Maghrib, in the west, to Sind (today's Pakistan) in the east, from the mountains of Daylam, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, to the highlands of the Yemen, in the south. From the very beginning, the Ismaili missionaries came forward as teachers. Teaching and learning are the very essence of the Ismaili mission, and 'the summoner' (*al-da'i*), the propagator and teacher, was – after the Imam – the central figure of the community. The Ismailis, who are named after their sixth Imam, Ismā'īl (719-762), the eldest son of the Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (702-765), originally called their doctrine the 'summons to truth' (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*) or simply *al-da'wa*, the summons, and their state the *dawlat al-haqq* (the righteous, rightly guided state).

As reported by historians and heresiographers of the time, the Ismailis were one of the most organised and energetic of the Shi'i communities in the third and fourth centuries after the *Hijra*, commanding popular support in many parts of the Muslim world, and offering a dynamic and progressive vision of social reform, with a sophisticated system of religious and philosophical thought, based upon an esoteric understanding of the inner meaning of the Qur'an. The vigorous expansion of Ismailism was largely due to the *da'is*, the missionaries of the Ismaili *da'wa* organisation. Although not much is yet

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[2] For a survey of Ismaili history, Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For the modern period, Farhad Daftary (ed.), *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011).

known about its earliest history, the *daʿwa* was centrally directed from Syria in the middle of the ninth century and thereafter spread rapidly in Iraq, eastern Arabia, Iran, Transoxiana, Yemen, and North Africa.

By 909, the Ismailis had successfully established the nucleus of a Fatimid state in Ifriqiya, which was subsequently extended to the whole of North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, and the Hijaz. From the beginning of their rule, and in particular after the occupation of Egypt in 969, the Fatimid Imam-caliphs concerned themselves with social reform, the promotion of the arts and the sciences, the construction of mosques, colleges and libraries, and other public projects. The centrepiece of this programme was the foundation of Cairo, which became the new capital city of the Fatimids, and the establishment of Al-Azhar as its principal mosque and educational complex. The Fatimid encouragement of intellectual and cultural expression attracted numerous scholars, writers, poets, and artists to Egypt. In fact, at the height of its power and prosperity, Fatimid Cairo rivalled ʿAbbasid Baghdad as much in the vitality of its cultural life as for political supremacy in the world of Islam.[3]

The period of the Fatimid Imam-caliphs is considered to have marked a climax in the history of the Ismailis. In the year 909 they managed to lay the foundations of a caliphate in present-day Tunisia, in opposition to the caliphate of the ʿAbbasids centred in Baghdad. The eleventh Imam of the Ismailis, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī (873-934), was proclaimed as caliph, and his descendants established one of the most important empires in Islamic history. In 969 they succeeded in peacefully conquering Egypt, where they founded Cairo as their new capital. In 973 the fourteenth Imam, al-Muʿizz (931-975), settled there. As a dynasty of Imam-caliphs, the Ismaili Imams were called 'Fatimids' because they traced their genealogy to the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima and hence to the Prophet himself.

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[3] For more on this, *Trésors fatimides du Caire. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe du 28 avril au 30 août 1998* (Paris/Gand: Institut du Monde Arabe / SDZ, Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1998) and *L'Égypte Fatimide: Son Art et Son Histoire – Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998*. Sous la direction de Marianne Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris – Sorbonne, 1999). Neither of these works is mentioned in the 'Further Reading' section of Shainool Jiwa's book.

An important aspect of Fatimid intellectual life is that which centred around its academic and educational institutions such as al–Azhar and the *dar al-ʿIlm* or the 'House of Knowledge.' The former was concerned mainly with the religious sciences, in particular the teaching of the *Sharʿīah* according to Ismaili law, and offered free public education to all Muslims, including women, for whom special classes were held; the latter provided research facilities for scholars in the non–religious sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philology, logic, and the like. Both institutions were liberally endowed by the state and their teaching staff received regular remuneration. The promotion of learning and scholarship was a planned, premeditated policy which the Fatimids pursued vigorously from the onset of their rule in Egypt. In fact, many of their cultural policies and educational institutions introduced in Egypt were prefigured, on a smaller scale, during the early period when the Fatimids were based in north–west Africa. Furthermore, the priority accorded to the intellect by the Fatimids was intentionally pluralistic, open equally to all Muslims, Ismailis and others, Christians, and Jews, enabling the original thinker, creative scientist, or talented poet, as much as the astute politician and military strategist, to rise high in the offices of court and state.[4]

Shainool Jiwa's *The Fatimids* is a two-volume historical work on the legacy of the Fatimid Empire and is a general overview of its history, mainly recommended to non-specialist readers who want a reliable and balanced overview in accessible language and concise format, delivering a well-researched and yet easy-to-follow introduction that will stimulate to think differently about Islam. The first volume (*The Rise of a Muslim Empire*, published in 2018) details the reigns of the first four Imam-caliphs and surveys the religious and socio-political underpinnings of Fatimid rule, from its North African establishment in 909 to its transition to Egypt in 969. Jiwa's second volume (*The Rule From Egypt*) discusses the latter ten Imam-caliphs and focuses on the period 969-1171, the pinnacle of Fatimid society, up until its decline. Although some readers may be frustrated by the detail of jumping back and forth across names, dates, and events, those who are able to follow the work thematically will certainly find this book to be very informative. Jiwa condenses a

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[4] For a brief introduction to the subject, Heinz Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997).

rich and fluid history into few pages while including the most essential elements, people, and institutions making up this period. Readers are provided with visual aids (maps, family tree charts, and city maps) to help identify locations and structures which would otherwise come off as abstract and jargon heavy. In addition, colourful images of important monuments such as mosques, coins, and artifacts, are added.[5]

In eight short, focused, and readable chapters (The Arrival of the Fatimids in Egypt; The Genesis of Fatimid Rule in Egypt; Towards an Inclusive Empire; The Composition of the State; Science and Scholarship in the City Victorious; The Empire of the Seas; The Fluctuations of Fatimid Rule; Late Fatimid Egypt and the Heirs of Empire), plus a brief Introduction and Conclusion (Glimpses of the Fatimid Legacy), Shainool Jiwa offers a brief history of the Fatimids, continuing the story of the dynasty from their newly founded capital of Cairo. Introducing the figures who moulded the empire, Jiwa charts the Fatimid expansion, the reasons behind its ultimate fall by the hand of Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin, 1137-1193), and the legacy that continues with the living Ismaili communities today. This lively and engaging work, including maps and colour images, draws on a broad range of primary sources to lead readers through two centuries which witnessed the triumphs and trials of the only sustained Shiʿi caliphate to rule across the medieval Islamic world. The Ismaili *daʿwa* reached far and wide, with its message gaining adherents from the Gulf of Yemen to as far as Sind. Capturing the cohesive religious fabric of Fatimid rule, Jiwa notes that al-Muʿizz pledged to maintain Sunni religious life while ruling over Egypt; she describes pillars of Sunni Islam that can serve as points of contrast to the Ismaili tradition. Individuals who can justly

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[5] Shainool Jiwa has lectured and published on Fatimid studies for over three decades. As a specialist on the Fatimids, she has written and lectured extensively on medieval Islamic history and has edited, co-edited, and translated key medieval Arabic texts relating to Fatimid history, including *The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017), *The Shiʿi World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz and his Era* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), and *Towards a Shiʿi Mediterranean Empire: Fatimid Egypt and the Founding of Cairo* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009).

be seen as archetypes of the Fatimid intelligentsia are referenced both biographically and through their works.

The classical Fatimid period, from the establishment of the state in Ifriqiya in 909 until the death of the eighth Imam-caliph, al-Mustansir (1029-1094), in 1094 is often referred to as the 'golden age' of Ismailism, when the Ismailis achieved a prosperous state of their own and Ismaili literature and intellectual activities reached an apogee. Fatimid history during its 'classical' period is normally divided into two phases. The initial phase, commonly designated as the North African phase, lasted just over sixty years from the establishment of Fatimid rule in Ifriqiya in 909 to the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 and the transference of the dynasty's seat of power there in 973. During this time the Fatimids were chiefly occupied with laying the foundations of their caliphate and assuring its endurance. In the second phase, covering a period of some hundred and twenty years from 973 until the death of the Imam-caliph al-Mustansir in 1094, the Fatimid caliphate, now centred in Egypt and enjoying stability, reached and then passed its peak of glory and territorial expansion, which was subsequently followed by the rapid decline and fall of the dynasty.

The Fatimid state entered a period of terminal decline in the eleventh century as a result of recurrent economic crises, increasing military interventions in the political and religious affairs of the state, and a major schism among the Ismailis over succession to the Imamat which led to the division of the community between the Must'alis and the Nizārīs. At the same time, the eastern Ismailis of Iran and Syria were coming under severe persecution from the Saljuqs, who had taken effective control of the 'Abbasid state. It was in these circumstances that towards the end of the 11th century the Persian Ismailis, who were then under the leadership of the *da'i* Hasan-i-Sabbah (1050-1124), acquired the fortress of Alamut and several other mountainous strongholds in Iran, and later in Syria, which came to constitute the territories of an Ismaili state. The long military struggle that ensued for almost a century between the Ismailis and the Saljuqs was one of the most turbulent

periods in Ismaili history, and later became a focus of fabulous stories and legends in medieval European literature.[6]

The conquest of Egypt itself in 969 represented an intermediary stage in the Fatimids' strategy of eastern expansion. Cairo, founded as a caliphal city by them, became the headquarters of the complex and hierarchical Ismaili *da'wa* organisation. Supreme leadership of the Ismaili *da'wa* and the Fatimid *dawla* were the prerogatives of the Fatimid Imam-caliphs. Special institutions of learning and teaching were set up for the training of *da'is* and ordinary Ismailis. Educated primarily as theologians, the Ismaili *da'is* of the Fatimid period were at the same time the scholars and authors of their community, producing what were to become the classical texts of Ismaili literature dealing with a multitude of *ẓāhir* (ظاهر, exoteric, apparent) and *bāṭin* (باطن, esoteric, hidden) subjects, with works of the *ta'wil* genre (تأويل, esoteric interpretation, hermeneutics, of the Qur'an) retaining their prominence. The *da'is* of this period elaborated distinctive intellectual traditions. In particular, certain *da'is* of the Eastern, Iranian lands, amalgamated Ismaili theology with different philosophical traditions into highly complex metaphysical systems of thought. It was indeed during the classical Fatimid period that Ismailis made their most lasting contributions to Islamic thought and culture. Modern recovery of their literature readily attests to the richness and diversity of the literary and intellectual heritage of the Ismailis of this period.

The Fatimids were not to realise their universal ideals, and they failed in uniting all Muslims under a Shi'i caliphate headed by the Ismaili Fatimid Imam-caliphs. But they did manage, at least for a while, to have their suzerainty recognised from North Africa and Egypt to the Hijaz, Palestine, and Syria. In the Hijaz, they supplanted the 'Abbasids as the custodians of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. And for one full year, 1058-1059, the *khutba* at the Friday sermon in Baghdad itself, the 'Abbasid capital, was recited in the name of the Fatimid Imam-caliph. Confronted with a variety of internal and external problems, however, the Fatimid caliphate had already embarked on a steady path of decline by the second half of the 11th century, almost one century

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[6] The origins and dissemination of these imaginative narratives were investigated in detail by Farhad Daftary in his *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994).

before its actual collapse. By then, the Ismaili *da'is* operating in the central and eastern lands of Islam, from Syria to Central Asia, had achieved lasting successes. The Ismaili converts in those lands, ruled by the 'Abbasids, Buyids, Saljuqs, Saffarids, Ghaznawids and other dynasties, acknowledged the Fatimid caliph as the rightful Imam of the time. All surviving dissident Qarmatis outside Bahrayn, too, had by then switched their allegiance to the Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa*. It was largely due to the success of the Ismaili *da'is* working outside the Fatimid dominions that Ismailism outlived the downfall of the Fatimid dynasty and caliphate, and survived the challenges posed by the Sunni revival of the 11th and 12th centuries.

The Nizārī Ismailis, of whom the Aga Khan is the head, were led by Hasan-i-Sabbah, who was operating in Persia as an Ismaili *da'i*, and his seizure of the fortress of Alamut in 1090 marked the effective foundation of what was to become the Nizārī Ismaili state of Persia and Syria. As the undisputed leader of the Persian Ismailis, Hasan was already following an independent revolutionary policy against the Saljuq Turks when the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir died in 1094. In the dispute over al-Mustansir's succession, Hasan upheld the cause of Nizār (1045-1095) and severed his relations with the Fatimid regime and the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo, which had lent their support to al-Mustaʿlī Biʾllāh (1074-1101). By this decision, Hasan-i-Sabbah founded the independent Nizārī Ismaili *da'wa* on behalf of the Nizārī Imam, who was then inaccessible. The Nizārī state, centred at Alamut and with territories scattered in different parts of Persia and Syria, lasted until it collapsed in 1256 under the onslaught of the Mongol hordes. This initial phase in Nizārī history was marked by numerous political vicissitudes. Hasan-i-Sabbah designed a revolutionary strategy against the Saljuq Turks, and although he did not realise his objective, the Saljuqs failed in uprooting the Nizārīs from their numerous mountain strongholds. But Hasan did manage, despite countless odds, to found and consolidate an independent Nizārī state and *da'wa*. By around 1120, a stalemate had developed between the Nizārīs and the Saljuqs, and the Nizārī state survived, despite the incessant hostilities of the Saljuqs and their successors, until the arrival of the Mongols.[7]

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[7] For more on this, Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

At the same time, *da'is* despatched from Alamut organised an expanding Nizārī community in Syria. The Syrian Nizārīs, too, possessed a network of mountain fortresses, while pursuing complex policies towards various Muslim powers as well as the Crusaders. By 1273, the Mamluk Sultan Baybars I (c. 1223-1277) had seized all the fortresses of the Syrian Nizārīs, who were themselves permitted to survive as a semi-autonomous community.[8]

Hasan-i-Sabbah and his next two successors at Alamut ruled as *da'is* and *hujjas*, or chief representatives, of the Nizārī Imams, who were then inaccessible to their followers. Subsequently, starting with the fourth ruler, Ḥasan II ʿalā dhikrihi'l-salām (c. 1142-1166), the Nizārī Imams emerged at Alamut to take charge of the affairs of their *da'wa* and state. The Nizārīs of the Alamut period were, thus, led by three *da'is* and *hujjas* and five Imams, who are generally referred to as the lords (*khudawands*) of Alamut in the Persian sources.

Among the considerable *oeuvre* of the eminent scholar Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī (1086–1153), the prominent Persian theologian and heresiographer, who may have been a crypto-Ismaili, the *Majlis-i maktūb* ('The Transcribed Sermon') is his only known work in Persian. First delivered as a sermon in Khwarazm in Central Asia, this treatise invokes the theme of creation and command, providing an esoteric cosmological narrative where faith, revelation, prophecy, and the spiritual authority of the Household of the Prophet are interwoven. The *Majlis-i maktūb* further discusses themes such as the evolution of religious law (*sharʿīat*) and its culmination in the *qiyāmat* (resurrection), the relation between free will and predestination, the interplay between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of faith, and the role and function of the Shiʿi Imams in the cosmological narrative. Written in the final years of his life, between 1143 and 1153, the year of his death, and no longer in government service and having withdrawn to the village of Shahrastāna, in Khurāsān, it is possible that he felt he could express his personal beliefs more openly than hitherto. At any event, the Ismaili character of the work has been noted in the past and this element of the *Majlis* receives further confirmation in this new edition and translation. Its theme is the

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[8] For an introductory survey of this theme, Nasseh Ahmad Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism: The Ever Living Line of the Imamate* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

Divine Command, Be! (*kun*, كُنْ), and Creation, a topic central to the Ismaili understanding of cosmology, which is presented in the form of a sermon (*waʿz*) comparable to the sermons of the great Fatimid *dāʿī*, al-Muʾayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1078) collected in his *al-Majālis al-Muʾayyadiyya*, or those of the medieval Persian poets Rūmī (1207-1273) and Saʿdī (1210-c.1292).[9]

This treatise is arguably the densest expression of al-Shahrastānī's thought, and it demonstrably indicates the Ismaili inclination of this Muslim scholar, who has usually been regarded as a Shafiʿī-Ashʿarī. Daryoush Mohammad Poor's comparative study of this treatise and the corpus of Nizārī Ismaili literature from the Alamut period (1090–1256) reveals the massive impact of al-Shahrastānī's thought on every aspect of the doctrines of Nizārī Ismailis. The style of the *Majlis* is varied, immediate and engaging, and it includes logical argumentation as well as two dramatic duologues, between God and Iblīs and then Moses and Khiḍr.

Al-Khiḍr ('The Green' or 'The Verdant' One) is identified with the guide and mentor of Moses described in *Sūrat al-Kahf* (The Cave) (Qur'an 18:60–82) as 'Our exceptional servant to whom We gave compassion from Ourselves and inner knowledge from Our presence.' Exegetes interpret this as 'God-given knowledge' (*ʿilm laduni*), which complements Moses's knowledge of *Sharʿīah*. Moses travelled to *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (the junction of two seas) together with a young man (according to Islamic sources, Moses's nephew and successor, Joshua, the son of Nun).

When Moses asked his companion to bring the fish they had taken with them to eat, Joshua told him that the fish had come back to life and entered the sea. Moses took this to be a sign of the person he was looking for and, so, they returned to the place where the fish had come back to life, meeting a person who was endowed with divine mercy and knowledge. This person was al-Khiḍr, who was asked by Moses

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9 For a survey of, and an introduction to, Ismaili devotional poetry, especially in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, see *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poetry*. Translated by Faquir Muhammad Hunzai. Introduced and Edited by Kutub Kassam (London/New York: I. B. Tauris / The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997).

to permit him to accompany him, but al-Khiḍr told him: 'you will not be able to have patience with me!' Moses insisted on the company and so they moved on together with the condition that Moses asked no questions about whatever actions he saw until the truth was revealed.

They boarded a ship and al-Khiḍr started to scuttle the ship. Moses objected to him, and al-Khiḍr reproached him for breaking his promise not to ask any questions. They moved on and saw a teenage boy on the way, and al-Khiḍr abruptly killed the boy. Moses objected to al-Khiḍr again, and al-Khiḍr reproached him for the second time. They then entered a village whose residents refused to give them food, but al-Khiḍr started to reconstruct a wall in that village that was on the point of falling down. Again, Moses objected to him, and this time al-Khiḍr told him that this was a parting between them, explaining the true meaning (*ta'wil*) of the events: The ferrymen were poor people whom al-Khiḍr wanted to prevent from having their boat seized by an approaching king; the child would have corrupted the faith of his believing parents and would be replaced; and the wall concealed an inheritance belonging to two orphan sons of a righteous man, a 'treasure which is a mercy from your Lord,' signifying the deep meaning, learned through patience, that behind apparent injustice lies mercy.[10]

During the sermon, al-Shahrastānī challenges the arguments of various theological schools, including the Ashʿarīs, Muʿtazilīs and the Karrāmīs, as well as those of the philosophers. In the end, it is the mystical truths of the enigmatic Khiḍr that he affirms. The concepts he outlines in the treatise went on to influence later Ismaili ideas, notably those concerning the declaration of the *qiyāmat* by the fourth lord of Alamūt, Ḥasan II ʿalā dhikrihi'l-salām, which took place in 1164. As a result, this new Persian edition and English translation of the *Majlis-i maktūb munʿaqid dar Khwārzm* by Daryoush Mohammad Poor is an

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[10] For further details and an examination of the theological sources, Irfan A. Omar, *Prophet al-Khiḍr: Between the Qur'anic Text and Islamic Contexts* (Lanham [MD, USA] / London [UK]: Lexington Books, 2022), a book that traces the story's mythical, mystical, and popular interpretations engendered by the Qur'anic story. See also, by the same author, *El-Khaḍir/El-Khiḍr: Le prophète-Sage dans la tradition musulmane* (Casablanca: La croisée des chemins, 2021, translated into French by Jean-Pierre Lafouge).

important addition to the study of early Nizārī Ismaili thought and provides a unique insight for anyone seeking to explore Islamic thought of the medieval era in general.

The current Aga Khan, Shah Karim al-Husseini, has been the Imam of the Nizārī Ismailis since 1957, and the previous Imam, Sultan Muḥammad Shah, Aga Khan III (1877-1957), was Imam from 1885 until 1957, which means that the Ismaili community has been, for almost a hundred and forty years, under the guidance of just two Imams. This means a sense of continuity and direction in a period, and in a world, which saw, and continues to see, transformations and changes on a massive scale, with political upheavals and violence impacting directly the Ismailis, be it in pre- and post-Partition India and Pakistan, the decolonisation process of East Africa, especially the expulsion from Uganda in 1972 and the independence of Mozambique in 1975, religious persecution in the former atheist U.S.S.R., the never-ending violence in Afghanistan, the revolution in Iran, the conflict in Syria, the erratic course of the Western and the Arab worlds, etc.

Daryoush Mohammad Poor's first monograph, *Authority without Territory: The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) examined the connection between the concept of authority and the transformation of the Ismaili Imamat and is the first study of the Imamat in contemporary times, with a particular focus on Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary leader of Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims. The book reveals in a scholarly manner, and within an interesting theoretical framework, how the present Nizārī Ismaili Imam has succeeded in bestowing aspects of the authority of the Imam to the office of the Imamat, transcending the Weberian boundaries of ideal types of authority. This has resulted in the institutionalisation of what the author calls 'authority without territory', examining the network of the institutions created and legitimised by the present Imam, known as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

One would think that M. Ali Lakhani's book would be a good complement to *Authority without Territory*, since the intention with *Faith and Ethics* was to explore Islam's universal principles and values, which Lakhani holds to be central to the spiritual and ethical issues facing both Muslims and non-Muslims in the rapidly changing modern world. The book was undertaken during the currency of the Aga Khan's

Diamond Jubilee year (2017-2018). The Imam's duty has been to guide his community on the basis of Islamic principles adapted to the needs of the time, a time when Islam is under great scrutiny, when it is beset by fragmentary forces from within and without, when horrific acts are undertaken in its name - acts which most Muslims consider appalling and defamatory of their faith - and when its very nature is both misrepresented and misunderstood.

However, this book, more than providing an extensive survey of the Aga Khan's aspirations, is about the author's own ideas regarding some issues, from a traditionalist point of view, while discussing current affairs and using some selected statements by the Aga Khan to illustrate, and to lend credence to, the author's assertions. The reader must wait for the ninth and penultimate chapter to get some acquaintance with how the values of integrity and dignity are at the forefront of the AKDN's work, with the traditional Muslim concepts of cosmopolitanism and social justice guiding the Aga Khan's response to the stark challenges of the modern age.

The book grew out of a previous essay by the author,[11] and was a response to an invitation made by the Institute of Ismaili Studies to write it in order to expand on the ideas of his essay, and to present an interpretation of Islamic ethics, principally by drawing from public speeches, addresses and interviews of Aga Khan IV that describe his vision and its ethical applications. The author holds that the Ismaili Imam's aspiration for a common humanity promotes the Islamic ideals of unity (توحيد, *tawḥīd*) and social justice (عدل, *'adl*), ideals which provide the foundation for the Ismaili Imamat's humanistic work, which coalesces around notions of harmony and community, compassion and empathy, equity and empowerment, pluralistic dialogue, and engagement, seeking thereby to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of humankind through tolerance, generosity, and spirituality.

In ten chapters (The Ismaili Imam and the Imamat; Ethical Foundations; Tradition and Modernity; The Ethos of Modernism; Pluralism and the Cosmopolitan Ethic; Cohesion within the Umma;

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[11] M. Ali Lakhani, 'Living the Ethics of One's Faith: The Aga Khan's Integral Vision'. *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 34 (2014), pp. 33-62.

Islam and the West; Cultivating an Enabling Environment; Living the Ethics of Islam; and Global Convergence), M. Ali Lakhani intention was to examine how the ideas and actions of the current Ismaili Imam provide an Islamic response to the challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era. Shah Karim's programmes, implemented mainly through the broad institutional framework of the Aga Khan Development Network, are aimed at improving the quality of human life among the disadvantaged, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Addressing global issues ranging from healthcare and education to culture and civil society, the Aga Khan's initiatives are founded on core Islamic principles and values.

Today, as Imam, or spiritual leader, of the Shi'i Imami Ismaili Muslims, the Aga Khan has, during the more than sixty-five years of his Imamat, worked to promote a view of faith and ethics founded on principles of integrity and dignity, and on values that are central to Islam's message of peace, unity, generosity, compassion and equity, and consistent with its position as one of the major civilisational influences of mankind, seeking to articulate this core message and speaking of its relevance to the modern world. He has also made efforts to put the message into practice by creating global institutions which promote its ethos. The Aga Khan's beliefs and goals, and the inclusive and compassionate dimensions of the Islamic values that he advocates in a materialistic age, make his voice particularly relevant both to those who want to better understand Islam and to those who seek 'a light in much of the world's conflicting darkness'.

In keeping with the Islamic view of an all-encompassing reality, this ethical dimension is presented as a bridge connecting faith, 'religion' (دين, *dīn*) with worldly life (دُنْيا, *dunyā*). Rather than taking a theological approach, the book focuses on ethics and metaphysics, and on the Imam's approach to issues that he has identified as relevant to living in the modern world, as well as the Imamat's initiatives in promoting an ethical framework to address these issues. While situating the Ismaili ethos firmly within traditional Islam, this book emphasises the relevance of wide-ranging principles underlying the cosmopolitan ethic of communal harmony and the compassionate ethic of social justice, that are promoted by the Aga Khan.

While previously the Ismaili Imamat's recognition, in a political sense, was tied to territorial rule (as in the Fatimid period), the present Aga Khan has taken steps to achieve new forms of acknowledgement for the provenance and continuity of the Ismaili Imamat in the modern world. While the Imamat is politically neutral, it does not mean that it does not have political impact, since it has increasingly acquired influence internationally, among governments and in civil society, particularly about matters relating to socio-economic development, and to policies and programmes impacting the quality of life of citizens, assisted by its institutions. In 2015, the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imamat reached an agreement for the establishment of the Seat of the latter in Portugal (a territory which was known is Muslim times as غرب الأندلس, *Gharb Al-Andalus*, West of the Iberian Peninsula), the westernmost country of Europe. For many centuries, the Portuguese endeavoured to expand Christianity and Christendom, having as main enemies Islam and Muslims. Many were those who theorised about a universal monarchy with the Portuguese king at its head. The Jesuit father António Vieira (1608-1697) wrote extensively about the Fifth Empire [*Quinto Império* in Portuguese], an entity with spiritual and territorial power, a messianic idea contemporary of the Fifth Monarchists in England. The idea was later developed by the poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who envisioned a future world of peace and understanding. For the philosopher Agostinho da Silva (1906-1994), that Empire would be a purely spiritual one, without emperors, oppression, and violence, a landless empire.

According to Shi'i gnosis, in particular the Jābirian writings, the 'sun rising in the West' was considered as the symbol of the Imam, the inaugurator of a new cycle. The next Imam will be the 50th, inaugurating a new cycle, in this case the eighth one, of the next seven Imams, heralding, perhaps, not the Fifth nor the Sixth but, and using a number which is very dear to the Ismailis, the Seventh Empire.

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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
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