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THE SYNERGY OF RELIGION AND MALAY CULTURE IN IMPROVING THE EMPOWERMENT OF ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES TOWARDS ACHIEVING SDGS

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ABSTRACT

Many Malay Muslims face challenges related to social and economic development in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to social justice and poverty. Conversely, the synergy between Islam and Malay customs has untapped potential in helping the general public to achieve the SDGs. The objectives of this study are to (1) examine how integrating Islam and Malaysian culture can improve the well-being of the general public, (2) identify factors that contribute to this collaboration in relation to poverty and well-being (SDG 1 and SDG 10), and (3) investigate the contribution of Islam and Malaysian culture in the development of an inclusive society (SDG 11 and SDG 16). The method used was descriptive qualitative, interview data collection using religious and secular texts, participatory observation, and document analysis. Data analysis was done thematically to identify factors that contribute to the well-being of the general public. The results showed that the synergy between Islam and Malay culture is crucial in enhancing social solidarity, poverty alleviation, and community development. The strong application of religious values and customs is proven to promote the achievement of SDGs at the local level and strengthen social cohesion.

Keyword : *Islam, Malay Culture, SDGs*

Introduction

The entire Malay Culture, as defined by Islam, is a type of religious practice. The Malay psyche began to experience new life by incorporating Islamic principles into daily life. The rise of rationalism and intellectualism can be seen as the forces that guided the process of transformation of the Malay way of life, moving from the fanciful arts and myths to the realm of reason and logic that taught an orderly and organized way of life. The Riau Malay community, which has a long history of believing in Islam, confirms that Islam has been able to integrate into Malay society and consistently uphold moral principles in all aspects of its existence.¹

Malay culture, which is observed by all Malaysians, originates from the Malay development period and is always connected to the country's history, culture, and traditions, including Islam, international trade, and the use of Malay as a language. The

¹Agung Setiyawan, "Budaya Lokal Dalam Perspektif Agama: Legitimasi Hukum Adat ('Urf) Dalam Islam," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 13, no. 2 (2012): 203–22.

symbols of Malaysian culture that are still used today as references to Malaysian identity are Islam, the Malay language, hospitality and openness.²

Many challenges are still faced in the context of social and economic development in Malay societies, especially with regard to social progress and poverty. Although Islam and Malay culture have historically been the foundation of the people's way of life, the potential for cooperation between the two has not been fully exploited to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the areas of prosperity, poverty (SDGs 1), and inequality (SDGs10).³

In addition, efforts to create inclusive and open societies (SDG 11 and SDG 16) are often hampered by the lack of integration of local religions and cultures into government policies and community development initiatives. The policies implemented have not fully supported the wisdom and strength of local cultures in improving people's lives.⁴ Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to find out how Islam and Malay culture can improve the welfare of society in general. In addition, it is also necessary to identify the factors that contribute to this collaboration so that it can make a significant contribution in reducing poverty, improving welfare, and creating an inclusive and resilient society.

If Islamic values and Malay culture can be effectively implemented, the Muslim majority has great potential to achieve social and economic prosperity. These lessons include lessons on solidarity, gotong royong and social care, all of which are crucial in addressing the threat of poverty and reducing inequality (SDG 1 and SDG 10). However, a key challenge today is the lack of integration between religious education and local customs in developing programs approved by government and non-governmental organizations. Often, top-down empowerment programs fail to have a meaningful impact because they do not adapt to changing conditions in the community.⁵

Some strategic thinking is needed to address this issue. Firstly, improving community education and awareness by implementing programs based on Islamic and Malay culture that can be implemented through organizations such as pesantren and pondok pesantren. Secondly, more effective collaboration with religious and cultural organizations is needed to ensure that the programs are more in line with local needs. In addition, it is necessary to develop local economic projects that can strengthen social cohesion, such as sharia operations or small businesses based on gotong royong. Monitoring and evaluation are also important to ensure program effectiveness and policy compliance based on study results.

²Andi Candra Jaya, "Politik Budaya Melayu: Strategi Kebudayaan Masyarakat Melayu Palembang Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Global," *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 2019, 68–84.

³Wahyuningsih Wahyuningsih, "Millenium Development Goals (Mdgs) Dan Sustainable Development Goals (Sdgs) Dalam Kesejahteraan Sosial," *BISMA: Jurnal Bisnis Dan Manajemen* 11, no. 3 (2018): 390–99.

⁴Syarif Hidayat, "Legacy Pemimpin Besar Islam: Inspirasi Untuk Kepemimpinan Modern Di Indonesia Pada Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," *Pelita: Jurnal Studi Islam Mahasiswa UII Dahwa* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–17.

⁵Toharudin Toharudin, "Nilai-Nilai Keislaman Dan Keindonesiaan Dalam Membentuk Karakteristik Peradaban Melayu Di Indonesia (Studi Pemikiran Munawir Sjadzali)," *Jurnal Intelektualita: Keislaman, Sosial Dan Sains* 7, no. 1 (2018): 41–58.

With this approach, it is expected that religious and secular cooperation will be a major factor in achieving the SDGs in the Malay community.⁶

This research aims to examine how the integration of Islamic values and Malaysian local culture can improve the overall well-being of society. By exploring the collaboration between religious teachings and cultural elements, this research seeks to identify factors that play a role in reducing poverty (SDG 1) and social inequality (SDG 10). This integration is expected to shape social norms that support welfare and improve the economic conditions of vulnerable communities, resulting in a tangible contribution to achieving more equitable and just welfare.⁷

In addition, this research explores how the relationship between Islam and Malaysian culture can support the development of an inclusive, safe and healthy society (SDGs 11 and SDG 16). It is hoped that by examining the concepts of shared values, social participation and inclusiveness, this research can provide relevant recommendations to create prosperous cities and communities and strengthen existing social institutions. The expected outcome is a practicable strategy to strengthen cooperation between religion and culture to achieve development goals in Malay.⁸

Research by Effendy shows that religion has great potential for social development as it can serve as a moral and ethical compass for the entire society. In the context of Malaysians, Islam is not only a spiritual teaching but also plays a role in shaping social and religious structures. Together, religion and Malaysian culture can address social issues such as poverty and inequality that are linked to the SDGs, especially SDG 1 (improving poverty) and SDG 10 (improving inequality).⁹ A study by Alatas shows that Malaysia's local culture, integrated with Islamic teachings, can be used to improve the country's economic and social welfare. Alatas shows how values such as gotong royong, almsgiving, and zakat can be used as strategies to improve people's welfare, especially in the context of poverty and social justice. This research is important for achieving SDGs 11 (strong communities and societies) and 16 (strong institutions, peace and justice).¹⁰ Research by Noor highlights the role of Islamic education in promoting sustainable development in Muslim countries. The research shows that Islamic teachings on social justice, environmental sustainability and community well-being are in line with the SDGs. The research highlights the need for

⁶Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria and Ahmad Sunawari Long, "Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan (SDGs) Dalam Kerangka Malaysia Madani Dan Prinsip Maqasid," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 25 (2024): 160–76.

⁷Nurul Azizah, "Internasional Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Di Komunitas ASEAN Di Era Digitalisasi Dengan Program Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs)," *IKHLAS: Jurnal Pengabdian Dosen Dan Mahasiswa* 1, no. 1 (2022): 20–25.

⁸Adi Guszahari, Sendi Setiawan, and Opan Murtopan, "THE CORRELATION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW," vol. 1, 2023, 347–58.

⁹Bustanul Arifin, "Implikasi Prinsip Tasamuh (Toleransi) Dalam Interaksi Antar Umat Beragama," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 1, no. 2 (2016): 391–420.

¹⁰Abdul Bari, Hasan Muhammad Alfatih, and Asep Abdul Muhyi, "Islamic Understanding of Feminism and Gender: Between Tradition and the Pressures of the Age:(Pemahaman Islam Tentang Feminisme Dan Gender: Antara Tradisi Dan Tekanan Zaman)," *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 2, no. 3 (2024): 413–26.

religious and secular cooperation as a means to achieve long-term and inclusive development goals.¹¹

This research aims to investigate how integrating Islam and Malay culture can improve general societal well-being, especially in relation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From a theoretical standpoint, the integration of religious and secular can be explained through a structural-functional framework, which highlights the importance of this collaboration in fostering social cohesion and contributing to the general well-being of society. In the Malay context, Islamic teachings that are in line with local customs, such as zakat, almsgiving and gotong royong, not only uphold harmonious social norms, but also foster solidarity and social bonds that are crucial for the community collectively.¹² This research is expected to produce significant findings regarding the cooperation between Islam and Malay culture in improving people's welfare and accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, this research is expected to provide more insights on how cooperation between religious and secular values can be best utilized to address social issues such as poverty and inequality (SDG 1 and SDG 10) and foster a better, inclusive, peaceful and tolerant society (SDG 11 and SDG 16).¹³

The potential benefits of this study are as follows: (1) provide advice to the government, religious organizations, and local communities on how to integrate Islamic and Malay principles to improve social and economic welfare; (2) serve as a guide for developing more effective community service programs based on religion and culture, especially in reducing inequality and empowering vulnerable groups; and (3) promote academic literature on inclusive development projects relevant to multicultural societies such as Malaysia.

Basically, the method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, which aims to describe in depth the phenomenon of synergy of Islam and Malay culture in improving community welfare and its contribution to the achievement of SDGs. Data collection was carried out through several techniques to explore the synergy of religion and Malay culture in SDGs.

The research utilized three main methods: interviews, observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with religious leaders, community leaders, and residents to explore views on the integration of Islamic teachings and Malay customs and their impact on poverty, social justice, and development. Participatory observation was conducted by directly engaging in social and cultural activities to observe the application of these values in daily life. In addition, document analysis was conducted on religious texts,

¹¹Ulil Albab, Heri Sutopo, and Dona Algarini, "Kontribusi Komite Daerah Ekonomi Dan Keuangan Syariah (KDEKS) Terhadap Perkembangan Sektor Ekonomi Kota Bandar Lampung," *Jurnal Abwatzikhoebillah: Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Ekonomi, Humaniora* 10, no. 2 (2024): 527–35.

¹²Mulyana Fitri and Yenni Samri Juliati Nasution, "Pendayagunaan Zakat Produktif Dalam Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (Sdgs) Di Indonesia," *JURNAL ILMLAH MAHASISWA EKONOMI ISLAM* 5, no. 2 (2023): 112–21.

¹³Fahmi Irahmsyah, "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) Dan Dampaknya Bagi Ketahanan Nasional," *Jurnal Lembannas RI* 7, no. 2 (2019): 45–54.

policy reports, and empowerment programs to understand how the values are reflected in community practices and policies.

After data collection, thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes relating to factors that contribute to community well-being, such as social solidarity, poverty alleviation, and inclusive community development. Through this analysis, the researcher was able to conclude how the synergy between Islam and Malay culture can strengthen social cohesion and promote the achievement of SDGs, particularly SDG 1, SDG 10, SDG 11, and SDG 16.

Integrating Islam and Malay culture can improve the general welfare of the community.

The findings of this study suggest that integrating Islam and Malay culture is crucial to improving the general welfare of society. This research shows that the principles found in Islamic education, such as zakat, almsgiving, and social justice, are very similar to the principles found in Malay culture, such as tolerance, integration, and gotong royong. Together, these two aspects strengthen social cohesion and solidarity within the community, which helps to holistically improve socio-economic cohesion.¹⁴

The integration between Islam and Malay culture has a very positive impact on the well-being of the community. Islam emphasizes principles such as social justice, zakat and alms, while Malay culture promotes the values of gotong royong, tolerance and cooperation. When the two go hand in hand, it creates a synergy that strengthens social solidarity and encourages community economic empowerment. This integration not only strengthens relationships between individuals, but also creates a more harmonious and productive pattern of life. (Interview Ahmad Syafiq:2024)

a. Increased Social Solidarity

Islam teaches the importance of caring for others, which is shown in ways such as zakat and alms, while Malay culture emphasizes gotong royong and being helpful in daily life. The implementation of these two values fosters strong social ties between community members and strengthens social solidarity. Strong social networks allow for a more equitable distribution of daily income, which helps to reduce social tensions and improve the general well-being of the community.¹⁵

Social solidarity is one of the most important aspects in the social and cultural structure that exists in Malay society. The values contained in Malay culture contribute greatly to the harmony that exists between members of the community, which in turn strengthens the overall social cohesion. The concept of social solidarity in Malay culture

¹⁴Nicolas Habibi, "Konstruk Bahasa Dalam Tradisi Budaya Melayu Islam Kerinci," *Islamika: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 22, no. 01 (2022): 16–36.

¹⁵Siti Ahsanul Haq and Ita Rodiah, "Filantropi Islam Berbasis Media Sosial: Meningkatkan Kesadaran Filantropi Melalui Platform Crowdfunding," *QULUBANA: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 3, no. 2 (2023): 1–17.

is closely related to the principles of gotong royong, mutual aid and integration that form the basis of daily social interaction.¹⁶

b. Economic Empowerment Based on Islam and Culture

Islam and Malay culture also have a positive impact on the general economic well-being of the community. Islamic teachings on zakat, waqf and infaq provide guidelines that can be used to support individuals and family members. On the other hand, Malaysian culture embraces the principle of gotong royong in local economic activities, such as cooperative business ventures in the community, which strengthens the collectivist aspect of the economy. When these two elements are combined, it creates a more inclusive and comprehensive economic model.¹⁷

Economic empowerment based on Islam and Malay culture plays an important role in improving people's welfare, especially among Muslims in Malaysia. These two elements complement each other to create a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic system. In this context, economic empowerment does not only focus on the material aspect, but also on the social and moral aspects that emphasize on the principles of justice, shared prosperity and care for others.¹⁸

c. Improving Access to Resources

Islam's teachings on social justice, which emphasize access to wealth and resources, fit well with the Malay cultural context, which encourages high levels of cooperation and teamwork. By integrating these two aspects, previously disadvantaged communities have better access to social, educational and economic services, which in turn will improve their overall quality of life.

Improving access to resources is an important aspect of community empowerment efforts, especially in the context of the predominantly Muslim Malay community. The integration between Islamic teachings and Malay culture can help strengthen access to economic, social, and educational resources that are critical to improving community welfare.¹⁹

d. Promoting Sustainable Social Development

The relationship between Islam and Malay culture is not only focused on economic issues, but also social issues. These two elements reinforce the values of harmony and unity in society. Through the spread of Islamic education that emphasizes tolerance and unity, the general public can work together to achieve

¹⁶Zulkifli M Nuh and Dardiri Dardiri, "Etnomatematika Dalam Sistem Pembilangan Pada Masyarakat Melayu Riau," *Katubkhanah* 19, no. 2 (2017): 220–38.

¹⁷Khairul Huda, "Islam Melayu Dalam Pusran Sejarah Sebuah Transformasi Kebudayaan Melayu Nusantara," *TOLERANSI: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 8, no. 1 (2017): 78–96.

¹⁸Febrian Syah Raharja and Puspitawati Puspitawati, "DINAMIKA ORGANISASI MAJELIS ADAT BUDAYA MELAYU INDONESIA (MABMI) DALAM MELESTARIKAN BUDAYA MELAYU DI KOTA MEDAN," *HUMANIS: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 16, no. 1 (2024): 20–28.

¹⁹Mutia Nur Hasanah and Indrianis Suryani, "PENDIDIKAN MULTIKULTURAL DALAM MEMPERTAHANKAN KEBUDAYAAN ISLAM DI ERA GLOBAL," *Ta Lim Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2024): 25–33.

common goals, such as developing social communities. This creates a stable, inclusive and peaceful social environment that contributes more to the well-being of society.

Sustainable social development is one of the main goals in achieving overall social welfare. In the context of the predominantly Muslim Malay community, the synergy between religious values and local culture can play an important role in promoting sustainable social development. Sustainable social development not only includes economic and environmental aspects, but it is also important to prioritize social, moral, and cultural aspects that provide long-term positive impacts for the community.

Overall, the integration of Islam and Malaysian culture has been proven to improve community welfare through strengthening social solidarity, encouraging economic empowerment based on religious and cultural values, and creating more equitable access to resources. By optimally utilizing the potential of these two elements, community welfare can be achieved more effectively, especially in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Factors contributing to this collaboration in relation to poverty and prosperity (SDGs 1 and SDGs 10)

The collaboration between Islam and Malaysian culture in relation to poverty and prosperity, especially in the context of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduce Inequality), is influenced by several very important and complementary factors. One of the most important factors is the social solidarity that exists in each of these systems. Islam emphasizes the need for zakat, infaq and waqf to help those who cannot afford it, while Malay culture encourages the use of gotong royong as a way to help people in everyday life. Both of these elements contribute to a strong social network that allows for a fairer redistribution of wealth and resources, thus reducing economic turmoil and accelerating poverty alleviation.²⁰

This collaboration has a very significant impact as both emphasize social solidarity and wealth redistribution. In Islam, zakat, infaq and waqf are the main instruments to help the underprivileged. On the other hand, Malay culture has the concept of gotong royong which fosters a spirit of togetherness in helping others. The combination of these two elements creates a strong social network, enabling a more equitable distribution of resources, thereby reducing economic turmoil and accelerating poverty alleviation. (Interview, Zainal :2024)

In addition, the development of a sharia-based economy is an important component of this cooperation. Through Islamic economic principles that emphasize on usury, such as mudarabah and musyarakah, the general public is provided with more inclusive and equitable access to financing, especially for those with limited capital. In Malay culture, working together as a community to develop joint ventures, such as

²⁰Isnan Murdiansyah, "Evaluasi Program Pengentasan Kemiskinan Berbasis Pemberdayaan Masyarakat: Studi Kasus Pada Program Gerdu-Taskin Di Kabupaten Malang," *Wiga: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ekonomi* 4, no. 1 (2014): 71–92.

cooperatives and group enterprises, also contributes to greater economic growth. Such collaborations help to improve the quality of life of the general public, provide business opportunities, and reduce the level of sluggishness in the local economy.

When it comes to addressing poverty and inequality, access to education and skills training also plays an important role. Islam teaches that knowledge is a must for everyone, and Malaysian culture highly values education as a means to improve living standards. By improving access to education and training, people are given the opportunity to develop their potential, work with more competent people, and improve their economic situation. Islamic teachings on education and Malay culture, which combine to form the foundation of education, equip people with knowledge relevant to their needs.

Sustainable management of natural resources is another important element that inhibits this collaboration. There is a principle of caliphate in Islam that encourages humans to be honest with themselves and their environment. Malay culture has a strong tradition of using prudent methods to preserve the environment, such as in environmental and forest management. Cooperation between Islamic and Malay principles not only helps create employment opportunities in the environmental and agricultural sectors, but also ensures that construction projects do not have a negative impact on the environment and can be carried out in a responsible manner.

At the end of the day, social media and community ties are what make this collaboration even stronger. There are some very strong traditions among Malaysians when it comes to cooperation and friendship among all members of society. Islam, with its teachings of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *takaful* (mutual protection), supports these efforts by encouraging people to care and help those in need. These social networks help prevent the marginalization of some groups in society and ensure that there are no unexpected factors in social and economic development. Through strengthening cooperation between Islam and Malay culture, the general public can create a more inclusive, just and harmonious environment that tacitly contributes to the reduction of social injustice and poverty in accordance with SDG 1 and SDG 10.²¹

The contribution of Islam and Malaysian culture to the development of an inclusive society (SDGs 11 and SDGs 16)

The contribution of Islam and Malaysia in building an inclusive society is highly relevant to the achievement of SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The collaboration between these two value systems provides a strong foundation for creating a society that is not only economically prosperous, but also socially inclusive and just. One of the main contributions is made through the application of Islamic principles that uphold social justice, harmony and

²¹Weihua Liao et al., "Using Granular Computing to Measure the Similarity of Sustainable Development in China: Addressing Goals 1, 3, 8, 10 and 15 of the SDGs," *Environmental Development* 47 (2023): 100886.

harmony, which are then reinforced by Malay traditions that emphasize harmony, cooperation and respect for one another.²²

This collaboration has a great impact as the values of Islam and Malay culture complement each other in creating a harmonious, just and inclusive society. Islam emphasizes social justice, respect for differences and good governance, while Malay culture highlights harmony, gotong royong and deliberation. These principles create a strong social foundation, where people can coexist peacefully, collaborate in building communities, and resolve conflicts with a deliberative approach. (Interview, Siti Halimah: 2024)

First of all, Islamic education places great emphasis on social awareness, peace and justice. Islam teaches us to treat all people with respect without imposing any restrictions on religious, cultural or religious practices. This is in line with SDG 16's goal of promoting inclusive and tolerant societies. In Malay culture, the concept of adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah, is a way of life that explains social order, where customary law and religion work together to ensure social harmony and justice. As a result, people can coexist peacefully, work together and resolve conflicts amicably through deliberation.²³

In addition, the fundamental principles of gotong royong and deliberation in Malay culture contribute to the development of thriving cities and communities (SDG 11). The principle of gotong royong, which is also in line with Islamic teachings on teamwork and cooperation, encourages communities to work together to preserve the environment, build local infrastructure, and enhance communal cohesion. This collaboration helps to create a more inclusive local environment where all community members participate in research and development to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

In conclusion, Islamic teachings on good governance and Malay culture, which upholds standards of wisdom and justice, also support the development of strong and transparent institutions. The key Islamic values in governance are integrity, justice and accountability. These values align with SDG 16, which calls for effective and transformative organizations. In contrast, Malays emphasize the need to have a strong sense of leadership, which can help create leaders who are not only capable but also have a strong moral compass for the welfare of the people.

In addition, education based on religious and cultural principles is essential to creating an inclusive society. Islam encourages people to be knowledgeable and active in society, while Malays view education as a means to cultivate good character. By integrating religious and cultural education, schools can help the younger generation develop more social skills and encourage them to become agents of change who promote tolerance and understanding.

Ultimately, the application of tolerance and harmony from Islam and Malay culture helps maintain harmony among the population. Ukhuwah (brotherhood) in Islam and

²²Faris Maulana Akbar, "Peranan Dan Kontribusi Islam Indonesia Pada Peradaban Global," *Indo-Islamika* 10, no. 1 (2020): 51–63.

²³Choirul Salim, Lilis Renfiana, and Nanda Pratama, "Memperkuat Toleransi Dan Kerukunan Melalui Pengabdian: Upaya Promosi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Masyarakat Desa Sumber Katon, Kecamatan Seputih Mataram, Lampung," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia Sejahtera* 3, no. 2 (2024): 01–12.

muafakat in Malay culture encourage communication and cooperation among community members, which is crucial to preventing social conflict. This collaboration aims to create a more cohesive society, but also lays the foundation for creating a safe, secure and inclusive social environment for all community members, in line with SDG 11 and SDG 16.

Strengthening Social Cohesion

In line with the goals of SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), building a cohesive and harmonious society through cooperation between Islam and Malay culture is a very important contribution. Islam, with its teachings emphasizing brotherhood (ukhuwah), compassion and mutual assistance, strengthens the spirit of solidarity among its adherents. This is in line with Malaysian culture that emphasizes gotong royong, togetherness and harmony in everyday life. Through this initiative, communities are not only able to work together to overcome various obstacles, but are also more tolerant of differences, whether in social, economic or religious aspects.²⁴

This collaboration is very important because Islam and Malay culture have complementary value bases. In Islam, the concept of ukhuwah (brotherhood) emphasizes compassion, solidarity, and mutual assistance between individuals. This is in line with the Malay culture that prioritizes mutual cooperation, togetherness and harmony. By applying these two principles, people can build stronger relationships, trust each other, and be more tolerant of differences, whether in social, economic, or religious aspects. (Interview, Ahmad Yusuf: 2024)

In the context of Malay society, the principles of deliberation and consensus are crucial in resolving conflicts and fostering social cohesion. The process of deliberation, which is conducted collaboratively and is also a component of Islamic education, allows everyone to reach an agreed consensus. This helps improve potential divisions and a sense of belonging among all members of the community. In this way, social harmony can be achieved through open communication and collaboration, making the general public more connected.

In addition, the values of tolerance contained in Islam and Malay culture play a role in building a more inclusive society. In Islam, tolerance is taught through the concept of tasamuh, which means mutual respect and appreciation of differences. Malay culture also encourages acceptance and appreciation of diversity, whether in terms of culture, religion, or social background. These values create a positive social climate, where conflicts can be reduced and people can coexist peacefully, thus supporting the creation of a stable and inclusive environment.

In addition, strengthening social cohesion is also driven by the role of local institutions, both religious and cultural, in encouraging social programs that involve community participation. For example, mosques and surau not only function as places of

²⁴Daniel Chosto, "Analisis Perbandingan Kesesuaian Konsep Universitas Berkelanjutan Dalam Memenuhi Sustainable Development Goals Nomor 4, 9, 16, Dan 17: Studi Kasus Pada National University of Singapore, Universiti Malaya, Chulalongkorn University, University of Indonesia, Dan De La Salle University," 2022.

worship, but also as centers of social activities that support community welfare. On the other hand, Malay traditional institutions play a role in maintaining the tradition of gotong royong, helping people in need, and strengthening solidarity networks at the grassroots level.

By integrating Islamic values and Malay culture, communities can build strong social bonds, where trust, solidarity and a sense of responsibility towards others increase. This is crucial in creating a more stable, harmonious society that is able to work together to achieve sustainable development. This synergy not only has a positive impact on individuals and communities, but also strengthens the social foundations that support the achievement of SDG 11 and SDG 16.

In conclusion, the synergy between Islamic teachings and Malay culture has significant potential in enhancing community empowerment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This integration of religious values and local traditions is proven to strengthen social cohesion, encourage economic empowerment, and create an inclusive and sustainable society. Through Islamic principles such as zakat, infaq and waqf, supported by a culture of gotong royong and deliberation, communities can help each other and work together to overcome poverty (SDG 1) and reduce inequality (SDG 10). In addition, this collaboration also plays an important role in building more inclusive cities and communities (SDG 11) and strengthening peace and social justice (SDG 16). As such, the application of local religious and cultural values is key to achieving more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development in the land of Malay.

Conclusion

This research shows that although many Malay Muslims face challenges in social and economic development, especially regarding social justice and poverty, the synergy between Islamic teachings and Malay culture has great potential that has not been fully utilized to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research successfully identified that the integration of religious and cultural values can significantly improve community welfare, strengthen social solidarity, and support poverty alleviation (SDG 1) and inequality reduction (SDG 10). In addition, this synergy also plays an important role in building inclusive and sustainable societies (SDG 11) and strengthening peace and social justice (SDG 16). Through a qualitative approach involving interviews, text analysis, observation, and document study, this research found that the application of Islamic principles supported by Malay customs can strengthen social cohesion and contribute to the development of a more prosperous, just, and inclusive society at the local level.

This research shows that the synergy between Islamic teachings and Malay culture can be the key to addressing the social and economic challenges faced by Malay communities, especially in the effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although many Malay Muslim communities still face problems related to poverty and social inequality, the integration of Islamic values and local culture is proven to be able to encourage community empowerment. This research reveals that this synergy not only

improves welfare and social solidarity, but also strengthens efforts to alleviate poverty (SDG 1) and reduce inequality (SDG 10). In addition, the contribution of this collaboration is also seen in building a more inclusive society (SDG 11) and strengthening peace and social justice (SDG 16). Through a qualitative approach with interview, document analysis and observation methods, this study found that the application of religious values and Malay traditions can strengthen social ties and accelerate the achievement of equitable and sustainable development at the community level.

Future research is suggested to expand the approach used by conducting comparative studies in other countries with large Muslim populations, such as Indonesia and Brunei, to understand variations in the synergy between religion and local culture in empowering communities to achieve the SDGs. In addition, a quantitative approach with a broader survey can be conducted to obtain more measurable data related to the impact of the integration of Islamic values and Malay culture on social and economic welfare. Further research can also focus on the role of the younger generation in maintaining religious and cultural values in the midst of globalization, especially how they adopt and apply these values in modern life. In addition, a multidisciplinary approach that combines the perspectives of sociology, anthropology and development studies can enrich the understanding of the contribution of religious and cultural values in building an inclusive society. Finally, further research on the implementation of government policies that support this synergy needs to be conducted so that community empowerment programs can be more effective and targeted in achieving sustainable development goals.[]

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